



Diagnosing the health of democratic governance: Canada and the United States in comparative perspective

Pippa Norris

McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Pippa_Norris@Harvard.edu
www.pippanorris.com

Synopsis: Many important questions are raised by the growth in the range and scope of the indicators and approaches available to diagnose the health of democratic governance. To consider some of these issues, four measures of democracy are compared here, each with a different focus and methodology: Freedom House's index of liberal democracy, the Polity IV project's assessment of constitutional democracy, Vanhanen's indicator of participatory democracy, and Przeworski et al's classification based on the notion of contested democracy. The Kaufmann/WBI measures of good governance are also considered. These represent the most widely-cited standard indicators commonly used by scholars and policy analysts in comparative research. They each have broad cross-national scope and a lengthy time-series, with data based on annual observations classifying regimes worldwide. After reviewing their pros and cons, the paper concludes, agnostically, that no single best measure of democracy exists for all purposes; instead, as Collier and Adcock suggest, specific choices are best justified pragmatically by the theoretical framework and analytical goals used in any study. The most prudent strategy is to compare the results of analytical models using alternative indicators, to see if the findings remain robust and consistent irrespective of the specific measures of democracy employed for analysis. Moreover, the available global indicators are relatively blunt instruments for assessing the health of democracy in any particular nation-state. The use of public opinion surveys, combined with a more in-depth audit, is likely to prove a more politically relevant and practically useful diagnostic tool to compare and monitor in the quality of democratic governance in Canada and the United States.

Paper for the Canada Program/Weatherhead Center "Comparing the democratic deficit in Canada and the US." May 8-10 2008.

This conference focuses upon assessing the quality of contemporary democracy in Canada and the United States. The list of symptoms highlighted by the Canadian Democratic Audit raised issues which are familiar in many other advanced industrialized societies, such as patterns of low and eroding voter turnout, widespread disaffection with political parties, and the weakening linkages between citizens and the state.¹ As William Cross summarized the initial motivation to establish the Audit: *“Much was written in the 1990s and early years of the 21st century concerning a ‘democratic deficit’ and ‘democratic malaise’ in Canada. There was substantial evidence that many Canadians were dissatisfied with the state of their democratic practices and institutions. The Canadian party system was in the midst of significant upheaval, voter turnout rates had reached record low and public confidence in democratic institutions was in significant decline. At the same time, new phenomena such as increased pressures of globalization and changing communications technologies were posing new challenges to Canadian democracy.”*² Observers of Western European and Anglo-American states commonly emphasize similar concerns.³ Before looking in detail at the available empirical evidence in both countries under review, however, it may be useful to reflect more generally upon the broader questions raised by this endeavor, not least what concepts and benchmarks underlie any attempt at evaluating the quality of democratic governance. A global perspective suggests that many of the concerns about Canadian democracy articulated by the Audit may be exaggerated in comparison with the major challenges facing many countries worldwide which are currently struggling to establish human rights under autocratic regimes, to build a stable peace-process and strengthen the capacity of the state to deliver basic services, and to consolidate inclusive representation and representative institutions.

The third wave of democracy has been remarkable not simply for the spread of fundamental freedoms and human rights in many societies around the globe, but also because this process has encouraged a burgeoning array of approaches and indicators designed to help evaluate the quality of democratic governance. The era since the early-1970s has seen important gains in the level of conceptual sophistication, replicability, methodological transparency, thematic scope, and geographic coverage of these measures. Some of the earliest standard indicators, which became widely adopted in the academic and policy research communities, were those developed to gauge the state of civil liberties and political rights by Freedom House in 1972 and the Polity I data collection focusing upon patterns of democratic and autocratic regime change, in work by Ted Robert Gurr and Harry Eckstein (1975). Since then, literally hundreds of indicators have become widely available in this sub-field, of varying quality and coverage.⁴

The diagnostic tools which are currently available to assess the quality of democratic governance in any country can be arrayed as an analytical typology, illustrated in Figure 1. The Democratic Audit represents the most in-depth qualitative approach, where multiple stake-holders within each country deliberate about the state of the state, as exemplified by the Canadian, British, Swedish and Australian versions.⁵ This approach has generated important debates in these countries and contributed towards major political and constitutional reforms. Audits have been used in more than eighteen states worldwide, including newer democracies exemplified by Mongolia, in 2003 when hosting the 5th conference of the ICNRD.⁶ The approach is not appropriate for every context, however, as it requires certain conditions for deliberation to operate, including freedom of expression and tolerance of dissent, a rich civil society with inclusive voices from multiple stakeholders, and the necessary resources to engage in this process. Another approach comes from the array of national and cross-national public opinion surveys which have been burgeoning in many societies, discussed fully elsewhere.⁷ Cross-national surveys include the Euro-barometer and related EU surveys (which started in 1970), the European Election Study (1979), the European Values Survey and the World Values Survey (1981), the International Social Survey Programme (1985), the Global Barometers (1990 and various), the Comparative National Elections Project (1990), the European Voter and the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (1995), the European Social Survey (2002), the Transatlantic Trends survey (2002), the Pew Global Attitudes project (2002), and the Gallup World Poll (2005). These allow a representative sample of the general public to express their views about the quality of democracy in their own country, as well as to assess the performance of their government leaders, institutions, and policies. The results also facilitate cross-national and time-series analysis of the perceived quality of democratic governance, and the attitudes and values under-pinning processes of cultural change.

In many countries, however, representative public opinion polls on these topics are not available, or certain sensitive issues cannot be asked under restrictive regimes. In this context, surveys of national and international 'experts' have become more widely used, exemplified by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, as well as various assessments of political risk. Composite measures which have drawn heavily upon such resources include the World Bank Institute's indicators of good governance, as discussed later, developed by Daniel Kaufmann and colleagues. Lastly a growing range of political indices have employed aggregate national data, often derived from official national statistics, exemplified by the Inter-Parliamentary union's statistics on the proportion of women in national parliaments, International IDEA's dataset on voter turnout worldwide since 1945, or various human rights indices monitoring ratification and implementation of major international conventions and

treaties.⁸ Where reliable statistics are collected and standardized, these indices facilitate global comparisons to analyze comprehensive comparisons across states and over time

[Figure 1 about here]

The growth of all these developments, which have transformed the sub-field, raise many important questions. In particular, what philosophical concepts of ‘democratic governance’ underline alternative empirical indicators? What is the relationship between notions of democracy and of ‘good governance’, a concept which has become increasingly common in the developmental literature.⁹ Is it best to adopt a minimalist approach towards measurement by selecting a few key indicators? Or is it preferable to provide a more comprehensive set of benchmarks, exemplified by the qualitative audit approach pioneered by David Beetham in conjunction with international IDEA?¹⁰ When operationalizing the concept of democracy, should indicators be continuous, implying subtle gradations in levels of democratization? Or should they be categorical, suggesting that regimes cross a specific threshold, such as holding a competitive multiparty election, after which they can then be considered democratic? Should the evidence rest on observable regularities from ‘objective’ data, exemplified by official levels of voter turnout, the frequency of national elections, or the number of political parties contesting legislative seats? Or should such benchmarks be supplemented by subjective evaluations, exemplified by public opinion surveys asking a representative sample of the population to rate the quality of governance or the state of democracy, or by the expert judgments used by Freedom House to evaluate conditions of political rights and civil liberties in each country? What are the major sources of random and nonrandom measurement error arising from these decisions that could potentially bias estimates of effects and generate misleading comparisons? What are the problems of missing data limiting these measures and how does this restrict the country coverage and comparative framework? Are composite indicators preferable, exemplified by the World Bank Institute measures of good governance, developed by Daniel Kaufmann and his colleagues? Or are more parsimonious and narrowly-focused indicators preferable, by providing greater conceptual precision and less noisy measurement? And which of these approaches is most valuable for the policy community, by providing performance indicators and practical targets which can be useful for policy diagnosis and implementation?

To consider some of these issues, four measures of democracy are compared here, each with a different focus: Freedom House’s index of liberal democracy, the Polity IV project’s assessment of constitutional democracy, Vanhanen’s indicator of participatory democracy, and Przeworski et al’s classification based on the notion of contested democracy. These represent the most widely-cited standard indicators commonly used by scholars and policy analysts in comparative research. They each

have broad cross-national scope and a lengthy time-series, with data based on annual observations classifying regimes worldwide.¹¹ After reviewing their pros and cons, the paper concludes, agnostically, that no single best measure of democracy exists for all purposes; instead, as Collier and Adcock suggest, specific choices are best justified pragmatically by the theoretical framework and analytical goals used in any study¹². The most prudent strategy is to compare the results of analytical models using alternative indicators, to see if the findings remain robust and consistent irrespective of the specific measures of democracy employed for analysis. If so, then this generates greater confidence in the reliability of the results since the main generalizations hold irrespective of the particular measures which are used. If not, then we need to consider how far any differences in the results can be attributed to the underlying concepts which differ among these measures. In particular, the available global indicators are relatively blunt instruments for assessing the quality of democracy and diagnosing specific problems of concern within any particular state, especially long-established democracies such as Canada and Sweden which usually score relatively well on the standard indicators by Freedom House and Polity IV, although less positively on certain specific indicators, such as those comparing the representation of women in elected office or patterns of electoral turnout and participation. Indicators provide a standardized reading, similar to a physician's initial check-up of the temperature or blood pressure for diagnosing the underlying health of a patient. Standard indicators are a useful first step for the diagnosis of democratic health and they help to analyze the average performance of certain policy reforms and programs. But unfortunately they suffer from a large margin of error and they are not sufficiently nuanced and precise to provide rich insights into underlying problems *within* each country, still less to provide reliable guidance to what prescription treatment will work with any degree of certainty when choosing the potential range of reforms in any particular case. Global benchmarks are valuable but the use of public opinion surveys and the more in-depth democratic audit approach are both likely to prove more politically relevant and practically useful to diagnose, monitor, and strengthen the quality of democratic governance in Canada and the United States.

Measuring democratic governance

Two criteria - validity and reliability - are particularly important for evaluating the construction of any empirical indicators in the social sciences.¹³ *Valid* empirical measures accurately reflect the analytical concepts to which they relate. The study of the origin and stability of democratic regimes requires attention to normative concepts in democratic theory, as well as to the construction of appropriate operational empirical indicators. Invalid measures miss the mark by producing unconvincing

inferences, for example if the operational indicators fail to capture important aspects of the underlying concept. *Reliable* empirical measures prove consistent across time and place, using data sources which can be easily replicated to allow scholars to build a cumulative body of research. Scientific research makes its procedures public and transparent, including the steps involved in selecting cases, gathering data and performing analysis. For Karl Popper, the classic hall-mark of the scientific inquiry is the process which subjects bold conjectures to rigorous testing, allowing strong claims to be refuted, if not supported by the evidence¹⁴. While repeated confirmations cannot prove inductive probabilities, attempts to refute findings can advance the body of scientific knowledge. Scientific progress arises from successive attempts to prove ourselves wrong. This process requires reliable empirical measures which are easily open to replication in cumulative studies conducted by the scientific community.

[Table 1 about here]

Multiple approaches to measuring democracy exist in the literature and these broadly divide into either minimalist or maximalist conceptualizations, each with certain strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, it can be argued that trade-offs often exist, with minimalist approaches usually strongest in terms of their reliability, while maximalist indicators commonly prove more satisfactory in terms of their measurement validity. Much debate in the literature therefore revolves around which criteria should be regarded as more important, with theorists employing econometric models often preferring the elegance and parsimony of replication, while more policy-oriented and qualitative approaches usually give greater priority to comprehensive if less easily replicated measures.

Minimalist measures of democracy focus attention upon just one or two key benchmarks, notably by concentrating on the rules governing party competition for government office. Reflecting Schumpeterian conceptions, where democracy is seen to exist in the competitive struggle for the people's vote, this type of regime is commonly defined procedurally as a political system where two or more parties or candidates contest executive office through popular elections¹⁵. The advantage of minimalist definitions, proponents argue, is that this process helps to develop clear and unambiguous empirical indicators, precise operational definitions, and reliable and consistent classification procedures. This facilitates scientific replication, to test whether key findings reported by one study hold true in other contexts, leading towards well-founded general theories in the social sciences. Minimalist approaches emphasize that coding decisions need to be transparent, leaving little room for the subjective judgments of individual researchers or the personal evaluations of independent observers

and national experts. By focusing upon a narrow range of benchmarks, this approach reduces the risks of including theoretically irrelevant attributes and redundant elements into composite measures.

The advantages of reducing the potential errors which arise from inconsistency and misclassification of cases are thought to outweigh the potential limitations of minimalist definitions. The most commonly-acknowledged danger is leaving out certain important dimensions of the concept of liberal democracy which are included in more comprehensive measures. For example, minimalist definitions may not attempt to measure the quality of democratic performance, such as how far states achieve inclusive representation, accountable leaders, freedom of expression, and equality of participation, on the grounds that these factors are difficult or even impossible to gauge systematically with any degree of reliability and consistency. Yet stripping the concept of democracy down to its bare essentials may thereby neglect certain vital aspects; for example, Cheibub and Gandhi, focus on electoral competition for executive office, but thereby leave out any consideration of mass participation as a central characteristic of democratic regimes.¹⁶ Marshall and Jagers acknowledge the importance of civil liberties for all citizens in their conception of democracies, and the rule of law, systems of checks and balances, and freedom of the press, but in practice Polity IV never attempts to code data on any of these aspects.¹⁷ The primary danger of minimalist procedural approaches is that certain critical aspects of democracy may thereby be excluded from consideration. In particular, many countries have multiparty competition for the executive and legislature, with processes of election contested by more than one party or candidate which observers report are conducted under conditions which are reasonably free and fair. Nevertheless the quality of democracy in these states often varies greatly in many other important regards, such as in the treatment of dissident minorities and opposition reform movements, restrictions on basic human rights, respect for the rule of law and judicial independence, or in the accountability of the executive to the legislature.

These problems are particularly dangerous in categorizing regimes such as Togo, Belarus, Egypt, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, or Zimbabwe which use multiparty competitive elections for the legislative and executive office as a façade to legitimate autocratic regimes. This important type of regime which is neither fully autocratic nor fully democratic exists in an ambiguous grey zone which has been conceptualized by different authors alternatively as either 'electoral autocracies' (Diamond), 'illiberal democracies' (Fareed) or 'competitive authoritarian regimes' (Levitsky).¹⁸ Other common terms include 'hybrid' regimes, 'competitive authoritarianism', 'transitional democracies' (implicitly assuming that these regimes will eventually adopt broader institutional and political reforms in a progressive trend) or

else as 'semi-free' states (Freedom House). Unfortunately the expansion in alternative typologies has added confusion rather than clarity.¹⁹ Electoral autocracies are characterized by some of the formal trappings of liberal democracy, but where genuinely free and fair multiparty competition, human rights, and civil liberties are restricted in practice by the ruling elites. Traditional autocracies usually maintain their grip on power through different means, such as one-party states (Cuba, North Korea), military dictators (Burma, Thailand), or traditional monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Qatar). By contrast, electoral autocracies bow to pressures to hold elections but use more subtle and complex techniques to stifle dissent and deter opposition. Common techniques which limit genuine electoral competition, often reported by observer missions, include coercion, intimidation, and fraud in the attempt to ensure electoral victory, major restrictions on access to the ballot for opposition parties and legal or physical threats used against challengers, the widespread use of intimidation, coercion, or bribery of voters by security forces at the polling station, and by strong pro-government bias and limits on independent journalism in campaign coverage in the media airwaves.²⁰ The number of these regimes has expanded in recent years, where elections have been adopted due to international or domestic pressures but where this has not been accompanied by any subsequent effective change in autocratic rule. If a single criterion is adopted as a benchmark to classify regimes by minimalist definitions, then the danger is that regimes in the grey zone can be easily misclassified. This is most common where holding the first multiparty competitive elections in post-conflict peace-settlements is widely regarded by journalists, popular commentators and the international community as indicative that a regime is transitioning to becoming more stable and on the road to becoming democratic, irrespective of subsequent developments and ineffective institutional checks and balances on elite power.

By contrast, maximalist or 'thicker' approaches to defining and measuring liberal democracy as a regime type have been strongly influenced by Robert Dahl's body of work published in *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (1953), in *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956), and in *Polyarchy* (1971).²¹ Dahl argued that liberal democracies are characterized by two main attributes – contestation and participation. In practice, Dahl suggested that democratic regimes or 'polyarchies' can be identified by the presence of certain key political institutions: 1) elected officials; 2) free and fair elections; 3) inclusive suffrage; 4) the right to run for office; 5) freedom of expression; 6) alternative information; and 7) associational autonomy²². Polyarchies use competitive multiparty elections to fill offices for the national legislature and the chief executive. Contests in this type of regime are free and fair, with an inclusive suffrage allowing widespread voting participation among all citizens, and citizens have the unrestricted right to compete for elected offices. For electoral competition to be meaningful,

polyarchies allow freedom of expression, the availability of alternative sources of information (freedom of the media), and associational autonomy (freedom to organize parties, interest groups and social movements).

Dahl's approach attracted widespread acclaim but empirical indicators which attempting to measure polyarchy have employed alternative indicators of participation and contestation, and not all studies have treated both components with equal weight. For example, Freedom House's approach to regime classification monitors, among other indicators, self-determination for ethnic minorities, freedom of religious expression, academic freedom, freedom of assembly and association, equal opportunities and gender equality, and rights to private property²³. Polity IV's measure of democracy emphasizes the existence of constraints on the powers of the executive, the openness of executive recruitment, and the regulation of participation²⁴. By contrast, Hadenius's specification focuses upon freedom of organization and freedom from coercion²⁵. Foweraker and Krznaric go even further in seeking to integrate 21 measures of liberal democratic performance, although for a smaller range of forty nation-states due to constraints in data availability.²⁶ What these 'thicker' conceptualizations of liberal democracy share is the attempt to develop comprehensive scales which facilitate fine-grained distinctions across diverse regimes and subtle gradations of states classified by levels of democratization. For example, levels of democracy can be gauged by monitoring equal opportunities for political participation, the channels of expression available through a free press, freedom of organization and assembly for opposition movements, a universal franchise for all adult citizens, as well the institutions of the rule of law and an independent judiciary, a functioning and effective bureaucracy, and the protection of civil liberties. The aim is to include all the relevant aspects of contestation and participation.

Therefore tensions exist in the literature. Minimalist approaches emphasize the values of reliability and consistency, but at the expense of potentially omitting vital components of democratic regimes and thus misclassifying types of regimes. Maximalist approaches prioritize using richer and more comprehensive multiple indicators, but with the danger of relying upon softer data and less rigorous categories. Both these approaches are common in the research where there have been multiple attempts to measure democracy, indeed a recent review noted almost four-dozen separate indicators of democratic performance, differing in their geographic and temporal scope.²⁷ Many of these, however, are restricted in the number of states they cover, the frequency of the measures, or the years to which they apply. Time-series which end prior to the early-1990s cannot fully capture the

dynamics of the third wave democracies in Central Europe, nor more recent developments occurring elsewhere. We can also set aside for our purposes those datasets which only concern advanced industrialized societies, indicators applying to particular regions such as Latin America, those which arbitrarily exclude smaller states falling below a certain population minimum (thereby skewing the results with a systematic bias), or measures where data limitations exclude important periods or many nation states (including autocratic states) worldwide. Publicly-available indicators which are widely used in the comparative literature are also those which reflect the prevailing consensus among researchers, excluding more idiosyncratic approaches. Using these criteria reduces the longer list to four measures, each reflecting differing conceptions of the essential features of democracy. Table 2.1 summarizes the key dimensions of each. Let us consider the construction and meaning of each of the main indicators that are selected for detailed comparison – by Freedom House, Polity IV, Vanhanen, and Przeworski et al - to consider the strengths and limitations of each.

(i) Freedom House: Liberal Democracy

One of the best known measures of liberal democracy, and one of the most widely used in the comparative literature, is the Gastil index of civil liberties and political rights produced annually by Freedom House. The measure has been widely employed by practitioners, for example its results are incorporated into the benchmark data employed by the US Millennium Challenge Account to assess the quality of governance and award aid in poorer societies. It has also been employed by many comparative scholars, such as in recent publications by Diamond, Barro, and Inglehart and Welzel²⁸. Freedom House, an independent think tank based in the United States, first began to assess political trends in the 1950s with the results published as the Balance Sheet of Freedom. In 1972, Freedom House launched a new, more comprehensive annual study called *Freedom in the World*. Raymond Gastil developed the survey's methodology, which assigned ratings of their political rights and civil liberties for each independent nation state (as well as for dependent territories) and then categorized them as Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. The survey continued to be produced by Gastil until 1989, when a larger team of in-house survey analysts was established. Subsequent editions of the survey have followed essentially the same format although more details have recently been released about the coding framework used for each assessment.

The index monitors the existence of political rights in terms of electoral processes, political pluralism, and the functioning of government. Civil liberties are defined by the existence of freedom of speech and association, rule of law, and personal rights. The research team draws upon multiple sources

of information to develop their classifications based on a checklist of questions, including ten separate items monitoring the existence of political rights and fifteen on civil liberties. These items assess the presence of institutional checks and balances constraining the executive through the existence of a representative and inclusive legislature, an independent judiciary implementing the rule of law, and the existence of political rights and civil liberties, including to reasonable self-determination and participation by minorities, and the presence of free and fair election laws.²⁹ Each item is allocated a score from 0 to 4 and each is given equal weight when aggregated. The raw scores for each country are then converted into a seven-point scale of political rights and a seven-point scale for civil liberties, and in turn these are collapsed to categorize each regime worldwide as either 'free', 'partly free', or 'not free'. As a result of this process, Freedom House estimate that out of 193 nation states, roughly two thirds or 123 (64%) could be classified as electoral democracies in 2007 (defined as 'free' or 'partly free').³⁰ This represents a remarkable advance during the third wave but nevertheless they estimate that the balance of regime types has largely stabilized during the last decade, for example Freedom House reported that in 1995 there were 117 electoral democracies around the globe (around 61%).

The emphasis of this measure on a wide range of civil liberties, rights, and freedoms means that this most closely reflects notions of liberal democracy. The index has the advantage of providing comprehensive coverage of nation-states and independent territories worldwide, as well as establishing a long time-series of observations conducted annually since 1972. The measure is also comprehensive in its conceptualization and it is particularly appropriate for those seeking an indicator of liberal democracy.

Despite these virtues, the index has been subject to considerable criticism on a number of methodological grounds.³¹ The procedures used by the team of researchers employed by Freedom House lack transparency, so that scholars cannot double-check the reliability and consistency of the coding decisions, nor can the results be replicated. The questions used for constructing the index often involve two or three separate items within each sub-category, allowing ambiguous measurement and aggregation across these items. The process of compositing the separate items is not subject to systematic factor analysis, so it remains unclear whether the items do indeed cluster together into consistent scales of political rights and civil liberties. The multiple dimensions included in the index provide a broad-ranging attempt to monitor human rights, for example concerning owning property, freedom of religious expression, choice of marriage partners, and the absence of economic exploitation. These are all widely regarded as important dimensions of human rights, with intrinsic value, but it is not

clear that these are necessarily essential components or valid measures of democracy per se. The concepts of freedom and democracy are not equivalent. It remains an empirical question whether democratic regimes promote these sorts of values, for example, whether they are associated with free market capitalist economies or whether some prefer protectionist economic policies and a greater role for the government in economic planning and the welfare state³². If the separate scores for the individual components of the Gastil index were publicly released, then researchers could construct narrower measures reflecting their chosen specification of democracy, but unfortunately only composite scores are available. Moreover since the index contains such a broad range of indicators, this also makes it less valuable as an analytical tool useful for policymakers; for example, if it is established that the Freedom House measure of democracy is consistently linked to the protection of human rights, economic growth, peace, or the provision of more generous welfare services, it remains unclear what particular aspect of the index is driving this relationship³³. The construction of the measure therefore suffers from certain problems of conflation and redundancy, and although it is widely used, it essentially reflects liberal notions of democracy, and other approaches emphasize alternative concepts.

(ii) Polity IV: Constitutional Democracy

Another approach commonly used in the comparative and international relations literature is the classification of constitutional democracy provided by the Polity project³⁴. This project was initiated by Ted Robert Gurr in the 1970s and it has evolved over the past three decades. The latest version, Polity IV, provides annual time series data in country-year format covering 161 countries from 1800 to 1999³⁵. Coders working on the Polity IV project classify democracy and autocracy in each nation-year as a composite score of different characteristics relating to authority structures. Democracy is conceived of conceptually as reflecting three essential elements: the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express preferences about alternative policies and leaders; the existence of institutionalized constraints on the power of the executive; and the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens (although not actually measured). The classification emphasizes the existence or absence of institutional features of the nation state. For example, competitive executive recruitment is measured by leadership selection through popular elections contested by two or more parties or candidates. The openness of recruitment for the chief executive is measured by the opportunity for all citizens to have the opportunity to attain the position through a regularized process, excluding hereditary succession, forceful seizure of power, or military coups. By contrast, autocracies are seen as regimes which restrict or suppress competitive political participation, in which the chief executive is chosen from within the

political elite, and, once in office, leaders face few institutional constraints on their power. The dataset constructs a ten-point democracy scale by coding the competitiveness of political participation (1-3), the competitiveness of executive recruitment (1-2), the openness of executive recruitment (1), and the constraints on the chief executive (1-4). Autocracy is measured by negative versions of the same indices. The two scales are combined into a single democracy-autocracy score varying from -10 to +10. Polity has also been used to monitor and identify processes of major regime change and democratic transitions, classified as a positive change in the democracy-autocracy score of more than 3 points.

The Polity IV scores have the virtue of providing an exceptionally long series of observations stretching over two centuries, as well as covering most nation-states worldwide. The provision of separate indices for each of the main dimensions allows scholars to disaggregate the components. The emphasis on constitutional rules restricting the executive may be particularly valuable for distinguishing the initial downfall of autocratic regimes and the transition to multiparty elections. Unfortunately the democracy-autocracy score also suffers from certain important limitations. Polity IV emphasizes the existence of constraints upon the chief executive as a central part of their measure. As Munck and Verkulian point out, however, there is a world of difference between those restrictions on the executive which arise from democratic checks and balances, such as the power of the elected legislature or an independent judiciary, and those which arise from other actors, such as the power of the military or economic elites³⁶. Although more information is now released in the user's codebook, the processes which the Polity team uses to classify regimes continue to lack a degree of transparency and therefore replicability by independent scholars. Moreover although acknowledging the importance of civil liberties as part of their overall conceptualization of democracy, Polity IV does not actually attempt to code or measure this dimension. The Polity IV index was originally conceived by Gurr for very different purposes, to monitor notions of political stability and regime change, and the growing use of this measure to assess constitutional forms of democracy represents a newer development.

(iii) Vanhanen: Participatory Democracy

A more minimalist approach is exemplified by Tatu Vanhanen who developed a scaled measure of democracy in each country according to two criteria: the degree of *electoral competition* (measured by the share of the vote won by the largest party in the national legislature), and also the degree of *electoral participation* (the proportion of the total population who voted in national legislative elections), which he combines to yield an index of democratization³⁷. Both these indicators use measures which are straightforward to calculate and the empirical data can be compiled from various

publicly available sources. These criteria reflect both of Dahl's key dimensions of polyarchy, namely contestation and participation. In a series of publications, Vanhanen develops this scale to classify levels of democracy in 187 nation-states worldwide on an annual basis from 1810 to 2000. The author argues that the level of electoral turnout in each country, gauged by the total valid votes cast in an election as a proportion of the Voting-Age Population (Vote/VAP), is usually regarded as an important indicator of democratic health, hence the widespread popular concern about any indication of falling electoral participation. Moreover the measure of VOTE/VAP also provides an indirect indicator of the extent of universal adult suffrage, highlighting states where major sectors of the adult population are denied the franchise on the basis of citizenship requirements, literacy qualifications, social class, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, mental capacity, imprisonment, or other related characteristics which disqualify residents from voting rights³⁸.

It is true that the universal suffrage is an important component of democracy and a major part of the historical fight for equal rights. Official data on voter turnout is easily available from standard reference sources, for example from International IDEA, hence this provides a reliable empirical indicator.³⁹ Nevertheless the question is whether this measure is a valid indicator of democracy, and there are several reasons to doubt this. If isolated from other conditions which are important for meaningful and fair electoral contests, by itself the comparison of voting turnout statistics may prove a highly misleading measure of democratization. In plebiscitary elections held to legitimize authoritarian rule, even in one-party states, voters may be successfully mobilized through intimidation and manipulation by government forces, rigged voting, ballot stuffing, and vote buying, pressures on opposition politicians, and state control of the media. In such cases, turnout may be far higher than in elections held under free and fair conditions, for example, voter turnout in national elections was usually greater in the one-party Soviet Union than in countries such as the United States, India, and Switzerland. International IDEA's worldwide comparison of countries ranked by levels of turnout (measured by the average ratio of votes cast to registered voters in national elections to the lower house held from 1945-2001), ranks Singapore 2nd and Uzbekistan 3rd (both with 93.5% turnout). This suggests that levels of voter turnout are meaningless by themselves as indicators of democracy unless the prior conditions of multiparty competition and civil liberties are specified, requiring other indicators. Moreover turnout is produced by multiple factors which are only loosely related to democracy per se; for example, if we just compare postindustrial nation states, it would seem odd to argue that high turnout generated by the strict use of compulsory voting laws meant that Australia (with an average Vote/VAP since 1945 of 84.2%) should be regarded as automatically more democratic than the UK

(73.8%), or, for the same reasons, that Italy (92%) should be seen as more democratic than France (67.3%). Indeed certain aspects of democratization are inversely related to patterns of turnout, such as holding more frequent elections and broadening the voting franchise to younger age groups, which both expand opportunities and yet also usually dampen levels of participation⁴⁰.

Party contestation has been operationalized in the literature in different ways. In countries holding multiparty national legislative elections, Vanhanen assesses competition by the share of the votes won by the largest party, arguing that if the combined share of the vote for all the other smaller parties is very low (for example, less than 30%), then the dominance of the largest party is so overpowering that it is doubtful whether such a country could be regarded as a democracy⁴¹. This measure is based on objective data which is transparent and easily replicable by cross-referencing various standard compilations of election results. Nevertheless the proposed procedure introduces a systematic bias from the electoral system, because the winning party may be predominant over successive contests due to the exaggerative quality of majoritarian electoral rules, even if they receive only a relatively modest share of the popular vote. Moreover there are also difficult cases under this rule where there are many parties, and the conditions of elections free of manipulation, fraud and intimidation, and yet one party attracts overwhelming popular support, exemplified by the 70% share of the vote received by the African National Congress party in April 2004 elections to the National Assembly. It would have been preferable to gauge party competition using standard indicators such as the Laakso and Taagepera measure of the 'effective number of parliamentary parties' (ENPP), and also the 'effective number of electoral parties' (ENEP), both of which take account not only of the number of parties but also the relative size of each⁴². Lastly, the degree of party competition in the legislature does not tell us anything about the frequency that parties alternate between government and opposition over a certain period. Indeed in pluralist societies with very fragmented party systems, with a high ENEP, multiple opposition parties exist but for this very reason, through 'divide and rule', the governing party can continue in power for decades.

(iv) Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi: Competitive Democracy

The fourth alternative measure under comparison, which is the most minimalist, was originally developed by Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi, and subsequently extended by Cheibub and Gandhi⁴³. This approach defines democratic states as those regimes where citizens have the power to replace their government through contested elections. This conception reflects the long tradition established by Joseph Schumpeter, followed by many subsequent commentators, which regards the

presence of competitive multiparty elections as the key feature of representative democracy⁴⁴. There is a broad consensus that at a minimum all democratic regimes require regular elections providing alternative party choices at the ballot box. Contestation is one of the essential aspects of Dahl's notion of polyarchy, alongside participation⁴⁵. Regular free elections for all major government offices provide opportunities for citizens to discipline their leaders. The credible threat of losing power compels elected representatives to pay attention to citizen's interests. For the threat of electoral defeat to be credible, effective party competition is essential to facilitate opposition scrutiny of the government during inter-electoral periods and party choice among citizens at the ballot box. Countries are clearly recognized as autocratic if they fill national legislative offices and the chief executive office through appointment, patronage, or inheritance, rather than by popular elections. One-party states which hold elections for the national legislature, but which ban any other party from organizing and from contesting elections, such as Cuba, also fall unambiguously into the autocratic category. In some cases a limited degree of electoral choice is maintained where individual candidates from within the same party run for office, as exemplified by local elections among alternative Communist party candidates in China or among Movement candidates in Uganda. But in general the presence of competition from alternative parties is widely regarded as essential for genuine electoral choices and democratic contestation. Only parties can present voters with a choice of leadership teams and programs representing a coherent set of policies, and thus allow collective responsibility. As Schattschneider claimed, modern representative democracy is unworkable without parties⁴⁶. Parties are necessary to build and aggregate support among a broad coalition of citizens' organizations and interest groups, to integrate multiple conflicting demands into a coherent policy program, to select and train legislative candidates and political leaders, to provide voters with a choice of governing teams and policies, and, if elected to office, to organize the process of government, and to stand collectively accountable for their actions in subsequent contests. For all these reasons, political parties thereby form the cornerstone of a democratic society and serve a function unlike any other institution.

But how can party competition and contestation for government offices best be measured? The essential feature of democratic states, Przeworski et al argue, is that they provide regular electoral opportunities for removing those in power. More than one party has to compete in regular elections for the lower house of the national legislature and for executive office in presidential systems. An opposition party has to have some chance of winning elected office as a result of popular elections and there must be some uncertainty about the outcome, so that the incumbent party may lose power. If the incumbent party loses, there has to be the assurance that they will leave office and the winning party

will succeed them⁴⁷. Through this mechanism, governing parties can be held accountable for their actions and, if they fail to prove responsive to public concerns, they face a realistic chance of being replaced by the opposition in a regular and orderly constitutional process. Following this conceptualization, Przeworski et al classify all states as either a democracy or an autocracy according to certain institutional rules, namely:

- (i) The lower house of the legislature must be elected;
- (ii) The chief executive must be elected (directly in presidential systems and indirectly by members of the elected legislature in parliamentary systems);
- (iii) There must be more than one party; and (if states pass all these rules),
- (iv) if the incumbent party subsequently held, but never lost an election, such regimes are regarded by default as authoritarian. Regimes which fail any of these rules are classified as autocratic.

They therefore examine whether government offices (both for the chief executive officer and the legislative body) are filled as a consequence of contested elections. Contestation is understood to occur where there are at least two parties and an opposition party has some chance of winning office as a result of elections. If the incumbent party loses an election, democracies require that they leave office. If no alternation occurs, then regimes are classified as autocratic. Based on this series of rules, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limogi categorize all regimes every year from 1950 to 1990, supplemented with data by Cheibub and Ghandi which updates the series to 2000. This dataset represents a major advance in the literature by clearly specifying a limited set of decision rules defining party contestation and proposing a transparent process of applying these procedures to develop a typology of regimes. This process is also easily replicable from published sources, allowing the dataset to be extended by other scholars to test their key findings in other contexts and time periods.

The main limitation of this approach, however, is that, while parsimonious, this stripped-down measure is open to the charge of neglecting certain important dimensions which are integral to the conception of liberal democracy. The most notable omission from the Przeworski et al.'s definition is any consideration of mass participation, in particular, they do not seek to code whether elections are held under conditions of a universal adult suffrage. Yet most would regard any state as undemocratic if it held elections which systematically excluded certain major categories of its adult population from voting rights. All countries have some categories of the population who are disqualified from exercising the franchise, for example, resident non-citizens, citizens living overseas, those declared mentally disabled, or people

convicted of certain criminal offences or undergoing a sentence of imprisonment. The conditions for citizenship and any residency requirements for voting also vary cross-nationally⁴⁸. In principle, however, universal adult suffrage is necessary for democracy, although it is not sufficient by itself. Contestation without universal adult suffrage can be confined to a coterie of competitive oligarchies and their band of followers⁴⁹. If we simply rely upon Przeworski et al's rules, for example, Britain would qualify as a democracy after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which established the rule of law, parliamentary sovereignty, and limited power for the monarchy, after which the Whig and Tory parliamentary parties rotated in government and opposition, despite the fact that opportunities to vote in many corrupt boroughs were restricted to a small group of property-owning middle class men, prior to the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884, 1919, and 1927. In the same way, the United States would be classified as democratic from the era of the Jacksonian party system, when the competition from Democrats and the Whig opposition emerged around 1828, well before the enfranchisement of slaves in 1870, the passage of female suffrage in 1919, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which swept away restrictive practices for African-American citizens. Przeworski et al argue that they are only seeking to monitor contemporary democracies since 1945, when most states had established the universal adult franchise. But nevertheless some major omissions remained in this period, notably Switzerland which only introduced the female suffrage for national elections in 1971, while South Africa retained apartheid until 1994, and the franchise continues to be withheld from women in contemporary Saudi Arabia.

The lack of attention to mass participation is a major problem with the validity of the Przeworski et al approach but, along similar lines, concern is also raised by the way that party competition is measured in a minimal way without taking account of other conditions which may make it meaningful. For example, without the protection of human rights, freedom of the press, free and fair elections, and civil liberties, parties cannot compete effectively for electoral support, and citizens cannot evaluate government performance and party policies to arrive at an informed choice at the ballot box. These problems are exemplified by pro-state bias in the campaign television news and limits on the independent media, reported by OSCE observers as occurring in Belarus. Elsewhere there are problems of overt censorship and severe repression of journalists, noted by the Committee to Protect Journalists as occurring in Algeria, Iraq, Colombia, and Russia⁵⁰. As noted earlier, the cases of 'electoral autocracies' are particularly difficult regimes to classify, for example Russia which classified as continuously 'democratic' since 1992, according to the Przeworski rules, yet which has seen a subsequent progressive deterioration in civil liberties, according to Freedom House and Polity IV. One way to test how far the Przeworski measure taps any broader indication of civil liberties is to examine the correlation between this measure and the Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Database monitoring a range of Human Rights, including civil liberties (the extent of freedom of association, movement, speech, religion and participation), women's rights (in the economic, political and social spheres), and the worst abuses arising from state repression (through the use of extrajudicial killings, political imprisonment, torture and disappearance)⁵¹. The Przeworski et al measure of Competitive Democracy was fairly strongly related to civil liberties ($R=.75^{***}$) but it was far

more weakly linked to indicators of state repression ($R=.36^{***}$). For example, among the regimes classified by Przeworski as democratic, torture was found to be practiced frequently by 31% and extrajudicial killings were frequently employed by 15%. In this regard, the measure of Competitive Democracy is far more generous in its interpretation of a democratic regime than the stricter monitoring of human rights provided by the Freedom House index.

Another potential difficulty with this measure is that contested multiparty elections appear relatively straightforward and unambiguous to code from public sources, based on the presence of more than one party on the ballot. In practice, however, degrees of party competition in the process of nomination, campaigning, and election vary substantially from one country to another. The fact that more than one party contests an election does not imply, by any means, the existence of a level playing field so that all parties stand an equal chance of winning seats, let alone government. This is most problematic in the cases of 'electoral democracies' or 'competitive authoritarian regimes', such as Zimbabwe and Belarus. Even among the clearer cases of established democracies, few ban any parties outright, but some party organizations are occasionally declared illegal, for example radical right parties are restricted by the German constitution and limited by Belgian laws against hate speech. Parties associated with violent terrorist tactics have been banned in Spain (*Batasuna*, the political wing of Eta in the Basque region) and France. The Turkish Constitutional Court shut down the Welfare Party, a radical Muslim organization with considerable popular support. More commonly, most democracies have a range of regulations restricting candidate and party access to the ballot, sources of campaign funds, and the media. In every nation, the type of electoral system, notably the effective threshold, limits which candidates win seats. All of these rules make party systems more or less competitive. Although free and fair elections are contested, where the opposition remains divided, predominant parties may be returned with a plurality of the vote for decades, such as the Liberal Democrats in Japan. The fact that multiple parties campaign in Japanese elections does not mean that the allocation of government offices rotates regularly between government and opposition parties. While accepted limits on multiparty competition do not raise major concern in categorizing long-established democratic states such as Germany, Belgium, and Japan, legal restrictions on the ability of opposition parties and reform movements to campaign and challenge the ruling elites poses far more difficulty in classifying regimes such as Russia.

Lastly, Przeworski classify all regimes as either democracies or autocracies, yet in reality regimes do not shift from autocracies one year to democracies the next, as dichotomous measures suggest. Mexico, for example, did not automatically become democratic the day after Vicente Fox was elected president by defeating the PRI candidate; instead the country experienced a series of steps which allowed opposition parties to make gains on local states, which allowed the Electoral Institute to clean up political bribery and ballot-stuffing, and which generated freer criticism of the governing PRI in the mass media. Recognizing that important distinctions may be lost by the idea of a strict dichotomy dividing the world into democracies and autocracies, there have been numerous attempts to introduce categories in the grey zone which have been conceptualized as, alternatively, 'semi-democracies', 'competitive

authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way), 'illiberal democracies' (Zacharia). Each of these qualifying terms suffers from certain ambiguities, implying subcategories. The democratization process refers to the stages which regimes go through in order to become democratic. The process can be progressive (where regimes become more democratic) or degenerative (where states become more autocratic).

Good Governance

The last decade has seen a proliferation of alternative initiatives which have sought to operationalize the related notion of 'good governance'. The World Bank has used assessments of government performance in allocating resources since the mid-1970s. Focusing at first on macroeconomic management, the assessment criteria have expanded to include trade and financial policies, business regulation, social sector policies, the effectiveness of the public sector, and transparency, accountability, and corruption. These criteria are assessed annually for all World Bank borrowers. Among these, the issue of corruption has moved towards the center of the World Bank's governance strategy, as this is regarded as a fundamental impediment towards reducing poverty.⁵²

The most ambitious attempt to measure all the dimensions of 'good governance' is the indices generated by Kaufmann and colleagues for the World Bank Institute. The Kaufmann-Kray indicators (also known as 'The Worldwide Governance Indicators') are some of the most widely-used measures of good governance. Compiled since 1996, these composite indices measure the perceived quality of six dimensions of governance for 213 countries, based on 31 data sources produced by 25 organizations. The underlying data are based on hundreds of variables and reflect the perceptions and views of experts, firm survey respondents, and citizens on various dimensions of governance. The World Bank does not generate these separate assessments; rather it integrates them into composite indices. The measures specify the margins of error associated with each estimate, allowing users to identify a range of statistically likely ratings for each country. The Worldwide Governance Indicators measure the quality of six dimensions of governance: *Voice and accountability*: the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media. *Political stability and absence of violence*: perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including political violence and terrorism. *Government effectiveness*: the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. *Regulatory quality*: the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development. *Rule of law*: the extent to which

agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence. *Control of corruption*: the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as “capture” of the state by elites and private interests.

Related well-known attempts to monitor several aspects of ‘good governance’ include the Corruption Perception Index generated annually since 1995 by Transparency International. The International Country Risk Guide is another measure which has been assessing financial, economic, and political risks since 1980 for about 140 countries. The Global Integrity, based in Washington, D.C., assesses the existence and effectiveness of anticorruption mechanisms that promote public integrity, using more than 290 indicators to generate the Global Integrity Index for more than 40 countries. The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Database monitoring a range of Human Rights, such as civil liberties, women’s rights, and state repression, has already been discussed.⁵³ Perceptual assessments using expert surveys and subjective judgments may prove unreliable for several reasons, including reliance upon a small number of national ‘experts’, the use of business leaders and academic scholars as the basis of the judgments, variations in country coverage by different indices, and possible bias towards more favorable evaluations of countries with good economic outcomes. Nevertheless in the absence of other reliable indicators covering a wide range of nation states, such as representative surveys of public opinion, these measures provide some of the best available gauges of good governance.

These and many associated projects have greatly expanded the number of political indicators which are now widely available and often used by analysts and policymakers. This study integrates selected the Kaufmann-Kray good governance indicators as part of the analysis. Nevertheless the primary focus of this book rests on the four indicators of democratic governance which have already been discussed. The reasons are that the core concept of ‘good governance’ contains a number of distinct dimensions, it is often over-loaded and conflated with multiple meanings and measures, and it remains under-theorized compared with the work on democratic governance.⁵⁴ As Grindle has argued, the ‘good governance’ agenda is poorly-focused, over-long and growing ever longer, depending upon the emphasis given to nostrums for reform.⁵⁵ Moreover, equally importantly, the Kaufmann-Kray indicators started in the mid-1990s and so observations are simply unavailable for the longitudinal study, which examines trends since the start of the third wave in the early-1970s. For all these reasons, this study emphasizes understanding the primary drivers of democratic governance, not good governance.

The pragmatic choice and comparison of indicators

To summarize the debate about measures and indicators, prominent scholars continue to disagree about the merits of the main minimalist and maximalist concepts of democracy most commonly used in the literature, as well as the value of adopting either dichotomous classifications (such as the Przeworski categorization) or graded measures (such as the 20-point Polity index). There is no consensus about the most appropriate criteria used to measure democratic regimes, the weighting which should be given to separate components, the reliability of the coding procedures used by different researchers, and the way that these indicators should be translated into regime typologies.

In practice, however, despite all the differences in the construction of democratic indices, it is striking that the four alternative measures most commonly used in the comparative literature correlate strongly with each other.⁵⁶ For comparison, the Polity IV scale of democracy-autocracy was recoded to a positive 20-point scale, and the Freedom House index was recoded so that a score of 1 represented the least democratic regimes, while a score of 7 represented the most democratic. Table 2 shows that the Freedom House rating was strongly and significantly related to the Polity IV score ($R=.904^{**}$), the Cheibub classification of the type of democratic-autocratic regime ($R=.826^{**}$), and the Vanhanen index of democratization ($R=.730^{**}$).

[Table 2 about here]

A visual examination of the trends since 1972 documented by each of these indicators also shows considerable agreement among the series, despite differences in their conceptualization, measurement and time-periods (see Figures 2 to 6). This suggests that there is an underlying consensus about historical developments, generating confidence about the reliability and robustness of measures. The trends monitored in each series differ in their starting points, with Polity IV presenting the longest period, from 1800 onwards. As shown in Figure 2, the Cheibub and Gandhi series since the end of the Second World War suggests a steady and substantial rise in the number of dictatorships worldwide from 1960 until the late-1970s (the period identified by Huntington as the second reverse wave of democratization), then demonstrates a fairly steady fall which continues to their most recent observation. The parallel rise in the number of democratic regimes appears to occur in this series from the early-1980s onwards (later than the Huntington periodization of the third wave) and continues to the end of their series in 2002.

[Figures 2 to 6 about here]

The Freedom House series monitoring political rights and civil liberties in Liberal Democracy starts in 1972 and runs through until 2005. Their tripartite classification of regime types, shown in Figure 2, also suggests that a gradual rise in free nation states occurs from the mid-to-late 1970s, experiencing a sharp surge in the 1989-1991 period, then registers a continuous more steady growth to date. The number of not free nation states remains steady throughout the 1970s and 1980s, only dropping precipitously in the 1989-1990 period (with the fall of the Berlin Wall) and then hitting an erratic plateau at a lower level. In this series, the number of 'partly free' states rises sharply in the 1989-1990 era. The mean Freedom House rating on the Gastil Index, shown in Figure 3, shows a steadier picture of developments with rising levels of Liberal Democracy in countries around the world.

The mean Polity IV Autocracy-Democracy 20-point score of Constitutional Democracy provides the longest time series extending over two centuries. Figure 5 shows a steady erosion of autocracy from roughly 1820 until the first peak reached a century later. In Europe this era saw multiple developments with the growth of parliamentary democracies independent of the monarchy, the evolution of competitive party systems, the expansion of the universal franchise to broader sectors of society, including the working class and eventually to women as well. After the initial advance, according to Polity IV the interwar era saw the first substantial reverse wave, with the rise of Hitler and Mussolini, but also a reversal of democracy in many Latin American nation states. The end of the Second World War registered a second sharp wave of democratization, notably the new constitutions established in Germany and Poland, and fragile democratic constitutions established in many ex-colonies which were achieving independence. The era from 1950 to 1980 displayed the sharp erosion in democratic states worldwide which Huntington terms the second reverse wave. It is only from the early-to-mid-1970s, with the end of dictatorships in Spain, Portugal and Greece, that democracy expands again around the globe in the Polity IV series, with the sharpest rise registered during the 1989-1991 period following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Lastly, trends in the Vanhanen index of Participatory Democracy, illustrated in Figure 6, also extend from 1810 onwards. The series suggests a slow rise in Participatory Democracy during the nineteenth century, with a sharp expansion in the 1920s, in large part because of the expansion of the franchise to the working class and women in many countries. The interwar years register strong setbacks for democracy, which is sharply reversed in the late 1950s, creating a more volatile picture during these years than the other indicators under comparison. The Vanhanen series also confirms the

rise in democratization which occurs during the third wave, registering here from the mid-1970s onwards.

It remains possible that systematic bias may affect all these measures, where similar data sources and reference works are used to construct these scales, or if subjective evaluations of each country are influenced by the published results derived from other indices. Yet despite the important differences in the conceptualization and measurement used in each of these scales, which might have been expected to produce considerable inconsistencies, in fact there appears to be considerable consensus about the overall classification of regime types. The most sensible approach to any comparative analysis, therefore, is not to pick any one of these indicators arbitrarily as the core way to measure democracy, but rather to test whether the results of the different models used for analysis remain consistent using each measure. If there are similar results - as we would expect, given the strong correlation among measures - then this suggests that the generalizations derived from the analysis remain robust irrespective of the particular measure which is adopted. If there are important differences, however, then we need to consider the reason for such inconsistencies and whether they arise from the differing underlying meanings associated with each measure. Comprehensive global comparisons are essential for the international community, especially in determining priorities and setting benchmarks for performance.

Indicators are particularly valuable to provide an initial check-up of democratic health, especially when a country is compared against cross-national standards. Is voter turnout in the US and Canada particularly low – or relatively high? Is the proportion of Canadian and American women in elected office a cause for celebration - or concern? Is the quality of human rights, the transparency of government information, the representation and inclusion of visible minorities, or participation by younger generation in these nations relatively positive - or negative? Cross-national average benchmarks and rankings provide a reading on the health of democratic governance in any state. Whether these measures are valuable for providing more detailed insights into the challenges facing democratic governance in Canada and the United States, however, is another matter. In particular, due to a 'ceiling' effect, global indicators are often limited in their capacity to distinguish among contemporary states which score relatively well, according to this data. In this regard, it may be more helpful to turn to alternative approaches, including the democratic audit approach which has been pioneered by International IDEA and David Beetham, as well as the plethora of contemporary social survey resources which are now covering more and more parts of the globe.⁵⁷

Table 1: Indicators and measures

	Liberal democracy	Constitutional democracy	Participatory democracy	Contested democracy
Source	Freedom House	Polity IV	Vanhanen	Przeworski et al./ Cheibub and Gandhi
Core attributes	Political rights and civil liberties	Democracy and autocracy	Electoral competition and electoral participation	Contestation of executive and legislature
Measurement of attributes	Continuous 7-point scales for each	Continuous 20- point scale	100-point scales	Dichotomous classification
Annual Observations	1972 to date	1800 to 1999	1810 to 2000	1946 to 2002
Main Strengths	Comprehensive scope	Extended time- period	Replicable data sources	Clear coding rules
Main Weaknesses	Problems of conflation and measurement	Exclusion of mass participation; Aggregation problems	Inappropriate indicators	Exclusion of mass participation; weakly related to state repression

Table 2: Correlation among democratic indicators

		Liberal Democracy Freedom House	Participatory Democracy Vanhanen	Constitutional Democracy Polity
Participatory Democracy	Correlation	.730(***)		
Vanhanen				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	3006		
Constitutional Democracy	Correlation	.904(***)	.751(***)	
Polity				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	4382	4051	
Contested Democracy	Correlation	.826(***)	.681(***)	.856(***)
Cheibub and Gandhi				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	5076	4661	6784

Notes: N=Number of cases. *** All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1: Diagnostic tools for assessing the quality of democratic governance

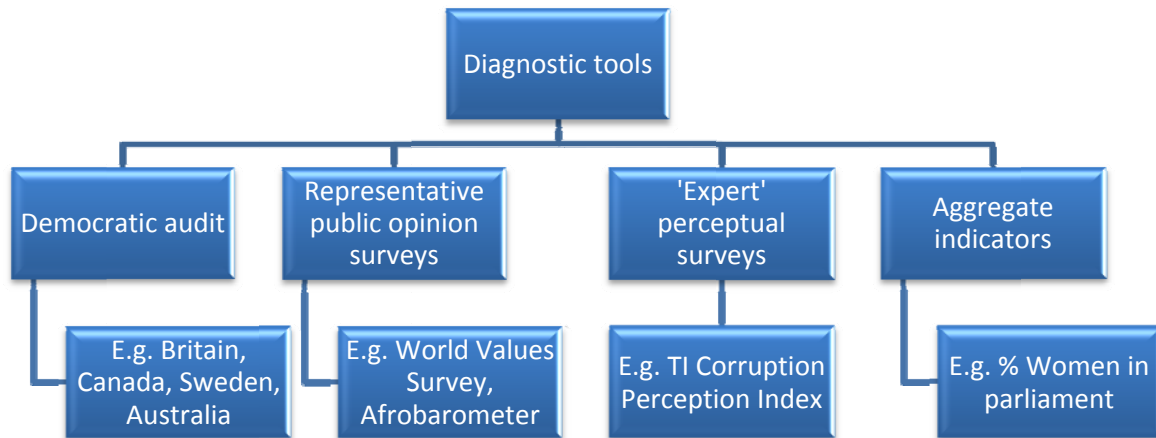
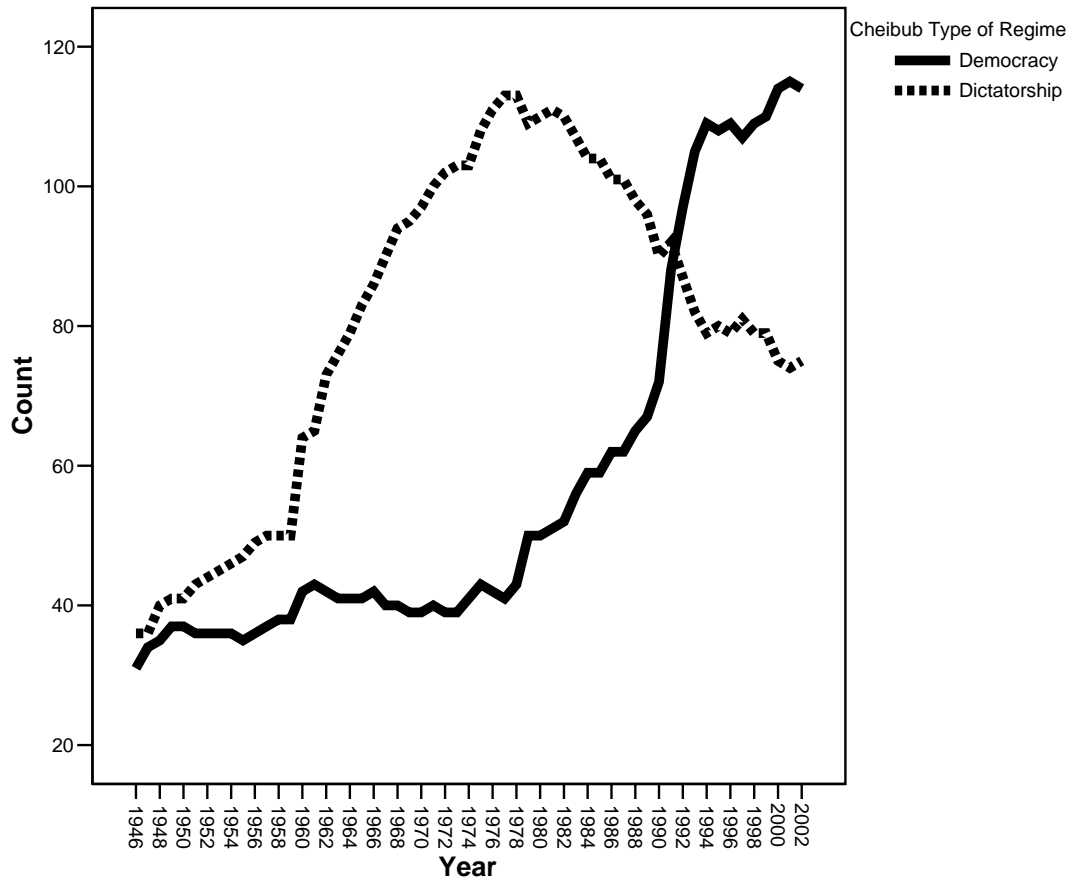
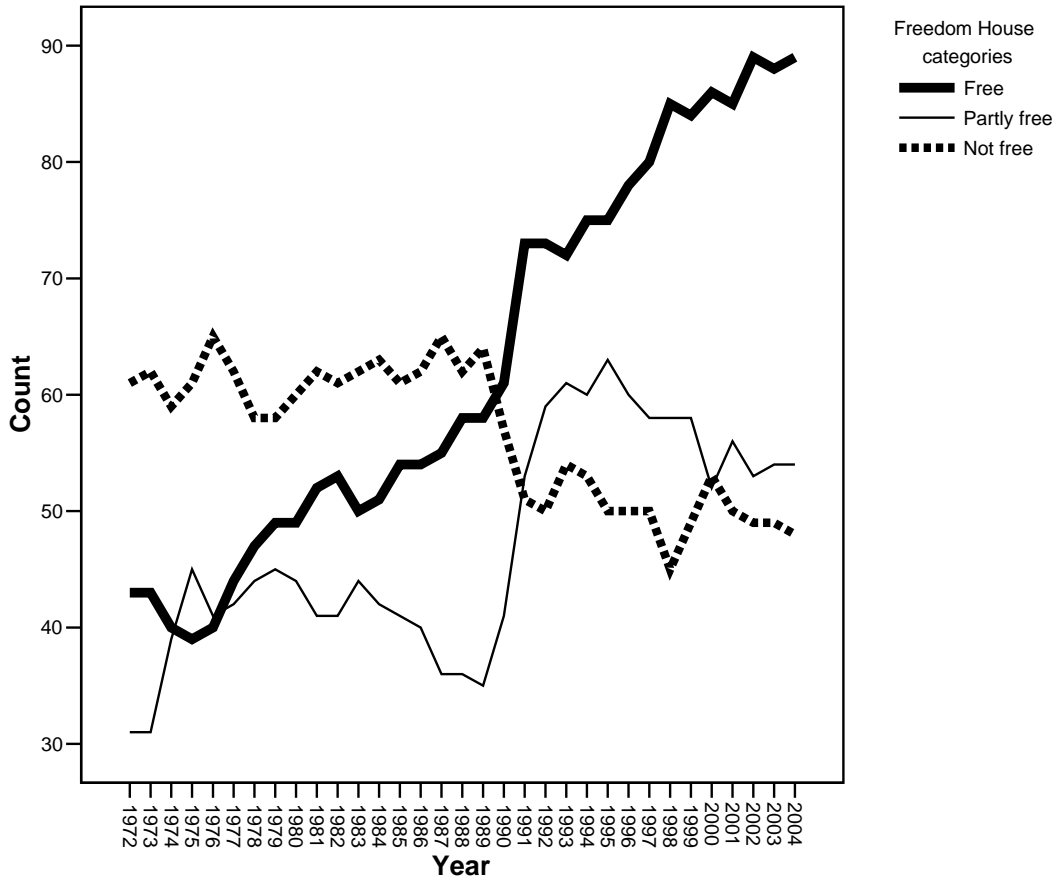


Figure 2: Trends in Cheibub and Gandhi’s classification of regime types, 1945-2002



Source: José Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 2004. 'A six-fold measure of democracies and dictatorships.' Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Figure 2: Trends in Freedom House classification of regime types, 1972-2004



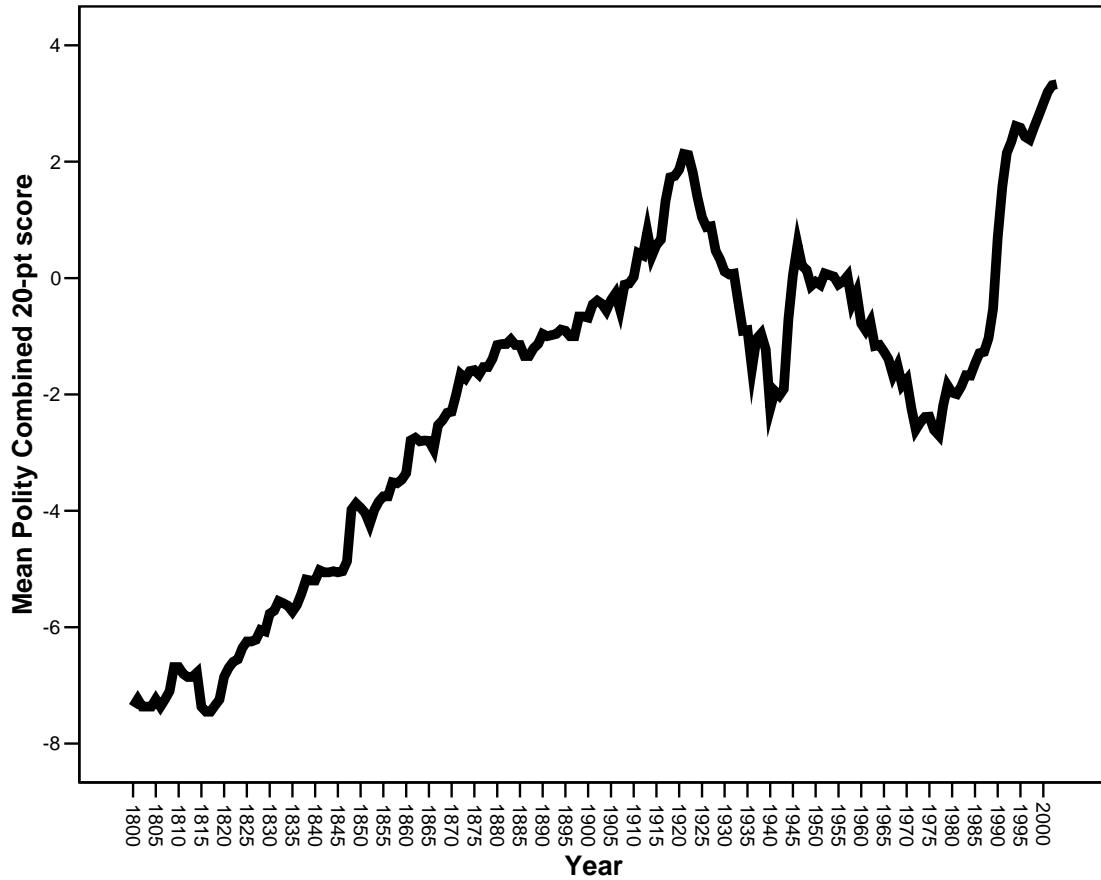
Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

Figure 3: Trends in Freedom House’s measure of Liberal Democracy, 1972-2004



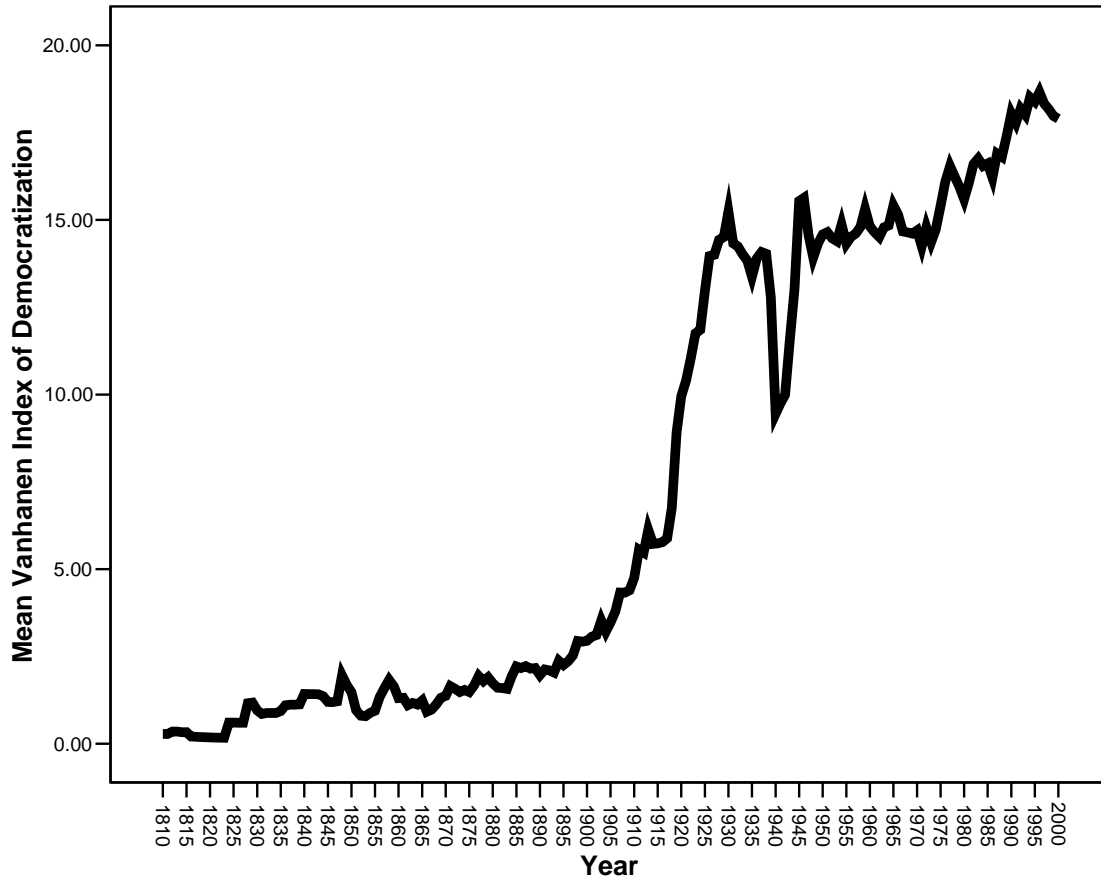
Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

Figure 4: Trends in Polity IV measure of Constitutional Democracy, 1800-2000



Source: Monty Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2003. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2003*. <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/>;

Figure 5: Trends in Vanhanen’s measure of Participatory Democracy, 1810-2000



Source: Tatu Vanhanen. 2000. 'A new dataset for measuring democracy, 1810-1998.' *Journal of Peace Research* 37(2): 251-265.

Note: This presentation is an expanded version of Chapter 3 from Pippa Norris (forthcoming August 2008). *Driving democracy: Do Power-sharing Institutions Work?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹ Allan Tupper. 2007. 'Auditing the auditors: The Canadian Democratic Audit.' *Canadian Public Administration/Administration Publique du Canada* 50 (4): 635–653; Paul Howe, Richard Johnston and André Blais. Eds. 2005. *Strengthening Canadian Democracy: Reconsidering provincial and federal debates about democratic reform alternatives*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

² William Cross. 2006. 'The Canadian Democratic Audit.' Paper presented at the International Political Science Association conference in Fukuoka, Japan.

³ See Russell J. Dalton. 2004. *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. For a counter-point, however, see Pippa Norris. 2003. *Democratic Phoenix*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ UNDP. 2007. *Governance Indicators: A Users' Guide (2nd Edition)* Oslo: UNDP. http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/governance_indicators_project.html; see also the Quality of Governance dataset <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/>

⁵ David Beetham, David, Sarah Bracking, Iain Kearton, and Stuart Weir. 2002. *International IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.

⁶ http://www.democraticaudit.com/auditing_democracy/auditsworld.php

⁷ Pippa Norris. 2008. 'The Globalization of Comparative Public Opinion Research.' For the *Sage Handbook of Comparative Politics* Eds. Neil Robinson and Todd Landman. London: Sage Publications.

⁸ For a collection of these resources, see Pippa Norris. 2008. *Democracy Cross-national Data and Democracy Time-Series Data* both available at www.pippanorris.com. See also the Quality of Governance dataset available at the University of Goteborg: <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/>

⁹ Merilee Grindle. 2004. 'Good Enough Governance: Poverty reduction and reform in developing countries.' *Governance* 17(4): 525-548; Derick W. Brinkerhoff and Arthur A. Goldsmith. 2005. 'Institutional dualism and international development: a revisionist Interpretation of good governance.' *Administration and Society* 37(2): 199-225.

¹⁰ David Beetham, David, Sarah Bracking, Iain Kearton, and Stuart Weir. 2002. *International IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International; David Beetham. 1999. 'The idea of democratic audit in comparative perspective.' *Parliamentary Affairs* 52(4): 567-581; David Beetham. 2004. 'Freedom as the foundation.' *Journal of Democracy* 15(4): 61-75.

¹¹ A useful review of these, and also the other measures which are available but covering a shorter time-period or more limited range of nation states, are available from Geraldo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 35 (1): 5-34.

¹² David Collier and Robert Adcock. 1999. 'Democracy and dichotomies: A pragmatic approach to choices about concepts.' *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 537-565.

¹³ Geraldo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 35 (1): 5-34

¹⁴ Karl Popper. 1963. *Conjectures and Refutations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

¹⁵ Joseph A. Schumpeter. 1950. *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.

-
- ¹⁶ Jose Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 2004. 'A six-fold measure of democracies and dictatorships.' Unpublished paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- ¹⁷ Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2002. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2002. Dataset Users' Manual*. Maryland: University of Maryland. www.cidm.umd.edu/inscr/polity
- ¹⁸ Thomas Carothers, 2002. 'The End of the Transition Paradigm.' *Journal of Democracy* 13: 5–21; Fareed Zakaria. 1997. 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy.' *Foreign Affairs* 76(6): 22-41; Larry Diamond. 2002. 'Thinking about Hybrid Regimes.' *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 21-35; Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. 2002. 'The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.' *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-65; Stephen Levitsky. 2003. 'Autocracy by Democratic Rules: The Dynamics of Competitive Authoritarianism in the Post-Cold War Era.' Paper Prepared for the Conference, 'Mapping the Great Zone: Clientelism and the Boundary between Democratic and Democratizing.' Columbia University, April 4-5, 2003.
- ¹⁹ Ariel C. Armony and Hector E. Schamis. 2005. 'Babel in democratization studies.' *Journal of Democracy* 16 (4): 113-128.
- ²⁰ M.M. Howard and P.G. Roessler. 2006. 'Liberalizing electoral outcomes in competitive authoritarian regimes.' *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 365-381.
- ²¹ Robert A. Dahl. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press; Robert A. Dahl. 1971. *Polyarchy*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press; Robert A. Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom. 1953. *Politics, Economics, and Welfare*. New York: Harper Collins; Robert A. Dahl. 1989. *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 221; Robert A. Dahl. 2005. 'What political institutions does large-scale democracy require?' *Political Science Quarterly* 120(2): 187-197.
- ²² Robert Dahl. 1989. *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 221
- ²³ Freedom House. 2007. *Freedom in the World, 2007*. 'Methodology'. www.freedomhouse.org.
- ²⁴ Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2002. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2002. Dataset Users' Manual*. Maryland: University of Maryland. www.cidm.umd.edu/inscr/polity
- ²⁵ Axel Hadenius. 1992. *Democracy and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ²⁶ Joe Foweraker and Roman Krznaric. 2003. 'Differentiating the democratic performance of the West.' *European Journal of Political Research* 42(3): 313-341.
- ²⁷ Joe Foweraker and Roman Krznaric. 2000. 'Measuring liberal democratic performance: An empirical and conceptual critique.' *Political Studies* 48: 759-787.
- ²⁸ Larry Diamond. 1996. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Robert J. Barro. 1999. 'Determinants of democracy.' *Journal of Political Economy* 107 (6): 158–183; Ronald Inglehart and Christopher Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ²⁹ David Collier and Robert Adcock. 1999. 'Democracy and dichotomies: A pragmatic approach to choices about concepts.' *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 537-565.
- ³⁰ Freedom House. 2007. *Freedom in the World 2007*. Washington, DC: Freedom House. www.freedomhouse.org.
- ³¹ Geraldo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 35 (1): 5-34.
- ³² See, for example, R.E. Burkhart. 2000. 'Economic freedom and democracy: Post-cold war tests.' *European Journal of Political Research* 37 (2): 237-253.
- ³³ For a disaggregated approach, see Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, G.W.Downs, Alistair Smith and F.M. Cherif. 2005. 'Thinking inside the box: A closer look at democracy and human rights.' *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (3): 439-457.

-
- ³⁴ Ted Robert Gurr. 1974. 'Persistence and change in political systems.' *American Political Science Review* 74: 1482-1504.
- ³⁵ Monty Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2003. *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2003*. <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/>; Monty Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, Christian Davenport and Keith Jagers. 2002. 'Polity IV, 1800-1999: Comments on Munck and Verkuilen.' *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1): 40-45.
- ³⁶ Geraldo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 35 (1): 5-34; Monty G. Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, Christian Davenport, and Keith Jagers. 2002. 'Polity IV, 1800-1999: Comments on Munck and Verkuilen.' *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (1): 40-45.
- ³⁷ Tatu Vanhanen. 1990. *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States. 1980-88*. NY: Crane Russak; Tatu Vanhanen. 1997. *Prospects for Democracy: A study of 172 countries*. New York: Routledge; Tatu Vanhanen. 2000. 'A new dataset for measuring democracy, 1810-1998.' *Journal of Peace Research* 37(2): 251-265.
- ³⁸ Pamela Paxton, Kenneth A. Bollen, Deborah M. Lee and HyoJoung Kim. 2003. 'A half century of suffrage: New data and a comparative analysis.' *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38(1): 93-122; Teri L. Caraway. 2004. 'Inclusion and democratization: Class, gender, race, and the extension of suffrage.' *Comparative Politics* 36 (4): 443-+.
- ³⁹ International IDEA. *Voter Turnout since 1945*. Stockholm: International IDEA.
- ⁴⁰ Mark N. Franklin. 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ⁴¹ Tatu Vanhanen. 1990. *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States. 1980-88*. NY: Crane Russak; Tatu Vanhanen. 1997. *Prospects for Democracy: A study of 172 countries*. New York: Routledge; Tatu Vanhanen. 2000. 'A new dataset for measuring democracy, 1810-1998.' *Journal of Peace Research* 37(2): 251-265.
- ⁴² M. Laakso and Rein Taagepera. 1979. 'Effective number of parties: a measure with application to Western Europe.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 12: 3-27.
- ⁴³ Mike Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, and Adam Przeworski. 1996. 'Classifying political regimes.' *Studies in International Comparative Development* 31: 3-36; Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Jose Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 2005. 'A six-fold measure of democracies and dictatorships.' Unpublished paper. For a discussion of the virtues of adopting a minimalist conceptualization and measure, see Adam Przeworski. 1999. 'Minimalist conception of democracy: A defense.' In *Democracy's Value*. Eds Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon. Eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ⁴⁴ The earliest conceptualization was offered by Joseph Schumpeter. 1947. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper and Bros. Similar definitions are offered by Seymour Martin Lipset: "Democracy (in a complex society) is defined as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials." Seymour Martin Lipset. 1959. 'Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy.' *American Political Science Review*. 53: 71.
- ⁴⁵ Robert Dahl. 1989. *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- ⁴⁶ Elmer Eric Schattschneider. 1942. *Party Government* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Anckar and Anckar argue, however, that a half-dozen small independent island states can be classified as democratic regimes without political parties, namely, Belau (Palau), the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Tuvalu. Their size, an extremely archipelagic geography, and an intense cultural resistance all contribute to an absence of political parties in these democracies. See D. Anckar and C. Anckar. 2000. 'Democracies without parties.' *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (2): 225-247.

-
- ⁴⁷ Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Jose Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 2004. 'A six-fold measure of democracies and dictatorships.' Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- ⁴⁸ André Blais, Louis Massicote, and A. Yoshinaka. 2001. 'Deciding who has the right to vote: a comparative analysis of election laws.' *Electoral Studies* 20 (1): 41-62.
- ⁴⁹ Pamela Paxton. 2000. 'Women's suffrage in the measurement of democracy: Problems of operationalization.' *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 35(3): 92-111; Teri L. Caraway. 2004. 'Inclusion and democratization: Class, gender, race, and the extension of suffrage.' *Comparative Politics* 36 (4): 443-450; Pamela Paxton, Kenneth A. Bollen, Deborah M. Lee and Hyo Joung Kim. 2003. 'A half century of suffrage: New data and a comparative analysis.' *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38(1): 93-122.
- ⁵⁰ The Committee to Protect Journalists 'Journalists killed in the line of duty during the last ten years: 1995-2004.' http://www.cpj.org/killed/Ten_Year_Killed/Intro.html
- ⁵¹ David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards 2004. *The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Database Coder Manual*. <http://ciri.binghamton.edu/>
- ⁵² World Bank. 2007. 'Strengthening World Bank Group Engagement on Governance And Anticorruption.' <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/comments/governancefeedback/>
- ⁵³ David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards 2004. *The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Database Coder Manual*. <http://ciri.binghamton.edu/>
- ⁵⁴ Derick W. Brinkerhoff and Arthur A. Goldsmith. 2005. 'Institutional dualism and international development: a revisionist Interpretation of good governance.' *Administration and Society* 37(2): 199-225.
- ⁵⁵ Merilee Grindle. 2004. 'Good Enough Governance: Poverty reduction and reform in developing countries.' *Governance* 17(4): 525-548.
- ⁵⁶ David Collier and Robert Adcock. 1999. 'Democracy and dichotomies: A pragmatic approach to choices about concepts.' *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 537-565; Zachary Elkins. 2000. 'Gradations of democracy? Empirical tests of alternative conceptualizations.' *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 293-300; Geraldo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. 'Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices.' *Comparative Political Studies*. 35 (1): 5-34.
- ⁵⁷ Pippa Norris. 2008. 'The Globalization of Comparative Public Opinion Research.' For the Sage *Handbook of Comparative Politics* Eds. Neil Robinson and Todd Landman. London: Sage Publications.