



**Representative Democracy and Capacity
Development for Responsible Politics**

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by

Massimo Tommasoli

Director of Operations

International IDEA

Stockholm, Sweden

m.tommasoli@idea.int

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This paper draws on IDEA's experience in democracy building. It is presented in the context of its mission to produce high-quality and policy-relevant comparative knowledge on democracy promotion made available to, owned and used by key actors at local, national, regional and international levels, addressing the links between the consolidation of democratic institutions and the conditions for strengthening democratic processes.

The paper is divided in six sections, addressing: the nature of democracy building; current challenges to democracy; the crisis of representative democracy as emerging from the mistrust in political institutions; popular participation; democratic practice, with emphasis on divided societies; and capacity development for democratic politics¹.

1. Representative Democracy and Democracy Building

Definitions of democracy differ and evolve. For IDEA, democracy goes beyond the rule of law and the protection of human rights; it means more than good governance and the effective management of public resources. Democracy is about the use of power and the management of conflict. It requires a set of political institutions and processes based on the principles of **popular control** over public decisions and decision makers, and **equality of respect and voice** between citizens in the exercise of that control. There are no blueprints since every country's political institutions and practices are shaped by its history, culture, social and economic factors. Moreover, the quality of democracy will vary according to how well the institutions allow for these two principles to be given practical expression, which can be done through processes of **participation, representation, accountability, transparency and responsiveness** to the citizens. Such processes imply a culture of participation, in which pluralistic media, an active civil society, competing political parties and other mechanisms allow all citizens to acquire political voice. IDEA has produced a methodology to enable local stakeholders and citizens to assess the quality of their democracy². (Ratings given by outsiders are much less relevant.) As long as it can be given freely, the higher the rating given by its citizens, the more stable and sustainable the democracy, the more secure the human rights and the good governance.

IDEA focuses on enhancing these democratic processes so as to strengthen public confidence and trust in the political system. For IDEA, **making democracy work is an ongoing task**, a continuing challenge for all countries that like to call themselves democratic. It is concerned with the conditions conducive to the emergence of democratic systems, their development and consolidation, their effectiveness and their sustainability. Democratization is not a linear process that moves from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. The process often stalls or regresses into lawlessness or violence. Democracies may remain fragile long after multiparty elections are established. Democracy cannot thrive without basic conditions of human security and a civic political culture that allows for the rule of law and protection of basic freedoms. A common sense of national sovereignty and citizenship, and of the nation itself, are also required, as is a supportive regional and international environment. Democracies may also be mismanaged, unable to maintain peace and security, or deliver public welfare and assist economic growth.

¹ Section 3.1 on trust in political institutions is based on a background paper commissioned by IDEA to Richard Rose (New Europe Barometer), in collaboration with Michael Bratton (Afrobarometer), Yun han Chu (East Asia Barometer) and Marta Lagos (Latinobarometro) of the Global Barometer Surveys Network. Section 3.2 on voter turnout is based on the presentation made by Andrew Ellis, Head of Electoral Processes at International IDEA, at the Round Table on "Challenges to Democratic Governance, organised on the occasion of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), Stockholm, 7 October 2004. Sections 4, 5 6.5 and 6.6 are based on background papers written by Tim Sisk, IDEA Senior Policy Advisor, in the context of IDEA's work on democracy building and conflict management. Section 6 draws on a background paper on democracy assistance trends commissioned by IDEA to Richard Youngs.

² <http://www.idea.int/democracy/sod.cfm>

Expectations of democracy may be higher in newly established democracies, and the euphoria of transition can be a specific problem, as it always contains the seeds of disillusionment. In these situations checks and balances against abuse may be lower, meaning reversals may be more frequent, but weaknesses in the political process can emerge or re-emerge also in long-established multiparty systems.

The task of making democracy work belongs to the countries themselves, their citizens, civil associations, social and economic forces, professional associations, religious groups, as well as public bodies, political parties and institutions. The notion of **local ownership of the process of reform and development** follows from the logic of a democracy drawing its legitimacy from the support given to it by its citizens. For significant political reforms and public policy decisions, there needs to be the space and time for knowledge to be shared, information circulated, opinion groups to form and debate and to build consensus with key stakeholder. The quality of the dialogue and the inclusive nature of the decision making processes will tend to condition the acceptability and effectiveness of the reforms in question. Building **local capacity for dialogue** as well as for institutional strengthening is thus one of the priorities in the work of IDEA.

The challenges of building sustainable democracy are still enormous, though better understood than a decade ago and increasingly in the public eye, thanks in part to media attention to the challenges of building democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. There are no blueprints or objective truths about how to build and strengthen a democracy. There is, however, much useful experience that can be drawn on, to gain ideas about what may have worked well or not so well in other fairly comparable situations; there may be lessons learned in democracy and peace building, in enforcing standards of integrity and transparency for political parties and institutions, designing institutional arrangements to enhance participation and governability, establishing good practice in political management, negotiating techniques and consensus building processes and so on. Such comparative knowledge and experience is more than ever in demand by political reformers at local, national and at intergovernmental level. IDEA specialises in developing such materials, in response to needs and demands and in cooperation with a wide range of partners and user organisations.

2. Challenges to Democracy

Democracy is now widely accepted as a goal and generally recognised for both its intrinsic merits and its instrumental values - as the only valid response to terrorism (though the perception of this validity could be undermined by the 'democracy at the barrel of a gun' approach), as the key to conflict prevention and the goal for sustainable peace building, as the only way to achieve responsive and accountable government and to build firm foundations to achieve Millennium Development Goals.

Despite significant steps towards democratisation in the last two decades, however, problems of consolidation are evident. Too often, steps towards democracy disappoint, bring few benefits in terms of more equality or better governance and leave the people disenchanted. The situation varies within and between continents. In several countries, semi-authoritarian regimes persist, manipulating electoral processes or otherwise allowing little space for opposition forces. Elsewhere, elections may produce a change of governing elite, but little change in levels of corruption or delivery on election promises. Electoral processes may be well managed in many countries, but voter registration may be biased and inadequate, election systems may freeze out specific interests and ignite tensions. Political parties across the globe fail to inspire trust or respect, and in most countries appear unable to demonstrate a worthy role between elections.

In older as well as newer democracies, ethnic, religious and social divides tend increasingly to become magnified and polarized in the discourse of competing political forces. Though they have made progress, women must still struggle to participate in the political system, most party elites still being willing to pay only lip service to the value of gender equality. Civil society and the media have developed and may well give voice to public concerns, sometimes helping to mobilise citizens as an effective political counterweight, but cannot replace inclusiveness or representivity within the political system. Civil society activism is no substitute for the role of political opposition.

The situation varies across and within continents. Africa, beset with problems of poverty, debt, HIV-Aids, armed conflict etc, has managed against great odds to move forward in many respects in the last year. Despite continuing imperfections in elections and chronic corruption, there appears to be a strong popular demand for more and better democracy. There are still black spots, where despotic and aging leaders resist all pressures to move on, there is also progress in overcoming violent and difficult legacies of the past, with more stability in prospect in the Manu river area, the Great Lakes, and even Sudan. The slowly emerging new African Union has focussed the minds of political elites on the business of responsible economic and political governance and a new sense of collective responsibility would seem to be developing.

In **Latin America**, the past few years have seen evidence of the fragility of several democracies on the sub continent and, at the same time, a growing concern by political elites to tackle together some of the underlying causes of democratic weakness. The Andean region has been most affected, with the confrontations in Venezuela and Bolivia, as well as in Ecuador and Peru. Popular discontent across the continent has reached worrying proportions, the most obvious cause being the lack of tangible socio-economic benefits for the vast mass of the population. With severe and rising poverty and the worst income distribution in the world, the public have lost confidence in the key institutions of democracy, particularly political parties and legislatures. Proportional representation combined with presidentialism, together with high levels of fragmentation in the party system, have often led to volatile political environments and divided governments. As political elites now identify and seek to act on the “crisis of governability”, they have begun to focus, for instance, on the problem of weak and non-transparent political parties and of political representation and participation. These issues are taken up in international forums such as the OAS, the IADB, the Grupo de Rio, and the Parlatino.

Experience with democracy in **Asia** is not more positive, though there is a much greater diversity of situations than elsewhere. If parts of East and South East Asia seem to be consolidating democracy, the older democracies in South Asia may appear blocked with their highly stratified societies, desperately poor populations, hierarchical and class-based structures, kinship and personality-driven political forces, criminalisation as well as corruption in political life. Populist ethnic or religious nationalism remains a threat in several regions. The problem of money in politics affects all parts of Asia, yet the ordinary people appear to treasure and use their vote to topple non-performing governments. Indonesia has made major progress but has a struggle to implement its ambitious reforms to decentralize and give more voice to the people. Burma remains a challenge to the international community in its refusal to build pluralist democratic institutions to replace rule by military Junta.

The challenges of building democracy in weak states have become more pronounced in some parts of the **Pacific**, especially in Melanesia. Where the state is able to play little or no role in the delivery of services and may even be unable to guarantee human security, it is not valued by its citizens. Formal institutions at national level can become little more than a piggybank for individual power holders,

or at best for the particular communities from which they spring. The real choice is often not between competing policy approaches but between the relative competence and honesty of different leaders in implementing basic development and service delivery – or between the ability of different leaders to deliver for their own individual communities at the expense of others. The design of structures of government that can deliver services at a sustainable cost to the national budget, the relationships between the centre and the community, and the relationships between what are too often counterposed as ‘democratic’ and ‘traditional’ approaches to government, are all not yet fully understood.

In the **former communist world**, there are all shades of progress towards sustainable democracy, from the successful transitions made by the Central European and Baltic states, to the more varied progress in the Balkans, the hopes for a fast pace of reform in Georgia and Ukraine, the very mixed picture in Russia, and varying degrees of autocracy in much of the CIS. Disenchantment with politics comes fast in much of the post communist world, where democracy is often associated with generalised corruption, social injustice and steep falls in living standards of large sections of the population. Women have often been among the losers, with very low levels of political representation.

Despite problems in building and sustaining democracy, there seems in many parts of the world to be increasing commitment by political elites as well as pressure from civil society to work at improving the functioning of democracy - to adapt institutions and electoral processes so as to give a more voice to the underrepresented, to strengthen the rule of law, improve transparency and limit the role of money in politics. The enormous challenges involved in rebuilding functioning states from above and outside, as in Afghanistan and more recently in Iraq, have absorbed much of the energy and resources of the international community, but have also alerted public opinion as never before to the complexities of building democracy - problems of security, legitimacy, local ownership, the interplay of cultural, religious and democratic values, the importance of the “process” of decision making as well as design of political institutions, the need also for a long term perspective. Democracy assistance is not necessarily adapted to support such processes.

Participatory development and democratic governance are increasingly recognised as key factors of an enabling environment for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Democracy assistance in the broader context of development cooperation has thus become commonplace, though most frequently focused on the performance of public institutions (“governance”) and on anti-corruption strategies, rather than on improving the mechanics of the political system itself. Local ownership is frequently emphasised as a principle of development cooperation, but this tends to stop at dialogue with the beneficiary government and maybe a few NGOs. It is still rare that donors urge their partner governments to engage full consultation of their parliament on the political issues of development, which could otherwise serve to strengthen the legitimacy of political processes in the newer democracies.

3. Trust in Representative Democracy and Citizens’ Participation

We will address the crisis of representative democracy and citizens’ participation from two complementary angles: (a) people’s perceptions and (b) voter turnout. To analyse trust in political institutions we will make use of the data of the Global Barometer Surveys Network³, whereas the analysis on participation will focus on

³ The Global Barometer Surveys Network is a scholarly collaboration of social scientists that addresses the task of finding out what people are thinking and doing by conducting

voter turnout, on the basis of IDEA's database and experience in monitoring voter turnout global data (reference to IDEA's voter turnout publication).

3.1. The Issue of Trust

3.1.1. Limited Trust in Political Institutions

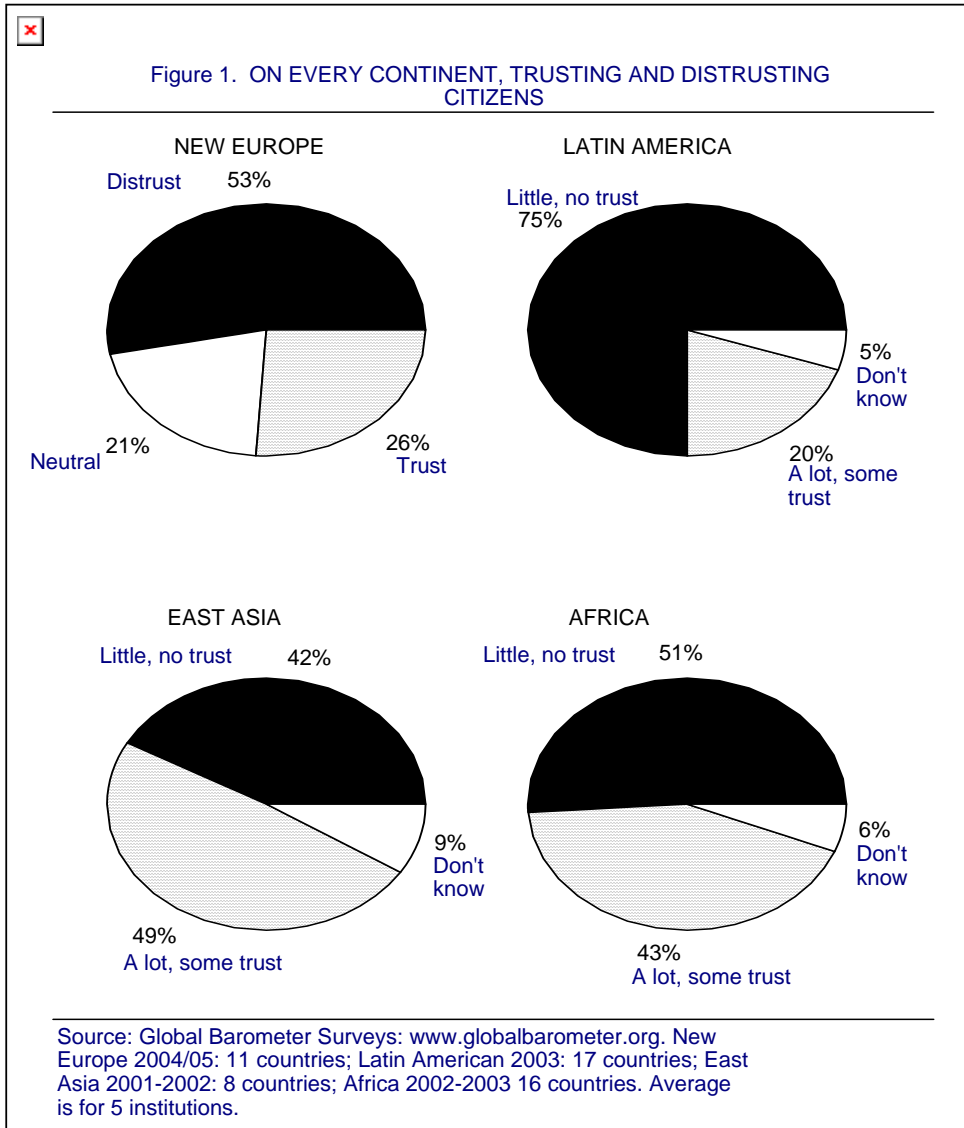
Trust is of fundamental importance for governance, that is, the process by which government policies are carried out through the cooperation of citizens with public officials. While implementing popular decisions is easy, leaders need the governance capital that trust provides in order to carry out unpopular decisions. If major political institutions are deemed trustworthy, citizens are more likely to cooperate with unpopular decisions necessary for the long-term benefit of a society. If institutions are distrusted, citizens may refuse to cooperate or ignore laws and regulations, and the effectiveness of government is thereby reduced.

During their term of office, political leaders often become unpopular because of their own behaviour or a because of unsuccessful efforts to deal with such issues as the economy or rising crime. In a democratic system, a low level of popularity can lead to defeat at a general election and authoritarian leaders can be deposed abruptly too. When leaders are unpopular, trust in political institutions provides a reservoir of political support. Furthermore, the rejection of an elected incumbent does not automatically lead to rejection of the institutions of democratic governance. Finally, while electoral demands for prosperity cannot guarantee an economic boom, a high level of popular trust can make governance work better by encouraging cooperation between governors and governed.

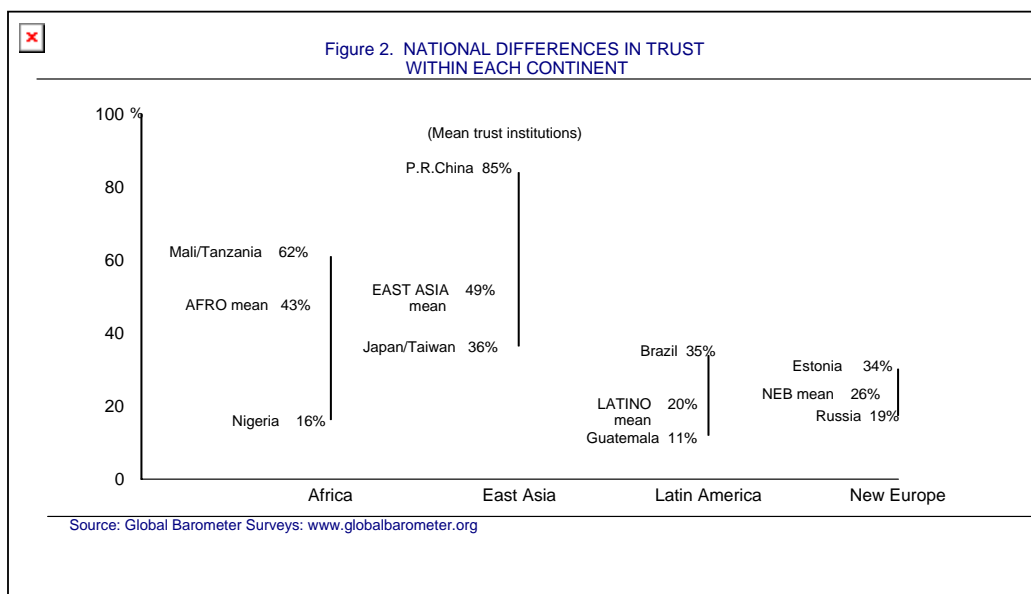
Trust in political institutions is thus particularly appropriate to address through surveys of public opinion. Every Global Barometer survey includes a battery of questions about trust both in key representative institutions (parliament, political parties) and in key institutions that maintain the state's authority (the army, police and courts). Since interviews are conducted in more than three dozen languages, the exact wording of questions must vary between continents but the meaning is common. The replies show:

On every continent, trusting and distrusting citizens. In societies in transformation, political institutions have not (or have not yet) secured the trust of a majority of citizens. The degree of trust and distrust differs across continents. In East Asia almost half the evaluations of five major political institutions register a lot or some trust and in Africa more than two in five responses are positive. However, the pie charts in Figure 1 likewise show that on each continent about half withhold trust from political institutions. The situation is less favourable in the post-Communist countries of Europe and in Latin America. Clear majorities register distrust in political institutions there. Yet the picture is not totally negative, for at least a fifth of responses in each of these continents express positive trust. In addition, 21 percent are sceptical about political institutions, choosing the neutral midpoint between trust and distrust in the seven-point NEB scale.

representative sample surveys in more than 50 societies in transition in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America (www.globalbarometer.org).



Substantial national differences. Continental averages of trust mask substantial differences between countries within each continent. Global Barometer surveys demonstrate that in every society public opinion is not homogeneous, as political culture theory postulates. The higher the average level of trust, the bigger the distance between countries (see Figure 2 and, for details, Appendix Table 1). For example, among 15 African countries, trust averages as high as 62 percent in Tanzania, where a largely rural population has long experienced the stable rule of a dominant party. Yet in Nigeria, whereas a more urbanized population has endured a turbulent history of repeated military interventions into politics, only 16 percent say they trust political institutions. The range in Asia is similarly great, because an extraordinary 85 percent of respondents in the People's Republic of China report trusting their institutions and in three other Asian countries more than half register trust. However, the average level of trust falls to 36 percent in Japan and in Taiwan.



Across half of Europe, one legacy of Communist rule is widespread distrust of political institutions. In Russia and Bulgaria on average only one in five trusts political institutions. Trust in institutions is least low in Estonia and Hungary, where an average of one in three show some trust. In Latin America too, countries differ only in the degree to which the majority of citizens are distrustful. Guatemala has the distinction of registering the lowest average level of trust, 11 percent. Brazil has the relatively highest level of trust, 35 percent.

Big differences between political institutions in trust. In every country on every continent the degree of trust shown specific political institutions varies. These differences are evident within as well as between countries (Table 1; and Annex A for details). Across continents the army, the institution with the least claim to be democratic, ranks first or second. This is true not only in post-Communist countries and in Asia, where the army has usually remained politically neutral, but also in Africa and Latin America, where military rule has frequently occurred. Even in countries where the army has been in power and where the overall level of trust in institutions is low, such as Argentina and Nigeria, the army is nonetheless less distrusted than civilian institutions.

Table 1: Representative Institutions Least Trusted Everywhere

	Afro	Asia	Eur	Latino
	(% trusting)			
Army	53%	65	45	26
Courts	47%	56	28	20
Police	45%	53	33	29
Parliament	42%	43	14	16
Parties	46% (*)	35	10	11

*In Africa, the ruling party

Source: Global Barometer surveys: www.globalbarometer.org

Trust in institutions exercising the state's authority is further evidenced by the police usually being second in the degree of trust on each continent, and first in Latin America. Even though Communist regimes were often described as "police" states, because coercion was the prerogative of special interior ministry and ruling party personnel, the police register the relatively highest level of trust. The courts rank relatively high in popular trust too. However, in Europe and Latin America the absolute level of trust is a third or less, indicating that in societies in transition, the courts have yet to establish a reputation of being independent of the governing powers and free of corruption.

Even though competitive elections are held in Global Barometer countries, representative institutions consistently rank lowest in trust. In nine of the 11 new Europe countries, nine-tenths of citizens withhold trust from their political parties. Similarly, only 14 percent of new Europeans express trust in their popularly elected Parliament. Hungary is the only country in which as many as one-sixth express confidence in both parliament and parties. Although Latin Americans have not been subject to the intense pressure of Communist Party mobilization, they too distrust both parties and parliament. The "highest" (*sic*) level of trust in representative institutions is found in Brazil and Uruguay, yet only one in four trusts parliament there and one in six trusts parties.

Even if they are not chosen in free and fair elections, African leaders often create a party apparatus to mobilize support and channel patronage. Hence, the Afrobarometer asks separately about trust in the ruling party and in the opposition parties. The answers show relatively high trust in the ruling party, averaging 46 percent, and relatively low trust in opposition parties, averaging 23 percent. There are wide variations in trust for the ruling party and in Parliament. For example, 69 percent of Tanzanians say they trust Parliament, as against only 11 percent of Nigerians. In Asia trust in representative institutions is on average greater, but variations are extreme. Although Japan is the oldest democracy covered by the East Asia Barometer, only 13 percent trust Parliament and 9 percent trust parties that are divided into factions and spend lavishly in competing for votes. In the People's Republic of China, trust appears abnormally high: 94 percent say that they trust the party, an answer that may reflect prudence as much as positive qualities of party officials at the grass roots.

While all societies require individuals to trust some social relations, the radius of trust differs radically. In an established democracy, the radius can extend from the home to national political institutions. However, the radius is usually much shorter in authoritarian regimes, because people develop strong face-to-face ties to insulate themselves from oppressive state institutions. In addition, people need strong face-to-face ties in order to cope with the shocks and stresses of change. This can produce an "hour-glass" society in which ordinary people trust informal face-to-face networks while distrusting political institutions. This is the case in post-Communist societies, for the New Europe Barometer found that 70 percent trust most people they know, while only 41 percent trust most people in their society, and just 26 percent trust major political institutions.

3.1.2. What Explains Differences in Trust?

Just as free elections reveal differences of opinion about who should govern, so in every country surveyed, there are major differences between citizens about trust in

political institutions. In the average Asian and African country, from two-fifths to half the people interviewed express trust in political institutions, while the other portion do not. Moreover, there are differences of degree in the extent of trust or distrust. The New Europe Barometer finds that one-fifth of post-Communist citizens are neutral or sceptical about rather than actively trustful or distrustful of institutions and those expressing extreme distrust on the seven-point scale are outnumbered by those who are a little or somewhat distrusting.

Many theories are put forward to explain why people differ in their evaluation of major political institutions. These include social differences between young and old or between men and women; economic differences between those who see themselves or their country as better or worse off financially; differences in political performance, such as the level of corruption in government; and cultural differences distinguishing Chinese from Japanese or Russians from Hungarians.

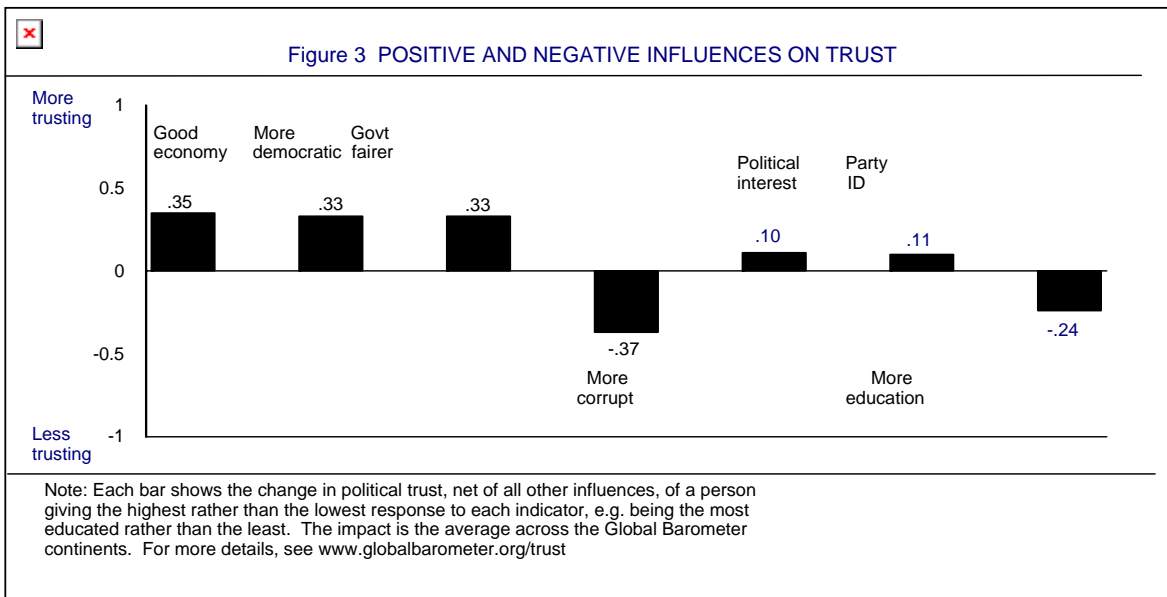
Contrasting theories about why people differ in trust have practical implications. Insofar as generational differences between young and old are the chief determinant, there is little that today's governors can do to prompt an increase in political trust. Only the gradual turnover of generations could alter the trust in political institutions. But insofar as economic conditions are influential, then governors can try to "buy" trust by promoting a rising standard of living. Insofar as political performance influences trust, governors can earn more trust by rooting out corruption in the political institutions for which they are responsible.

Before prescribing what needs to be done, we must determine which of the competing explanations of trust is best supported by the systematic statistical analysis of evidence. Many explanations of why individuals in countries as different as Chile, China or the Czech Republic trust or distrust political institutions are stated as universal propositions about the motivation of people everywhere, for example, 'It's the economy, stupid'. The multi-continental scope of Global Barometer Surveys provides evidence specially suited for testing the validity of such generalizations by pooling surveys from all countries in a continent to identify influences and comparing the results to ascertain similarities or differences between continents.

Since many citizens have limited knowledge of politics, this implies that political trust or distrust is not a reflection of specific characteristics of courts or of MPs but reflects a generalized attitude toward political institutions as a whole. Factor analysis statistics confirm that this is the case. Individuals have an underlying predisposition to be more or less trusting of all political institutions. Even though the level of trust may differ from one institution to another, an African who trusts the police is more inclined to trust parliament, and a Latin American who distrusts the courts is more inclined to distrust political parties. Therefore, the answers that each individual gives about trust are combined into a single measure of trust, the average of their responses about trust in the army, police, courts, parliament and political parties.

Even though explanations of trust have different theoretical rationales, they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, we use multiple regression analysis to determine how strong each social, economic, political and cultural influence is after controlling for the effect of other influences. Given the wealth of social structure, economic and political measures in each GBS questionnaire, initially analysis was undertaken with two dozen potential influences on trust. As is invariably the case, statistical analysis found that many potential influences in fact were unimportant. Therefore, regressions were re-run with only those influences that appeared substantial on several continents.

The results of multivariate statistical analysis are robust, explaining 38 percent of the variation in the extent to which individuals do or do not trust their political institutions in East Asia, 21 percent in Africa, 19 percent in Europe and 12 percent in Latin America. Analyzing influences across four continents identifies many common patterns independent of national context. Figure 3 shows the seven influences that across continents have the biggest impact on political trust, whether positive or negative.



What government does have the biggest impact on trust? While the point may seem obvious, it is often overlooked. Governors find it easier to blame the world economy or foreigners for citizens distrusting them than to accept that distrust is their own fault. Citizens who see the government treating people like themselves fairly and equally will have more trust in political institutions than those who think it unfair. Net of all other influences, on a four-point scale the effect of seeing government as very fair boosts trust by a third of a point, and the impact is consistent across continents. Treating people fairly can be done by the professional bureaucracy of an authoritarian regime. However, an authoritarian regime is less likely to be trusted, and citizens who see their government as democratic are likely to trust it. Thus, among citizens who see their government as both fair and democratic, trust is two-thirds of a point higher.

A government that abuses its authority has a big negative impact on trust. Corruption at the national level can lead to a waste of scarce resources and the conspicuous enrichment of a narrow political elite. At the local level, corruption can take the form of officials extracting money from poor people for doing what public officials ought to do anyway. Thus, the trust a government gains by being perceived as democratic will be lost if it is also perceived as corrupt. The negative impact reduces trust by more than two-thirds of a point if a person not only sees corruption as widespread but also views government as treating people like themselves unfairly.

Economic conditions exert a big impact on trust in political institution too. The state of the national economy rather than individual circumstances is the feature of the economy that is important. If individuals view the national economy positively, then on a four-point scale their level of trust rises by more than one-third of a point. Whether or not its actions are a major cause of prosperity, government gets the credit or the blame

for the national economy. Many factors outside the control of government can produce a sense of economic progress, for example, a boom in oil prices benefits the Russian economy whatever its governors do. Likewise, a fall in world commodity prices hurts African economies.

In established democracies, political interest and education are expected to encourage positive attitudes toward political involvement. However, in societies in transition this is only half true. Those who are interested in politics and identify with a political party are more likely to trust political institutions. But insofar as a government is untrustworthy, then the more you understand what is going on politically, the less you will trust it. Thus, in transition societies educated citizens tend to be less trustful of political institutions. A greater knowledge of how a country ought to be governed makes educated people more aware of the gap between ideals, including those enshrined in their national constitution, and how governors actually use and abuse political institutions. This implies that political involvement is less likely to reflect the civic virtues of an ideal democracy and more likely to be due to individuals calculating that party ties and being in the know politically are useful ways to advance their material interests and career.

An advantage of identifying common patterns of trust is that the regression analysis simultaneously identifies exceptions to the rule, including countries where political conditions cause citizens to differ to a degree from the overall pattern outlined above⁴. The citizens of the People's Republic of China deviate most from other East Asian citizens. Chinese trust in political institutions is two-thirds of a point higher than would be expected, a boost big enough to offset the negative effect arising from the perception of the government as corrupt. One possible explanation for Chinese distinctiveness is political. The starting point by which Chinese evaluate their government may not be an idealized democracy but the repression and fear of the Cultural Revolution. Today's government in Beijing is thus gaining political trust by liberalizing institutions by comparison with a totalitarian past. The past has also created a positive economic legacy. Although China is poor in absolute terms, during the past decade the economy has grown at the extraordinary rate of 9 percent a year. Although the countries included in the Latinobarometro differ in many respects, national context has less impact on trust. Differences in trust among Mexicans and among Argentineans reflect individual circumstances that also affect people throughout the continent. The impact of context in Brazil, the boost of one-quarter of a point on the trust measure, is less than half the impact of national context in China.

In Africa and Europe, national exceptionalism depresses trust in political institutions. Nigeria's government is not only distrusted in the absolute sense but has political institutions more distrusted than would be the case if Nigerians saw their political system as other Africans do. The effect of national context may be due to ethnic minorities feeling that the federal government does not care about them or suspicions that popularly elected new leaders are just as corrupt as the soldiers they have succeeded. Fuelled by economic recovery, Russians show more positive attitudes toward their conditions but this does not boost political trust. Russians whose attitudes

⁴ National exceptions were identified by iteratively coding several major countries on each continent as dummy variables in order to see whether their national context, net of the other influences identified in Figure 3, had a substantial impact on trust. The four countries discussed above are the ones that showed the biggest impact on their continent.

are otherwise the same as those of citizens of Central and Eastern Europe are less trusting.

Many of the attitudes that increase trust are cumulative. People who see their government treating people fairly, being democratic and associated with economic success are, net of all other influences, likely to be a full point higher in trust in political institutions than citizens who view their country negatively on all three counts. But in some instances influences tend to push in opposite directions. If people view the economy as successful but regard their government as corrupt, then corruption cancels out the gain in trust generated by economic success.

3.1.3. Implications for Governance

The Global Barometer Surveys diagnosis of the causes of distrust also highlights ways in which governors could act to increase trust. Since many of the causes of distrust are due to actions of governors, prescriptions for change are within their responsibility. The priority for increasing trust in political institutions is a change in the behaviour of government officials.

Promoting the rule of law and bureaucratic fairness is the single biggest step that governors could take to increase trust. The more individuals perceive their government as corrupt and unfair, the less likely they are to trust its institutions. Even though public officials may argue that corrupt practices are traditional, that does not make them any more acceptable to ordinary citizens who are vulnerable to exploitation by unfair officials. Transparency International not only assesses the extent to which national political systems are corrupt; it also prescribes steps that can be taken to reduce corruption (www.transparency.org). In addition to abstaining from corruption, officials in societies in transformation need more incentives and training to be bureaucrats, that is, public officials who exercise their powers impersonally and fairly according to the rules.

Improving democratic practices will also increase trust. While the great majority of countries covered in Barometer surveys hold elections, this is not sufficient to make government trustworthy. Where free elections are held, if political parties are led by cliques that blatantly ignore public opinion, few people will want to identify with a political party. While an elected government can claim legitimacy, if it wins because it is seen as the lesser evil and politicians use office to enrich themselves, this will breed distrust. In new democracies the *sine qua non* for trustworthy government is that elected representatives should be accountable to the courts. If this does not happen, laws on campaign finance and civil society generally will not be enforced and representative institutions may be viewed with suspicion.

Where government is associated with economic growth, there is more trust in political institutions, because growth implies governmental effectiveness. In a single term of office the government of a developing country cannot deliver a high standard of living, but it can achieve economic growth. This not only encourages citizens to be more optimistic about the future but also to be more trusting of political institutions here and now. The example of China demonstrates that it is the speed of economic growth rather than the absolute standard of living that promotes greater political trust. Since the way in which individuals evaluate the national economy is more important for trust than the economic circumstances of individual households this helps the government, since even those who do not benefit directly from growth will still be positively influenced by macro-economic improvement.

Whether an increase in public education has a positive effect on trust depends on the performance of government. Where political institutions are distrusted with good cause, then there will be a boomerang effect from education. It will increase distrust. Given the very strong desire of young people in societies in transformation to get more education, this will produce pressures on politicians to make their institutions more trustworthy or face the consequences of political alienation and an educated demand for structural change in the regime.

The bad news for distrusted governors is also the good news for political reformers. Political distrust is not due to shortcomings of individuals, such as a lack of education, or to a national political culture. High levels of political distrust reflect low levels of political and economic performance by governors. Many of the measures required to increase political trust are within the hands of governors: improving adherence to the rule of law and reducing high-level and low-level corruption; making officials conform to bureaucratic principles of fairness in treating citizens; improving the responsiveness of central democratic institutions such as parties and parliament; and promoting economic growth. In short, good government makes for trust and bad government makes for distrust.

3.2. Participation and Turnout

3.2.1. The Practical Relevance of Knowledge and Tools on Voter Turnout

One practical element of IDEA's mission is a response to the demand for greater understanding by legislators, electoral management bodies, political commentators and stakeholders in reform debate of the deeper factors affecting electoral participation. A basic element of this is the assembly and dissemination of data relating to turnout worldwide in order that debate and analysis has a broad basis in fact, the principle which underlies the creation of the IDEA voter turnout database and global turnout report⁵ and a regional follow-up for Western Europe⁶.

Much of the detailed study of participation has taken place in established democracies. Given the availability of data, this constraint is understandable. It may even be inevitable for some detailed work: Mark Franklin's recent analysis⁷ requires data covering the span of a person's membership of the electorate, roughly 50 years. Butler and Stokes suggested long ago⁸ that voting behaviour is broadly socialised in three elections. Franklin's analysis develops and confirms this, or something close to it, in 22 established democracies. The depth of data was required to show that most people establish their pattern of participation (or not) by the third election after they reach voting age, and that for each successive cohort of people reaching voting age this pattern is then not susceptible to change and will retain its effect until they leave the electorate through death. Measures taken now which remain in place for three elections or so will have an effect throughout the voting life of a new or relatively new elector.

But if analysis of participation questions is important for established democracies in developed countries, it is even more so for new and consolidating democracies in

⁵ IDEA, *Voter Turnout since 1945 – A Global Report* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2002).

⁶ IDEA, *Voter Turnout in Western Europe since 1945*, (Stockholm, International IDEA, 2004).

⁷ Mark Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸ David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

developing countries. Questions of institutional and electoral design may well be more open in these countries. The rate of population growth may be much higher, meaning that the socialisation or otherwise of new potential voters will have much larger long term effects. The acceptance and legitimacy of democracy itself may still not be as solid.

Are the same influences at work in established democracies and new democracies, or in developed countries and developing countries? For example, in developed countries, a higher proportion of educated people turn out, although this does not imply that increasing the level of education will in itself boost turnout. In India, by contrast, Sandeep Shastri told the 2003 CSES conference that ‘there are those who vote and those who use the telephone’ – and the 2004 National Election Study⁹ confirmed that ‘the upper castes are increasingly turning away from the electoral arena, while more and more Dalits are firmly moving in this arena’. On the other hand, advantaged groups in Indonesia were more optimistic that their vote would make an impact¹⁰.

We may only be able to make best guesses as to what comparative knowledge may be transferable. With the appropriate health warnings, this will still give useful tools to political and institutional reformers – at least enabling them to ask questions rather than working in the dark or being even unaware of the kind of consequences that may result from different decisions. The design options they choose may have impacts that do not become apparent for years and may then take decades to undo.

3.2.2. *What Do We Currently Know About Factors Which Affect Participation Levels?*

First, there are **mechanical effects**. Improving physical access to polling stations has an effect. The presence of absentee voting may have an effect – although it may be masked by the tendency to introduce it in response to downward trends in turnout. Richard Rose¹¹ finds that rest day voting has made a significant difference in European countries since 1945 this is contested by Mark Franklin¹².

Second, there are **systemic and institutional design effects**. Electoral system choice matters: PR tends to be linked with higher turnout¹³. As Franklin notes, turnout tends to be higher in districts with closer results. This means that boundary delimitation methods also matter. Politicians have an understandable urge to design systems which keep their bottoms on their seats – look at the US House of Representatives – but there is a price to pay in terms of popular engagement in elections.

Mark Franklin also suggests that turnout is lower when the results of elections make little difference to the subsequent form of the executive. On the one hand, the Swiss grand coalition model has led to continuity of government over a long period whatever the results of individual elections. Looking at the US, the single example in his dataset, he also suggests that separation of powers has in itself an effect on turnout, because it makes the link between voting and the outcome of the election on the executive weaker. If this principle can be generalised, it raises important

⁹ CSDS, *How India Voted, preliminary findings of National Election Study* (Delhi: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2004).

¹⁰ TAF, *Democracy in Indonesia: A Survey of the Indonesian Electorate in 2003* (Jakarta: The Asia Foundation, 2003).

¹¹ Richard Rose, *Voter Turnout in the European Union Member Countries*, in IDEA, *Voter Turnout in Western Europe since 1945* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2004).

¹² See Mark Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹³ Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

questions. Does it imply that any country with a presidential system will find lower turnout levels an associated phenomenon, with possible consequences for legitimacy? Does it mean that the existence of compulsory voting, however weakly enforced, in much of Latin America is an important structural feature in maintaining the legitimacy of its democracies? Are there implications for the Philippines, Indonesia, or Georgia in democratic development and institution building?

The role of direct democracy instruments in institutional frameworks may also matter. The turnout in individual Swiss initiative votes is low, but it is said that a high proportion of the Swiss electorate participate in initiative votes taken together. Referendums have generally lower turnout than general elections worldwide, but there is more variation in turnout¹⁴. However, there are some referendums – for example those on Norwegian EU accession or the independence of Québec – where turnout has been higher than in the preceding general election. More intense campaigns lead to more political knowledge and more reliance on attitudes on issues, especially when cues from political leaders are mixed or unclear.

Third, there are **political effects**. Less people vote when an election is not seen as competitive (Franklin 2004). Canadian elections up to 2000 provide one example¹⁵. The different perception of party competition was an important factor in the 12% drop in turnout in the UK in 2001¹⁶. Those people who are going to vote are more likely to vote in elections where they think it matters, and more likely to stay at home when they think it is a foregone conclusion – either nationally or, in a majoritarian system, in their own area (Franklin 2004).

Party identification plays a role in keeping turnout up in 'less relevant' elections (Franklin 2004) - but it is itself on the decline. Again an illustration: the most recent report of the Swedish Election Studies Programme¹⁷ shows that the proportion of the Swedish electorate with strong party identification has fallen from 65% in 1968 to 40% in 2002. The fall is particularly marked among those who also have little interest in politics – from 29% to 14%. Nor is party identification necessarily higher in newer democracies: in Indonesia in 2003, approaching a major series of elections after fundamental institutional changes, 34% were prepared to express a party identification (TAF 2003).

When the political system is perceived as too fragmented, turnout drops (Franklin 2004). Some major parties or coalitions which give coherence to the system appear to be necessary. This has implications for institutional and electoral system design, especially considered alongside factors such as the desirability of inclusion of all groups in an elected legislature in transition, in particular in post-conflict transition. It opens the question of how far it is desirable to see the institutions adopted during transition as themselves transitional – a practice which may run counter to Rein Taagepera's advice¹⁸ that if rules are continuously altered, no stable electoral system can emerge in which parties and voters know how to respond to system incentives. In effect, advice not to keep pulling up the plant by the roots to see if it is growing.

¹⁴ Larry LeDuc, *The Politics of Direct Democracy* (Peterborough: Ontario Broadview Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Jon Pammett and Larry LeDuc, *Explaining the Turnout Decline in Canadian Federal Elections: A New Survey of Non-Voters* (Ottawa: Elections Canada, 2003).

¹⁶ Harold Clarke, David Sanders, Marianne Stewart and Paul Whiteley, *Political Choice in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Sören Holmberg and Henrik Oscarsson, *Swedish Voting Behaviour* (Göteborg University: Swedish Election Studies Programme, Sweden, 2004).

¹⁸ Rein Taagepera, *Designing Electoral Rules and Waiting for an Electoral System to Evolve*, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *The Architecture of Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Mark Franklin does not find that alienation, or general trust in government, are factors that affect turnout. However, Richard Rose¹⁹ found that trust in governing parties, and trust in governments more generally, was related to turnout at the 2004 European Parliament elections. Where governing parties fared badly, turnout was lower. This raises several questions: Is this a one-off occurrence? Or is the inclusion in Rose's analysis of 12 EU member countries outside the Franklin dataset an indication of a substantive difference in the way the newer democracies work in relation to questions of trust? Or does it demonstrate that different factors may apply to turnout in second order elections, including not only European Parliament elections but regional and local elections – a huge area of discussion in which very little work exists?

Fourth, there are **demographic effects** – and they are clearly very long term. The gender balance of the electorate matters. Pippa Norris indicates that the difference in turnout between men and women has shrunk since 1945, with the turnout of women matching or slightly exceeding that of men²⁰. The positive effect of female enfranchisement is confirmed by Franklin (2004), showing again that it is an effect that takes perhaps nine elections to fully work through.

Voting rates among younger people are currently lower. Even though they may increase with age and as young people join more settled communities, they are set to remain lower. Turnout will continue to fall while people who are more likely to vote die off, and people less likely to vote replace them. This effect is bigger when population is increasing – which suggests more profound implications in many newer democracies in the developing world.

The widespread introduction of votes at 18 has diminished turnout: Franklin describes it (Franklin 2004) as “a well-intentioned decision with the unanticipated consequence of giving rise to a lifetime of disenfranchisement for many of the intended beneficiaries.” It is however clearly not practical politics to reverse this. Would lowering the voting age further enable schools to be agencies of democracy education and engagement, as Franklin suggests, or would it make things even worse? And is there now a political vicious circle in which some or all parties respond disproportionately to a ‘grey’ political agenda and will therefore resist changes that would rebalance electoral participation to their possible disadvantage?

How does the socialisation of people into voting work? What makes young people become habitual voters? It is not as if those who do not vote participate in other ways: those who engage in other kinds of participatory activity are also those who vote²¹. However, the story of interest in politics is not all gloom. It appears paradoxical that interest in politics in Sweden has increased since 1968 even though turnout has fallen over the same period²². The explanation is a big increase in the number of thoughtful independent people over the period, but also a big increase in the number of uninterested, non-partisan people – both of which groups one may speculate are made up of younger rather than older people. It may be that the biggest challenge in engaging young people switched out of voting in the habit forming years is that of engaging the young, urban, unemployed and unqualified ‘underclass’ who are switched out of society generally. An example of the

¹⁹ Richard Rose, *Europe Expands, Turnout Falls*, in IDEA, *Voter Turnout in Western Europe since 1945* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2004).

²⁰ Pippa Norris, *Women's Power at the Ballot Box*, in IDEA, *Voter Turnout since 1945 – A Global Report* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2002).

²¹ Pippa Norris, *Democratic Phoenix* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²² Sören Holmberg and Henrik Oscarsson, *Swedish Voting Behaviour* (Göteborg University: Swedish Election Studies Programme, 2004).

identification of this kind of non-voting group is found for the Republic of Ireland in Lyons and Sinnott²³.

3.2.3. *The role of Voter Education*

What knowledge or skills are needed to engage? Is political knowledge now gained differently from the past, with the proliferation of media channels on which news can be present from 24 hours a day to never, and with the almost instant access to information provided through the Internet? What indeed is now an effective store of political knowledge that enables informed decision making?

The problem is illustrated by the wide range of highly praised voter education undertaken by for example Elections Canada or IFE in Mexico – but Canadian or Mexican turnout still goes down. It is of course possible that the falls would have been even greater without it! If attitudes to participation are formed in one's first three elections, is any democracy education not aimed specifically at young people a waste of time, or even just not a cost effective use of budgets? There is lots of talk, and a significant amount of activity, in the field of democracy curricula and education civics – but much of it appears to have very limited impact. There does not yet appear to be any basis to understand what may be effective and what not effective, with a consequent danger of the spending of vast amounts of money to no purpose.

How important is turnout anyway? Turnout is a useful proxy for legitimacy, used as such by media and commentators as well as in academia and thus an inescapable part of real world politics. But we should not forget that it is only a proxy. The real underlying issue is the legitimacy and credibility of democratic government.

4. Popular Participation, Democracy and Conflict Management

The *Otpor!* Revolution in Serbia in 2000, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003-2004, and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in November 2004 raised anew the role of large-scale demonstrations – an outpouring of public participation – in the process of transition to democracy. Many analysts of democratization have observed the role of a “popular upsurge” as a key turning point in the process of ending authoritarian rule. Can mass protests demanding an incumbent's ouster, together with new accountability, be the basis for launching and sustaining a democracy? In recent years, crowds on the streets in Lebanon, Togo Venezuela, or Hong Kong raise questions about the immediate and long-term impact that such mass public gatherings can have in demanding democracy. Sometimes, as in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, they produce regime change; in other places, such as Venezuela or Hong Kong, they fizzle out without producing change; in yet other places, such as Tiannamen Square in China in 1989, pro-democracy gatherings are crushed by the state as threats to national security.

At the same time, mass public action is not always pro-democracy, and there are rightly questions raised about the limits of direct participation by the masses in achieving long-term democratization or conflict management. Clearly mass outpourings have been pivotal moments in recent democratization processes, but at other times there is danger of conflict in such public confrontations. From mob justice to deadly ethnic riots to genocidal fratricide, there is every possibility that mass public action will not advance democracy but will instead inflame deep and dangerous social conflicts that provide the potential for mass action to turn into mass violence. When is mass, direct, public involvement “true” democracy, salutary to

²³ Pat Lyons and Richard Sinnott, Voter Turnout in 2002 and beyond, in Michael Gallagher, Michael Marsh and Paul Mitchell (eds.), *How Ireland Voted 2002* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

democratization and to conflict management, and when it is a dangerous form of potential social conflict?

There are no easy answers to this question. But the very fact that there are limits to and ambiguities about what constitutes healthy popular participation in politics does not undermine an essential premise of democratic practice: the right and benefits of the direct involvement of citizens in public affairs. In extraordinary times, such involvement may take the form of mass public protests like those that bring down dictators. But more regularly and frequently, democratic popular participation is seen in a wide variety of public policy arenas, in civil society organizations, and through community-level action. Public participation in this sense is not only a critical part of democracy – because such participation can yield social capital, or trust among citizens – but also an essential element in conflict management initiatives. Through participation mechanisms can deepen a peace process by incorporating a wider array of interests and individuals at various levels, from constitution-making exercises to community-level conciliation.

This section considers the theme of democratic public participation for conflict management. It begins with an evaluation of the conditions under which mass action is salutary for democracy and conflict management, and when it is injurious to democratic values and conflict-inducing. It explores successful public participation through civil society and issues of public policy (the official approaches of the state to addressing social issues). What principles, guidelines, and mechanisms for popular participation contribute to the twin goals of democracy building and conflict management?

4.1. Mass Action as Public Participation: Panacea or Perilous?

Today there is widespread interest in the phenomenon of mass social movements in terms of their potential contribution to democracy, and the role of mass action in conflict settings. In the last four decades, especially, there has been a widespread explosion of direct popular activism in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and more recently in the former Soviet states. As suggested above, there is no simple formula for when popular uprisings are helpful in promoting democracy or in pursuing conflict, and when they are potentially detrimental to these goals. Generally, such action is rightly seen as a sign of broad popular engagement in democracy. In Serbia, the *Otpor!* (Serbian for “resistance”) movement grew from a student-led anti-government group into a social movement that included local-level authorities, farmers, and trade unionists; eventually, by marching on Belgrade, they brought down the government of Slobodan Milosevic, a person widely seen as shouldering special responsibility for the Balkan wars of the 1990s and some of the crimes against humanity that occurred in them.

Otpor!, like many social movements before it, was celebrated because of its non-violent approach to resisting against the state. From the organization of Solidarity in Poland in 1980 at the Gdansk shipyard, to “People Power” in the Philippines in 1986, social movements demanding democracy have been critical to democratization in recent years.

4.1.1. Social Movements and Democratization

Likewise, the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine have been more recently celebrated by democracy observers as a new form of public bravery in opposition to the first wave of post-Soviet leaders in the newly independent states of for the former USSR, because they have taken a stand against corruption and the usurpation of power, against electoral fraud, against governments that have lead to the creation of “new oligarchs” whose rapid accumulation of wealth was unimaginable just a few years ago. Some, such as Freedom House analyst

Adrian Karatnycky, see the Orange revolution as new “winds of change” blowing across the former Soviet space; they popular revolt, he asserts, is both indicative of a new demand for democracy in formerly socialist countries and a “seismic” shift of geopolitics away from Russian and toward the West.²⁴ Protestors, wearing distinctive orange scarves and waving orange flags, camped for weeks in Kiev’s Independence Square demanding the affirmation of now-President Victor Yushchenko’s win at the ballot box in second-round presidential elections held in late December 2004. Eventually they prevailed. Observers around the world heralded the mass action as a triumph of 21st century democracy.

The phenomenon of social movements has been critical in the evolution of democracy, and these movements are widely seen as moments in time – sometimes lasting years, while other times being fleetingly brief – in which people turn to the streets to exercise their democratic right of direct participation. From the Civil Rights struggle in the United States in the mid-1960s, which brought new laws preventing racial discrimination, to the anti-nuclear protests of the 1980s in Europe, to anti-apartheid mass action that finally brought down apartheid in South Africa in the late 1980s, to the gay and lesbian rights protests of the 1990s and the anti-globalization protests of today, social movements arise to press demands for political change. Is this democracy? Clearly public participation is in some basic sense democratic, such that there are guides to social organization that are simply described as “*Doing Democracy*.”²⁵

The causes of human rights and environmental protection, especially, have been advanced in recent years by direct social action by broad social movements, sometimes to pressure the state and sometimes in direct opposition to state politics. In sum, modern social movements are often aimed at challenging the dominant paradigms in society, and in opposition to particular leaders, regimes, or policies. Charles Tilly, the eminent sociologist, observes that “Significant changes in social movements are, indeed, occurring in the 21st century. As compared with the 20th century, internationally organized networks of activists, international non-governmental organizations, and internationally visible targets such as multinational corporations and international financial institutions all figure more prominently in recent social movements, especially in richer and better connected parts of the world.”²⁶

The causes of recent social movements are widely debated as much as their effects. Some see the rise of such movements in modern frustrations that have led to a reawakening of cultural and ethnic identities (particularly after the decline of ideologies such as communism). Others see a role in mass communications: both broadcast communications which allow for mass mobilization and more recently in the Internet, which has given opportunity to easier mobilization and coordination of groups across borders. There is also an apparent diffusion of tactics and methods of organization in contemporary social movements, and since Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., a general commitment to non-violent forms of protest and, at times, civil disobedience. Struggles of indigenous groups against centuries of oppression, against poverty and deprivation, or those demanding social justice, political equality, or democratic elections are part and parcel of today’s political

²⁴ See Adrian Karatnycky, “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2005).

²⁵ See Bill Moyer, JoAnn McCallister, Mary Lou Finlay, and Steve Soifer, *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements* (Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2001).

²⁶ Charles Tilly, “Social Movements Enter the Twenty-first Century,” Conference on Contentious Politics and Economic Opportunity Structure, University of Crete, October 2003, p.3

landscape.²⁷ It is fundamentally clear that mass social movements are redefining concepts of direct participation in modern democracy.

4.1.2. *Social Movements as Mass Action: Is There a Dark Side?*

The romantic view of social movements demanding accountability, pursuing rights, and improving governance is a generally accepted one. At the same time, there is real appreciation that “people on the streets” is a form of social conflict, of contentious politics, and that such conflict can contention can go beyond “constructive” conflict that leads to positive outcomes (such as ending racial discrimination) and be “destructive” conflict. For example, an outpouring of nationalism or ethnic particularism by a social group can be constructive – pursuing group or collective rights – but it can also induce fears in the state (especially the police), minority or other groups, leading them to pursue a violent response. Is there a dark side to social movements that act as stimulants of conflict?

Some have seen in many instances of mass action such a dark side. That is, mass direct participation can sometimes go hideously awry, leading to destructive violent conflict. A common manifestation of this problem is overreaction to public outpourings by fearful or belligerent authorities unwilling to accept a challenge by protest groups, or through misperception about what is happening on the ground. The January 30, 1972 “Bloody Sunday” incident in Northern Ireland – the spark that set off 27 years of “Troubles” – is such an example; inexperienced British troops, sent to the province to bolster local police forces, fired on allegedly unarmed protestors.²⁸ The scenario of overreaction by state authorities to social protests is one that has been seen time and again. Indeed, most contemporary internal conflicts in recent years have an event that is somehow similar to Bloody Sunday in which clashes between protestors and police or the military have been a further catalyst for civil war.

Another type of concern with social movements is their potential to become what has been identified as another common type of destructive conflict: the deadly ethnic riot. That is, many divided societies around the world have seen a type of social violence in which public demonstration is met by counter-demonstration, or when the masses are incited to violence against enemies real or perceived. In a landmark study, scholar Donald Horowitz has described a deadly ethnic riot in stark terms that relate mass action and social movements to the underlying causes of conflict.

A deadly ethnic riot is an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership. So conceived, ethnic riots are synonymous with what are variously called ‘communal,’ ‘racial,’ ‘religious,’ ‘linguistic,’ or ‘tribal’ disturbances.’... Not surprisingly, therefore, riots are a frequent forerunner of secessionist warfare, of terrorism, and of several major forms of political change, including coups, martial law, and suspension of democratic liberties.²⁹

Horowitz notes, critically, the importance of mass participation: while there are those who organize for violence through mobilization of supporters and through espousing

²⁷ These topics are investigated more fully in Marco Guigni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, *How Social Movements Matter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

²⁸ For full analysis of this event, see the CAIN project at the Institute for Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity (INCORE) at <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/index.html>.

²⁹ Donald Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001): pp. 1, 12.

an understandable “code” of rhetoric to justify violence, mass participation is an essential element of such episodes that link outbreaks of violence to the deep origins of conflict in society. Organization without deep social sentiment of enmity won’t be successful. At the very far end of fears about mass violence in such conditions is genocide, such as that which engulfed Rwanda in April-June of 1994: in 100 days, some 800,000 lost their lives. One of the most disturbing findings of the causes and dynamics of the genocide was the mass participation in killing that took place.³⁰

4.2. Civil Society, Peacemaking and Public Policy

The findings on social movements above – that they generally contribute to democracy but that romanticism about them must be limited by severe caveats about the ways in which direct public participation can go horribly wrong – suggests that for sustainable democracy other forms of direct public participation are required.

In this respect, the potential role of electoral instruments of direct democracy should be noted – like referendums, citizens’ initiatives and recall votes. These are becoming more common, and imply a sort of irreversible effect: once introduced into the political system, it is almost impossible to abolish them because ‘taking away the people’s right to decide’ is a very powerful argument to overcome: and when

Eight Functions of Civil Society

1. Civil society limits state power.
2. Civil society supplements political parties by providing for representation of particular social interests.
3. Civil society helps foster democratic attributes of trust and tolerance, or “social capital.”
4. Civil society represents particular interests, especially of the poor and vulnerable.
5. Civil society provides avenues for direct public participation in policy formulation.
6. Civil society provides opportunities for new political leaders to emerge, gain in prominence, and prepare to assume official office through elections.
7. Civil society educates the public and the state on policy alternatives.
8. Civil society holds governmental authorities accountable.

neighbouring countries use instruments of electoral direct democracy, it can be easy to mobilise to introduce them too. The way in which these instruments can be used to complement representative democracy is not yet fully understood, and is an area for further analysis to which International IDEA can contribute. There is indeed a widespread perception that electoral direct democracy may still be viewed as something potentially contradictory to some basic principles of representative democracy, which inhibits consideration of how its instruments can be used constructively rather than destructively.

It is rightly romanticised for democracy because it is in associational life that the public can debate, learn about

their own interests and other interests, develop ties with others, and discover the elements of social unity. Today, civil society is often simply defined as “non-governmental organizations,” or happily stated as NGOs. But NGO is a very imprecise understanding of civil society. Everyone seems to appreciate that a pure charitable organization is an NGO, but what of the private sector, or religious organizations, or even organized criminal groups? The term civil society, and understanding of NGOs, needs to be more clear.

Much has been written on the critical connections between civil society, states, and democracy from a variety of ideological perspectives: pluralistic democracy sees civil

³⁰ For a summary evaluation of the perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide, see Chapter 5 of *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwandan Experience* (Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda); available at the Journal of Humanitarian Assistance, posted 14 April 1996, <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/nordic/book1/pb020.html>.

society as a critical component of interest representation and aggregation, emanating from a market economy, while Marxism views civil society as inherently constrained under capitalists modes of production.³¹ In more recent analysis, civil society is seen as essential to creating the social capital necessary for a state to be “strong,” that is to be able to govern effectively and to produce public goods such as essential services like education and health care. A strong civil society creates a strong state in which people trust in government and are more likely to comply with laws even if they don’t agree with the law or their direct interests are not served by a particular policy. Student movements, churches, professional associations, women’s groups, trade unions, trade associations, civic organizations, and the like give voice and opportunity for direct public participation and through citizens and civil society leaders.

The arguments about civil society and democracy are complicated in societies prone to or emerging from violent conflict. In divided societies such as these, civil society often reflects the underlying divisions between groups rather than serving as a conciliatory factor in promoting democracy and peace. Indeed, religious leaders are often key actors in providing for justification for violence. Scholar David Little observes that modern religious nationalism’s contribution to conflict, and to peace, is found in the interpretation of key tenets by religious leaders in terms of justifying inclusion and tolerance, and exclusion and conflict.³² Religion can be interpreted to provide injunction to conflict, and to peace.

The problem of “parallel” civil societies in societies torn by conflict has been seen as a contributor to conflict. While civil society is often (and rightly) associated with contributing to peace, separate civil societies that compete for legitimacy. For example, while religious leaders are often seen as key players in civil society and as social peacemakers,, at times religious leaders in divided societies have not served as social unifiers; indeed, through their interpretation of religious canons they have exacerbated conflict when they articulate the basis in religion for extreme, narrow nationalism in a multicultural society, leading to social discrimination or intolerance.

4.2.1. Civil Society and Peacemaking

If parallel or separate civil societies contribute to social tensions, then it follows that integrated civil society contributes to peacemaking. In diverse, multicultural societies organizations that cross-cut lines of identity, such as interfaith organizations, are best positioned to contribute to peace through democratic participation. Ashutosh Varshney, for instance, demonstrates that Indian neighborhood peace committees, consisting of Hindus and Muslims, played an important role in preventing ethnic tension from turning into violence. These committees “policed neighborhoods, killed rumors, provided information to the local administration, and facilitated communication between communities in times of tension.”³³ Finally, civic groups are important agents of socialization. If organized across ethnic borders, they promote norms and values of ethnic tolerance and cooperation. And a tolerant culture is arguably the best guarantor for a durable peace between ethnic groups.

Research on conflict management has come up with two important findings:

³¹ For an overview, see Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³² David Little, “Religious Nationalism and Human Rights,” in Gerard F. Powers, Drew Christiansen, SJ, and Robert Hennemeyer (eds.), *Peacemaking: Moral and Policy Challenges for a New World* (Washington, DC: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1994), pp. 84-95.

³³ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

- First, a dense network of formal associations and informal institutions connecting various social groups strengthens societies by providing an over-arching national identity that is inclusive, not exclusive. For example, if citizens can identify not only as Serbs, Pashtuns, Kurds, Abkhazs, or Hutus but also as union workers, parents, and members of certain neighborhoods, interests and grievances are not exclusively identified with and expressed through one's ethnic community. Social struggles might then be fought not for one's ethnic group but for all members of a particular socio-economic group irrespective of their identity in ethnic, or racial, or religious terms. In short, by crosscutting societal polarization, institutionalized cooperation between communal groups mitigates conflict.
- A second aspect of deepening moderation the existence of cooperative links between elites and representatives of multiethnic organizations. John Paul Lederach (1996; 1997) speaks in this regard about an "organic approach" to ethnic peace building.³⁴ Top-level negotiators have the greatest capacity to influence the peace building process, yet they are often unaware of specific problems that exist in certain regions. Moreover, without cooperation at the middle and grassroots levels, it will be difficult to implement peace accords, as officials and ethnic leaders at lower levels of the hierarchy are able to upset peace at the national level. Lederach insightfully writes that it is illusory that "the accomplishments at the highest levels will [automatically] will translate to, and move down through, the rest of the population."³⁵

4.2.2. Civil Society and Public Policy

One of the most critical questions regarding mass or direct participation in democracy through civil society is the effects of such activity on the policies of the states. These public policies are especially important in states prone to or recovering from violent conflict, because it has been seen that state policies can either work to exacerbate social tensions or to ameliorate them. Among are broad themes of public policy that are of critical importance in such divided societies are instruments to promote, monitor, and protect human rights, specific policies such as those that relate to language use, various levels of policy making, such as managing culturally diverse cities, and processes for making public decisions, such as consensus-based policy making.

Grievance over diversity issues such as religious, cultural, or language rights is a common and sometimes pivotal driver of conflict in deeply divided societies. With regard to language, for example, a debate rages over whether the state should encourage assimilation through the adoption of a single official language, or whether "language pluralism" is preferable. Similar debates occur over whether a democratic system necessarily demands a pluralistic approach or whether diversity is best accommodated by fostering unity. In an IDEA study of democratizing Indonesia in 2000, for example, three approaches were advocated to help promote religious pluralism: inter-religious dialogue processes, participatory activities among a wide range of diverse groups to foster trust, and developing a common national identity that explicitly embraces religious diversity as a core essence of being Indonesian.

³⁴ Lederach (1996) argues that three levels need to be involved to achieve ethnic reconciliation. At the top level, political and military leaders are involved in high-level negotiations to achieve settlements between rivalling ethnic groups. At the middle level, economic, religious, and humanitarian leaders organize problem solving workshops and peace committees, and provide training for conflict resolution. At the grassroots level, local leaders and officials organize neighbourhood committees and workshops for prejudice reduction.

³⁵ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997): 45.

The study concludes that “In a democratic nation, every group has an equal right to speak out and to associate. But there should be a constitutional guarantee that the foundations of the nation will not be modified by anyone or any one group in power.”

4.3. Pathways of Participation for Conflict Management

In deeply divided societies today, struggling with the balance between public participation, democracy, and conflict management, there is an appreciation that without some degree of direct engagement in democracy and conflict management processes, there is no “ownership.” That is, without public involvement, neither sustainable democracy nor sustainable peace is possible. Today’s democracies need to be deepened through stronger civil society that serves the functions necessary for meaningful public participation in policy making by states to occur. Likewise, the state can’t manage all social relations, so civil society itself has a direct role in mitigating conflict.

Among the lessons learned on how best to facilitate public participation in conflict management initiatives, two are particularly relevant:

- *A multi-tiered approach.* Multiple tracks at which top and mid-level leaders negotiate are essential to success. Public policies processes such set up bargaining institutions that allow problems such as stakes, issues, identity, and economics to be negotiated in a participatory way. A proliferation of opportunities for facilitated interaction was an essential component of South Africa’s transition from war to peace. At the same time, opportunities for interaction don’t guarantee that talks will progress. In Cyprus, peace is not yet at hand despite many opportunities in the last decade to establish multiple arenas for bargaining.
- *Community-level action.* The need for multiple tracks also suggests that elite-level negotiations need to be accompanied by local-level process for conflict mitigation. A multi-tiered approach is called for in which top-level bargaining bolsters the work of community-level mediators, and local level confidence reinforces the pressures for peace at the top.³⁶ This also raises the notion of “complimentarity” in peace processes, in which efforts at different levels of society reinforce each other.³⁷ While multi-tiered negotiation may introduce coordination problems among peacemakers, both elite-level and bottom-up approaches are inadequate alone.³⁸

5. Democratic Practice

Democratic practice refers to both formal and informal institutional arrangements for collective decision-making and a wide variety of deliberative decision-making processes that incorporate core values of democracy in efforts to build and sustain peace. The concept includes both traditionally conceived institutional arrangements of power sharing and process options aimed at creating and strengthening democratic values and behaviour and promoting positive outcomes related to human development and human security. In the 21st century, democracy must be able to

³⁶ See Gennady I. Chufrin and Harold H. Saunders, “A Public Peace Process,” *Negotiation Journal* (April 1993: 155-177).

³⁷ See David Bloomfield, *Peacemaking Strategies in Northern Ireland : Building Complementarity in Conflict Management Theory* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997).

³⁸ Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).

relate the values of human rights and participation to meeting the challenges of poverty, inequality, and the peaceful management of complex social relations.

The *practice* of democracy has become a universally accepted value, even in societies where social tensions limit its possibilities, where war and political violence make democracy difficult, where there are tough policy choices on balancing security and freedoms, and where the socio-economic conditions for the rapid introduction of democracy are not conducive to its quick consolidation. Arguing for the universality of democracy in practice in circumstances unfavourable to its success is a marked change from arguments that contend democracy must wait until certain favourable “preconditions” are achieved. As Amartya Sen has put forward:

Throughout the nineteenth century, theorists of democracy found it quite natural to discuss whether one country or another was ‘fit for democracy.’ This thinking changed only in the 20th century, with the recognition that the question itself was wrong: A country does not have to be deemed fit *for* democracy; rather, it has to become fit *through* democracy.³⁹

The universality of democracy applies in deeply divided societies as well, even in war-torn “failed states” in which state capacities are destroyed, where civil society is weakened, and where political violence and manipulation are paths-of-least resistance to securing territory and power. In internationally managed transitions in such failed-state environments (such as those in which the United Nations has exercised trusteeship-type authority), tight control over politics by the UN for a transitional period has been aimed at building democratic institutions to eventually allow for direct public participation in governance.

The end-goal of transitional administration in war-torn and failed state environments has, however, invariably been toward the creation of new institutions and frameworks that are themselves independently democratic, capable, and autonomous.⁴⁰

Democratic practice is basic approach to promoting peace in divided societies through democratization. A central tenet of the democratic practice concept is that political institutions and processes, to successfully contribute to peace, must advance to the very basic aims of governance: human development and human security. That is, to have value, democratic practice as a concept needs to go beyond a simple procedural notion of democracy to acknowledge and address head on the real concerns that democracy in deeply divided societies needs to deliver on essential developmental and security imperatives. Two essential arguments underlie the need to articulate more fully the possibilities of democratic practice contributing to peace. First, for democracy to flourish over time it should not be introduced or imposed by fundamentally undemocratic means. Second, progress toward democracy can be enhanced in myriad ways in divided societies even when national or transitional processes limit the functioning of a fully fledged, complete system of democracy at all levels of society; in transitional processes, at local levels, in interim ways, or through dialogue processes, practices based on the fundamental values of democracy can lay the foundation for a more extensive, meaningful and stable system to emerge over time.

³⁹ Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” *Journal of Democracy* 10 (3) (1999): 4; see also Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Chapter 6 “The Importance of Democracy” (New York: Anchor Books, 1999): pp. 149-159.

⁴⁰ On internationally administered transitions and democracy, see Simon Chesterman, *You the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004): Chapter 7, pp. 204-233.

5.1. Democracy and the Principle of Majority Rule

The association of democracy with competition and conflict is intrinsic in its common definition. From ancient theorists to the present, democracy has traditionally been defined as the realization in practice of two essential principles – *participation* of citizens at the ballot box and through direct involvement in social life, and *competition* of candidates in elections for votes with among those elected serving as representatives of the people in decision-making institutions. Ideal forms of democracy maximize these two principles in practice simultaneously, such that high levels of participation and high levels of competition yield the most democratic polities, or what the eminent theorist of democracy Robert Dahl has termed “polyarchy.”⁴¹ Democracy defined as competition to secure majority rule is an enduring concept in contemporary theory and practice, for good reason. This is true even though most systems with strong majoritarian features also feature institutions and practices that encourage compromise and consensus building; there are very few *pure* majoritarian systems in the world.⁴²

To be sure, in virtually every major world region there are myriad examples of ways in which democratic political competition has exacerbated underlying social tensions, impeding the realization of development goals and threatening human security. Elections, especially, as a principal form of democratic practice have been the precipitating event for an escalation of violent conflict in virtually every world region. Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, Haiti, Liberia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe are just a few 21st century examples of countries in which electoral processes, or the prospect of elections over the horizon, have sharply heightened social tensions and induced or exacerbated political violence.⁴³ Violence debilitates support for democracy by polarizing societies and undermining the social cohesion necessary for political compromise, and undermining the human security and human development imperatives that democracy must deliver to remain a legitimate answer to the real challenges of contemporary governance.⁴⁴

In so many societies today, where ethnic, religious, racial, or deep class divisions run deep, democratic competition does indeed inspire and inflame political violence. Violence is often a tool to wage political struggles: to exert power, rally supporters, destabilize opponents, or derail the prospect of elections altogether in an effort to gain total control of the machinery of government. The misfit of sharp democratic competition with goals of social peace in deeply divided societies has been recognized in modern experiences with democracy in ever-increasingly complex societies; in the 21st century, the concern about democracy’s ability to heighten tensions and conflict in society has only risen in poignancy in response to new diversity, globalisation, and the pursuit of sustainable development.

5.1.1. The Allure of Competitive Democracy

The rationale for democracy as an essentially majority-rule form of decision making remains compelling. Indeed, there is a good argument that the determination of

⁴¹ See the concept, classically articulated, in Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁴² Andrew Reynolds, for example, distinguishes between majoritarian systems and “qualified majoritarian” systems. See *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 1999:

⁴³ See Terrence Lyons, “Post Conflict Elections, War Termination, Democratization, and Demilitarizing Politics,” George Mason University Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution Working Paper 20 (February 2002); available at www.gmu/depts/icar/Work_Paper20.pdf.

⁴⁴ For a poignant empirical example, see Somini Sengupta, “Violence Jolts the Still Fragile Democracy in Nigeria,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2004.

collective decisions in any societies is maximized is most fair, and most just, under conditions of simple majority rule. In the view of eminent social contract theorists, majority-rule decision making is arguably the fairest way to make collective decisions for a very good reason. In *A Theory of Justice*, for example, John Rawls argues that under the “veil of ignorance” – the original condition in which a group of people come together to make collective decisions without knowledge of the preferences of all the others – ultimately majority rule will emerge as the democratic principle on which every rational person will eventually agree. Liberal democracy, conceived of in this way, is the outcome of simple reasoning. That is because for each individual, majority rule is the decision-making system that will maximize their opportunities to be in a winning coalition, and minimize the likelihood they will be among the losers on any given policy decision.

As long as democratic decisions benefit even the least well-off in society (an important assumption, especially in deeply divided societies), majority rule is an idealized way to determine basic issues of fairness and justice in a society. Under majority rule, each voter’s preference is weighted equally (that is, each voter has an equal chance of influencing the outcome). *The Encyclopedia of Democracy* succinctly captures the clear allure of majority rule as a “default” decision rule in democratic systems:

Majority rule treats all individuals as equals. The decision of a numerical majority thus carries the most weight; in contrast, accepting the decision of the minority would mean a relative devaluation of the vote of each member of the majority. Because majority rule respects the individual choices made by the majority of the citizenry, it implies a utilitarian theory of justice. If people vote according to their own perceived best interest, majority rule will result in policies that are perceived to benefit most people.

Majority rule presumes that all individuals are capable of understanding their own interests and that no single group has the monopoly on truth or political wisdom. Majority rule is therefore not compatible with claims to possess and enforce the singular truth about human nature, the good life, or the just society.⁴⁵

Majority rule may, in some instances, lead to moderate politics – just the kind of avoidance of extreme positions that deeply divided societies need. In theory, and indeed in the experience of highly developed, long-standing democracies such as the United Kingdom, France, or the United States, governments in majoritarian political systems – especially those with directly elected presidents – are arguably more moderate because in order to attain power political leaders have strong incentives to appeal to the “median” (or average) voter. Political parties will naturally gravitate toward the center, eschewing extremism and policies that alienate moderate voters.

5.1.2. Defects of Majoritarian Democracy

Majority-rule systems of democracy arguably have a variety of intrinsic defects even in those societies where there is a high degree of value consensus. Among these are the concerns classically outlined by Robert Dahl and other theorists over the years concerning policy “cycling” and the “impossibility” of stable coalitions. Another core defect involves the problem of intensely held preferences, in which strongly motivated losers will be unduly harmed. In addition to these concerns, there are at least four clear and well-substantiated arguments against the use of majority-rule

⁴⁵ Joel B. Grossman and Daniel M. Levin, “Majority Rule, Minority Rights,” in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Democracy* 3 (Washington, D.C. : Congressional Quarterly 1995): 788.

decision making in especially deeply divided societies that resonate in the scholarly literature and which are confirmed by studies that emanate from lessons learned in recent experience.

1. *Majority rule exacerbates ethnic politics and leads to permanent minorities.* Deeply divided societies lack the “cross-cutting cleavages” – a panoply of economic and vocational interests that cross-cut lines of identity such as ethnicity or religion – and thus voting occurs not on economic or interest criteria but instead on identity issues. Elections are an “ethnic census.” In situations where there is a clear identity-based majority (or stable coalition of minorities), there is a likelihood permanent exclusions of minorities.⁴⁶
2. *Given the absence of fundamental human rights, majority democracy heightens the vulnerability of social “out-groups.”* Divided societies often lack neutral security forces, or that feature private militias, that act to protect the rights of all citizens. Thus, the assumption of basic human rights required for majority rule to function effectively is absent; social groups that are at odds with the central state are thus more vulnerable under majority-rule institutions that otherwise.
3. *Majority rule undermines the need to resolve commitment problems and security dilemmas in post-war settings.* The features of divided societies or post-war settings in which the resolution of social disputes cannot be imposed on elements of societies that have the capacity to “spoil”; majority rule heightens commitment problems.
4. *Democratizing states are prone to social meltdown; majority rule approaches increase the likelihood that new social tensions will emerge in the course of democratization* as winners consolidate their control over the transitional process.

Particularly in societies like these that have experienced a period of violent conflict in civil wars and internal social strife, or are vulnerable to the imminent outbreak of such conflict as old tensions flare and new differences emerge, democratic competition seems fundamentally ill-suited to the goals of conflict prevention, management, resolution, and transformation.⁴⁷ Electoral politics especially – political campaigns for power, to be determined by voting at the ballot box – can lead to competitions for power that are fought as easily on the battlefield or streets than in the arenas of parliament.⁴⁸ Competitive politics defines, enhances, and sharpens differences in society in an effort to clarify the agendas of aspirants to political power.

5.1.3. *Still Alive and Well*

Is majoritarian democracy always conflict-inducing? While there are those who suggest that, in deeply divided societies, majority-rule decision making is invariably conflict inducing, critics also point out the efficiency and coalition-building gains that majority-rule democracy offers. Policy makers as well still cling to the view that there

⁴⁶ See the extensive argument against minority governments and narrow majoritarian governments (minimum winning coalitions) in divided societies, see Arend Lijphart, “Back to Democratic Basics: Who Really Practices Majority Rule?” in Axel Hadenius, ed. *Democracy's Victory and Crisis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 143-159. See also Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press): 649-50).

⁴⁷ For an overview, see Krishna Kumar, ed. *Post-conflict Elections, Democratization, and International Assistance* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner), 1999.

⁴⁸ For example, in a significant 1995 study Human Rights Watch argued that the most deadly civil wars of the early 1990s were precipitated by political entrepreneurs that inflamed social tensions as a route to maintain or gain political power. See Cynthia Brown and Farhad Karim, eds., *Playing the Communal Card: Communal Violence and Human Rights* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995).

are instances in which majority-rule procedures are just and fair. The principle of majority rule as the defining approach to democratic decision making is alive and well, even in its application to the most contentious issues in deeply divided societies.

For example, the use of referenda today to address even the most poignant decision for a society – whether to stay together or to separate through secession – are commonplace. In contested territory such as Serbia (Kosovo), Sudan (Southern Sudan), Morocco (Western Sahara), and Papua New Guinea (Bougainville), there is a reflexive reaction by policy makers to determine the will of the people in disputed territories by simple majority rule; in all of these divided societies, referenda are seen as the legitimate way to determine the will of the people on the most essential element of the social contract: sovereignty. That is, in these and other similar situations there is apparently broad acceptance that simple majority rule is a legitimate way to determine *the* question of politics: Who constitutes the “people?”

Thus there are – even in deeply divided societies – arguably conditions under which majority-rule systems may be appropriate for definitive resolution of social disputes, though the question of how should be a “majority” constituted remains open.

5.2. Democratic Practice: Principles and Characteristics, Elements and Features

Amartya Sen’s admonitions about the imperatives of democracy cited in the introduction are buttressed by the fact that, even in the most today’s difficult post-war environments, international policy makers agree that a transition to democracy in these deeply divided (and wounded) societies is the ultimate goal of the peace process. This is true of situations in which democracy emerges as a negotiated outcome in a peace process, and in those situations in which outside forces intervene and “impose” democracy.⁴⁹ Democracy’s utility in these and other conditions of deep conflict is, as Sen suggests, its *intrinsic value* in promoting political and social participation, its *instrumental value* assuring clean governance through accountability and responsibility, and the *constructive role* of democracy in the formation of collective social values that take into account the relationships between needs, rights, and duties for a given society.

Cultural differences, regional variation, acute poverty, nor the diversity of society inherently limits the contribution of democracy to fundamental human development and human security aims. Advocates of alternative approaches – such as the “control” model, a form of dominance⁵⁰ – have not made the case that such approaches to governance in divided societies are sustainable over time, or can through subsequent liberalization give way to a more democratic system. Likewise, arguments in favour of partition in divided societies run aground in the cold realities of international politics that in most instances (and with very well-defined exceptions) favours norms territorial integrity over self-determination (defined as a separate state for every aspirant

Democratic practice, as a core principle, has as its immediate and long-term imperatives of human rights protection – and the more recent concept of a state’s responsibility to protect by providing human security – democracy and conflict management as convergent, not divergent, paths to peace.
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⁴⁹ For evaluation of the former cases, see Ben Reilly, “Democratic Validation” in John Darby and Roger MacGinty, eds., *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence, and Peace Processes* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003): 174-183.

⁵⁰ The “control” model is closely associated with Ian Lustick’s analysis of ethnic Arabs within Israel. See *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel’s Control of a National Minority* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1980).

national group).⁵¹ Likewise, partition does not solve the problems of cooperation of deeply divided societies; it only rearranges the balance of minorities and majorities, as the protagonists in the Kosovo conflict clearly appreciate.⁵² The unpalatable (and unsustainable) option of control and the inherent barriers to and inadequacies of partition as solutions to conflict lead back to the practice of democracy as a route of essential conflict management. Indeed, many established democracies today emerged from a period of internal war.⁵³

5.2.1. Practice: Institutions and Processes

The institutional tradition above provides an essential baseline for understanding the principles and characteristics of democracy types and forms that can ameliorate and manage deep-rooted conflicts. Beyond institutions, there is an increasing concern as well about the processes by which democracy is introduced; for example, with constitutional review processes under way in so many deeply divided states, there has been a concerted effort to revisit the ways in which basic laws can be drafted in a more open, accessible way that involves the public in their creation. Constitution-making or review processes in Afghanistan, Fiji, Rwanda, and South Africa that have featured extensive public consultation are contrasted with those in Bosnia, Nigeria, or Iraq which have been generally insulated from public discourse (arguably to ill effect). As well, democracy building in divided societies faces a number of dilemmas that involve not just institutions, but civil society and public policy concerns at a broader level. For example, free speech is a basic human right but it has also been used to incite violence through “hate media.” What is the appropriate balance?

To broaden the analysis of democracy’s conflict-mitigating effects, a further elaboration of the concept of democratic practice can be useful. As described in the definition offered above, democratic practice involves both formal, institutional (i.e., rule-bound) processes and informal institutions (rules and norms). Democratic practice also addresses events as structured processes (such as major electoral events) and other processes of change such as the transformation of rebel forces into political parties, or the constitution-making. Democratic practice may also be applied as a concept to key governance challenges that relate to conflict mitigation, such as interim processes for monitoring human rights violations and redressing non-compliance. Reconciliation processes in post-war settings are also crucial to democratic practice, for without some reckoning with the past peaceful interaction in the future is unlikely to be sustained. For the purposes of this chapter, democratic practice is described in terms of principles, elements, characteristics and features.

- *Principles* are those values that guide practice; principles are values that guide appropriate action.
- *Characteristics* are those necessary and fundamental aspects of a practice that offer action-specific guidance for the principles.
- *Core elements and features* are strategies, approaches, methods, instruments, or mechanisms that are commonly found in institutions and processes of democracy in a given setting.

⁵¹ See the International Peace Academy Special Report “Competing Claims: Self-Determination, Security and the United Nations,” 2001.

⁵² See “Kosovo Final Status: Options and Cross-Border Requirements,” U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report No. 91, July 2002; and “The Lausanne Principle: Multiethnicity, Territory and the Future of Kosovo’s Serbs,” European Stability Initiative, June 7, 2004.

⁵³ See Nancy Bermeo, “What the Literature Says – and Doesn’t Say – About Postwar Democratization,” *Global Governance* 9 (2) (2003): 159-178.

5.2.2. Principles and Characteristics

Principles of democratic practice are the essential values that through their advancement establish the conditions for peace.

- The *protection of human rights and the provision of human security* is a, if not *the*, central element in democratic practice. In recent years, there has been somewhat of a misplaced divergence between those who have focused in divided societies on the relative importance of human rights as freedom from harm and freedom of action, those who have focused on democracy building in terms of institutional processes and elections, and those who focus on conflict management and resolution.⁵⁴

In many ways, these differences arguably are based on underlying core differences between justice and accountability and conflict management; often, the issue is most commonly seen in the operation of the principle of inclusion in conflict management processes, and whether those who have committed acts of violence deserve a place at the democracy and/or peace negotiations table. Democratic practices for conflict management do not necessarily and inherently need to trade off democratic accountability for peace, as a number of recent instances of reconciliation processes demonstrate.⁵⁵ As Jack Donnelly has argued, human rights help “civilize” democracy by giving meaning to the operation of democratic institutions in a way that does not allow for tyranny, be it through broad-based, majority, or minority rule.⁵⁶

- Democratic practice *strengthens the state and strengthens society* by helping facilitate mutually reinforcing relationships between public authorities and civil society. One of the key arguments against democracy in deeply divided societies is that social conflict weakens the state by reproducing the fragmented nature of society in political institutions. Likewise, democratic practices that empower civil society for advocacy or provide service delivery are also argued to weaken the state by promoting alternative sources of power that do not allow public authorities to develop capacities for governance.⁵⁷

A key principle of democratic practice is that the strengthening of state capacities and measures designed to empower civil society capacities and direct participation is not mutually exclusive. Democratic practice thus involves the simultaneous focus on formal process of democracy that yield capable state institutions and processes that encourage civil society empowerment through interest-group formation, activism, lobbying, and collective action. Precisely because deeply divided societies lack cross-cutting social relationships, and thus the social capital necessary for development success, democratic practice that focuses on strengthening the state and strengthening society are critically important.

⁵⁴ See Pauline Baker, “Conflict Resolution versus Democratic Governance: Divergent Paths to Peace?” in Chester A. Crocker, Fen O. Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds. *Managing Global Chaos: Sources and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996).

⁵⁵ See International IDEA, *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2003).

⁵⁶ Jack Donnelly, *International Human Rights* (2nd edition) (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998).

⁵⁷ For a summary of these arguments, and especially the argument about mutually reinforcing state-society relations, see Joel Migdal, Vivienne Shue, and Atul Kohli, *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- *Consensus-seeking as an optimal decision-rule remains the most critical principle of democratic practice in divided societies.* The criticisms of majority-rule democracy in deeply divided societies stand the test of time; minimum-winning coalitions, winner-take-all outcomes to electoral contests, and exclusive regimes are tantamount to domination in divided societies which by definition lack a common sense of national unity, of common purpose, and a collective destiny. There may be moments when majority-rule procedures contribute to peace – such as the 1998 referenda in Northern Ireland that bolstered the peace process – but these are anomalous situations, not the norm.

Democratic practices in divided societies eschew exclusivity in the pursuit of consensus-seeking as a principle approach to democratic practice. In institutional terms, whether broad-based coalitions are formed following electoral processes (as in consociationalism) or prior to elections (as in integrative approaches) the overriding principle of consensus-seeking remains a core feature of these alternatives.

The question of *consensus-seeking*, however, underscores that in many divided societies – especially those that are going through transitional moments, for example emerging from violent conflict – full consensus of all elements in society may not be possible. There may well be spoilers who either cannot, or should not, be part of a ruling consensus; the question of who is a spoiler capable of inclusion in a consensus decision, and who should be excluded from the broad majority, is a variable and difficult question common both to democratization processes (e.g., should former dictators or security forces views be accommodated?) and to peace processes (e.g., should perpetrators of mass violence have a place at the negotiation table?) remains a difficult question, answerable only in application to specific situations.⁵⁸

Characteristics of democratic practice refer to actionable items that give meaning to the various principles.

- *Democratic practices are inclusive of all major elements of a given population.* One of the most enduring findings about democracy's role in managing conflict is that the inclusion of all major social groups is essential. In addition to inclusion, however, participation by minorities or vulnerable groups also implies influence in policy outcomes and not "token" or powerless representation.
- *Proportionality in representation, distribution of resources, and in the allocation of other values in society is fundamental to democratic practice.* From membership in the armed forces, to the fair distribution of oil revenues, to plum jobs in the civil service, to the appointment of cabinet ministers (and, sometimes, as in Bosnia), proportionality in the allocation of values in society – tangible and intangible values, such as language use – proportionality remains a critical characteristic of democratic practice in divided societies.

Among the advocates of consensus-based democracy, the principal questions are not whether there should be proportionality, but on what basis it should be determined. It is not surprising that most analysts of civil-military relations in areas of conflict closely scrutinize the identities of leading members of the security forces for ethnic, religious, or regional balance. Likewise, analysts of electoral system choice almost invariably advocate some type of proportional system for deeply divided societies (despite the description above regarding differences over recommending specific electoral formulae for achieving proportionality). Increasingly, analysts of the underlying causes of conflict point

⁵⁸ For an evaluation of these difficult choices in peace processes, see Stephen Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* (22, 2), 1997: 5-53.

to *disproportional* distribution of public goods (e.g., oil revenues) as a key causal determinant of violence.

5.2.3. Elements and Features

In elaborating on the concept of democratic practice, a number of core elements and features should be explored that are often – if not always – reflected in institutionalized and procedural aspects of democratic decision-making. Ideally, democratic practices will feature these elements; this is especially true in divided societies that face major change processes, in which democratization processes or peace negotiations may last for years before a society finds itself free from devastating social violence.

- *Deliberative/dialogue processes* (ongoing arenas of bargaining and interaction). Democratic practice has its roots in a theory of democracy that suggests the essence of the system is open, free-flowing dialogue that exchanges information, allows all sides to see openly the needs, aspirations, preferences, attitudes, and intent of others.⁵⁹ From such deliberation – tedious and time-consuming it may be – problem solving can occur and, when possible, consensus solutions can emerge.

Arguably, there are democratic practices in a variety of cultural traditions in which the core values of democratic are reflected in indigenous institutions. Notwithstanding debates about “Asian values” or the compatibility or incompatibility of democracy with Islam, cultural characteristics are not an inherently limiting variable in the practice of democracy.
- *Contextual appropriateness*. Democratic practice as a concept also rests on the belief that there is no inherent superiority of a single approach or option, and indeed democracy is not a formulaic enterprise that replicates Western ideals or institutions.
- *Multi-faceted and multi-layered*. Democratic practice is similarly based on the notion of a multi-layered approach in which democracy operates at various levels: national, provincial, local, in communities, and in civil society. This multi-layered approach creates “complementarity” in which progress toward the realization of democratic values at one level – for example in national contexts – is complimentary to the attainment of these values at other level of society. Similarly, processes that promote democracy may involve formal negotiations with authoritative decision-makers and informal or – to borrow a term from the conflict resolution literature – “track-two” level discussions among influential opinion leaders in a society.
- *Sustainable over time*. Given the concern with partial democracy, or “one person, one vote, one time,” democratic practice must relate to the overall viability of democracy over time. Pacts to end civil wars that lead to democratization, for example, have been criticized for setting the parameters of undemocratic practices over time; for example, while Zimbabwe’s initial post-war regime was seen as democratic the sustainability of that country’s democracy has been questioned anew in recent concerns about human rights, vote rigging, and authoritarian rule by the government. Likewise, in Bosnia, the war-ending Dayton Accord has said to be limiting of democracy in the long run. Sustainability as a concept is preferred to the more static notion of “consolidation” of democracy, in post-war and in transitional settings alike. Sustainability also

⁵⁹ See John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

suggests flexibility, in that democracy's arrangements need to be able to take into account demographic or other changes; the argument for flexibility is best illustrated in the problems that were seen in Lebanon's national pact, which due to its rigidity in the allocation of parliamentary seats along confessional lines.

- *Realistic about difficult issues.* At the same time, democratic practice should be realistic about the very tough and sometimes nasty issues that arise in deeply conflicted societies, especially around questions of representation, inclusion, and the limitations to open deliberation. For example, inclusion as principle is indisputable in democratic practice, but questions arise about whether political forces with anti-democratic tendencies may well be legitimately elected, about whether those with prior records of human rights abuses can participate, whether exclusive, ethnically narrow parties preaching discrimination should be allowed to campaign for elections, and so on.

6. Capacity Development for Democratic Politics: Trends in Democracy Assistance

This section offers a general (and necessarily schematic) overview of how Western governments' democracy assistance policies have subsequently evolved. It identifies elements of more sophisticated approaches to democracy assistance that have taken shape in recent years, but also highlights how the attempt to fashion more holistic strategies has brought its own set of problems. Efforts to temper the latter will constitute the next phase in donors' progressive honing of their democracy assistance strategies.

6.1. Overall Trends

During the last ten years, donors have developed a relatively standardized range of initiatives encompassing what are seen to be democracy's constituent arenas – civil society, elections, political parties, parliaments, civil-military relations, state reform, the rule of law and good governance. These have become the familiar categories around which democracy assistance is organized. Donors exhibit slightly different emphases between these various arenas, but all spread their political aid between these relatively convergent conceptual strands of work. Indeed, the increasing homogeneity of democracy aid profiles is striking, particularly against a background of perceived divergence between Western states' high-politics international diplomatic strategies.

Focused on what are judged to be the individual building blocks of political change, the vast majority of donors eschew any overarching classification of 'democracy assistance'. It is still impossible to identify total amounts of democracy aid in any precise fashion. For aid ostensibly aimed at increasing transparency, some donors also continue to be incredibly opaque in sharing information on their democracy assistance activities.

Definitions in this sense remain elastic. Many initiatives implemented under a democracy assistance label are at best tenuously related to political reform; conversely, much aid with strong political impact is allocated under other aid categories. Donors will support almost identical individual projects but invariably register them under different categories of aid. Some donors appear intent on overselling the amount they invest in democracy assistance; others seem keen on underplaying their commitment. Some donors have stretched definitions of political aid in an effort to convince a skeptical audience that significant amounts of resources are being devoted to democracy and human rights; others insist the key is to maximize the chance of projects succeeding on the ground by defining them as apolitically as possible. The OECD measure of 'government and civil society' category contains

much support that it is not remotely related to democracy.

A curious duality has emerged. On the one hand, donors' individual 'blocks' of political aid – civil society support, or rule of law projects, for instance – have exhibited increasing similarities in their evolution. On the other hand, there has been no unified coalescing of these scattered pockets of political aid into commonly agreed measures of donors' overarching investment in political reform. Indeed, the picture has become increasingly disparate, as democracy-related funding has been forthcoming from an array of new programmes covering conflict prevention, cultural cooperation, economic governance, civic education, as well as separate country-specific initiatives.

Bearing in mind such caveats, it can be safely concluded that political aid, broadly defined, was one of the fastest growing categories of aid during the latter half of the 1990s – with the rate of increase flattening off in the case of most donors in recent years. Notable donor profiles include:-

- The overall US investment in political aid increased during the 1990s, before reaching a plateau of approximately \$700 million a year, 6-7 per cent of total overseas development assistance.
- Out of a total European Commission aid budget of 7.5bn euros for 2004, only 124 million was available under the European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), but 2.9bn euros was defined as contributing to governance and civil society reform more broadly.
- Germany, the largest European funder, now allocates just over 100 million euros per year for a broad category of 'Governance' projects – which includes democracy, human rights and conflict prevention work - and another 150 million euros to the Stiftungen.
- The Nordic states have consolidated their presence as the highest proportionate contributors. Aid for 'democratic governance' has consistently accounted for over 10 per cent of total Swedish ODA. Danish funding for 'human rights and democratisation' has increased by over a third since 2001, and is due to be boosted by an additional \$65 million up to 2009. Norway gave 9 per cent of its bilateral aid to 'Civil society and democracy development' in 2003, and another 9 per cent to 'Peace, reconciliation and democracy'.
- Elaborating a political aid portfolio slightly later than the US and other principal donors, Japan has gradually consolidated itself as a mainstream player in broadly defined 'governance assistance', with yearly allocations of around \$150 million comparing favourably with most European governments.

Overall sums remain self-evidently limited compared to the more established, mainstream aid categories. Few would deny that big infrastructure, health or education projects will quite naturally require more resources; to set these areas of ODA alongside democracy assistance hardly compares like with like. It is, however, difficult to refute the judgement that political aid amounts have been extremely modest relative to the magnitude of political challenges – as well as to the significance often claimed for such funding.

As overall funding has increased, so geographical priorities have shifted. During the 1990s two parallel logics conditioned the distribution of democracy assistance. On the one hand, a large slice of democracy assistance appeared to follow overall aid distribution, tacked onto donors' primary mainstream poverty reduction programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, most donors focused more heavily on post-transition scenarios, where a commitment to political reform was evident.

German political aid was, for example, split between these two logics, going primarily

to Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of the 1990s, over a third of the US democracy budget was going to Eastern Europe and Eurasia, while the main gainers after 2000 were states recently having enjoyed democratic breakthroughs: Indonesia, Nigeria, Mexico, Peru and Serbia. A similar logic was reflected in Japan's 'request-based approach' to democracy assistance.⁶⁰ Both Swedish and Norwegian political aid was heavily concentrated in a relatively small number of African states, including Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and South Africa; although both these donors have increasingly developed a strong focus on the link between conflict and democratic-institution-building, with increasing portions of democracy assistance going to Serbia, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, the DRC, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan and Cambodia. Several donors have introduced initiatives offering the 'reward' of additional aid where recipient countries demonstrate democratic progress and a willingness to cooperate on reform initiatives; this is, for example, a prominent dynamic in German governance aid and the US Millennium Challenge Account.

Significantly, reform oriented aid has not succeeded in offering a route into engaging with more intransigent states. Authoritarian states account for a small share of democracy assistance budgets compared to semi-authoritarian and post-transition countries. In cases such as Libya, Burma, Zimbabwe, North Korea, Cuba or Syria relatively limited funding has been offered to exiled advocacy groups and NGOs gathering information and monitoring rights abuses occurring in these states. In order to overcome obstacles to implementing effective political aid projects in Russia, donors have increasingly sought to pursue initiatives through the Council of Europe – Russia's membership of which is seen to offer the prospect of greater leverage over Moscow.

While such patterns are discernible, however, what is arguably more striking is the inclusive breadth of donors' geographical spread. Most donors have offered a smattering of democracy assistance in most regions of the world. This is of a piece with donors' similarly broad thematic coverage. All donors support most thematic areas; most provide assistance in all sectors. Nuances are apparent: French aid is more oriented towards state elites, German aid towards regional level governance, British aid to public administration reform. While these self-evidently reflect donors' own domestic specificities, however, it would be an exaggeration to argue from this that donors have sought to export wholesale their own particular model of democracy. Arguably, commonalities between donor democracy aid profiles have become more notable than differences. All donors have adopted something of a scatter-gun approach, supporting small parcels of every type of work in a large number of countries. This represents a response to criticism leveled at western governments for being interested only in supporting democracy in a few select states and for conceiving democracy to be about only elections, or only civil society, or only bicameral legislative politics. By the end of the 1990s it was not the case that democracy assistance was only being offered in a small number of amenable countries, or only where immediate and significant Western interests existed. In place of undue narrowness, however, democracy assistance profiles have taken shape that are devoid of thematic or geographical critical mass.

Debates in the last three years have centered on the prospective reorientation of aid away from Eastern Europe and the Balkans to the Middle East, the latter being the region most sparsely funded during the 1990s. Donors have all announced intentions to target democracy aid at the Middle East, and have in some cases followed through with new and increased funding designed with this in mind. New funding under the US's Middle East Partnership Initiative has attracted most prominent attention.

⁶⁰ Japanese International Cooperation Agency, *Roads to Democracy and Governance*, 23, 2003.

Significantly, France has also initiated a raft of political reform projects in the Maghreb and Mashreq. This constitutes a potentially major change to the nature of democracy assistance. If the latter was previously often the preserve of specialists in aid ministries, one of the most routinely made suggestions since 9/11 is that democracy aid needs to be invested with greater strategic purpose. Some tension is evident between foreign and development ministries on this question. As the latter have resisted the diversion of funds from least developed states into an agenda driven by more instrumental foreign policy objectives, some new Middle East reform initiatives have appeared within foreign ministries. This is leading to what one leading practitioner calls the 'Balkanisation of democracy assistance', with a plethora of new funds appearing across different parts of Western governments' policy-making machinery. Tensions have recently deepened between the European Parliament, the Commission and the European Council – and indeed within each of these institutions this question of how tightly democracy funds should be directed in accordance with strategic priorities.

Critics argue that the distribution of EU aid has in practice still been decided more by internal trade offs than it is coherently deployed as a foreign policy tool.⁶¹ It remains to be seen how far geo-clientelism gives way to a systematic harnessing of democracy assistance to security policy. Another increasingly prominent debate in this sense relates to the paucity of linkage between external and internal civil rights policies: without this many practitioners and analysts fear that hardline anti-terrorist provisions within the West leaves democracy promotion policy to survive in increasingly stony ground.

6.2. Reassessing civil society?

The drift towards civil society funding established itself as one of the clearest trends of the 1990s. This responded to criticisms that donors had previously focused too narrowly on democracy's formal institutional features, and in particular on elections. The vast majority of donors have gradually reoriented their democracy assistance away from electoral support and monitoring. The still often heard claim that Western governments are only interested in democracy's formal façade is not one invited by the evolving profile of democracy assistance. Between the mid-1990s and 2004 the share of EIDHR funds allocated to electoral assistance, for instance, fell from over 50 per cent to 14 per cent. By 2002 48 per cent of US democracy funds were being allocated to civil society, up from one third in 1997 and having climbed gradually over the decade; the share going to elections and political processes had fallen to only 7 per cent.

Within the category of civil society support, most donors have continued to channel the largest share of their funds to NGOs. The single largest group of such recipients continues to be the large human rights organizations. Typically, a large international NGO will be supported to work with one of the two or three main umbrella human rights NGOs in the recipient state. A far larger proportion of political aid budgets goes to the standard range of human rights issues - torture, the death penalty, xenophobia – than on the broader agenda of political reform. One of the most common forms of project within European democracy assistance has been support for the incorporation of international human rights treaties and covenants into developing countries' domestic legislation. While clearly closely related, the human rights and democracy strands of Western policies have not always been entirely mutually reinforcing: one complaint from aid officers is that diplomatic tensions focusing on select human rights issues have often complicated aid projects on broader

⁶¹ Carlso Santiso, 'Reforming European Foreign Aid: Development Cooperation as an Element of Foreign Policy', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 7/4: 419 (401-422), (2002).

governance reforms within the state in question.

In this civil society support donors have espoused a philosophy based around fostering community-level participation and organizational capacity. Concepts of local ownership that have dominated development policy thinking have filtered into democracy assistance, making much of the latter look very much like an extension of new approaches to development. This is presented as part of a move towards strengthening general democratic process and away from trying to engineer specific policy outcomes. Germany's development ministry, as one representative example, defines the aims of its political aid to be 'strengthening the political dimension of development'; enhancing 'capabilities for self-reliant problem solving...not...prescribing ready-made solutions'; encouraging a 'citizen-orientation of the state', and boosting participation of the poor in monitoring local government performance.⁶²

Expediency has certainly not been entirely absent: it is this type of project that has been possible without significant confrontation with recipient governments. Most donors have been reluctant to extend their focus to projects openly opposed by governments. Continuing support for organizations denied official recognition has invariably been problematic. Critics observe that many NGO recipients have been the more moderate, measured, and arguably co-opted sector of civil society. Many donor officials insist that much-maligned GONGOs can usefully widen access to government reformers and provide a foothold from which to press for more genuine separation between civil society and state. But in some cases donors have stood rather meekly by while government authorities sabotaged externally funded projects. Donors flag this as an area where future efforts must focus: in many contexts the need is not only, or even primarily for more funding but for stronger political backing to ensure that projects are actually allowed to run in an effective manner.

The perception is widespread that the US remains more drawn than other DAC donors to supporting overtly politicized groups, dissidents and direct democracy propaganda through its civil society programmes. European donors commonly argue that a focus on linking social rights initiatives to political reform work distinguishes European assistance from more directly political US approaches. Even the more forward-leaning European donors, such as Sweden, have preferred to support highly politicized groups for their educational or humanitarian work and not simply for their being anti-regime.

The US has certainly supported anti-regime exile groups from Iraq, Iran and Syria that other donors have declined to fund. The State Department has sometimes intervened to channel funds to openly pro-US groups this happening, for example, in Eastern Europe and in some Middle Eastern countries.⁶³ However, overall USAID approaches have also exhibited an increasing orientation towards long-term, democratic capacity-building. The US and other donors have all been guilty of abandoning their caution in supporting the most critical civil society organizations only very late in the day. For example, donors moved to support anti-Fujimori groups in Peru when transition was already imminent. Democracy aid has invariably followed more than it has pre-empted tangible political change. Many activists in developing states judge European donors to have become more willing than the US to fund some

⁶² BMZ Position Paper, *Good Governance in German Development Cooperation*, no.50, June 2002

⁶³ K. Quigely, 'Lofty Goals, Modest Results: Assisting Civil Society in Eastern Europe', in Marina Ottoway and Tom Carothers, *Funding Virtue* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000): 203; C. Dalpino, *Deferring Democracy: Promoting Openness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2000).

controversial projects.

Reflecting a now well-worn critique of civil society support, a firmly established consensus has taken root among donors that democracy aid needs to move away from the traditionally favoured set of internationally-connected NGOs to support civil society organizations more organically entrenched in local communities, organized around issues of real daily significance rather than abstract debates of competing political regime types. Many donors now aim to support a smaller number of NGOs, aiming for more tangible impact with locally rooted groups. Donors no longer need to be convinced on this routinely repeated point. Talk is ubiquitous of the need to move away from standardized templates: how in practice to do this is matter of genuine uncertainty. One currently debated question is whether and how to start incorporating business groups, an often key protagonist in democratic transition so far absent from political aid work. Another issue is whether donors should begin including Islamist groups within their civil society programmes; positive indications have been made on this, but caution – and in some cases opposition – still prevails at the level of implementation.

6.3. Government-to-government institution building aid

An increasingly prominent area of debate relates to the role of aid channeled to state institutions for capacity-building initiatives. A reassessment of the linkages between civil society and the state has been evident in recent years. Influential civil society protagonists have themselves advocated a more holistic approach to democracy assistance that ceases overwhelmingly to target voluntary associations as substitutes for a strong democratic state.⁶⁴

Significant amounts of government-to-government institution-building aid have been presented as part of democracy assistance efforts. The corollary to donors' slightly less rosy view of civil society actors has been a declared intent to pay greater attention to state-building challenges. The US's most senior democracy aid official argued that resources shifted into state building projects in response to a recognition that civil support was invariably failing to generate smooth momentum to democratic transition.⁶⁵ The state-elite focus has remained a distinctive element of French political aid, with priorities listed as including the 'training of foreign elites'; export of the French legal system; social dialogue and the strengthening of trade unions; constitutional support; and negotiated change through 'national consultative committees'.⁶⁶ Japan sees its main strength lying in assistance to 'improve the efficiency of government capacity-building'.⁶⁷ Support for more effective links between regional and national public institutions represents the largest slice of Germany's political aid, drawing on what is seen as a particular, domestically-derived German expertise. Moreover, donors profess a realization that state-building challenges are often those that need most attention well after formal transition; some donors have consequently reversed incipient withdrawals from places like Russia and the Balkans.

Whether and how such initiatives have in fact served to enhance democratic quality, however, is in some cases not clear. Most rule of law projects have been strikingly formalistic. Work under this category has focused mainly on offering support for setting up ombudsmen offices; legal advice on incorporating international human rights covenants into domestic legislation; measures to speed up the processing of cases; provisions for copying laws; and judicial training, carried out by lawyers. It has

⁶⁴ M. Edwards, *Civil Society* (London: 94, 2004).

⁶⁵ G. Hyman, 'Tilting at Straw Men', *Journal of Democracy* 13/3, (2002): 26-32.

⁶⁶ 'La coopération pour la promotion de l'état de droit', 'La défense et la promotion des droits de l'Homme' www.france.diplomatie.fr/cooperation/dgcid

⁶⁷ Japanese International Cooperation Agency, *Roads*: 37.

rarely sought to address the broader politics that continue to limit the effective use of such formal measures. One critic characterizes approaches to the rule of law as 'breathtakingly mechanistic', devoid of any linkage to political process'.⁶⁸ A recent BMZ policy review raised concerns that rule of law and other state-reform projects were being used in a way that actually fomented local level corruption and patronage, and that recipient governments were disingenuously presenting standard social development projects as a 'governance' commitment. One diplomat acknowledged that, within 'governance' budgets, democracy has so far been 'the missing link'. With institutional support budgets exceeding democracy and human rights funds many times over, these failings represent one of the most debilitating shortcomings of democracy assistance efforts.

One of donors' stated priorities has been more systematically to marry top-down capacity-building to bottom-up accountability measures in mutually reinforcing fashion. Official discourse and policy statements are replete with references to drawing out the 'complementarity' and 'interconnections' between democracy aid and those mainstream aid budgets covering areas such as public administration reform. The declared aim has been to generate greater 'democratic spill over' from good governance projects - the latter recognized to have more political overtones than previously assumed. A new EU resolution on Governance in 2004 formally enshrined an apparently broader and more holistic concept of good governance cooperation. DfID's influential 'drivers of change' model is predicated on the notion of building governance elements into all standard aid projects. Within German aid, 'democracy' indicators have been incorporated as 'mainstream' criteria within good governance programmes.

Some recent initiatives have attempted to link state reform work to enhanced civil society access to public policy-making. It remains unclear, however, how far such trends are likely to extend. Alongside frequent talk of ensuring better linkages, many officials still conceive a focus on the rule of law as a separable – and in the short term, preferable objective to democracy promotion. One senior EU aid official is still able to assert that the rule of law 'is more important than democracy' in European policy. Many rule of law projects have continued to focus overwhelmingly on procedural capacity and efficiency - with little systematic coordination to assess qualitative impact on democratic process. One aid official acknowledges that, while the relevance of public administrative reform to democracy is now recognized, the question remains open of 'how do we let people...participate in a meaningful way' in state reform projects. Some democracy officers still tend to see governance funding as a competitor to their own political efforts, lamenting the large amounts of aid diverted to governance projects that are far more integral – they judge – to the economic liberalization than to the democracy agenda.

In practice, rather than good governance and the rule of law being approached as prerequisites to democracy assistance proper there is evidence to suggest that they may end up as long term substitutes for the latter. The assumption is still too uncritically made that all state-building capacity work is reform-oriented; as one head of department sweepingly claimed, 'everything we do [in this sphere] is conducive to democracy'. A belief commonly asserted, but rarely demonstrated.

6.4. Political society: parties, parliaments and the military

A corollary to this concern with state-civil society linkage has been a professed determination to focus more intensively on the bodies often grouped together under the label of political society. A commanding majority of donors list as their main

⁶⁸ Tom Carothers, *Promoting the Rule of Law Abroad: The Problem of Knowledge*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Working paper 34: 9, 2003).

'lesson learned' from the last ten years of democracy assistance the need for a better understanding of the underlying politics of democracy-building. They recognise that civil society's transformative potential has been over-estimated and the essential aggregative role of political institutions unduly overlooked. Comments from different donors exhibit a striking commonality, averring to the need for greater recognition of 'the centrality of politics'; of the democracy agenda's 'implications beyond the development assistance perspective'; of 'the need for a political analysis of the structures of power...and forces that can brake or promote change'; of the need to move from isolated 'technical' initiatives to a comprehensively 'political' approach. The development minister of one of the largest democracy funders points to a need to recognize that 'democracy assistance is not simply more development cooperation.' Several donors reveal that, partly in response to critiques of the gradualist 'transition paradigm', they have begun to compile assessments of underlying power relationships in a select number of recipient countries.

Relatively limited shares of democracy assistance have gone to direct, party-building initiatives. All but a small part of party-strengthening work has been carried out by the party foundations and, with the exception of the US and German foundations, these have continued to operate with extremely limited resources. The Stiftungen account for 90 per cent of non-governmental party foundation funds in Europe; no other European foundation receives more than 5 million euros a year. In the case of no donor does the percentage of democracy assistance accounted for by party work reach double figures. US party work declined steadily during the late 1990s until in 2001 it represented under 5 per cent of USAID's democracy and governance budget – at which stage it was identified as a priority focus for increased resources.⁶⁹ The most notable exception to such caution in the party sphere was the explicit backing given to anti-Milosevic opposition parties in the Balkans.

Conceptually, donors' main stated concern has been that the partisan, fraternal party approach used in Latin America, Southern and then Eastern Europe shows signs of 'running out of steam'. There has been a shift away from support for individual electoral campaigns towards longer term capacity-building. Europeans moved earlier in this direction than the US foundations.⁷⁰ Another trend is toward more inclusive dialogue, bringing together a wide range of parties to fashion consensus on basic reform options. The declared aim is to move away from self-standing party initiatives towards a more holistic incorporation of party support into state reform and civil society work. US officials talk, in this sense, of a move towards a 'middle out' approach, linking party work to other thematic areas of democracy assistance. Sweden has recently begun to initiate such party system approaches in Central America and East Africa. Several other donors have begun tentatively to incorporate some of this work into their own bilateral initiatives, meaning that political party work is likely to become increasingly less the unique preserve of the semi-autonomous foundations.

The implementation of such logic is still acknowledged to be in its early stages, however. Strategies emphasize the broader context of, and structural impediments to party development, but as one donor recognised: 'this is basic, but we are not doing it'. Doubts remain over how to combine assistance for the party system in general with the evident need in many contexts to bolster opposition groups against a dominant party. One observer notes that donors have found it difficult to fashion meaningful support where parties are programmatically weakest - precisely the

⁶⁹ USAID 'Political Party Development and USAID', *Democracy Dialogue* (December 1999)

⁷⁰ Tom Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, page 150 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

situation in which backing is most needed.⁷¹ In practice, initiatives have still been most readily forthcoming that target individual parties, as and when opportunities for access exist. A dual challenge remains to link such support both upwards to the systemic level and downwards to strengthen what are still often conflictive relations between parties and civil society organizations.

Similar trends can be seen in parliamentary support. This has been another dimension of democracy building under-represented in most donor profiles. As in other areas, approaches in recent years have come to focus on the building of connections between parliamentary support and initiatives aimed at enhancing civil society interest groups' access to policy-making. The largest category of parliamentary work has gone to strengthening the role of women in parliaments. This is an area that some donors have come to question, however, expressing a concern that the focus on women's rights in parliament has often diverted attention from broader reform work: in many cases, it is admitted, the problem has been less of women's role within parliaments than with the weakness of parliament per se vis-à-vis the executive – an area less frequently addressed through democracy assistance. Another trend is towards support for regional parliamentary fora, with donors supporting bodies such as the SADC Parliamentary Forum. Parliamentary exchanges have continued to expand, but it often stretches a definition to claim that these are concerned with democracy promotion in any direct sense. Some donors have been concerned that one-off parliamentary exchanges have had no discernible impact and thus need to be used as a base from which to develop longer-term capacity-building assistance. Most donors claim to be keen to divert funds away from support for formal committee structures, equipping parliamentary libraries and the transposition of new rules and procedures in parliaments, towards increasing parliaments' responsiveness to citizens. In practice, much support still goes to funding equipment and very technical drafting provisions.

The reform of civil-military relations has been perhaps the most neglected of all democracy's constituent arenas. Suffering from a low degree of awareness amongst the main decision-makers on political aid, this issue has to a significant degree been left to defence ministries. Where it has been incorporated into democracy assistance profiles it is invariably been through a conflict prevention lens. Assessments of democracy aid rarely pick up how much traditional defence diplomacy has transmuted into Security Sector Reform (SSR) work. These have developed almost as two different policy-making worlds. A quid pro quo has increasingly taken root: defence ministries have trimmed traditional defence cooperation into reform oriented SSR initiatives; in return it has been accepted by an erstwhile skeptical development community that SSR does have a genuine place in reform and conflict prevention objectives. The US launched an initiative to incorporate USAID-led accountability elements into Defence Department military training, aimed at encouraging civil society participation in the formulation of defence policies.⁷² European donors all run similar projects. Sweden has launched a pilot project on democratic oversight of the military in Honduras, while the Dutch government has sought to elaborate an integration of development, diplomatic and defence elements of political reform initiatives. A number of donors have recently been engaged in DAC discussions on the possibilities of incorporating SSR work into development aid. While such moves are of significant import, however, in overall terms security sector reform initiatives have only very tentatively moved away from standard military capacity-building towards assistance aimed at the broader restructuring of civil-military relations. It is

⁷¹ S. Mair, 'Multi-partisan or Bi-partisan Cooperation? What is the Best Solution for Democracy Assistance', page 136 in Dutch Institute for Multiparty Democracy, *Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Assistance*, 2004.

⁷² See USAID *Civil-Military Relations Resources*, <http://www.usaid.org/>

widely acknowledged that security sector reform initiatives are primarily about consolidating alliances with third country militaries, albeit in parallel with new human rights training and courses on democratic oversight run with security forces. Where democracy and human rights modules have been added to military training courses there is rarely any follow through from donors to assess how these can be harnessed to contribute to more reform-minded militaries. The more self-critical donors increasingly acknowledge that the proclivity in SSR work towards 'training the trainers' programmes continues with little idea of what, if any, impact these might be achieving. Most donors remain cautious of conflating military and development aid too much, with Japan and other governments preferring any new focus on military reform to be supported through multilateral institutions.

6.5. An International "Regime" for Democracy Building? An Overview

Whether in telecommunications, trade, the environment, health, or management of the global commons such as atmospheres and oceans international "regimes" are systems of rules and networks of actors who help manage problems across international boundaries. These regimes usually involve collaborative efforts by international organizations, states, transnational NGOs, and local civil society. Is it possible to speak of an international "regime" for democracy promotion? This question can be addressed by evaluating the four aspects of such regimes: agenda setting, norms, monitoring, and compliance.

- *Agenda setting.* While it would appear that powerful states such as the U.S. often influence the international agenda for democracy, that view is only partially true. While it is clear that democracy building has become a cornerstone of the second Bush Administration in the U.S., it is also clear that demand for democracy comes from within and below. Whether in Togo, Ukraine, or Lebanon, the agenda of democracy is also set by those citizens and advocacy groups within states willing to demand free and fair elections, to accountability by their political leaders, and to the freedom to participate in policy making.
- *Negotiating norms.* There is an international right to democratic participation, codified in various instruments of international law.⁷³ New norms of democratic participation continue to evolve, particularly within the context of regional organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the African Union, and in sub-regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The regime has also seen the development of "soft law" norms such as the authoritative statement of the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1996 *Agenda for Democratization*.⁷⁴
- *Monitoring.* Capacities for monitoring the progress of democracy are in widespread.⁷⁵ From the work of human rights NGOs who monitor and report on each country, to organization such as Reporters without Borders who monitor press freedoms, to Transparency International which seeks to track problems of corruption, in today's information technology aid monitoring capacities are improving rapidly. So, too, the global news media has become more integrated through rapid developments in communications technologies, such that the prospects for monitoring democracy's progress are improving daily. Additionally, new instruments for assessing the quality of democracy have been created to

⁷³ For a comprehensive review of international law pertaining to democracy, see Jude Ibegbu, *Right to Democracy in International Law* (London: Mellen Press, 2003).

⁷⁴ Reports A/50/332 and A/51/512, November 17, 1996.

⁷⁵ For a quick country-by-country overview of recent monitoring of democracy, see www.worldaudit.org.

take a more holistic view of the quality of progress toward democracy's goals in any given setting.⁷⁶

- *Gaining Compliance.* The international community uses mostly incentives to promote democracy norms, for example through direct assistance to electoral processes or by funding directly to international NGOs for creation and sustaining the monitoring and implementation capacities and domestic NGOs for activities such as monitoring capacity building, training, the media, labour unions activism, and in some instances direct support to ruling and opposition political parties alike.
- *Reacting to Non-compliance.* The most difficult choices the international community faces is in situations of non-compliance with international norms. In Zimbabwe, for example since 2000 the country has seen three consecutive electoral processes in which many observers saw serious irregularities, intimidation, fraud, and repression. While many organizations in the democracy promotion network have criticized Zimbabwe and called for or enacted sanctions, such as the Commonwealth which suspended Zimbabwe in 2002, others such as South Africa (a Commonwealth member) have sought a more engagement-oriented approach and have taken a quiet approach to the democratic irregularities of its neighbour to the north. On the other hand, there has been relatively greater consensus to impose sanctions on Burma, which has held democracy activists such as Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi under lock and key.

6.6. Facilitating Democracy: Options, Instruments

Just as the network for global democracy promotion has evolved, there has been an expansion in the options and instruments available for facilitating peace-through-democratization transitions. These instruments involve dissemination of best practices, creation of communities of practitioners, cross-border learning, and professionalism of elements of democratic practice such as dialogue processes and electoral administration. While the list below is by no means exhaustive, it is representative of the "how to" side of democracy promotion.

- *Capacity Building.* NGOs such as party-affiliated organizations in the United States (NDI and IRI) have been at times involved in directly training political party officials and candidates in transitional countries. Similarly, training has been provided for functions such as electoral administration and election-related dispute resolution. International IDEA, for example, convened a major international meeting of the world's "election management bodies" in September 1999.
- *Training for government reform or improved practices.* The network has promoted democracy through training programs aimed at improved transparency and accountability, and through more effective aspects of governance such as parliamentary rules and guidelines. The international NGO Parliamentarians for Global Action, for example, has provided opportunities for training of newly elected legislators in law-drafting procedures.
- *Information-sharing.* Best practices, comparative information, and specific consulting. Due to the highly technical nature of aspects of democracy such as constitutional design and electoral system choice and administration, a key

⁷⁶ See International IDEA's State of Democracy Project, and especially the publication by David Beetham, Sarah Bracking, Iain Kearton, and Stuart Weir. *International IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment*. (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002).

function of the democracy building network has been to provide information and specific consultative advice on these often complex issues. In 1995, for example, the UN's Electoral Assistance Division helped sponsor the work of the Fiji Constitutional Review Commission, which toured the globe meeting with scholars, NGOs, and officials in states on best practices for constitutional design in multiethnic societies.⁷⁷

- *Providing country-level assessments.* In countries where democracy promotion has been extensive, actors in the network have teamed up to provide country-level assessments of the challenges to democracy, options for transition, and provided recommendations. International IDEA, for example, has produced detailed assessments of the prospects for improving democracy in Burkina Faso, Romania, Guatemala, and Nepal. The World Bank, for example, completed a major country level assessment of conflict in Nigeria in 2003 following the country's transition to democracy in 1998 and 1999; the report identifies a number of ways in which democracy and development are critical to future conflict mitigation in this complex and multicultural society.⁷⁸
- *Election monitoring.* The most celebrated function of the network has been its extensive work in monitoring transitional elections. Monitoring involves everything from placing international poll watchers at voting booths, to assessing media coverage, to evaluating vote tabulation and results, tracking public opinion, and the often controversial practice of parallel vote tabulation independent of the authorities. Election monitoring has been a particularly regular instrument in post-war situations, a practice which was first widespread in Namibia in 1989 and which has been a remarkable feature of virtually every post-war election since then. In a recent comprehensive look at the evolution of election monitoring in the 1990s and early 2000s, Eric Bjornlund concludes that:

The involvement of multilateral organization in elections monitoring has helped them to strengthen their commitment to promoting genuine democracy among member states. Meanwhile, non-partisan domestic-monitoring groups in developing countries have not only deterred fraud and improved public confidence in important elections, but have also encouraged citizen involvement in political life more generally.⁷⁹

- *Professionalizing election administration.* The powers, responsibilities, capacities, and professionalism of electoral management bodies are critical to processes of democracy worldwide. In recent years, organization such as IDEA, UNDP and IFES have teamed up to provide "one-stop shopping" on electoral costs, administration, and all other election management issues. The ACE Project – www.aceproject.org -- provides online, up-to-date information on best practices, options, and issues in the rapidly growing world of election management. This knowledge base is combined with careful work with electoral management bodies to share information, develop professional standards, and train new cadres of professional election managers.
- *Civic education.* International NGOs have been extensively involved in mounting civic education campaigns in transitional societies, from "get out the vote"

⁷⁷ See the report of the Commission, titled *Towards A United Future*, along with the multitude of submissions received by members of the network around the world.

⁷⁸ See the study of the World Bank at <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdext.nsf/67ByDocName/ConflictAnalysis>.

⁷⁹ Eric Bjornlund, *Beyond Free and Fair: Monitoring Elections and Building Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004): p. 304-305.

campaigns to "street law" (practical applications of human rights), to awareness of constitutional concepts and the meanings and purposes of democracy. The aim of such activities is to work at the grass roots level to provide the capacity to participate and awareness among the public of the meaning of human rights and ways to directly participation to pursue their promotion and protection.

6.7. Conclusion

Common threads have gradually woven themselves into donors' democracy assistance programmes during the last ten years. In each case, the evolution in approaches to democracy-building has been simultaneously significant and circumscribed. Most unequivocally, donors stress a conviction that democracy assistance is moving away from support for self-standing projects in different thematic sectors towards the moulding of holistic linkages between different arenas. At the same time, political aid still often appears to function as a relatively modest and hermetically sealed pocket of aid activity. A shift away from attempts at direct institutional engineering is universally proclaimed and acclaimed; but it is uncertain that what has emerged in its place is capable of generating significant democratic change. At best, the value of gradualism remains convincingly to be substantiated, and in the absence of assessment mechanisms so far has intuitive rather than demonstrable merit. Few benchmarks have been rigorously designed or applied that suffice to hold donors to account against their own logic of incremental capacity-enhancement. Independent monitoring agencies are lacking at the political level, while on the ground, judgement is rarely derived from the participation of local 'stakeholders'.¹ It is now widely recognised that democracy assistance will at most impact at the margins, and that support relating to the broader context of political change represents a hitherto under-estimated key. And yet in practice democracy officers commonly remain focused simply on 'running good projects' and meeting the reporting requirements attached to these. Concepts and criteria relate, at one level, to individual projects, at another level to generic macro-level aims - 'good governance', 'the rule of law'. One is too narrow to look beyond the confines of individual parcels of aid; the other is too broad to guide actionable priorities. A central challenge for democracy assistance is to fashion, from all the strands of new thinking elaborated in this paper, strategies able to articulate a linkage between these two levels.

Annex A: Table 1. Summary of Institutional Trust

	Army	Police	Courts	Parliament	Party ¹	Country mean
	(% trusting ²)					
A. AFROBAROMETER						
Mali	79	63	50	62	58	62
Tanzania	72	51	54	69	66	62
Malawi	72	64	61	38	45	56
Mozambique	49	50	59	54	64	55
Lesotho	50	51	58	49	55	53
Botswana	60	57	57	37	43	51
Ghana	54	51	45	48	51	50
Uganda	51	43	51	48	56	50
Namibia	50	48	42	47	59	49
Kenya	58	28	37	53	65	48
Zambia	52	42	49	40	32	43
Senegal	61	45	42	25	26	40
South Africa	32	35	39	31	32	34
Cape Verde	35	36	43	22	19	31
Nigeria	21	11	22	11	16	16
<i>Afro-Barometer</i>	(53)	(45)	(47)	(42)	(46)	(47)
B. NEW EUROPE BAROMETER						
Estonia	57	45	46	18	7	34
Hungary	39	43	45	23	16	33
Lithuania	61	33	26	17	10	30
Romania	60	32	26	15	9	28
Poland	59	36	22	8	3	26
Latvia	36	36	35	14	10	26
Slovakia	48	27	24	12	10	24
Slovenia	30	33	25	19	10	23
Czech R	29	28	26	13	15	22
Bulgaria	38	35	15	7	6	20
Russia	38	15	21	11	10	19
<i>New Europe</i>	(45)	(33)	(28)	(14)	(10)	(26)

¹ Note: trust for the ruling party in African countries.

² Percentage excludes don't knows.

Annex A: Table 1. Summary of Institutional Trust (continued)

	Army	Police	Courts	Parliament	Party	Country mean
C. EAST ASIA BAROMETER						
PR China	95	77	72	86	94	85
Thailand	76	55	60	54	47	58
Mongolia	67	48	47	61	42	53
Hong Kong	63	na	69	52	22	52
Philippines	54	47	50	44	35	46
Korea	59	50	51	15	15	38
Taiwan	58	45	41	20	16	36
Japan	48	48	61	13	9	36
<i>East Asia</i>	(65)	(53)	(56)	(43)	(35)	(50)
D. LATINO BAROMETRO						
Brazil	54	37	42	28	16	35
Uruguay	33	50	37	25	17	33
Chile	36	48	20	23	13	28
Colombia	41	37	19	13	9	24
Costa Rica	na	36	31	20	10	24
Venezuela	34	26	19	18	14	22
Honduras	27	33	19	19	12	22
Panama	na	35	20	17	15	22
Mexico	40	17	13	21	10	20
El Salvador	25	34	17	14	11	20
Paraguay	23	24	17	14	11	18
Argentina	27	22	16	14	8	17
Peru	26	23	12	13	8	16
Nicaragua	22	26	15	11	7	16
Bolivia	19	14	16	13	6	14
Ecuador	25	17	8	6	6	12
Guatemala	11	16	12	10	8	11
<i>Latino Barometro</i>	(26)	(29)	(20)	(16)	(11)	(21)

Annex B: Lessons Learned on Election Assistance⁸⁰

The international community has often been keen to provide support to elections during the last fifteen years, and many positive contributions have resulted. However, donors have sometimes tended to provide assistance to elections because they have an easily identifiable and measurable outcome, provide high visibility, are politically attractive and are easy to justify internally.

This means that elections are too often supported as isolated events. Successful elections are built upon the foundation of the legitimacy of institutional frameworks. The wider aspects of constitution building, political law and electoral system design, the relationship between electoral systems and political party systems, and the need to involve stakeholders through dialogue are often insufficiently understood or considered in planning election support.

A holistic approach linking electoral assistance to the inclusive development of political frameworks and democratic culture is therefore required. Failure to do this can have a variety of undesirable consequences: one example may be the international community supporting replays of the same semi-authoritarian election scenario every four or five years, where the technical election performance may improve, but no progress towards democratisation is visible.

Worse, elections are sometimes used as an exit strategy by the international community for political disengagement in a post-conflict transition. In the real world, election planners recognise that difficult compromises may have to be made, or that timing may slip for security or other reasons. But experience shows that timing and sequencing of elections may be important, that quick elections are not necessarily beneficial, and that it is always better to back up a commitment to legitimise government through elections with complementary measures to enhance the legitimacy of interim governments.

The key principle for planning future electoral assistance needs to be **a process based approach**, prioritising electoral technical assistance, but as part of a comprehensive strategy of capacity building to strengthen democratic processes and institutions. This contains the implication that there will be occasions when no kind of electoral assistance programme is appropriate – and that observation is almost certainly not appropriate either.

Considered as a component of such a strategy, effective electoral support for the long haul includes:

- a. **Exploration of and support for longer term development of electoral processes and structures** that are robust, credible, cost efficient and affordable within recipient country budgets.
- b. **Investment in electoral administration capacity** rather than ‘ad hoc’ contributions to electoral events. Possible mechanisms include the availability of interactive knowledge services, electoral communities of practice and peer group support, as is being developed by the ACE 2 partnership; twinning arrangements and cooperation with leading electoral management bodies; and regional and local training networks able to use electoral training tools for long term capacity building such as BRIDGE in local languages.

⁸⁰ Introduction by Andrew Ellis, Head of Electoral Processes, International IDEA, at the EC Conference on Election Support: Achievements and Challenges, Brussels, 28 September 2004

- c. **Support and encouragement of planning and evaluation cycles.** Of the three classic 'time-money-quality' parameters, time is often the most critical, as well as the most scarce, for an election administration.

Even when viewed in isolation, there are reasons to review the focus of many electoral assistance interventions. Here are ten points to consider:

1. **Avoid event driven approaches and short timelines** – Donor agencies tend to use an event driven approach, starting to think about electoral support only when they identify a polling day which may be at most eighteen months away and often much less. Political hesitancy can lead to starvation of the key early planning and training stages of election preparation. Subsequent short timetables create great pressure to spend donor funds with little time to contemplate best practice. Coupled with lengthy internal donor procedures, the result can be 'head over heels' procurement using expensive options, such as helicopter transport of ballots or chartered plane transport of out-of-country materials, rather than more cost effective local solutions that take time to develop.
2. **Plan for sustainability** – Nor does the event driven approach sit well with the development of the human and organisational capacity to run effective elections that are both 'good enough' and sustainable within the national budget in the longer term. First elections are often visible and well funded, and may even set standards that are too high: second and third elections are equally important in developing long term electoral capability. Even when donors make commitments to follow up electoral assistance programmes, the political will may not in practice outlast polling day.
3. **Avoid reinventing the wheel** - When the only priority is to deliver an election under time pressure, with all knowledge and direction coming from outside, the result can include loss of institutional memory, lack of continuity, and lack of ownership among local stakeholders in the electoral process. Each election process should build on the previous one, with observation reports an important possible means for identifying future technical assistance agendas.
4. **Respond to the trend towards election manipulation through the media** – Attempts to manipulate elections are more and more taking place deliberately and carefully through the media in the weeks before polling day. Electoral assistance planning needs tools to respond to this challenge: a global initiative towards codes of conduct and guidelines for the role of media in elections would be valuable.
5. **Address political parties and party funding** - The key role of political party development and the issues surrounding political party funding still appear too sensitive for many donors to address.
6. **Ensure technical advice is appropriate** – The quality of electoral assistance should be assured by value for money and accountability procedures, not compromised by them. External advice of a 'home country knows best' nature is rarely helpful.
7. **Assist the whole electoral process** - The early years of electoral assistance overemphasised the election day itself. Most donors have now also recognised the importance of support for other aspects of the election process, including registration of electors, boundary delimitation, the nomination process, the count and the distribution of seats. The importance of the electoral planning process, which includes the timely drafting and reviewing of electoral laws and regulations, the development of electoral calendars and operational plans, and the drafting of forms and procedural manuals, is however not yet fully

acknowledged. Nor is the critical importance of electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

8. ***Strengthen electoral processes, don't just judge them*** – Funding an observation mission alone can be an easy, visible and low risk disbursement of funds allocated to an electoral process, especially where there are controversial issues surrounding it. Local stakeholders find it strange when funding is available to judge a process, but not to help make it work.
9. ***Fund the basics, don't just pay for the 'plums'*** – As in many other areas of development work, some aspects are more attractive than others, and some funders will only fund high profile items. This leaves recipient countries and election planners with a 'jigsaw puzzle' approach to their work.
10. ***Build donor institutional memory*** – The decentralised approach to electoral assistance of some donors can result in new officers being responsible for each intervention, with the knowledge and experience gained by those involved being lost as rotation takes effect.