

PROPOSAL

**MEASURING DEMOCRACY:
A MULTIDIMENSIONAL, TIERED, AND HISTORICAL APPROACH**

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In the wake of the Cold War, democracy has gained the status of a mantra.¹ Perhaps no concept is as central to policymakers and scholars.² Yet, there is no consensus about how to measure democracy such that meaningful comparisons can be made through time and across countries. Skeptics wonder if such comparisons are possible at all. While this conclusion may seem compelling, one must also consider the costs of *not* comparing in a systematic fashion. Without some way of analyzing the level of democracy through time and across countries we have no way to mark progress or regress on this vital matter, to explain it, or to confidently affect its future course.

How, then, can this task be handled most effectively? Extant approaches are generally unidimensional in conceptualization, which is to say that they attempt to reduce the complex and contested concept of democracy to a single indicator -- either binary (democracy/autocracy) or continuous (a scale). Extant approaches also tend to be contemporaneous in focus. Only a few indicators extend back in time prior to the 1970s, and these are problematic on other accounts.

This proposal argues for a new approach to the problem of conceptualization and measurement. We begin by reviewing the weaknesses inherent in traditional approaches. We proceed, in the second section, to lay out our approach, which may be characterized as *historical*, *disaggregated*, and *multilevel*. The third section lays out the most disaggregated indicators. The fourth section sets for various clarifications and caveats about what is being proposed as part of this project. The fifth section reviews some of the payoffs a disaggregated index may bring to the study of democracy, and to the task of democracy assessment and promotion. The final section discusses some of the obstacles one can anticipate in the implementation of this project, and some procedures for addressing these challenges. An appendix describes proposed solutions to problems of coding.

I. Arguments for a New Approach

Critiques of democracy indicators are legion.³ Here, we touch briefly on five key issues of conceptualization and measurement: (1) definition, (2) precision, (3) data collection and data coverage, (4) aggregation, and (5) validity tests. The discussion focuses largely on several prominent indices including Freedom House, Polity IV, ACLP, and the EIU.⁴ Glancing reference will be made

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³ See Acuna-Alfaro (2005), Beetham (1994), Berg-Schlosser (2004a, 2004b), Bollen (1993), Bollen & Paxton (2000), Bowman, Lehoucq & Mahoney (2005), Coppedge, Alvarez, Maldonado (2008), Foweraker & Krznaric (2000), Gleditsch & Ward (1997), McHenry (2000), Munck (2009), Munck & Verkuilen (2002), Treier & Jackman (2008), Vermillion (2006). For work focused more generally on governance indicators see Arndt, Oman (2006), Besancon (2003), Kurtz, Schrank (2007), Sudders, Nahem (2004), USAID (1998).

⁴ Freedom House employs two indices, “Political Rights” and “Civil Liberties” (sometimes they are employed in tandem, sometimes singly) each of which extends back to 1972 and covers most sovereign and semisovereign nations (see www.freedomhouse.org). Polity IV (Marshall & Jaggers 2007) also provides two aggregate indices, “Democracy”

to other indices in an increasingly crowded field, and many of the points made in the following discussion probably apply broadly.⁵ However, it is important to bear in mind that each index has its own particular strengths and weaknesses. The following exercise does not purport to provide a comprehensive review.⁶

Definition

Democracy means rule by the people. Unfortunately, beyond this core attribute there is little agreement (Beetham 1994, 1999; Collier, Levitsky 1997; Held 2006; Lively 1975; Saward 2003). Since problems of definition are universally acknowledged and frequently discussed, expatiation on this point is unnecessary. However, it is worth pointing out that contemporary indices of democracy are by no means exempt from the general disagreement characterizing the field. Binary indices (e.g., ACLP) generally adopt a minimalist definition of democracy (centered on contestation), while continuous indices (e.g., Freedom House) usually assume a somewhat broader (though by no means comprehensive) set of defining attributes. This means that there is greater heterogeneity among the definitional attributes of continuous concepts of democracy than among the definitional attributes of dichotomous concepts. Some of the attributes found in continuous indices can be surprising. For example, the Freedom House Political Rights index includes questions pertaining to corruption, civilian control of the police, the absence of widespread violent crime, willingness to grant political asylum, the right to buy and sell land, and the distribution of state enterprise profits—all topics fairly distant from the core idea of democracy (however that might be understood) (Freedom House 2007).

Another way of thinking about *binary* versus *continuous* approaches to measurement is to say that the first intends to classify polities as democratic or autocratic, while the second aims to specify how democratic/autocratic each polity is relative to other polities. The fuzzy-set approach to measurement attempts to combine both issues into a single index (Schneider 2008).

In any case, it is clear that the methodological problems affecting contemporary indices begin at the level of definition. Since definitional consensus is necessary for obtaining consensus over measurement, the goal of arriving at a single, universally accepted measure of democracy is, in practice, impossible. We therefore prefer multiple overlapping concepts to a single definition.

and “Autocracy,” usually used in tandem (by subtracting one from the other), which provides the Polity2 variable. Coverage extends back to 1800 for most sovereign countries with populations greater than 500,000 (See www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity). ACLP (Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, & Przeworski 1996) codes countries dichotomously (autocracy/democracy) and includes most sovereign countries from 1950 to 1990. Newly expanded by Cheibub and Gandhwe (in process), the dataset now stretches back to 1800 and up to 2008. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has recently developed a highly disaggregated index of democracy with five core dimensions and sixty sub-components, which are combined into a single index of democracy (Kekic 2007). Coverage extends to 167 sovereign or semisovereign nations over the past year.

⁵ E.g., Competition and Participation variables (Vanhanen 2000), the Polyarchy index (Coppedge & Reinicke 1990), Contestation and Inclusiveness indices (Coppedge, Alvarez, & Maldonado 2008), the Political Regime Change [PRC] dataset (Gasiorowski 1996; updated by Reich 2002), the Democratization Dataset (Schneider & Schmitter 2004), Unified Democracy Scores (Pemstein, Meserve, Melton 2008), the Democracy Barometer (Buhlmann, Merkel & Wessels 2008), and indicators based on Altman & Perez-Linan (2002), Arat (1991), Bollen (1980, 2001), Bowman, Lehoucq, & Mahoney (2005), Hadenius (1992), Moon (2006).

⁶ Detailed surveys can be found in Hadenius & Teorell (2005), Landman (2003), and Munck & Verkuilen (2002). See also Acuna-Alfaro (2005), Beetham (1994), Berg-Schlosser (2004a, 2004b), Bollen (1993), Bollen & Paxton (2000), Bowman, Lehoucq & Mahoney (2005), Casper & Tufis (2003), Elkins (2000), Foweraker & Krznaric (2000), Gleditsch & Ward (1997), McHenry (2000), Munck & Verkuilen (2002), Treier & Jackman (2008).

Precision

Many of the leading democracy indicators are insensitive to important gradations in the quality of democracy across countries or through time. At the extreme, binary measures such as ACLP reduce democracy to a dummy variable. While undoubtedly useful for certain purposes, this dichotomous coding leaves many (generally assumed) characteristics of democracy unaddressed (Elkins 2000). For example, the ACLP recognizes no distinctions within the large category of countries that have competitive elections and occasional leadership turnover. Papua New Guinea and Sweden thus receive the same score (“democratic”), despite evident differences in the quality of elections, civil liberties, and barriers to competition afforded in these two settings.

Continuous measures appear to be more sensitive to gradations of democracy/autocracy because they have more ranks. Freedom House scores democracy on a seven-point index (14 points if the Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices are combined). Polity provides a total of 21 points if the Democracy and Autocracy scales are merged (creating the “Polity2” variable). Appearances, however, can be deceiving. Polity scores, for example, bunch up at a few places (notably -7 and +10), suggesting that the scale is not as sensitive as it purports to be. The EIU index is by far the most sensitive, and does not appear to be arbitrarily bunched.⁷ Even when scores are not so tightly bunched, the reliability of the most prominent indices is usually too low to justify confidence that a country with a score a few points higher is actually more democratic (Pemstein et al. 2008). Note that most extant indicators are bounded to some degree, and therefore constrained. This means that there is no way to distinguish the quality of democracy among countries that have perfect negative or positive scores. This is acceptable so long as there really is no difference in the quality of democracy among these countries – an assumption that might be questioned. Consider that, in 2004, Freedom House assigned the highest score on its Political Rights index to countries as dissimilar as Andorra, Bulgaria, Denmark, Israel, Mauritius, Nauru, Panama, South Africa, Uruguay, and the United States.⁸ It is hardly likely that there are no substantial differences in the quality of democracy among these diverse polities. We believe that a disaggregated approach measuring multiple dimensions that are not intended to be combined into a single score would produce more varied and sensitive scores.

Data collection and coverage

Democracy indicators often suffer from data collection problems and/or missing data.⁹ Some (e.g., Freedom House) are based largely on expert judgments; others (e.g., Freedom House in the 1970s and 1980s) rely heavily on secondary accounts from a few newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *Keesing’s Contemporary Archives*, which almost assuredly do not provide equally comprehensive coverage of every country in the world. Subjective judgments can be made fairly reliably, but doing so requires clear and concrete coding criteria and many well-trained and competent judges – the very criteria on which the leading indicators have been most heavily criticized (Munck and Verkuilen 2002).

In an attempt to improve coverage and sophistication, some indices (e.g., EIU) impute a large quantity of missing data. This is a dubious procedure wherever data coverage is thin, as it seems to be for many of the EIU variables. Note that many of the EIU variables rely on polling

⁷ Questions can also be raised about whether these indices are properly regarded as interval scales (Treier & Jackman 2008). We do not envision an easy solution to this problem although Pemstein, Meserve, and Melton (2008) offer some intriguing ideas.

⁸ The precise period in question stretches from December 1, 2003 to November 30, 2004. Obtained from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15&year=2006> (September 21, 2006).

⁹ For general treatments of the problem of conceptualization and measurement see Adcock & Collier (2001).

data, which is available on a highly irregular basis for 100 or so nation-states. This means that data for these questions must be estimated by country experts for all other cases, estimated to be about half of the sample. (Procedures employed for this estimation are not known.)¹⁰

Wherever human judgments are required for coding, one must be concerned about the basis of the respondent's decisions. In particular, one wonders whether coding decisions about particular topics – e.g., press freedom – may reflect an overall sense of how democratic Country A is rather than an independent evaluation of the question at hand. In this respect, “disaggregated” indicators may actually be considerably less disaggregated than they appear. (It is the ambiguity of the questionnaires underlying these surveys, and their reliance on the subjective judgment of experts, that foster this sort of premature aggregation.) Because our primary emphasis is on the disaggregated indicators rather than on ratings of countries overall, we hope to reduce this kind of bias.

Aggregation

Since democracy is a multi-faceted concept all composite indicators must wrestle with the aggregation problem – which indicators to combine into a single index, whether to add or multiply them, and how much to weight them. It goes without saying that different solutions to the aggregation problem lead to quite different results (Munck & Verkuilen 2002). This is a *very* consequential decision.

Typically, aggregation rules are additive, with an (implicit or explicit) weighting scheme. Another approach considers indicators as a series of necessary conditions (Goertz 2006: 95-127, Munck 2009), perhaps with the use of fuzzy sets (Schneider 2008). More inductive approaches may also be taken to the aggregation problem. Thus, Coppedge, Alvarez, & Maldonado (2008) do an exploratory factor analysis of a large set of democracy indicators, identify two dimensions, and label them Contestation and Inclusiveness. Pemstein, Meserve, & Melton (2008), following the lead of Bollen & Jackman (1989), Bollen & Paxton (2000), and Treier & Jackman (2008), analyze extant indices as reflections of a (unidimensional) latent variable. (An advantage of factor analysis is that it allows for the incorporation of diverse data sources and estimates of uncertainty for each point score.)

In order for aggregation to be successful rules must be clear, they must be operational, and they must reflect an accepted definition of what democracy means. Otherwise, the resulting concept is not valid. Although most indicators have fairly explicit aggregation rules, they are sometimes difficult to comprehend and consequently to apply (e.g., Polity). They may also include “wild card” elements, allowing the coder free rein to assign a final score, in accordance with his or her overall impression of a country (e.g., Freedom House).

Problems of definition are implicit in any factor-analytic or latent-variable index, for the author must choose either (before the analysis) which indicators to include in the sample or (after the analysis) how to interpret their commonality -- requiring a judgment about which extant indicators are measuring “democracy” and which are not. This is not solvable simply by referring to the labels assigned to the indicators in question, as many of the most well-known and widely regarded democracy indicators are labeled indicators of rights or liberties or freedom rather than of “democracy.” More broadly, while latent-variable approaches allow for the incorporation of multiple sources of data, thereby reducing some sources of error, they remain biased by any systematic error

¹⁰ Reliance on survey data also raises even more difficult questions about validity, i.e., whether the indicators measure what they are supposed to measure. There is surprisingly little empirical support for the notion that respondents are able to assess their own regimes in a cross-nationally comparable way or that they tend to live under regimes that are congruent with their own values.

that is contained in, and common to, the chosen data sources. Our approach will pay careful, systematic attention to these issues.

Validity tests

Adding to worries about measurement error is the general absence of inter-coder reliability tests among democracy indices. Freedom House does not conduct such tests, or at least does not make them public. Polity does so, but it requires a good deal of hands-on training before coders reach an acceptable level of coding accuracy. This suggests that other coders would not reach the same decisions simply by reading Polity's coding manual. (And this, in turn, points to a potential problem of conceptual validity: key concepts may not be well-matched to the empirical data.)

These critiques notwithstanding, defenders of Freedom House, Polity, et al. often point out that the extant indicators are highly intercorrelated. Indeed, the correlation between Polity2 (drawn from the Polity IV dataset) and Political Rights (drawn from the Freedom House dataset) is a respectable 0.88 (Pearson's r). Yet, on closer examination, consensus across the two dominant indices is largely the product of countries lying at the democratic extreme – Sweden, Canada, the US, et al. When countries with perfect democracy scores are excluded from the sample, the correlation between these two indices drops to 0.78. And when countries with the top two scores on the Freedom House Political Rights scale are eliminated, Pearson's r drops again -- to 0.63. This is not an impressive level of agreement, especially when one considers that scholars and policymakers are usually interested in precisely those countries lying in the middle and bottom of the distribution – countries that are undemocratic or imperfectly democratic. Testament to this disagreement is the considerable consternation of country specialists, who often take issue with the scoring of countries with which they are most familiar (Bowman, Lehoucq, & Mahoney 2005; for more extensive cross-country tests see Hadenius & Teorell 2005).

Not surprisingly, differences across indicators sometimes produce divergent findings in empirical work where democracy is a key variable. Note that most of the temporal variation in autocracy/democracy is provided by “middling” cases (neither completely autocratic nor completely democratic) over which there is greatest disagreement across indices. Casper and Tufis (2003) show that few explanatory variables (beyond per capita income) have a consistently significant impact on democracy when different democracy indices are used. (See also Elkins 2000, Hadenius and Teorell 2005.) One of the major threats to validity is the practice of adding or averaging indicators that are only weakly correlated. Disaggregation will avoid this problem.

II. Towards A New Index

Three features distinguish our proposed approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy. First, we propose to extend indicators of democracy back in time wherever possible. Second, we propose a disaggregated index, one that gathers evidence about a large set of polity characteristics relevant for democracy. Third, we propose a tiered (multilevel) approach to the problem of aggregation.

History

Most democracy indicators, and virtually all truly disaggregated indicators, focus on the contemporary era. Coverage typically begins in the 1990s or even more recently. Freedom House

begins in the 1970s (though there are questions about data consistency across decades). Only a few democracy projects extend back further in time, all of them in a highly aggregated format (e.g., ACLP very much so, Polity somewhat less). Thus, it is fair to say that the industry of democracy and governance indicators has been prospective, rather than retrospective, in its general orientation. New indicator projects are launched almost monthly, all of them focused on tracking some aspect of democracy or governance *going forward* in time.

While policymakers are rightly concerned with the course of future events, their desire to shape these events requires a sound understanding of the past. Policymaking does not take place in a world that is re-created *de novo* each year; it takes place in a world that is a constantly evolving interaction of the present with the past. We cannot understand the future of democracy in the world and how to shape it unless we understand the forces that produced the state of democracy in the world today. The more data we have – about many years, many components, and many possible determinants – the more we will be able to pin down democratization trends, their causes, and how we may be able to influence them. These are the primary reasons motivating a *historical* approach to democracy.

Disaggregation

Many of the problems of conceptualization and measurement stem from the decision to represent democracy as a single point score or as a combination of a few highly correlated factors. These are attempts to measure what we are calling “Big-D” democracy.

Summary measures of regime status have their uses. Sometimes we want to know whether a country is democratic or non-democratic, or how democratic it is, overall. It is no surprise that democracy indicators are cited constantly by policymakers and academics. However, the goal of summarizing a country’s regime type is elusive. As we have seen, extant democracy indices suffer from serious problems of conceptualization and measurement. And, while many new indicators have been proposed over the past several decades – all purporting to provide a single point score that accurately reflects countries’ regime status – none has been successful in arriving at an authoritative and precise measurement of this challenging concept.

Arguably, the traditional approach falls short because its self-assigned task is, strictly speaking, impossible. The highly abstract and contested nature of democracy grossly complicates effective operationalization. This is not a problem that can be solved – at least not in a non-arbitrary fashion. Naturally, one can always impose a particular definition upon the concept, insist that *this* is democracy, and then go forward with the task of measurement. But this is unlikely to convince anyone not already predisposed to the author’s point of view. Moreover, even if one could gain agreement over the definition and measurement of democracy, an important question remains about how much useful information about the world this highly aggregated concept would provide.

We believe that a more productive approach to this topic, as to other large and vexing subjects (e.g., governance), is to *disaggregate*. At lower levels of abstraction the concept becomes more tractable, and also more useful – since one can interrogate finely honed issues of descriptive and causal inference that are lost in aggregate point scores.

The idea of “scoping down” is not entirely new. In many areas, specific topics integral to democracy have been successfully measured (see studies cited in Section II). Some broader ventures have been proposed, but not implemented in a comprehensive fashion (e.g., Beetham, Bracking, Kearton, Weir 2001; Buhlmann, Merkel, & Wessels 2008). Democracy assessments (aka audits – in-depth assessments of a country’s democratic life, at all levels – are detailed and highly disaggregated (e.g., Beetham 1994; Diamond, Morlino 2005; Landman 2008; Proyecto Estado de la Nación 2001).

However, most efforts at disaggregation are flawed, because (a) the resulting indicators are still highly abstract and hence difficult to operationalize, (b) the underlying components, while conceptually distinct, are gathered in such a way as to cast doubt on their validity as independent measures, or (c) the information necessary to code the indicator is simply not available across nations or prior to the contemporary era.

Consider, for starters, the Polity index, which is ostensibly divided into five components: competitiveness of participation, regulation of participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on executive. Although each of these components is described at length in the Polity codebook (Marshall and Jaggers 2007), it is difficult to say precisely how they would be coded in particular instances, or how the stated aggregation principles lead to an overall score for a given country in a given year (Munck & Verkuilen 2002). Even in disaggregated form (e.g., Gates et al. 2006), the Polity index is highly abstract, and therefore open to diverse interpretations.

The two principal Freedom House measures -- Civil Liberties and Political Rights -- are similarly difficult to get one's arms around. Indeed, the notion of "political rights" is scarcely less abstract than the core concept of democracy and commonly interpreted as synonymous with it. Recently, Freedom House released coding scores for the components of Civil Liberties and Political Rights for a single year (2007). The Political Rights index is shown to be the product of: (a) Electoral Process, (b) Pluralism and Participation, and (c) Functioning of Government. The Civil Liberties index comprises (a) Freedom of Expression, (b) Association and Organizational Rights, (c) Rule of Law, and (d) Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights. This represents an important step towards greater clarity and disaggregation. However, it remains ambiguous how each of these components is scored. Moreover, inter-correlations among the seven components are extremely high -- Pearson's $r = 0.86$ or higher. This by itself is not necessarily problematic; it is possible that all democratic (or autocratic) things go together. However, the high inter-correlations of the Freedom House sub-indicators coupled with their ambiguous coding procedures suggest that these components may not be entirely independent of one another. It is hard to exclude the possibility that country coders have a general idea of how democratic each country is, and that this idea is reflected in consistent scores across the multiple indicators. As we have observed, separate components are not always independently coded.

The new EIU index (Kekic 2007) does a better job of disaggregating component variables, which are reported for five dimensions: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties, the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Correlations are still quite high, ranging from .74 to .93 (except for the cultural variable, which is more distinct). Moreover, the specificity of the questions makes the claim of independence among these five variables plausible. Unfortunately, EIU is unwilling to divulge data for the sixty specific questions that compose the five dimensions, so it is difficult to judge the accuracy and independence of the index. It may be useful, or it may be not, but we may never know for sure. Moreover, we shall never be able to judge the *content* of the five dimensions because answers to the component questions are unattainable. Also, the chosen data sources (in large part, survey data), are not extendable into the past.

Tiers

Any attempt to measure democracy compels one to wrestle with the fundamental problem of conceptualization. What is "democracy"?

For projects that set out to measure a single, narrow concept of democracy, it is sufficient to stipulate definitions for key terms (with some justification for each), and move expeditiously to empirical issues. However, it would be hazardous for our project to impose any definition that might

be perceived as one-sided or partial. Indeed, our purpose is to respect the multifaceted nature of democracy, and hence the need for a truly multidimensional index. To be sure, we cannot claim to measure *all* of the facets of this multifaceted concept through time and across countries; the empirical ambitions of the project are finite. However, we do not wish to constrain our investigation in advance by invoking a partial definition of the concept, one that excludes components that many knowledgeable informants associate with democracy.

Our principal concern is with the operation of democracy within large and fairly well-defined political units (e.g., nation-states), which we shall refer to as *polities*. The sizeable population of these units presumes that representative institutions will be significant in the political process, though it certainly does not preclude more direct forms of citizen governance existing side-by-side with representative institutions. We are less concerned with democracy within small communities (e.g., city-states, school boards, corporations), in contexts where the political community is vaguely defined (e.g., trans-national democracy movements), or on a global level (e.g., the United Nations). This empirical focus necessarily colors our approach to definition, as democracy may be said to work somewhat differently in different contexts.

With this stipulated context, let us begin with a few features of the concept that all may agree upon. The core meaning of democracy is rule by the people, aka political equality. This seems to be a common element to all usages of the word and has a long heritage stretching back to the Classical age. All usages of the term also presume some degree of political sovereignty. A community, however large or small, must enjoy self-determination in order for democracy to be meaningful.

Beyond these core elements, there is great debate about the meaning of democracy.¹¹ The debate has both descriptive and normative overtones; it is about what actually occurring patterns of democracy are (or reasonably could be) and about what they should be.

Our general argument has been for a more disaggregated approach to the concept of democracy. The question arises, however, how disaggregated should the concept be in order to prove useful to citizens, policymakers, and academics? Our answer to this question is commonsensical: as (dis)aggregated as it needs to be to suit a particular goal. We presume, that is, that different levels of aggregation will be required in order to pursue the many diverse goals that this concept currently serves, or might serve.

This leads us to recognize different levels of aggregation, or *tiers*, for this key concept. Four tiers will be elucidated in this proposal: (a) the *overall concept* (“Big-D democracy”), understood through four general models of democracy (electoral, liberal, participatory, egalitarian), (b) *dimensions* of democracy (building on each of the foregoing models), (c) *components* of democracy, and (d) *indicators* for each of the foregoing (adumbrated in the following section).

Models of Big-D democracy

Summarizing a polity’s overall level of democracy in a single point score is a fraught task, for reasons discussed at length above. To the extent that it is possible at all (i.e., to the extent that a coherent concept can be crafted from the multifarious attributes attached to this word in everyday speech), it requires some initial judgments about how the concept of democracy ought to be understood.

In surveying the immense literature on democracy, four approaches to this definitional question may be discerned. We refer to these holistic models as *electoral*, *liberal*, *participatory*, and *egalitarian*. They represent four ways of conceptualizing how rule by the people works, or ought to work. As such, they offer four perspectives on “Big-D” democracy. We do not define a separate

¹¹ E.g., Beetham (1994, 1999), Collier and Levitsky (1997), Held (2006), Lively (1975), Sartori (1962), Saward (2003), Weale (2007).

dimension for deliberative democracy not because it is invalid but because its core features - such as deliberative polls, sincere efforts at consensus-building, and equal consideration of all points of view during discussion – are rare, virtually impossible to measure in a large cross-national project, or indistinguishable from the participatory dimension.

Electoral democracy, also known as the contestation, competition, minimal, or realist model, is based on the idea that a measure of responsiveness and – more important – of accountability is ensured by competition among leadership groups, which vie for the electorate’s approval during periodic elections before a broad electorate. Parties and elections are the crucial instruments in this largely procedural account of the democratic process. It is generally assumed that elected governments will rule unimpeded, so long as their measures do not impede the continuation of democratic procedures. Of course, many additional factors might be regarded as important for ensuring and enhancing electoral contestation, e.g., civil liberties, an active media, a written constitution, an independent judiciary (to enforce the rules of the game), and so forth. However, these factors are (from the perspective of the model) secondary to electoral institutions.¹²

Liberal democracy stresses the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, rule of law, horizontal accountability (effective checks on rulers), and minority rights. These are seen as defining features of democracy, not simply as aids to political competition. The liberal model also takes a rather “negative” view of political power. Principles and procedures must be established so as to ensure that rule by the majority does not result in the oppression of minorities or the loss of individual liberties.¹³

Participatory democracy is usually viewed as a lineal descendant of the “direct” (i.e., non-representative) model of democracy, as derived from the experience of Athens – though elements of this model may be discerned in the experience of many small communities throughout the world and throughout human history. The motivation for participatory democracy is uneasiness about delegating complete authority to representatives. Direct rule by citizens is preferred, wherever practicable. And within the context of representative government, the participatory component is regarded as the most democratic element of the polity. The participatory model of democracy thus highlights the importance of voting, but also of citizen assemblies, party primaries, referenda, social movements, public hearings, town hall meetings, and other forums of citizen engagement.¹⁴

Egalitarian democracy emphasizes the goal of social equality, both as an input to the political process and an output. It may be argued that social inequalities lead inevitably to political inequalities; insofar as this is true, the goal of political equality requires a high degree of social equality. It may also be argued that the goal of a truly democratic polity is to equalize life-chances; this imposes a substantive goal on the concept of democracy (which other models ignore in favor of procedures that may or may not promote socioeconomic equality). Note that social equality may be understood as a primarily economic phenomenon and/or as a matter of social status and identity (including religion, ethnicity, language, and caste).¹⁵

While we have sketched these four models in stark terms, emphasizing their differences, it must also be pointed out that there are important shared characteristics across these ideal-types. Arguably, the latter three models build on the electoral model insofar as they presume free and fair elections, broad suffrage, and a modicum of electoral competition. Arguably, all models of democracy presume the existence of certain political institutions deemed necessary to create and preserve democracy within the context of a large polity, e.g., civil liberty, a judiciary, political parties,

¹² Important work on these topics includes Dahl (1956), Przeworski et al. (2000), Schumpeter (1942/1950).

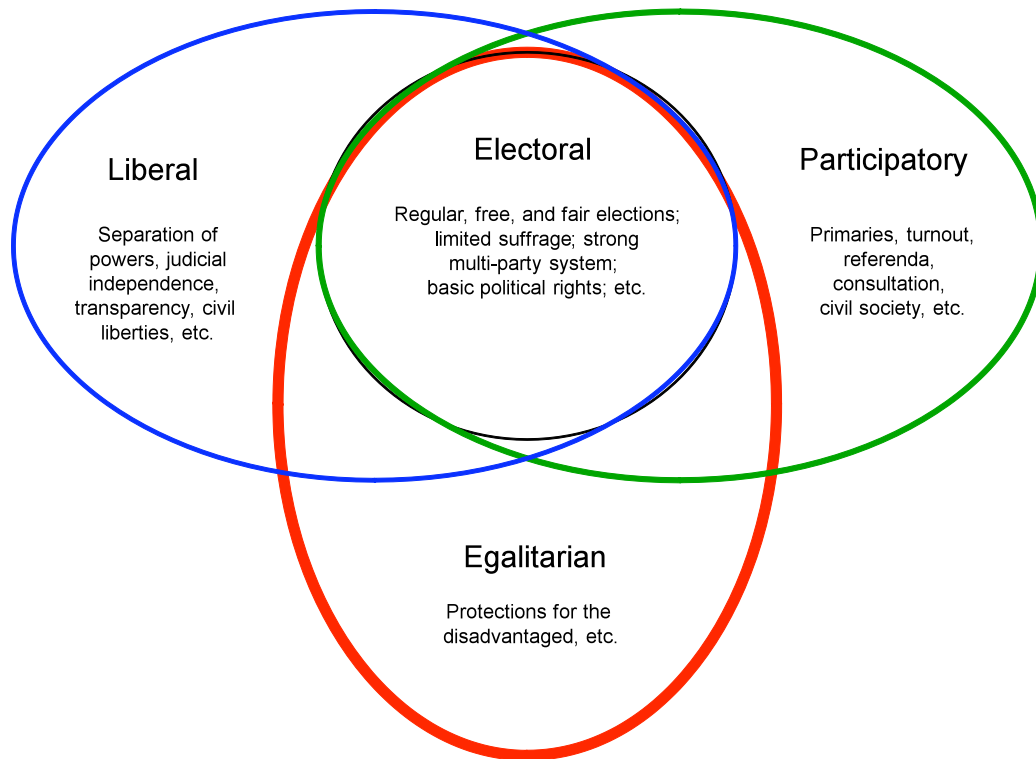
¹³ Dahl (1956) (on “Madisonian Democracy”), Hayek (1960), Vile (1967/1998).

¹⁴ Fung, Wright (2003), Pateman (1976).

¹⁵ Macpherson (1977).

and so forth. What is different across the models is the emphasis placed upon each of these institutions as elements of democracy (and, indeed, of the good polity). From this perspective, the electoral model may be understood as establishing a definitional threshold, a minimum set of attributes that a community must satisfy in order to claim the status of a democracy. These inter-relationships are illustrated schematically as a Venn diagram in Figure 1.

Figure 1: **Big-D (holistic) Models of Democracy**



Dimensions

Evidently there is a good deal of overlap among the different models of democracy sketched above. The holistic quality of these models makes them useful for some purposes, but rather intractable if one’s theoretical goals happen to be more finely-grained. In order to create sharper (i.e., more coherent and differentiated) concepts we extract the most salient features from each model to create a set of distinct *dimensions*, as summarized in Table 1.¹⁶ These dimensions can be conceptualized as the non-overlapping areas of each of the models in Figure 1.

¹⁶ In calling these features “dimensions,” we do not intend to imply that the components of each dimension are strongly correlated with one another. However, we do expect that most of the components of one dimension are *not* strongly correlated with the components of the other dimensions.

Here, we imagine there will be a good deal of divergence among the world of polities. Some will be particularly strong on the electoral dimension; others will be strong on the liberal dimension; and so forth. This may prove to be a useful device for charting change through time and variation across regions.

Table 1:
Dimensions of Democracy

<p>I. Electoral</p> <p><i>Principles:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Contestation <input type="checkbox"/> Vertical accountability <input type="checkbox"/> Majority rule (loosely understood)</p> <p><i>Elements:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Free and fair elections</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong multi-party system</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Enabling institutions sufficient to ensure ongoing electoral contestation</p>
<p>II. Liberal</p> <p><i>Principles:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Horizontal accountability <input type="checkbox"/> Limited government <input type="checkbox"/> Decentralization <input type="checkbox"/> Individual rights <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Rule of law</p> <p><i>Elements:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Civil liberties, et al.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Constraints on political power: how constrained is the executive and, by the same token, how empowered and independent are rival power centers (courts, legislature, local government,...)? How many veto points?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Transparency</p>
<p>III. Participatory</p> <p><i>Principles:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen participation <input type="checkbox"/> Government by the people <input type="checkbox"/> Responsiveness</p> <p><i>Elements:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Electoral: candidate selection, suffrage, turnout, referenda</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Consultative: hearings, panels, other deliberative bodies</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Civil society: interest groups, social movements, voluntary associations</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Informational: media, transparency, civil liberty, unconstrained debate</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Local government: to what extent empowered and a vehicle for participation?</p>
<p>IV. Egalitarian</p> <p><i>Principles:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Equality, with special attention to the least advantaged</p> <p><i>Elements:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Electoral: bias in suffrage and turnout?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Policies: harm or benefit to the least advantaged?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Effective representation: are the interests of less advantaged groups upheld by important political institutions (e.g., executive, legislature, judiciary, media, et al.)?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Social class: the distribution of income/wealth</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Civil liberty: especially for the least advantaged (are they repressed?)</p>

Components

At a somewhat lower level of aggregation, we recognize *components* of democracy. These include: inclusive citizenship, openness to participation, actual participation, regular elections, free elections, fair elections, executive rule of law, executive constraints, legislative independence/empowerment, judicial independence/empowerment, party development, media development, civil society development, local government development, civil liberty, and social equality. These concepts are sketched briefly in Table 2.

Table 2:
Components of Democracy

1. *Inclusive citizenship*: the degree to which all citizens and permanent residents enjoy the protections of the law.
 2. *Descriptive representation*: the degree to which women and members of all ethnic and religious groups are able to win high political office.
 3. *Openness to participation*: the availability of multiple opportunities for citizens to vote and participate in other official consultations, such as referenda, public hearings, and primaries.
 4. *Actual participation*: the extent of participation in elections and other officially sponsored consultations.
 5. *Regular elections*: the extent to which elections are held on schedule, with well institutionalized and understood rules, and elections are administered efficiently and expeditiously.
 6. *Free elections*: the extent to which parties and candidates can compete for votes in an environment free of government interference.
 7. *Fair elections*: the extent to which the state takes positive action to ensure a level playing field by counting votes honestly and guaranteeing all significant competitors some public funding and media access.
 8. *Executive rule of law*: the extent to which the executive (and persons and agencies under his/her control) follows the law, as defined by the constitution, treaties, statutes, and as interpreted by the judiciary.
 9. *Executive constraints*: the extent of effective constraints on the executive (whether by elective or non-elective bodies).
 10. *Legislative independence and empowerment*: extent to which a democratically elected legislature serves as a constraint on the executive. This means either a formal system of accountability, in which the executive is chosen by and removable by the legislature, and/or a system in which the legislature has other tools by which to limit the powers of the executive (e.g., passage of bills, investigatory powers, et al.).
 11. *Judicial independence and empowerment*: extent to which the highest judicial bodies are able to constrain the executive to act within the bounds of the constitution.
 12. *Party development*: extent to which parties are plural (there is more than one party) and well institutionalized.
 13. *Media development*: extent to which major media outlets are independent, free to air diverse political views, and able to reach the citizenry.
 14. *Civil society development*: extent to which civil society (excluding parties and media) is independent, well institutionalized, and reaches out to diverse sectors of society.
 15. *Local government development*: extent to which local government is independent (of national government), has important policymaking powers, and satisfies the requirements of electoral and participatory democracy.
 16. *Civil liberty*: extent to which citizens enjoy freedom of speech and freedom from politically motivated persecution by government.
 17. *Social equality*: equal/unequal distribution of income or (in predominantly agricultural societies) land.
-

III. Indicators of Democracy

At a lower level, one can identify various *indicators* that serve to operationalize the concept of democracy. In identifying potential indicators we focus on those features that (a) perform some function that brings the political process into closer alignment with the core meaning of the term (rule by the people), (b) pertain to one or more of the four models of democracy and (c) are measurable across sovereign and semisovereign units and through time (preferably, though not necessarily, back to 1900).

This decision rule identifies a broad range of indicators which, for reasons of convenience, are sorted into twelve categories: (1) sovereignty, (2) voting and eligibility for public office, (3) elections, (4) the executive, (5) the legislature, (6) the judiciary, (7) political parties, (8) the media, (9) other civil society organizations, (10) local government, (11) civil liberty, and (12) social equality.

The rest of the present section defines the twelve categories, identifies experts and a project manager who will oversee the measurement of the component, lists any existing organizations and datasets that cover the component, and outlines the specific indicators that we hope to measure as part of this project (along with obstacles likely to be encountered).

1. Sovereignty

Project manager: Michael Bernhard (U. of Florida).

Additional experts: Karen Adams (U. of Montana), Tanisha Fazal (Columbia), Erik Gartzke (UCSD), Robert Jackson (Boston University), Stephen Krasner (Stanford), Douglas Lemke (Penn State), Kunle Owolabi (U. of Notre Dame).

Organizations: Correlates of War project.

Studies, datasets: Karen Adams (dataset), Correlates of War (dataset), Kristian Gleditsch and Michael Ward List of Independent States (dataset) <http://privatwww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/statelist.html>.

General question: Is the political community sovereign?

Notes: Democracy assumes self-government. To the extent that a polity is governed by others rather than by itself, it is less democratic. Often sovereignty is limited by issue, as with protectorates that are self-governing on domestic issues but not in control of their defense or foreign policies or trade relations.

Indicators

External sovereignty

Is the territory independent of foreign domination? (Note: We are not concerned here with pressures that all states are subject to as part of the international system.)

If the territory is not entirely sovereign (e.g., a colony or protectorate), is there a degree of sovereignty over domestic affairs?

Potential obstacles: Few, as long as attention is limited to the most obvious types of international status, such as independent states, colonies, protectorates, and such. More problematic but not insurmountable if we introduce internal restraints on sovereignty like dual power and civil war.

2. Voting and Eligibility for Public Office

Project manager: Pamela Paxton (Ohio State) (unconfirmed)

Additional experts: Matt Golder (Florida State U.), Bonie Meguid (Rochester), Tatu Vanhanen (University of Tampere, Finland, emeritus).

Organizations: IDEA.

Studies, datasets: IDEA (Global Survey of Voter Turnout); Moon et al. (2006); Paxton et al. (2003); Vanhanen (2000), US Office of Personnel Management Investigations Service (2001).

General question: Who is allowed to vote and who votes? Who is eligible for public office and actually attains it?

Notes: All items below pertain to major national elections -- parliamentary and (if applicable) presidential elections. (Presidential elections may not be relevant if the presidency is a weak office with little policymaking power.)

Indicators

Suffrage

What are the suffrage requirements (e.g., age, criminal record, gender, citizenship, residence, and so forth)? [Narrative. If there is a particular group that is excluded, please note this group's name.]

What percent of male adult citizens are allowed to vote (presuming they follow statutory requirements such as registration)? [If there is a particular group that is excluded, please note this group's name.]

What percent of all adult citizens (male/female) are allowed to vote (presuming they follow statutory requirements such as registration)? [If there is a particular group that is excluded, please note this group's name.]

What percent of all adult residents (male/female, citizen/non-citizen) are allowed to vote (presuming they follow statutory requirements such as registration)? [If there is a particular group that is excluded, please note this group's name.]

Turnout

What percent of male adult citizens voted?

What percent of all adult citizens (male/female) voted?

What percent of all adult residents (male/female, citizen/non-citizen) voted?

Eligibility for Public Office

Do candidate eligibility rules exclude women or members of certain ethnic or religious groups?

To what extent do women and members of all ethnic and religious groups actually win high political office?

3. Elections

Project manager: Staffan Lindberg (University of Florida).

Additional experts: Jørgen Elklit (Aarhus U., Denmark), Matthijs Bogaards (Jacobs University, Bremen), Jennifer Gandhi (Emory), Philip Keefer (World Bank), Judith Kelly (Duke), Gerry Munck (USC), Andrew Reynolds (UNC), Andreas Schedler (CIDE), Rakesh Sharma (IFES), Susan Hyde (Yale).

Organizations: ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, Carter Center, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), National Democratic Institute (NDI), OAS Department of Cooperation and Electoral Observation.

Studies, datasets: Bjornlund (2004); Carter Center et al. (2005); Elklit, Reynolds (2005); Eriksson (2002); European Union (2007); Gerken (2009); Hyde & Malinov (2009); Munck (2006); Project on

International Election Monitoring; Schedler (2006b); Hicken et al. (in progress), Polity IV, Lindberg (2009), Nohlen et al (1999, 2002).

General question: Are elections free and fair?

Notes:

Elections might be differentiated by (a) lower house, (b) upper house, and (c) presidency. In some cases, (b) and/or (c) is nonexistent or inconsequential, in which case it should be ignored. If no election occurs in a given year, then many of these questions will be filled out with the same value as for the value for the last election in order to make it useful for continuous time-series (unless of course rules or norms pertaining to elections have changed in the interim). If more than one election occurs in a given year there will be two entries for that country in that year. (This complicates data analysis, but it is essential to the purpose of the dataset, which is to provide primary-level data that can be used for further analysis.)

Potential obstacles: Only a few indicators will be measurable before recent years. (If these rules were always defined in constitutions, the Elkins and Ginsburg project would be sufficient; but often they are contained in electoral laws and such.)

Indicators

Factual data

Date of last presidential election

If n/a, leave blank. Format: yyyy/mm/dd.

Accumulated number of presidential elections

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, regardless of constitutional and unconstitutional changes and interruptions by periods of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Uninterrupted, consecutive number of presidential elections

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, since the last unconstitutional change of government/interruption by a period of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Date of last upper house election

If n/a, leave blank. Format: yyyy/mm/dd.

Accumulated number of upper house elections

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, regardless of constitutional and unconstitutional changes and interruptions by periods of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Uninterrupted, consecutive number of upper house elections

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, since the last unconstitutional change of government/interruption by a period of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Date of last lower house/single chamber election

If n/a, leave blank. Format: yyyy/mm/dd.

Accumulated number of lower house/single chamber election

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, regardless of constitutional and unconstitutional changes and interruptions by periods of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Uninterrupted, consecutive number of lower house/single chamber elections

A count of how many elections has been held in this category of elections including the last one, since the last unconstitutional change of government/interruption by a period of non-electoral regimes. Indicates 'democratic stock' or experience. If n/a, leave blank.

Electoral regime

At this time, are regularly scheduled elections – past and future – on course, as stipulated by election law or well-established precedent? (If the answer is no, the implication is that they have been suspended or postponed in violation of election law or well-established precedents).

At this time, is the constitution of the Election Management Body independent of partisan or corrupt pressures *or* balanced in its representation of different partisans? (EMB refers to whatever government bureau(s) is assigned responsibility for setting up and overseeing elections.)

At this time, does the EMB have sufficient power and prestige to enforce its own provisions?

At this time, is the EMB sufficiently clean and effective to carry out its assigned duties? [Added]

Campaign finance

At this time, are there disclosure requirements for large donations to election campaigns that are generally observed?

At this time, is public financing available that constitute at least one third of the estimated expenditures by candidates and/or parties during the course of a typical campaign?

Sources: IDEA (2003), Pinto-Duschinsky (2002), USAID (2003).

Competition

In the last election, were all viable political parties and candidates granted reasonable access to the ballot?

In the last election, were opposition candidates/parties or their supporters subject to systematic harassment, selective prosecution, or intimidation by the ruling government?

In the last election, did the incumbent enjoy unfair advantage by virtue of occupying public office? Unfair advantage involves such things as a) imposing a levy on civil servants to finance the party's campaigns, b) widespread and organized use of civil servants for campaign purposes, c) widespread use of government materiel for campaign purposes, d) snap elections scheduled without sufficient time for the opposition to organize.

In the last election, were other forms of vote fraud (e.g., ballot-stuffing, mis-reporting of votes) widespread?

Did participating parties/candidates accept the essential fairness of the process?

Participation

Was the voters' registry updated before the last election to more or less adequately reflect who had sought to register before the last election? (If the election rolls were not made public then the answer is assumed to be No.)

In the last election, were election choices secret?

In the last election, were vote-buying (bribery) and/or intimidation of voters widespread?

Outcome

In the last election, did the official results conform, more or less, to actual ballots cast?

What was the percentage of lost or spoiled ballots?

Was the last election generally judged free and fair by international election monitors and/or the international press? (If there was disagreement, then please report the mean [average] result, weighting each group by its level of involvement in overseeing this election.)

Did losing parties/candidates accept the result of the last election?

Election monitors

In the last election, were election monitors from all parties and independent domestic election monitors allowed to monitor the vote at polling stations across the country?

How many polling stations (%) were attended by domestic election monitors and opposition parties' election monitors in the last election?

In the last election, were independent international election monitors allowed to monitor the vote at polling stations across the country?

How many polling stations (%) were attended by international election monitors in the last election?

4. The Executive

Project manager: Jan Teorell (Lund University).

Additional experts: Kirk Bowman (Georgia Institute of Technology), John Carey (Dartmouth), Steven Fish (UC Berkeley), Jennifer Gandhi (Emory), Fabrice Lehoucq (UNC Greensboro), Gerardo Munck (USC), Anibal Perez-Linan (U. of Pittsburgh), Andreas Schedler (CIDE), Matthew Shugart (UCSD).

Organizations: Comparative Constitutions Project (Elkins and Ginsburg)

Studies, datasets: Amorim Neto (cabinet ministers in Latin America); Banks (2009), Bowman, Lehoucq & Mahoney (2005); Cahoon (World Statesmen), UNDP (2004: 77-84), Metcalf (2000).

Turnover: Bienen, van de Walle (1991); Gandhi, Cheibub (ACLP dataset); Goemans, Gleditsch, Chiozza (2009); Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak (dataset).

General questions: Who is the head of the government (president, prime minister, other)? How is the chief executive(s) selected? Is the executive constrained by an independent legislature? Is the executive constrained by an independent judiciary? Is the executive constrained by term limits? How frequent is executive turnover, and by what means does it occur? Is the executive accountable to the legislature? Is the executive accountable to the military or any foreign powers?

Note: The executive is understood as the person or persons formally in charge of administering the national bureaucracy, including the most essential departments (e.g., finance, infrastructure, foreign affairs, military). This may be an individual (e.g., president) or a collective body (e.g., cabinet or collegial presidency). In the case of colonies and protectorates, some of the executive functions may be administered by a foreign power but there will still be an executive in charge of domestic affairs. In the case of monarchies and military governments, there is sometimes some ambiguity about who is running the ship of state. However, there is, in modern times, always (to our knowledge) an individual or body (e.g., cabinet) who are formally charged with running the national government. This will be known as the executive.

Indicators

Identification of the head of the government.

Is the government led by an individual or by a collegiate body? Is there a separate head of state? Is the official head of the executive branch the effective head of the government? Is the head of the government an interim or a regular leader?

Selection/ Access to office.

How did the current executive gain access to office? Was the executive appointed a) through a general election, b) by a legislature, c) a monarch, d) a military junta, e) some other body, f) a foreign power or g) through unconstitutional means (e.g., a coup)?

Removal.

Can the head of the government be removed by a vote of no confidence, a legislative impeachment, a declaration of incapacity, or some other mechanism? Are those mechanisms effective and viable (given the executive's degree of control over the legislature and the courts)?

Term limits.

Are there constitutional term limits? If so, what are they? Are they respected (at this point in time)?

Executive constraints.

Does the executive respect the constitution? Is the executive constrained by a) a legislature, b) a judiciary, c) a military, d) a monarch, or e) other nonelective bodies (e.g., agencies, clerical councils)?

Turnover.

How many years has the current executive been in office? How many consecutive terms has the current executive served? How many years has the current ruling party or coalition controlled the executive? How many consecutive terms has the current ruling party or coalition served?

Note: Turnover may be regarded as a sufficient (but not necessary) condition of effective electoral competition if a product of elections (as opposed to coups d'états). In a regime where elections do not occur or where elections do not determine top leadership positions a pattern of regular leadership turnover may, nonetheless, indicate a degree of democratic responsiveness and/or institutionalization (rule of law).

Potential obstacles: Much of the information may be obtained from coding information available in Cahoon's website (worldstatesmen.org), from Banks' Cross-National Time-Series dataset, the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) and from the ARCHIGOS project. Main obstacles will be in obtaining historical data, in the verification of historical sources, and in the aggregation of multiple questions/measures into a single concept (e.g., constraints on the executive).

5. The Legislature

Project manager: Steven Fish (Berkeley)

Additional experts: Joel Barkan (University of Iowa), John Carey (Dartmouth), Scott Desposato (UCSD), John Huber (Columbia), Mark Jones (Rice), Lanny Martin (Rice), Robert Mattes, Scott Morgenstern (U. of Pittsburgh), Shaheen Mozaffar (Bridgewater State College).

Organizations: Inter-Parliamentary Union

Studies, datasets: African Legislatures Project (ALP); Fish, Kroenig (2009).

General question: How independent and empowered is the legislature?

Indicators

General

Is there an elective legislature?

Is the executive appointed by the legislature?

Is the executive removable by the legislature? If so, under what circumstances?

Executive oversight and investigation – de jure

What powers does the legislature possess?

Does it include the power of subpoena?

Executive oversight and investigation – de facto

Is staffing sufficient?

Are minority parties (those not in the ruling party or coalition) and committees able to exercise oversight and investigatory functions against the wishes of the majority party or coalition?

How often does the legislature investigate the executive?

How often do such investigations culminate in decisions unfavorable to the executive?

Budgetary powers

Does the legislature possess the power of the purse?

Can executive vetos be over-ridden?

Can executives rule by decree?

6. The Judiciary

Project manager: Jeff Staton (Emory).

Additional experts: Vanessa Baird (Colorado-Boulder), Rebecca Bill-Chavez (Navy), Dan Brinks (UT-Austin), Clifford J. Carrubba (Emory), Matthew Gabel (Washington U.), Gretchen Helmke (Rochester), Jeffrey Lax (Columbia), Andrew Martin (Washington U.), Georg Vanberg (UNC).

Organizations: Human Rights Watch (see also organizations listed under Civil Liberties); The World Justice Project (American Bar Association), World Bank, Comparative Constitutions Project

Studies, datasets: American Bar Association (2007); Tate et al (2002); Carrubba, Gabel, Helmke, Martin, Staton (2008); Executive Opinion Survey of the *Global Competitiveness Report* (available for 80 countries in 2002); Vera Institute of Justice (2003); La Porta et al (2004); Feld and Voigt (2003); Ríos-Figueroa (2006); Kaufmann Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2007); Henisz (2000); Keith (2002); Tate and Keith (2007); Howard and Carey (2004); Clague et al (1999); Cingranelli and Richards (2008); Bertelsmann (2008); Ríos-Figueroa and Staton (2009); Elkins and Ginsburg (2009); Gwartney and Lawson (2007)

General question: How independent, empowered, and effective is the judiciary?

Notes:

The judiciary is a core element of a liberal democracy. It is the piece of the state primarily responsible for ensuring that the executive is constrained by formal limits on power. In practice, the constraints that judiciaries can place on power increase in three critical dimensions: empowerment, independence and effectiveness. First, in order to place a meaningful constraint on the executive, judiciaries must be formally empowered to review government policies and issue legally binding resolutions. Second, judges must be independent – they must be free from undue external influence on their decision-making process, such that their resolutions reflect their sincere understanding of the law. Third, judicial decisions must be respected in practice, such that judges can provide an effective constraint on government.

In light of the large number of existing measures of aspects of the rule of law, many of which reflect the concepts we have identified, our primary goal will be to collect each of the existing measures, document their availability across space and time, and evaluate their validity. We will also develop a new measure of judicial independence from the United States State Department Human Rights reports. This measure is designed to more closely measure the concepts of independence and effectiveness than do existing scores.

We aim to address the questions listed below. Importantly, in some cases, we can directly answer these questions. For example, the Elkins and Ginsburg (2009) constitutions project provides explicit information on formal institutions that reflect elements of judicial empowerment and independence. Likewise, the United States State Department Human Rights Report, which are the basis of the Cingranelli and Richards, Tate and Keith and Howard and Carey measures, summarize expert opinions concerning autonomy and effectiveness. In other cases, measures will be proxies. For example, the Clague et al contract intensive money measure, which estimates the percentage of the money supply held in banks, is clearly at best a proxy for independence and effectiveness.

Potential obstacles: There are two chief obstacles. The first is how to develop direct *de facto* measures of autonomy and effectiveness that date back beyond the early 1970s. The second is how to develop a measure of autonomy that is sensitive to strategic constitutional review. I am yet unsure about how to solve the first problem, at least with respect to the goal of developing a broadly cross-national measure. I believe that we are track to tackle the second problem. I am working on a measurement paper with two colleagues at Emory (Justin Esarey and Tom Clark), the aim of which is to develop a measure of judicial independence derived directly from judicial decisions, rather than from expert opinions. This technique will allow us to generate independence scores from the data provided by the Carruba et al and Tate et al projects.

Indicators

Review:

- Does the judiciary have the power of constitutional review?
- Is constitutional review concentrated in one court or can it be carried out throughout the judiciary?
- Are the effects of constitutional review resolutions general (*erga omnes*) or specific to the parties?
 - Under all conditions?
- Are there limits on jurisdiction that undermine the ability of the judiciary to constrain the government?

Independence:

- Are judicial decisions independent of external political pressures?
- Are judicial decisions independent of corrupt external pressures?
- Are judicial decisions independent of internal political pressures (i.e. within the judiciary)?

Budget:

- Does the judiciary enjoy budgetary independence?
- Are formal commitments to the judicial budget respected?
- What is the yearly variance in the judicial budget?

Appointment and tenure:

- How are judges appointed?
- How may judges be removed from the bench?
- Have judges been removed from office in response to decisions challenging government authority?
- How are they retained?
- What is the formal length of judicial tenure?
- What is the effective judicial tenure?

Legitimacy:

- Are judicial decisions widely respected? Universally respected?

7. Political Parties and Party System

Project manager: Allen Hicken (University of Michigan).

Additional experts: Stefano Bartolini (EU Institute, Florence), Pradeep Chhibber (UC Berkeley), Kenneth Janda (Northwestern), Mark Jones (Rice), Richard S. Katz (Johns Hopkins University), Philip Keefer (World Bank), Herbert Kitschelt (Duke), Steven Levitsky (Harvard), Scott Mainwaring (Notre Dame), Peter Mair (EU Institute, Florence), Karen Remmer (Duke), Kenneth Roberts (Cornell), Eric Wibbels (Duke).

Organizations: Comparative Manifestoes Project.

Studies, datasets: Carey (dataset), Database on Political Institutions (World Bank); Janda (dataset); Wiesehomeier-Benoit (dimensions of party competition); Coppedge (classification of Latin American parties).

General questions: Are political parties well-institutionalized? Does the party system offer a variety of meaningful choices to voters?

Notes:

“Party” may refer to a longstanding coalition such as the CDU/CSU if that coalition functions in most respects like a single party. Note that the identity of a party may be obscured by name changes. If the party/coalition changes names but retains key personnel and is still run by and for the same constituency then it should be considered the same organization.

Questions below refer to all parties in a polity, considered as a whole. However, larger parties should be given greater weight in calculating answers so that the party system is adequately represented.

Potential obstacles: Some inconsistent election results from different sources; lack of systematic collection of information about internal party politics.

Indicators

Party institutionalization:

- Do parties have permanent organizations, identifiable leadership, and legislative cohesion?
- Are there well-understood rules governing each party's business and, if so, are these rules generally followed?
- Is there a clearly identifiable group of party members and is this group relatively stable from year to year?
- Do parties issue detailed policy platforms (manifestos)?
- Do parties hold regular conventions and, if so, are these conventions sovereign (in the sense of making final decisions on party policy and procedure)?
- Do parties have local sections (constituency groups), or are they centered on the capital and on a restricted group of local notables?
- Do MPs in the same party generally vote together in the national legislature?
- Do MPs change parties in between elections?

Election results: Do results of an election indicate that a democratic process has occurred?

Studies, datasets: Bogaards (2007); Carr (n.d); Mackie, Rose (1997); Nohlen (1993); Nohlen, Krennerich, Thibaut (1999); Nohlen, Grotz, Harmann (2002).

What percent of the vote was received by the largest party or winning candidate in the final (or only) round?

Specify name of party or candidate:

Source: DPI.

What percent of the vote was received by the second largest party or second most successful candidate in the final round?

Specify name of party or candidate:

Source: DPI.

What percent of the seats in the lower/upper house was obtained by the largest party?

Specify name of party:

Source: DPI.

What percent of the seats in the lower/upper house was obtained by the second largest party?

Specify name of party:

Source: DPI.

8. Media

Project manager: Holli Semetko (Emory University)

Additional experts: Devra Moehler (Annenburg School, University of Pennsylvania), Pippa Norris (Kennedy School of Government); Erik Nisbet (Ohio State), Wisdom Tettey (University of Calgary).

Organizations: IREX

Studies, datasets: IREX Media Sustainability Index, <http://www.irex.org/msi/index.asp>; Freedom House Freedom of the Press Index

General question: Are media outlets independent, representative of diverse interests/points of view, and able to reach the citizenry?

Notes: We need to work out the division of labor b/w this section and sections 2 and 10, or decide to replicate questions in all sections. Questions below refer to all media in a polity, considered as a whole.

However, larger media outlets should be given greater weight in calculating answers so that the media system is adequately represented.

Indicators

How many daily newspapers are there in the capital city?

How many radio broadcasting stations are there?

How many television broadcasting stations are there?

Does the government directly or indirectly attempt to censor the major media (print, broadcast, internet)?

Indirect forms of censorship might include politically motivated awarding of broadcast frequencies, withdrawal of financial support, influence over printing facilities and distribution networks, selective distribution of advertising, onerous registration requirements, prohibitive tariffs, and bribery. [See recent index of internet freedom developed by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University.]

Of the major media outlets, how many routinely criticize the government?

Do the major media represent a range of ideologies (perhaps affiliated with a range of political parties)?

Are individual journalists harassed – i.e., threatened with libel, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed -- by government or nongovernmental actors while engaged in legitimate journalistic activities?

Is there self-censorship among journalists when reporting on politically sensitive issues?

Do most citizens have access to a range of media outlets, including those critical of the government?

9. Other Civil Society Associations

Project manager: Michael Bernhard (U. of Florida).

Additional experts: Sheri Berman (Barnard College), Lena Blomstrand (Head of Civil Society Center, Sida), David Campbell (Notre Dame), Grzegorz Ekiert (Harvard), Andrew Green (independent scholar), Gretchen Helmke (Rochester), Marc Howard (Georgetown), Jude Howell (Director, Centre for Civil Society, LSE), Jan Kubik (Rutgers), Steven Levitsky (Harvard), Susan Stokes (Yale), Lucan Way (University of Toronto), Meredith Weiss (SUNY Albany).

Organizations: Center for Civil Society (UCLA), Centre for Civil Society (LSE), Civil Society Center (Sida, Sweden), National Endowment for Democracy (Washington, DC), Center for Civil Society and Democracy (Georgetown)

<http://www1.georgetown.edu/departments/democracyandgovernance/programs/cdacs/36905.html>,

Center for Civil Society Studies (Johns Hopkins University)

<http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3>

Studies, datasets: Anheier (2004); Andrew Green (proposal); Helmke, Levitsky (2004); Civil Society Index (CIVICUS, the Civil Society Center at Sida and Helmut K. Anheier), European Social Survey. The U.S. “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy” Survey (<http://www.uscidsurvey.org/>), World Values Survey. The Comparative Non –Profit Sector Project

(<http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3>), Ekiert, Kubik (2001), The Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project

<http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/index.php?section=content&view=9&sub=3>, Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Civil Society Ratings

http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=352&ana_page=347&year=2008

General questions: Is civil society (leaving aside elements considered in other sections) independent and well organized?

Notes:

“Civil society organization” refers to any of the following: an interest group, a social movement, church group, or classic NGO, but *not* a private business, political party, or government agency. Must be at

least nominally independent of government and economic institutions. Questions about civil liberties, of obvious significance to civil society, are covered in a separate section.

Indicators:

- Is it easy (and legal) to form civic associations, including those with a critical view of government?
- What are the major religious organizations?
- What are the major labor and business associations?
- What are the major additional civic associations?
- Are civil society organizations generally independent of direct government influence (or are they manipulated by the government and its allies such that they do not exercise an independent voice)?
- Are there any sizeable civil society organizations that are routinely critical of the government?
- Are major civil society organizations – representing key constituencies on an issue – routinely consulted by policymakers on policies relevant to their members (e.g., by giving testimony before legislative committees)?

10. Subnational Politics

Project manager: Kelly McMann (Case Western Reserve University)

Additional experts: Matt Ingram, Carlos Gervasoni

Organizations:

Studies; datasets: Ammons (2001), Bardhan, Mookherjee (2006), Bierschenk, Olivier de Sardan (1997), Campbell (2003), Clark, Hoffmann-Martinot (1998), Commonwealth Local Government Forum (www.clgf.org.uk), Council of Europe (Local democracy reports for member states; www.coe.int), Crook, Manor (1998), John (2002), Kaufmann, Leautier, Mastruzzi (2005), McCarney, Stren (2003), Montero, Samuels (2004), Municipal Development Partnership (PDM, seat in Cotonou, Benin: (www.pdm-net.org), Olowu, Wunsch (2003), Oxhorn (2004), Soos (2002), UN Habitat (various years), World Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy, aka the Gold Report (<http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/gold/index.asp?L=>).

General question: How democratic are subnational governments? Do they have significant resources and policymaking powers? How much do degrees of the democracy at the subnational level diverge from national norms?

Indicators

- What, if any, are the subnational levels of government?
- What is the lowest level at which government executives are elected?
- What is the average voter turnout per election cycle for government executives at the lowest level?
- What is the lowest level at which government representative bodies are elected?
- What is the average voter turnout per election cycle for government representative bodies at the lowest level?
- What is the average population size for urban units at the lowest level?
- What is the average population size for rural units at the lowest level?
- What proportion of tax revenue is collected by subnational governments?
- What proportion of public spending is done by subnational governments?
- What, if any, policy areas are delegated to the lowest level?
- Which subnational tier of government (local, provincial/state, regional) has the greatest authority and resources after the national tier?
- Through what other government institutions or processes do citizens participate at subnational levels?
- For some of the above questions, referring to the most relevant subnational tier, if any: What proportion of the subnational units do you estimate would have a rating on this indicator that is

similar to the national rating? What proportion would be rated as more democratic? What proportion would be rated less democratic?

11. Civil Liberty

Project manager: Svend-Erik Skaaning (Aarhus University, Denmark).

Additional experts: Arthur Banks (independent scholar), David Beetham (U. of Leeds, emeritus), David Cingranelli (SUNY, Binghamton), Christian Davenport (U. of Notre Dame), Todd Landman (Essex).

Organizations: American Bar Foundation, Amnesty International, Freedom House, Human Rights First (formerly Lawyers Committee for Human Rights), Human Rights Watch, Interamerican Commission on Human Rights.

Studies; datasets: Arat (1991); Cingranelli & Richards (1999); Cingranelli & Richards (n.d.); Freedom House (2006); Gibney & Dalton (1996); Green (2001); Landman (2004); Landman, Carvalho (2009), Skaaning (2006a, 2006b, 2008).

Additional sources of information: State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (main source), supplemented by Freedom House's Freedom in the World (narrative country reports), Amnesty International's Annual Reports, Human Rights Watch's World Reports, and – especially when going back in time – country narratives found in reports, books, articles, and newspapers.

General question: Do citizens enjoy freedom of speech and freedom from politically motivated persecution by government?

Notes:

Civil liberties issues pertaining specifically to voting, elections, media, parties, and CSOs are covered in other sections.

Potential obstacles: Difficult to find relevant information regarding periods before the 1980s.

Indicators

Can citizens speak freely about political subjects in their homes and in public spaces?

Is physical violence (e.g., torture, killings) and/or arrest targeted at presumed opponents of the government widespread?

Are certain groups systematically discriminated against, harassed, or intimidated by virtue of their race, ethnicity, language, caste, or culture to the point where it impairs their ability to participate in politics on an equal footing with other groups?

If so, how large (as a percentage of the total population) is this group(s)?

12. Social Equality

Project manager: Carsten Schneider (Central European University, Budapest)

Additional experts: Mick Moore (Center for the Future State/Institute for Development Studies, Sussex), Deborah Yashar (Princeton), Raúl Madrid (Texas-Austin), Kathryn Hochstetler (University of New Mexico), Ayesha Jalal (Tufts—History and Sociology), Alex Pacek (Texas A&M) [See <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/8/995>].

Organizations:

Studies; datasets:

General question: Are citizens able to participate fully in political life in spite of disadvantages due to their socioeconomic circumstances, gender, religion, language, or racial, ethnic, or national identity? Does the state actively address political inequality arising from these conditions?

Indicators

Which gender, religious, linguistic, or ethnic groups are at a political disadvantage due to discrimination or socioeconomic circumstances?

What proportion of the population is disadvantaged in these ways?

Are there state programs or other institutionalized practices that are designed to enable these groups to participate on an equal footing in spite of socioeconomic disadvantages? Are they effective?

IV. Caveats and Clarifications

Having outlined different tiers of the democracy concept – Big-D, dimensions, components, and indicators – it is important to clarify in specific terms what this project hopes to achieve.

We do not intend to provide a Big-D definition of democracy, much less an aggregation scheme by which that concept might be measured. However, we anticipate that the indicators provided in this project will provide the empirical fodder for such high-level aggregation schemes as might be proposed, e.g., perhaps based on the four archetypal models of democracy that we have identified (electoral, liberal, participatory, and egalitarian) or on some other holistic model. In this respect, our project should facilitate the development of composite indicators of democracy, wherever summary point scores (summarizing a country's level of democracy on some presumed scale) are required. It should be clear that we are not opposed to high-level aggregation. However, because this process is fraught and necessarily highly indeterminate (for reasons explored at the outset of this document), we believe it would be inappropriate for a project of this nature – which purports to remain neutral about the ultimate meaning of democracy – to undertake it.

We *do* intend to provide aggregation schemes and point scores for lower-level concepts associated with the umbrella-term, democracy. This includes *dimensions* and *components* of democracy, as sketched in Tables 1 and 2. Further details on coding and aggregation will be worked out in consultation with project participants as we proceed.

The reader will note that the various tiers of democracy recognized in this proposal – Big-D (holistic), dimensions, components, and indicators – are not organized into a single taxonomy (i.e., a tree diagram in which lower-level tiers fall directly under the purview of higher-order tiers). Taxonomies are useful insofar as they help to solve the aggregation problem and clearly delineate the relationship across various tiers of a complex concept. However, they do not always serve to carve nature accurately at its joints. Thus, while various taxonomies of democracy have been proposed (e.g., Dahl 1971), we find that these are either reductionist (excluding important components of democracy) or incoherent (since lower-level categories do not fall neatly beneath higher-order categories). Note that many indicators are relevant for more than one dimension of democracy, and perhaps even for more than one component of democracy. Thus, the notion of constructing exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories that link tightly up and down the ladder of abstraction seems fanciful. Consequently, we have chosen to represent various facets of democracy across multiple tiers but have not imposed a taxonomic organization upon the tiers. What is lost in

parsimony, we hope, is compensated for in comprehensiveness and in faithfulness to each concept under review.¹⁷

In any case, the empirical backbone of the current project lies at the lowest level of aggregation – the *indicators* laid out in section III. Here, several clarifications are in order.

First, inclusion on our list of indicators does not imply that a given property will necessarily lead to desirable policy outcomes. Although models of democracy generally presume a normative vision of the good society, we do not make this presumption in our selection of indicators. To say that an indicator provides a measure of democracy (according to one or more models of democracy) is not to say that it advances the cause of justice or the good.¹⁸ The causal inter-relationship of democracy to other desired outcomes is rightly viewed as an empirical matter.

Second, the set of indicators in section III is not intended to be entirely comprehensive. Indeed, the protean nature of “democracy” resists closure; there are always potentially new indicators that, from one perspective or another, may be associated with key term. Moreover, some dimensions of the concept, such as *deliberation* and *responsiveness*, are difficult to capture empirically, and virtually impossible to track over time and across countries on a global scale. This also limits our scope. Thus, our data-collection effort, while ambitious and wide-ranging, makes no claim to represent the final word on an ever-expanding subject.

Third, different institutions and practices of democracy sometimes conflict with one another. For example, protection of individual liberties can impose limits on the will of the majority; and the existence of strong civil society organizations may have the effect of pressuring government to restrict the civil liberties enjoyed by marginal groups (Berman 1997; Levi 1996). This is implicit in democracy’s multidimensional character. No wide-ranging index can avoid potential conflicts among democracy’s diverse attributes. Note, however, that with separate indicators for these different components it will be possible to examine potential tradeoffs empirically – an important substantive issue for policymakers and academics to grapple with.

Fourth, some indicators are undoubtedly more important in guaranteeing a polity’s overall level of democracy than others. This of course depends upon one’s model of democracy and on the aggregation principles employed to work up from a set of indicators to a holistic measure of democracy. Inclusion on our list of indicators does not presuppose a judgment of relative importance. All it means is that a particular indicator is relevant to the operationalization of at least one model of democracy.

Fifth, some of the categories listed above call forth a host of useful indicators, each shedding light on different aspects of the concept. Others involve only one or two indicators, either because they are relatively simple to measure or because additional elements cannot be easily measured. This means that some institutions and practices have a long list of associated indicators (e.g., Elections), while others are concise (e.g., Sovereignty). Readers should not assume that the length of each list of indicators implies greater or lesser weight in any overall index of democracy (however conceptualized).

Finally, we are aware that some of the chosen indicators cannot be extended all the way back to 1900. Where we encounter such limitations, our plan is code each variable as far back in time as possible (but not beyond 1900). When the time comes for aggregation, different aggregated versions of democracy will be possible using different sets of variables. Specifically, the larger selection of variables covering the more recent years will produce “thicker,” more precise, and more nuanced indicators of democracy, while the smaller set of variables available for the earlier years will produce

¹⁷ The taxonomic model of concept formation is defended by Sartori (1984), and critiqued by Collier and Mahon (1993), Lakoff (1987), and Goertz (2006).

¹⁸ Arneson (2004).

narrower, simpler, more basic indicators of democracy. This strategy will also make it possible to explore how much it matters that democracy is measured in a thick or thin fashion (Coppedge 1999).

V. Anticipated Pay-offs

The potential pay-offs to a multidimensional, tiered, and historical index of democracy may be briefly enumerated.

First, there is the prospect of identifying concepts whose definitions and measurements citizens, scholars, and policymakers can generally agree upon. While the world may never agree on whether the overall level of democracy in India is summarizable as a “4” or a “5” (on some imagined scale), we may yet agree on more specific scores according to the four dimensions of democracy and at lower levels of aggregation.

The importance of creating consensus on these matters can hardly be over-emphasized. The purpose of a democracy index is not simply to guide rich-world policymakers and policymaking bodies such as USAID, the World Bank, and the IMF. As soon as an index becomes established and begins to influence international policymakers, it also becomes fodder for dispute in other countries around the world. A useful index is one that claims the widest legitimacy. A poor index is one that is perceived as a tool of western influence or a mask for the forces of globalization (as Freedom House is sometimes regarded). The hope is that by reducing the components of democracy down to levels that are more coherent and operational it may be possible to garner a broader consensus around this vexed subject. Countries would know, more precisely, why they received a particular score in a particular year.

A second advantage is the degree of precision and differentiation that a multidimensional, tiered, and historical index offers relative to the old-fashioned “Big-D” concept of democracy. While Big-D democracy floats hazily over the surface of politics, the dimensions of a disaggregated index are comparatively specific and precise. Contrasts and comparisons become correspondingly more acute. Our proposed index would allow policymakers to clarify how, specifically, one country’s democratic features differ from others in the region, or across regions.

This is especially helpful in the context of country *assessments*. How can policymakers determine which aspects of a polity are most in need of assistance? While Freedom House and Polity offer only one or several dimensions of analysis (and these are highly correlated and difficult to distinguish conceptually), our proposal envisions twelve such parameters. It seems clear that for assessing the potential impact of programs focused on different elements of a polity it is helpful to have indicators at hand that offer a differentiated view of the subject. Intuitively, the greatest effectiveness is achieved when program interventions are targeted on the weakest element of democracy in a country. These differentiated indicators would make it possible to both identify those elements and test the assumption behind such choices.

Related, the proposed index would allow policymakers to track a single country’s progress and/or regress through time. One would be able to specify *which facets* of a polity have improved, and which have remained stagnant or declined. This means that the longstanding question of regime transitions would be amenable to empirical tests. When a country transitions from autocracy to democracy (or vice-versa), which elements come first? Are there common patterns, a finite set of sequences, pre-requisites? Or, is every transition unique? Do transition patterns affect the consolidation of democracy? With a large set of indicators of many components of democracy

measured over many years, it would become possible for the first time to explore transition *sequences* (McFaul 2005). Does a newly vibrant civil society lead to more competitive elections, or to an authoritarian backlash? Do accountable elected officials create an independent judiciary, or does an independent judiciary make officials accountable? Similar questions could be asked about the relationships among citizenship, voting, parties, civil society, and other components of democracy, perhaps with the assistance of sequence-based econometrics (Abbott 1995; Abbott, Tsay 2000; Wu 2000).

Note that insofar as we wish to judge *trends*, trend lines are necessary. A single snapshot of the contemporary world reveals nothing about the direction or speed at which countries are moving toward, or away from, democracy. Even trends in a short span of recent years can be very misleading, as many democratization paths contain many years of stasis punctuated by sudden movements toward or away from democracy. Assessments of *global trends* require even more data, as some countries move in opposite directions in any given year; “waves” of democratization exist only on average, with many exceptions (Huntington 1991).

One would also be able to test democracy’s causal effect as an independent variable. Does democracy hinder economic growth, contain inflation, promote public order, or ensure international peace? Answering such classic questions absolutely requires a lengthy time-series because the effects of these factors play out over many years. They also require a great deal of disaggregation because we need to know, as specifically as possible, which elements of democracy are related to which results. This is helpful from the policy perspective as well as from the analytic perspective (so that we can gain insight into causal mechanisms). Whether democracy is looked upon as an independent (causal) variable, or a dependent (outcome) variable, we need to know *which* aspect of this complex construct is at play.

Recent work has raised the possibility that democracy’s effects are long-term, rather than (or in addition to) short-term (Gerring et al. 2005; Converse & Kapstein 2006; Persson & Tabellini 2006). It seems quite probable that the short-term and long-term effects of democracy are quite different. Plausibly, long-term effects are more consistent, and more positive along various developmental outcomes, than short-term effects. Consideration of these questions demands a historical coding of the key variables.

Policymakers also wish to know what effect their policy interventions might have on a given country’s quality of democracy (or on a whole set of countries, considered as a sample). Yet, there is little hope of answering this question in a definitive fashion if democracy is understood only at a highly aggregated level. The intervention is too small relative to the outcome to draw strong causal inferences between USAID policies, on the one hand, and Country A’s level of democracy (as measured by Freedom House or Polity) on the other. However, it is plausible – though admittedly still quite difficult – to estimate the causal effects of a program focused on a particular element of democracy if that element can be measured separately. Thus, USAID’s election-centered programs might be judged against an outcome that measures the quality of elections. This is plausible, and perhaps quite informative (though, to be sure, many factors other than USAID have an effect on the quality of elections in a country). The USAID-sponsored quantitative assessment of its own Democracy and Governance programs established the feasibility of such comparisons (Finkel et al. 2007), although the quality of the available indicators limited what could be learned. With better indicators, we could have greater confidence in such findings. The bottom line is this: since policymakers must make reference to country-level outcome indicators, they will be much better served if these indicators are available at a disaggregated level.

All of these features should enhance the utility of a disaggregated index. Indeed, the need for a differentiated picture of democracy around the world is at least as important for policymakers as it

might be for academics. Both are engaged in a common enterprise, an enterprise that has been impeded by the lack of a sufficiently discriminating instrument.

In this context, one might ponder the sort of problems that would arise for macroeconomists, finance ministers, and policymakers at the World Bank and IMF if they possessed only one highly aggregated indicator of economic performance. As good as GDP is (and there are of course difficulties), it would not go very far without the existence of additional variables that measure the *components* of this macro-level concept. We are in a similar situation in the field of political analysis. We have some crude sense of how democratic a country is; but we have no systematic knowledge of how a country scores on the various components of democracy.

VI. Strategies for Implementation

In order to manage a project of this scope without losing touch with the particularities of each case it is necessary to marry the virtues of crossnational data with the virtues of regional expertise. As currently envisioned, this project would rely primarily upon country experts to do the case-by-case coding. Student assistants may be employed in a supporting role (e.g., to fetch data). These coding decisions will be supervised by several regional experts who are permanently attached to the project and who will work to ensure that coding procedures across countries, regions, and time-periods are consistent. Extensive discussion and cross-validation will be conducted at all levels, including inter-coder reliability tests, as discussed.

We strongly advise an open and transparent system of commentary on the scores that are proposed for each country. This would include a blog- or Wiki-style format in which interested individuals are encouraged to comment on the scores provisionally assigned to the country or countries that they know well. This commentary might take the form of additional information – perhaps unknown to the country expert – that speaks to the viability of the coding. Or it might take the form of extended discussions about how a particular question applies to the circumstances of that country. Naturally, a few cranky participants may be anticipated. However, the Wikipedia experience suggests that there are many civic-minded individuals, some of them quite sophisticated, who may be interested in engaging in this process and may have a lot to add. At the very least, it may provide further information upon which to base estimates of uncertainty (as discussed above). Final decisions, in any case, would be left to the larger committee of experts associated with the project.

Evidently, different indicators will involve different sorts of judgments and different levels of difficulty. Some issues are harder than others, and will require more codings and re-codings. As a general principle, wherever low inter-coder reliability persists for a given question that question should be reexamined and, if possible, reformulated.

It is important that the process of revision be *continual*. Even after the completed dataset is posted, users should be encouraged to contribute suggestions for revision and these suggestions should be systematically reviewed.

As a management structure, we propose an advisory group to be headed by academics -- with some remuneration, depending on the time requirements, and suitable administrative support -- in partnership with the policy community. We think that a major shortcoming of previous efforts arose from insufficient input from methodologists and subject specialists. In this wide-ranging project, experts will be needed on each of the twelve components. Their ongoing engagement is essential to the success of the enterprise. Moreover, it is important to canvas widely within the social science disciplines so that decisions are not monopolized by a few (with perhaps quirky judgments). As a convening body, there are several possibilities including the Development Assistance

Committee (DAC) of the OECD (which has a demonstrated interest in problems of measurement as connected to topics of governance), the American Political Science Association, the National Academy of Sciences, or an association of universities.

Before any agency, or group of agencies, undertakes a commitment to develop – and maintain – a new democracy index it is important that it be confident of the yield. Thus, we recommend several interim tests of a “pilot” nature.

One of the principal claims of this index is that greater inter-coder reliability will be achieved when the concept of democracy is disaggregated. This claim may be probed through inter-coder reliability tests across the leading democracy indices. A pilot test of this nature might be conducted in the following manner. Train the same set of coders to code all countries (or a subset of countries) in a given year according to guidelines provided by Freedom House, Polity, and the present index. Each country-year would receive several codings by different coders, thus providing the basis for an inter-coder reliability test. These would then be compared across indices. Since the coders would remain the same, varying levels of inter-coder reliability should be illustrative of basic differences in the performance of the indices. Of course, there are certain methodological obstacles to any study of this sort. One must decide how much training to provide to the coders, and how much time to give them. One must decide whether to employ a few coders to cover all countries, or have separate coders for each country. One must decide whether to hire “naïve” coders (e.g., students) or coders well-versed in the countries and regions they are assigned to code (the “country expert” model).

In any case, we think the exercise worthwhile, not only because it provides an initial test of the present index but also because it may bring a level of rigor to a topic -- political indicators – that has languished for many years in an inadequate state.

If a multidimensional index promises so many returns, one might wonder why it has not already been developed. After all, academics and policy makers have been struggling with issues of conceptualization and measurement for quite some time, and the problems noted at the outset of this paper are acknowledged by most experts.

It is important to remember that producing an index of this nature is time-consuming and expensive, requiring the participation of many researchers. Moreover, while the downstream benefits are great, no single scholar or group of scholars has the resources or the incentives to invest.¹⁹ Academic disciplines do not generally reward members who labor for years to develop new data resources. Consequently, academics have continued to employ – and complain about -- Polity, Freedom House, ACLP, and other highly aggregated indices.

To be sure, the entire range of indicators proposed here is probably larger than any single funder is willing or able to undertake. It is therefore highly advisable that several funders share responsibility for the project so that its financial base is secure and so that the project is not wholly indebted to a single funder, a situation that might raise questions about independence. Preferably, some of these funders would be non-American (e.g., Canadian, European, Japanese, EU, or international bodies like the World Bank or UNDP). Private foundations (e.g., OSI, the Google foundation) might also be tapped. We conceptualize this project as a union of many forces. Of course, this makes project management more complicated. But such diversity may also, in the long run, enhance the legitimacy of the end-product.

Another possibility is that different funders might undertake to develop (or take responsibility for) different components of the index, thus apportioning responsibility. It is essential,

¹⁹ Note that while scholars who are discontented with the leading indicators of democracy periodically re-code countries of special concern to them (e.g., Acuna-Alfaro 2005; Berg-Schlosser 2004a, 2004b; Bowman, Lehoucq & Mahoney 2005; Gibson ??; McHenry 2000), this re-coding is generally limited to a small set of countries and/or a small period of time. The incentive structure for data collection is discussed compellingly in Herrera, Kapur (2007).

however, that some level of supervision be maintained at the top so that the efforts are well-coordinated. Coordination involves not only logistical issues (sharing experts in the field, software, and so forth) but also, more importantly, the development of indicators that are mutually exclusive (non-overlapping) so that the original purpose of the project – disaggregation – is maintained. Note that several of the above-listed indicators might be employed across several components, requiring coordination on the definition and collection of that variable.

Policymakers will have to step into this leadership vacuum if they expect the problem of faulty indicators to be solved (or at least improved). Precedents for intervention can be found in many fields of natural and social science. USAID served as the principal funder for the Demographic and Health (DHS) surveys, which vastly enhanced our knowledge of public health throughout the developing world.²⁰ The State Department and the CIA served as principal funders of the Correlates of War data collection project. On a much smaller scale, the State Department provides ongoing support for the Polity dataset. Measuring democracy well – with a multidimensional, tiered, and historical approach – will require equally substantial public investment.

²⁰ Surveys and findings are described on the USAID web site at <http://www.measuredhs.com/>

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Appendix A:
Coding Strategies

Coding categories listed in this index are *dichotomous* (yes/no), *categorical* (un-ranked), *ordinal* (ranked), or *interval*.²¹ For each indicator, coders would be expected to record: a) the answer to the question, b) the source(s) on which the answer is based, c) the name of the coder(s), d) an estimate of uncertainty (discussed below), and e) any further explanation that might be helpful. It is important therefore that the chosen data-storage software be capable of handling numerical and narrative responses (e.g., MS-Access). Wherever one finds disparity between formal rules (constitutional or statutory) and actual practice, coding decisions should be based on the latter. Unless otherwise specified, the geographic unit of analysis is the (sovereign or semisovereign) nation-state.²²

Predictably, a highly disaggregated index translates into a long set of indicators – roughly one hundred, as presently constructed. While this may seem ponderous, one must also consider that most of these questions are fairly simple. It should not take a country expert, or well-coached student assistant, very long to complete each questionnaire. Indeed, a long set of questions is usually quicker to complete than a much shorter set of questions on the same general subject if the latter are vague and ambiguous – as they must be if they are to encompass the same subject in a more concise framework. No time is lost, necessarily, by the use of a longer questionnaire.

The point scores for each indicator will be accompanied by an estimate of *uncertainty*. This may be arrived at by combining two features of the analysis: a) inter-coder reliability and b) subjective uncertainty (the coder's estimate of how accurate a given score might be). Uncertainty estimates serve several functions: scholars may include these estimates as a formal component of their analyses; they provide a signal to policymakers of where the democracy index is most (and least) assured; and they focus attention on ways in which future iterations of the index may be improved.

Note that uncertainty estimates allow for the inclusion of countries and time-periods with vastly different quantities and qualities of data -- without compromising the legitimacy of the overall project. Of course, contemporary codings are likely to be associated with lower levels of uncertainty than the analogous historical codings, and countries about which much is known (e.g., France) will be associated with lower levels of uncertainty than countries about which very little is known (e.g., Central African Republic). Without corresponding estimates of uncertainty, an index becomes hostage to its weakest links; critics gravitate quickly to countries and time-periods that are highly suspect, and the validity of the index comes under harsh assault – even if the quality of other data points is more secure. With the systematic use of uncertainty estimates, these very real difficulties are brought directly into view by granting them a formal status. In so doing, the legitimacy of the larger enterprise is enhanced, and misuses discouraged.

²¹ Further work will be required in order to specify what these scales mean in the context of each question. In certain cases, it may be possible to combine separate components into more aggregated nominal scales without losing information (Coppedge & Reinicke 1990). This is possible, evidently, only when the underlying data of interest is, in fact, nominal.

²² Evidently, there is enormous heterogeneity within large nation-states, necessitating judgments about which level of coding corresponds most closely to the mean value within that unit. Where extreme heterogeneity exists vis-à-vis the variable of interest it may be important to include a companion variable indicating high within-country variance on that particular component. One thinks of contemporary Sri Lanka and Colombia – states where the quality of democracy is quite different across regions of the country.

Indicators may vary according to historical era. For example, the presence of a free press might center on television-based media outlets in the present era and telegraph and print-based media in previous eras. While this complicates matters a bit, one might note that the same genre of incommensurability is faced in cross-sectional comparisons across rich and poor countries. (Radio is generally much more important as a medium of communication in the developing world than is television or print media, for example.) These indicators will be valid as objective indicators of the concrete phenomena they measure in a quite literal way. Combining them into cross-nationally comparable indicators of higher-order concepts such as freedom of the press or access to information will require carefully thought-out aggregation rules.

For the postwar era, obtaining sufficient information ought to be relatively easy. Sources include the *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections [and Developments]*, *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, the *Journal of Democracy* ("Election Watch"), *El Pais* (www.elpais.es), *Political Handbook of the World* (Banks [various years]), reports of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, Elections around the World (electionworld.org), the International Foundation for Election Systems [IFES] (IFES.org), the Commonwealth Election Law and Observer Group (www.thecommonwealth.org), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (www.osce.org/odihr), the Carter Center (www.cartercenter.org), the International Republican Institute [IRI] (www.iri.org), the National Democratic Institute [NDI] (www.ndi.org), the Organization for American States [OAS] (www.oas.org), and country narratives from Europa (and other) Yearbooks and the annual Freedom House surveys.

Further back in time, sources are scarcer. We will depend on many area-studies specialists to guide project managers and their coders to the best available sources. A wide variety of general reference materials is available which should cover the important features of political life in all sizeable countries (non micro-states). These include: *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, *Statesman's Yearbook*, *Europa Yearbook*, newspaper reports, and secondary historical accounts. Archival sources may be necessary for some countries and some features of the index.

Given the project's broad theoretical scope and empirical reach, evidence-gathering approaches must be eclectic. Multiple sources should be employed wherever possible in order to cross-validate the accuracy of underlying data.