

SELLING DEMOCRACY ABROAD OR RESCUING IT AT HOME?
THE HAZARDS OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

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Paper presented at ECPR Conference, Marburg, September 2003.

This paper contains some preliminary thoughts that may be included in a book *The Frontiers of Democracy*, to be published by Ashgate. The normal conventions regarding quotation and citation apply.

ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the relationship between changes in the nature of democracy in the West and the promotion of democracy in the Third World. It begins by examining arguments about the nature and extent of changes in Western democracy since the 1960s. It then considers the objectives of democracy promoters and the indigenous response, before going on to look at the actual dynamics of democracy promotion. There is a brief exploration of the specific case of Tanzania. Among the main problems highlighted are the emphases by democracy promoters on party competition, which often fails to advance interest aggregation or scrutiny of the executive, and the promotion of a narrowly conceived civil society.

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic participation in Britain was in a sorry state in the early post-war years, according to the *Whitley Bay Guardian*.

Those older people who so like to look back on the 'good old days' will probably remember that in the past the man on the street and his wife were far more community minded than they are today. Whenever any function was organised in a town or village, everyone worked with a will and all joined in the festivities with zest. Not so today we are told. Very few people bother to

vote in local elections, few could name more than an odd one or two councillors... (*Whitley Bay Guardian*, 1946.)

This might surprise the current generation of undergraduates who have been fed on stories about mass participation in political parties and trade unions, high turnouts in elections, and governments responding to the popular will by translating the ideals of Keynes, Beveridge and Butler into reality. Perhaps the golden age was really a generation earlier, yet the same newspaper reported in 1921 that:

... It is fairly evident that 'death by bad citizenship' is likely to be a portion of our everyday existence unless some steps are taken to arrest the development of the disease. We are suffering from the growth of 'shirkers' in every class of the community – men who shirk their duties and responsibilities to the state and to others and further men who shirk work in any form. (*Whitley Bay Guardian*, 29 October 1921.)

Nostalgia, as they say, is not what it used to be. Why should we accept allegations of democratic decline today as any more valid than those made by earlier generations? One immediate answer is that we now have more data available to compare past and present. Some of this may largely be unquantifiable, such as the extent of public accountability of politicians or the capacity of governments to execute the popular will, but much of it does facilitate quantifiable comparison, whether on electoral turnout, party and group membership, or the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of citizens. Not even the quantitative data can 'prove' that democracy has improved or deteriorated, since different observers will put different interpretations on the data, and indeed on the concept of democracy itself, but at least we can plot the ways in which democracy has changed over time.

If in the (admittedly subjective) judgment of many observers, most countries in the West have suffered a democratic decline over the past half-century, what relevance does this have to Western attempts to promote democracy in the Third World, especially since the 1980s? This is the key concern of this paper, though the question will be pursued in a roundabout way in the belief that the straightest route up the mountain is not the quickest or safest. We begin by looking at some of the arguments about the alleged decline of democracy in the West. This provides the base camp from which democracy promoters set off, and it may influence their thinking about the objectives of the task in hand and the means of executing it. This leads us on to a discussion of what the various democracy promoters are trying to do, considering both their own claims and those of their critics. We go on to look at the actual dynamics of democracy promotion, its effectiveness and the indigenous response, with special reference to the case of Tanzania. Finally we reflect on the limitations of democracy promotion within the context of changing values and practices in the West.

The emphasis on external democracy promotion does not, of course, imply that Third World countries are merely passive recipients with no democratic movements or aspirations of their own. It is simply that the focus of this paper is on the external contribution. Neither does the emphasis on changes in internal Western democracy imply that these are the **only** influence on the nature of democracy promotion. Other factors such as Western strategic and economic interests are clearly important

as well (Pinkney 2001). (Having just read Peter Burnell's paper, I am probably doing the opposite to what he recommends by narrowing the focus. The views of the conference would be welcome!)

THE DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE WEST: REALITY OR NOSTALGIA?

Having acknowledged that democracy, and its rise and fall, are slippery concepts, we can pick out six overlapping ways in which many authors allege that democracy has declined since the 1950s. There is said to have been a decline in public participation, reflecting a weaker civil society; in people's political awareness, in people's trust in politicians, in people's ability to influence political outcomes (often related to greater social inequality), in the accountability of rulers to both elected representatives and the wider public, and in the capacity of governments to implement their chosen policies.

On **public participation**, we are on safe ground in noting the fall in electoral turnout in most countries. The average turnout in twenty major Western nations and Japan fell from 82% in the 1950s to 76% in the 1990s (Dalton 2002: 36). While this is not a dramatic fall, it has to be set in the context of increased formal education, improved media communications and increased car ownership which makes for easier access to the polls, all of which might have been expected to increase turnout. The fall in party membership has been much steeper. The Conservative Party had over three million members in the early 1950s and the Labour Party over one million (Butler 1955: 107), whereas today the figures are barely 500,000 and 300,000 respectively. In America, Dukakis talks about both the main parties walking away from the old grassroots model in which they had reached out to all potential voters, in favour of employing consultants using television and direct mail to target segments of the electorate (Dukakis in Crotty 2001: 4). In Britain, Henn et. al. offer a comparable picture of parties more concerned with public relations than public participation (Henn et. al. 2002: 172).

The involvement of groups in society is more difficult to measure, as not all groups have formal membership records, but again there is ample evidence of decline. Putnam recorded a substantial decline in most forms of 'political and community participation' in America between the 1970s and 1990s (Putnam 2000: 45), and Knight & Stokes showed a similar decline in membership of churches, trade unions, friendly societies and voluntary organisations in Britain (Knight & Stokes 1996: 2). While many of the activities in question are non-political, the authors argue that less participation in the community drains away the social capital that a flourishing civil society, and ultimately a healthy democracy, require.

Measuring **changes in political awareness** is even more difficult, but impressionistic accounts again suggest a decline. It is conceivable that the growing number of people who do not vote, belong to parties or participate in the community, take these non-decisions after a careful assessment of the choices available, but it seems unlikely, especially when the non-participants are generally the least educated. Berman records a striking level of all-round ignorance in America, stretching from

politics to history, geography, science and simple general knowledge. 21% of Americans in the 1990s believed that the sun revolved around the earth, and 12% believed that Noah's wife was Joan of Arc. Both Berman and Barber see growing ignorance and de-politicisation as a product of consumerism where people are reduced from citizens to customers. People may complain about the quality of a particular public service, just as they might complain about the quality of a hamburger, but they are less likely to have a vision of alternative ways of ordering society. The media contribute to the decline both by trivialising the news and by reducing the serious content of newspapers to a point where fewer people read them (Barber in Axtmann 2001: 295-311; Berman 2000: 14-70; Putnam 2000: 216-46).

On the **decline of public trust in politicians**, there is little room for argument. In Britain, Bromley et. al. record a substantial increase in the number of people believing that parties are only interested in people's votes, that MPs have lost touch with the people, that it makes little difference which party is elected, that "people like me have no say in what the government does" and that the system of government could "be improved quite a lot or a great deal" (Bromley, Curtice & Seyd in Park et. al. 2001: 205-7). Putnam records that two-thirds of the American public trusted the government to do what was right in the 1950s and 1960s, but only 39% by 1998. In the 1960s, two-thirds of the population rejected the proposition that 'elected officials' did not care "what people like me think", yet by 1998 two-thirds agreed with it. In Western Europe, trust in politicians and political institutions had fallen in all the countries surveyed except the Netherlands, and confidence in parliaments had fallen in eleven of fourteen countries (Putnam in Pharr & Putnam 2000: 9-19).

The growth of **social inequality** in most Western countries is hardly in dispute. Between 1970 and 1994 the share of national income going to the wealthiest 20% in the United States rose from 15.6% to 20.1%, while that going to the poorest 20% fell from 5.4% to 4.2% (Berman 2000: 22). What supporters of the democratic decline thesis argue is that the constitutional right to vote and participate as equals in the political sphere is increasingly undermined as inequality grows in the economic sphere. Diamond speaks of "the raw purchase of political influence" by the wealthy (Diamond 1999: 274), Barber of the private funding of elections legitimating the control of political sovereignty by private interests (Barber in Axtmann 2001: 301), and Bello of a plutocracy governed by corporate wealth in America (Bello 2000: 2). A vicious circle develops here. The poor become increasingly disconnected from society, as traditional means of participation decline and participation is perceived as having less impact on political outcomes. The rich are then able to 'buy' political influence more easily as the masses offer less resistance, and the masses participate less as they see political outcomes as beyond their control.

The problem of **public accountability** of politicians and officials links in with the issues of participation, political awareness, trust and unequal access, together with governmental capacity which we shall discuss presently. If governments are less well connected with citizens, as the institutions of civil society become thinner, they can more easily give way to the demands of powerful businesses without being called to account informally by bodies such as mass parties, churches, trade unions or friendly societies. What were once regarded as aberrations in the political process, such as the occasional award of a defence contract to a donor to party funds, can easily become the norm. Decisions that meet the requirements of Ecclestone, Murdoch or Monsanto

may arouse the indignation of purists, but the means of resisting them have become minimal. Some of the formal mechanisms of accountability through the legislature remain intact, but to little avail if the opposition in Parliament cannot build up a head of steam in society, and in many cases the formal mechanisms have been weakened by a delegation of responsibilities to unelected quangos and agencies. In the United States, the power of oil companies, agribusiness and the arms industry hardly need elaboration. With a more pliant and trivialised media, public pressures on politicians on major policy issues has been reduced, even if it remains strong when special interests are threatened (Berman 2000: 44-66; Engel 2003: 2-3; Willis 2003: 21; Hertsgaard 2002: 10).

The **capacity** of governments to respond to the democratic will is said to have been eroded by the combined effects of globalisation, privatisation and the growth of supra-national authorities (Barber in Axtmann 2001: 295-311; Peeler 1998: 196-7; Scharpf in Pharr & Putnam 2000: 115-20). Privatisation clearly involves the surrender of governmental power, unless it is buttressed by effective public regulation of privatised businesses. And globalisation reduces the scope of a government to assert the public interest if businesses that dislike public control over working conditions or pollution are new freer to move elsewhere. Supra-national authority limits the scope still further, sometimes passing power to international financial institutions (IFIs) which are subject to virtually no democratic control, or sometimes to institutions such as the European Union where attempts at democratic control have yet to win public confidence. None of this necessarily precludes a thriving democracy if governments take a realistic view of what they can do, as Scharpf suggests in the case of some of the smaller European countries (Scharpf in Pharr & Putnam 2000: 120), but the general effect may be to reduce public faith in politicians if the latter are less able to meet public demands. With the growth of consumerism, the gulf is all too apparent between the ability of the private sector to produce the perfect hamburger and the inability of governments to produce the perfect policy. The fact that the hamburger can only reach the table by creating problems of deforestation, pollution, environmental degradation and low wages, all of which are then left at the door of the politician, may be lost on people who have been persuaded that they are customers rather than citizens.

In the face of all these allegations of democratic decline are arguments that either the decline has been exaggerated or that democracy is taking on new forms rather than declining. Johnston & Jowell see no decline in social capital in Britain and no fall in the membership of groups, but it is difficult to reconcile the percentage of the population who claim in survey interviews to be members of groups and the percentage who belong according to the groups' own figures. On a rough calculation, the official membership of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth is less than 50% of the figures claimed by survey respondents, and that for political parties 52% (Johnston & Jowell in Park et. al. 2001: 175-9). Dalton, Henn et. al., Inglehart and Norris all touch on the argument that we need to look in new places for democratic renewal. Dalton claims that many traditional 'party' functions have been taken over by interest groups, single issue lobbies and the media (Dalton 2002: 253); Inglehart that 'elite challenging' forms of participation are growing, and that the withdrawal of citizens' trust is directed mainly at 'authoritarian' and 'hierarchical' institutions, of which he includes the army, the police, the churches, parliaments, the Civil Service,

political parties, the educational system and the press (Inglehart in Norris 1999: 236-51); Norris that new forms of participation 'may be' replacing the old, including recycling, mobilisation on the Internet and volunteering at women's shelters and hospices (Norris 1999: 258). Henn et. al. insist that young Britons are interested in politics, but in a different way. They are sceptical of the motives and values of politicians and parties, and see little benefit from voting, but are concerned about Europe, education, militarism and post-material values (Henn et. al. 2002: 167). Young people are more likely than early generations to regard politics as "what goes on in Parliament" than in terms of "things that affect my life" (ibid: 169). Finally the contributors to Dionne & Di Iulio emphasise the role of religious groups as radical campaigners, and not merely as conservatives, in American politics (Dionne & Di Iulio 2000: 1-9; Parker in ibid: 56-66).

Let us skate over flippant questions such as whether the educational system or political parties are 'authoritarian' or 'hierarchical' institutions, whether visiting a bottle bank is a form of participation, or whether Lloyd George, Churchill or Bevan would ever have entered politics if they had dwelt too much on "things that affect my life". The more serious question is whether worthy concerns about the environment, hierarchy and authority are an adequate substitute for the daily grind of participation in a variety of institutions which may be (or have been) authoritarian, socially exclusive, conservative or even corrupt, but which at least provided a network through which governments could interact with civil society. If one accepts the 'new groups for old' thesis, one would at least want to note the minimal member participation in 'new' groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (Knight & Stokes 1996: 2; Putnam 1995: 71). And if one's preference is for 'non-hierarchical' groups such as anti-motorway protesters, one would want to know what long-term influence they can wield. When some non-hierarchical groups take to hounding paedophiles or blocking roads with petrol tankers, there might be concerns that democracy is giving way to crude populism.

Dalton's assertion that many traditional party functions have been taken over by other institutions illustrates a bigger problem. It is not followed by any discussion of how adequately the task of aggregating interests can be taken over by interest groups, or whether the proprietors of newspapers or television channels, who decide what constitutes 'news', provide a better source of information than party activists knocking on doors to discover people's concerns. One does not have to take the Luddite view that political structures and campaigns should be frozen in the mould of the 1950s to ask whether the weakening of traditional structures has created new openings for democratic participation and egalitarian values, or whether it has left a vacuum which is being filled by powerful business and media groups which use money and the manipulation of news to influence governments, and promote ignorance and populism amongst the masses.

THE EXPORT OF DEMOCRACY: NEW RAW MATERIALS FOR OLD?

By this stage the reader will be asking what relevance the alleged decline of democracy in the West has to the promotion of democracy in the Third World. Even if it is true that political participation in the West is declining in quality and quantity, and that global capital exercises a growing influence there, why should this concern the Third World citizen who simply wants the opportunity to vote out authoritarian, incompetent and corrupt politicians, and to be free of coercion by both government and anti-government forces? Such a citizen might anyway be unaware of, or indifferent to, the finer points of democratic decline in the West. Even if we assume an awareness, would not the importation of even the worst Western model be an improvement on the rule of Mugabe, Moi or Suharto? One could make irreverent comparison between today's democracy promoters and nineteenth century missionaries. The missionaries were not inhibited from preaching the gospel in Africa by the ungodly behaviour on many of their compatriots at home. Then, as now, many of the recipients of the message felt confident that they could retain the parts that were helpful to them, while discarding the less palatable bits. The chief might welcome the building of a mission hospital but continue to practice polygamy, just as the current politician may welcome aid for administering competitive elections while ensuring that resources bypass constituencies voting for the opposition. Yet these musings ignore at least two points. Firstly, there are parts of the world where people are aware of changing Western values and try to resist their importation, and secondly, the nature of the democracy exported cannot easily be separated from the environment in which it is assembled.

On the first point, there are voices in Asia which go beyond opposing 'Western values' merely as a pretext for preserving authoritarian rule. They argue that much social behaviour should reflect a collective consensus in society, rather than being a matter of 'individual choice' as in the West. The issues may include family responsibility, the observance of religious values, and the tolerance or otherwise of divorce, homosexuality, abortion and minority rights; and the general tolerance of activities and opinions which conflict with generally held cultural values. This goes against the Western 'permissive' trend of the past forty years which increasingly emphasises the right of the individual to 'choose' divorce, abortion or sexual deviance, or even public drunkenness or drug addiction, just as one might choose a particular brand of detergent (Chan in Diamond & Plattner 1998: 29-30; Fukuyama in *ibid*: 227; Kausikan in *ibid*: 24; Flanagan & Lee 2000: 656). This trend might be linked to increasingly individualistic societies where consumerism challenges the notion that the collective values of society might take precedence over individual whims. The argument on the Asian side is not necessarily that some despot should proclaim the acceptable values from on high, but that any democracy should, through the representative process, be able to decide which forms of human behaviour are contrary to indigenous values, and to outlaw them even if this infringes what elsewhere would be regarded as 'individual freedom'.

The issue becomes not just one a clash of cultures, but one of the appropriateness of entrenching 'human rights', or allowing a crude majoritarianism to triumph over consensus. If Western democracy promotion is seen as a means of letting in alien values, it may be resisted not only by authoritarian rulers but by a broader swathe of public opinion. In some cases the resistance is broadened into a constitutional as well

as a cultural campaign, as long-standing Western practices are resisted as well as newer permissive values. Why should Singapore or Uganda jeopardise economic development by permitting divisive multi-party politics? Why should the eight-year limit on the incumbency of an American president be imposed on societies where elders are venerated rather than pensioned off? Why should the tradition of 'helping one's own' be construed as corrupt? Much of this may be regarded as special pleading, but it can help to support arguments that something alien is being imposed.

The arguments about resisting alien values can, however, be overplayed. They surface most openly in Asia, less so in Africa where nineteenth century colonial rule was more effective in destroying much indigenous culture, and less still in Latin America where the dominant elites are largely of European descent. On these continents the indigenous response to democracy promotion is more pragmatic, reflecting the potential costs and benefits to different political actors, whether they be dictators trying to cling to power, oppressed minorities, professional people trying to advance human rights or business people seeking a quick profit. Each will decide which parts of the democratisation package they want to accept or reject but, to return to the second point, how far have changes in the West determined the content of the package, and how easily can the content be adapted to indigenous conditions? While we can easily compare the West today with fifty years ago, we cannot so easily compare 'democracy promotion' over a similar period. No such concept existed in an explicit sense in the 1950s, though most colonial powers were meticulous in drawing up formal constitutions with detailed checks and balances. On the actual functioning of these constitutions they had less to say, though the worst abuses of human rights were condemned. But little was said about the respective roles of the public and private sectors, the position of civil society or the direction of foreign policy. Neighbouring countries such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, or Kenya and Tanzania, could follow divergent paths over capitalism and socialism or relations with East and West. This echoed the diversity of democracies within the Western camp. Today democracy promotion is much more prescriptive, and it is arguable that the prescriptions reflect the narrower horizons of Western democracies. The ingredients include an odd mixture of newer fashions in the West (retrenchment, 'good governance' and free market fundamentalism) and institutions which many people would regard as having declined in the West (political parties and civil society).

The incongruity of these prescriptions goes beyond the obvious point that particular institutions and practices may be given the same names in both the West and the Third World, but have little in common beyond that. Free markets will look different in the Third World if there are few potential entrepreneurs, few consumers with surplus cash to spend and few conventions of ethical business behaviour. Retrenchment will not just be a matter of cutting social provision, but a matter of life and death if communities are deprived of health facilities or roads for marketing their crops. Civil society will not be a dense network of well-organised groups with connections in high places, but at best an agglomeration of (largely foreign) NGOs and informal local groups with few resources. But beyond these differences there is the question of how far the West is practising at home what it preaches abroad, and how far the democratic end product at home will influence the character of the exported version.

The Western prescription of **free markets** and **retrenchment** is open to charges of inconsistency in that the West still permits generous agricultural subsidies and restricts imports from the Third World, but the trend has been towards a substantial transfer of resources to the private sector, and less democratic control over that sector. This may be justified on the economic grounds that it creates more wealth, but politically it has left the most vulnerable groups with less voice, whether through the loss of trade union rights or through the removal of council house rents from political control. **Good governance** generally implies delegating more power to unelected quangos and agencies, many of which escape any real public accountability, while politicians are able to escape responsibility for the activities of these bodies. In the case of promoting **party competition** and **civil society**, the best that can be said is that Western countries put a very selective interpretation on these concepts. Civil society may have expanded in the West in the sense that more welfare provision is now in the hands of charities, but we have suggested that civil society, in the sense of a network of voluntary institutions that help to shape and respond to government action, has declined. As for political parties, not only have membership and party identification fallen drastically, but the ability of members to participate has diminished as party conferences have become public relations exercises, and policies are decided increasingly through leaders consulting small think tanks. Governments may still be chosen through party competition, but it is a competition in which growing numbers of the population are now mere spectators.

These changes were not, for the most part, imposed from on high, and owe their origins to a variety of forces, including globalisation, changing employment patterns, reduced leisure time, technological changes and the impact of television (Putnam 2000), but many of them are welcomed by ruling elites who believe that they actually enhance democracy. No longer are governments obstructed by narrow vested interests, whether they be professions and trade unions defending obsolete work practices or churches opposing Sunday shopping. Bureaucrats are freer to manage without political interference, and politicians are freer to follow their own inclinations without obstruction from unelected bureaucrats. Single-issue groups are less able to obstruct the greater good if planning procedures are less rigorous and police powers are increased. Extremist party activists no longer prevent leaders from following 'moderate' policies. Ministers who want to impose tighter immigration controls, or deal more firmly with crime, are now able to reflect the public mood. And with the economy in the safe hands of the private sector, people are able to enjoy growing prosperity without worrying unduly about the democratic process. All this adds up to a perfectly defensible view of a particular form of democracy, but we should at least be aware that it is a different form of democracy from that which was accepted, at least implicitly, until around the 1970s. Without falling into the trap of nostalgia, we can note that previously there was a greater acceptance of the contribution that groups in civil society might make, the role that the state might play in social and economic provision, and the need for transitory populist demands to be balanced against the longer term judgments of experts or professionals.

If it is the post-1970s version of democracy (let us call it post-industrial democracy) that now holds sway, how will this be reflected in Western attempts to promote democracy in the Third World? The general consensus in the literature is that, for good or ill, most democracy promotion goes little beyond the post-industrial model, and much of it only promotes 'electoral democracy' with little scope for

participation between elections. The main disagreement is over whether this is the result of a realistic assessment of what is feasible, or a deliberate attempt to keep any radical alternative off the agenda. Burnell (2000) and Carothers (1999) emphasise the practical difficulties in promoting anything more ambitious than a modified version of the current Western model, but there is also the view that democratic aid deliberately targets groups that will sustain existing inegalitarian power structures and a free market economy (Abrahamsen & Williams in Adar & Ajulu 2002: 307-28; Hearn & Robinson in Burnell 2000: 241-62; Hearn 2000: 815-30; Hearn 2001: 43-53; Howell & Pearce 2001: 230-1, 187-223; Robinson 1996; Tornquist 1999). Abrahamsen & Williams (323-4) see democracy promotion as part of post-Cold War triumphalism, and Robinson (29) sees it as a means of penetrating and conquering civil society. The theme in much of this literature is that urban NGOs socialised into Western values are aided, while more radical, often less formally structured, indigenous groups are marginalised.

What we appear to be looking at is both an ideology which accepts assumptions about the nature of democracy that reflect the post-industrial model, and a conception of civil society as a collection of bodies promoting welfare and self-help rather than a network of groups, institutions, practices and values which set the tone of the political process. Again we have a parallel with what Western civil society may have become. Tornquist offers an alternative route to democratisation.

International support for Third World democratisation should be redirected from the inconclusive promotion of civil society and social capital to the specific support of *genuine* actors in the *real* processes of democratisation such as ... the *genuine* Indonesian pro-democracy forces' attempts to bridge the gap between top-down activists and those working at the grassroots level, the Philippine democratisers' efforts to co-ordinate movements from below and link them up with the building of a new party, or the Kerela reformists' propelling of decentralisation and political planning from below. (Tornquist 1999: 168. Emphasis added.)

We can ask how one discovers what is 'genuine' and 'real', and quibble about whether the groups described are not a part of civil society rather than an alternative to it, but what emerges here is the notion of groups, actions and ideas interacting between different levels, rather than a range of ad hoc groups ploughing their own lonely furrows under the watchful eye of foreign donors. Without explicitly focusing on civil society, Ake and the contributors to the Glickman volume presented democracy largely in terms of celebrating the diversity of ethnic and functional groups rather than a narrow concern for parties and NGOs. They considered such devices as devolution, functional representation, proportional representation and various checks and balances to ensure that a diversity of voices was heard, and interacted with each other (Ake 1996: 132; Glickman 1995). The reader might sometimes detect a bias in favour of helping radical groups, just as Abrahamsen, Hearn and Robinson detected a current bias in favour of conservative groups, but whether these solutions are feasible or desirable is not our immediate concern. The more important question is why they, and the ideas behind them, are largely outside the compass of democracy promoters, and whether this reflects the prevailing values of post-industrial democracy. Such a question is raised more in the interests of speculation than in the expectation of a conclusive answer, but it is interesting that

even the more radical NGOs and left of centre political parties prefer a ‘realistic’ to an idealistic approach to democracy promotion. They may throw in references to equality, social justice and the social market, but they seem to regard it as impractical or improper to go far beyond post-industrial democracy.

THE DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Having established that Western powers want to promote democracy, and that the sort of democracy they want to promote may have been shaped by their own experiences over the past forty years, how easily is the wish translated into action? Some of the processes of interaction are suggested in Table 1.

Table 1. The Dynamics of Democracy promotion

THE WEST	THE THIRD WORLD	POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
<p>Forces: Globalisation and widening inequality.</p> <p>Values: Pluralism, consumerism, permissiveness and Christianity.</p> <p>Interests: Economic domination, security and ideological hegemony.</p> <p>Structures: Governments, armies, NGOs, businesses and religious groups.</p> <p>Tools: Courses, conferences, indirect aid to strengthen civil society and the economy. Support for political parties. Sanctions against undemocratic behaviour.</p>	<p>Forces: Globalisation, economic inequality and decay of states.</p> <p>Values: ‘Traditional’ concern for family and community (especially Africa and Asia); notions of social hierarchy (especially Latin America).</p> <p>Interests: Economic survival, elite survival and non-elite rights.</p> <p>Structures: Weakened states, unreliable armies, armed rebels, parties, indigenous and foreign NGOs and religious groups.</p> <p>Tools: As opposite, but some groups resist democratisation. Use of aid for undemocratic ends e.g. strengthening ruling party domination, corrupt privatisation.</p>	<p>Western advantages in terms of greater wealth, media penetration and military strength, combined with economic decline and decaying states in the Third World, might suggest growing Western ability to impose its version of democracy. But there are questions about the health of democracy in the West itself, and the apparently growing divergence of values between (a) Western permissiveness and self-indulgence, and (b) More ‘traditional’ family, community and religious values in the Third World. This raises doubts about the will to promote acceptable forms of democracy and the degree of resistance that may be encountered.</p>

Table 1 suggests that the Western powers enjoy many advantages. For the most part, they have gained materially from globalisation. They can therefore use economic incentives and punishments to encourage democratic behaviour. They have well organised structures to provide the necessary administrative capacity, and they have the motivation to promote their version of democracy. The structures are not just

Western governments, but extend to political parties, NGOs and IFIs, even though the democratic credentials of some of these bodies may be dubious. In the late 1980s, the motivation sometimes extended little beyond a belief that democratically elected governments would be more honest and competent than authoritarian ones, and therefore less of a burden on donors. With the ending of the Cold War, a greater crusading zeal crept in, with democracy as the ideology of the victors, and one which should be embraced by all. Whether democratisation was achieved by converting (or threatening) erstwhile authoritarians, or by facilitating free elections which were then won by their adversaries, Third World rulers became indebted to the West for their survival or accession to power, and were more likely to be subservient to Western interests than formerly.

Western strengths are mirrored by Third World weaknesses, with globalisation and worsening terms of trade weakening such autonomy as has survived, and state structures weakened by debt, retrenchment and growing public resistance, as governments fail to deliver tangible benefits. Much of the Western pressure for democratisation was pushing at an open door, as people organised themselves independently of governments in pursuit of both economic survival and political emancipation, but pressure helped to keep the door open when authoritarian rulers or their clients tried to cling on. A variety of tools have been employed, from clearly visible and powerful ones such as aid for virtuous countries and sanctions against sinners, to more subtle devices such as grants to strengthen democratic structures like legislatures and local authorities; courses and conferences on 'good governance', and aid to NGOs. The latter may be seen as a contribution to a more diverse civil society to sustain democracy, but it also contributes to the twin objectives of a free market economy as the state loses resources to the private and voluntary sectors. Again we need to avoid the implication that alien solutions were being imposed on unwilling populations. Many of the NGOs, including those campaigning specifically for democratisation and human rights, and virtually all political parties, are home grown, but governments and groups within Third World countries also have the ability to resist democratic pressures or to turn them to their own advantage. President Moi of Kenya was a pastmaster at the former. On the latter, Carothers (1999: 201) describes the way in which Nepalese MPs who visited the Danish Parliament came away more concerned with acquiring the sort of wealth enjoyed by the Danes than with their democratic ethos.

It is when we look at values that the relative strength of the West seems less impressive. This is not to do with the moral superiority of any one set of values, but with the question of how far Western values are understood, accepted or adaptable to indigenous conditions. The problem is not a lack of belief in democracy. Africans can claim the tradition of villagers meeting under the palaver tree to achieve consensus, Latin Americans the tradition of working class struggle for emancipation, and Asians the heritage of Gandhi and Nehru. Let us take as given the well-worn argument that democracy is never going to be easy in countries characterised by poverty, a limited sense of nationhood and externally imposed states which hover uneasily above society. Let us also recall the points made earlier about the clash between Western individualism and Asian (and to a lesser extent African) communitarianism. The notion that drunkenness or dressing immodestly are matters of individual choice, rather than of collective values underwritten by the state, may exacerbate resistance to Western democracy, but a more serious problem may be that Western democracy

promotion enables the formal democratic game to be played with greater polish while much of the real substance of political conflict is going on elsewhere. Parliaments may function impeccably, elections may be conducted relatively fairly, urban NGOs may chronicle their successful campaigns, and the sound of gunfire may be absent from capital cities, but that is only part of the story. Police violence against demonstrators in Nairobi was moderated largely as a result of pressure from foreign governments, yet the violent eviction of Kikuyu farmers up country by ruling party thugs passed largely unnoticed. The relative freedom with which President Museveni and his Government in Uganda can be criticised is admired, yet a violent struggle is continued by rebel groups which claim that the representative process will not accommodate them. Haugerud describes the survival of an 'informal civil society' in Kenya, with dissent expressed at funerals and football matches, in bars and markets, but all this is detached from the formal political process and does not even feed into opposition parties (Haugerud 1997: 17).

It may be unfair to criticise Western democracy promoters for failing to penetrate every nook and cranny of indigenous society, but we return to the question of what we understand civil society to be and what we expect it to do. In the West it has been a useful device for absorbing activities which the state cannot or will not perform, but we have suggested that it now contributes less to the shaping of ideas and values, or to guiding and limiting the direction of government. Western countries may be able to afford a thinning of civil society because they have well established formal political institutions with a wide measure of competence and legitimacy. But if a thinner version of civil society is prescribed as a major buttress to democracy in the Third World, where formal institutions are less secure, the strains may begin to show. NGOs may continue to contribute to welfare, development and self-help, but this is a far cry from the notion of a dynamic civil society acting as an intermediary between government and governed. As we argued above, the interesting question is not whether it would be feasible or desirable for the formal political process to connect more with the 'informal', often unorganised civil society, but why such a possibility is hardly considered by Western democracy promoters.

THE CASE OF TANZANIA

Tanzania offers several advantages to the would-be democracy promoter. Under one-party rule from 1961 to 1995 there was extensive intra-party participation, there is relatively little ethnic or religious antagonism, and little political violence outside Zanzibar. The establishment of multi-party democracy was an indigenous decision, albeit taken in the realisation that it might otherwise be imposed from outside, following persuasion by ex-President Nyerere and the report of a Presidential Commission. But strength on the 'participatory' axis of democracy was somewhat offset by weakness on the 'contestation' axis, with little experience of political competition at the national level. In common with much of the Third World by the 1990s, Tanzania saw a proliferation of democracy promoters, both indigenous and foreign. They had no need, as in Uganda, to argue for the right of opposition parties to exist, and no need, as in Kenya, to campaign against systematic violence against the opposition, though there were individual cases of police brutality. This left the promoters freer to concentrate more on the fine detail of democratic consolidation.

One striking feature of the process is the blurring of the distinction between external and indigenous promoters when one looks at the activities on the ground. Several of the foreign groups working within Tanzania, whether based on embassies, political parties or NGOs, are led by Tanzanians rather than foreigners, and many of the indigenous promoters speak an ideological language that would be easily recognisable in the West. To take two examples, the indigenous Research & Education for Development in Tanzania (REDET) carries out public opinion surveys; organises civic education through television programmes, newsletters and the provision of materials for schools and colleges; organises leadership courses for public servants which emphasise the context of the rule of law, human rights and tolerance, and organises discussion groups at every level from national politicians to villages. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), an agency of the German Social Democratic Party, organises meetings and courses on democratisation, local government, women's rights, freedom for the media, poverty reduction and conflict reduction (FES 2003: 3). Both organisations work in co-operation with governmental bodies, Parliament, political parties, NGOs and religious groups. Other groups specialise more in specific aspects of democracy such as human rights, sexual equality or helping communities to resist environmentally damaging projects. In yet other cases, democracy promotion blurs into supporting development projects in the belief that such development is a prerequisite of democracy. The Hans Seidel Foundation, an agency of the German Christian Social Union, is prominent in this field.

While nineteenth century missionaries faced the task of not only spreading Christianity but of persuading people to abandon their existing religions, the modern political crusaders do not face a comparable hurdle. Indeed many of their activities are a response to public demand rather than attempts to convert a reluctant public. There is little sign of resistance to democratisation on the grounds that it reflects alien values, as is sometimes the case in Asia, though President Mkapa has spoken of the need "to protect young and gullible minds from the corruption of what passes as modernity and freedom to indulge in instant gratification" (Mwambande 2003: 2), and there have been cases of cruise ships chartered by homosexuals not being allowed to dock in East Africa. The permissive society is sometimes deplored, as is undue Western 'interference' in judging when democratic norms have been breached, notably in the conduct of elections in Zanzibar. But for the most part Tanzanians have seen democratisation as an a la carte menu from which they can choose the appropriate fare. To complete the circle of mutual admiration, the promoters express satisfaction that their work is yielding results, as evidenced by people demanding more of the same, financial sponsors continuing their support and 'customers' expressing satisfaction with the courses and conferences attended (Taylor 1999: 86).

How do the actual achievements in democratisation compare with these expressions of satisfaction? An immediate problem is that the achievements are often those of attitude and behaviour which are difficult to quantify, whereas illiberal and undemocratic survivals can be pinpointed in cases of police brutality, repressive legislation or rigged elections. Interviews with democracy promoters and officers of NGOs and trade unions suggested an almost unanimous belief that democracy had advanced substantially over the past decade. Not only have multi-party elections been held, but people are said to be more willing to speak their minds and question authority, where previously they would have accepted the word of the ruling party.

The growth of the NGOs has helped by providing nuclei for campaigning on a variety of issues (Mutakyahwa in FES 2003: 92-3), and independent press can draw attention to the fallibility of politicians.

Paradoxically, greater freedom of expression can also help to highlight the survival or growth of undemocratic features. The Legal & Human Rights Centre and the NGO Policy Forum have both enumerated many of these. The catalogue includes the survival of laws which curtail the rights of women, children and employees, a continued ban on public demonstrations, the arbitrary use of police and military violence, and a Prevention of Terrorism Act which permits the confiscation of the property of suspects. Opportunities for participation are threatened by an NGO Bill which would make NGOs more accountable to the Government than their members, the courts are often corrupt, and the state has encouraged foreigners to exploit natural resources, with residents often evicted with minimal compensation. Social rights such as access to adequate health care are limited by the unavailability of medicine and charges for treatment (Legal & Human Rights Centre 2003; NGO Policy Forum 2002). Where legislation has been passed to protect the interests of citizens, animals or the environment, the limited capacity of the state has made enforcement difficult, whether in giving redress to the victims of rape or preventing the export of wild animals (Kikula & Kiangi in Semboja et. al. 2002: 131-53.)

In addition to limited state capacity, many observers have remarked on the survival of an authoritarian, or at least paternalistic, culture. The Bill imposing more onerous demands on NGOs is cited as an example of the thinking of politicians who want institutions to derive their legitimacy from the state, rather than vice versa. Trade union leaders complained of similar legislation which, they said, made them more answerable to the Government than to their members, and NGOs complained that village assemblies were used more for conveying messages from the Government than for local participation (NGO Policy Forum 2002: 6). Opposition parties are allowed to exist, but the police need a lot of convincing that they should be free to hold public rallies. One Tanzanian democracy promoter suggested that attitudes had changed least at the highest levels. Ordinary citizens, NGOs, journalists and business people might enjoy a variety of new found rights, but Government and Parliament did not work in a radically different way from in the past. Politics at the top is still a matter of hanging on to power and the benefits that go with it, and holding one's seat in Parliament requires the delivery of tangible benefits to constituents rather than holding the Government to account.

Even with all these blemishes, the state of democracy in Tanzania might compare well with many other Third World countries, but we are still left to explain why democratisation has not advanced further if there is apparently near-universal support for it. There are the obvious handicaps of poverty, dependency and limited governmental capacity, all of which limit the range of political choices, and therefore the degree of enthusiasm for political participation. Beyond that we may note the working of the party system, the alleged survival of a pre-democratic culture (discussed above) and the position of civil society. A multi-party system is one of the key demands of democracy promoters, yet Tanzania had had no experience of such a system before 1995, and the vast majority of respondents to the Presidential Commission on the Constitution expressed a preference for the continuation of the one-party state. The right to establish opposition parties was nonetheless conceded,

officially because the minority had a right to be represented, but also with a view to pleasing foreign donors and in the expectation that any opposition challenge could be seen off easily. With a first past the post electoral system and no major ethnic, regional or religious divisions which an opposition might exploit, this has proved to be the case. The mere existence of opposition parties was regarded by many interviewees as a significant contribution to democracy in providing a freer climate of debate and questioning authority, and this is echoed in academic literature. Ngware et. al. (2000: 84, 741) reported that 71% of the electorate preferred a multi-party system, Taylor sees local government today as more democratic, with an inclusive style of leadership (Taylor 1999: 85-6) and Snyder notes that effective protests are now easier (Snyder 2001: 142-3).

It seems somewhat generous to credit a few small opposition parties, which have little prospect of winning power in the foreseeable future, with having produced such changes, though ruling parties do often have an exaggerated fear of impending defeat which may make them more wary of public opinion. Even if this is true, experience since 1995 does not augur well for democracy if one expects multi-party politics to be one of its major cornerstones. As in many parts of the world, opposition parties contain many idealists and people who have made considerable personal sacrifices for refusing to conform but, outside Zanzibar, no opposition party has any real power base in more than a handful of constituencies and none has found any issue on which it can arouse public support (Mmuya 1998: 12, 27, 177). Democracy promoters might not see this as an insuperable problem, and might regard the present imbalance as the inevitable result of the ruling party enjoying the benefits of over thirty years in which to build a mass base. Opposition weaknesses might be tackled by encouraging more opposition politicians to attend the variety of courses available on democracy and political leadership, or through foreign parties taking like-minded Tanzanian parties under their wings. Opposition parties might pin their hopes on bigger Government subsidies or foreign donations, but this assumes that an inflow of money is a cause of political success rather than a consequence. All these remedies seem to ignore the fact that party competition is normally the product of past or present conflicts between groups in society, whether on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, region or ideology, and that such conflicts are not salient enough in Tanzania to sustain such competition.

None of this is to advocate the return of de jure one-party rule, but it does suggest that one should not regard party competition as a major building block for democracy simply because that was the way democracy developed in Europe. The obvious alternative is to look to civil society as a means of articulating people's interests and holding authority to account, but there is again the danger of building castles in the air rather than looking at what sort of indigenous foundations are to hand. The achievements of many NGOs over the past decade are impressive by any standards, in areas as diverse as getting a Human Rights & Good Governance Commission established, campaigning against female genital mutilation and preventing the establishment of an environmentally damaging prawn farming project in the Rufiji Delta (Legal & Human Rights Centre 2003: 43; Tanzanian Media Women's Association n/d; Journalists Environmental Association of Tanzania n/d). All this enhances the democratic process, but it is a process which is dominated mainly by the educated minority. The objection of critics in Tanzania, like those of Abrahamsen, Hearn, Robinson and Tornquist in other parts of the world, is that donors' aid to what they construe as 'civil society' is really aid to selected NGOs based mainly in the

capital and operating through formal structures which discourage participation by ordinary citizens. While there is common thread running through the diagnosis, the prescriptions vary. Cameron describes the limitations of pastoralist NGOs which, he says, lack accountability to their constituents and are dominated by donors, and he hints that their leaders need 'training' in participatory forms of community empowerment (Cameron 2001: 55-72). Kelsall also stresses the lack of accountability, but rather than prescribing training, with its implication of donors telling Africans how to operate democracy, he argues that donors often erode whatever accountability existed, and that more formal organisation may inhibit participation. External support for NGOs has done little to advance governance. Training and conferences on democratisation provide employment for organisers and a pleasant diversion for the participants, but they have little impact on ordinary people (Kelsall in Barrow & Jennings 2001: 138-48). Shivji takes a more pragmatic view. Looking at the case of Maasi farmers seeking to defend their interests against the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, a quango on which they have no representation, he suggests that they have combined the traditional Maasi structures, to ensure legitimacy and accountability, with modern NGOs supported by national and international campaigning. The general conclusion is "that there are basic forms of resistance on the ground which seem to combine skilfully available forms of resistance with traditional forms of legitimacy and organisation" and that we need to look beyond "the more visible, the so-called modern, civil society struggles" (Shivji 2000 in Semboja et. al: 114-5).

Despite the differences of emphasis, all three authors imply a tendency among donors towards a partial view of civil society, in which NGOs run by educated elites will foster habits of competence, integrity and participation that will ultimately strengthen the economy and democracy. Just as the free market is ultimately expected to produce a trickle down of wealth to the poorest, so NGOs will apparently produce a trickle down of democratic participation. And perhaps encouraging political parties to compete for power more vigorously will ultimately trickle down to arouse the enthusiasm of voters. Those on the radical side of politics, and not just conservatives, might prefer this top-down approach if it gives greater prominence to issue such as human rights, feminism and environmentalism, rather than the interests of peasants wanting to preserve their traditional rights. We cannot be sure that the dreams of all these social and political engineers will not eventually come true, but we should remind ourselves of where the dreamers come from. Democracy in the West today may function tolerably well through the application of 'managerial' solutions, the use of the voluntary sector ('civil society'?) to mop up welfare functions discarded by the state and the use of political parties to deliver votes rather than to involve the community, but would all this be possible if democracy had not previously had deeper roots in society? Is the West living on previously accumulated social capital? Tanzania has not built up the same store of social capital. The various forms of direct and indirect aid for democratisation have produced many beneficial results, but we are still entitled to ask whether grafting on currently fashionable Western notions of 'good governance' and 'civil society' will be sufficient to produce the sort of interaction between government and governed that is at the heart of democracy.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

'Democracy promoter' was not a common occupation in the 1940s, but there were people in the West who gave considerable thought to how democracy might work in the colonies after independence. Churchill's Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, expressed concern about the gulf between politically minded Africans and "the vast bulk of African cultivators living under tribal conditions". His successor, Arthur Creech Jones, denied that any African political party could bridge the gap between the aspirations of the rural masses and the political rituals of Accra (Hargreaves 1979: 34, 340). Such cautious views were cast aside with the stampede for independence in the 1950s and 1960s, but the political rituals of Accra, and indeed most other capitals, have not always inspired great confidence. 'Bridging the gap' has not become any easier. The British colonial secretaries of the 1940s might be depicted as reactionaries ordering the nationalist tide to recede, but they were at least aware that effective democratic government rested on what we would now call civil society. Today we have rediscovered the concept, yet we live in a political system where governments defer to global capital, to wealthy party supporters, to narrow think tanks and crude populism, while institutions rooted in society have greater difficulty in making their voices heard. Western politicians, diplomats and NGOs will, almost without exception, say that a 'vibrant' civil society is the key to building democracy in the Third World. But we need to know whether it is a civil society in their own image, or one that really connects between government and governed.

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