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# Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?

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THIS book brought together a network of international scholars to address a series of interrelated questions. The first are *diagnostic*: how far are there legitimate grounds for concern about declining public support for representative democracy world-wide? Are trends towards growing cynicism with government in the United States evident in many established and newer democracies? The second concern is *analytical*: what are the main political, economic and cultural factors driving the dynamics of support for democratic government? The last questions are *prescriptive*: what are the consequences of this analysis and what are the implications for public policy and for strengthening democratic governance? Chapters in this volume critically explore these issues seeking to establish a world-wide audit of public support for representative democracy at the end of the twentieth century.

Certain common themes have emerged from this volume which can be highlighted here. The first is to emphasize that the concept of political support is *multi-dimensional*. Rather than talking about 'political trust', in every case we need to specify its object. Just as 'social trust' can refer to trust towards one's family and friends, one's neighbours and community, or to citizens in different countries, so political trust depends upon the object. The Eastonian classification draws a valuable distinction between support for the political community, regime, and authorities. Building upon this foundation, the five-fold conceptualization used within this volume draws a line between the political community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions, and political actors. Much confusion surrounding this topic results from neglecting these distinctions.

This expansion of the Eastonian schema is long overdue because the second major theme which emerges from this book concerns divergent trends in support for regime principles and institutions. At the turn of the millenium most citizens in well-established and in newer democracies share widespread aspirations to the ideals and principles of democracy. The end of the Cold War has produced crumbling adherence to the old nostrums of authoritarian regimes.

By the end of the twentieth century overwhelming support is given to the principle of democracy as an ideal form of government, even among citizens living under flawed regimes characterized by widespread abuse of human rights and civil liberties, such as in Nigeria, Peru, and Turkey. Such adherence may be purely symbolic, like abstract support for the principles of freedom and equality, or it may be more deeply grounded. At the same time citizens draw a clear distinction between which type of government they would choose as their ideal and the performance of current regimes. At the end of the twentieth century citizens in many established democracies give poor marks to how their political system functions, and in particular how institutions such as parliaments, the legal system, and the civil service work in practice. This pattern has long been evident in Italy and Japan, but as Dalton demonstrates in Chapter 3 of this volume the erosion of support for core representative institutions has spread to many more advanced industrialized societies. Other chapters illustrate the conflict between democratic ideals and reality evident in many newer or incomplete democracies such as South Korea, Russia, and East Germany.

The last theme which emerges concerns how we interpret the consequences of these developments. Classic theories of political culture have long suggested that if the structure of government conflicts with the political culture, then regimes lack legitimacy to tide them over bad times (Almond and Verba 1963). This may produce serious problems of government stability which may hinder the process of consolidation in newer democracies. If people become disillusioned with the perceived performance of democratic governments, over successive administrations, then in time this might erode their belief in democracy itself. In this perspective failure of performance will flow upwards to undermine democratic values. In Chapter 4 Rose and Mishler stress that the publics in Central and Eastern Europe do not hanker nostalgically to return to the old regimes of the communist era. Nevertheless there are indicators that the public remains dissatisfied with its forms of governance in many newer democracies. Parliaments and parties provide some of the most important channels of linkage between citizens and representative government yet the evidence in this book demonstrates a widespread lack of confidence in these institutions throughout Latin America as well as in many Central and Eastern European countries. Without a deep reservoir of public support to bolster regimes through economic crisis or external shocks, semi-democracies may revert to their authoritarian legacy. The potential problem is less that the public actively desires the return of old regimes, than that new democracies, lacking legitimacy, may be undermined by leadership coups, by ethnic conflict, by extreme nationalist parties, or by a more gradual erosion of political rights and civil liberties. In this view the sky is not falling down for democracy, as Chicken Little claimed. But neither is the Panglossian view true that all remains well in the body politic.

Yet other authors in this volume provide an alternative interpretation which regards the tensions between ideals and reality as essentially healthy for

the future of democratic governance, since this indicates the emergence of more 'critical citizens', or 'dissatisfied democrats', who adhere strongly to democratic values but who find the existing structures of representative government, invented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to be wanting as we approach the end of the millenium. In established democracies this may increase the pressures for structural reforms, to make elected governments more accountable to the public. For advocates of direct democracy, the forms of governance in the nation-state need to evolve to allow more opportunities for citizen decision-making than an election for government every few years. Proponents argue for increased use of referendums and initiatives, devolution to community organizations, and grassroots mobilization to solve local problems. In this perspective, the challenge is to reform existing institutions and to widen citizen involvement in governance, with the evolution of new channels to link citizens and the state.

In addressing these issues this book aims to steer a course between the Scylla of crisis theories and the Charybdis claiming that all's right with the world. There are genuine grounds for concern about public support for the core institutions of democratic government, in established and newer democracies, but too often 'crisis' accounts are broad-brush and exaggerated when the diagnosis needs to be careful, systematic, and precise. To examine these issues this introduction falls into four parts. We start by reviewing the previous literature on democratic crisis and stability. We then outline the conceptual framework and data sources used throughout the book. On this basis we highlight the major findings about global trends in support for democratic governance. The last part outlines the plan of the book and summarizes the contents in subsequent chapters.

## Theories of Democratic Crisis and Malaise

### The 1960s and 1970s: A Crisis of Democracy?

Theories of democratic crisis have gone through periodic cycles of hope and fear. The politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s led several theorists to predict a 'crisis' of Western democracy (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975; Huntington 1981). Exuberant democracy was believed incompatible with effective governability (Brittan 1975; King 1975). These accounts struck a popular chord because many contemporaries felt that riots over civil rights, violent protest over Vietnam, and the trauma of Watergate seemed to be tearing America apart, the antithesis of the quiescent Eisenhower years. Similar echoes were heard in Europe rattling off the cobblestones of Paris, London, and Bonn, reflecting the 1968 student radicalism and industrial strife in Europe. Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki (1975) argued that weakening confidence in government leaders and political institutions in Western Europe, the United

States, and Japan was due to increasing demands from interest groups and new social movements, the rise of protest demonstrations and civil disobedience, more polarized ideological and issue cleavages, combined with the apparent incapacity of national governments to mitigate the consequences of the international economic recession produced by the OPEC oil shocks. Nineteenth-century institutions of representative democracy seemed unable to cope with twentieth-century demands, producing what appeared to be the crisis of the overloaded state.

Similar anxieties were heard about problems facing newer democracies in this period: O'Donnell claimed that the process of democratization in Latin America contained internal contradictions, producing rising public demands which ultimately undermined economic development and weakened state management, producing a reversion to authoritarian rule (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986). This account seemed to fit the reverse wave of democratization from 1958 to 1975. Fledgling democracies crumbled throughout Latin America with a succession of military coups: Peru (1962), Brazil and Bolivia (1964), Argentine (1966), Chile and Uruguay (1973). Authoritarian rule was ascendant in Asia (Pakistan, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, India), Southern Europe (Greece, Turkey) and Africa (Nigeria). Some of these countries had just been decolonized, others had been democracies for many years, fuelling a wave of concern about the future stability of democracy and its applicability to developing societies.

## The 1980s: Confidence in Democracy Regained?

'Crisis' theories tended to fall out of intellectual fashion during the 1980s, as they appeared to have underestimated the adaptive capacities of the modern state. In established democracies the resurgence of confident conservatism blue in tooth and claw, led by Reaganism and Thatcherism, seemed to lower public expectations simultaneously, reduce government services, and reverse the 'politics of decline' (Hoover and Plant 1989; Krieger 1986; Norpoth 1992). During the 1980s the Left lost political and intellectual ground in many OECD countries (Fox Piven 1992; Anderson and Camiller 1994; Kitschelt 1994). Far from being a threat, new types of direct action like demonstrations quickly became part of the conventional repertoire of middle-class political participation (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Topf 1995). New social movements like environmentalism and feminism became absorbed into the mainstream policy process (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Dalton and Kuechler 1990). In America, despite the anti-government rhetoric, the sunny economic can-do optimism of Reaganism dispelled the shadows of Carteresque malaise.

The evidence for the 'crisis' thesis came under strong challenge from a network of scholars focusing on trends in political support in Western Europe. The five-volume *Beliefs in Government* project provided a thorough examination of public opinion in Western Europe based primarily on analysing the series of *Eurobarometer Surveys* from 1973 to 1990 (Klingemann and Fuchs

1995; Kaase and Newton 1995). A wide range of contributors to this project found little systematic evidence for widespread signs of growing malaise during these decades. Instead, diverse patterns of political support were found in different European societies, whether measured by trust in politicians (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995), satisfaction with the workings of the democratic process (Fuchs 1995), institutional confidence (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995), or electoral turnout (Topf 1995). The only trend consistent with the 'crisis' thesis was a general cross-national weakening in attachment to political parties (Schmitt and Holmberg 1995). As one account summarized these conclusions: 'There is little evidence to support the various theories of crisis, contradiction and catastrophe. There are few signs of a general decline in trust, confidence in public institutions, political interest, or faith in democracy; nor is there much evidence of an increase in apathy, alienation, or faith in democracy' (Budge and Newton 1997: 132). From this perspective the overall pattern of change in democratic attitudes during the 1970 and 1980s in Europe was one of trendless fluctuations, not secular decline, so why worry? Crisis theories seemed to have gone the way of bell-bottoms, Afghan coats, and patchouli oil.

World-wide the transition from authoritarian rule received a new burst of life with the third wave of democratization. This process started in the mid-1970s with the restoration of elected civilian administrations in Portugal, Spain, and Greece (Morlino and Montero, 1995). The surge of democratization gathered pace in Latin American and Asia, followed by historic developments with the end of the Soviet empire in Central and Eastern Europe, which brought a heady mood of optimism in the West. By the end of the twentieth century around 40 per cent of states around the world can be classified as fully democratic (or 'free'), according to Freedom House's classification of political rights and civil liberties (Karatnycky 1997). As Huntington described the era between the end of the Portuguese dictatorship and the fall of the Berlin Wall: 'Although obviously there were resistance and setbacks, as in China in 1989, the movement towards democracy seemed to take on the character of an almost irreversible global tide moving on from one triumph to the next' (Huntington 1991: 21).

## 1990s: Malaise Redux?

Yet by the early to mid-1990s many commentators sensed, if not a crisis of government, then at least a more diffuse mood of *Angst*. Like a mid-life divorce, the end of the Cold War proved unsettling. Democracy seemed to have triumphed and yet to become absorbed by self-doubt. Popular accounts stressed widespread signs of democratic malaise, claiming that the electorate in many industrialized societies, but particularly in the United States, had become deeply disengaged. Voters were commonly described as 'ready to revolt', 'angry', 'disgusted', and 'frustrated' (Tolchin 1996; Dionne 1991; Craig 1993). In America the stereotype of the 'angry white male' was discovered in 1994. Yet the popular *Zeitgeist* in America seemed more anxious than angry,

immobilized on the couch by ennui more than energized by radical energy. As one commentator put it, Europe and America seem to have experienced '. . . a flight from politics, or what the Germans call *Politikverdrossenheit*: a weariness about its debates, disbelief about its claims, skepticism about its results, cynicism about its practitioners' (Maier 1994: 59).

Studies confirm the long-term slide in political trust for federal government and many major institutions in America over the last three decades (Lipset and Schneider 1987; Nye *et al.* 1997). According to NES data, in 1958 almost three-quarters of citizens said that they trusted the federal government 'most of the time' or 'just about always'. By 1980 only a quarter proved as trusting. Since then trust has remained low compared with earlier decades, although there was a modest recovery in 1996 (see Figure 1.1).
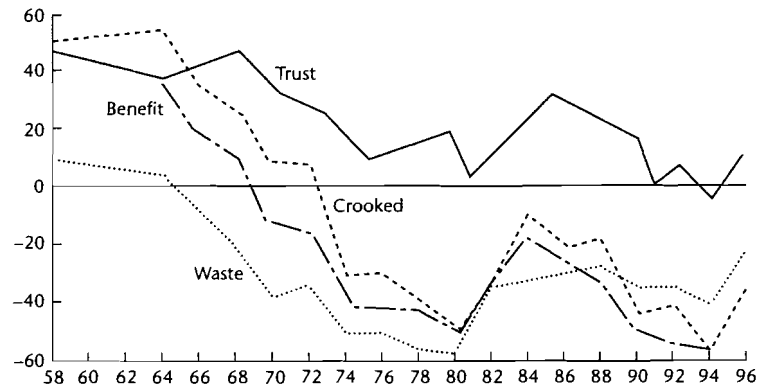


**Fig. 1.1.** Confidence in politicians in the United States, 1958–1996.
*Source:* NES Percentage Difference Index.

Many established democracies seemed to share an underlying unease about a long-term decline of public confidence in government and anxieties about a growing disconnection between citizens and the state. Britain experienced the rise of a more sceptical electorate (Curtice and Jowell 1997). Swedish surveys monitored a thirty-year erosion of trust in politicians, paralleling trends in the United States (see Holmberg, Chapter 5 this volume). Widespread cynicism about government remained embedded in the Italian and Japanese political cultures, fuelling pressures in the early 1990s for major reforms of the electoral and party systems in both countries (Morlino and Montero 1995; Morlino and Tarchi 1996; Pharr 1997). Echoes of earlier crisis theories were used to describe public discontent in established democracies as diverse as Canada (Delacourt 1993), India (Kohli 1990), Israel (Avishai 1990), and Britain (Sampson 1993), as well as the European Union (Hayward 1995; Koechler 1987). Some went so

far as to claim a 'moral crisis' afflicting Europe and North America, with citizens increasingly polarized, divided, and mistrustful of political leaders and institutions (Maier 1994).

Since 1973 the 'third wave' of democracy has transformed the geopolitical map and greatly expanded the universe of 'electoral democracies'. Nevertheless the heady mood of optimism following the fall of the Berlin Wall was succeeded by a more cautious ambience. During the mid-1990s the surge in the number of democratic states worldwide stabilized rather than expanded. In semi-democracies the consolidation stage proved sobering and fraught with obstacles, especially throughout much of Africa and Asia. Semi-democracies faced the challenge of the triple transformation of their nation-state, economic structures and political systems. Outside of wealthy industrialized nations the quality of democratic government often remains flawed, poorly institutionalized, and insecure.

The consolidation literature stresses that many 'incomplete', 'partly-free' or 'semi-democracies' continue to be plagued by problems of ethnic conflict and religious polarization, widespread administrative corruption, intimidation and dishonesty at the ballot box, severe socioeconomic inequalities, constraints on the press and coercion of opposition movements, weak legislatures, highly fragmented or predominant party systems, rising levels of violent organized crime, and executive arrogation of power against representative institutions (Diamond, Linz, and Kipset 1995; Diamond, Plattner, and Chu 1997; Hadenius 1997). Occasionally semi-democracies revert to authoritarian rule, as in Nigeria and Algeria, but more commonly they fail to become fully consolidated. Rose and Mishler's studies of public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall shows that although many citizens remain highly sceptical about democracy nevertheless they prefer the new regimes to the old, and there are few grounds to believe that the public desires a return to authoritarianism (Rose *et al.* 1998; Mishler and Rose, Chapter 4 this volume). Despite occasional reversions, notably in Africa, and the lack of progress in regions like the Middle East, the critical problem facing most semi-democracies at the end of the twentieth century concerns the flawed and incomplete quality of democratic government, more than its persistence or stability.

## Understanding Trends

The twentieth century has therefore experienced periodic cycles of hope and fear about the state of popular support for democratic government. We need to re-examine this issue because understanding trends has important implications for explaining the causes of this phenomenon. If we establish a similar pattern of growing scepticism about government across established democracies then plausibly this may be due to common structural and secular trends

shaping public opinion in advanced industrialized societies. In this case, we might look for explanations such as social capital theory focusing on a decline in civic engagement and social trust (Putnam 1994, 1995a, 1995b); or post-materialist theory emphasizing changing value orientations (Dalton 1996; Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997a).

Alternatively if we find different trends across different democracies then the pattern of deepening cynicism in the United States and Sweden, and enduring alienation with government in Italy and Japan, may reflect country-specific factors. In this case we should search for explanations based on specific historical traditions, the performance of governments, or the workings of particular political systems. Path-dependent theories, for example, suggest that countries and regions drawing on different historical roots may continue to display markedly different attitudes towards government today. In this view our institutions, norms, and values are conditioned to an important degree by earlier patterns. If true, then even two neighbouring countries as superficially similar as Canada and the United States may maintain different public philosophies towards the state (Lipset 1990, 1996).

Establishing the pattern of basic trends in public support for democracy is also critical for understanding their possible consequences. If disenchantment with representative government has become widespread this can be regarded as worrying in itself, as an indicator of the health of democracy. But this is also a matter of serious concern if significant consequences flow from this development. As discussed in the final chapter of this book it is commonly claimed that in established democracies growing cynicism may produce declining electoral turnout and political engagement (Teixeira 1992); may facilitate the growth of protest politics and extreme anti-state parties (Craig and Maggiotto 1981; Muller 1979; Muller, Jukam, and Seligson 1982; Cheles, Ferguson, and Vaughan 1995) and at elite level may perhaps deter the best and brightest from entering public service (Nye et al. 1997; Norris 1997).

Even greater concern has focused on the effects of widespread cynicism in newer and more fragile democracies such as Russia, South Africa, and Taiwan. The quality of democracy in many incomplete, partial, or semi-democracies has often proved deeply flawed. Widespread cynicism about democratic government may exacerbate this situation. Adherence to a democratic political culture has long been thought a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the consolidation of newer democratic governments (Lipset 1959; Almond and Verba 1963; Dahl 1971; Linz and Stepan 1978; O'Donnell et al. 1986; Lipset 1993; Diamond et al. 1995, 1997; Linz and Stepan 1996). The conclusion of the book considers the consequences of falling faith in government and the implications for democratization.

The first challenge for this volume is therefore to sort out the claims and counter-claims about the breadth and depth of any erosion of public confidence in representative government within established and newer democracies. To consider these issues Part I of this volume describes the extent of cross-national support for democratic government and the dynamics of pub-

lic opinion over time. Certain methodological observations are helpful in sorting out the evidence. Consistent and systematic comparison depends upon five factors:

- the conceptual framework;
- suitable sources of survey *data*;
- the selection of time *periods*;
- the choice of countries; and
- the choice of appropriate measures.

Let us consider each in turn.

## The Conceptual Framework for Critical Citizens

The most critical step in our analysis is the use of a consistent conceptual framework. One important theme to emerge from this volume is that political support needs to be understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. This book develops a fivefold conceptual framework distinguishing between the different levels or objects of political support. These distinctions are often blurred in practice, when popular discussions about declining confidence in legislatures, trust in politicians, and support for democratic values are treated as though interchangeable. This practice has led to considerable confusion about claims and counter-claims in the literature. One of the most useful analytic frameworks is provided by David Easton (Easton 1965, 1975) who distinguished between support for the community, the regime, and the authorities.

These distinctions provide an essential starting-point but this book suggests that greater refinement of categories is necessary since there are significant theoretical and empirical gradations within different parts of the regime. In Easton's conception the regime constituted the basic framework for governing the country. People could not pick and choose between different elements of the regime, approving of some parts while rejecting others. Yet in practice citizens do seem to distinguish between different levels of the regime, often believing strongly in democratic values, for example, while proving critical of the way that democratic governments work in practice. People also seem to make clear judgements concerning different institutions within the regime, expressing confidence in the courts, for example, while disapproving of parliament. Accordingly, strongly influenced by the arguments of Russell Dalton (Chapter 3 this volume) and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Chapter 2 this volume), the authors in this volume expanded the classification into a fivefold framework distinguishing between political support for the community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions, and political actors (see Figure 1.2). These levels can be seen as ranging in a continuum from

the most diffuse support for the nation-state down through successive levels to the most concrete support for particular politicians.

The first level concerns diffuse support for the *political community*, which is usually understood to mean a basic attachment to the nation beyond the present institutions of government and a general willingness to co-operate together politically. As Linz and Stephan emphasize (1996), agreement about the boundaries of the political community is the essential precondition for the foundation of any stable nation-state. 'Without the existence of a state, there cannot be a consolidated modern democratic regime' (Linz and Stephan 1996: 7). But the boundaries of the political community can be defined more narrowly in terms of a local or regional community, or a community defined by

**Diffuse Support**

| Object of Support | Summary of Trends |
|---|---|
| Political Community | *High* levels of support. |
| Regime Principles | *High* levels of support. |
| Regime Performance | *Varied* satisfaction with the workings of the regime. |
| Regime Institutions | *Declining* confidence in government institutions; *low* levels of support in many newer democracies. |
| Political Actors | *Mixed* trends in trust in politicians. |

**Specific Support**

Fig. 1.2. *The conceptual framework for the book.*

political cleavages based on ethnic, class, or religious identities, as much as by physical geography. As discussed by Newton in Chapter 8 of this volume, these boundaries are important for social-capital theories concerned with issues of social trust and civic engagement. Attachment to the nation is conventionally measured by items tapping a sense of belonging to the community, national pride, and national identity.

The second level refers to support for the core *regime principles* representing the values of the political system. In democratic states this dimension refers to what Rose (1997a) has termed 'idealist' definitions of democracy derived from classical liberal theory. Since democracy remains an essentially contested concept, open to multiple meanings, there is no consensus about which values should be nominated as most important. Empirical studies about what people understand by the term suggests that democracy means different things to different people in different societies (Thomassen 1995; Simon 1996; Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger 1997). Nevertheless, the basic principles of democratic regimes are commonly understood to include such values as freedom, participation, tolerance and moderation, respect for legal-institutional rights, and the rule of law (Beetham 1994; Simon 1996). Surveys can tap agreement with these specific values, or more commonly general agreement with the idea of democracy as the best form of democracy (Fuchs 1995).

The third level concerns evaluations of *regime performance*, meaning support for how authoritarian or democratic political systems function in practice. This taps a 'middle level' of support which is often difficult to gauge. In *Eurobarometers* this is commonly measured by '*satisfaction with the performance of democracy*', that is, how democracy functions in practice as opposed to the ideal (Fuchs 1995). Yet this measure is ambiguous, and as contributors note, alternative interpretations of this item are possible. This survey item taps both support for 'democracy' as a value (which might be expected to rise gradually over time), and also satisfaction with the incumbent government (which might be expected to fluctuate over time). But as Klingemann argues the focus on 'how democracy is working' does seem to make it a suitable item to test public evaluation of democratic performance more than principles. One can believe strongly in democratic values yet feel that the way democracy functions in a country leaves much to be desired. In newer democracies, Mishler and Rose suggest that we need to compare the current against the older regime, since this provides a common standard, rather than comparing the current regime with an idealized conception of representative democracy.

The fourth level focuses on support for *regime institutions*, tapping what Rose (1997a) terms a 'realistic' view of democracy. This includes attitudes towards governments, parliaments, the executive, the legal system and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the military (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Lipset and Schneider 1987). These studies seek to measure generalized support for the institution—that is approval of the powers of the Presidency rather than support for Bill Clinton, and support for parties rather than particular party leaders—although in practice the dividing line between the office and

incumbents is often fuzzy. We also commonly make a conventional divisions between 'public' and 'private' institutions, although this line may vary depending upon the degree of state control. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue (1995: 23), much can be learnt by examining the dynamics of support for individual institutions, such as Congress and the courts, because evidence suggests that the public distinguishes between them.

Lastly, we are also interested in comparing specific support for *political actors* or authorities, including evaluations of politicians as a class and the performance of particular leaders. Studies have compared popular support for different presidents or prime ministers, whether satisfaction with leadership has declined since the post-war period, and the dynamics of support such as 'rally round the flag' effects (Brace and Hinckley 1992; Clarke and Stewart 1995; Rose 1995). More often, analysis at this level has focused on trust in politicians as a class, using items first developed by the NES in 1958 (summarized in Figure 1.1) and adopted later by some other national election studies (see Dalton, Table 3.3 and Holmberg, Fig. 5.1 in this volume). Indeed many previous studies of political trust have often relied exclusively on these measures, as though there were no other indicators of support, even though it is possible to deeply mistrust politicians and yet to continue to have confidence either in the institutional structures or in particular representatives.

One long-standing controversy surrounding the original NES measures of political trust has its origins in the Miller–Citrin debate in 1974 (Miller 1974*a*, 1974*b*; Citrin 1974). This debate revolved around whether, as Miller argued, the results measured by the NES index indicated a profound loss of diffuse support for the political system as a whole, or whether, as Citrin suggested, it indicated more specific approval of the performance of political leaders. In the conceptual framework used in this study we come down strongly in favour of understanding the NES measures as referring to trust in political actors, *not* the political regime *per se*. The items derived from the NES index, subsequently used in Scandinavian and European surveys, explicitly ask about support for 'politicians', including 'MPs', 'people running the government', 'officials', 'parties', 'political leaders', 'people in government', 'people in parliament', 'politicians in general', 'members of parliament', and similar phrases (see Dalton, Table 3.3; Holmberg, Fig. 5.1 in this volume). As Citrin argued (1974) many Americans who scored low on trust in the NES index expressed pride in 'our system of government'. These stimuli therefore probably provoke short-run evaluations of current office-holders more than diffuse support for the political system as a whole: 'The cynical responses to the CPS political trust items are hardly extreme. To believe that the government wastes "a lot" of money, can be trusted "to do what is right only some of the time", and includes "quite a few" people who are "crooked" or "don't know what they're doing" need not speak of a deep-seated hostility towards the political system at the regime or community levels' (Citrin 1974: 975). Moreover these items are rarely about 'government' in the sense used by most parliamentary democracies, where this term is usually reserved for the party or parties in office more than the system

of government including the executive, judiciary, and legislature. These types of items will therefore be understood in this book as monitoring 'trust in politicians', which is only one component of the regime as a whole.

As discussed by Dalton and Klingemann in subsequent chapters, the book adopts this fivefold classification of political support because factor analysis strongly suggests that the public makes these distinctions, and there are divergent trends over time in support for different levels. One reason for the confusion in the literature between those who see a pattern of declining confidence in established democracies and others who see only trendless fluctuations is the reliance on different indicators relating to different levels of support. It is rational and consistent, for example, for citizens to believe in democratic values but to remain critical about the way democratic governments actually work in practice, or to have confidence in political institutions but no faith in politicians, or to disparage most politicians but to continue to support a particular leader, or to trust each other but not elected officials. Evidence in subsequent chapters suggests that political support is not all of one piece. If the public can and does distinguish between different objects of support, our analysis needs to be aware of these distinctions.

## Sources of Comparative Survey Data

The conceptual framework is critical but to move beyond this towards empirical analysis we need suitable sources of data. In developing societies until recently, in the absence of systematic surveys of public opinion, the importance of cultural factors has traditionally been examined by tracing the influence of particular religious traditions or historical experiences gauged at the national or macro level. It has commonly been found, for example, that postcolonial states which experienced Anglo-American rule were more likely to prove stable democracies than those once colonized by France, Portugal, the Netherlands, Spain, or Belgium (Hadenius 1994; Lipset 1993). Other work on political culture in developing societies has commonly been more interpretative and qualitative (Diamond 1994). Only in recent years have we started to develop more systematic data comparing public opinion at individual level across newer democracies.

Much of this work has focused on understanding the dynamics of public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe and the political culture in the former Soviet Union (Finifter and Mickiewicz 1992; Gibson, Duch, and Tedin 1992; Duch 1993; Miller and Gronbeck 1994; Evans and Whitefield 1995; White, Rose, and McAllister 1997; Rose, Mischler and Haerpfer 1998; Mishler and Rose 1995*a*; Mishler and Rose 1995*b*). But a growing literature in the last few years has started to analyse public opinion in other new democracies, for example data in Latin America (Booth and Seligson 1994; Linz and Stephan 1996), South Africa (Gibson 1996, 1997) and Asia (Shin 1998).

In mapping political support in the major regions of the world the book draws on multiple sources of data. Due to an extensive international network of survey researchers we now have access to a wider range of evidence than ever before. Sources of comparative public opinion data include Almond and Verba's path-breaking *Civic Culture* study, a five-nation survey in 1959/60; the Political Action Study carried out in five nations in 1974; *Eurobarometers* conducted twice yearly since 1973 among the expanding universe of member states of the European Union; the International Social Science Programme (ISSP) monitoring social and political attitudes every year since 1985; the *World Values Survey* (WVS) undertaken in 1981–4, 1990–3, and 1995–7; the *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer* started in 1989; the *New Democracies Barometer* operating since 1991; and the *Latinobarometro* started by MORI in 1995. These sources are supplemented by occasional international surveys by major polling companies including Harris, Times-Mirror, MORI, and Gallup. We also draw on national surveys, such as election studies, where there are comparable time-series data. These multiple sources have been produced by an extended network of political scientists, drawing on similar concepts and methods. With regional and worldwide surveys we have started to move from comparing 'countries' and 'regions' to types of political, social, or economic system as the common unit of analysis.

## Analysing Time-Series Trends

When understanding time-series data we need care to compare items during similar periods, since different starting or ending dates may be critical for our understanding of causal relationships. For example, if the major decline in confidence in government occurred during the mid- to late 1960s, as suggested by Crozier *et al.* (1975), this could not be tested by examining evidence from the *Eurobarometer Surveys*, which only started in 1973. Careful attention must also be paid to matching measurement periods to our hypotheses about patterns of change. If television is largely to blame for political cynicism, for example, ideally we need to examine survey indicators before this media became well established during the late 1950s in developed societies. Unfortunately in most countries few consistent items stretch back to surveys before the 1970s. The first items on political trust, for example, were asked in 1948 in West Germany, in 1958 in the United States and in 1968 in Sweden, but only later in many established democracies. Despite the richness of recent cross-national data-sets, much survey evidence in newer democracies only started in the 1990s.

In assessing trends over time, multiple indicators are better than single ones but often we have only two or three observation points. If so, we need to consider whether the observations occurred during 'typical' periods. Evidence from national election studies, for example, may monitor higher levels of

political efficacy than periods of normal politics. Many chapters analysing causal explanations rely upon the second wave of the *World Values Survey*, conducted in 1990–3, but we need to note that this was a time of major transition in many newer democracies. The focus on more recent evidence is critical for understanding trends, using the third wave of the *World Values Survey* conducted in 1995–7, because the last decade provides important insights into the process of democratic transition and consolidation.

In time-series analysis where we have more regular measurements we need to distinguish between alternative patterns. Often studies search for linear secular trends, which show a consistent and steady decline in support over successive periods. But we need to be open to alternative patterns over time including 'stepped' or period-specific shifts, cyclical waves of ebb and flow in support, and trendless fluctuations around the mean. Each of these may offer different interpretations.

## The Selection of Countries

The selection of countries is also critical for systematic comparison. We have now accumulated a rich body of comparable survey evidence in established democracies in North America and Western Europe. But even with the World Values Study consistent evidence globally remains limited. We lack systematic cross-national data for many countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, in part because surveys often follow, rather than precede, the process of democratization. Nevertheless this book contains some of the broadest evidence which has recently become available. Drawing on the *World Values Survey*, Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Chapter 2) provides a wide-ranging comparison of attitudes towards democracy in many countries world-wide. Subsequent chapters go on to compare public opinion across advanced industrialized societies (Dalton) and in seven newer democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Mishler and Rose). Contributors have also focused in depth on selected case-studies chosen to illustrate different facets of the issues under consideration, including Sweden (Holmberg) as a smaller, affluent welfare state where there has been growing disengagement with government, South Korea (Rose, Shin, and Munro) as an East Asian society in the throes of the democratization process, and Germany (Fuchs) as a single country deeply divided by its recent historical traditions between East and West. The advantages of the case-study approach is that chapters can look at a single nation, or compare subcultures within countries, to provide a richer and more detailed understanding of public opinion within its specific historical and institutional context.

## Measures of Trends in Political Support

### Political Community

Turning to the available evidence, we should bear in mind that there is often a significant gap between our concepts and measures. Contributors are dependent upon the available survey items, which were often designed for different analytical purposes than those we most want to tap. Nevertheless a shared consensus about many measures has developed in survey research. Support for the political community is conventionally gauged by indicators of national identity and pride. The latter is measured in the *World Values Survey* by the following item: '*How proud are you to be (British/American/German, etc.)? Very proud, quite proud, not very proud or not at all proud?*'

Many long-established nation-states such as Canada, Belgium, Italy, and Britain are believed to be under threat in the late twentieth century, threatened by global and international forces on the one hand and by the fissions of regional and/or linguistic political identities on the other. Yet evidence in this book suggests that in the mid-1990s indicators of national pride remained relatively high with no consistent secular decline across nations. Drawing on the mid-1990s *World Values Survey*, Klingemann demonstrated that more than three-quarters of all citizens expressed pride in their country in 17 out of the 24 nations under comparison. Those who proved 'very' or 'quite' proud of their country ranged from a low of West Germany (57 per cent) and Japan (62 per cent) up to a remarkable 98 per cent of all citizens in the United States (Klingemann, Table 2.3). National pride demonstrates considerable fluctuations over time but no secular decline compared with either the early 1980s (Dalton, Figure 3.2 in this volume), or the early 1990s (Klingemann, Table 2.5 in this volume).

An alternative indicator of national support in the *World Values Survey* asks respondents about willingness to volunteer for military service: '*Of course we all hope that there will not be another war, but if it were to come to that, would you be willing to fight for your country?*' Klingemann demonstrates that a high proportion of citizens remained 'willing to fight for their country', with Germany and Japan, with their historical legacies, again at the bottom of the league (Klingemann, Table 2.6). This evidence suggests that in the countries under comparison there has been no consistent decline over time in support for the political community at national level.

### Regime Principles

Studies also tapped support for the overall values and principles of democracy. This provides insights into the perceived moral legitimacy of the government—i.e. whether it is seen as authorized to exercise power—which is usually regarded as essential for long-term political stability. Public opinion surveys have commonly measured support for democratic values by gauging agree-

ment with the idea of democracy, approval of democracy as the '*best form of government*' and as '*a good way of governing*', and preference for democratic over authoritarian regimes.

Evidence presented by Klingemann (Table 2.7) demonstrates that by the mid-1990s democracy as an ideal form of government was supported by the overwhelming majority of the public in nearly all countries (with the exception of Russia where it was supported by only a bare majority). Based on *Eurobarometer* data, Dalton (Table 3.5) also confirms overwhelming and widespread approval of the idea of democracy (over 90 per cent), and positive attitudes towards democracy as the best form of government, throughout Western Europe. In the mid-1990s democratic values were also supported by the majority of citizens throughout Latin America, although with some variations between the most positive countries including Argentina and Uruguay, and the less positive such as Brazil and Chile (Klingemann, Table 2.7). Lastly Rose *et al.* asked citizens in South Korea to indicate their views of democracy as an ideal and in reality. Using a 10-point scale ranging from complete dictatorship (1) to complete democracy (10), respondents were asked '*Where would you place the extent to which you personally desire democracy for our country?*' and '*Where would you place our country at the present time?*'. The results (Chapter 7, this volume) demonstrate the tensions between ideal and reality: people thought the government in power was less democratic than their aspirations. South Koreans demonstrated overwhelming support for democracy as an ideal but serious doubts about how far their government met this ideal.

This body of evidence suggests there are few grounds for concern about the widespread adherence to the principle of democratic values, measured at this abstract level, in the countries under comparison. By the mid-1990s democracy has come to be widely regarded as the ideal form of government in the countries where we have evidence in Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, and Asia. If not the 'end of history' this seems to represent the triumph of liberal democracy against any ideological alternative form of government. Yet we need to register two important qualifications to these observations: we lack equivalent survey data in large parts of the world with authoritarian regimes, such as many countries in the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia. Moreover, abstract approval of the broad ideals and principles of democracy may be rooted in shallow support for particular aspects, like tolerance of dissenting views or minority rights (McClosky and Brill 1983; McClosky and Zaller 1994). As well as broadening our cross-national comparison, in subsequent surveys we need to go much further to deepen our analysis of what people understand by the principles and values of democracy.

### Regime Performance

The chapters in this book also tap evaluations of the way the regime works, and particularly satisfaction with the way the democratic process functions in practice. The evidence for South Korea presented in Chapter 7, which we have

already discussed, confirms the pattern found in previous studies in Central and Eastern Europe where there remains a marked gap between evaluations of the ideal and the practice of democracy (Evans and Whitefield 1995). In Western Europe, where we have the longest time-series data in the *Eurobarometer,* studies have relied upon the standard question: *'Are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is functioning (in your country)?'.* This measure has been extensively analysed and Fuchs (1995) demonstrated that satisfaction with the working of democracy, monitored regularly by this item since 1973, shows a pattern of trendless fluctuations over time. Nevertheless there are persistent cross-national differences within Western Europe, with the lowest satisfaction commonly expressed in Italy and Greece contrasted with the most positive responses recorded in Denmark and Norway (Klingemann Table, 2.11). In the *Latinobarometro,* using the same item, Klingemann found that in the mid-1990s two-thirds or more of citizens in Latin America were dissatisfied with regime performance, with public opinion particularly critical in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil (Table 2.9).

In Chapter 4 of this volume Mishler and Rose use an alternative measure in the *New Democracy Barometer* in Central and Eastern Europe (1991–6) making a direct comparison between newer and older regimes without reference to democracy per se: *'Here is a scale for ranking governments: the top, +100, is the best, and the bottom, –100, the worst. Where would you put (a) the former Communist regime; (b) the present system with free elections and many parties; (c) our system of governing in five years time?'* This is designed to avoid idealistic evaluations of principles, and measures past and current regimes on a common metric. The results demonstrate that during the 1990s the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have experienced a modest rise in support for the new regimes compared with their communist predecessors (Mishler and Rose, Figure 4.1). Nevertheless this pattern does vary among different countries and support for current regimes remains far stronger in the Czech Republic and Poland than in Hungary and Slovakia.

An alternative perspective is provided by Fuchs in Chapter 6 of this volume which compares support for the system of government in the unified Germany. He found that Germans in East and West shared similar normative conceptions of the meaning of democracy: both emphasized that democracy required liberal and social rights. Nevertheless citizens in both regions differed sharply in their evaluations of the performance of democracy in the German government. Respondents were asked: *'Do you believe that we in the Federal Republic have the best form of government, or is there a form of government that is better?'* He found a large and persistent gap from 1990 to 1995 in evaluations of the system across both regions: more than 70 per cent of respondents in the West believed that Germany had the best form of government compared with less than 40 per cent in the East. The evidence presented in the first section of this book therefore strongly suggests that patterns of satisfaction with the performance of democracy varies substantially cross-nationally and that in gen-

eral this shows no clear decline over time. One plausible explanation to account for variations between countries, explored in subsequent chapters, is that these evaluations reflect different experiences of governments in transitional, consolidating and established democracies.

## Regime Institutions

Chapters have also compared support for the core institutions of the state, along with attachment to political parties as one of the key linkages between citizens and the state. We can draw a distinction between 'public' institutions, including parliaments, the civil service, the judiciary, the legal system, the armed forces, and the police, and 'private' institutions like trade unions and companies, although the precise boundary varies between different systems (for example, whether the church is established or disestablished, whether companies are nationalized or private). This book focuses on the central institutions of government, with private institutions providing a point of comparison. The institutional focus looks at the formal structures, not the specific incumbents or office-holders. It emphasizes evaluations of the office of the presidency, parliament, and politicians/MPs in general, for example, not the performance of particular leaders or representatives. Studies have commonly confirmed a significant gap between trust in institutions like the US Congress and trust in particular members (Parker and Parker 1993).

The most striking finding to emerge from this comparison, and the most convincing evidence supporting the malaise thesis, is the declining support for public institutions demonstrated in many of the chapters. The *World Values Survey* can be used to compare attitudes towards authority, based on approval or disapproval of the statement *'More respect for authority would be a good thing'.* Comparing the *World Values Survey* in 1981 and 1997, Inglehart found that respect for authority declined in 28 out of the 36 countries for which we have time-series data. He argues that this shift in values is associated with a broader pattern of declining respect for authoritarian and hierarchical institutions. The *World Values Survey* shows that from 1981 to 1997 two-thirds or more of the countries under comparison experienced declining confidence in the armed forces and police, and this fall was especially strong among postmaterialists. The *Latinobarometro* compared public opinion in 17 countries in Latin America and found that in the mid-1990s on average only a fifth of the public expressed *'a lot'* or *'some'* confidence in political parties, and less than a third reported confidence in the national parliament, civil service, government, police or judiciary (Lagos 1997). Among the more affluent OECD countries Ian McAllister (Chapter 9 this volume) also noted a modest decline from 1981 to 1991 in public confidence towards parliament and the civil service. In Chapter 11 of this volume Norris confirmed this pattern based on a combined index of institutional support, including confidence in parliament, the civil service, the police, army, and legal system, using the *World Values Surveys*. Confidence in this combined institutional index declined from 1981 to 1991

across all 17 countries with time-series data, although the fall was sharpest in South Korea, Argentina, and Finland.

Much previous work has compared support for political parties, associated with theories of de-alignment (Dalton et al. 1992; Crewe and Denver 1985; Franklin et al. 1992; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Norris 1997a). There is a long-standing debate about whether trends in partisan identification signify party decline or evolution (Mair 1997). In this book Russell Dalton (Table 3.2) provides the most detailed long-term evidence of the proportion of people with a party identification, especially strong identifiers, across 18 nations. Dalton confirmed declining party attachments across nearly all advanced industrialized societies, although the exact timing and strength of the decline varied between nations.

Finally, in Chapter 2 of this volume Klingemann demonstrates a remarkable degree of cross-national variation in evaluations of the performance of the governmental system, parliament, and confidence in government, with highly negative responses in most countries in Central and Eastern Europe (with particularly critical responses in Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus) as well as in Latin America. The first part of this book indicates that support for pub-lic institutions, notably for parliaments and parties, does seem to have fallen during the 1980s in many, though not all, established democracies. Moreover, levels of support for the institutions of representative democracy seem low in many newer democracies. Although the problem should not be exaggerated, given the limited evidence of time-series trends, if we had to specify the most important concern about support for government, the cross-national evidence points towards this institutional level.

## Political Actors

Lastly studies have focused on support for political actors (or 'authorities'). This is most commonly measured by generalized trust for politicians and pub-lic officials, and by evaluations of the performance of particular presidents, prime ministers, party leaders and representatives monitored in regular opin-ion polls. In Chapter 5 of this volume Dalton compared the evidence for gen-eralized trust in politicians and government, where NES items are replicated in national election studies and similar mass surveys. The standard NES items on trust in politicians provide the longest time-series available but they do not necessarily translate well into other contexts, their meaning is open to differ-ent interpretations, and alternative indicators have been used elsewhere, so the comparative time-series analysis remains limited across countries.

Nevertheless as Dalton shows (Table 3.3), the disenchantment with politi-cians in the United States seems to be reflected in trends in Sweden and Canada, although there is a mixed pattern elsewhere. This pattern was con-firmed by Sören Holmberg (Figure 5.1) who looked in more detail at trends in the smaller welfare-states in Scandinavia and the Netherlands. He found that Sweden is the only country in the comparison which has experienced a steady

long-term decline in trust for politicians similar to that found in the United States: 'Generalized political trust has been plummeting more or less con-stantly for the last thirty years in Sweden' (Holmberg, Chapter 5, this volume). In contrast trust in politicians has actually increased in the Netherlands, and remained stable in Norway and Denmark. This evidence suggests that gener-alized trust in politicians varies substantially across nations, although the comparative evidence remains patchy.

From the available evidence the mapping exercise in the first part of the book suggests the broad picture outlined in Figure 1.2. The general diagnosis from Part I therefore confirms that there has been an erosion of public support for the core institutions of representative government, including parties and parliaments, in recent decades. Yet this is insufficient, by itself, to support the crisis of democracy thesis. The public's evaluations of how regimes function varied substantially between newer and established democracies. Moreover there was little systematic evidence for a long-term crisis in support for demo-cratic principles or for the nation-state. Democratic values now command widespread acceptance as an ideal, but at the same time citizens have often become more critical of the workings of the core institutions of representative democracy.

## Explaining the Dynamics of Political Support

If this represents a broad consensus about the diagnosis of the problem, how do we explain this pattern? Why should confidence in government and demo-cratic institutions vary cross-nationally? The Visions of Governance project developed a series of alternative hypotheses (Nye et al. 1997) which can be tested through cross-national comparisons. Subsequent chapters analyse the most plausible explanations for the decline in institutional support including the impact of social trust, government performance, institutional designs, and shifts in cultural values.

## Declining Social Trust and Civic Engagement?

In recent years there has been increased interest in theories of social capital. The work of Robert Putnam, in particular, has re-emphasized the importance of social trust for civic engagement, in Italy (Putnam 1994) and the United States (Putnam 1995a, 1995b). This theory suggests that in recent decades there have been significant changes in patterns of social interaction in the United States, as face-to-face activities within the local community have been falling. Many activities common in the 1950s have been in steady decline, whether in terms of local political activities (going to PTAs, attending political meetings, helping candidates), working with neighbours on local issues, join-ing social clubs and leisure societies, and even entertaining friends and family

at home. Many factors have contributed towards these developments, including generational shifts and patterns of women's employment. But it is the possible consequences which we will address. These changes in lifestyles, Putnam argues, have led to a steady secular decline in social trust with important consequences for civic engagement and for good government.

To reconsider these issues Kenneth Newton (Chapter 8, this volume) examines the nature of the relationship between social and political trust, and in particular whether theories of social capital help explain declining support for governmental institutions and generalized political trust in established democracies. The chapter discusses the conceptual meaning of social trust and considers the available survey evidence in Europe. Newton concludes that there is not a close or consistent association between social and political trust, nor between social trust and political behaviour, nor between activity in voluntary associations (civic engagement) and political attitudes and behaviour. In short, Newton dashes cold water on social-capital theory and stresses that political trust seems to be more a product of political rather than social factors.

## Political Explanations: The Failure of Government Performance?

As discussed earlier, one of the most common perspectives draws on the 'crisis of government' literature of the 1970s (Crozier et al. 1975) and locates the primary explanation in terms of relative expectations of government compared with its actual performance (Lawrence 1997; Bok 1997). In this view the heart of the problem lies in increasing expectations of government due to the expanded role of the state in the post-war period and new demands by citizens, and the inability of government to meet these expectations given the globalization of the economy, problems of government overload, and hence the 'crisis of the state'. Studies in political economy have argued that regime support is influenced by public evaluations of government performance (Weil 1989; Weatherford 1984, 1987, 1992; Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg 1993; Lockerbie 1993; Anderson 1995; Weisberg 1996). Although there is a growing body of literature, much of this concentrated on the United States, studies often use a limited time-period, and there is no consensus about the most appropriate way to compare government performance on a consistent and meaningful basis.

To explore these issues further, in Chapter 9 of this volume Ian McAllister considers the evidence for performance-based explanations. The study focuses on confidence in political institutions (parliament and the civil service) in advanced industrialized societies, comparing the universe of 24 OECD countries. McAllister first analysed the macro-level impact on institutional confidence of alternative objective indicators of economic and social policy outputs, such as levels of adjusted GDP, life expectancy, education, and unemployment. He then went on to examine the influence of the social and economic factors on institutional confidence at individual-level. McAllister concluded that there was a modest yet consistent relationship between

support for political institutions and subjective economic satisfaction, but institutional support seemed unaffected by objective indicators of economic performance. Overall the impact of the political economy on institutional confidence proved more limited than the influence of deep-rooted cultural values, especially the length of time which a country had been democratic.

For another perspective on this issue Arthur Miller and Ola Listhaug (Chapter 10, this volume) set out to compare the relationship between institutional confidence and the economic performance of governments. The study first examines the direct link between government performance, as measured by objective indicators of inflation, unemployment and government deficits, and institutional confidence in two dozen countries. Miller and Listhaug conclude that institutional confidence is not influenced by either recent levels of inflation and unemployment or recent changes in those conditions. The only measure of economic performance which did seem to be correlated with institutional confidence concerns the size of the government deficit as a percentage of GDP. Miller and Listhaug go on to examine expectations of government and the dynamics of institutional confidence in three countries with suitable time-series data: Norway, Sweden, and the United States. The study concludes that failure of economic performance is one factor which does undermine trust in government although changes in citizen's expectations about government also play a role.

## Institutional Explanations: The Failure of Constitutional Design?

Another body of literature has suggested that we may have been experiencing a growing 'democratic deficit' as significant changes in the political process may have widened the gap between citizens and the state. In particular the linkages between representative elites and public opinion—provided by the intermediary institutions of political parties, interests groups, and parliament—may have weakened over time (Hayward 1995, 1996). Both Holmberg and Dalton stress that the role of parties may be regarded as particularly critical linkage mechanisms, especially in theories of responsible party government. The most plausible explanations here focus on the lack of accountability of political leaders in countries with either predominant one-party governments, or semi-permanent coalitions, or divided governments. Under such systems it is extremely difficult for citizens to use elections as an opportunity to 'kick the rascals out', if dissatisfied with government performance (Powell 1989). Other factors hindering accountability may include the professionalization of legislatures and low levels of incumbency turnover, insulating politicians from electoral defeat (Norris 1997b). The increasing globalization of governance, and the weakening independence of the nation-state, may also reduce the ability of citizens to use party choice in national elections as a mechanism to determine public policy. The lack of minor 'protest parties', especially those on the right, may fail to provide a channel for disaffected voters (Miller and Listhaug 1990). Some, or all, of these factors may have made

governments, and legislators, increasingly unaccountable and unresponsive to public opinion, and therefore may have increased disillusionment with government performance.

In Chapter 11 of this volume Norris examines institutional explanations for system support, in particular whether certain sorts of constitutional arrangements generate stronger levels of institutional confidence. The study compared countries in terms of their political rights and civil liberties, executive–legislative relations, party systems, state structures and electoral systems, and the winners and losers from the system. Since institutions are largely stable phenomenon, the most effective research design to test this thesis requires comparison across a wide range of different types of political systems, rather than a comparison of trends over time. The study found that winners who backed the party in government expressed significantly more institutional confidence than losers. Institutional support also tended to be higher in states characterized by a wide range of political rights and civil liberties, as well as 'Westminster' rather than consociational democracies. The chapter concludes by considering the implications for issues of constitutional design in newer democracies.

## Cultural Explanations: Modernization and Changing Values?

Lastly cultural explanations, notably Inglehart's theory of post-materialism (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997a), suggest that value change in post-industrial societies has encouraged the development of more critical citizens who question traditional sources of authority, including government. During the post-war decades, Inglehart argues, post-industrial societies have gradually experienced a major shift in their basic values. The growth of post-materialist values among the younger generation has been marked by a gradual decline in support for traditional sources of political authority, including representative government, and established, hierarchical institutions such as the army, police, and church (Inglehart 1997a). Moreover, Inglehart suggests, modern societies have seen a slump in conventional forms of political participation, such as membership in political parties and voting turnout. Older forms of representative democracy have declined but at the same time Inglehart finds an increase in new forms of self-expression and political participation, such as activism in social movements. If so, trends in confidence in government should be closely related to the process of modernization.

Post-materialist theory emphasizes that the modernization process has undermined support for traditional, hierarchical institutions and authoritarian values, producing a crisis of confidence in government, but this should not be understood as a crisis of confidence in democracy per se. Rather, Inglehart argues that this signifies the growth of post-material values among the younger generation, with increased demands for new forms of political engagement via new social movements and direct action, to replace the older channels of participation via parties and interest groups. The implications of

generational value change is that, if correct, the erosion of faith in government is a process which is difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. There may be certain fluctuations due to 'period effects', for example blips upwards or downwards following eras of economic boom or bust, but the general trend should be a slow but steady secular erosion of faith, in government as in God.

## Interpreting the Consequences

While we have established a broad consensus about trends in system support, and some clarification of the major explanations, there is little agreement about their consequences. As Easton pointed out (1965) the implications of any erosion of support may vary depending upon the level. As discussed in the conclusion, support for specific political leaders, for elected representatives in parliaments, for particular parties and for governments in office, can be expected to ebb and flow as part of the normal process of democratic politics. At regular intervals, so long as representatives and parties in office are not insulated from defeat, dissatisfied citizens can use elections as the safety-valve in the system to 'throw the rascals out'. Anger or disaffection with government may spur civic engagement as much as disengagement. Of course elections may fail to function as an effective safety-valve under certain conditions: in party systems with predominant parties in government for decades such as (until recently) the position of the Japanese LDP or Italian Christian Democrats; where there are semi-permanent coalition partners in government, such as in Switzerland; or where incumbent representatives are insulated from high turnover, as in the US Congress (Powell 1989). In these systems, without an outlet, public disaffection may strengthen and accumulate.

More significant systemic effects can be expected if there is growing disillusionment with the performance of the major civic institutions in representative government, including parliaments, the legal system, parties and the civil service. Citizens may become disaffected with the political system if they feel that the courts are untrustworthy, elected representatives pay them no heed, and the administrative process is rife with corruption and clientalism (Gamson 1968; Miller and Borrelli 1991). A steady drumbeat of criticism, such as an onslaught of Congress-bashing or a presidential media feeding frenzy due to accusations of sexual or financial ethical violations, may drain the 'reservoir of public good will' over the long haul. If enough popular disaffection accumulates this may help to generate major constitutional changes, particularly if public opinion can be expressed through channels like referendums, as with the electoral reforms introduced in the recent years in New Zealand and Italy (Norris 1995), or the term limits movement in the US (Craig 1993). There may be more systemic effects on the regime: Harmel and Robertson found a significant association between levels of satisfaction with

democratic processes and cabinet stability in Western Europe (1986). If popular pressures lead to institutional reforms this can be understood as a demand-side process which helps resolve tensions between democratic ideals and reality (see Chapter 7, this volume).

The consequences for the political system may be even more serious if citizens do not adhere to the basic principles and values of the regime, like tolerance of minorities, since then there is no consensus about the rules of the game. Nevertheless as Rose argues (1997) because democracy is a symbol, approval of democracy as 'the best form of government' in the abstract may tell us little unless we probe further to understand what people understand by this statement (Simon 1996; Thomassen 1995).

Lastly, if there are deep divisions about the national identity of the political community—if there is no agreement about the boundaries of the state and deep ethnic, religious, or regional/linguistic conflict—then ultimately this can have serious consequences (Taras and Ganguly 1998). This can result in a renegotiation of the constitutional settlement such as in the UK and Canada, incidents of violent terrorism by breakaway groups like the Basque separatists, persistent and bloody civil wars such as those in Northern Ireland, Somalia, and Bosnia, or even in the breakdown of the nation-state and regional succession such as the velvet revolution experienced by the former Czechoslovakia.

## Conclusions

Close reading of the available evidence in many countries around the world provides convincing evidence for certain core contentions. These assertions are sketched in bare-boned fashion here and the supporting evidence will be argued, developed, and qualified throughout this book.

The first is that political support is not all of one piece and to make progress we need to disentangle its different components and objects. The argument in this book is that we need to distinguish between support for the community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions, and political actors. We have considerably more evidence about some levels than others but the evidence in this book strongly suggests that the public makes clear distinctions between these objects, and so should we.

The second claim flows from the first, namely that in established democracies, during the last decades of the twentieth century, growing numbers of citizens have become increasingly critical of the major institutions of representative government. The evidence presented by different contributors to this volume suggests that in most countries support for the community and for democratic principles remains overwhelming. Evaluations of regime performance, and trust in politicians, varies substantially from one country to another. But public support for the core institutions of representative government—including parties, parliaments, and governments—has fallen in many,

but not all, established and newer democracies. Moreover, in newer democracies support for the current regime and for representative institutions often remains remarkably shallow, which may create serious problems for the stability of these systems during the consolidation process.

Lastly, while there is broad agreement among the book's contributors about these patterns, and some common ground concerning their explanation, nevertheless as we shall see considerable controversy remains concerning the interpretation of their consequences. In many countries during recent years political support has eroded most sharply and consistently for government institutions, but not for democratic values and principles. Moreover, in many emerging and transitional democracies, as well as in some established democracies, citizens are highly critical in their evaluations of how well regimes work. There is growing tension between ideals and reality. This may have produced the emergence of more 'critical citizens' or perhaps 'disenchanted democrats'.

As discussed further in the conclusion these results are open to at least two alternative interpretations. If 'the fish rots from the head' then the erosion of support for the core institutions of representative government may be seen as a worrying development which may gradually undermine faith in democratic values. If people cannot trust parliaments, public officials, parties or the police, and the regime performs poorly, then they may come in time to be disillusioned with democracy as an ideal. This may have serious consequences since public adherence to democratic values is usually regarded as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the long-term stability of democracies, to tide regimes over bad times.

Alternatively these trends may prove a more positive development which will ultimately strengthen democratic government if this signifies the growth of more critical citizens who are dissatisfied with established authorities and traditional hierarchical institutions, who feel that existing channels for participation fall short of democratic ideals, and who want to improve and reform the institutional mechanisms of representative democracy. Criticism does not necessarily imply disengagement. It can mean the reverse. We need to explore further the consequences of this development. It is too easy to link trends like the decline of trust in America with the fall in turnout, without seeing whether these phenomena are actually causally connected. Established democratic regimes, and core institutions like parties and parliaments, may be adopting and evolving to meet new challenges, not declining. In newer democracies dissatisfaction with the performance of regimes characterized by widespread corruption, abuse of power and intolerance of dissent, can be regarded as a healthy reaction. Too much blind trust by citizens and misplaced confidence in leaders, for good or ill, can be as problematic for democracy as too little. The consequences of declining support for government institutions therefore remains open to debate. The conclusion considers the implications of this analysis for public policy reforms, for strengthening transitional and consolidating democracies, and for new channels of public participation in governance.