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The People Have Spoken: Global Views of Democracy



USIA Office of Research and Media Reaction

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**A Special Report of the
Office of Research and Media Reaction**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democracy means many things to people around the world. USIA polling in major countries in recent years shows how publics view democracy and their own governments:

- Definitions of democracy vary from country to country, sometimes taking in the Western ideal of "liberal democracy," sometimes not. The hunger for the "rule of law," however, appears nearly universal.
- In countries making the transition from less democratic to more democratic forms of rule, the desire for stability, order, and especially economic security may often be as strong or stronger than the desire for freedom and democracy. This is true in such diverse regions as eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and Africa.
- In more mature democracies like India, the United States, and Japan, disquiet with certain aspects of freedom and individual rights can co-exist with a fundamental commitment to the current system of government.
- In country after country there is a gap -- sometimes quite broad -- between the democratic ideals the public feels are important and the practice of these ideals.
- Many governments receive relatively low performance marks and/or confidence ratings from their constituents, yet these feelings of dissatisfaction are not always associated with overall discontent with their governmental order. This may in part be explained by the divergence between what the governed expect from their leaders and what those leaders can actually accomplish.
- While trust in most public institutions is generally low worldwide, the military in those same countries tends to receive top confidence marks. The reasons seem as varied as the societies under investigation -- a reflection of priorities (in addition to defending the homeland) such as maintaining order or protecting secularism.
- World publics appear convinced that one of the gravest threats to democracy today comes from within -- from the corrosive effects of corruption on officials at all levels.
- A set of shared attitudes and values among a nation's citizens seems to be the sine qua non for any democracy to function well or even to survive.

Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

1

Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

4

Democracy in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina

10

Democracy in Turkey

12

Democracy in Russia, Ukraine,
and the Commonwealth of Independent States

14

Democracy in Africa

20

Democracy in South Asia

23

Democracy in East and Southeast Asia

29

Democracy in Latin America

34

Democracy in Haiti

42

Democracy in the United States

45

Conclusion

52

Appendix: A List of Polls

53

Introduction

With the battle between capitalism and socialism over for now, a new global issue has seized the imagination of social scientists. Whether posed as the “clash of civilizations” or “the end of history,” the debate has been engaged: Whither democracy?¹ Some argue that democracy is spreading irreversibly, others that it is in retreat. Are there objective measures that can gauge where democracy stands today? Freedom House in New York issues an annual “scorecard” assessing how nations around the world stack up to its yardsticks. Its reports try to measure such variables as the degree of freedom of the press and speech and the openness of electoral procedures. The U.S. State Department does something similar with its yearly reports on human rights and on religious freedom. The Heritage Foundation publishes an annual review rating the extent of economic freedom, country by country.

This report, on the other hand, analyzes attitudes about democracy held by the people who live in countries in every region of the world.

Wrestling with Basic Concepts

There was a time, not so long ago, when most people could easily say what democracy means. They saw the world largely in terms of black and white. Nations like the United States, western European countries, and Japan were democracies. Places that called themselves “democratic republics” or “people’s republics” were automatically excluded, as were dozens of other countries that demonstrably lacked mechanisms for the public to control its leaders.²

Today, historic definitions of democracy -- “government by the people, either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled; majority rule” -- seem too limited to embrace all the values that have accrued to the idea of “democracy” over the centuries.

Consider the following propositions, many or all of which might be considered essential components of democracy in modern times:

- The judicial system treats everyone equally.
- There is freedom to criticize the government openly.
- Honest elections are held regularly.
- One can choose from several parties and candidates when voting.
- The media (broadcast and print) are free to report news and commentary without government censorship.
- The rights of minorities are protected.
- There is equality of opportunity between men and women.
- Free health care and free education are available to all.
- There is freedom to practice any religion openly.
- There is economic prosperity in the country.
- The government guarantees economic equality among its citizens.
- The government provides for [guarantees] the basic material needs of its citizens.

Some of these attributes focus on “political” values of democracy: the rule of law, civil rights, an open and pluralistic society. The overarching significance of liberty in these propositions lends a

name to the associated concept of "liberal democracy." The "social-welfare" values of the other attributes shape a somewhat different concept, that of "social democracy." To confuse matters even more, one expert suggests we are now witnessing "the rise of a disturbing phenomenon in international life -- illiberal democracy."³ He refers to the co-option of outwardly or formally democratic practices by nondemocratic rulers.

Democracy seems to demand a certain level of economic development, even prosperity, to flourish. Moreover, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has argued: "Democracy is impossible without private ownership because private property -- resources beyond the arbitrary reach of the state -- provides the only secure basis for political opposition and intellectual freedom."⁴ However, as Paul Goble has written: "Democracies by themselves cannot make anyone rich, and free markets do not by themselves guarantee a democratic form of government. The two may prove to be mutually supportive, but they are not one and the same thing."⁵

Can a "fundamentalist" state be a democracy? That is unlikely, given the lack of pluralism in such a state. On the other hand, in states ruled by a secular ideology, such as communist China, organized religion itself represents a threat: an independent authority which may undermine the legitimacy of the rulers.

One of the major problems confronting democracies in the world today is that of corruption. Present in any form of government, graft and corruption are especially troubling in a democracy because they undermine the equal access to authority that is one hallmark of democracy. They also erode public trust in institutions.⁶

Democracy and Public Opinion

It is striking how many world publics these days seem to express dissatisfaction with their own freely elected leaders. In nation after nation public opinion surveys show low or falling confidence in public institutions and leadership.

The question is: Do these attitudes reflect a dissatisfaction with democracy in general, or with the way in which democratic governments perform their duties, or do they only show lack of confidence in specific leaders and institutions but retention of trust in democracy more generally?

This paper examines public attitudes in various countries worldwide on different aspects of democracy. USIA has not polled on all the relevant issues in all countries. Absent from this report almost entirely, for example, are western Europe, the Near East, and much of Asia. Discussion of issues is limited for other areas. Some countries -- including the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Haiti -- receive special treatment because they represent particularly timely or interesting case studies. The chapter on Latin America is longer than most because of the rich

data available for that region. What remains is, if not exhaustive, at least a good indication of where democracy stands in many parts of the world.^a

^a A Note on Methodology: Because of the variations in democracies worldwide, the questions used in the various polls cited herein frequently differ in wording, one from another. Polls were conducted in one year in some countries but different years in others (see appendix). These variations pose some difficulties for purposes of comparison. Yet the thrust of one question is often very close to that of another, slightly different one; and many of the basic attitudes measured are unlikely to shift in the course of a year or two.

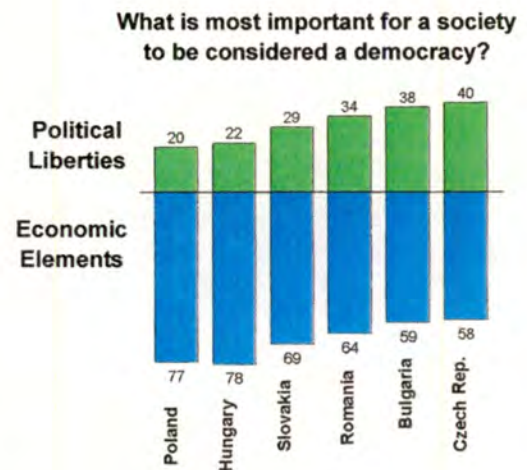
Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

A Multidimensional Definition of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

Central and east Europeans define democracy in a way that combines liberal democratic and socio-economic elements such as equality, security and prosperity. Immediately following the demise of the Soviet bloc, roughly half in all countries of the region inclined toward each set of values. However, as publics became more secure in their new political freedoms and their countries began the transition to free-market economies, USIA surveys found that economic concerns rapidly began to eclipse political values in their thinking on democracy.

When asked in 1996-97 surveys to rank which element of democracy from a given list is most important "for a society to be called a democracy," sizable majorities name economic benefits rather than political values (see figure at right, using 1997 data).⁷

Economic optimists -- those who are most sanguine about economic circumstances in their country as well as their own financial situation -- are more inclined to say political freedoms overshadow economic elements. Economic pessimists are inclined to stress economic equality and stability. Similarly, women, the elderly and the least educated, along with opponents of the free market, are more inclined to favor economic elements, particularly equality, in their definition of democracy. Those more likely to feel secure with the economic transition -- men, the young and the better educated -- and supporters of the market system are more inclined to prefer political freedoms.



Individual Components of Democracy

While these publics tend to name economic elements as most important, they do not reject the political rights associated with democracy. The tables on the opposite page show public response when respondents are asked whether each of the six items listed is essential "for a society to be called a democracy." In this question, respondents evaluate each element separately, often finding both political liberties and economic elements crucial for democracy.

Of the liberal democratic elements, only "a system of justice that treats everyone equally" is identified as essential "for a society to be called a democracy" by solid majorities across the region. This finding has been fairly consistent since the fall of the communist systems. Fewer (between a third and a half) in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and

<u>Equal Justice System</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	70	73	79	73	65	82
important	22	21	16	21	28	14
not very important	3	3	3	3	4	--
not important	1	2	1	1	1	--
<u>Multiparty elections</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	30	41	45	32	37	46
important	45	28	35	36	47	35
not very important	14	17	12	20	11	8
not important	5	13	5	6	2	3
<u>Freedom to Criticize Government</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	39	43	29	24	36	51
important	40	32	36	36	40	33
not very important	14	17	24	27	18	8
not important	2	7	9	9	4	2
<u>Economic Prosperity</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	75	78	70	74	65	75
important	19	19	23	20	30	19
not very important	2	2	3	2	3	1
not important	1	--	1	--	1	1
<u>Basic Needs Guaranteed</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	64	77	59	69	55	68
important	27	19	30	24	36	25
not very important	3	3	7	4	6	3
not important	2	1	2	--	1	1
<u>Economic Equality</u>	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
essential	40	51	39	49	36	44
important	38	34	34	35	44	32
not very important	11	10	15	10	11	12
not important	5	5	8	3	7	6

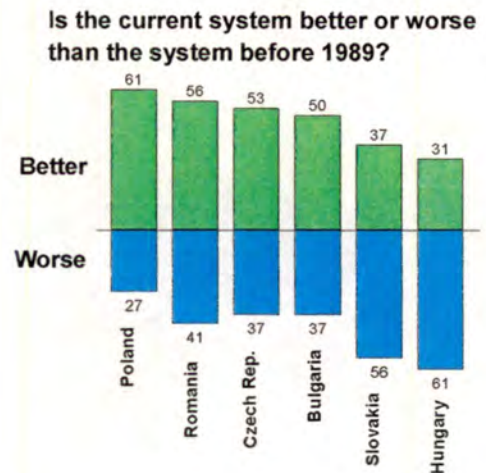
Bulgaria consider “at least two strong political parties competing in elections” and the “freedom to criticize the government” essential for a society to be called a democracy.

Among the economic elements, majorities of two-thirds or more in most of central-eastern Europe say that “*economic prosperity in the country*” is essential for a society to be called a democracy. This finding highlights the degree to which these publics are likely to evaluate democracy according to economic performance. Slightly smaller majorities say that “*a government that guarantees basic economic needs for all citizens*” is essential. In addition, between 36 and 51 percent say that “*a government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens*” is essential for a society to be called a democracy.

Evaluations of Current Political System

USIA data from the early 1990s through 1997 show that while many central and east Europeans see a clear improvement in their political system, others -- in some cases, as many or more -- think the current political system is worse than the system before 1989.

The figure at the right (1997 data) shows that more in Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria evaluate the current political system as better than the previous one, although significant percentages say it is worse. Slovaks and Hungarians are more likely to say the current system is worse than the previous.⁸



Throughout central and eastern Europe, those who have gained or expect to gain from greater openness in the economic and political systems are most positive about the new political order. Those who are less likely to prosper are more inclined to long for the security of the former regime and evaluate the current system as worse than the previous one. In addition, the better-educated and those who rate the country's economy as “good” and are optimistic about the future are also more likely to evaluate the current system as better than the previous, while the least educated and those most negative about the economy and their own financial situation -- those who have gained the least or lost out in the changes -- are more inclined to be critical of the current political system.

Those under 30 are slightly more likely to say that the current political system is better than the former one.

Evaluation of Economic Conditions Has an Impact

Publics were not always prepared for the degree of economic hardship that has, for many, accompanied the transition to markets and democracy. Their inevitable disillusionment appears to contribute in some cases to their relatively modest support for the current system.

USIA survey findings have shown that majorities in most central and east European countries -- except for Poland -- consider the current economic situation worse than the previous situation. Support for a Western-style free market economy is modest across the region. Half at most in each country think a free market is right for them, while a quarter to a half think it is wrong.

Support for New Institutions

Governments in central and eastern Europe have tended to enjoy the support of their publics during brief "honeymoon periods" following elections. Like publics in longer-established democracies, central and east Europeans have sometimes turned governments out of office when those in power failed to deliver expected improvement. In some cases (Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria), this pattern led to the election of governments whose members were active in the former communist regimes. More recently, some of these "leftist" governments (e.g., in Bulgaria and Poland) have been challenged by new and renewed political forces.

Publics in central and eastern Europe were initially highly supportive of their new institutions following the fall of the communist regimes. For example, in 1990, majorities in Poland (63%), Czechoslovakia (86%) and Romania (78%) had confidence in their national governments (47% in Hungary had confidence). Seven years into the transition, however, support has decreased considerably.⁹

Confidence in National Government (1997)

	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
great deal	3	7	5	6	7	21
fair amount	25	36	27	20	31	32
not very much	54	27	50	48	45	30
none at all	13	28	18	25	17	15

Confidence in the justice system is very important in legitimizing regimes, particularly as most central and east Europeans' consistently rate an equal system of justice (along with economic prosperity) as essential to a democracy. Confidence in the courts and police varies somewhat across the region, but has remained fairly stable within countries over the last few years.

Confidence in the Police

	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
great deal	9	10	2	5	18	16
fair amount	42	39	27	29	35	35
not very much	35	33	51	47	35	33
none at all	12	18	20	18	11	14

***Confidence in
the Courts (1997)***

	Poland	Hungary	Czech Rep.	Slovakia	Romania	Bulgaria
great deal	7	13	2	5	14	6
fair amount	37	37	20	33	32	19
not very much	38	28	51	44	39	43
none at all	13	16	25	15	13	25

Civic Culture

Public interest in politics is fairly low across the region. Only in Slovakia do a majority (57%) claim to have at least "a fair amount" of interest in political affairs, with clear majorities in the other five countries expressing little or no interest. Most strikingly, eight in ten Romanians claim to have "not much" or no interest in politics. In all countries except Romania, interest in politics tends to increase steadily with both education and age, although there is a noticeable drop off above age 65. In addition, men in each country tend to claim much more political interest.

Publics in central and eastern Europe tend to divide over the role of the citizen in political life. In 1996, Czechs (65%), Poles (59%) and Slovaks (56%) are more likely to say "*citizens' involvement in political life is an integral part of democratic solutions to political problems,*" though significant minorities disagree. The opposite view — "*it's best to leave politics to elected officials*" — prevails in Hungary (54%) and Romania (54%) and the public is closely divided in Bulgaria (47% vs. 44%).

Trust in one's fellow citizens is a hallmark of a democratic civic culture. In five of the countries, about eight in ten say that "you cannot be too careful" in trusting other people. There is a more even split in Bulgaria, where four in ten (41%) believe that "most people can be trusted." In each country, men and the better-educated are more likely to hold a benign view of others, with no pattern of differences among the age groups.

Challenges for Democracy

While majorities across the region agree with the statement, "*Whatever the problems that democracy brings, it's the best system of government for us,*" various political, economic and social problems affect public regard for democracy. Political corruption and economic decline, for example, pose tremendous challenges to new regimes aspiring to institutional reform. Other issues, such as longstanding ethnic tensions and independent-minded media, challenge the regimes' dedication to political freedoms. These problems can also fuel dissatisfaction within the public.

Crime and Corruption: Publics in most central and east European countries are closely divided on whether political corruption is worse now than under communism. Poles and Bulgarians are more likely to agree that the level of corruption is no worse now than before. Elsewhere, though, the pattern is reversed, with more *disagreeing* with this statement.

Concern about organized crime is widespread in the region. Nearly eight in ten in each country surveyed believe that organized crime has "a very big" or "a rather big" influence over their country's affairs. Relatively few say that it has "a rather small" influence or "none at all." Except in Poland and Bulgaria, the belief that organized crime is very influential appears linked to a more general concern about corruption.

Other Issues -- Ethnic Tensions and Media Freedom: USIA surveys conducted in 1995 reveal that central and east Europeans are generally no more likely than some west Europeans to express prejudice against minorities living in their countries. However, while east and west Europeans voice similar levels of dislike for the minority groups in their countries, these feelings tend to find more overt expression among east than west Europeans.

Progress toward media freedom has been uneven across the region. In countries where the media are restricted, governments make use of powerful state-run television networks and severely limit the activity of fledgling independent media. This has added impact because, as USIA surveys have shown, publics across central and eastern Europe tend to rely most on television for information about events in their countries. When publics are asked about the media climate in their country, generally the young, urban, and better-educated are particularly critical of the media, and are most likely to perceive bias in news reporting.

"Political corruption is not any worse now than under communism."

August - October 1997	Agree	Disagree
Bulgaria	46%	39%
Czech Republic	38	56
Hungary	43	46
Poland	52	32
Romania	46	50
Slovakia	32	59

"How much influence would you say organized crime/Mafia has over [our] affairs?"

August - October 1997	Big	Small
Bulgaria	79%	7%
Czech Republic	74	21
Hungary	78	16
Poland	72	20
Romania	80	15
Slovakia	78	17

Democracy in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina

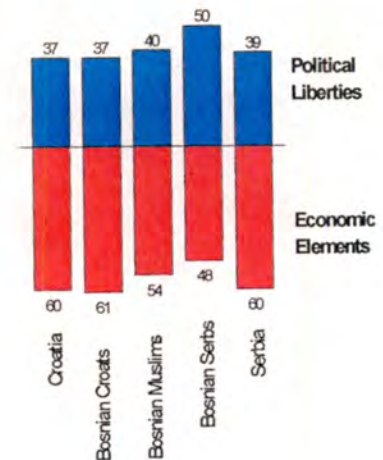
The previous section looked at public perceptions of democracy in countries which, to differing degrees, have been in a democratic transition since the end of the cold war. This section briefly outlines attitudes toward democracy in three countries where democratization has been overshadowed by the turbulent break-up of the former Yugoslavia: Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina.

Ethnic Divisions Present Obstacle for Establishment of Democratic Values

Ethnic animosities still run strong in these former Yugoslav countries. Unresolved situations in Eastern Slavonia and in Kosovo present challenges to the establishment of democracy in Croatia and Serbia, respectively. But war is the most extreme manifestation of the destructive power of ethnic tensions in this region. The idea of a multiethnic Bosnia continues to be opposed by nearly all Bosnian Serbs and most Bosnian Croats. Both remain convinced that the three ethnic groups can no longer live together because the war has done too much damage. Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, support a multiethnic state and continue to believe the three ethnic groups can live peacefully together again in the country.

Democracy Viewed as Both Political Freedom and Economic Security

Like other central and east Europeans, majorities in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia Hercegovina view democracy as having both a political liberties component -- including multiparty elections, a system of justice that treats everyone equally and the freedom to criticize the government -- and an economic security component -- including economic prosperity, a government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens and one that guarantees that citizens' basic economic needs are met (see figure, based on 1997 data). When asked specifically which element is most important for a society to be considered a democracy, publics in Serbia and Croatia tend to rank economic elements as most important. In Bosnia, Bosnian Croats rank economic elements as most important as do a slim majority of Bosnian Muslims. Bosnian Serbs are closely divided.



Selective Confidence in Government Institutions

These publics tend to be quite selective as to which government institutions they support, with confidence in national governments tending to be the most variable. Croats tend to voice confidence in their national government and Bosnian Muslims express confidence in the central government, the Federation Parliament and the collective presidency of Bosnia. By contrast,

Bosnian Croats and Serbs, and Serbs in Serbia, lack confidence in their national governments,¹⁰ although a majority of Bosnian Serbs express confidence in the Bosnian Serb Parliament. Local governments tend to inspire more confidence, with majorities among all three ethnic groups in Bosnia having confidence in their local government.

Confidence in Army, Police and Courts

Except among Bosnian Croats, the armed forces elicit more confidence than any other national institution among these publics. Nine in ten Croats express confidence in the Croatian Army. Nine in ten Bosnian Serbs express confidence in the Bosnian Serb Army and nearly as many Bosnian Muslims express confidence in the Muslim-Croat Federation Army. However, only one in ten Bosnian Croats expresses confidence in the Federation Army. Among Serbs in Serbia, confidence in the army is at half, but still higher than most other national institutions. Confidence in the police remains solid in Croatia and among some Bosnians (Muslims in particular). Half or more, except among Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Croatia lack confidence in the court system.

Democracy in Turkey

Turkey has -- for half a century -- straddled more explosive fault lines than perhaps any other democratic nation and therefore deserves a special note. Established in the 1920s as a secular state by charismatic leader Kemal Ataturk, modern Turkey still walks several tightropes: *geographically*, it is poised between Europe and Asia; *strategically*, it is a member of NATO but not integrated into other European organizations such as the EU; *culturally*, its population is largely Muslim, but the modern republic is founded on secularist principles.

Tension between the secular state and Islamist elements in Turkey was highlighted in recent years in the rise to power of Refah (Welfare) Party leader Necmettin Erbakan in 1996 in coalition with the True Path party. Erbakan's efforts to elevate Islamic values in politics and to strengthen ties with some Islamist states of the Middle East drew heavy criticism from opponents. Under pressure from the Turkish military -- which considers itself the protector of the secular tenets of Kemalism -- Erbakan resigned in 1997. Currently, in the name of protecting Turkish secularism, federal prosecutors are working to ban the Party (causing some observers to question whether such a move is itself democratic).

Despite the gains of Refah over the past few years, a 1997 USIA survey shows that roughly a quarter of the Turkish public can be characterized as either moderate or staunch *Islamists*, with only one in ten expressing staunch Islamist views. The majority of the public remains either moderately or strongly *secularist* in outlook (76%). While some wish to promote religious values -- having Islamic values play a larger role in society (78%) and increasing religious education in schools (63%) -- these views tend to reflect social conservatism rather than a move toward political Islam. Just a quarter of the public think that "Turkey should be administered according to Shariat laws," and fewer still (14%) favor a role for religious organizations in government.

Although political and religious cleavages visibly strain Turkish democracy, beneath the surface there is a surprising degree of consensus on some core democratic tenets. The overwhelming

Most Important Element in a Democracy (in %; 1997)

System of justice that treats everyone equally	35
Economic equality among all citizens	15
Government that guarantees basic economic needs are met	13
Economic prosperity in the country	11
Freedom to criticize the government	6
Multiparty system	5

majority of Turks (92%) think that their country should pursue democratic principles,¹¹ and three-quarters (73%) also believe that a multiparty system is better than a one-party system.

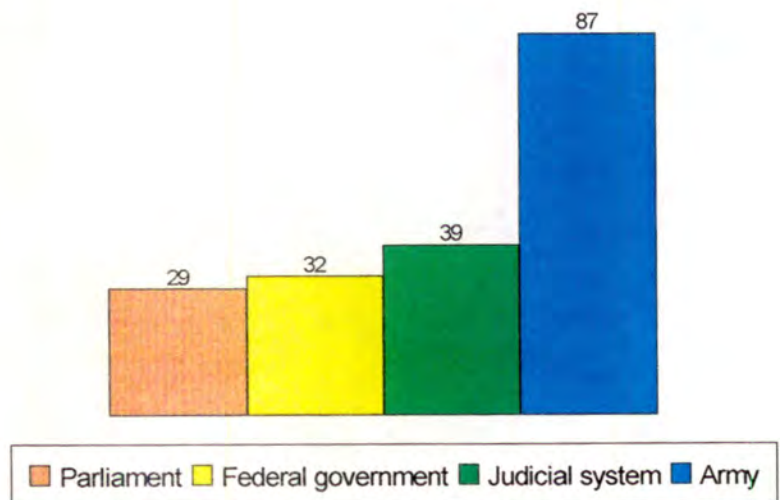
Participatory aspects of democracy also appeal to many Turks: eight in ten feel that citizens have a duty to do something about policies with which they disagree.

Yet, as with many world publics, a gap remains between this widespread support for certain democratic ideals and confidence in Turkey's current political system. Two-thirds say that most people "have no say in what the government does" and that the current political system does not protect citizens' rights. In addition, confidence in government is low. In 1997, as many do *not* believe that "in general, one can rely on the government to do what's right" as agree with this view (48% to 46%).¹²

Majorities of Turks *lack* confidence in the federal government (69%), parliament (67%) and judiciary (56%). (Half doubt that the courts guarantee everyone a fair trial regardless of social position.) However, slightly more have than lack confidence in *local* government (50% to 45%). The Army is the most trusted institution in Turkey (nine in ten voice confidence), and as many trust it to "safeguard the interests of the Turkish people." Seven in ten also express confidence in mosques and in the police.

The upshot remains, however, that fully 88 percent agree with the statement "I feel very critical of our political system," and seven in ten say that politics "is dirty and too closely tied to or influenced by criminals."

Turks Expressing Confidence in Various Public Institutions (in %)



Democracy in Russia, Ukraine, and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Just as the end of the Soviet empire in 1989 brought democratic change in central and eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union itself since 1991 has ushered in a nearly unprecedented transformation of governance in the former USSR. Pluralism and democracy, if limited and inchoate, have at least taken root in some of the former Soviet republics. Though much challenged, freedom has proven resilient in many of the successor states. The transition is incomplete, however, and democracy's destiny not assured.

As in the countries freed from Soviet thrall, the idea of democracy most current in the former USSR is something akin to "social democracy" in Western terms. Political rights and freedoms are not ignored, as the graphs on the following page show. Large majorities recognize the importance of a free press, the ability to criticize their government openly, freedom of religion, and honest elections. Since 1989 -- when the first relatively free elections in over 70 years were permitted in the then-USSR -- the Russian people and other former Soviet citizens have demonstrated their dedication to these principles of democracy in action.

Nonetheless, social well-being and legal equality top the list of most-desired democratic features. Free education and health care for all get a nod of approval from virtually all, as does the critical foundation of the rule of law that "all are treated equally by the judicial system" and "the guilty are punished no matter who they are."

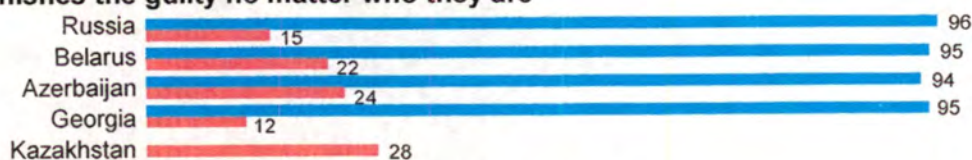
The Roots of Disillusionment

Throughout the region, there is a considerable gap between what publics say they want in a democracy and what exists in their own countries. This is evident most graphically in the full-page figure on the facing page.

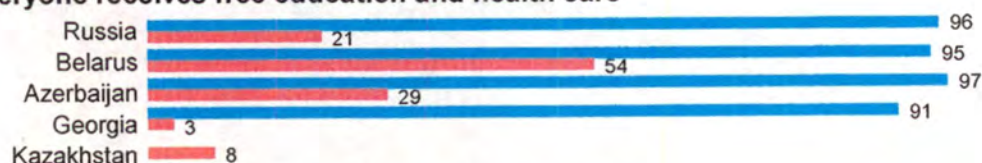
The most striking contrast is that between the virtually unanimous hunger for an equitable system of justice and the lack thereof -- with no more than 12-28 percent of these publics affirming that such a court system exists in their country. In Russia and Ukraine -- and to a lesser extent in Georgia -- publics in late 1996 say that they do not feel much progress at all has been made in their respective countries since 1991 toward achieving "the rule of law." Six in ten in the two Slavic lands say *no* progress whatever has occurred. (See table on p. 16)

Former USSR - Importance and Existence of Various Democratic Practices

The judicial system treats everyone equally and punishes the guilty no matter who they are



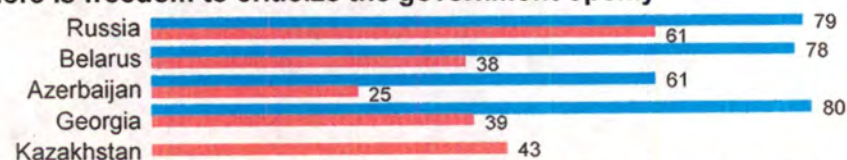
Everyone receives free education and health care



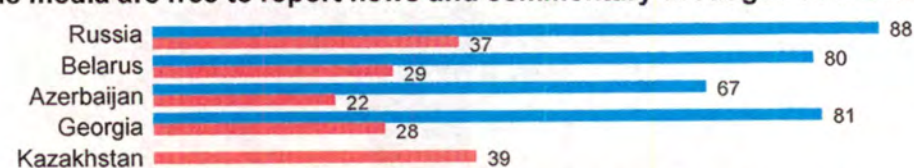
Every person can freely practice his or her religion



There is freedom to criticize the government openly



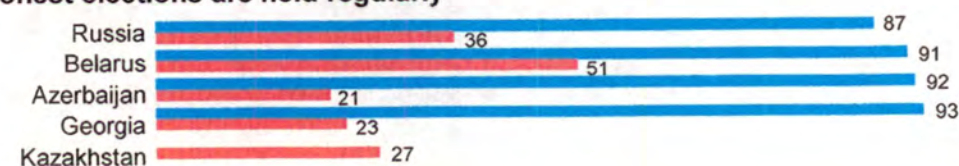
The media are free to report news and commentary w/out gov't censorship



One can choose from several parties and candidates when voting



Honest elections are held regularly



■ % saying it's important ■ % saying it exists

Progress Toward the Rule of Law

	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>	<i>Georgia</i>
A great deal	1%	2%	4%
A fair amount	8	6	30
<i>Subtotal</i>	9	8	34
Not very much	22	27	32
None at all	61	60	21
<i>Subtotal</i>	83	87	53
DK/NA	8	7	13

The one aspect of democracy which appears both universally appreciated and considered to be in place is the freedom to practice one's own religion. The ability to choose among several candidates and parties at elections is also thought to exist in many former Soviet republics, but not in Azerbaijan.

For the rest, the record is more than spotty. In every country citizens recognize that a multiparty system is not synonymous with "honest elections." Only in Lukashenko's Belarus do even half the public feel that they vote in fair elections. Russia stands out in one regard: six in ten there believe that they enjoy the freedom to criticize their government openly, far more than in any other nation surveyed in this region.

Taking the Temperature of Democracy

How do the citizens of these erstwhile Soviet republics view their systems overall? With a cool eye, for the most part. Asked if they think theirs is a democratic country, more Georgians say "no" than say "yes" (45%-38%). When queried how they would describe their system of government, as many Armenians respond "authoritarianism" or "oligarchy" as say "democracy" (16% each), but more characterize it as a system of "presidential power" (23%).

When given the choice between a government "where power is dispersed among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches" (the classic American separation of powers) and one with "a strong authoritarian leader," Belarusians are almost as likely to prefer the strongman as a system of checks and balances (39% vs. 45%). Georgians and Kazakhstanis, though, are *more* likely to favor an authoritarian leader (53-54%, as opposed to 31-32% supporting separation of powers).

Only half in Russia say that protecting their freedoms is important enough to lead them to fight a dictatorship; a third say that "restoring order is so important" that they would support a dictator.

Similarly, a majority in Kazakhstan prefer to live “in a society with strict order, even if it requires limiting freedom of speech.” (A third feel this way strongly.)

A vote for the bad old days? Not really. Change, transformation, chaos have produced a wariness that transcends politics; the yearning here is for order and stability more than for yielding on the democracy which they otherwise prize. Russia has gone through several dramatic political crises in the past six years. Georgia went through a debilitating civil war immediately after gaining independence. Belarus tottered on the brink of an internal breakdown in the past several months, with a major confrontation between the legislature and the president. Kazakhstan, while on the surface more stable, still faces ethnic and other tensions.

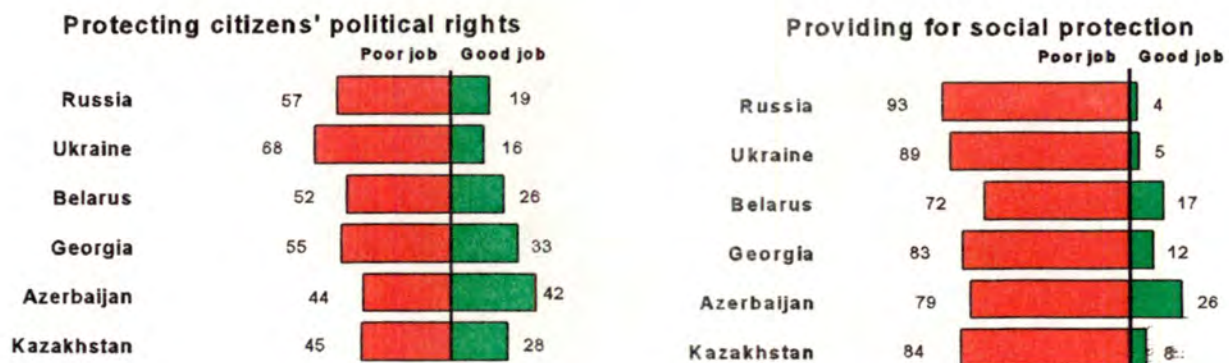
Where the Dangers Lie

Apathy, skepticism, and distrust are three of the greatest threats to post-Soviet nascent democracies. Voters do not feel empowered and do not believe their interests are being well-served by current regimes. For example, few in any of these nations feel that “voting gives persons like me some say” in how the government runs the country. In Ukraine, two-thirds *disagree* with this proposition, as do a majority in Armenia (56%) and half in Russia. More Georgians and Belarusians feel empowered by voting than do not (53% to 27% and 53% to 38% respectively). Azerbaijanis, however, divide on the issue (41% to 39%).

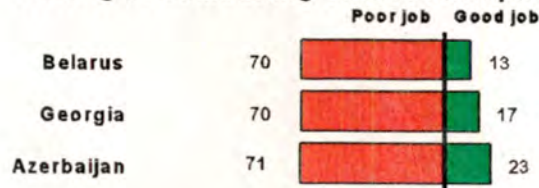
In Kazakhstan, six in ten say that public officials do *not* care “what people like me think;” three in ten feel that they do. In Russia fully 84 percent feel that officials are indifferent to the public’s opinions.

On task after task, meanwhile, these publics give failing or very low marks to their regimes:

How Well is the Government Performing Various Tasks?



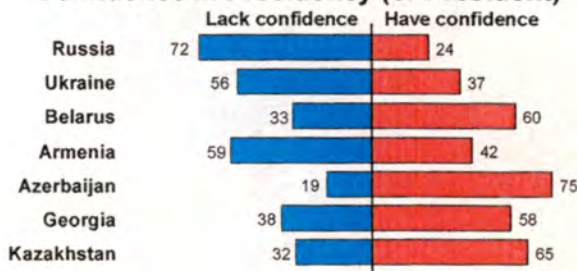
Halting or combatting official corruption



In Russia, three-quarters in 1994-96 said that "halting official corruption" was a *very important* task for the country. In a possibly related finding, three-fourths also say that the Russian state is unable to maintain law and order within its bounds.

On security-related tasks which relate to democracy -- such as dealing with Crimea in Ukraine or Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia -- the governments involved receive poor or very poor ratings from half or more of their citizenry. But the greatest of these thorny issues, Chechnya, is mostly out of Russia's side now, and people in both Armenia and Azerbaijan are more or less content with the job their respective leaders are doing with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Confidence in Presidency (or President)

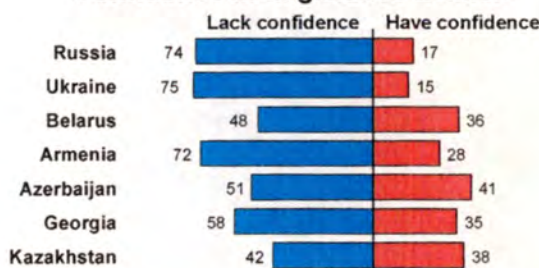


Little Confidence in Public Institutions

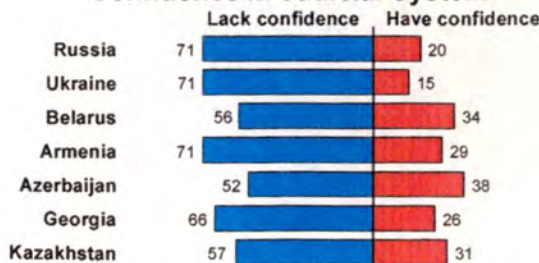
Confidence in most public institutions and political figures is low throughout the CIS. This is hardly surprising, given a world-wide trend of similar direction.

The few exceptions to this rule -- the office of the president in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Georgia and President Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan -- are worth examining. Does this reflect a penchant for strongman rule? It might, given the situation in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Is it more a judgment on the competence or good will of the incumbents? That is possible. It's probable, however, that bruised feelings of nationalism or patriotic sentiments also play a role here: the head of state is vested with more confidence in these three countries because he is seen as defending the nation's interests more fully than other branches of government.

Confidence in Legislative Branch



Confidence in Judicial System



What stands out is the low ranking of virtually all branches of government in Russia, Ukraine, and Armenia. The irony here is that many outsiders would consider these three as among the most promising democracies in the region -- testimony, perhaps, to their critically thinking publics.

Conclusion

The picture may seem grim to some, but it is also a fact that attitudes about democracy in the former Soviet Union -- on confidence in public institutions, government performance, and so on -- closely resemble those in Western democracies like the United States. Whether or not time alone is the remedy for these young democracies' ills is an open question. But there is reason for some optimism in the results of USIA polls which show widespread acceptance of and belief in the values upon which a sound democracy is based.

Democracy in Africa

Until relatively lately there has been a dearth of public opinion data on popular views of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 1996-97, however, USIA commissioned surveys in -- or acquired data about -- Ethiopia, Angola, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. These polls probe the publics' attitudes toward not only democracy and the democratic process but also the role of civic education in these nations.

Some of the countries discussed here appear to be in transition from less democratic to more democratic states; others are mired in the authoritarian ways of the past. Ethiopia held nationwide elections in May 1995 (boycotted by most opposition parties) which, for good or ill, left power in the hands of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. Kenya's last general election, in December 1992, was viewed by most observers as seriously flawed. Leaders in both Kenya and Zimbabwe are well-entrenched and without effective political opposition. Nigeria has long been saddled with rule by military strongmen and rampant corruption. Angola has suffered through more than two decades of civil war but may have put an end to the chaos in recent years. South Africa has moved from democracy's pariah to a promising new order.

Democracy's Appeal Limited by Knowledge and Poverty

What emerges from all polling is a fairly widespread desire for democracy in the abstract and more tenuous support and understanding in fact. For example, majorities (generally overwhelming) in Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa say that nearly all political values associated with Western-style democracy are "important" or "very important." The publics show a high regard for honest elections, the protection of minority group rights, due process of law, a fair judiciary, and freedom of the press.

Tempering the enthusiasm for democratic values, however, is the hardscrabble life endured by most of these publics. In Ethiopia, when asked to prioritize (from a list) several "possible goals for our country," half choose "major economic reforms." "Democratic principles" ties for (a distant) third, along with "guidance by religious values," at only nine percent. This in a nation where a sizable majority (61%) say that the establishment of democracy in their country is a fairly or very good thing (and three-fourths of the better-educated express this view).

Similarly, in Angola -- where the vast majority of better-educated people prefer "a government that allows you to make choices" (85%) over one that "makes most of the decisions for you" (3%), economic tasks are placed much higher on the government "to do" list than forging democracy. Better-educated Angolans opt first for "providing people with a chance to get ahead economically" (33%) and for "providing an opportunity for people to have an adequate standard of living" (28%). Few choose "guaranteeing individual political rights within the country" or "safeguarding the freedom of the press" (2% each).

In four other African nations -- Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and South Africa -- publics' understanding of democracy, by their own admission, is imperfect at best. Minorities in each claim to have "a good understanding of how democracy is supposed to work" in their own country. That proportion is lowest in Zimbabwe (21%), somewhat higher in South Africa (34%), Kenya (38%), and Nigeria (43%). In South Africa, blacks and whites are near reverse mirror-images in their views: whereas 27 percent of blacks but 52 percent of whites say they have a good understanding of democracy, 58 percent of blacks and 39 percent of whites feel that they "do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work." In the other three countries, not surprisingly, self-professed understanding tends to rise with the level of education.

In Kenya, the public was asked questions to see how democracy is faring. Asked how well various statements describe their own country, Kenyans affirm that "one can choose from several parties and candidates when voting" (65%) but not that: "there is freedom to openly criticize the government"; "the judicial system punishes fairly"; "elections for public office are fair and honest"; and that "the media are free to report the news without government censorship." In fact, roughly two-thirds say that none of the last four statements describe Kenya well. And few (20%) think that "the government is free of corruption"; four in five reject the statement.

Civic Education a Key to the Future

It may bode well for democratic prospects in Kenya and Nigeria that half or more in each say that they are interested in politics (though large minorities lack interest) and that about the same proportions participate in some form of community service. Less propitious are the half in South Africa (53%) and majority in Zimbabwe (68%) who express little or no interest in politics, and the third or fewer who engage in typical civic activities there.

Yet across the board there is support for civic education, even in Zimbabwe. Nearly all say it is important that citizens be educated in democracy and good citizenship (i.e., the rights and obligations of a good citizen). Public schools (below college-level) are the choice of most in each country for providing such education; families take the second spot, far behind.

Threats to Democracy

The lack of trust in their own leaders and fellow citizens is a major obstacle in the way of further democratization in most of these African nations. Majorities in Kenya (83%), Nigeria (85%), South Africa (64%), and Zimbabwe (63%) believe that the majority of public officials are corrupt. (Despite this, two-thirds of Nigerians still feel that their government is "sincere in its promise to quickly return the country to civilian rule.") Nearly as many in each country say the same about the majority of business leaders. In Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa, furthermore, the requisite trust in one's fellow citizens is, if not absent, in short supply. About half in each say that "you can trust your neighbors and the people you work with to do what is right most of the time." Nearly as many (44-47%) feel the opposite.

But perhaps the greatest threats to democracy throughout the continent are tribalism and ethnic conflict, forces which have torn asunder polities in such nations as Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire. In USIA polls, this issue has not often surfaced -- the countries surveyed are somewhat atypical in this regard. But in one poll, that of better-educated Angolans, it was at least touched upon, and it appears not to be a major concern. Asked what is the single most important problem facing Angola today, enough volunteered "conflict" or "war" (22%) to put it in second place, after "unemployment" or the bad economic situation (32%). But overall, the educated public is very optimistic that "Angolans can live peacefully together again," that the years of fighting have not done "too much damage" for reconciliation to succeed (86% agree, only 6% disagree).

Along the same lines, these Angolans place "assurance of ethnic and minority rights within the country" far down the list of individual rights the government might protect -- named by three percent, as compared to open, fair elections and a judicial system punishing all equally, each cited by a quarter or more.

Postscript

Nigeria's current military leader, General Abacha, has signaled (November 1997) that he will release some political activists under detention in his country. Four years after his ascension to power, having annulled the 1993 elections won by today's best-known political prisoner, the general appears intent on winning over the public in preparation for promised presidential elections in October 1998. The announced aim of the elections is to place Nigeria under civilian rule.

In Kenya, national elections have just returned President Daniel Arap Moi to office for another five-year term, amid charges of manipulation and voter fraud. Last year, before the elections, an outbreak of violence in areas where political opposition to Moi's regime was strong led conspiracy theorists to accuse the government of foul play. Some claim it is the opposition itself which is responsible for a wave of arson, while still others blame Islamic fundamentalists.

Whether any elections can or will fundamentally change the situation of democracy in these nations remains a moot point. When Cameroon recently held presidential elections, its 15-year-tenured ruler Paul Biya won seven more years in office, taking 93 percent of a vote most observers considered rigged. Similar outcomes would not be a surprise elsewhere in the region.

Democracy in South Asia

Pakistan

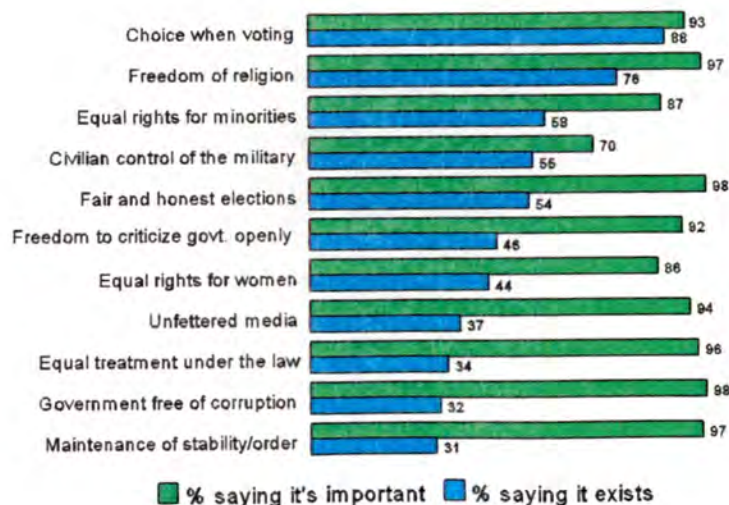
Pakistan is an Islamic ideological state which has for nine years been governed by a series of elected governments. Most of the first 40 of its 50 years were spent under military dominance. Pakistanis are now broadly dissatisfied with the way democratic governance is working in their country, according to the first USIA-sponsored survey taken in that country in nearly a decade. Yet they remain committed to the basic principles of democracy -- at least on paper. But poll findings suggest that given the ongoing conditions of civil unrest, perceptions of wide corruption in government, and a poor economy, many Pakistanis may be willing to trade democracy for greater economic and personal security.

The Distance Between Ideals and Practice

As elsewhere around the globe, majorities of urban Pakistanis affirm the great importance of many democratic values, including honest elections, freedom of religion, an independent judiciary, multiparty elections, freedom of the press, and the freedom to criticize the government openly. Smaller majorities of urban residents place a high value on equality for women and minority rights.

But also as with other nations, the ideals often fall short -- in some cases *far* short -- of practice. In assessing how descriptive these conditions are of their country, Pakistanis are most likely to say that Pakistan enjoys multiparty elections, religious freedom, the protection of minority rights, and -- by a slim margin -- honest elections. Lacking, in the view of a majority, are an impartial judiciary (62% say it does not effectively exist), freedom of the press (56%), and especially a government free of corruption (64%) and able to maintain stability and order (67%). They divide on whether or not there is freedom to criticize the government openly. The graph below shows the discord between the democratic traits these Pakistanis rate as at least fairly important and the extent to which they believe those characteristics apply to their own country.

Pakistan Democracy Assessed

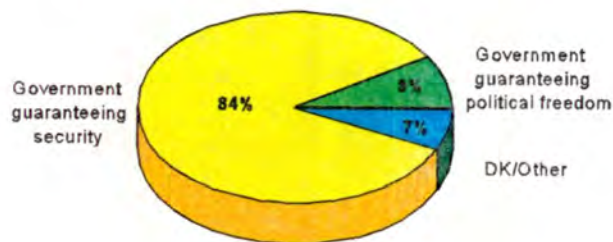


The bottom line: nine years into civilian government, half do *not* consider Pakistan a democratic state (about a quarter do). The naysayers have mixed views on whether their country will ever have a democracy “which functions as it should” -- more say it will than say it won’t (55% to 45%). The better-educated tend to be more skeptical.

The reasons Pakistanis offered for why their country is not a democracy include the lack of democratic traditions and continuing “feudal” conditions (38%), lawlessness (21%), corruption (21%), the weak economy (17%), and government inefficiency and recent failures (14%).

Overall, a majority (56%) feel that citizens’ basic rights are *not* well protected in the current political system. Given the nation’s bleak economic situation, it is not unexpected -- but still sobering -- that the large majority would prefer a government which guarantees economic security to one which guarantees political freedom.

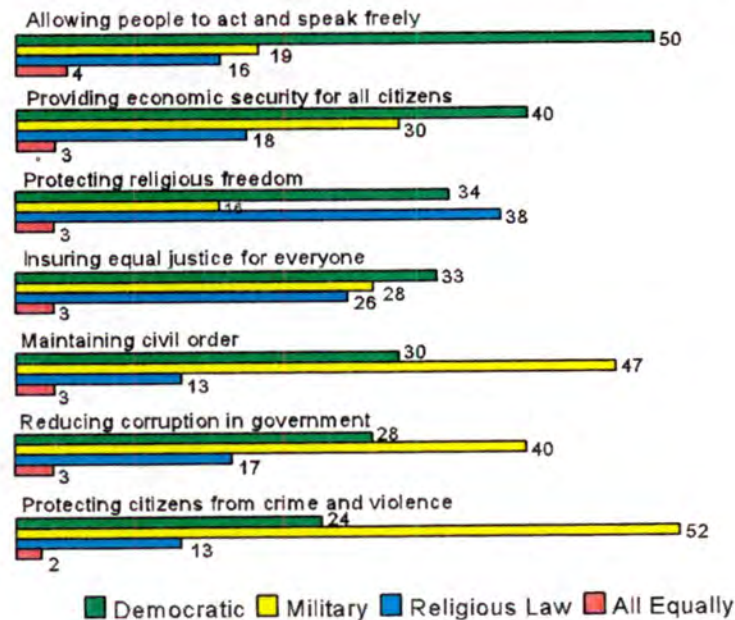
Preferred Type of Government - Pakistan



The Allures of Nondemocratic Systems

The nearly half century of military-dominated rule in Pakistan did not leave the populace overly eager for civilian leaders and Western-style democracy. Whereas about nine in ten express confidence in the country’s military, significantly fewer voice confidence in the current civilian government. Only a narrow plurality (36%) prefer a democratic government to military rule (30%) or to a “religious” government (22%).

Pakistan: What type of government is better at:



In a tripartite question, Pakistanis were asked “how to find solutions to political problems in a country” -- whether they felt that “citizens’ involvement in political life is the best way to solve political problems,” or that “it’s best to leave politics to elected officials,” or that such decisions are best left to the military (or other “traditional authorities”). As many say they want elected officials to solve political problems as say the citizenry should (30% to 28%), while 17 percent opt for the military. (One in ten volunteer that all three together should resolve problems, and a handful say none.)

Apathy Fuels the Dissatisfaction

Fewer than half (43%) profess to have at least some interest in political affairs (54% say they are “not very” or “not at all” interested). Half claim to have voted in nationwide elections earlier this year which brought a new prime minister (Nawaz Sherif) to office. Two-thirds say they are too busy to become involved in politics. Yet indifference does not explain everything: a slim majority (55%) also claim that any political actions they might engage in would have little or no effect.

Asked for a self-assessment of how well they understand the way democracy works in their country, Pakistanis divide evenly. As many say they do as say they do not have a good understanding of how it is supposed to work (42% to 41%), while a fifth are unsure.

Lacking a sense of empowerment and efficacy, Pakistanis are further alienated by the feeling that corruption is rampant throughout the power circles of their nation. Three-fourths say that the

majority of both public officials and business leaders are corrupt (half agree strongly with each proposition).

Where to Place Public Trust?

Pakistanis place more trust in the military than in the recently elected national government (86% to 65%). A smaller majority (61%) places at least a fair amount of confidence in "religious leaders" as well. Slightly more have confidence than lack it in national radio and television (53% to 41%), but local newspapers are viewed more skeptically (44% lack confidence, 43% express it). They are similarly divided on legal and judicial system: half voice little or no confidence, nearly as many profess at least a fair amount.

Lowest of all on the trust totem pole fall civil servants and the police. Six in ten lack confidence in government workers, eight in ten in the police -- a reflection of the widespread corruption reported.

India

India has been "the world's largest democracy" (in terms of population) since gaining its independence from Britain in 1947. In some respects, however, India remains a patchwork system which has not cohered into a smoothly functioning democracy. For example, the nation has a multiparty system which can splinter and lead to unstable coalition politics.¹³

Nevertheless, by a narrow plurality Indians in the nation's four major cities say they are satisfied with the way their democracy is working at the national level (47% to 37%). A majority (58%) feel this way about democracy at the local level. Among those dissatisfied with the way democracy's working in the country as a whole, opinion divides evenly on whether or not India will ever have an "ideal democracy" (43% each for "yes" and "no").

About as many agree as disagree that "the basic rights of citizens are well protected by our political system" (45% to 41%). If asked to choose between a government which guarantees political freedoms but does not promise economic security and jobs for all and a government that guarantees jobs and economic security but restricts political freedoms, the majority of urban Indians come down on the side of economic security (60% to 21%). Some (11%) want to have it both ways.

The gap between what urban Indians want in a democracy and what they have in their own country is most striking with regard to impartial justice, honest elections, and a corruption-free government (see figure on next page). Fully 90 percent of major-city residents agree that women should have the same legal rights and obligations as men (three-quarters agree strongly). Seven in ten also support (half strongly) proposed legislation which would reserve a third of the national

parliament's seats for women. On a related issue, eight in ten feel that India will not have a true democracy until all vestiges of the traditional caste system have been eliminated.

Assessing Indian Democracy



Trust and Confidence

Two months before its fall, only half expressed confidence in the then current national government; nearly as many (44%) said they lacked confidence in it. Three-fourths (74%) agree that "the majority of public officials are corrupt" (half strongly agree). Two-thirds believe that the majority of business leaders are corrupt.

True, the overwhelming majority profess to have confidence in the military (88%), which has historically remained apart from politics, and in broadcast media (81%). The courts (legal/judicial system), moreover, receive a vote of confidence from a sizable majority (60%) and the

civil service (ordinary government workers) from about half (53%). But as many lack as have confidence (45% to 44%) in other government officials, and twice as many voice little or no confidence in the police (65%) as say they have it (32%). Only a third express confidence in religious leaders.

On other attitudes which may affect democracy's prospects in India: Six in ten major city residents believe that "you can trust your neighbors and the people you work with to do what is right most of the time." Thirty-seven percent disagree. The overwhelming majority (88%) feel that it is *not* OK to break the law, even if certain that no one will catch you.

Political Involvement

More urban Indians say they are *not* interested in political matters than profess that they are (54% to 45%). Still, eighty percent claim to have voted in the last national election. Two-thirds say that "citizens' involvement in political life is a very important part of finding democratic solutions to political problems," while a quarter believe that "it's best to leave politics to elected officials."

Among other common political activities, a majority of city dwellers (61%) read about politics in the newspapers, but minorities (42-48%) either discuss politics with others or work with other people in their community to try to solve local problems. Fewer still (8-19%) spend any time working for a political party or particular candidate, attend political rallies or meetings, contact government officials/politicians, or try to convince friends to vote the way they do.

Contradictions abound in how these Indians view their own involvement in politics. Although a huge majority (86%) claim that "if a citizen is unhappy with the policies of the government, he/she has a duty to do something about it," and somewhat smaller majorities (61-62%) claim they are at least fairly likely to sign a petition or participate in a peaceful demonstration *in their local community* -- yet seven in ten say they are too busy to get involved in politics. And whereas four-fifths (79%) agree that "if people like me get together with their neighbors they can help in solving the country's problems," half say that if they did participate in local community political activities their actions would have little or no effect (a third feel it would have at least a fair amount of impact).

All in all, it is hardly surprising that only a fifth of urban Indians claim to have a good understanding of the way democracy works in their country, and half admit that they "do not fully understand" how democracy is supposed to work.

Democracy in East and Southeast Asia

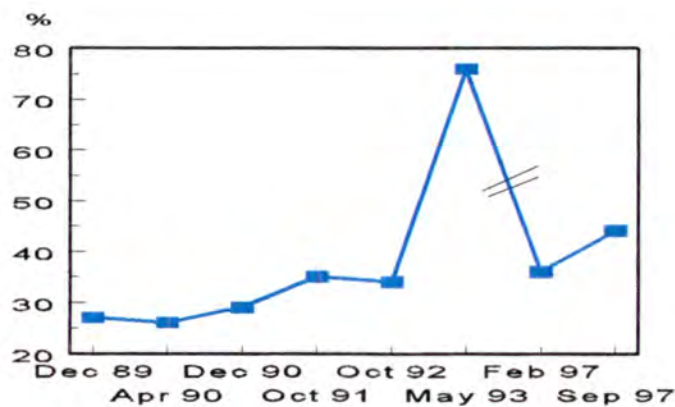
In South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, current and past USIA polling provides some key findings on the state of democracy. The picture is mixed at best. In the course of the past year, economic and political scandals and/or other woes have triggered discontent among broad segments of these Asian publics. The current crisis may be having an impact on people's views of democracy. The survey results reported below do *not* reflect the influence of recent developments.

The tradition of military or strong-man rule is about as marked in East Asia as in most of Africa and Latin America. Korean politics of the 1960s through the 1980s was highlighted by military coups and authoritarian military rule. Students in particular -- but others also -- have clashed frequently with police over government policy in the last decade. Yet today the country is evolving into a more pluralistic society. Political protests in 1987 led to the first truly democratic election in the nation's history. In presidential elections held on December 18, 1997, a long-time opposition activist won the three-man race, narrowly defeating the ruling party's candidate.

The Thai military has a long history of intervention in civilian politics -- with 18 coups or attempted coups since the installation of a constitutional monarchy in 1932. The Philippines were under the sway of Ferdinand Marcos for some 14 years (and now, after the Corazon Aquino interregnum, President Fidel Ramos may be trying to amend the Marcos-inspired constitutional limit and succeed himself).

Half (53%) of South Koreans are *dissatisfied* with "the way democracy works in Korea" (a sizable minority -- 44% -- profess satisfaction). This contrasts with the situation in Thailand and the Philippines: seven in ten in both (urban) Thailand (late 1995) and the Philippines (1996) said they were satisfied with the way democracy works in their own country.

Proportion of South Koreans Satisfied with the Way Democracy Works, 1989-97



Majorities (seven in ten) in the Philippines feel that elections at both the national and local levels are free and fair; four-fifths think that the country is being run for the benefit of all the people. A smaller but still distinct majority (59%) of urban Thais feel that their country is also being run for the benefit of all the people.

Public Confidence in Democracy's Institutions

Further evidence that the links between the governed and their leaders, which must be strong in a democracy, are not eroded in many parts of eastern Asia lies in public confidence in official institutions. In the Philippines, seven in ten or more say they have confidence in the nation's most important public institutions. The broadcast media (radio and TV) top the list, at over 90 percent each, with the press, local government, and the "national government" close behind (85-87%). Four in five express confidence in the armed forces, congress, civil service, and court system. On the lowest rung fall the police -- tarnished by corruption charges -- but at a far from anemic 69 percent.

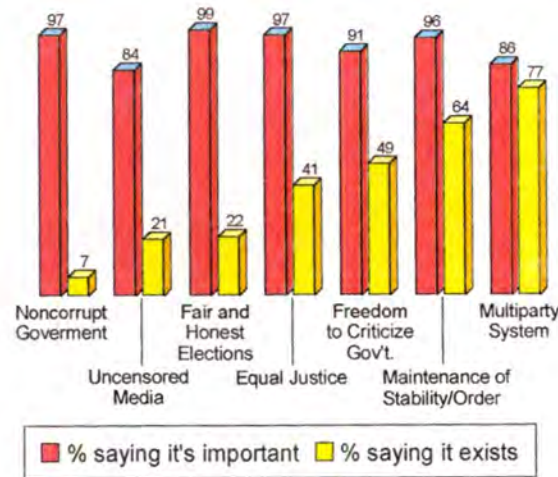
The picture is similar, if not as rosy, in Thailand. There, the armed forces barely top domestic TV in the urban public's confidence (88% to 84%) but are further ahead of the civilian leadership -- the National Assembly, or parliament (69%), and especially the "national government" and the civil service (both at 59%). The judicial system, however, comes close to the top -- at 80 percent. Lowest of all, but still with an urban majority confidence vote, is the police.

In South Korea over the past decade, virtually every public institution has seen its "ratings" drop. The only two exceptions are career military officers and judges, both of whose confidence rankings are higher today than seven years ago, though lower than in the mid-1980s. National politicians, bureaucrats, local police, and owners or managers of big businesses have all fallen, as have — though less dramatically — school teachers, newspaper reporters, and university professors.

Democracy's Doldrums

If one examines the health of democracy in the two nations whose publics proclaim themselves more or less satisfied with how their systems are working, some paradoxes are revealed. Urban Thais view many conditions as "important" or "very important" elements of a democratic system. Yet majorities find most of these conditions absent in their own country. Of the various aspects given, three rank above the rest: fair and honest elections, a government free of corruption, and a judicial system that punishes the guilty no matter who they are. All three were called "very important" by 80-83 percent of the people, and at least somewhat important by higher proportions (see chart opposite). "Stability and order are maintained" and "freedom to criticize the government openly" came in with smaller majorities.

Importance and Existence of Democratic Practices in Thailand



However, urban Thais are unwilling to vouchsafe the judgment that *any of the key elements* of a working democracy *actually exists in Thailand* today. Leaving aside the issue of corruption, the lowest marks assigned by these Thais -- what they most feel the lack of -- went to "fair and honest elections" and "media free to report news without censorship," followed by an equitable system of justice and freedom to criticize the government.

While Thais thus see the shortcomings in their own democracy, fully two-thirds of the urban population would *not* agree to give up the political freedoms they now have, even if the country's problems could be solved by a nondemocratic leader's seizing power. A third say they would be willing to make this hypothetical trade.

And what of the equally "satisfied" Filipinos? Despite the fairly widespread approval of the nation's political system, fully two-fifths would be willing to "give up many of the political freedoms we now have" should a leader take power and be able "to solve the nation's problems" by ruling undemocratically. Only half say they would be *unwilling* to cede their freedoms.

Whereas the vast majority of the Filipino public (89%) think that "people like themselves" can have some effect on decisions made by local and national governments at least some of the time, most urban Thais (78%) feel that they have little or no impact on government decisionmaking at the local or national level.

Differing views of democracy may explain some of these apparent contradictions. Despite a superficial identification with Western-style governments, the Thai concept of democracy seems more centered on social outcomes than on either individual rights or "due process." Urban Thais' focus on harmony, fairness, and social order sets them close to many publics in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as in South Korea: a majority (62%) in 1995 put group harmony over individual rights.

Three-fourths of South Koreans in 1994 agreed that “the most important thing” in a democracy is to seek harmony of the group, even if individual rights are restricted. In 1997, however, in an open-ended question allowing multiple responses, more Koreans named such characteristics as freedom generally or “individual freedom” (31%) and freedom of speech (17%) more often than they cited a humane or family-oriented society (10%) and “improvement of people’s consciousness” (14%). At the same time, many South Koreans (60%) admit that they do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work in their country; a third claim to understand.

What Accounts for the Anomalies and Differences?

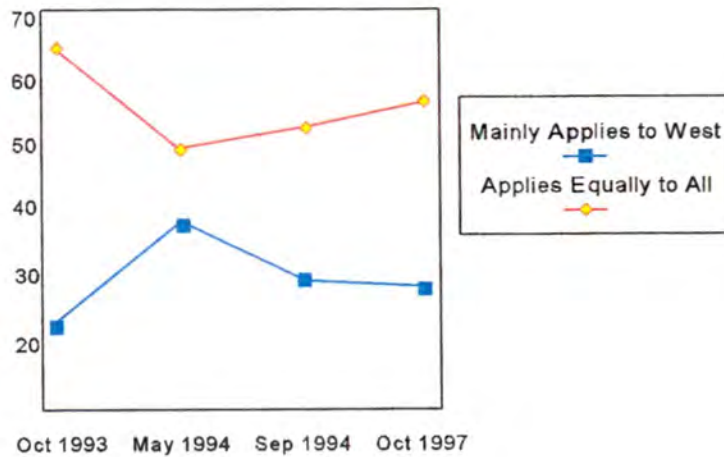
The sagging economy, labor unrest, and a major corruption scandal all appear to have contributed to Koreans’ critical views of their government and public institutions. When Kim Young Sam was elected South Korea’s first civilian president in three decades in 1993, three-fourths of his compatriots claimed to be satisfied with the way their system of government was working. He had vowed to clean up corruption on taking office. In 1997, even prior to the current financial crisis, scandal and the ensuing collapse of the country’s second largest steel maker had darkened his government’s image. Two-thirds of the public cite “widespread corruption in business and government” as the primary cause of the nation’s ailing economy.

By the same token, the satisfaction vouchsafed democracy in the other two nations may be misleading. Some of the same forces at work in South Korea are working against the system in Thailand and the Philippines as well. The recent collapse of the Thai baht and ensuing economic crisis has been a severe test of the system there and has adversely affected stocks and the peso in the Philippines. Enhanced confidence in democracy and its institutions in Thailand may in part be a “bounce” effect from the forced resignation in 1992 of the military-backed Prime Minister Suchinda. Satisfaction with Philippine democracy has declined from 77 percent at the start of the Ramos administration (1994) and may nosedive further should the push to change the constitution in the president’s favor bear fruit. (In late September 1997, thousands in Manila went to the streets to protest the possible Ramos reelection bid.)

Japan

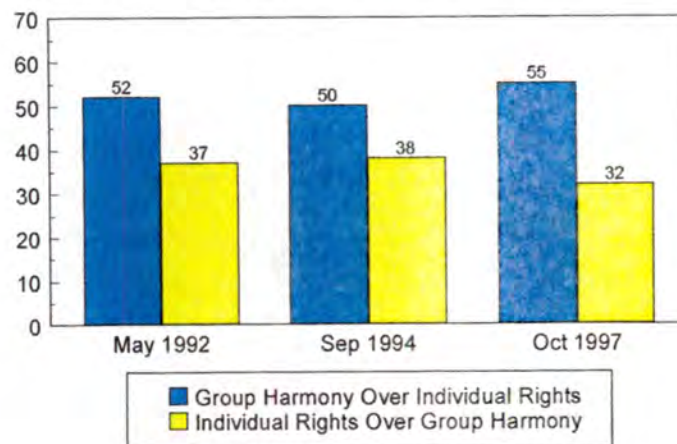
Despite all the turmoil and especially the problems posed by economic collapse elsewhere in east Asia, Japanese democracy remains strong, does it not? Probably so. By a two-to-one margin, more Japanese feel that “democracy is a universal idea that applies equally to Western and non-Western nations” (56% to 27%). A quarter believe that democracy “applies mainly to Western nations.” (See figure on facing page)

Japanese Views on the Universality of Democracy



In the fall of 1997, when asked to name the most important characteristics of a democracy (multiple responses permitted), more Japanese volunteered “freedom” (21%) than such other traits as “equality” (15%) and “human rights” (11%). Smaller numbers cited “sovereignty of the people” and “peace” (7% each), “responsibility” (5%), “elections” or “cooperativeness” (both 3%).

Harmony or Individual Rights More Important?



By a slightly widening margin over the past few years, the Japanese appear to place more value on the priority of the group over the individual. While this trend can be understood as a strengthening of democracy in one sense, it may be seen as more problematic for those who feel that individual rights are the cornerstone of Western-style liberal democracy.

Democracy in Latin America

Latin America has had a variety of experiences with democratic government, from its early implementation in Chile in the 1920s to its recent restoration in Haiti. Periods of military "democracies" have scarred many countries. A few have experienced authoritarian or one-party civilian rule masquerading as democracy. Revolutionary movements have threatened or toppled some would-be democracies in the past; narcotrafficking cartels imperil at least two current regimes. Latin publics unambiguously embrace the ideals of democracy, but the foundations of a fully functioning system are still under construction in many countries. Public opinions generally reflect both the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in the region.

In the majority of Latin American nations, urban publics prefer democracy to any other form of government. Support for this absolute position, however, varies -- from highs of 71-80 percent in Argentina, Panama, Costa Rica, and Uruguay; to three-fifths in Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Nicaragua; to slimmer majorities in Chile and El Salvador.

Only about half in Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Guatemala share this preference, and in Honduras the proportion shrinks to a plurality (42%). A quarter each in Brazil, Mexico, and Paraguay say they might prefer authoritarianism in certain circumstances; a fifth feel this way in Guatemala. These findings are not new: USIA polls since the early 1990's have found similar responses.

Preference for Democracy in South America (1996)

<i>Best type of government:</i>	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- <i>Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't</i>	71	64	50	54	60	52	59	63	80	62
- <i>Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable</i>	15	17	24	19	20	18	26	13	9	19
- <i>Type of government doesn't matter</i>	11	15	21	23	18	23	13	14	8	13

Preference for Democracy in Mexico and Central America (1996)

<i>Best type of government:</i>	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- <i>Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't</i>	53	80	51	42	59	75	56
- <i>Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable</i>	23	7	21	14	14	10	12
- <i>Type of government doesn't matter</i>	17	8	19	29	20	12	22

As for the rest of these city dwellers, about as many say that the type of government does not matter "for people like them" as say they might prefer an authoritarian government at times.

Large majorities in all countries but Chile and Guatemala also say they would defend democracy were it threatened. In Chile, half say they would defend democracy but a third would not.

Willingness to Fight for Democracy: South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- Yes	73	84	69	53	74	80	59	75	78	74
- No	15	9	25	35	22	16	14	12	11	18

Willingness to Fight for Democracy: Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- Yes	66	85	56	80	72	75	60
- No	23	7	27	10	16	13	23

A further example of Latin Americans' bent for democracy is seen in responses to the following question: *If a nondemocratic leader took power who could solve our country's economic problems, I wouldn't care if that leader took away many of the political freedoms we now have [in Brazil: . . . the loss of some of our democratic rights would be acceptable].* (See table below) Mexicans nationwide were unique among the four countries polled in mustering a large majority who would resist yielding their freedoms, and Mexico City residents were even more strongly

	Brazil (1996)	Mexico (late '95)	El Salvador (late '94)	Panama (late '94)
Strongly agree	20%	7%	14%	21%
Somewhat agree	23	14	25	21
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>42</i>
Somewhat disagree	13	17	12	8
Strongly disagree	29	57	33	45
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>53</i>
DK/NA	16	5	16	6

opposed to this kind of trade-off than their compatriots. Brazilians, on the other hand, were most open to this sort of deal, while substantial minorities who might jettison some freedom for economic improvement were also found in the other two countries.

Despite their support for the concept, solid majorities nationwide (ranging from 57% to 78%) in Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, and Nicaragua say they do *not* fully understand how democracy should function in their countries. Urban publics in Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and El Salvador feel the same. University-educated publics in all countries are much more likely than others to believe education in democracy is important.

Many Say Democracy Lags

Urban residents in many Latin American nations heavily endorse such Western-style elements of democracy as honest and regular elections, freedom of speech, and minority rights, saying that it is "very important" for these to exist in their countries. The one exception: Argentina, where between five and six in ten rate such elements so highly.

Given their high standards and expectations for democracy, it is probably no surprise that urban publics everywhere in Latin America are critical of their own brand of democracy. Except in Uruguay and Costa Rica, at least four-fifths in each country believe that there are still things to be done before they have fully established democracy in their own lands.

Achievement of Democracy in South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy	86	85	94	87	92	77	88	78	63	80
- Democracy is fully established already	12	13	4	10	7	20	9	14	34	16

Achievement of Democracy in Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy	85	70	74	75	87	83	78
- Democracy is fully established already	10	23	6	13	7	13	10

In the same vein, nationwide majorities in several countries are not satisfied with the way their own democracy is currently functioning. According to 1996-97 USIA polls, two-thirds in Colombia are dissatisfied (42% very dissatisfied), while three-fifths in both Bolivia and Peru feel this way (about a third in each "very"). More divided is the public in Brazil, where as many feel satisfied as dissatisfied (44% to 46%).

As the tables below show (Latinobarometer data), dissatisfaction with the way democracy is currently functioning is strongest among publics in Brazil, Venezuela and Panama, where three in ten are "not at all satisfied." Satisfaction with current democracies is also comparatively low, however, in urban areas of Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Guatemala. In virtually all South American countries, and in Mexico, the levels of satisfaction have fallen since 1995 by 5, 10, and even 15-20 percent.

Satisfaction with Democracy: South America (1996)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Satisfied (very/somewhat)</i>	34	25	20	27	16	34	22	28	52	30
<i>Not very satisfied</i>	50	58	46	54	61	47	59	53	38	41
<i>Not at all satisfied</i>	14	17	31	15	22	16	19	12	9	27

Satisfaction with Democracy: Mexico and Central America (1996)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Satisfied (very/somewhat)</i>	11	51	16	23	28	26
<i>Not very satisfied</i>	51	35	47	49	42	41
<i>Not at all satisfied</i>	33	8	27	23	29	27

Satisfaction is probably linked to how effective people feel their system is or can be. In a 1995 survey among urbanites in seven South American nations and Mexico, only in Peru did a clear majority (62%) believe that democracy permits solutions for the problems in their nation. A slim majority (54%) in Uruguay and half (52%) in Argentina felt this way. Elsewhere (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela), opinion divided evenly on whether or not democracy could solve their problems. In Paraguay many more were negative than positive on this score (53% to 34%).

Confidence in Public Institutions Low

Discontent with democracy is also related to views on public institutions. In mid-1996, urban residents in most South American countries and Mexico expressed distrust in key institutions. Seven in ten or more have little or no confidence in their countries' political parties, national congress (legislature), or the police. Six in ten or more express little or no confidence in either

the judiciary or the "administration." The exceptions are Chile and Peru, where half the urban populace do have at least a fair amount of confidence in their governments.

In contrast, half the urban public in Chile, solid majorities in Brazil (66%) and Venezuela (59%), and three-fourths in Ecuador (76%) view their militaries with some confidence.

Confidence in Public Institutions: South America and Mexico (1996)

% "not very" or "not at all" confident in:	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
<i>Armed Forces</i>	65	63	36	48	55	23	47	40	58
<i>Judiciary</i>	73	73	58	62	67	67	71	70	78
<i>Government</i>	77	79	75	48	81	64	49	82	81
<i>Congress</i>	71	75	79	55	83	71	61	79	73
<i>Police</i>	73	81	74	52	75	64	67	82	86
<i>Public Administration</i>	77	76	72	58	79	70	68	78	77
<i>Political Parties</i>	80	83	83	70	87	81	74	87	80

Problems with Realizing Democracy

Successful democracies typically demand an active civil society whose members share many values, including the rule of law, pluralism, the desire of each to contribute to the well-being of all, and trust in one's fellow citizens.

Lack of trust and involvement. In two different multicountry surveys in 1996, Latin American publics reveal serious mistrust of their compatriots. In a USIA-commissioned study, only minorities (from 25% in Costa Rica to 44% in Brazil) believe they can trust their neighbors and fellow workers "to do what is right most of the time." In all eight countries surveyed, younger publics are considerably *less* likely than others to believe neighbors and co-workers can be trusted.

In the second project, conducted in eight South American nations and in Mexico, the results on a similar but slightly different question are, if anything, even worse:

Trust in Others: South America and Mexico

<i>In general, would you say that you can trust most people, or that you can never be too careful when dealing with others?</i>	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
<i>Can trust most people</i>	23	17	11	18	23	20	13	11	21
<i>Can never be too careful</i>	74	81	87	80	76	78	79	86	76

The lack of trust may in turn help explain why most Latin Americans do not volunteer for or participate in local civic groups and a comparative lack of community spirit. Three in ten or fewer in eight South American countries and Mexico (especially fewer in Argentina) say they have participated in community-type activities such as *belonging to a sport or volunteer youth group, a church volunteer group, or a nonchurch-affiliated volunteer group* in the past six months. Nor have they worked with a *neighborhood association or the local PTA, or belonged to a labor union*. Those aged 18-24 are considerably more likely than the public at large to participate in youth groups; the middle-aged are more likely than others to attend PTA meetings. Few over 55 participate in any group. Apparently many participate in community/volunteer groups primarily because other family members belong.

Data from six of the nine countries suggest that religion also plays a role: Protestants and Evangelicals are almost twice as likely as Roman Catholics to participate in church-affiliated volunteer groups.

Respect for the law. Publics in the Andean region are perhaps most challenged in this regard -- by the effects of corruption from illegal drug traffickers -- yet these publics strongly believe in the importance of the law. In Bolivia and Colombia -- two countries which rank at the top of many lists of most corrupt nations -- and in Peru, the overwhelming majority (78-86%) say that it is *not* all right to break the law, even "if you are certain no one will catch you." In drug-cartel-ridden Colombia, about three-fourths feel this way strongly. Only 12-15 percent feel that it is okay to do so. Elsewhere, a solid majority (62%) in Brazil also feel this way.

Why the Difficulties with Democracy?

What explains the lack of trust (in officials and fellow-citizens), dissatisfaction and disillusion with the system, and lack of participation which are so important in making a democracy work? The data suggest several explanations:

(1) Few find much to applaud about their **government and its policies**, in part due to unmet expectations. Almost all these countries face a variety of economic problems, including runaway inflation and high unemployment. Large majorities everywhere but Mexico (small majorities) believe their governments should provide work for all, reduce the gaps between rich and poor, and provide a welfare net for the disadvantaged -- the unemployed, sick, and elderly.

(2) There is a widespread belief in most Latin American nations that corruption (and crime) has increased significantly over the past five years (fewer say this in Chile and Peru). (See table on following page)

Corruption in South America and Mexico (1996)

<i>In the past 5 years, has corruption . . .</i>	Argentina	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru	Venezuela	Mexico
increased a lot	87%	74%	64%	51%	76%	84%	48%	93%	76%
increased a little	5	11	16	21	12	9	20	3	12
stayed the same	5	10	12	18	8	5	20	3	9
decreased a little	1	3	6	5	2	1	9	1	1
decreased a lot	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-
DK/NA	2	1	1	4	1	1	3	-	2

In a separate 1996 survey, urban Mexicans overwhelmingly believe (83%) that there is “a great deal” of corruption in their country. An additional 13 percent say that there is “a fair amount” of it in Mexico. People tend to link corruption directly to their views on public institutions.

(3) The **efficacy of elections** is widely suspect. While many believe voting can effect changes for the better, there is no widespread feeling of empowerment. A slim majority in Colombia and half in Mexico believe that, no matter if one votes, things will not improve. In Bolivia about as many say that voting can change the future as disagree. Urban publics in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador most often feel voting can change things.

Moreover, many believe that their own elections are rigged. Six in ten or more in six South American nations believe this (81% in Brazil and 85% in Venezuela say they are). Argentine and Peruvian opinions are split. Only in Chile does a large majority believe elections are “clean” and honest.

Does Voting Make a Difference? South America and Mexico (1996)

<i>Some people say voting can change the future; others say that no matter how you vote, things will not improve in the future.</i>	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PER	VEN	MEX
<i>Voting can change the future</i>	63	51	61	49	43	58	52	49	46
<i>Voting will not improve things</i>	29	47	37	45	54	37	35	40	51

(4) Finally, there are mixed impressions about the overall **political situation** in each country. Six in ten or more urban residents in Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela -- and about half in Argentina and Brazil -- say the situation is "bad." Majorities in Chile and Peru, and pluralities in Bolivia and Ecuador, call their situation "neither good nor bad." Most expect no change over the coming twelve months, although Venezuelans are clearly pessimistic (55% expect the situation to worsen).

Democracy in Haiti

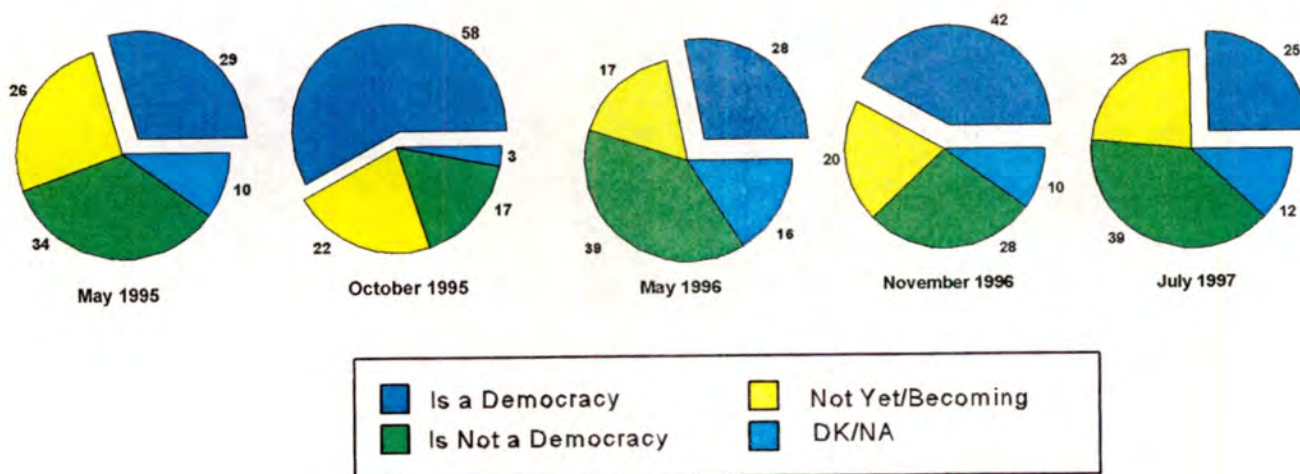
USIA's latest poll of urban Haitians, in late July 1997, suggests that democracy continues to lose ground in that troubled nation. The survey followed nationwide elections in April in which the large majority of Haitians did not vote. In economic and social conditions which continue to deteriorate for most urban Haitians, many appear to have lost hope that anyone -- least of all their government -- will be able to improve conditions.

Half (53%) of the urban populace candidly admit that they "do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work" in Haiti -- though a lower proportion than elsewhere in Latin America. Two-fifths (38%) claim to have a good understanding of how it is supposed to work.

Not Yet a Democracy

More city dwellers now believe that Haiti is *not* a democracy than say it is (39% to 25%), but another quarter feel that it is "becoming a democracy." This is a reversal of opinion since last November, when affirmers outweighed deniers by 42 percent to 28 percent, but in line with other shifts over the past two years. Perhaps equally disturbing is the finding that, among the plurality saying Haiti is not *now* a democracy, the view that Haiti will *never* have a well-functioning democracy prevails over the opposite view by a two-to-one margin (24% to 10%).

Is Haiti a Democracy?



When asked in May of 1995 and again the following year what the word "democracy" means, a plurality offered "equal rights, respect for each other." Another quarter said "freedom" -- freedom of speech, freedom to act, to live. These sentiments were mirrored by those who felt that their country was not a democracy in 1996. The three main reasons they cited for their belief:

respect for others (20%), lack of education about democracy (10%), and the absence of freedom (9%).

A Censorious Public Demands More of Their Leaders

Two-thirds of urban Haitians say the government is functioning *not very well* (30%) or *not well at all* (34%) and, of these, just over one in ten (14%) expect improvement in the next year. Those who believe government is functioning badly were asked the main reason for this opinion. About a fourth each (27%) say either that government in general is inept, unaccountable, unable to solve problems or that difficult living conditions make things hard for the government to work well. Still, 14 percent cite incompetent or corrupt officials as the primary reason for the malfunctioning government. Another tenth (11%) mention faulty government policies and lack of social services.

In general, the higher the educational level, the more likely that blame is directed at those in positions of responsibility rather than at the domestic situation in Haiti.

Overall, the public is doubtful of the future. Six in ten believe the government will *not* make any headway in the next twelve months on resolving the country's most serious problems, compared to just fifteen percent who think it will. Pro-reform Prime Minister Rosny Smarth's resignation shortly before interviewing began probably reinforced existing scepticism.

Back in May 1995, *half* expected to see progress. Residents of poorer cities are more negative on these (and other) issues. Even among erstwhile supporters of the current president -- members of the OPL party -- the proportion of those skeptical about the government's ability to resolve problems runs as high as three-fourths.

Majorities believe their senators and deputies (57%) and mayors (54%) care *nothing at all* about the problems facing people and that newly elected municipal authorities (57%) will *not* be capable of resolving community problems.

Attitudes Translate into Behavior

The same issue of the quality and ethics of their own officials and candidates for public office plays a huge role in elections. When asked why they think most Haitians did not vote in the April 6 elections, a plurality (21%) say "people are discouraged, disappointed with government" and "have no confidence that candidates will do anything to resolve their problems." Many nonvoters say they themselves did not vote because "they don't trust politicians or candidates; politicians just tell lies and fill their own pockets, they won't vote for 'hooligans.'" Lack of interest, of a voter's card, or of transportation were also mentioned as reasons for not voting.

Few show much respect -- or desire to vote -- for public officials or local candidates. A plurality cite either discouragement with government and lack of confidence in candidates (21%) or disgust with lying and corrupt candidates (10%) as the reason for not voting in the April 6 election. Few think elected officials care about constituents or will do anything to resolve local problems.

Trust Declines in Public Institutions and Leaders

Public support for President Preval has fallen twenty-one points since last November (to 48%). About four in ten (37%) think he is doing a good job as President, down from 65 percent last November. Key institutions have also seen positive ratings plummet or turn negative. Now, about half (54%) express little or no confidence in the Preval administration; one-third express at least *some* confidence. In a different measurement, in November 1996, six in ten urban Haitians held a *good* opinion of the administration.

Just two in ten (22%) express confidence in the current Parliament; two-thirds say they have *little* (19%) or *no* confidence (46%) in that stalemated legislative body. By contrast, just one-fourth held a poor opinion of Parliament in November 1996. Parliament's job performance rating has also fallen precipitously in 1997: half (54%) now think Parliament is doing a *poor* job at "passing necessary laws for the country," compared to the same proportion in November 1996 (53%) who said it was doing a *good* job.

Only a minority of urban Haitians (17%) express any confidence in the controversial Electoral Council (CEP), center of bitter disputes over vote-counting procedures and anomalies in the April 6 elections. Half the public (52%) say they have *no* confidence *at all* in the CEP. In contrast, just before the presidential elections in October 1995, a significant majority of Haitians held a *good* opinion of the Council.

Two-thirds (63%) of the urban public now have *little or no* confidence in Haiti's justice system, compared to just half who, in a different question, expressed a poor opinion last November. In general, OPL sympathizers and those with secondary or university educations are slightly more likely to be supportive of government institutions, while those with little or no education more often express no opinions about them.

The only government institution which has retained -- indeed *improved* -- its approval rating over recent months is the National Police. Despite recurring incidents of crime and violence on Haitian streets, an overwhelming majority (81%) feel the police are doing at least a fairly *good* job at "maintaining law and order" (31% say "very" good). This is the highest rating the police have received in USIA polls and represents a significant increase in public support from last November, when just over half (56%) thought they were doing a good job.

Democracy in the United States

Americans express great pride in their country. When asked which specific achievements give rise to these feelings, in 1996 four-fifths (78%) say they are proud of "the way democracy works" in the U.S. -- ranking this sixth among the ten achievements listed. (Past surveys have shown that Americans express much more pride in their country than the publics in other advanced democracies -- e.g., Japan and western Europe).

What Makes Americans Proud (2-4/96)	<i>Very proud</i>	<i>Somewhat Proud</i>	<i>Subtotal: Proud</i>	<i>Not proud</i>
Scientific and technological achievements	48%	41%	89%	5%
Armed forces	46	39	85	9
History	47	36	83	12
Sports	35	47	82	11
Arts and literature	28	52	80	11
Way Democracy Works	27	51	78	16
Economic achievements	27	49	76	17
U.S. political influence in the world	20	54	74	19
Fair and equal treatment of all groups in society	17	37	54	40
Social Security system	13	34	47	47

About four-fifths also believe that "whatever its faults, the United States still has the best system of government in the world." (Eighty-three percent agree with this statement vs. 15% who disagree.) Most Americans, in fact, feel that the U.S. political system has some faults -- but not enough to require drastic change.

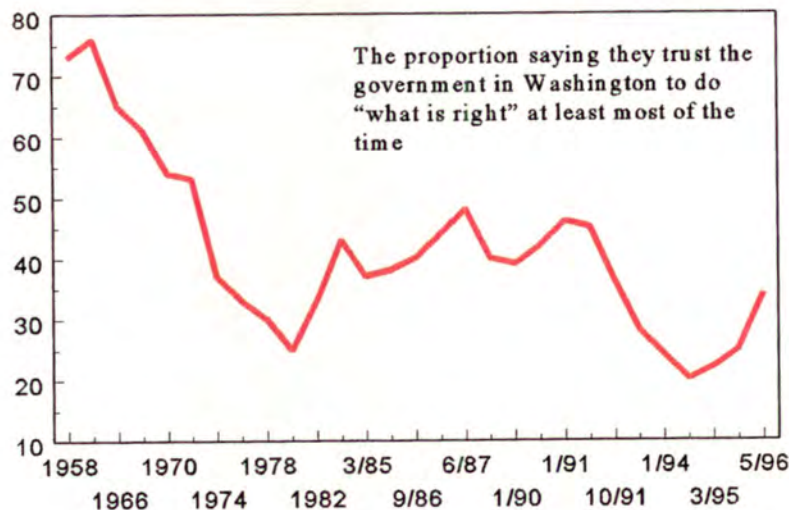
The question "All in all, how well or badly do you think the system of democracy in America works these days?" receives the following responses:

American democracy (2-4/96):

Works well and needs <i>no changes</i>	4%
Works well but needs <i>some changes</i>	63
Does not work well and needs <i>a lot of changes</i>	23
Does not work well and needs to be <i>completely changed</i>	4
No opinion	6

Trust in the "Government in Washington" -- A Downward Spiral

Several polling organizations have regularly used the same question to gauge the public's trust of the federal government: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" Confidence in the federal government has dropped sharply during the past 30-40 years. In the 1960's, better than three-fifths of Americans believed the "government in Washington" could be trusted to do "what is right" at least *most of the time*. In the 1970's and 1980's, about two-fifths

Confidence in Washington (in %)

on the average believed the federal government could be trusted to that extent. Since 1992, no more than one-third on any poll have expressed this view, compared to at least two-thirds now who think the federal government can be trusted no more than *some of the time*. Lack of trust has more than doubled since the 1960's -- from about 30 percent then to nearly 70 percent today.

Public confidence in politics generally and in many nongovernmental institutions has also declined since the 1960's. This is reflected in the sharp increase in the Harris Poll's "Alienation Index" -- from 29 percent in 1966 (average response on five different questions measuring social and political estrangement) to a peak of 67 percent in late 1995. Harris's late 1996 measurement shows a decline of five points in the index (from 67% in December 1995 to 62% in December 1996). On Harris's December 1996 poll, for example, 59% agree with the statement, "The people running the country don't really care what happens to you" and 65% agree that "What you think doesn't count very much anymore."

Concerning the separation of powers, a Gallup poll taken in late spring 1997 asked respondents "how much trust and confidence" they had in each branch of the federal government. The judicial branch comes in best, with seven in ten expressing at least a fair amount of confidence. The "executive branch headed by the President" falls about midway between the judicial and legislative branches, with nearly twice as many voicing confidence as saying they lack it. Nearly as many lack confidence as have it in the legislature (44% to 54%).

Degree of Confidence in the Branches of the Federal Government (6/97):	<i>Great Deal</i>	<i>Fair Amount</i>	<i>Not Very Much</i>	<i>None</i>
Judicial branch, headed by the U.S. Supreme Court	19%	52%	22%	5%
Executive Branch, headed by the President	13	49	27	9
Legislative branch, consisting of the U.S. Senate & House of Representatives	6	48	36	8

Is "All Politics [Still] Local"?

Americans' views of Washington, however, are not the only story. Various polls in recent years have shown that public confidence in the federal government is lower than confidence in state and especially local governments. For example, a Hart-Teeter poll, sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government, recorded these findings in February 1997:

Level of Confidence by Type of Government (2/97):	<i>Great Deal</i>	<i>Quite a Lot</i>	<i>Subtotal - Confidence</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>Very Little</i>	<i>Subtotal - Lack of Confidence</i>
The federal government	6%	16%	22%	45%	32%	77%
Your state government	8	24	32	47	20	67
Your local or community government	12	26	38	38	22	60
The military	27	30	57	31	10	41
The church/organized religion	30	24	54	27	14	41

This set of polls shows that confidence in every level of government has risen between 5-10 percentage points since previously measured in March 1995 (including for the federal government, despite the long-term trend noted). Nevertheless, confidence in every level of government remains far below confidence in "the military" or "the church or organized religion."

Americans differentiate, furthermore, in where they place their (relative) trust by the functions governments perform. Several recent polls have asked the public which level of government they think can best handle different types of problems. These polls show most Americans view the national government as best able to "improve the economy," safeguard the environment, protect civil rights, "provide services to immigrants," set health standards for the food we consume, and ensure the nation's security. But state governments are widely viewed as best able to "improve public education," provide job training, and set rules for receiving public assistance. Local governments are widely seen as best able to "fight crime" and pass local ordinances governing such activities as smoking in public.

"In which level of government do you have the most trust and confidence to handle each of the following problems most effectively?" (1/97)

	Federal	State	Local
Provide services to immigrants	62%	19%	11%
Protect civil rights	59	21	13
Provide health care for the disabled, poor and elderly	44	36	15
Establish rules on who can receive welfare or public assistance for poor people	28	44	23
Provide early education to low-income children	25	39	32
Fight crime	24	26	42
Provide job training	20	45	30

"Now I would like to read you a list of issues facing the country. Please tell me, for each one, which level of government you think can best deal with that issue ..."
(11/96)

	Federal	State	Local
Improving the economy	65%	20%	8%
Handling health care issues	46	37	10
Reforming the welfare system	42	42	10
Providing a safety net, or the basic necessities of shelter, food and emergency health care	31	38	24
Fighting crime and drugs	30	32	31
Improving public education	18	46	31

Why Are Americans Displeased with Their Democratic Government?

Various polls have explored the reasons for Americans' reduced trust in the federal government. The main reasons offered by the public can be grouped as follows, from most to least influential on people's confidence in the government:

Reasons Listed for Distrust of the Federal Government (1995-97):

	Composite percentage naming item as a "major reason"
Waste in government spending; government inefficiency	80%
Elected officials pursue their own personal agenda, not the voters' priorities	70
Special interests have too much influence	65
Elected officials lack honesty, integrity	60
Government interferes too much in people's lives	45
Too much partisan politics	30
Complaints about specific, unresolved problems:	
Crime, drugs	60
Federal taxes are too high, unfair	50
Poor condition of our public education system	40
Failure to protect American jobs and living standards	40

These findings, particularly the comparative lack of trust in government at all levels, evoke alarm in some observers.¹⁴ Yet declining participation in elections is not necessarily a condemnation of the political process, nor is throwing out incumbents a revolutionary procedure. These attitudes and behaviors seem consistent with a public displaying a healthy skepticism of those in power, and their potential to abuse that power, yet still adhering to “the basic social compact” of American democracy.

What these findings seem to confirm is that it is the government’s *performance* in various tasks rather than the government itself or the form of government that engenders distrust. Are disappointed expectations mostly to blame for the poor performance ratings of the government? Or, put more bluntly, do Americans expect too much of their leaders?

How Americans View the Role of Government

In the abstract, the bulk of Americans believe they would be better off having less government than they now have. More Americans say the government is already doing too many things better left to business and individuals than say the government should do more to solve national problems (58% to 34% in February 1997).

However, when asked in the same poll who should be responsible for solving our country’s problems, the public mentions *the government* more often than all nongovernmental entities combined:

“Who do you think should be most responsible for solving problems facing the nation -- government, business, individuals, or nonprofit and charitable organizations?”

Government	44%
Nongovernment: Total	39
Individuals	33
Business	3
Nonprofit/charitable groups	3
All equal (volunteered)	10
Other, Don’t Know	7

Also, when asked about the extent of the role that government should play in the U.S., three-fourths want something more than the bare minimum from their government. Only a quarter of

the public believe the government should do "as little as possible" after providing for the nation's defense and the fair administration of justice.

What Americans Want From Their Government (11/96)



Previous surveys have shown Americans distinguish between certain functions they believe government should take primary responsibility for (e.g., education, care for the elderly, reducing crime, reducing illegal immigration) and functions which the public thinks should be left mainly in the hands of business, community leaders or other individuals (e.g., child care centers, support of the arts, improving moral values). Some functions are widely viewed as being the shared responsibility of government and nongovernmental organizations -- e.g., creating jobs, job training, reducing pollution, and health care.

Conclusion

Values, Values, Values

Few commentators on democracy have been more astute than the Russian novelist Fedor Dostoevsky. At the center of his masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky places a dialogue between Jesus Christ and the Grand Inquisitor which speaks to the problem of human values -- and modern democracy. The Inquisitor taunts Christ with the claim that God's greatest gift to mankind, freedom, is a burden on most humans and that, deep down, the great majority of people want bread (security) rather than freedom.

In many of today's transitional societies, that same longing for stability, order, and economic prosperity appears to outweigh the perceived blessings of democracy. In more mature democracies, freedom and liberal ideals seem to be holding their own against the yearning for security-at-any-cost. Arthur Schlesinger, in a recent piece in *Foreign Affairs*, looks at this dichotomy in terms of Western versus Asian values: "The Asian tradition, we are told, values the group more than the individual, order more than argument, authority more than liberty, solidarity more than freedom."¹⁵

As important as cultural values, moreover, are certain psychological attitudes which democracy demands in order to work well. Among democracy's requisite traits are the ability to compromise, not to see things totally in black and white, to avoid putting things into the context of a "zero-sum game." If it means anything, democracy means sharing -- the sharing of power and of resources. "Winner takes all" cannot work in a democracy. If losers lose all, they are more reluctant to play the democratic game.

How Comparable are the World's Democracies?

Are the values that Westerners prize in their democracies universal and absolute, or is democracy a relative thing? By exploring the values and views of various countries around the world, this report has shown that there are significant differences that separate today's democracies. Despite the differences, some core values remain common to most.

Whether a country has a two-party or multiparty system, frequent or infrequent elections, and a presidential or parliamentary regime is not of great consequence. In whatever circumstances, wherever some kind of pluralism takes hold and individuals' rights are upheld, democracy flourishes. Neglect all of the values and attitudes which nourish democracy, and the system dies.

Appendix: A List of Polls

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sample Size & Type</u>	<u>Firm</u>
<i>Central and Eastern Europe States</i>			
Bulgaria	Sep 1997	1032 nationwide	Center for the Study of Democracy
Czech Republic	Sep 1997	1207 nationwide	AISA
Hungary	Sep 1997	1000 nationwide	Median
Poland	Sep/Oct 1997	980 nationwide	DEMOSKOP
Romania	Sep 1997	1018 nationwide	IMAS
Slovakia	Sep 1997	1144 nationwide	AISA
Turkey	Sep 1997	1112 nationwide	Strateji Mori
Bosnia Hercegovina	Jan 1997	2967 nationwide	Puls (Hercegovina and Central Bosnia) Medium (RS)
Croatia	Nov 1996	987 nationwide	Puls
Bulgaria	Mar 1996	1150 nationwide	Center for the Study of Democracy
Czech Republic	Apr/May 1996	1169 nationwide	AISA
Hungary	Mar/Apr 1996	1000 nationwide	TARKI
Poland	Jul 1996	1088 nationwide	DEMOSKOP
Romania	Mar/Apr 1996	1198 nationwide	IMAS
Slovakia	Apr/May 1996	1183 nationwide	AISA
<i>Turkey</i>	Jul/Aug 1996	1142 nationwide	Strateji Mori
	May 1997	1130 nationwide	Strateji Mori
<i>Russia, Ukraine, and Commonwealth States</i>			
Armenia	May/Jun 1996	1000 nationwide	Yerevan State University
Azerbaijan	Sep 1996	1000 nationwide	SORGU
Belarus	Apr/May 1997	1073 nationwide	NOVAK
Georgia	Dec 1996	1020 nationwide	SOCIOGEO
Russia	Mar/Apr 1997	1868 nationwide	CESSI
Russia	Oct 1996	1800 nationwide	ROMIR
Ukraine	Oct/Nov 1996	1200 nationwide	Kiev International Institute of Sociology
Ukraine	Dec 1995/Jan 1996	1200 nationwide	SOCIS
<i>Africa</i>			
Angola	Jul/Aug 1996	2001 urban and suburban regions	BBC
Ethiopia	Dec 1995/Jan 1996	1000 nationwide urban	Research International
Kenya	Mar/Apr 1997	2017 major urban/rural	Markinor

Nigeria	Mar/Apr 1997	2130 nationwide urban/ rural	RMS Ltd.
South Africa	Feb/Mar 1997 Aug 1997	1992 nationwide urban 1495 nationwide urban	Markinor Markinor
<i>South Asia</i>			
India	Aug/Sep 1997	1527 urban	ORG-MARG
Pakistan	Jul 1997	800 urban	Aftab
<i>East and Southeast Asia</i>			
Japan	Oct 1997	1048 nationwide	Shin Joho
The Philippines	Aug 1996	1500 nationwide	Frank Small & Assoc.
South Korea	Sep 1997	1512 nationwide	Gallup Korea
Thailand	Sep 1995	1000 urban	Frank Small & Assoc.
<i>Latin America</i>			
Argentina	Jun/Jul 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Bolivia	Jun/Jul 1996	772 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Brazil	Jun/Jul 1996	1080 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Chile	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Colombia	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Ecuador	Jul 1996	1200 nationwide	Latinobarometer
Mexico	Jun 1996	1526 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Paraguay	Jun/Jul 1996	598 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Peru	Jun 1996	1200 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Uruguay	Jun/Jul 1996	1200 nationwide	Latinobarometer
Venezuela	Jun/Jul 1996	1500 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Costa Rica	Jul 1996	1005 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
El Salvador	Jul 1996	1003 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Guatemala	Jul 1996	998 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Honduras	Jul 1996	1001 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Nicaragua	Jul 1996	1033 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Panama	Jul 1996	1002 nationwide urban	Latinobarometer
Argentina	Apr 1996	1000 nationwide	Mora y Aruajo
Bolivia	Nov/Dec 1996	1200, cities of 10,000+	APOYO
Brazil	Mar/Apr 1996	1500 nationwide	IBOPE
Colombia	Nov/Dec 1996	1200, cities of 10,000+	Invamer-Limitada
Guatemala	Apr 1996	1205 nationwide	CID-Gallup
Nicaragua	Apr 1996	1002 nationwide	CID-Gallup
Peru	Nov/Dec 1996	1203, cities of 10,000+	APOYO

Chile	Jul 1996	1000, 3 major cities	MORI Chile
Costa Rica	Jul/Aug 1996	1000, 6 largest cities	CID-Gallup
El Salvador	Mar 1996	1000 San Salvador only	CID-Gallup
Haiti	May 1996	1208, 3 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Haiti	Nov 1996	1299, 5 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Haiti	Jul 1997	1351, 5 major cities	Saint-dic et Saint-dic
Mexico	Jul/Aug 1996	1001, 3 major cities	Gallup-Mexico
Mexico	Mar 1997	1015, 5-city phone poll	Gallup-Mexico
<i>United States of America</i>			
United States	May/Jun 1997	935 nationwide	Gallup/USA Today
United States	Feb 1997	1276 nationwide	CBS News
United States	Feb 1997	1003 nationwide	Hart-Teeter (Council for Excellence in Government)
United States	Jan 1997	1503 nationwide	PEW Center for the People and the Press
United States	Nov 1996	1000 registered voters	US News and World Report/Lake and Tarrance
United States	Apr/May 1996	1024 nationwide	ABC News
United States	Feb/Apr 1996	2904 nationwide	NORC/General Social Survey
United States	Jan/Apr 1996	2047 nationwide	Gallup/Post-Modernity Project
United States	Nov/Dec 1995	1514 nationwide	Washington Post/Kaiser Foundation/ Harvard University Survey
United States	Mar 1995	1003 nationwide	Hart-Teeter (Council for Excellence in Government)
United States	Dec 1994	1968 nationwide	Roper

Notes

1. Usually posed as a question, as here, the ultimate aim of such queries is often prescriptive. Cf. Larry Diamond, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives. A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict* (December 1995).
2. As a Polish anecdote of some years ago had it:
 - Q. So, what's the difference between a democracy and a "people's democracy?"
 - A. The same as between a jacket and a straitjacket.
3. Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1997, pp. 22-43.
4. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Has Democracy a Future?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September/October 1997), p. 7. The reverse connection is also made: "Democracy is fostering market-oriented reforms in Latin America. . . . Only the democratic opposition can *guarantee* the future course of a market economy. When the opposition is committed to the market economy, its victory brings policy changes in its wake but no rewriting of the fundamental rules that govern the economy . . . and it is the key to the contribution of democracy for markets in Latin America in the 1990s." (*Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 1997, p. A15).
5. Paul Goble, "Hyphenated Democracy," *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 3, 1997, p. 16. Schlesinger (*ibid.*) makes a similar but slightly different point.
6. Musing on diverse forms of government, the French *philosophe* Montesquieu wrote in his 18th-century treatise *On the Spirit of the Laws* that it is essential for the citizens of a democracy to display virtue.
7. By contrast, earlier USIA findings in western Europe showed that publics in Germany and Great Britain rank political rights most important.
8. USIA surveys and other research have consistently found ambivalence among Hungarians toward their new regime. This finding is likely due partly to a tendency toward pessimism among the Hungarian public but partly to the fact that Hungary in 1989 had one of the more liberal regimes and was further along in the transformation process than other countries in the region, perhaps leading the public to have higher expectations for rapid improvement.
9. A notable exception is Bulgaria, where confidence in government is at its highest point since 1989. This survey was taken a few months after the presidential elections in October-November 1996 in which opposition leader Petar Stoyanov was elected.
10. The national government in Serbia had held the confidence of a slim majority of Serbs during the year preceding the election-related protests in the fall of 1996, after which support dropped by half (down to just 23%) in a winter 1997 survey.
11. In a different question, asked to choose which is the *most important priority* for their country from a list, a third each select "pursuit of democratic principles" (33%) and economic reforms (34%) -- the two top choices. Many fewer choose such items as good relations with the West (12%) or administering the country in accord with Islamic law (9%).
12. In a different question posed in 1996, comparatively few (21%) said that they trust the government "to do what is right most of the time." The majority then trusted the government "only sometimes" (50%) or "almost never" (22%).

13. See the conference report "Democracy in South Asia" produced by the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies in August 1997, pp. 9-11.

14. For example, The Kettering Foundation writes, in a recent publication, about the "disconnect" between the American public and the U.S. political system. What could once be dismissed as mere apathy is seen as a more ominous malady: "Polls show that Americans are losing confidence in nearly all of their major institutions." The "widening gap that separates the people of this country from their governments [federal and local]" threatens to undermine "the basic social compact that provides legitimacy for a representative government." (David Mathews, "Defining the Disconnect," *Connections*, VIII, No. 1 (June 1997), p.2.

Cf. two articles which both appeared on December 23, 1997, the first by Charles Murray ("Americans Remain Wary of Washington," *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A14) and the second by Benjamin Tyree ("Symptoms of eroding faith in government," *The Washington Times*, p. A12).

15. Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

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The People Have Spoken: Global Views of Democracy, Vol. II



USIA Office of Research and Media Reaction

A MILLENNIUM PROJECT

The People Have Spoken:
Global Views of Democracy, Vol. II

**A Special Report of the
Office of Research and Media Reaction**

U.S. Information Agency

September 1999

A Note to Our Readers

This report appears as the Office of Research and Media Reaction, along with the U.S. Information Agency of which it is a part, is formally integrated into the State Department on October 1st.

It is perhaps fitting that the final global report of the office is on a subject -- democracy -- that is so closely linked to the work of USIA in public diplomacy. No topic is more central to what the research function measures -- public attitudes and opinions on issues most relevant to American policymakers. No topic is more important to the health of American society than the progress of democracy around the world.

Contents

Introduction	1
Africa and the Middle East	3
South Asia	7
East Asia	9
Latin America	16
Russia, Ukraine and the CIS	24
Europe	32
United States	42
<i>Appendix: List of Polls</i>	44

Introduction

Over a year ago, this office's global assessment of democracy -- "The People Have Spoken" -- appeared. The report in hand updates that publication.

The *idea* of democracy holds sway in most of the world today. Among those both little acquainted with the practice and most familiar with its workings, the concept retains its power. With popular imagination in countries around the globe so smitten, democracy's future should be bright and secure.

On closer look, however, the picture is not so rosy. Democracy remains under threat from many quarters. Even broaching the subject in some societies provokes endless discussions of what is wrong (and sometimes right) with democracy. Forecasts of what lies ahead for democratic societies run the gamut, but most serious commentators would probably agree that the perils of democracy should be neither ignored nor understated. Nor should they be exaggerated, however.

In this update, two of the more obvious threats to democracy are central. The first is corruption. Corruption is an ancient evil -- easily recognized, easily condemned -- so pervasive as to appear ubiquitous. How does corruption endanger democracy, when it is so widely "accepted"? It does so by undermining many of the bases of modern democracy: *equal* treatment (e.g., under the law), *equal* access (to bureaucrats and officials), *accountability* of leaders and officials to voters, and so on.

In the best of all worlds, there might be no corruption. But in our less-than-perfect world, corruption is ever-present. What makes its existence even more galling is the fact that in some societies, unfortunately, corruption represents more than bad government. *Particularly where there is no firmly established rule of law*, corruption is -- or may be -- a way to temper worse forms of malfeasance by some officials or simply to correct incompetence.

A further insight into the "uses of corruption" comes from an observer in Russia, who asks:

"How do you conduct democratic reforms in a country in which the majority of the elite are profoundly undemocratic?" . . . "Consciously or instinctively, Yeltsin believed that the only way was to give such people a stake in his regime by letting them steal. . . . Corruption was a form of control." (*Financial Times*, June 19/20, 1999, p. IX)

Differentiating between "good" and "bad" corruption is not an issue where laws are supreme, but it may be a less than easy task elsewhere -- all the more reason to study its extent and impact.

A less obvious danger for democracy is anomie. This phenomenon too has been around for a long time but seems to have come into its own primarily in the modern, or post-modern, world.

Anomie in this sense refers to a set of attitudes, to individuals' fears and concerns about their fellow citizens and their leaders: can people trust their own governments, can they trust their compatriots, do others share their values and norms of behavior? These questions play some role in every society. But whereas they may be peripheral in many traditional, authoritarian, or nondemocratic societies, they seem to be at the heart of contemporary democracies.

There are those who argue that democracy rests on shaky foundations when the majority do not trust their elected officials "to do what is right most of the time" or feel that their representatives "don't much care what people like me think." Others believe that such attitudes may just reflect the changing nature

in every society. But whereas they may be peripheral in many traditional, authoritarian, or nondemocratic societies, they seem to be at the heart of contemporary democracies.

There are those who argue that democracy rests on shaky foundations when the majority do not trust their elected officials "to do what is right most of the time" or feel that their representatives "don't much care what people like me think." Others believe that such attitudes may just reflect the changing nature and functions of democracy and may be a necessary, if painful, part of the natural evolution of this form of governance. Some would even argue that polls do not so much indicate where democracy's problems lie as help to create those problems.¹

The state of American (and European) democracy is a major concern for many, given low levels of trust in public officials and government in general. "They just don't seem to care" -- in Washington, Berlin, Stockholm, or other Western capitals -- is an all-too-common lament. In fact, if one reads the final section of this report (on democracy in the U.S.), it almost makes the problems of other parts of the world seem of a piece with those in this country. It certainly puts things in better perspective. For all the debate over the current "crisis" in democracy, it is not clear that the situation is as bad in the transitioning countries -- or in the most developed -- as appears.

If this begins to sound like an old and tired argument, that's because it largely is. That the world is going to the dogs is one of mankind's most unshakable and cherished convictions. It's all somewhat reminiscent of that old chestnut about political polling:

Interviewer: Do you think that ignorance and apathy among voters is a serious problem?

Respondent: I don't know, and I don't care.

Moreover, recent research in emerging democracies of eastern and central Europe and the former Soviet Union calls into question a direct causal link between trust in others and the progress of democratization.

Be all this as it may, the perception is widespread that democracies around the world do not always operate the way many would like to see them work. Whether the villains are seen as "special interests," lobbyists, dishonest politicians, uneducated or indifferent citizens, venal bureaucrats, or any other group, there is cause for concern. But it is difficult to measure the degree of danger all these issues pose for democracy. The resilience of the institution, after all, depends directly on the strength of will of the governed, and that has yet to be shown to be wanting in most countries around the globe.

¹ Among some excellent recent discussions of these issues are: "Is there a crisis?", *The Economist*, July 17, 1999, pp. 49-50; "Democracy's Prospects," *Harvard Magazine*, July-August 1999; and "Whose Government Is This?", *The Washington Post*, July 13, 1999, p. A17.

Africa and the Middle East

Nigeria

A tumultuous year and a half in Nigerian politics has added to both the perils and the promise of democracy in the most populous nation on the continent. In the fall of 1997, General Sani Abacha turned presidential elections into a one-man show and won a new term of office. By June he was dead, and a new military man, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, became president. Abubakar postponed new presidential elections until spring 1999 to ensure more favorable circumstances for the transition to a civilian-based democratic regime. Almost his final act was to put into effect a new constitution, by decree.

General Olusegun Obasanjo, who won the postponed election and was inaugurated president of Nigeria in late May 1999, faces multiple challenges in fulfilling campaign promises to end military rule, raise public trust in government, and, most difficult, control corruption. His task is complicated by the patchwork quilt that is Nigeria, having over 200 ethnic and linguistic groups within its borders. But there is enormous goodwill to help him, as the country has its first elected president in a generation; he comes into office with the first civilian administration since 1983.

USIA's latest poll was conducted in May, just after the elections. Support for democratic reform was a major determinant of how people voted. When asked why they supported a particular political party, they most often cited that party's promises to improve the economy and reduce inflation (named by 54%), but that was followed closely by a desire to restore democracy (45%).

An earlier poll, in October 1998, during the tenure of General Abubakar -- not under Obasanjo -- provides more insight into the current transition. Nigerians then gave General Abubakar high marks for his efforts to increase transparency and fairness in the electoral process. Large majorities (84-85%) pronounced themselves satisfied with his government's performance in returning the country to civilian rule and agreed that he was right to postpone elections to better safeguard the prospects for civilian rule.

The Hydra That Threatens Democracy. The October survey shows that the Nigerian public remains acutely aware of the danger official corruption poses. Eighty-two percent say that corruption among public officials is a *very serious* problem; another 10 percent call it "somewhat serious." A majority (58%) also say that it would be difficult for Nigeria to hold public officials accountable for their acts of corruption. A third (32%) say it would not. One possible solution, or deterrent, to corruption -- publishing the names of alleged corrupt officials -- is roundly favored by the public (79%).

The problem is *not* just a reflection of 25 years of military rule in the country: about half say that a civilian government would be equally corrupt (20%) or *more corrupt* (26%) than a military one. A plurality (39%), however, think that civilian rulers would be less corrupt.

Reading the Tea Leaves for the Future. Some hope for democratic rule in Nigeria lies in the October 1998 poll's finding that three-fourths (76%) feel that respect for human rights improved under General Abubakar's brief rule. One in ten (12%) says that the situation with human rights remained the same.

At the same time, however, the public divides evenly on whether the 1995 Constitution – soon to be adopted – is the best for Nigeria, with 48 percent saying yes, 45 percent no. Similar mixed views exist on the kind of state system Nigeria should have. A third (34%) want the federal government to have more authority, a fifth (21%) want to change the federal structure to give states more authority, and a quarter (25%) say that the current federal system is best.

South Africa

Presidential elections in spring 1999 marked at least the beginning of the transition from Nelson Mandela's first nonwhite administration to the post-Mandela era. His successor, Thabo Mbeki, while lacking the stature of his patron, nonetheless enjoys rising popularity ratings and comfortably high job performance marks (as Deputy President) as he enters his five-year term of office.

An April-May, 1999 USIA poll conducted on the eve of the elections reveals fairly widespread satisfaction with the electoral process in South Africa. Three-quarters (73%) before the elections expected that the poll would be fair and free. Race, however, sharply differentiates perceptions in this regard: just half as many whites as blacks (40% to 82%) foresaw a transparent election.

Familiarity with democratic processes grows apace. Unprompted, roughly six in ten South Africans are able to name a specific characteristic of democratic elections. A third mention freedom of choice (among various candidates), a quarter (26%) note the right of every qualified voter to participate, and 15 percent cite the principle of "one-man, one-vote." Still, about two-fifths overall (38%) are either unable or unwilling to offer an attribute.

The outgoing Mandela government received generally good performance ratings, higher in virtually every category from November 1998. Three-fifths (61%) said that the government's general performance was good, but blacks were much more inclined to give good grades than whites (71% to 21%). Eight in ten overall (79%) – and majorities among both blacks (85%) and whites (64%) -- said that his government was doing a good job in promoting gender equality. Two-thirds overall (64%), and the same proportion among blacks (67%), thought that Mandela's

regime was handling a controversial program of affirmative action well; fewer, but still a majority (55%), among whites believed this.

On the all-important issue of creating national unity, however, fissures again follow the color line. The overwhelming majority of blacks (87%) lauded the outgoing government, but only a fifth (21%) of whites did so (for an overall rating of 73%). On the related issue of narrowing the income gap between different racial groups, two-thirds of black (65%) but just 45 percent of whites said the Mandela government was doing a good job.

The public was less forgiving on other performance measures. Overall, just half (48%) praised the outgoing regime's efforts to manage the economy, two-fifths for fighting corruption (44%) and inflation (42%), and only a quarter (26%) for reducing crime. In each case, whites were far more likely than blacks to criticize the government's job.

Ghana

In Ghana, a country not included in the previous democracy report, a March 1998 poll found the same kind of lack of familiarity with democracy that is widespread in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. More Ghanaians say they do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work in their country than say they have a good understanding of this (49% to 41%). Among the best-educated, however, the proportion self-reporting a good understanding rises to 57 percent.

Virtually all (97%) feel, moreover, that it is important that people be educated on democracy and good citizenship (89% say it is very important). By the same token, at least nine in ten categorize the following democratic principles as very important in a democracy: equality of every citizen under the law, protection of the rights of minority ethnic and political groups, honest elections regularly held, and freedom to express opinions "even if critical of the government." Slightly fewer (80%) call equal rights for both sexes very important.

As in Nigeria, an overwhelming majority (91%) agree that "corruption among public officials is a major concern" for Ghana. A mere 4 percent disagree. (Nearly as many – 88% – feel that corruption in business and the private sector is also a major concern.) Nonetheless, just 3 percent – unprompted -- call corruption the country's single most important problem; economic factors like unemployment, inflation, and general poverty are cited by the vast majority.

Two potentially troublesome signs: More than twice as many say that it is better for Ghana to pursue economic reform before undertaking political reform than say the reverse (53% to 22%); a fifth (19%) say that it is "better to pursue both at once."² And while half (54%) claim to follow

²In late 1997, Nigerians responded with almost identical priorities: 59 percent putting economic reform before political reform, 27 percent putting political reform first.

political developments in Ghana fairly or very closely (70% among the university-educated), not many engage in such political activities as working for some political party (9%) or contacting a public official on a problem of personal concern (10%).

Jordan

A survey conducted in May, 1999, not long after Jordan lost Hussein, its king of nearly four decades, shows that the new government of his son and successor King Abdullah receives fairly high marks from the public. Three-quarters (76%) express at least a fair amount of confidence in it (43% say they have a great deal of confidence); just a fifth (18%) say they lack confidence. Other institutions receive similar high marks: the legal/court system (75% to 15%), tribal or clan affiliations (65% to 23%), the Upper House of parliament (60% to 30%), the Lower House (58% to 29%), and the media (57% to 31%). Lower but still generally favorable confidence ratings go to municipal courts (49% to 34%) and professional associations (47% to 22%).

Despite public confidence in the government, views are mixed on the status of democracy in the country, which instituted democratic reforms in 1989. A huge majority (90%) feel that freedom of religion receives a great deal or fair amount of protection. Smaller majorities say that freedom of opinion (60%) and of the press (58%) are at least fairly well protected. Fewer than half, however, say this about the freedom to assemble (46%) or to protest (40%).

Jordanians are also doubtful about the autonomy of their country's domestic institutions: pluralities to about half believe that the media (48%), political parties, both houses of parliament, and professional associations (all 42%) have little or no ability to resist interference from the government. But on a more positive note, a plurality (43%) feel that the legal system is able, at least to some extent, to ward off government interference.

As in most fledgling democracies or "transitioning" countries like Jordan, political parties have yet to play a large role in Jordanian democracy. Formally legalized as part of the former government's reforms, they are one of the few public institutions which does not garner public confidence: only 21 percent express at least a fair amount, compared to 41 percent who say they lack confidence in political parties. (In contrast, far more trust Jordan's clan and tribal associations.) Nearly all (99%) affirm that they do not belong to any political party and also say (96%) that they have no intention of joining one in the foreseeable future. The prevailing view, in fact, is that political parties are *not* necessary for the success of Jordan's political system (47% to 23%).

South Asia

Pakistan

Our 1997 survey in Pakistan found a public inclined toward authoritarian solutions to major domestic problems of the economy and of civic disorder. Nearly two years later, these attitudes persist. In the past six months Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has responded to sectarian violence by imposing martial law and suspending civil rights in the province of Sindh.

A March 1999 poll shows that many more urban Pakistanis still have confidence in their military (85%) than have it in their national government (55%, down from 65% last year). A substantial majority (80%) *lack* confidence in the police; fewer, but still a majority, lack it in the civil service (56%). More lack than have confidence in the courts and legal system (51% to 38%).

Urban Pakistanis portray themselves as living in a country rife with violence and “terrorism” in local communities. Three-quarters (75%) say that violence between different groups of people in the country is a very serious problem; another 18 percent say it is fairly serious. About as many point to “political differences” (26%) as to “economic factors” (30%) as root causes of communal violence. The urban public divides on whether such violence has increased over the past year or not: 43% feel that it has, at least somewhat, whereas 39 percent think that it has not, and 12 percent say that the level has remained more or less constant.

Despite these findings, not many choose terrorism (7%) or community violence (2%) as the most serious problem facing the country (from a list). First place in this regard goes to unemployment (selected by 43%), followed by inflation (18%), poverty (7%) and other economic problems (9%). Another problem for democracies, government corruption, is chosen by just 2 percent. (In last year’s report, corruption was reported as widespread, and a fifth (21%) said corruption was one of the main reasons why their country was not a democracy.)

The troubled domestic scene in Pakistan has led many there to look for a kind of religious authoritarianism to solve their problems. Specifically, more of the urban Pakistani populace express a favorable view of the radical Islamic Taliban in Afghanistan than voice an unfavorable view of how the Taliban runs its territory (41% to 18%). An unsettling 43 percent say they support the imposition of Taliban-like restrictions on democracy in Pakistan, while only 18 percent would oppose them.³

³These restrictions were characterized as “strict social, political, and religious practices on the people of the country.”

More disagree than agree (38% to 30%) that “the kind of Islam practiced by the Taliban is becoming more popular and influential in Pakistan.” But among those that say it is, the most common explanation for this increased appeal of Taliban-style Islam is “corruption in our society” (chosen by 45% from a list), trailed by the Taliban’s purported purer, truer brand of Islam (selected by 30%) and the lack of sincerity in the Islamic practice of Pakistan’s own Islamic parties and religious leaders (22%).⁴

⁴One or two responses permitted.

East Asia

Introduction

Representative democracy in many East Asian and Pacific countries is a relatively recent import of no more than 4 to 6 decades. This Western idea either blends with or runs against the grain of the rich cultural traditions of political entities much older than most modern democracies. Polls conducted in 1998 in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea and Japan reveal that publics in all five countries share some basic assumptions about the nature and limits of democracy. In most of these countries, the workings of democracy and civil society have come under intense scrutiny in recent years as their economies weathered terrible storms and their governments endured other serious stress.

One aspect of the findings should be highlighted at the start. In one way or another, many of the survey results reflect an underlying tension in these countries between so-called "Asian values" and "Western values," specifically, between the notion of group harmony and that of individual rights. Publics in all five of these countries believe that, in a democracy, harmony should take precedence over individual rights. This view -- consonant with past USIA polling -- is most prevalent in Indonesia (where four-fifths hold it) but solid majorities in South Korea and urban Thailand, and half in Japan and the Philippines, share this view.

People in South Korea, moreover, are much more likely to say that distinctive East Asian cultures and traditions make "Asian democracy" fundamentally different from democracy in the West than to say that democracy is a sort of universal idea that's fundamentally the same all over the world (61% to 29%).⁵ Sentiment in Japan (50% to 28%) and Thailand (53% to 32%) runs the same way; urban Indonesians divide on the issue (36% vs. 39%); and only Filipinos among these five nations think that democracy is indeed a universal idea and basically the same everywhere, soundly rejecting the concept of a separate form of Asian democracy (65% to 26%).

The problem of corruption worries most of these publics, but they assess its damage variously and do not necessarily despair of solving the problem. All agree, furthermore, on the importance of educating their citizens in democracy. From 70 percent (Indonesia and South Korea) to 80 percent (Thailand and the Philippines) feel this way strongly. Unlike in some other areas of the world, civic participation is relatively high in each of these countries, especially in Japan and Indonesia, but the form of activity varies greatly from nation to nation.

⁵In October 1997, in a different question, by a two-to-one margin, the Japanese felt that "democracy is a universal ideal that applies equally to Western and non-Western nations" (56%) rather than that "democracy applies mainly to Western nations" (27%).

It is instructive to compare how some of these publics judge what is important (or essential) in a democracy, and how well their own country measures up to what democracy demands of them.

Figure 1. Rating Elements of Democracy (in %)

	Most important in a democracy			Essential for country to be called a democracy			Describes democracy in..		
	Ind.	Phil.	Thai	Ind.	Phil.	Thai	Ind.	Phil.	Thai
Judicial system punishes the guilty, no matter who they are	12	25	28	94	91	93	NA	62	66
Leaders are wise and virtuous	53	NA	NA	98	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Government guarantees basic economic needs of all citizens	11	17	20	95	83	83	NA	41	19
One can choose from several parties/candidates when voting	2	24	11	64	93	46	NA	94	67
There is freedom to openly criticize the government	6	14	14	78	86	78	NA	85	70
There is economic prosperity in the country	8	5	18	94	86	79	NA	NA	NA
There is no large gap between rich and poor	NA	15	8	NA	80	60	NA	41	33
All cultural and religious groups are treated fairly	7	NA	NA	96	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Majority get a fair share of jobs and government benefits	2	NA	NA	43	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

In the above table, the various attributes of democracy are arranged roughly in descending order of importance for all three countries. It is easily seen that in both the Philippines and Thailand, publics are inclined to see their own democracies in a rather favorable light, with majorities in each saying that three of their top four choices of what's most important in a democracy actually exist in their own country. These three attributes all deal with political rights and freedoms. In both countries, performance falls down most severely in the public's mind on economic measures of democracy.

Indonesia

USIA polled in the spring of 1998, when political unrest and financial difficulties were at a peak, and again in the fall, both times in six major Indonesian cities. The abnormal circumstances of spring 1998 doubtless influenced that survey to some extent, but the results are still valuable for the insights they provide into the political views and values of urban Indonesians. In the meantime, Indonesia has held successful parliamentary elections in early June – the first free elections in that country since 1955. And even a prominent opposition critic of the regime acknowledged that, to the best of his knowledge, the results were fair and free. A second test of Indonesian democracy comes later this year with presidential elections.

As noted above, urban Indonesians divide on whether their own brand of democracy is basically the same or different from Western-style democracy. Among those who say the two are different, most point to the West's greater freedom of speech as a major distinguishing feature, but not always in a positive sense. Some applaud Westerners' freedom to criticize their governments and to express opinions without fear of reprisal. Others, however, are more critical of the way freedom of speech is exercised in some Western countries "without limitation" and "without responsibility."

Although fieldwork for the first survey began at a time (late April 1998) of heightened political tension, with anti-government students demonstrating in the streets and violence on the upswing, only 1 percent of the urban population (and *no students*) claimed to be "politically active." At least half (56%), however, said they take part in conventional and officially sanctioned activities such as voting in general elections (40%). Many fewer claimed actually to participate in election campaigns (8%).⁶

Two-thirds (65%) reported little or no interest in politics in general; 29 percent said they were at least somewhat interested. But the share expressing interest rose to 62 percent among the best-educated. Similarly, just 43 percent said that they discussed current national issues with their friends and co-workers at least occasionally (compared with three-quarters in both the Philippines and urban Thailand). The university-educated were much more likely than others to engage in such discussions, as were men vis-a-vis women and the young (18-34) vs. the old (over 55).

By September-October of last year, with the economy in shambles, a broad plurality was blaming the nation's economic problems on *KKN*, the tangled skein of corruption, nepotism, and illegal

⁶Fieldwork began just before the government announced a rise in fuel and electricity prices. Rioting ensued in several cities, interrupting interviewing. President Suharto resigned two days after fieldwork ended.

manipulation that was the hallmark of the late Suharto regime. Unlike almost everywhere else in east Asia, urban Indonesians were dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country (56%, to 29% who are satisfied) in fall 1998.

Among the dissatisfied, the most frequent complaint was that the government pays little attention to the aspirations of its people. Others decried the lack of freedom of speech, the breakdown in public order (the riots and demonstrations), and official corruption as causing their discontent. At the same time, however, those who were satisfied with Indonesian democracy pointed to these very demonstrations as evidence of greater freedom of speech. Some also believed that the government was beginning to crack down on corruption, collusion, and nepotism.

Note: The June 1999 elections for the Indonesian legislature will doubtless influence the next survey on political issues in substantial ways.

The Philippines

In the spring of 1998 Filipinos registered general satisfaction with the state of democracy in their country, with most expressing confidence in a range of political and social institutions. While majorities continue to feel that they have basic political freedoms and that they are personally empowered, they are also critical of the overall fairness of the system and worried particularly about corruption. The picture of Philippine democracy which emerges from this recent poll is thus virtually unchanged from that in the previous global democracy report.

Taken just before the election of Joseph Estrada to the presidency, USIA's poll found, among other results, that more Filipinos would opt for a government that guarantees economic security and jobs, even if it restricts political freedoms, over one that guarantees political freedoms but not economic security and jobs (44% to 37%). The situation was similar in late 1992, in a poll just after the inauguration of President Fidel Ramos, and again in 1997, when two-fifths were willing to "give up many of the political freedoms we now have" to gain a leader who could solve the nation's problems.

What may come to overshadow this long uninterrupted sense that democracy is "working" in the Philippines is the fact that over half say that most (35%) or nearly all (20%) public officials are engaged in bribe-taking and corruption. Four in ten (39%) believe that only a few officials are so involved, and just a handful (4%) say that almost no officials are. Similarly, the overwhelming majority (82%) disagree with the view that "the government is free of corruption," whereas only 17 percent agree.

A smaller majority (55%) say that, if they were to take up a problem with the local government, they would *not* be given equal treatment (i.e., treated as well as anyone else). Three in ten (29%) believe that they would; another 13 percent say it would depend on the circumstances.

Unsurprisingly, the judicial system and the police receive the lowest levels of confidence (still 71% however) of all public institutions.

All of these findings would appear to be signs of danger for Philippine democracy. But the picture is more complex than that. Filipinos seem ready to accept many "trade-offs" in their system without giving up on the system itself. Thus, although a slight majority (54%) disagree that using personal connections and giving "gifts" to officials is "the only way to get things done in this country," nearly as many (45%) agree with that proposition. A similar sizable minority (42%) says that "we can't really blame public officials who accept bribes or gifts, since they are probably only trying to help their families." (A majority of 58 percent reject this view.)

Other "contradictions" abound as well. Sixty percent of Filipinos also say that elections for public office are *not* fair and honest. They divide, however, on just how venal the politicians are: 50 percent think that "it doesn't matter whom we elect – politicians are only working for their own interests," while 48 percent disagree. Still, seven in ten (71%) agree that, generally speaking, "this country is run for the benefit of all the people. And, another positive sign of democracy's strength, an overwhelming 92 percent feel that "if people like me get together with their neighbors, they can help in solving our community's problems."

Thailand

Widely content with the way democracy works in Thailand, urban Thais today voice the same high levels of satisfaction (72%) as they did in 1993 and 1995. Concrete achievements of the system doubtless influence these attitudes from a February-March 1998 survey:

- 85 percent believe that Thailand is successfully maintaining stability and order, no small feat at a time of much unrest in other parts of the region
- two-thirds say that the judicial system punishes the guilty, no matter who they are (just 41 percent expressed faith in this aspect of the rule of law in 1995)
- seven in ten believe that there is freedom to criticize the government openly (up from half in 1995)
- two-thirds affirm that they can choose from among several parties and candidates in elections (although 77 percent said this four years ago).

Students and others with a university education are somewhat more critical of democracy's performance in their country (58% are satisfied, 43% dissatisfied). They divide on such issues as the equality of the judicial system's performance.

Just as in the Philippines and Indonesia, however, there are many troubling signals for democracy in Thailand. More would opt for a government which guarantees economic security and jobs even if it restricts political freedoms than for one that guarantees political freedoms but not economic security and jobs (44% to 14%). A quarter volunteer that they want a government that does both. Outside of Bangkok, this preference for "jobs over freedom" is even more prevalent.

Although a small majority (55%) believe that, in general, the country is run for the benefit of all the people, a rather hefty minority (41%) believe the opposite. The flip side of the coin: a majority (57%) also think that 'it doesn't matter who we elect – politicians are only working for their own interests' (40% disagree).

Still, the sense of empowerment is strong: 68 percent think that people like themselves can affect decisions made by the local government at least some of the time, and 57 percent think this of the national government. Just above one in ten (12-14%) feel that they can influence either level most of the time. The pessimists who say that they can never affect government decisions come in at 40 percent for the national government, 29 percent for the local level. Moreover, a whopping 8 in 10 agree (40% strongly) that 'if people like me get together with their neighbors they can help in solving our community's problems.'

Notwithstanding these concerns, most public institutions enjoy high confidence ratings from the public (e.g., three-fourths for the judicial system and two-thirds for the media, local government, and national government), comparable in most cases to the levels found when last measured in 1995. A majority (61%), however, say that the media are not yet free to report the news without government censorship (28% say they are). In one shift of note, the police now garner just a 45 percent confidence rating, down from 56 percent four years ago.

Thai politics and government are perceived as corrupt: only 7 percent say that the government is free of corruption; 89 percent say otherwise. (Similarly, 87 percent do *not* think that elections for public office are fair and honest; just 9 percent say they are.) Half think that "almost all" (14%) or "most" (35%) public officials engage in bribe-taking and corrupt practices. Four in ten doubt that, when taking up a problem with a local government office, they would be given equal treatment. Three in ten (29%) feel that they would, but as many (29%) say "it depends."

Half (53%) say that "using personal connections and giving gifts to officials is the only way to get things done in this country;" 45 percent disagree. Still, a sizable majority (64%) do not accept the proposition that "we can't really blame public officials who accept bribes or gifts, since they are probably only trying to help their families."

It is noteworthy that in the spring of 1998 a majority (56%) blamed "widespread corruption in business and government" for the economic crisis, and in a September 1998 poll the same factor

was seen as the greatest obstacle to enacting the economic reforms that might resuscitate the economy.

South Korea

In a January 1999 survey, the prevailing view was that “widespread corruption in business and government” are the biggest obstacle to the country’s economic recovery. Other high-ranking causes were “the reluctance of industrial conglomerates (*chaebol*) to restructure” and the “lack of government leadership.” Nevertheless, a majority (61%) credit the government with doing a good job in handling the economic crisis, a big improvement over September 1998, when only 41 percent said the government was doing a good job in this regard, and more in line with those of spring 1998, when the Kim Dae Jung administration came to power.

Latin America

Latin America continues to enjoy incremental success solidifying democratic rule across the region. No coup d'etats have occurred and no military governments have held office since the beginning of this decade. Half or more of the urban publics⁷ in all countries -- and three-fourths or better in several (Argentina, Uruguay, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama) -- endorse democracy over all other forms of government, according to the multicountry 1998 Latinobarometro.

In most countries, significantly greater majorities say they would fight to defend democracy if it were threatened than voice support for it. Three in ten in Chile and Mexico say they would not defend democracy.

Still, solid minorities across the region remain *unconvinced* of democracy's overall merit and continue to believe that, under some circumstances, an authoritarian form of government may be best. About three in ten in Paraguay (36%, down from 42% in 1997, in part a result of successful

Preference for Democracy in South America, Mexico, and Central America (1998)

<i>Best type of government:</i>	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't	73	56	48	53	55	57	51	63	81	60
- Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable	16	22	18	16	17	19	36	12	9	25
- Type of government doesn't matter	9	16	28	29	20	20	11	17	7	13
- Yes, would fight for democracy if threatened	76	83	75	58	72	73	65	82	80	76

<i>Best type of government:</i>	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- Democracy preferred to any other form of gov't	51	69	54	57	72	71	79
- Authoritarian gov't sometimes preferable	28	21	29	9	9	8	10
- Type of government doesn't matter	19	5	16	21	14	16	10
- Yes, would fight for democracy if threatened	51	77	74	62	67	76	75

Latinobarometro98

⁷ National samples varied in the amount of coverage of the total population, ranging from 97% in Ecuador and 90% in Mexico, to 26% in Colombia and 22% in Brazil.

elections in May 1998) voice support for conditional authoritarian rule. Similar numbers in Mexico (28%) and Guatemala (29%) also endorse authoritarianism on occasion. Of perhaps greater concern are the smaller minorities who are turned off by the whole debate: from one in ten in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and El Salvador to three in ten in Brazil and, again, Chile feel the type of system governing them does not really matter.

Most of these opinions are relatively unchanged from a year or two earlier.⁷ However, fewer today endorse democracy unconditionally in Bolivia and in Chile and Costa Rica (down 8% and 14%, respectively from last year), two of the countries with the most ingrained democratic traditions, despite the fact that both witnessed successful elections in 1998. On the other hand, more endorse it in El Salvador (79%, up 23% since 1996, perhaps a reflection of the ever more pluralistic political atmosphere since the 1992 peace accords) and in Ecuador (up 16%) and Paraguay (up 7%), both of which saw unpopular leaders removed through presidential elections.

National Democracies Are "Works in Progress." Given the broad support for democracy in principle among Latin America's urban publics, it is somewhat surprising to find that so few believe their own democracies are "complete." Only in Uruguay and Costa Rica do as many as four in ten say that their democratic system is fully established. In all other countries, three-fourths or more believe their system is in fact less than complete, with considerably more to be done before a truly democratic government is achieved. Still, incremental improvements appear to have taken place, as slightly larger minorities in several countries now consider democracy fully established, including in Argentina (up 14% from 1997's poll), Bolivia (up 7%), and Guatemala (up 9%). However, fewer believe their own democracy is complete in Mexico (down 15%, due perhaps in part to the widely reported corruption of government officials which may offset positive feed-back from the more open and fair elections). Nicaragua and Honduras also saw downturns (19% and 6%, respectively).

Quality of Democracy in South America, Mexico, and Central America (1998)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
- Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy	76	78	90	84	84	81	94	89	57	82
- Democracy is fully established already	23	18	7	13	12	15	5	8	40	17

⁷While many findings remain fairly stable from year to year, in some countries the results of polls jump quite a bit from year to year, *up or down*; trends are thus difficult to measure.

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
- <i>Things remain to be done to achieve full democracy</i>	75	58	76	78	88	85	77
- <i>Democracy is fully established already</i>	18	38	22	11	9	13	22

Latinobarometro98

Satisfaction Is Tepid in Most Countries. Related to the implication that most Latin American democracies are -- at best -- works in progress is the dissatisfaction which continues to be expressed about the way national democracies are functioning. At least half in all but three countries are "not very" or "not at all" satisfied with the way their democracy works; in most countries, six in ten or more -- 80 percent in Peru, where Fujimori still rules -- are dissatisfied. Satisfaction is highest in Uruguay (68%), Costa Rica (54%) and Guatemala (57%). The Guatemalan figure is most surprising: satisfaction with the way democracy is functioning has increased from 16 percent of urban Guatemalans in 1996 to 57 percent now. This is no doubt in part a reflection of the optimism induced by the recent peace accords between the UNGR insurgents and the government.

Levels of satisfaction with how their own democracies are functioning have also increased significantly in several other countries, including Argentina (up 16% since 1966), Bolivia (up 9%), Colombia (up 8%), Uruguay (up 16%), and Mexico (up 10%), with the greatest hike registered in El Salvador (up 21%, again no doubt partly due to the increasingly pluralistic environment there).

Satisfaction with Democracy: South America, Mexico and Central America (1998)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Satisfied(very/somewhat)</i>	50	34	27	32	24	24	24	18	68	35
<i>Not very satisfied</i>	35	50	50	48	49	46	47	50	24	39
<i>Not at all satisfied</i>	14	9	22	17	24	17	28	30	6	25

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Satisfied (very/somewhat)</i>	21	54	57	26	34	47
<i>Not very satisfied</i>	41	26	34	45	48	40
<i>Not at all satisfied</i>	34	8	9	25	18	12

Latinobarometro98

Discontent Related to Low Opinions of Public Institutions. Latin American opinions about their democracies are related to a number of different factors, not the least of which is the impression publics have of their key public institutions. In 1996, urban residents in most South American countries and Mexico expressed distrust in core governmental institutions; that lack of confidence is evident still, as the tables on the following page indicate. The greatest overall lack of confidence is voiced by Argentines, Peruvians, and Nicaraguans, all three of which express considerably less trust now in their institutions than they did in 1996. However, Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Panamanians are also less positive than they were then. Publics in Chile and Costa Rica are most confident of their institutions as a whole, but Bolivians and Venezuelans also demonstrate more favorable views. Generally, the armed forces (or the police in several Central American nations) remain the institution generating most trust, while political parties and, to a lesser degree, legislatures evoke the least.

Confidence in Public Institutions: South America, Central America, and Mexico (1998)

% "not very" or "not at all" confident in:	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Armed Forces</i>	72	58	47	50	58	36	60	61	61	41
<i>Judiciary</i>	79	65	58	63	68	77	60	82	50	68
<i>Government</i>	77	59	58	44	64	64	43	73	49	61
<i>Congress</i>	79	65	75	57	74	80	60	79	74	78
<i>Police</i>	79	65	76	43	67	73	54	73	49	76
<i>Political Parties</i>	81	72	79	73	81	74	72	72	63	84
<i>Church</i>	39	10	24	20	19	26	12	21	40	23

% "not very" or "not at all" confident in:	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Armed Forces</i>	50	29	63	47	71	62	61
<i>Judiciary</i>	68	37	71	46	72	70	61
<i>Government</i>	56	49	64	33	72	74	56
<i>Congress</i>	60	58	77	41	75	76	65
<i>Police</i>	71	56	72	54	67	59	57
<i>Political Parties</i>	64	63	79	66	78	81	73
<i>Church</i>	22	10	14	14	26	8	18

Latinobarometro98

Corruption Is Rife. A major contributor to the lack of public confidence in key institutions is the perception that many are riddled with corrupt officials. Overwhelming majorities, ranging from 69 percent in Peru to 94 percent in Venezuela, think that corruption has increased "a great deal" in their country over the past 12 months. Only in Chile and Mexico do smaller majorities believe this. In all but two countries, these figures are about as large or slightly larger than those collected in 1996 and 1997. The perception of increased corruption jumped in Guatemala (up 22% since last year) and El Salvador (up 17%). In a similar vein, virtually everyone says corruption is a serious problem in their own country, with large majorities everywhere but Chile (51%) and Mexico (50%) calling it "very" serious.

Corruption: South America, Central America, and Mexico (1998)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Corruption over the past 12 months has increased:</i>										
<i>A great deal</i>	90	73	83	54	83	85	89	69	72	94
<i>Corruption is:</i>										
<i>Very serious</i>	86	61	74	51	82	69	84	60	60	58

(cont)

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Corruption over the past 12 months has increased:</i>							
<i>A great deal</i>	58	89	77	77	91	76	84
<i>Corruption is:</i>							
<i>Very serious</i>	50	73	58	80	85	68	60

Latinobarometro98

Other Issues also Affect the Realization of Democracy. Corrupt and untrustworthy public institutions hinder progress toward democracy. A number of other issues examined in the 1998 Latinobarometro suggest that certain shared societal and political attitudes may work against the development of full democracies as well.

1) In Latin America, few believe there is equality before the law in their country; large majorities in most countries, ranging from 58 percent in Honduras to 86 percent in Brazil, say there is no such thing. Half in Uruguay, Costa Rica, and El Salvador feel this way. Moreover, significant minorities -- from 20 percent in Honduras to 48 percent in Mexico and Panama -- apparently condone a certain level of disdain for the law and believe people can "follow their conscience, even if it means breaking the law." Thus, it is no surprise that large majorities in all countries but Uruguay (41%) continue to describe their compatriots as "not very" or "not at all" law-abiding; indeed slightly more say this now than last year.

Rule of Law: South America, Central America, and Mexico (1998)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>All are equal before law</i>	18	26	13	21	26	20	16	14	48	18
<i>No equality before law</i>	77	67	86	78	72	78	81	84	49	80
<i>People should always obey law</i>	51	50	70	50	47	52	63	42	50	67
<i>People can follow conscience</i>	37	39	29	38	47	43	27	46	42	27

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>All are equal before law</i>	25	47	31	26	27	25	45
<i>No equality before law</i>	73	50	68	58	63	73	54
<i>People should always obey law</i>	43	52	57	68	55	42	55
<i>People can follow conscience</i>	48	42	36	20	34	48	28

Latinobarometro98

2) Empowerment of the individual is the basic premise underlying any democracy; a nation which fails to empower its citizenry falls short of being fully democratic. According to this criterion, many Latin Americans cannot call their systems democracies. Although pluralities or majorities generally believe that casting a vote can change their futures, significant minorities still voice doubts that their votes can make a difference, including four in ten (or more) in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras. While most countries have seen little overall change in these opinions since 1996, the lack of confidence in the power of the vote increased dramatically in Ecuador (up 13% from 1996), Costa Rica (up 9% since 1997), and Nicaragua (up 16% since 1997). Opinions are more positive in El Salvador (those saying voting could change the future increased by 12% from last year to this) and Venezuela (up by 25%, no doubt in anticipation of the December elections which at the time of the poll were widely expected to bring the popular Hugo Chavez into office).

Does Voting Make a Difference? South America, Central America, and Mexico (1998)

<i>Some people say voting can change the future; others say that no matter how you vote, things will not improve in the future.</i>	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Voting can change the future</i>	63	46	60	54	49	43	58	49	70	68
<i>Voting will not improve things</i>	32	45	37	43	47	50	37	41	28	27
<i>Elections are rigged:</i>	42	66	62	27	71	72	60	69	22	67

<i>Some people say voting can change the future; others say that no matter how you vote, things will not improve in the future.</i>	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Voting can change the future</i>	49	51	50	50	58	56	60
<i>Voting will not improve things</i>	49	45	47	41	38	39	36
<i>Elections are rigged:</i>	68	19	49	45	54	45	46

Latinobarometro98

3) Closely related to the view that voting makes no difference is the belief held by many in the region that most past elections results have been rigged. In eight of the eleven South American countries and Mexico, large majorities feel their elections are fraudulent; majorities in Uruguay (69%) and Chile (66%), and a plurality in Argentina (45%) voice confidence that they are not. Central Americans are less likely to believe elections are rigged; only in Nicaragua do a clear majority (54%) say they are.

4) At one level, democracies may be seen to flourish where people trust rather than distrust their fellow citizens. Yet in Latin America, large majorities – three-fourths or more in 13 of the 17 countries surveyed – believe that one "can never be too careful when dealing with others." No more than a fourth in all but three countries – Mexico, Uruguay, and Costa Rica – believe that most of their compatriots are trustworthy. There is no indication of any shift toward more trust; responses show little or no change since 1996.

Trust in People: South America, Central America, and Mexico (1998)

	ARG	BOL	BRA	CHI	COL	ECU	PAR	PER	URU	VEN
<i>Can trust most people</i>	23	21	5	15	20	22	13	13	34	16
<i>Can never be too careful</i>	74	77	95	84	77	73	86	83	64	83

	MEX	C.R.	GUA	HON	NIC	PAN	SAL
<i>Can trust most people</i>	40	34	26	16	11	18	21
<i>Can never be too careful</i>	58	62	70	79	86	79	75

Latinobarometro98

5) Theoretically, democracy does *not* flourish where it lacks the participation of an informed citizenry. Yet relatively few in urban Latin America seem to keep abreast of key issues. Given the many negatives about their political systems and governments, it is perhaps not surprising that two-thirds (67%, down about 10 points from the 1996 poll) continue to express little or no interest in politics. Only about a third or fewer in each country (slightly more in Panama, Peru, and Uruguay) express at least a fair amount of interest. Most say they are either distrustful of, indifferent to, or irritated by politics.

Moreover, Latin Americans apparently do not enjoy playing a proactive political role. While half or more in most countries follow the local political news at least fairly closely, just three in ten or fewer say they talk politics with family and friends, and even fewer (about 15%) ever try to convince others of their political views. Nor are they activists. Only small minorities have ever

taken part in political demonstrations or related activities; large majorities in most countries say they would never do so.

Haiti

A special case, Haiti has had less exposure to democracy than almost any other Latin American country. The final removal of the Duvalier regime, followed by the late 1994 return of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, have failed to remedy the island's problems. Attempts to install and strengthen democratic institutions have been stymied, beginning in earnest with the controversial April 1997 elections and the subsequent failure of opposing parties to resolve the conflicting issues. This stalemate led to the resignation of the appointed Prime Minister; President Preval and Parliament were unable to come to any agreement on a successor. After almost two years of little or no government legislation, President Preval dissolved parliament and appointed a new prime minister by decree. But the impasse to a large extent continues to this day.

Not surprisingly, public confidence in the government has plummeted. Preval, in office since 1996, has seen his own rating shrink from some three-quarters (78%) having a good or very good opinion of him in May 1996 to just 42 percent sharing that view in August 1998. Confidence in his government (now standing at just 30%) is half what it was two years ago (61%). Half the Haitian public (51%) express little or no confidence in the Preval administration.

Job performance ratings for Preval and his government are similarly abysmal: highest for his ability to work with the Parliament and for his stewardship of the economy (each 49%), the proportion saying he is doing a very or fairly good job sinks to 45 percent over his ability to work with the opposition, and to just 37 percent for how well he is doing in passing needed reforms.

Confidence in most public institutions is likewise at an all-time low. The sole exception is the National Police force, garnering the confidence of 54 percent of urban residents (34% express little or none). The justice system, never that high in public esteem to begin with, has fallen from a confidence rating of 39 percent in May 1996 to 27 percent in August of last year. Parliament's favorable rating has plummeted from 45 percent to 11 percent in the same time period. Local elected officials, such as mayors, have the confidence of just a fifth (20%), while a majority (56%) express little or no confidence in them. More lack than have confidence in the dysfunctional Electoral Council (50% to 16%), which is tasked with resolving disputed past elections and organizing new ones, and in the new, relatively unknown Modernization Council (26% to 13%).

The current regime is clearly in difficulty in Haiti. It will have trouble surviving, judging by the following: although the economy is in shambles and six in ten cite economic difficulties as the most serious concerns facing the country, three in ten (27%) name *political* rather than economic problems as the most serious for Haiti. And there is little indication that the anticipated reelection of President Aristide in 2000 will do anything to improve the case for democracy in Haiti.

Russia, Ukraine, and the CIS

Russia

Is Russians' love of democracy unrequited? One would certainly expect so, given the lack of competence, honesty, and political will displayed by the leaders they've elected over recent years. The ills of their system of government are well-documented in USIA polls in this decade. For example, a January 1999 nationwide poll found almost no public institution with a favorable confidence rating. The three exceptions are the Orthodox Church (63% express at least a fair amount of confidence), the armed forces (53%), and broadcast -- but not print -- media (radio and TV receive 53-55% ratings).

Two-thirds of Russians *lack* confidence in the State Duma, the lower house of parliament (69%); in the Federation Council, the upper house (66%); and the judicial system and courts (67%). Six in ten also lack confidence in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (61%), whose police units are responsible for general law and order in the country, and in their local authorities (59%). A plurality (46%) lack confidence in the Federal Security Service (FSB, successor to the KGB). Faring somewhat better, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs garners a 41 percent confidence rating, up slightly from earlier years.

Government Performance Earns Low Marks. These confidence ratings reflect a pervasive attitude that successive Russian governments are incapable of carrying out the most fundamental tasks:

How good a job has the federal government been doing in . . .	Good, very good	Bad, very bad
Guaranteeing timely payment of wages, salaries and pensions	3	94
Social protection for the unemployed, homeless and needy	3	93
Fighting organized crime	4	92
Maintaining law and order	8	87
Reducing inflation	6	83
Cleaning up environmental pollution	9	80
Providing for Russia's defense needs	15	70
Protecting citizens' political rights	8	62
Developing free enterprise	23	61
Ensuring an adequate food supply	44	52

Corruption Seen as Rampant. Assessing how much dishonesty and corruption exists among various institutions and groups of people, Russians view these problems as pervasive. Large majorities see at least a fair amount of corruption in the police (84%), large corporations (75%), the courts and judicial system (74%), the State Duma (69%), banks (69%), and the federal government (68%). The armed forces and universities and other institutions of higher learning (59% each) are also seen as tainted with corruption. Russians divide fairly evenly on the extent of corruption in the news media and trade unions, but a majority are inclined to absolve churches and other religious organizations (28% say there's none, 27% say there's not much). Young people in 1998 were as critical of the police, courts, Duma, and federal government for their corruption, but inclined to see less corruption in large corporations and banks, more in the armed forces and higher education.

An April 1999 VCIOM (non-USIA) poll asked: Is it possible to eliminate or at least to reduce corruption in Russia? A fifth (22%) felt that it could be eliminated entirely; a majority (59%) believed that corruption could only be reduced, not wiped out completely. One in ten (12%) said that it was impossible to do either.

Prospects Not that Bright. Given all this bad news, it would seem that Russians are ripe for a change in leadership. The fact that they yearn for stability and order in their lives, for an end to the constant turmoil and bad times of the past decade, would seem to make them ready for the siren call of an "iron hand" to put things in order. But contrary to what might be expected, that is a solution that most Russians still reject. Asked if, in order to restore order, it would be permissible to curtail some of their newfound liberties, majorities – most fairly large – say no. They say nay to restricting "habeas corpus" rights (73%), banning meetings and demonstrations (68%), canceling scheduled elections (63%), limiting opportunities to travel abroad (62%), and establishing censorship of the mass media (60%). Young people in last summer's survey mirror these same views.

Were there grounds for optimism for Russia's short-term future, it should lie in its youth, who have consistently been the most supportive of reform, the most westward-looking, the most sympathetic to democratization and market economics. Yet when asked last summer whether Russia has a democratic form of government, young people were twice as likely to say that it does not than to say it does (44% to 21%). One in ten volunteered that democracy is developing in Russia. Three in ten said that they have a fair amount (23%) or a great deal (7%) of interest in national or regional political affairs. But two-thirds had little (47%) or none (20%). Half (52%) said that they do not fully understand how democracy is supposed to work in Russia. Only 16 percent claimed to have a good understanding of how it's supposed to work. The rest said that they either don't understand what democracy is or find it hard to respond.

Ukraine

Grim as the picture is in Russia, the outlook is no better in Ukraine. As in Russia, a December 1998 poll revealed widespread lack of interest and involvement in politics. Most Ukrainians have little (48%) or no (24%) interest in political affairs. Three in ten have a fair amount (22%) or a great deal (7%). Half say that Ukraine does *not* have a democratic form of government. A quarter say either that it does (14%) or that it is moving toward democracy (11%).

The public is harsh in its judgment of the government's performance on most tasks and views corruption as endemic. Large majorities say that the national government has been doing a poor job of providing social protection for the needy (94%), ensuring timely payment of wages and pensions (also 94%), combating corruption (86%), maintaining law and order (85%), cleaning up pollution (84%), protecting civil liberties (84%), and reducing inflation (79%). Roughly half believe that performance has been poor in ensuring an adequate food supply, developing a sound banking system, and providing for Ukraine's defense. Local governments receive equally low marks for their conduct of affairs (keeping roads in repair, maintaining law and order, paying pensions, picking up garbage).

Most Ukrainians feel that there is at least a fair amount of corruption among people in the police force (79%), the judicial system (73%), the parliament, or Rada (73%), institutions of higher learning (72%), the government (71%), large corporations (66%), local authorities (62%), and banks (58%). Fewer say that corruption is as prevalent in the armed forces (47%), trade unions (46%), mass media (43%), and churches (21%).

Trade-offs. Unlike in Russia, there appears to be more ambivalence in Ukraine about the new forms of liberty that have come with independence. For example, in choosing between two statements, just half (52%) say that "people should be free to say whatever they want, even if what they say increases tensions in society." Two-fifths (40%), however, believe that "it is better to live in a society with strict order, even if it requires limiting freedom of speech."

Similarly, when asked if it would be permissible or impermissible for a leader to use authoritarian measures to establish order in the country, half to a majority oppose restrictions on liberties. Three-fifths say that it would be impermissible for a leader to ban meetings and demonstrations (61%), impose censorship on the mass media (60%), or cancel scheduled elections (57%). But just half say this of disbanding the parliament and ruling by decree or of restricting opportunities to travel abroad (48% each). A quarter to about a third consider these actions permissible.

Belarus

The western Slavic state of Belarus is under the sway of an authoritarian-minded president named Aleksandr Lukashenko. In the past, support for his regime derived largely -- but not exclusively -- from an aging rural population. Today, despite widely acknowledged hard times and economic problems, support for the president remains high: two-thirds (63%) voice confidence in Lukashenko.

Our latest survey (May 1999) also shows a major reason for his continued popularity. Four-fifths (83%) say that President Lukashenko and his government have done a good job of ensuring the timely payment of wages and pensions. Compared to its closest ex-Soviet neighbors, Ukraine and Russia, this is a stellar accomplishment. The regime also gets high marks for providing for public education (60% think it has done at least a fairly good job), ensuring an adequate food supply (55%), and providing for Belarus's defense (51%).

But the record is spottier in other areas. The public is much more divided on how well the Lukashenko government has done in providing social protection for those in need (38% say poor, 33% good) and in combating crime (53% poor, 47% good). More say it has done a *poor* rather than a good job of protecting citizens' rights (46% to 31%). And majorities feel that it has performed *poorly* in combating corruption (61%), cleaning up the environment (62%), providing medical care and medicines (70%), and controlling inflation (80%).

Belarusians Are Torn About Newfound Values. Independence and democratization have proven to be daunting tasks for the citizens of Belarus; their ambivalence about both processes is manifest. For example, given a choice between two options, more say that "order and stability in society are more important than human rights and personal freedoms" than say the reverse (33% to 23%), although a plurality (39%) volunteer that these two sets of values are equally desirable.

Similarly, more adhere to the view that "it is better to live in a society with strict order, even if it requires limiting freedom of speech" (51%) than say that "people should be free to say whatever they want, even if what they say increases tensions in society" (42%). Yet, six in ten (61%) agree that "citizens should have the right to publish newspapers with any political orientation"; just a fifth (22%) disagree with this proposition.

Confronted with a "what if" scenario that "a leader wants to establish strict order in our country," and asked what actions would be permissible or impermissible for such a leader, Belarusians reject permitting him to disband the parliament and rule by decree (65% say it would be impermissible, 14% permissible); to limit opportunities to travel abroad (65% to 20%); to establish censorship of the mass media (59% to 23%); to ban meetings and demonstrations (58% to 27%); or to cancel scheduled elections (57% to 23%).

Belarusians are aware of the way that freedom is circumscribed in their country. There is fairly widespread recognition that certain key elements of democracy do not pertain today in Belarus. (See table on following page)

Does each of the following statements accurately describe our country or not?	Yes	No
Every person can freely practice his or her religion	89%	4%
One can choose from several candidates when voting	72	18
There is freedom to criticize the government openly	33	51
Honest elections are held regularly	29	40
The media are free to report news and commentary without government censorship	24	49
The judicial system treats everyone equally and punishes the guilty no matter who they are	12	69

Other facets of Belarusian political life emerge more fully from a series of propositions that respondents could either agree or disagree with. Fully four-fifths (83%) agree completely or somewhat that they “feel powerless to change things in this country;” a mere 11 percent disagree. Two-thirds (65%) believe that “it is dangerous to become too involved in political activity” (16% disagree). A majority (56%) deny that “voting gives people like me some say on how the government runs things;” a third (32%) agree. And Belarusians divide evenly on whether or not the government is working on behalf of the people (46% agree, 46% disagree).

Between Scylla and Charybdis: Confidence (Low) and Corruption (High). Aside from the President, few public institutions garner much trust from the people. More lack than have it in their local administration (49% to 36%), the new National Council (set up by Lukashenko in 1996; 47% to 33%), the rubber-stamp Council of Ministers (45% to 37%), and their oblast administration (42% to 37%). A majority (63%) lack confidence in the courts and judicial system, whereas a quarter (25%) voice confidence in the system. Only the Orthodox Church and the armed forces receive a majority confidence rating from the public (two-thirds each).

When asked how much corruption they think exists among people in various organizations and public bodies, Belarusians are rather harsh in their judgment. As in most other CIS nations, the

worst offenders in this respect are the police (76% say that there's at least a fair amount of corruption) and the judicial system and courts (70%). Two-thirds say that banks (66%) and universities and other institutions of higher learning (63%) contain fairly high levels of corruption as well. Fewer, but still a majority, say this of large corporations (59%). Half (49%) say that their local authorities manifest at least a fair amount of corruption; a quarter (24%) think there's not much or none.

Opinion divides on the extent of corruption in the armed forces (37% say there's not much or none, 33% say a fair amount or great deal) and in trade unions (32% little or none, 33% at least a fair amount). More think that corruption is at least fairly widespread in the parliament (38%) than think it is not (19%), but a plurality (41%) is uncertain. The same is true of the national government -- with 37 percent saying corruption holds sway there and 24 percent disagreeing -- and of the *official mass media* (37% to 26%), 36-38 percent offering no opinion in each case.

Among the few institutions which come out in good odor are the *independent mass media* (36% say little or no corruption, 22% say a fair amount or a great deal, but 41% offer no view) and churches and other religious organizations, of which half (52%) say there's not much corruption or none at all, and just one in ten (11%) says there's a good deal or a lot (but a hefty 36% offers no opinion).

Georgia

In September 1998, when asked to compare "how things are today with how they were ten years ago," most Georgians (87%) said that people enjoy more freedom to express their views openly than they did before. Only one in ten thought that the system of justice had improved, while half (52%) thought that it had worsened, and a fifth felt it had remained about the same. Overall, USIA's poll revealed widespread discontent and little sense of personal well-being.

Whither Georgian Democracy? Opinion divides on whether Georgia has a democratic form of government: 29 percent say that it does, 31 percent that it doesn't, 3 percent that it is heading toward democracy, and 37 percent offer no opinion. The reasons offered by those who see Georgia as undemocratic include: nonobservance of human rights, restriction of freedom of speech, widespread corruption, and the existence of social-economic inequality.

In addition, two-thirds (64%) feel that there has been little or no progress in establishing the rule of law in Georgia since 1991; a quarter (23%) believe that there has been at least a fair amount of progress on this score. Only 17 percent say that laws are enforced in a fair manner most or all of the time; two-thirds think that they are enforced fairly just some of the time (51%) or never (18%). And a mere handful say that the judicial system treats everyone equally (7%) or that the police can be trusted to act within the law (5%).

Only two-fifths (43%, but up from 28% in 1996) think that the media are free to report news and commentary without government censorship. Few say that honest elections are held regularly (11%, *down* from 23% in 1996) or that people can run private businesses without paying off officials (10%).

Although a majority (58%) say that citizens should have the right to publish newspapers with any political orientation, when freedom of expression is weighed against social order, the commitment to freedom is more equivocal: a majority (56%) opt for order even if it means limiting freedom of speech; only a third (34%) believe that "people should be free to say whatever they want, even if what they say increases tensions in society. Similarly, Georgians tend to say that it is more important for the government to promote social and economic equality than for the government to promote individual freedom (45% to 24%), although another quarter (26%) say that the two aims are equally important.

Some attributes of democracy, however, are widely recognized as already existing in Georgia: 93 percent say that citizens can freely practice their religion; 87 percent avow that they can participate in multiparty elections. Two-thirds (63%, up from 39% in 1996) affirm that there is freedom to criticize the government openly.

Asked what they would allow if a leader came to power who wanted to establish strict order in the country, a majority of Georgians say that it would be *impermissible* to cancel scheduled elections (64%) or to establish censorship of the mass media (62%). Three-fourths (76%) think that it should be impermissible to limit opportunities to travel abroad in such a case. But they divide fairly evenly on whether the leader could ban meetings, demonstrations, and opposition parties: 49 percent say this would be impermissible, but 42 percent view it as permissible.

Apathy or Cynicism? Slightly more Georgians express an interest in political affairs than say they lack interest (53% to 45%). But this sentiment does not translate into anything like a feeling of empowerment. More disagree than agree with the proposition that "voting gives people like me some say about how the government runs things" (47% to 35%); a fifth (19%) offer no opinion.

Not many Georgians (14%) feel that they are well-informed about the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) which plans and supervises national elections in Georgia. On the contrary, four-fifths say that they are not very (33%) or not at all informed (49%). Nonetheless, the majority (59%) hold that the CEC makes decisions which favor particular candidates rather than that the CEC is a completely neutral body guided by the law (10%).

Not one of the foremost political parties in Georgia, including President Shevardnadze's own Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), can claim the confidence of a majority. Instead, most Georgians express little or no confidence in all of these building blocks of democracy. (A few years ago, in 1996, the CUG had the confidence of half the population.) And confidence in public institutions runs no higher, the Orthodox Church of Georgia being the sole entity which receives at least a fair amount of confidence from a majority (65%). Half express a *lack of confidence* in the

Presidency (53%; 39% have confidence) or the armed forces (52%; 37% have). More lack than have confidence in the ombudsman's office (32% to 21%), and majorities lack it in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (75%), the judicial system (74%), the parliament (70%), their local government (67%), the Ministry of State Security (62%), and the State Chancellery (56%).

Of a piece with these findings are the public's performance ratings for the government. Georgians say their government is performing well on only two tasks: conducting relations with Western countries (70% say "well," 19% "poorly") and protecting the rights of ethnic minorities in the country (66% to 22%). Overwhelming majorities say the government is doing poorly in providing social protection for the unemployed, homeless, and others who need help (93%); halting official corruption (87%); providing health care services and educational opportunities (77%); combating crime and maintaining law and order (74%); protecting the political rights of all citizens (69%); and in dealing with a variety of security and foreign-affairs issues.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

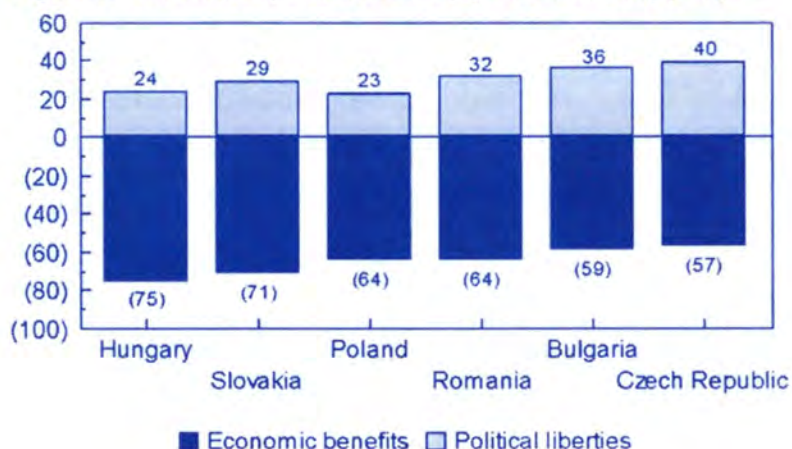
In these two Caucasus nations in polls done in November 1998 and December 1998-January 1999 respectively, the hypothetical question about a leader seeking to establish strict order was posed. In each, citizens were chary of giving up their newly won freedoms. But as the table below shows, on all but one measure the Armenians were more adamant than the Azerbaijanians in protecting their rights. In fact, the public in Azerbaijan is divided on whether it would be permissible for a strict-regime leader to ban meetings, demonstrations, and opposition parties.

If a leader came to power who wanted to establish strict order in the country, would it be permissible or impermissible to do the following to establish order...	<i>Permissible</i>		<i>Impermissible</i>	
	Armen	Azerb.	Armen	Azerb
Cancel scheduled elections	31%	15%	61%	73%
Ban meetings, demonstrations, and opposition parties	25	42	69	49
Establish censorship of the mass media	29	33	64	55
Limit opportunities for travel abroad	20	30	76	63
Disband the parliament and rule by decree	NA	30	NA	58

Europe

Unclear on the Concept. Central and east Europeans' views of democracy have shifted very little since last measured a year or two ago. A concept of democracy centered on economic benefits – including economic prosperity, guarantees of basic needs and economic equality – still prevails in these societies over one based on political rights and liberties – including a fair system of justice, freedom to criticize the government and multiparty elections.

Figure 1. The Most Important Element(s) of a Democracy (in %)



While central and east Europeans emphasize economic aspects, majorities do think political elements are important or even essential elements of a democracy (Table 1 on following page). Overwhelming majorities (78-84%) in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and especially Bulgaria – and two-thirds in Poland and Romania – feel that a system of justice that treats everyone equally is an *essential* component of democracy. In addition, all six publics view multiparty elections and the freedom to criticize the government as *important, but not essential*.

Publics in Key West European Countries Tend to View Democracy in Political Terms.

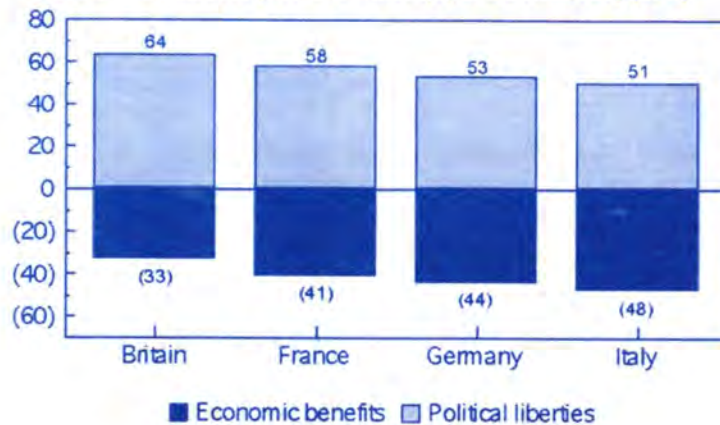
In contrast to central and east European views, 1999 surveys in Britain, France, Germany and Italy show that publics in these countries tend to describe democracy in political terms. Yet even in these countries sizable minorities of a third or more describe democracy in economic terms.

Table 1: Meanings of Democracy

People associate democracy with diverse meanings such as those on this card [SHOW CARD]. For each of these, please tell me whether you think it is essential, important but not essential, not very important, or not important at all for a society to be called a democracy.

	Bulgaria	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
At least two strong political parties competing in elections						
Essential	47	40	39	32	34	33
Important but not essential	34	34	30	43	40	40
Not very important	8	15	16	12	11	17
Not important at all	4	6	11	3	5	6
Don't know	9	5	4	10	10	4
A government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens						
Essential	44	44	54	42	43	57
Important but not essential	35	31	34	37	38	29
Not very important	12	14	8	11	8	9
Not important at all	4	8	2	5	3	3
Don't know	4	3	3	5	8	2
A system of justice that treats everyone equally						
Essential	84	79	78	69	66	78
Important but not essential	13	16	18	22	26	17
Not very important	1	3	2	4	3	3
Not important at all	--	1	--	1	1	1
Don't know	2	2	2	5	5	2
Freedom to criticize the government						
Essential	49	31	41	44	37	32
Important but not essential	33	34	36	38	39	39
Not very important	10	24	16	11	14	20
Not important at all	2	9	5	2	3	6
Don't know	6	2	3	6	8	3
A government that guarantees basic economic needs for all citizens						
Essential	66	59	75	61	53	71
Important but not essential	28	29	22	29	36	22
Not very important	3	8	2	5	4	3
Not important at all	1	2	--	1	1	1
Don't know	3	2	2	5	6	3
Economic prosperity in the country						
Essential	76	70	77	71	64	77
Important but not essential	20	23	20	22	30	19
Not very important	1	4	2	2	1	2
Not important at all	--	1	--	1	--	1
Don't know	3	1	1	4	5	2

Figure 2. The Most Important Element(s) of a Democracy (in %)



Large majorities of these west European publics feel that a fair system of justice is *essential* to a democracy, and that freedom to criticize the government and multiparty elections are *important, but not essential* -- similar to publics in the east (Table 2, next page). Only in Britain do a clear majority think that multiparty elections and freedom to criticize the government are *essential* to a democracy. In fact, majorities in Britain, France, Germany and half in Italy say that a government that provides for basic economic needs is *essential* to a democracy.

Despite Some Satisfaction with the Transition, Disappointment Has Set In. When asked if the current political system is better or worse than that under communism, publics in Poland (59% better vs. 28% worse), the Czech Republic (55% vs. 35%), Romania (50% vs. 39%) and Bulgaria (47% to 36%) tend to say that the current political system is *better*. The public in Hungary divides on the issue (42% better vs. 47% worse), and half in Slovakia (53%) say the present system is *worse*; 41 percent think it's better. Views on this comparison have remained rather stable over time. Only in the Czech Republic and Romania has there been a sharp decline in those seeing the current system as better.

Given central and east Europeans' economically oriented definition of democracy, this disappointment stems partly from their unmet economic expectations. Seven in ten in all six nations agree with the proposition: "I thought that democracy would be better than it has turned out to be." And between 51% and 84% say that the changes that have taken place over the past ten years have had a *bad* effect on people's living standards and happiness.

Many are nostalgic for the securities of the past system. Majorities in Romania (64% agree vs. 30% disagree) and Hungary (56% vs. 38) and pluralities in Poland (50% vs. 41%) and Bulgaria (50% vs. 37%) agree that, "if we could find a strong leader who we thought could solve our country's problems, I wouldn't care if that leader took away many of the political freedoms we've gained since the fall of communism." In Slovakia, the public divides rather evenly: 49 percent disagreeing, 43 percent agreeing. Only in the Czech Republic do a majority (56%) oppose the trade-off proffered; 40 percent, however, would support it.

Table 2: Meanings of Democracy

-35-

People associate democracy with diverse meanings such as those on this card [SHOW CARD]. For each of these, please tell me whether you think it is essential, important but not essential, not very important, or not important at all for a society to be called a democracy.

	Britain	France	Germany	Italy
At least two strong political parties competing in elections				
Essential	59	52	50	25
Important but not essential	27	32	31	42
Not very important	7	10	8	19
Not important at all	4	5	3	9
Don't know	3	2	7	5
A government that guarantees economic equality among its citizens				
Essential	47	58	47	32
Important but not essential	38	33	35	47
Not very important	9	6	9	12
Not important at all	3	2	3	6
Don't know	4	2	5	4
A system of justice that treats everyone equally				
Essential	83	79	75	63
Important but not essential	13	18	17	32
Not very important	1	2	3	3
Not important at all	1	1	1	1
Don't know	2	1	4	2
Freedom to criticize the government				
Essential	74	53	54	27
Important but not essential	21	33	34	48
Not very important	2	10	8	16
Not important at all	1	3	1	5
Don't know	2	1	4	4
A government that guarantees basic economic needs for all citizens				
Essential	65	65	61	47
Important but not essential	30	29	29	45
Not very important	3	4	4	5
Not important at all	1	1	1	--
Don't know	2	1	4	3
Economic prosperity in the country				
Essential	57	55	53	31
Important but not essential	34	37	36	54
Not very important	4	6	6	10
Not important at all	1	1	1	1
Don't know	4	1	4	4

But when asked directly about returning to the past, majorities in Romania (59%), the Czech Republic (69%), Poland (56%), Hungary (56%) and half in Slovakia (53%) and Bulgaria (51%) *disagree* with the idea of returning to the old system's security and stability. Majorities in each country say that their country is "becoming a democracy," and agree that "whatever the problems that democracy brings, it's the best system of government for us."

Esteem for Public Institutions Remains Low. Looking across central and eastern Europe, citizens of Hungary are the only exception to the rule that people in these countries lack confidence in their own governments. Confidence in government institutions sometimes displays a short-lived blip after elections; in the case of Hungary, views have become more positive in the first year of the Orbán government. Currently, a bare majority of Hungarians (55%) say that they have at least a fair amount of confidence in the government, while substantial majorities in Romania (78%), the Czech Republic (77%), Poland (70%), and Slovakia (64%) register little or no confidence in their government. The public is more divided in Bulgaria, but even there half (53%) lack confidence while 44 percent have it. Publics also appear cynical toward politicians: only about one in ten in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia say that politicians care about the problems of the average citizen, and majorities across the region *disagree* that "since 1989, our leading politicians have always had good intentions."

Trust in the rule of law is weak, as evidenced by the fact that solid majorities in Bulgaria (71%), the Czech Republic (69%), Slovakia (66%), and Romania (64%) lack confidence in the courts and judicial system. Views are mixed in Poland (50% confident vs. 46% not), and Hungary again is the exception: a majority (58%) voice confidence in the courts (but 38% lack it).

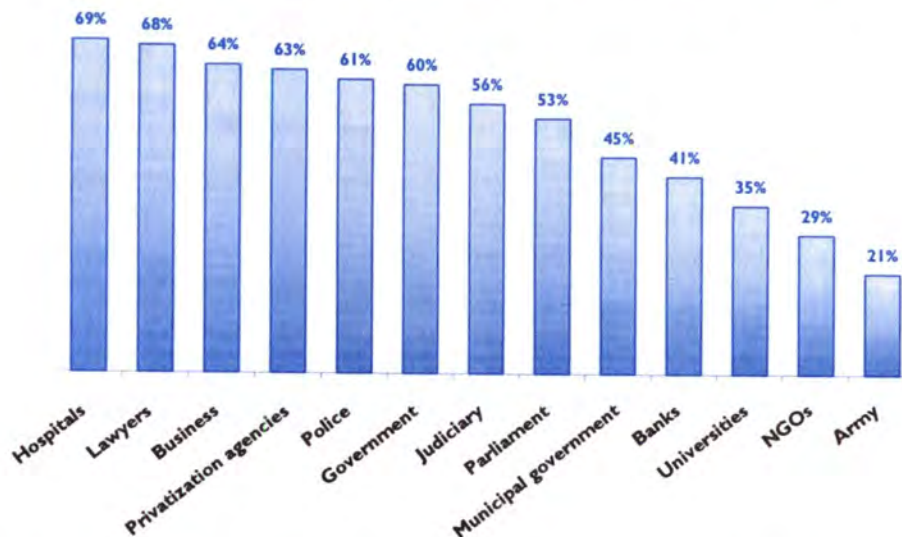
A majority in Poland have confidence in the police (73% vs. 22% do not), but views are more negative elsewhere. Majorities lack confidence in Slovakia (63%), the Czech Republic (60%), and Hungary (56%), as do half in Romania (53%) and Bulgaria (50%).

Corruption. One reason why confidence in national institutions is so limited is public perceptions of widespread corruption beyond the police and court system. Averaging responses from all six publics (Figure 3, next page), a majority think that corruption is widespread in the *government/state administration* and half think it is widespread in *parliament*. Relatively fewer view *municipal government* as tainted. Higher levels of confidence in the *army* correspond with low levels of perceived corruption: the army is on average considered the least corrupt national institution.

Publics perceive extensive corruption in law-making and law-enforcing institutions. On average, two-thirds think *lawyers* are mostly corrupt and about six in ten think corruption among *police* and in the *judiciary* is widespread. In fact, half or more in each country do not believe that were they wrongly accused of a crime, their judicial system would find them innocent.

The business community is considered corrupt as well. About two-thirds think that corruption in *business* and *privatization agencies* is widespread. However, there is more faith in *banks*, especially in Poland and to a lesser degree in Slovakia and Hungary.

Figure 3. Average Perception of Corruption in Central and Eastern Europe
Percentage who say most or all are engaged in bribe-taking and corruption in:



Outside of government and business, *hospitals* -- an area where many have had direct experience -- are considered one of the most corrupt institutions in these societies, with solid majorities in each country perceiving that most or all hospitals and doctors are engaged in corrupt activities.

Universities, however, are seen as relatively corruption-free, as are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) -- although this score is low, in part, because sizable minorities are unable to estimate the extent of corruption among NGOs.

Europeans Draw Line At Bribery, Stolen Goods. USIA surveys show that central and east Europeans are fairly similar to west Europeans in their tolerance of certain illicit behaviors, including *accepting a bribe*, *buying stolen goods*, *claiming benefits which one is not entitled to*, *not paying all one's taxes* or *using company equipment or supplies for work outside the company* (Table 3, next page).

Similar levels of tolerance across Europe suggest that while individual ethics may not differ greatly between eastern and western Europe, greater enforcement and more punitive procedures in western legal systems account in part for differing levels of actual corruption in east and west.

Table 3. Personal Approval of Illicit Behaviors

	Bulgaria Czech R. Hungary Poland				Romani a	Slovak ia	Britain	France	Ger man y	
Accepting a bribe in the course of a person's duties										
Sometimes justified	10%	18%	15%	13%	10%	24%	10%	25%	17%	12%
Never justified	86	81	84	86	85	75	89	72	79	86
Buying something a person knows was stolen										
Sometimes justified	20%	31%	26%	19%	12%	40%	17%	30%	22%	23%
Never justified	76	67	72	80	81	58	82	68	74	74
Claiming benefits which one is not entitled to										
Sometimes justified	21%	49%	21%	29%	22%	51%	17%	38%	37%	27%
Never justified	72	48	78	69	73	45	81	59	58	68
Not paying one's taxes										
Sometimes justified	26%	44%	32%	29%	24%	47%	26%	49%	43%	33%
Never justified	70	55	66	68	73	52	73	50	53	65
Using the company's equipment or supplies for work outside the company										
Sometimes justified	20%	58%	52%	38%	19%	59%	44%	53%	40%	33%
Never justified	75	38	47	59	77	38	56	44	54	63

USIA Surveys: 1999

Despite perceptions that many organizations in their societies are corrupt to a certain extent, publics do not appear resigned to this situation. Relatively few across central and eastern Europe, about two in ten, believe that the spread of corruption in their countries *cannot be confined* (see Table 4, following page). Large majorities think it can be either *limited to a certain extent* or *substantially reduced*. However, very few think it can be *completely eradicated*, suggesting publics have realistic expectations.

Asked which organization would be most effective in curbing corruption in their country, government is most commonly named, with many also naming the judiciary, parliament and police. Sizable numbers say that citizens themselves would be most effective at curbing corruption. Very few mention NGOs or the media, despite the fact that the media can and has in many countries been active in exposing corruption.

Table 4. Potential for Cleanup

	Bulgaria	Czech R.	Hungary	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
The spread of corruption cannot be confined	8%	15%	23%	15%	19%	20%
Corruption will exist, yet it can be limited to a degree	46	57	54	50	43	53
Corruption can be substantially reduced	31	23	17	25	18	23
Corruption in [SC] can be eliminated	6	3	3	8	12	3

Turkey

Turkey continues to grapple with the relationship between Islam and democracy. Within the past few months, a legislator was forced out of the country's parliament for wearing a head-scarf into the parliamentary chamber. Although the legislator said that her actions were "personal" rather than "political," this incident has highlighted the perennial tension between religious and secular forces in Turkey.

Gap Between Desires and Existence of Some Political Rights. In a pre-earthquake (May 1999) poll, large majorities of Turks say that it is "very important" that several rights are guaranteed "in the country where [they] live," including multiparty, fair and regular elections, freedom of speech, religion and cultural expression, and a fair justice system (Table 1). A large majority also feel that it is very important that national unity and solidarity be guaranteed. Somewhat fewer, but still a majority, think that civilian control of the military is "very important."

While Turks deem the protection of these rights to be important, they find their political system lacking. A majority think that multiparty elections occur (though a majority doubt they are honest) and half think that freedom of religion and cultural rights are guaranteed, but half or more say that other elements do not currently exist.

Reflecting the disparity between what they want and what they think they currently have, nearly all Turks say that following democratic principles, along with implementing economic reforms, should be top priorities of the Turkish government. Large majorities also call for closer relations with the West and solidarity with other Muslims (Table 2). Asked to choose a top priority, a third name following democratic principles (35%) and economic reform (35%) as most important. About one in ten names developing closer relations with the West, fostering Muslim solidarity or following religious values and Islamic law.

Table 2: Public Views of Priorities: Turkey, May 1999

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Most Important</u>
Make important reforms for economic development	94%	35%
Obey democratic principles	94%	35
Develop closer relations with the West	85%	11
Be in solidarity with other Muslims	74%	8
Always be administered by religious values and Islamic laws	34%	8
Don't know/No Answer	—	4

Priorities differ across the political spectrum. Supporters of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), Motherland Party (ANAP), Republican People's Party (CHP) and True Path Party (DYP) tend to rank obeying democratic principles as the top priority. Undertaking economic reforms is also a (lesser) priority for many in these parties. Supporters of the far-right National Action Party (MHP) tend to put economic reform ahead of democratic principles. In contrast, supporters of Islamist Virtue Party (FP), give top priority to both governing Turkey according to Islamic law and being in solidarity with other Muslim countries.

Table 1: Importance of Rights to Be Guaranteed in Turkey, May 1999

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Exists</u>
One can choose from several parties/candidates when voting	76%	68%
Everyone can freely practice their religion	83	51
All groups have the right to express themselves in language & culture	79	47
National unity and solidarity are maintained	87	45
Media are free to report the news without government censorship	74	45
There is freedom to openly criticize the government	80	38
Honest elections are held regularly	87	31
The judicial system punishes the guilty no matter who they are	84	31
The military is under the control of civilian leaders	58	27

children (61% vs. 35%) and that Islamic values should be given the same (25%) or more (35%) respect in their government than they have now (36% less respect).

Integrity of Government Officials in Question. Unchanged from last year, half (49%) express confidence in the national government but a majority *lack confidence* in Parliament (54% vs. 39% confident). Political parties in general are viewed unfavorably by two-thirds (66% vs. 32% confident), likely because many doubt the integrity of politicians. Eight in ten (80%) say that all or most government officials are engaged in bribe-taking and corruption; just two in ten (18%) think that corruption in government is more limited.

About two-thirds in Turkey express confidence in the police (68%), the Religious Affairs Directorate (63%), and Mosque officials (59%). Likely reflecting public satisfaction with the trial and conviction of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, Turks' confidence in their country's judicial system has risen somewhat since last year (from 45% to 54%).

While confidence in the judicial system as a whole has increased, the public remains skeptical of its legal system in certain respects. Unchanged from last year, only a third (30%) believe that "citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system"; two-thirds (64%) are doubtful. Slightly more (42%, up from 29% last year) agree that "the courts in Turkey guarantee everyone a fair trial regardless of whether they are rich or poor, educated or uneducated," but a majority (55%) continue to doubt this assertion. Similarly, more disagree (50%) than agree (42%) with the assertion "if I were wrongly accused of a crime, I'm sure our judicial system would find me innocent."

Military Still Commands Highest Respect. Although many do *not* think the military is currently under civilian control, the army remains far and away the most trusted institution in Turkey, with nearly nine in ten (85%) expressing confidence. In addition, many have more respect for military leaders than for political figures: just 29 percent agree that "government leaders are more trustworthy than military leaders" (59% *disagree*). A 1997 survey found that 89 percent agreed that "the army can be counted on to safeguard the interests of the Turkish people" (only 6% disagreed).

The United States

Americans had a good test of their democracy in 1998-99, as the head of state came under attack and was finally impeached by the House and acquitted by the Senate. Polls in the aftermath of this lengthy and draining process revealed few surprises about U.S. attitudes toward their government. The level of trust in the government did not fall through the floor; it just *remained at near-subterranean lows*. Since about 1974, a majority of Americans have felt that they usually cannot "trust the government in Washington to do what is right." Post-impeachment surveys put this kind of *distrust at two-thirds of the public*. (Record-high levels of distrust in the Federal Government -- among four-fifths of the public-- were recorded in 1994.) In most recent years, roughly a third feel that you can trust Washington to do what is right "most of the time" or "just about always" -- though this figure has fluctuated from year to year in the 1990s: from 43 percent in 1991 to just 20 percent in 1994.

In a different measure, confidence in most public institutions has remained steady or even risen in the past two years. Two of the beneficiaries of greater public confidence are "the judicial branch, headed by the U.S. Supreme Court" (80% express confidence, the highest level achieved since 1972) and "the military" (68% have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence, a fourth have at least "some," and just 6% lack confidence). Confidence in both "the executive branch, headed by the president," and the legislative branch have stayed at fairly high levels since 1997: two-thirds (64%) voice confidence in the executive branch (35% have little or none), a smaller majority (57%) express confidence in the legislative branch (41% have little or none).

Constituency Politics. The basis of modern American democracy is generally said to be "grass-roots" or "constituency" politics, although many would argue that lobbyists and special interest groups often wield more power over politicians than do constituents. It is particularly useful, therefore, to examine how constituents view their own relationship to their representatives and elected leaders.

In a January 1999 survey, about four-fifths (84%) think that "the views of the majority of Americans" should have more influence on decisions made by elected officials in Washington than they perceive is now the case. Roughly one in ten is satisfied with the current level of public influence (8%) or wants it diminished (4%).

The same poll revealed that the American people overwhelmingly believe that the government "is run pretty much by a few big interests looking out for themselves" (75%) rather than "run for the benefit of all the people" (19%). Similarly, majorities also feel that those in government don't *care much* (59%) and don't much *understand* (68%) "what people like me think."

By a two-to-one margin, Americans believe that members of Congress should generally base decisions more on what they believe the *well-informed public* would think about an issue than on what a majority of the general public think about it (65% to 29%). This finding perhaps reflects the fact that a similar majority (61% to 31%) feels that "sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."

Yet in a finding that might appear contradictory to the preceding ones, seven in ten Americans (69%) say that their own representative's votes on an issue should be guided more by "the way voters in [his] district feel about that issue" rather than by "the representative's own principles and judgment about what is best for the country"(25%).

Given three possible bases for shaping legislative decisions in situations where a representative's own favored course of action differed from that preferred by a majority of his constituents, Americans respond as follows as to how the representative should resolve the dilemma:

Reevaluate his position and look for a new alternative, on the basis that there is probably something valid in the majority's position	55%
Accept the will of the majority, on the basis of demo- cratic principle	23
Do what he thinks best, on the basis that he should not be swayed by external pressure	19

Appendix: A List of Polls

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sample Size/Type</u>	<u>Firm</u>
<i>Africa</i>			
Ghana	March 1998	1017 adults;* urban	Research & Marketing Services
Nigeria	October 1998	4976 adults; nationwide	Research & Marketing Services
South Africa	April-May 1998	3384 adults (16+); nationwide	Markinor
<i>Near East</i>			
Jordan	May 1999	1128 adults; nationwide	
<i>South Asia</i>			
Pakistan	March 1999	2028 adults; urban	AFTAB Associates
<i>East Asia</i>			
Indonesia	April-May 1998	1610 adults; urban	
Indonesia	Sept.-Oct. 1998	1823 adults; urban	
Japan	September 1998	1007 adults; nationwide	Shin Joho Center
The Philippines	Feb.-March 1998	1500 adults; nationwide	SOFRES FSA
South Korea	January 1999	1506 adults (20+); nationwide	Korea Gallup
South Korea	September 1998	1509 adults (20+); nationwide	Korea Gallup
Thailand	Feb.-March 1998	1022 adults (15+); urban	ACNielsen-Deemar
<i>Latin America</i>			
All Central American countries and Mexico	March 1999	1000-1200 adults; most urban	MORI Chile (coordinator)
All South American countries	Nov.-Dec. 1998	1000-1200 adults, except Paraguay (600); most urban	MORI Chile (coordinator)
Haiti	August 1998	1394 adults; urban	
<i>Commonwealth of Independent States</i>			
Armenia	November 1998	1000 adults; nationwide	GORBI (with the Sociological Research Center, AAS)
Azerbaijan	Dec. 1998- Jan. 1999	1000 adults; nationwide	GORBI (with SIAR-Baku)

*Unless otherwise indicated, "adults" means 18 years of age and older.

CIS (cont'd)

Belarus	May 1999	1002 adults; nationwide	Social & Ecological Surveys
Georgia	September 1998	1003 adults; nationwide	SOCIOGEO
Russia	Dec. 1998- Jan. 1999	1798 adults; nationwide	VCIOM
Russia	May-June 1998	1248 young adults (18-29); nationwide	VCIOM
Ukraine	Nov.-Dec. 1998	1203 adults; nationwide	Kiev International Institute of Sociology

Europe

Bulgaria	May 1999	1081 adults; nationwide	Center for the Study of Democracy
Czech Republic	May 1999	1171 adults; nationwide	AISA
France	March-April 1999	1003 adults; nationwide	Louis Harris
Germany	April 1999	1138 adults; nationwide	INRA Deutschland
Great Britain	March-April 1999	1048 adults; nationwide	IRB
Hungary	May 1999	1000 adults; nationwide	Median
Italy	April-May 1999	1001 adults; nationwide	Pragma
Poland	May-June 1999	904 adults; nationwide	Demoskop
Romania	May-June 1999	1018 adults; nationwide	Sociobit
Slovakia	May-June 1999	1179 adults; nationwide	AISA
Turkey	May 1999	1100 adults; nationwide	Strateji-Mori

United States

Jan.-May 1999	ca. 1000 adults each; nationwide	Various firms, including <i>CBS</i> News, the Center on Public Attitudes (COPA), Gallup, Harris, Pew Research Center, and <i>The Washington Post</i>
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