

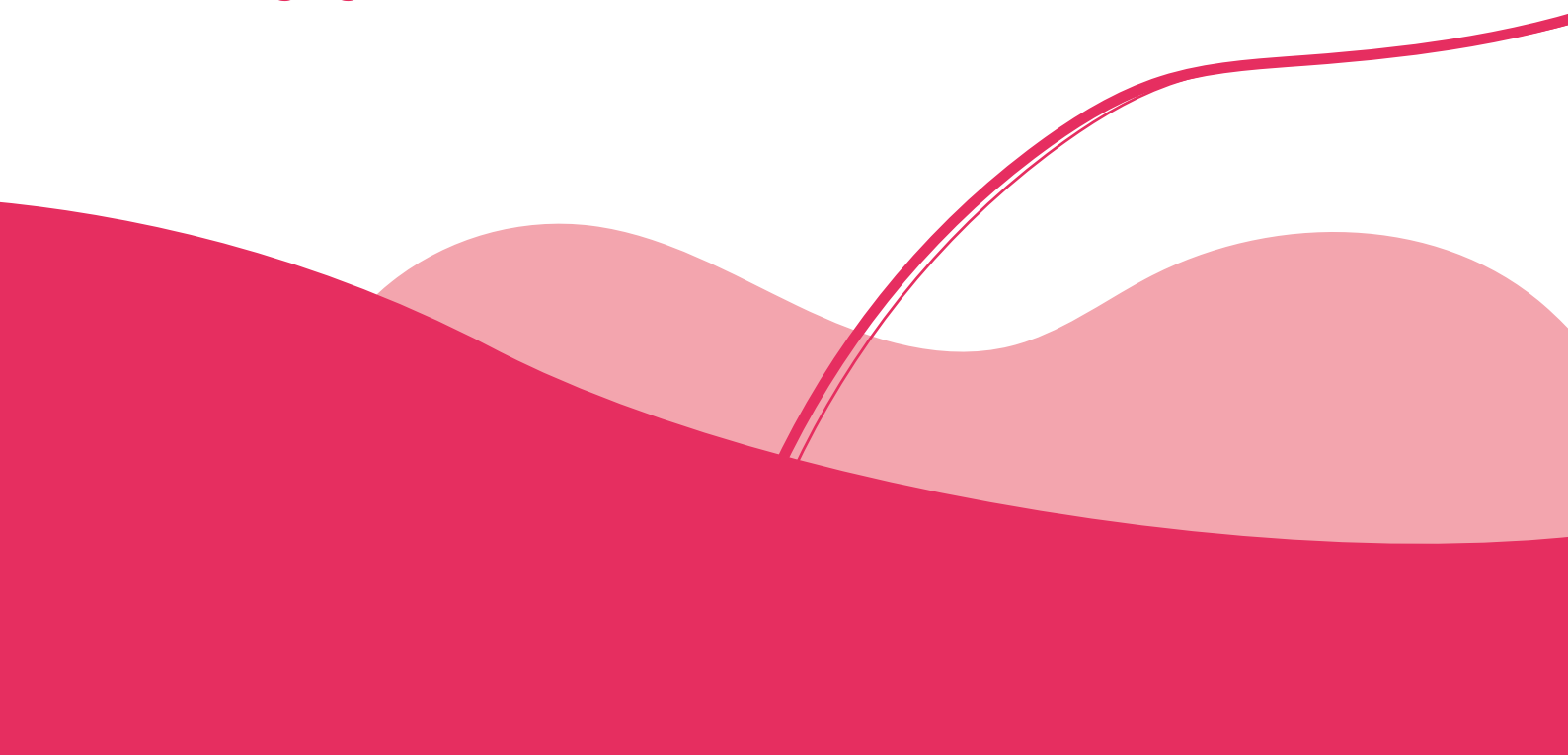


***The Global State of Democracy 2017***  
*Exploring Democracy's Resilience*

**Chapter**

# 2

Democracy's resilience  
in a changing world



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# Democracy's resilience in a changing world

Democracy has grown impressively from the 1970s to the 2000s. Yet in 2017, despite democracy's long-term resilience, it appears to be fragile in many countries. From new populist movements that threaten the rights of minorities to the stark challenges of corruption and state capture, democratic institutions are vulnerable to setbacks, the erosion of rights and the manipulation of electoral processes. Concerns about democracy's health have raised an important question: What makes democracy more resilient? This chapter explores the global state of democracy by exploring the conditions for its resilience. How can citizens resist illiberal or autocratic regimes? When do checks and balances among institutions prevent state capture and backsliding? How can structural risks to democracy in underlying social and political relationships be reduced? Can democracy be designed to be more resilient? What roles do outsiders play in protecting democracy from peril when it is under threat? The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for building more resilient democracies to face these challenges and to weather the crises that lie ahead.

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**Written by**  
Timothy Sisk<sup>2</sup>

## 2.1. Introduction: what makes democracy resilient?

Concern has grown from scholars and policymakers over the possible global decline of democracy worldwide (Annan 2016). Amid global unease over the rise of populism and 'strong-leader' autocrats, or the endemic challenges of state capture and corruption in many countries, enthusiasm for democracy seems to have decreased: doubts have arisen about its ability to address the contemporary problems of providing peace and security and broad-based human development. Although democracy is currently under threat, it remains an ideal and a best-possible governance system. Democratic values among citizens, and within institutions and processes at the national and international levels, have proven to be remarkably resilient in many ways. Mass

demonstrations against corruption took place in 2017 in Brazil, Romania, South Africa, the United States and Venezuela; citizens have taken to the streets to reclaim democracy. This chapter explores democratic resilience: the ability of democratic ideals, institutions and processes to survive and prosper when confronted with change, challenges and the crises they may produce.

Democracy's values are historically longstanding and enduring, even though the ideals have been subject to criticism from many philosophical and practical perspectives over time (Dahl 1989; Denyer 2016). Democracy reflects a core value enshrined in article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the 'will of the people' is the basis for the legitimacy and authority of sovereign states; it reflects a common and universal desire for peace, security and justice. The article stipulates that:

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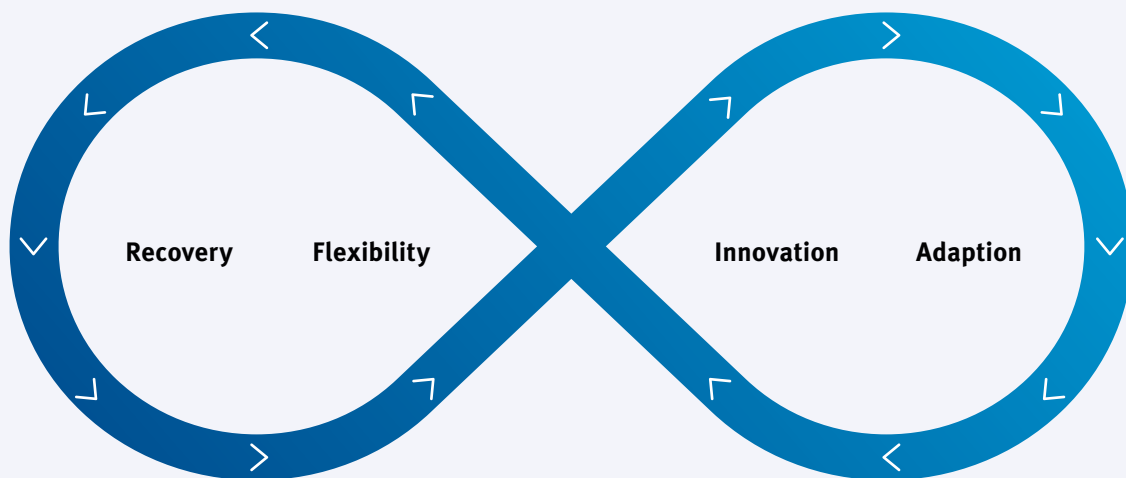
(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives, (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country, (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Democracy reflects the fundamental ethical principles of human equality and the dignity of persons, and is thus inseparable from human rights (Beetham et al. 2008). Its core principles are manifested in different ways: the institutions, processes and elements of democracy such as electoral systems or arrays of institutions have grown organically and

uniquely in various countries (Beetham et al. 2008; Held 2006). Modern analysis must account for the wide variation in the norms, institutions and processes that collectively comprise today's democracies that goes far beyond traditional theories of liberalism or social democracy; democratic variation requires careful, close-in analysis of how local models reflect or detract from broad democratic values (Youngs 2015).

The gaps between the international norms of the 'right' to democracy and its implementation, particularly in elections, are often at odds with the realities of managed elections, in which the rules of the game are biased. Participation is often managed and the playing field is unfair, and the results at times are fraudulent and lack credibility, resulting in 'flawed or failed contests' that 'can undoubtedly wreck fragile progress' (Norris 2014: 3). Democratic rights are often overlooked in the localized political realities of

## The key characteristics of democratic resilience



Resilience is the property of a social system to cope with, survive and recover from complex challenges and crises. The characteristics of a resilient social system include flexibility, recovery, adaptation and innovation.

Resilient social systems are flexible, adaptable, innovative and can recover from challenges or crises

state 'capture', particularly in countries with abundant export-valuable natural resource commodities. Some citizens have turned to extremist political solutions, which threaten the foundations of human rights, democracy and peace that have characterized the post-World War II international system.

Yet democracy shows considerable signs of resilience. Resilience is defined as a political system's ability to cope with, survive and recover from complex challenges and crises that present stress or pressure that can lead to systemic failure. Resilient social systems are flexible (able to absorb stress or pressure), can recover from challenges or crises, adaptable (can change in response to a stress to the system), and innovative (able to change in order to more efficiently or effectively address the challenge or crisis). For further information on International IDEA's definition of resilience see the Background Paper accompanying this chapter, *Democracy and Resilience: Conceptual Approaches and Considerations* (Sisk 2017).

This chapter explores the relationship between democracy and resilience to inform ways to build democracies that are more resilient. It focuses particularly on current events in 2016–17, complementing the analysis of International IDEA's Global State of Democracy (GSoD) indices that cover the period 1975–2015. This current analysis explores in more depth critical issues that raise questions about democracy's resilience, including the ways that devoted citizens, strong institutions, cohesive societies, and international support contribute to its ability to survive and thrive.

Section 2.2 presents an overview of the current global context: democracy under threat and the causal explanations of complex, globally related challenges that lead to social polarization, political capture and democratic crises. Resilience in democracy is explored in two distinct contexts: (a) turbulent (and sometimes indirect) transitions to democracy and (b) recent setbacks in established democracies. Section 2.3 affirms that democracy has inherent

value: it can contribute over time to peace and security and to development goals; democracy and inclusive, accountable governance are at the centre of virtuous cycles of human progress.

Section 2.4 explores the challenge of populism and the resilient responses of citizens who defend democracy when it is threatened. Section 2.5 explores dimensions of institutional resilience: when political systems provide checks and balances that advance accountability in politics. Section 2.6 examines policies that reduce the underlying structural risks that can undermine democracy, particularly ethnic diversity and gender- and class-based inequalities. The argument that democracy can be designed to be resilient is discussed in Section 2.7, which explores these issues in societies that are deeply divided and conflict affected. Section 2.8 evaluates resilience through external support: when international actors (such as regional and international organizations) or transnational civil society act in concert to help safeguard and promote democracy within countries. Section 2.9 concludes with a set of recommendations for future efforts to build more resilient democracies worldwide.

## 2.2. Democracy imperilled: challenges, crises and opportunities

The 21st century offered promise as rapid technological innovations helped bring unparalleled development and continued gains in democracy, fundamental rights and prosperity. Yet, in 2017 the world is fragmented, conflicted and under threat from global challenges such as climate change, migration and widening socio-economic inequality—the effects of which undermine social cohesion, put peace at risk, and threaten to reverse hard-won 20th-century gains in all world regions. It is a tenuous moment for democracy. New challenges, if not adequately addressed, endanger democracy in today's complex world. The contemporary global, regional and country-specific landscape of democracy has rapidly evolved in recent years, raising questions about democracy's ability to thrive amid recent challenges and crises. What challenges threaten democracy today?

## After the third wave: challenges to (and gains in) democracy

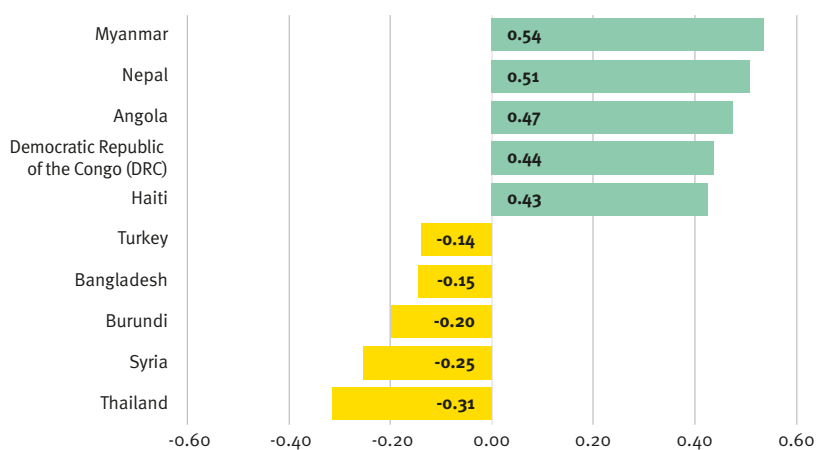
Since 1974, a third wave of democratization has emerged in a clear pattern of transitions from authoritarian rule and civil war towards the adoption of new, democratic constitutions, electoral processes, and broadening freedoms and participation (Brown 2011; Møller and Skaaning 2013). The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s triggered another wave of democracy that extended unprecedented freedoms to countries in Europe. Democracy thrived and deepened to become the world's principal form of governing institutions, and the quality of democracy expanded gradually in both established democracies and those that have transitioned since the 1970s. Development proceeded rapidly around the world: there was steady progress in human development in 2000–15 through the attainment in many countries of the Millennium Development Goal targets of reducing poverty, advancing the rights of women and girls, and improving access to clean water and sanitation (UN 2015).

Countries that successfully transitioned from authoritarian rule or civil war to democracy in the period 1974–2015 did so through domestic or national processes of negotiation and reform, at times with support from the international community (Stoner and McFaul 2013; Ould-Mohammedou and Sisk 2016). For example, United Nations envoys and country-level resident coordinators played pivotal supportive roles at key moments in the transition processes in Myanmar and Tunisia. In transitioning Nepal (2006–11) and in Colombia following the 2016 Havana peace agreement, the UN-fielded political missions supported the transition and the demobilization of rebels. Yet there is considerable consensus that successful transitions to democracy are internal processes. As Figure 2.1 suggests, progress and regression in democracy scores have occurred around the world over the last decade of the GSoD indices.

Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Myanmar and Nepal have

FIGURE 2.1

### Relative gains and losses in Representative Government, 2005–15



**Notes:** This graph presents scores for the countries that saw the most variation—relative gains and declines—on the Representative Government dimension of the GSoD indices from 2005 to 2015 (from -1 to +1). Positive scores indicate positive developments during this period, and negative scores indicate negative developments.

**Source:** GSoD indices 2017 (Representative Government Index).

experienced the highest relative gains in representative government scores. All five of these countries had a score of 0 in 2005, meaning that they did not have competitive elections. Bangladesh, Burundi, Syria, Thailand and Turkey showed the highest relative losses, but of these, only Syria regressed to a score of 0. For decades, a prevailing assumption has been that in most instances, once democracy is ‘consolidated’, it will persist (Alexander 2002). Democracy is generally considered to have consolidated when two conditions are met. First, citizens and political leaders believe it is the only legitimate way to claim political authority. Second, there is greater institutionalization: the rules of democracy that allow for the pursuit of its principles are further defined, refined in practice and adapted to changing social contexts.

Progress towards democracy during a transition is not linear or inevitable (Carothers 2002), and countries considered to be consolidated democracies can experience backsliding (Lust and Waldner 2015). Indeed, democracy faces challenges in Western Europe. For example,

Since 1974, a third wave of democratization has emerged in a clear pattern of transitions from authoritarian rule and civil war towards the adoption of new, democratic constitutions, electoral processes, and broadening freedoms and participation



Democracy faces challenges in Western Europe. For example, polarization undermines the social cohesion necessary for democracy to function well; observers of Germany worry about the fragile centre coalition that has represented modern German democracy. The narrowly approved 'Brexit' referendum in June 2016 in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (EU) has raised concerns about the ability of a razor-thin majority to make decisions that deeply affect the lives of all citizens

polarization undermines the social cohesion necessary for democracy to function well; observers of Germany worry about the fragile centre coalition that has represented modern German democracy (Grimm 2016). The narrowly approved 'Brexit' referendum in June 2016 in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union has raised concerns about the ability of a razor-thin majority to make decisions that deeply affect the lives of all citizens. Snap elections in June 2017 demonstrated the stability of democracy in the UK when the government went ahead with polls in the wake of terrorist attacks.

Echoing global concerns about restrictions on civil society (Mendelson 2015), in countries such as Azerbaijan, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia there has been a rollback of independent organizations, free media and freedom of opposition (Shekhovtsov and Pomerantsev 2016). Events in Hungary and Poland have raised concerns about their democratic consolidation: economic stress has combined with exclusivist views of social and political identities to elect strongly ideological governments (Rovni 2014). In January 2017, protestors in Romania took to the streets in several cities for weeks to express anger over a government decree that would have weakened accountability laws for government officials (Lyman and Gillet 2017). These protests won considerable concessions from the embattled government, yet some worried whether the masses can sustainably serve as a check on corruption (Voluntiru and Tintariu 2017).

Democracy is also being tested in other regions. In Africa, democratization is evolving rapidly as a generation of leaders associated with independence is likely to be replaced soon by a new generation. For example, in Angola, South Africa and Zimbabwe the strength of multiparty democracy will be tested for possible alternations in ruling regimes for the first time since independence. Uganda has tightly controlled elections, and opposition parties have been restricted or impeded. Conflict erupted in Burundi from 2015 through 2017

over a constitutional crisis, giving rise to an intractable political crisis; in 2016 and 2017 crises erupted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon and Zimbabwe over executive manipulations to retain power beyond constitutional term limits. In Ethiopia, protests have erupted along ethnic lines, causing an ongoing state of emergency with continued concerns about the country's vulnerability to more widespread crisis (Jeffrey 2016). Power plays by presidents often lead to violent protests and cycles of repression, as in Burundi where an intractable 'third-term' claim by President Pierre Nkurunziza precipitated near state failure (ICG 2016).

In Asia and the Pacific, democracy remains uneven as countries such as China and Viet Nam enjoy continued economic progress under one-party systems; in 2016, Viet Nam transitioned to new leadership through an election by delegates of the country's ruling Communist Party. The Philippines—which transitioned to democracy following its 'People Power' revolution of 1983–86—has been subjected to a rollback of rights and freedoms justified by a populist war on drugs in search of order and security (Teehankee 2016). Opposition parties in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Maldives, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand have called into question the validity of electoral processes and boycotted or refused to accept the results; this pattern indicates the weakness of democracy in the region (UNDP 2015).

Patterns in Latin America suggest that democracy has become the nearly universal norm in this region, which is enjoying its most in-depth democratic consolidation to date (except for Cuba and Venezuela) (see Mujal-Leon 2011 on Cuba). The region has seen the expansion of rights for indigenous persons and groups, and rights of sexual orientation. Yet observers argue that democracy in the region remains a troubled system of governance given the persistence of economic inequality (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2014). El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico

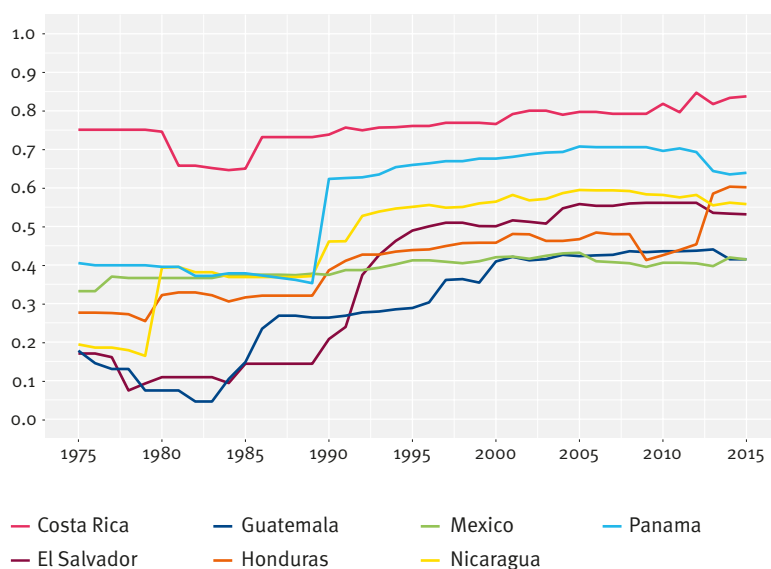
have experienced armed violence stemming from organized crime, and other forms of human insecurity, such as gender-based violence, which restrict democracy (Santamaría 2014). The GSoD indices data on personal integrity and security in Figure 2.2 indicate that a number of countries in Central America and Mexico have continued to experience high levels of personal integrity rights violations since the period of initial democratization in the early 1990s. While there have been some improvements in personal security and integrity since the 1970s and 1980s, high levels of violations have persisted in the last 25 years despite the broader expansion of democracy in these countries. In such insecure environments, civil society, independent media, judges and prosecutors, and local government officials have all been targeted by criminal organizations and illicit networks. Civil society is often under pressure because of its success in mobilizing, organizing and holding governments to account.

### Challenges affecting contemporary democracies

Drivers of demographic, economic and social forces appear to be the root causes of authoritarian resurgence, contentious politics and democratic decline globally (Human Rights Council 2012). Some observers link these trends to the regression of democracy: they contend that globalization processes have induced social exclusion and contention, which present new and fundamental challenges for democracy (Munck 2002). In the post-globalization world of economic interdependence, these challenges interact with national and local contexts to produce localized social dislocation and grievances. Countries face tremendous pressure on governance in response to climate change and the effects of extreme weather events and natural disasters on land, water, biodiversity and the oceans. Research has linked environmental pressures to the vulnerability of communities and countries to conflict: governance institutions face the potential of environmentally driven conflicts at the local and national levels (often related to

FIGURE 2.2

### Personal Integrity and Security in Central America and Mexico, 1975–2015



Notes: This graph shows the trends across Central American countries and Mexico for personal integrity and security from 1975–2015. The y-axis shows the score and the x-axis the years. Scores in the y-axis range from 0 to 1. Higher scores indicate a higher degree of personal integrity and security.

Source: GSoD indices 2017 (Personal Integrity and Security Index).

land and extractive industries); without 'good' governance, institutions may escalate into violence (UNEP 2004).

The Independent Commission on Multilateralism (2016) identified several challenges that governments and societies face, including environmental challenges stemming from climate change effects, social pressures from changing communities, economic issues such as youth unemployment, and management of natural resources and valuable commodities. Migration is a serious transnational challenge to democracy that has led to social polarization, xenophobia and anti-immigrant movements in many countries (Piper and Rother 2015). While migration generally produces net positive economic effects for recipient societies (UNDP 2009), migration and debates over immigration policy and responses have created new strains for many democracies. Countries as varied as Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa and the USA face

In Asia and the Pacific, democracy remains uneven as countries such as China and Viet Nam enjoy continued economic progress under one-party systems



Migration is a serious transnational challenge to democracy that has led to social polarization, xenophobia and anti-immigrant movements in many countries

migration-related pressures, and have seen violence against immigrants.

Among the most difficult and challenging global problems with local effects is ensuring security and combating terrorism; many governments justify restrictions of rights and freedoms with the need to prevent terrorism. Increasing terrorist attacks have had deleterious effects on democracy, most notably in relation to the restrictions on freedoms associated with responses to terrorist events (Chenoweth 2013; Large 2006).

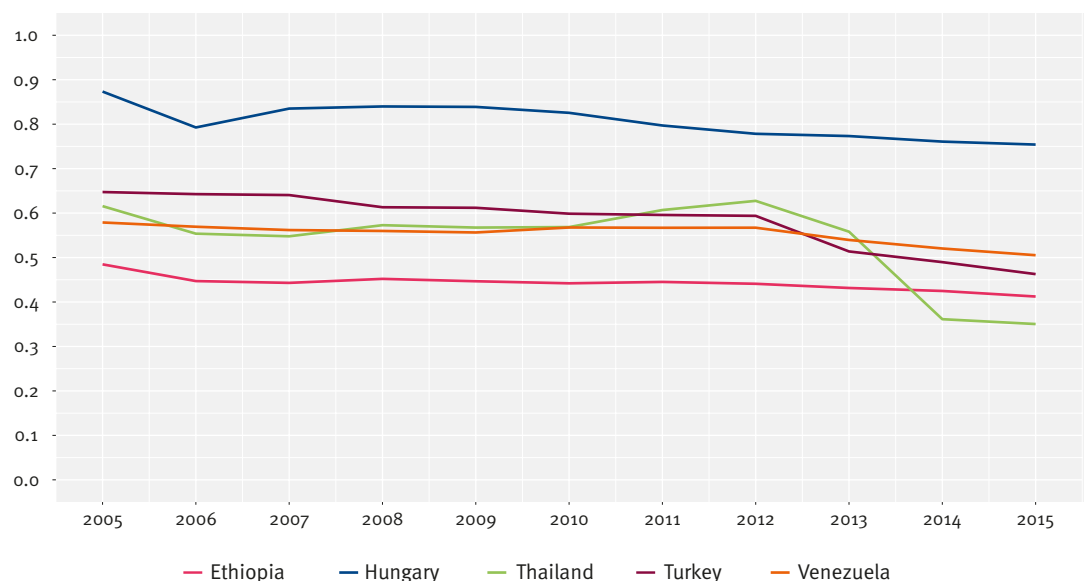
In many contexts, however, discontent with democracy stems from the internal challenges found in local-level economic, demographic and social contexts. In many societies, persistent socio-economic inequality and marginalization destabilize the political process and support for institutions: democracy does not appear to change the challenges of everyday life for people living in poverty or those who face other social disadvantages. In South Africa's local elections of 2016, voters

gave a stunning rebuke to the 25-year ruling African National Congress—ousting it in the major municipalities of Johannesburg and Tschwane/Pretoria—over frustrations about the lack of service delivery, corruption and persistent inequality that continues to reinforce social differences entrenched during apartheid. In April 2017, protests erupted nationally calling for the removal of President Jacob Zuma, who was accused of graft and economic mismanagement.

There are concerns in South Africa, Venezuela and Zimbabwe that democracy has failed to end poverty or to deliver security. Weak or corrupt governance by democratically elected regimes has often failed to address the needs of people living in poverty. In turn, social inequalities and marginalization can lead to local crises, conflict and violence. Armed conflict has been on the rise around the world in the last decade, with enduring threats to human security (Dupuy et al. 2016; Marshall and Cole 2014; Petterson and Wallenstein 2015).

FIGURE 2.3

**When democratic rights erode: civil liberties in Ethiopia, Hungary, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela, 2005–15**



**Notes:** This graph shows the trends in civil liberties in Ethiopia, Hungary, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela from 2005–15. The y-axis shows the score and the x-axis the years. Scores in the y-axis range from 0 to 1. Higher scores indicate greater respect for civil liberties.

**Source:** GSoD indices 2017 (Civil Liberties Index).

Figure 2.3 illustrates the demonstrable declines in civil liberties in Hungary, Ethiopia, Thailand, Turkey and Venezuela over the last decade, as borne out by the GSoD indices. When political, economic or social challenges are inadequately addressed, they increase the risk of crisis escalation with local—and sometimes global—implications. Crises in democracies include succession struggles, state failures or lapse of government authority, election-related or other political violence or threats of violence, terror events aimed at disrupting social cohesion, or direct violence between the state/police and the opposition. Violence is especially damaging to democracy. Recurrent crises negatively affect women's participation in politics, and election-related violence is often deliberately perpetrated to depress women's participation in voting, running for office, or involvement in public decision-making or political life (IFES 2015).

### 2.3. Reaffirming democracy

It is now vital to reaffirm democracy as a value system for governance and as a form of government. Ruling regimes typically profess their commitment to democratic principles, and to universal human rights, as a system of laws, institutions and practices through which state authority is legitimized. According to International IDEA's Voter Turnout Database (2016), 186 countries held legislative elections in the period 2011–15, with nearly 3.37 billion voters. More countries have the basic framework of democratic institutions and processes now than ever before. In the 21st century, state legitimacy originates from democratic processes that empower the state to provide security and deliver services (ostensibly, further enhancing its legitimacy) (OECD-DAC 2010).

#### **Democracy's long-term utility: peace and prosperity**

There is increasing consensus that democracy—as an enduring set of values and principles and as a form of government—is a fundamental building block of human progress. Democracy is a form of non-violent conflict management that can reconcile divisions and contention

within society; it is the basis of sustainable peace within countries. While authoritarian governments may be 'resilient', they do so at the cost of human rights. For years, scholars have argued that democracy generally contributes to international peace—the 'democratic peace theory' holds that democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with other democracies—and can enable an internal 'democratic peace': democracies are less likely to experience internal social conflict that can escalate to civil war (Gleditsch and Hegre 1997; Russett and Oneal 2001).

In addition to its intrinsic value, democracy has enduring instrumental utility for development and peace (Sen 1999a, 1999b). It facilitates the equality of citizens' voices, and thus allows for the expression of interests and preferences and the free flow of information, both of which are essential elements of development. The sustainability of the social contract within countries is assured through inclusion, while participation in governance is undergirded by the protection of fundamental rights. Policy practice in international organizations has evolved since the founding of the UN and the modern Bretton Woods system to recognize that goals such as development and growth, prevention of conflict, and broadening participation, dignity, equity and sustainability must be pursued simultaneously. Democratic governance provides the normative framework through which policies to address these issues are 'formed and executed' (Asher et al. 2016: 80).

UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) builds on the premise that 'governance matters': it states that peaceful and inclusive societies are central to achieving all other development goals. SDG16's promotion of 'peaceful and inclusive societies' and 'effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions' reflects a commonly accepted understanding that democracy, peace and development outcomes are inherently intertwined, and that reducing violence, delivering justice and combatting corruption are all essential to achieving sustainable development (Jandl 2017).

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Democracy is a form of non-violent conflict management that can reconcile divisions and contention within society; it is the basis of sustainable peace within countries

Democracy is seen as an institutional and enduring means of resolving and preventing social conflict, and thus democratic governance contributes to peace, which in turn contributes to development opportunities (Brown 2003). Greater inclusivity over time contributes to democratic accountability: democracy introduces a culture of equality that empowers historically marginalized people; inclusion helps create the 'demand side' necessary for creating the will for the state to respond on the 'supply side'. The key to democracy's contribution to development is its ability to non-violently manage conflict as a first-order priority, and subsequently to extend and improve government services over time. Democracy, peace and development work together over the long term to provide a virtuous cycle of progress even as patterns and progress vary by context. Cross-cutting civil society engagement in democratic transitions has been found to be associated with a reduced risk of terror attacks in a cross-country analysis (Pospieszna 2015).

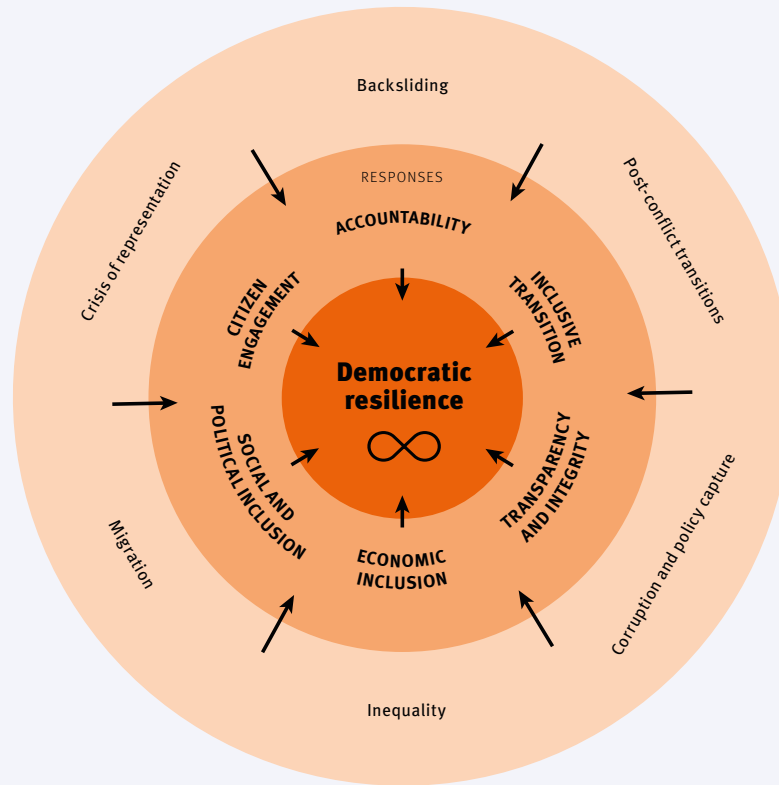
Vicious cycles of state fragility reflect how poor, captured or violently contested control over political power is at the heart of violence, development reversals and humanitarian catastrophes that violent conflict creates (UNDP 2012; World Bank 2011). State fragility is caused by 'vicious' cycles of poor governance, poverty, corruption and inequality, and episodes of social violence, which are mutually reinforcing. Some observers argue that such fragility is more likely to be found in 'partial' or grey-zone democracies, 'competitive authoritarian regimes' or hybrid democracies than in autocratic states, which can be stable (Brownlee 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010). Countries in turbulent transitions from authoritarian rule are especially vulnerable to crises such as constitutional disputes or election-related violence and potentially reversion to authoritarian rule. Events such as communal conflict, election-related violence or state repression have been statistically shown to be more common in periods of political transition and change (Goldstone et al. 2010). During crises of transition, countries are

vulnerable to falling into downward spirals of conflict, economic crises, and 'states of fragility' (OECD-DAC 2016).

Of the countries involved in the 2010–11 Arab Uprisings, only Tunisia has managed to make progress towards transforming from authoritarianism to democracy. Libya, Syria and Yemen are still plagued by the consequences of civil war: human flight, food insecurity, lack of medicine, the suspension of education and the collapse of livelihoods; in turn, they are caught in a web of regional rivalries along sectarian and global geopolitical lines (Cordesman 2016). Thus, while in the long run democracy is both intrinsically and instrumentally beneficial for acquiring security and prosperity, transitions from authoritarianism to democracy are fraught with peril and threats of complete state failure.

Democracy's relationship with economic development (which appears to contribute to sustainable peace) is more contested, in both the scholarly literature and in practice. Although many studies have investigated this link, some have found no direct relationship between democracy and development, as non-democratic countries can have high economic growth rates; research on a direct, linear, immediate relationship between democracy and development is inconclusive (Rocha Menocal 2007). Others argue that modern inclusive democratic politics and competition for citizen support can induce the creation of public goods that facilitate the development of a middle class. In this way, democratic politics responds to citizen interests through the provision of basic needs such as a reliable system of market regulation, financial regulation, education and health care, and infrastructure. (Acemoglu et al. 2014; Stasavage 2005; Halperin, Siegle and Weinstein 2005; Leftwich 2005). Indeed, many people today associate democracy as much with their own personal welfare as with the voice, or avenues for expression, that democratic institutions and practices provide. The most important relationship between democracy and development may be their 'co-evolution' in the long run (Gerring et al. 2012).

## Democracy under pressure: Resilient responses



### 2.4. Resilient citizens: confronting problems and perils of representation

Data on declining confidence in political parties show that less than 20 per cent of the population in EU member states had favourable opinions of political leaders and political parties (European Commission 2014). In Latin America and the Caribbean, a 2011 study of public attitudes showed that trust in political parties was between 20 per cent in the lowest-scoring country (Paraguay) and only 40 per cent in the highest-scoring country (Mexico) (Corral 2011). This decline of confidence in parties reflects the overall trend that representation is under stress. Social movements mobilized by populism lack the 'inter-mediation' mechanisms linking society to democratic institutions that political parties have historically provided, together with political leaders' ability to effectively moderate and reach consensus across political divides.

Human Rights Watch's 2017 annual report notes a deterioration in human rights around the world, which is linked to a shared 'politics of fear' (HRW 2017). Human rights monitors such as Amnesty International (2017) have recently noted that: 'Seismic political shifts in 2016 exposed the potential of hateful rhetoric to unleash the dark side of human nature... more and more politicians call themselves anti-establishment and wield politics of demonization that hounds, scapegoats and dehumanizes entire groups of people to win the support of voters' (HRW 2017) citing 'a global pushback against human rights'. A common thread in many of these contexts has been populism—appeals by demagogic political elites who claim to stand for the common person and advocate illiberal (that is, against fundamental rights) perspectives that offer romantic and often unattainable visions of society. Populist movements are complex, and may have positive implications for democracy by giving

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The decline of confidence in parties reflects the overall trend that representation is under stress. Social movements mobilized by populism lack the 'inter-mediation' mechanisms linking society to democratic institutions that political parties have historically provided, together with political leaders' ability to effectively moderate and reach consensus across political divides

voice to those aggrieved in society at elites and the establishment, but they can also seize control of governments and implement unworkable social policies. Populism appears to be especially dangerous when it is paired with unchecked majoritarianism in winner-take-all systems (Mudde 2015).

### **'Illiberal' democracy: the challenge of populism**

In the USA and Western Europe in particular, the underlying causes of populism include cultural concerns about the erosion of identity and territoriality, job insecurities from a rapidly changing economic environment, and anti-immigrant attitudes triggered by the threat of terrorism. Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain have experienced a rise in populism in the form of widespread mobilization for resistance to moderate, centrist or established political elites from both sides of the political spectrum (Judis 2016). Populism in these contexts is generally driven by class-based alienation intertwined with virulent identity politics, even as debates swirl over whether cultural backlash or economic dislocation best explain the phenomenon (Inglehart and Norris 2016).

Populism has serious consequences for democracy. When extreme ethnic nationalist populists prevail, minorities often see threats to their safety and economic livelihoods, especially vulnerable ethnic minorities and migrants. Populism and nationalism have generated concerns about whether democratic processes can withstand social forces driven by undercurrents of exclusion and nationalism. In the USA, a minority coalition of voters (46 per cent of the popular vote) elected populist, nationalist billionaire Donald J. Trump as president. Trump lost the overall popular vote to rival Hillary Clinton by 2.9 million votes (in the aggregate popular vote, 48.2 per cent to 46.1 per cent), but prevailed in the Electoral College, a feature of US democracy by which the president is elected by the number of delegates won in the 50 states (Crieg 2016). Trump's inauguration

in January 2017 prompted mass protests in Washington, DC, including the now-historic 'Women's March' by 470,000 people—three times as many as attended the inauguration (Wallace and Parlapiano 2017). The vote was further marred by ongoing allegations of foreign interference in the US election and the ties between the Trump campaign and Russia, as well as alleged Russian hacking of electoral administrators in 31 of the 50 US states (Berkowitz, Lu and Vitkovskaya 2017). There are public concerns that the Trump presidency continues to undermine the US democratic and constitutional order. These events highlight the vulnerability of the world's longest-standing democracy to social, economic and cultural drivers of nationalism that can undermine democracy's principles.

Comparative public opinion research in the USA and elsewhere provides evidence of a broader public concern about the efficacy of democratic institutions in both emerging and long-standing democracies even as most people in all regions surveyed considered personal and press freedoms to be very important (Pew Research Center 2015). Social movements have historically been critical to pressuring regimes to democratize. At the same time, the growth of populist citizen movements underscores the widespread discontent with governments and governance worldwide, leading to new forms of engagement. Populism presents a paradox: it involves heightened citizen participation, but often in an exclusive, ideologically extreme manner, or in a call for action that disregards rights—particularly those of minorities.

Narrowly construed populism undermines, rather than creates, the social capital needed for today's complex, multicultural societies. According to a broad literature on social cohesion, when citizen engagement cuts across divisions within society, and is organized around national platforms focusing on security and development, it is more likely to support democracy than those that are primarily exclusivist, nationalistic or ethnic in



orientation (Jensen 2010). Policymaking needs to be able to manage the politics of inclusive groups through innovative approaches that place a premium on broad-based stakeholder participation, ensuring inclusive institutions, accountable processes and outcomes, and citizen engagement throughout the policy cycle (OECD 2015).

### Popular commitment to inclusive democracy

Broad economic and social processes continue to drive the demand for democracy. Increased access to education, rising incomes, and improved communication and urbanization have facilitated the development of the middle class and contributed to the popular demand for democracy. In bargains between elites and the masses, democracy emerges as an 'equilibrium' or middle ground. The more people understand how democracy works, the more they tend to believe it is the best form of governance (Cho 2014). Public opinion surveys have found little appetite for authoritarianism among Asian youth: those growing up in democratic regimes in the region have a more favourable view of democracy and expect it to continue (Dalton and Shin 2014). Restive movements for democracy in Hong Kong have symbolized youth demands for democracy beyond the semi-autonomous province.

Pathways to democracy may be driven by citizen beliefs in and attitudes towards political rights and liberties drawn from other contexts or from the diffusion of international norms (Koesel and Bunce 2013). Some argue that the increasing demand for women's participation in governance is driven in part by the global spread of norms about women's political equality. Following the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, known as the Beijing Platform), women's political empowerment increased globally due to both internal drivers (economic and social gains for women secured at the domestic level) and international pressures to increase women's participation

(Paxton, Hughes and Green 2006). While networked domestic and international women's movements have played a key role in advancing demands for democracy, women's coalitions that pressed for initial transitions to democracy have been difficult to sustain (Baldez 2003).

When elites do not rely on the masses for support, demands for democracy are less common. This can occur, for example, when state revenue is derived from primary commodity exports, such as oil, or when anti-democratic elites can buy support through patronage and clientelism, or enforce their rule coercively with the support of a well-compensated military (Geddes 2009; Haber and Menaldo 2011).

The presence of a strong civil society is critical to democracy's resilience. In many places, popular

Populism has serious consequences for democracy. Populism and nationalism have generated concerns about whether democratic processes can withstand social forces driven by undercurrents of exclusion and nationalism

#### BOX 2.2

##### Non-violent civil resistance: factors for success

During the 2010–11 Arab Uprisings, when Time magazine named 'The Protestor' as its Person of the Year, scholars came to the remarkable conclusion that between 1900 and 2006, non-violent civil resistance struggles were more than twice as likely as violence to be effective at advancing democracy (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Evaluating data on violent and non-violent protests from around the world, and the effectiveness of such protests in achieving citizen aims, they found that non-violent social movements were more likely to involve higher rates of participation and to facilitate more durable and peaceful democracies. Violent insurgencies were equally unlikely to achieve their goals. These findings shed light on how non-violent citizen action can form the basis of democratic resilience.

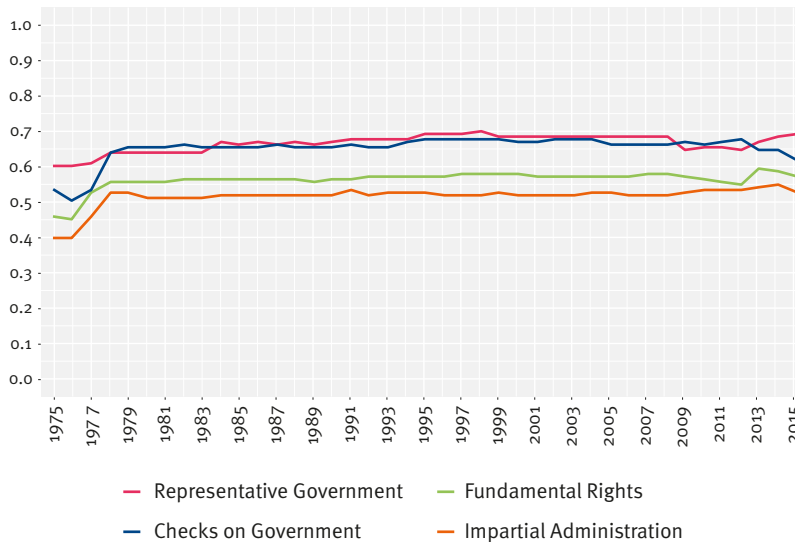
Drawing on early scholarly and activist work on non-violent resistance, popular non-violent protests for change have been successful when they:

- are large enough not to be ignored or easily suppressed, and when crowds are diverse and cross-cut generations, ethnicity, classes, genders and geographies;
- remain deeply dedicated to maintaining non-violent principles, even in the face of violent resistance by the state or other social groups;
- use flexible and innovative techniques, including a variety of non-violent methods beyond on-the-street protests including lower-risk tactics such as sick-outs and stay-aways, boycotts or legal petitions; and
- appeal to economic and business elites, civil servants and especially military forces who may shift loyalties toward non-violent democratic opposition rather than support an incumbent autocrat losing their grip on power.



FIGURE 2.4A

Democracy in India, 1975–2015

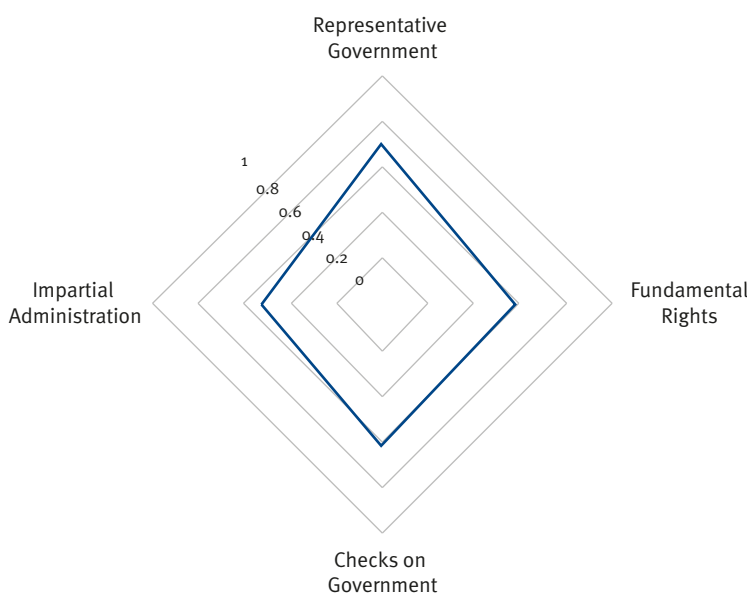


Notes: This graph shows the trends in India for Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government And Impartial Administration. The y-axis shows the score and the x-axis the years. Scores in the y-axis range from 0 to 1. Higher scores indicate a higher performance on a given attribute.

Source: GSoD indices 2017.

FIGURE 2.4B

Democracy in India, a 2015 snapshot



Source: GSoD indices 2017 (Representative Government Index; Fundamental Rights Index, Checks on Government Index and Impartial Administration Index).

civil resistance, working with civil society and the media, ‘protects’ democracy through investigations, information transparency and advocacy (Fox and Halloran 2016). Democracies with a strong civil society are more likely to endure over time. Civil society can be resilient even where it is suppressed and subject to severe restrictions. Some human rights activists argue that civil society has proven to be resilient even in countries such as Iran (Bouroman 2007). Box 2.2 explores the characteristics of successful non-violent resistance.

Where civil society is active and able to organize, and when it cuts across major divisions within society, including religious or ethnic divides, debilitating social violence is less likely to erupt. For example, India has been a remarkably resilient democracy due to its independent judicial institutions, citizens and civil society, and commitment to a free press (Kohli 1992; Varshney 2001). A vigorous civil society helps create underlying trust and social cohesion that in turn fosters the contestation and contention that allows a democracy to remain strong under pressure (Cheema and Popovski 2010). While India continues to experience unrest in its periphery, and regional tensions remain high over Kashmir, its democracy is vibrant.

Figures 2.4A and 2.4B show representation, fundamental rights, checks and balances, and impartial administration in India for the period 1975–2015; India’s democracy remains stable, if not perfect, over time. An ongoing concern in India continues to be its struggle with inclusivity, religious and caste-based diversity, and eradication of discrimination; India has perhaps the world’s most extensive experience in seeking to remedy exclusion through reservations in representation and broad-based affirmative action (Glazer 2007). Despite the challenges of diversity, the quality of India’s democracy has remained stable over time.

## 2.5. Resilient institutions: countering capture, corruption and patronage

If citizens are strongly committed to democracy, it will persist as a permanent, essential ideal (Norris 2011). Improving democracy's resilience thus begins with establishing or restoring citizen trust in the efficacy of democratic politics and defending it against alternative ideologies, including authoritarian nationalism.

In many third-wave democratization countries, concerns about the de-consolidation or rollback of democracy involve corruption, capture and personal profit at the expense of citizens' welfare. The timing of the 2016 impeachment of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, who was found guilty of manipulating the federal budget, raised questions about whether the political crisis surrounding her impeachment was generated to conceal the depth of the country's economic crisis. The ongoing corruption crisis, which involved many political elites, may have signalled the weakness, or the possible resilience, of democracy in the country. Some suggested that the corruption charges and relatively poor service delivery in the run-up to the Rio Olympic Games reflected the weakness of its system since Brazil returned to democracy following military rule from 1964 to 1985, when millions took to the streets to demand democracy (Boykoff 2016). Brazil's government continues to be shaken by the corruption crisis, as more politicians (including eight cabinet ministers and the president) were caught up in the scandal in 2017 (Langlois 2017).

### The corrosive effects of capture and corruption

Capture, corruption and the unchecked infusion of money into politics are all too often manifested as undemocratic influence by the powerful few. Informal networks of patronage, favouritism and illicit dealing also obstruct the empowerment of women and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, and result in uneven levels of development. The response to such capture requires capable, autonomous and independent

judicial institutions—whose investigators, prosecutors and courts are critical to both prosecuting and preventing corruption—as well as a comprehensive approach to countering graft. Institutional resilience is essential to ensure that a wide range of integrity-enhanced rules for political competition is in place to ensure meaningful citizen control in democracies.

Many countries have faced complex political, economic, and social challenges and crises that have threatened the legitimacy of the ruling democratic regime. Several countries also experience public antipathy to government and traditional political institutions. Such political challenges can result in the deliberate, gradual 'erosion' of democracy, or backsliding, as has been seen in Russia, which adopted laws that strongly restrict the ability of human rights and other civil society organizations (including the media) to mobilize or to perform advocacy or accountability functions (Sherwood 2015).

These factors, often combined with captured institutions—when politicians co-opt power for their own purposes or extend a 'dominant-party' state (Greene 2010)—are among the various leading explanations of democratic backsliding from within. For example, Nigeria's 2016 elections were dominated by the winner President Muhammadu Buhari's pledge to combat corruption. In Kenya, scholars and civil society activists have decried patterns of clientelism that occur along ethnic lines, further exacerbating the ability of democratic institutions to provide accountability and undermining the basis of popular control and political equality (Kivoi 2010; Horowitz 2016). Such patterns of ethnic politics have been linked to vote buying and implicit and explicit patronage along ethnic lines. Kenya's decentralization process, which began with the adoption of its 2010 constitution, has led some to worry that ethnic patronage and 'capture' are being further entrenched in local government institutions, even as overall assessments of decentralization suggest that the constitution provides new checks and balances (Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis 2016).

Increased access to education, rising incomes, and improved communication and urbanization have facilitated the development of the middle class and contributed to the popular demand for democracy. In bargains between elites and the masses, democracy emerges as an 'equilibrium' or middle ground

Institutional resilience is essential to ensure that a wide range of integrity-enhanced rules for political competition is in place to ensure meaningful citizen control in democracies

### Can democracy self-correct? Considering institutional resilience

A longstanding feature of democracy is horizontal accountability—a system of checks and balances among separate democratic institutions and branches of government, including the executive. Independent or autonomous institutions that interact to achieve balance and survival can address internal weaknesses or vulnerabilities, and thus help safeguard democracy (Ganghof 2012).

Greater institutionalization, and the prevalence of multiple checks and balances, decreases the likelihood that a democracy can be fully captured by any branch of government or actor. Institutions such as judiciaries or local

governments become more autonomous over time, and are more likely to be able to resist threats to democracy—such as restrictions on fundamental rights—when they appear. Informal institutions or rules that are routinely followed can complement or supplement democratic processes and facilitate consolidation, though they can also detract from or work against formal democracy if they contradict (or serve as a substitute for) formal democratic processes (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). In the Republic of Korea, a scandal in 2016–17 involving then-President Park Geun-hye led to widespread street protests, a vote in Parliament to impeach her, a Constitutional Court affirmation of the legitimacy of the vote, and ultimately to her arrest and indictment for corruption, abuse of power and fraud (San-Hun 2017). Elections, held in May 2017, imbued the new government of President Moon Jae-in with newfound democratic legitimacy in the wake of the corruption crisis.

The rule of law, access to justice, and a strong, independent, capable and efficient judicial system are critical elements of a resilient democracy. An important factor is democratic control of the armed forces and security sectors, and their professionalization under the civilian control of constitutionally elected authorities. The transition processes in many third-wave democracies involved a sequential (and at times turbulent) process of extensive security sector reform and transitional justice; the military in some countries—such as Egypt, Myanmar and Sri Lanka—kept the autocratic regimes in power and became major economic stakeholders (Mani 2010).

Electoral processes can help adapt and strengthen democracy over time. Independent, autonomous and professional electoral management bodies are critical, since their mandate is to protect the procedural credibility of democratic processes. The longer a country has experienced successful electoral cycles, the more the electoral process has been shown to 'adapt' to social conditions and thus becomes increasingly resilient (see Box 2.3).

#### BOX 2.3

##### Elections as adaptive cycles: democratization in post-war Sierra Leone

Electoral cycles may generate rotations in ruling coalitions, which is important for flexibility in resilience —incorporating new public demands, interests and political actors into the political system. The more flexible, open and adaptive the electoral process is, the more the overall system of governance can adapt to changing social, economic and demographic changes within society. Over time, electoral processes may become entrenched to favour the dominant political actors. Some scholars, whose work has focused on post-democratization Africa, have developed compelling theories of electoral processes unfolding as a set of nested 'games' by which transitions to democracy occur. Each iteration of the game (or electoral process) furthers the consolidation of the democratic rules: voters and citizens become more mobilized, organizations and institutions become more vested, 'blatant failed manipulation of election outcomes' are identified and the costs of authoritarian repression increase (Lindberg 2009, 2015).

Sierra Leone appears to reinforce these findings on elections and adaptive resilience. In 2018, it will hold its fourth round of national elections since it emerged from civil war in 2002. The capacities of the Electoral Commission appear to have strengthened in each previous electoral cycle; indeed, the chairwoman of the commission, Christina Thorpe, has won several international awards for her work to strengthen the commission. The UN administered the 2002 elections, and the 2007 elections were the first to be held in a peaceful environment and fully managed by the National Electoral Commission and the Political Party Registration Commission in concert with the UN (Jinadu 2012). The 2012 elections were given overall high marks by observers, which concluded that the polls were 'conducted with a high degree of transparency' and that 'very few cases of election-related violence were reported across the country' (Carter Center 2013).

These electoral cycles strengthened the legitimacy of institutions: compliance with Sierra Leone's 2008 Anti-Corruption Act was an important element in the 2012 elections, as the issue was in prior rounds of elections since the civil war.

Figure 2.5 provides a 'big-picture' view of long-term global trends in institutions capable of protecting democracy, including effective parliaments, independent judicial institutions and the quality of media integrity. The long-term data show gradual, if slow, improvement in parliamentary effectiveness, yet little growth in global patterns towards more independent judiciaries.

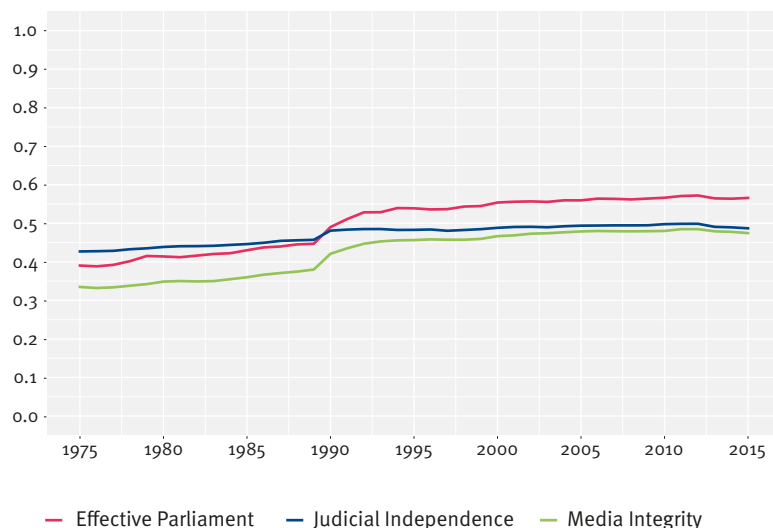
Institutional resilience requires a level playing field and the protection of these institutions from corrupt influences. Reducing the influence of money in politics is central to ensuring institutional resilience and the conditions for political equality. This is particularly relevant for the funding of electoral campaigns, which are vulnerable to the influence of organized crime and illicit networks. International IDEA's *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: A Handbook on Political Finance* identifies challenges such as unequal access to funding by political parties, the ability of the wealthy to unduly influence politics, an influx of illicit funding and widespread vote buying (Falguera, Jones and Ohman 2014). Box 2.3 examines the role of elections in conflict-affected countries in the context of Sierra Leone. Public funding for political parties contributes to resiliency by reducing the influence of money in politics; 120 countries provide funding to political parties for campaigns, regular operational purposes or in other ways such as subsidized access to private media (International IDEA Political Finance Database).

## 2.6. Resilient societies: reducing structural risks

Societal divisions, inequalities and fissures are reflected and processed through democratic processes, as democratic institutions are a prism of social dynamics. Economic challenges such as inequality and extreme poverty undermine citizen perceptions of state legitimacy and democracy's ability to address basic needs. In 2016, the World Bank reported that continued socio-economic inequalities are

FIGURE 2.5

### Institutional resilience: parliamentary and judicial institutions and media integrity for 155 countries, 1975–2015



**Notes:** This graph shows the global level trends from 1975–2015 for Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence and Media Integrity. The y-axis shows the score and the x-axis the years. Scores in the y-axis range from 0 to 1. Higher scores indicate a higher performance on a given attribute.

**Source:** GSoD indices 2017 (Effective Parliament Index, Judicial Independence Index, Media Integrity Index).

the principal barrier to greater economic inclusion and demands for political inclusion (World Bank 2016: 2).

Structural economic challenges severely and negatively affect the practice of democracy. While inequality and economic 'hard times' can lead to demands for democracy and 'pocketbook protests' (Brancati 2013), which can trigger greater participation and inclusion of the marginalized in governance (as has been the case in South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy), long-term or structured inequality poses significant threats to democracy's survival (Karl 2009). Multi-country studies have demonstrated that inequality increases the risk of clientelism or corruption (You 2015). A 2013 International IDEA report analyses the experiences of 38 cases in which marginalized groups engaged in decision-making; these groups overcame barriers and developed effective strategies for mobilization, articulated grievances, worked with sympathetic civil society and engaged with international actors (Smith and Hedström 2013).

### Managing diversity and post-conflict transitions

An extensive body of scholarly research investigates the challenges of democracy in multi-ethnic societies, particularly those with a history of violence and enmity along identity lines. In 2016, Minority Rights Group International (2016) reported worsening identity-related conflict globally in its annual Peoples under Threat survey. In ethnically diverse societies such as Indonesia, Myanmar and Turkey, social cohesion is under strain from ethnic, religious and sectarian mobilization, violent conflict and repression of minorities, which in turn drive further conflict (Pew Research Center 2014). Myanmar's dramatic

transition to democracy, which culminated in the March 2016 election of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, has witnessed progress in the reduction of some ethnic or separatist internal conflicts, but the country has been criticized for its treatment of the Rohingya minority (ICG 2016).

While ethnic and religious diversity are not directly associated with democratic instability—many highly diverse countries such as Canada prosper as democracies—under certain conditions identity-based conflict can threaten the quality of democracy and its performance (Harris and Reilly 1998; Large and Sisk 2006). For example, some scholars believe the scourge of sectarianism in the Middle East and Iran inhibits the spread of democracy in the region (Hashemi and Postel 2017).

#### BOX 2.4

##### Democratization and identity-based mobilization in Nepal

In divided, conflict-affected countries such as Nepal, the introduction of democracy creates unique challenges. Democracy provides a way to move towards structural equality. Where spatial or 'horizontal' social inequalities motivate armed rebellion and civil war (Murshed and Gates 2005), democratic processes help manage and resolve inter-group grievances. For example, after the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) signed a comprehensive peace agreement in 2006, a large consortium of domestic and international civic groups (including International IDEA) engaged in extensive post-conflict democratization efforts. This process focused on educating, empowering and building inclusive local government institutions to guarantee the inclusion of all previously marginalized groups in the constitution-making process, including marginalized caste groups such as the Dalit, indigenous Janajati groups, Tharu and Madhesi ethnic groups, and women's groups. The democracy-promotion effort strategically focused on extending democracy to the local level ('devolution') to address the deepest structural drivers of civil war.

New social problems emerged with this opening of the political space, particularly in intensive identity-based political mobilization. Such ethnic mobilization created an 'inclusion dilemma' (Bogati et al. 2017). The spread of democracy increased demands from identity-based groups not only for participation in the constitution-making process, but, in many cases, for greater local autonomy, constitutional protections and even 'ethnic federalism'. The outbreak of identity-based political mobilization ultimately caused the collapse of the transitional Constituent Assembly and a long period of government failure that, in effect, undermined initial efforts to redress deep social divisions.

Although a new constitution was finally created in 2015, Madhesi groups in the Terai region rejected the final agreement on the internal or federal boundaries; unrest rocked the region in 2016 and again in 2017, causing disruptions along the critical supply routes with India and further preventing the full realization of peace in Nepal. Local elections unfolded in 2017 amid continued negotiation over the thorny issues of local powers, decentralized functions and federal boundaries.

Scholars and practitioners have pointed to a set of paradoxes and dilemmas relating to democracy in conflict-affected countries as they transition from war to democracy (OECD-DAC 2015). Leaders in such countries in effect exchange the uncertainty of the battlefield for the uncertainty of democratic electoral processes, which leaves post-war democracies vulnerable to elite capture (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). Other common challenges in post-conflict transitions are the transformation of rebel forces into mainstream political actors, the often deeply divided nature of civil society, managing electoral processes, constitution-making, transforming security institutions and transitional justice, building state capacity for service delivery, and addressing the psychological and social wounds of war. Thus, countries emerging from conflict face structural challenges and are especially prone to crises that threaten the re-emergence of widespread political violence and, potentially, armed conflict.

Box 2.4 illustrates the turbulent nature of Nepal's road from civil war to democracy, as ethnic mobilization has prevented the full consolidation of democracy even though a new constitution was finally agreed in late 2015.



Social polarization increases the risk of conflict and complicates the processes of coalition formation and interest aggregation that are inherent to democracy. Around the world, social polarization appears to have significantly affected democracy's ability to manage conflict and to help realize effective approaches to controversial policy issues (Esteban and Schneider 2008). Some institutional choices, such as certain forms of list proportional representation, have been criticized as encouraging fragmentation of the party system—termed 'polarized pluralism'—especially during economic hard times (Pelizzo and Babones 2007).

Scholars have long argued that identity-based conflict can be mitigated by designing the right types of democratic institutions for the context, for example by adopting inclusive, proportional (or non-winner-take-all) electoral processes, decentralizing power and autonomy, and creating a strong regime of minority rights (Lijphart 2004; Reynolds 2011). However, there remains a strong debate between those who advocate ethnic power sharing as the best solution to the challenges of democracy in divided societies versus those who recommend institutions to create cross-cutting ethnic coalitions of moderate, centrist parties that seek to transcend ethnic divides (Reilly 2006). The immigration societies of Canada and the USA, which have taken different philosophical approaches to managing diversity stemming from new identity cleavages in society, are sometimes juxtaposed as a 'mosaic' approach (in Canada) vs. a 'melting pot' approach in the USA (Peach 2005).

### **Redressing women's exclusions and inequalities**

Deeply ingrained inequalities are synonymous with demands for access to livelihoods, reliable service delivery and corruption-free governance. Inequality and a lack of economic opportunities, especially for youth, were at the heart of demands for democracy in the demographically and economically

unbalanced countries of the Middle East and Iran, and North Africa (Ncube and Anyanwu 2012). Following transitions, democracies must deliver in inclusive ways—assuring fundamental livelihoods and a marketplace based on fairness—to maintain credibility. Addressing structural inequalities requires political will and the inclusion of poor, marginalized, or disadvantaged individuals or groups in democratic processes. Thus, broad measures to enhance social inclusion and protect the vulnerable are central to democracy's resilience: the ideal of political equality is undermined unless all in society can access the resources necessary to meet basic human needs.

In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the CEDAW, which established a set of rights for the advancement of women's human rights towards gender equality, including representation in governance. In the early 2000s, Millennium Development Goal number 3 set targets for the expansion of women's representation, which is commonly achieved through the adoption of women's quotas (Jones 2009). There is no single, one-size-fits all approach to designing democracy to enhance women's participation; International IDEA has produced a handbook to help relate the type of quota to the electoral system to help define a 'best-fit' approach (Larsrud and Taphorn 2007).

While women have enjoyed modest gains in representation, there is only a weak link between representation and influence (Ballington and Karam 2005). The percentage of women in parliament has increased from 11 per cent in 1995 to 23 per cent in 2017 worldwide, but this has not necessarily translated into improvement in the human rights of women, especially those from minority groups (UN 2015; IPU n.d.). Women's movements have been critical components of democratization efforts, often working across lines of conflict, historical divisions and ethnic divides. Women have been successful at uniting across social, economic and political divides in civil society

**Broad measures to enhance social inclusion and protect the vulnerable are central to democracy's resilience**



It is possible to design a set of rules—or institutions—to engineer specific desirable outcomes in democracies such as inclusivity, more meaningful representation or accountability

to make critical differences in democratic transition processes. Yet in Chile, Brazil, East Germany and Poland, women's groups have struggled to maintain their momentum after the transition (Baldez 2003).

Advances in women's representation have been seen in countries emerging from conflict, where transitional processes may give women the opportunity to mobilize and make gains in representation and influence (Hughes and Tripp 2015). There is more widespread involvement of women in many post-conflict countries, such as Nepal, Rwanda and South Africa, than in countries with similar levels of development that have not experienced conflict. Yet this surprisingly high level of women's representation in these post-conflict countries may not be fully inclusive, and women may not necessarily have a strong influence over policy outcomes (Berry 2015). Research has shown that when women have greater rights, societies and states are more secure (Hudson 2007/8).

### 2.7. Designing resilience: building better democracies

The effectiveness of quotas in elections or within political parties for expanding women's participation affirms that elements of democracy can be designed to achieve desirable outcomes. But can democratic institutions be designed to make democracy itself more resilient? Scholars of institutions have argued that it is possible to design a set of rules—or institutions—to engineer specific desirable outcomes in democracies such as inclusivity, more meaningful representation or accountability. The 'constitutional engineering' approach, pioneered by the eminent Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori (1997), assumes that considerations such as presidential system design, electoral system design, or the delimitation of internal boundaries and decentralized governance (such as in federal systems) can promote specific desirable outcomes in democratic systems (stability, inclusion or ethnic politics).

Perhaps the most extensive application of this perspective is found in the electoral system design literature, which argues that a country's electoral system must be chosen based on a close context assessment of goals such as accountability, inclusivity and gender equality (Norris 2004). Concerning other specific institutions, there is widespread debate in the scholarly literature over what types of institutions produce more resilient democracies. Research on institutional design helps inform policy-related debates to help countries choose the 'right' institutions to create more inclusive electoral processes (Reilly 2006; Reilly and Nordlund 2008). Outside actors such as bilateral development organizations, transnational civil society and international organizations often provide guidance on suitable institutions for a country's context.

### Designing institutions during transitional times

Scholars have identified 'creative tension' between international actors, scholars and national actors in designing resilient institutions to promote peaceful, democratic politics (Bastian and Luckham 2003). Outsiders bring 'models and methods', while local actors provide contextual knowledge and can better anticipate the effects of various design approaches in invariably complex local circumstances. The principal concern is whether (and how) democracy can be designed to be resilient. The answer to this question may involve an assumption that in some situations, such as conflict-affected countries where the UN has a strong presence, outsiders will impose designs, but that institutional models will follow principles of national or local ownership. In February 2017, the UN Mission in Colombia, together with the government, announced a new multi-sponsor peacebuilding trust fund to support innovative and adaptive approaches to accessing justice, community security and local governance in the country's most conflict-affected (often remote) regions (UN News Centre 2016). This approach encourages broader democratic ownership of transformative processes.

While countries with long-established democratic institutions may rely on informal and innovative approaches to institutional adaptation and redesign, transitional processes from authoritarian rule or civil war have offered opportunities to engage in innovative institutional design that makes democracy more resilient. Institutions, once in place, often create their own incentives for endurance. Choosing the right institutions for the right context, at the right moment, can yield 'increasing returns' in the coming years; institutional design at such critical or 'conjunctural' moments sets the stage for subsequent politics through 'path dependency' (Pierson 2000).

Constitution-making processes have been one method of revisiting the fundamental ground rules of democracy and building more inclusive, and thus resilient, institutions. Institutional design in these contexts involves choosing the most fundamental structures of a political system in a manner that ensures inclusivity, proportionality, and the influence of minorities and marginalized groups in politics. Among the most critical choices are the design of presidential and parliamentary institutions, electoral systems, political party regulations, federalism and decentralization measures, and special institutions to address particularly contentious issues such as language, education and minority rights.

There are arguably no single, standardized 'best' forms of institutions or models for more resilient democracies; innovation entails adapting and adopting rules and mechanisms that are appropriate to the context and the aim they are designed to achieve. For example, while proportionality is a critical principle for building more resilient democracy, it can be manifested in electoral systems in many ways. Thus, it may be best to think in terms of principles to inform institutional design during transitions, such as proportionality, decentralization, and proliferating points of power and authority, and multiplying points of interaction, bargaining and mutual problem solving. These principles can in turn be

translated into specific institutional designs for more consensus-oriented democracy through comparative knowledge, the use of appropriate experts, understanding pre-existing institutions, and sequencing the pathways of reform and change (such as electoral processes) in a careful, calibrated manner (Reynolds 2011).

International influence on the design of institutions chosen during democratization (such as during constitution-making processes) occurs through internal decision-making that is aided by persuasion and knowledge transfer from international actors. Innovative approaches, such as the creation of the Mediation Support Unit for the UN's top mediators, appear to be an effective way to bridge the gap between the theory of institutional design and its application in inevitably complex contexts.

### **Informal institutions in multicultural contexts**

The challenge of migration reflects the urgency of innovatively designing new institutions to address contemporary challenges in modern democracies. Migration is a global issue that has strong local effects. In some contexts, migrants' integration has not been well managed through existing institutions and policies, particularly in the social sphere; migrant communities often live in parallel, separate communities to those of host-country citizens. Such social distance between communities has led to a rise in anti-immigrant movements, vigilantism and extremist political parties. Nationalism in response to migration has led to increasing securitization, exclusion and marginalization, which in turn worsens the problem of status deprivation and fear by targeted minority communities. How might institutional design help alleviate such problems?

Newly designed institutions and processes may be needed for political systems to adapt to the social changes brought by migration—increasing demographic diversity—if they are to be resilient over time. First and foremost, permanent migrants and their communities must be integrated into the broader

There are arguably no single, standardized 'best' forms of institutions or models for more resilient democracies; innovation entails adapting and adopting rules and mechanisms that are appropriate to the context and the aim they are designed to achieve

New, innovative avenues of voice, representation and participation are needed to open cultures and institutions to allow these communities to be heard

community, as well as the regional and national social fabrics. Social integration requires economic integration: economic exchange and interdependency often facilitates tolerance, as mutual interests and understanding develop across group lines. The guarantee of fundamental freedoms is vital: when migrants are permanent 'second-class' citizens, integration falters and frustration builds. Such has been the case of the Palestinian migrants in Lebanon, where close cooperation and interaction at the local level is critical to maintaining local peace even as the lack of citizenship is an enduring injustice to Palestinian refugees. Like in Lebanon, in some situations informal institutions emerge to open lines of dialogue and mechanisms for economic integration and service delivery in the absence of formal mechanisms and feasible pathways to citizenship (Yassin, Stel and Rassi 2016).

Building resilience in multicultural contexts, whether for migrants or across ethnic and other identity-based divides, requires thinking beyond traditional democratic institutions and processes of adaptation and reform (Wolff 2011). New, innovative avenues of voice, representation and participation are needed to open cultures and institutions to allow these communities to be heard. Approaches to engaging with migrants and their communities are also applicable to addressing the challenges of exclusion, disadvantage and marginalization in today's 'post-globalization' societies. Addressing exclusion is critical for developing sustainable approaches to citizenship consistent with international human rights norms. International rights law defines forced population transfers as a crime against humanity, and provides additional protection for particularly vulnerable migrants such as refugees.

Strengthening social cohesion has become a critical conceptual and practice-oriented approach to designing formal and informal, direct and indirect approaches to building trust within societies (Jensen 2010). Social cohesion approaches emphasize analysing the nexus and networks of cross-group coordination and

engagement (for example, in civil society or in the marketplace) and designing programmes and initiatives to build on them. From inter-faith dialogues to 'environmental peacebuilding' (which focuses on a common interest in environmental sustainability), social cohesion programmes have been applied in many diverse countries as a core approach to building the societal base upon which democratization—and the 'extension' of the state to the local level—can occur.

Examining social dynamics as the basis of overcoming division and fragility is a very useful complement to formal statebuilding and democratization efforts with local initiatives (Marc et al. 2013). For example, in conflict-affected countries the proliferation of peacemaking and peacebuilding institutions at various levels (which are sometimes overlapping and mutually reinforcing) can help build resilience by providing multiple avenues in which to address grievances or disputes before they escalate into violence (Odendaal 2013).

For the long term, a more coherent global institutional framework is needed to establish a more effective and humane system of managing migration. Until then, steps need to be taken to combat xenophobia and facilitate migrants' economic, social, and political integration and rights. Measures to design a more resilient approach include considering voting rights for migrants at the local level, reforming citizenship laws to clarify and facilitate pathways to naturalization, engaging with diaspora communities and leaders (e.g. religious leaders), and expanding opportunities for external voting so that migrants have political rights in their countries of origin (Ellis et al. 2007).

## 2.8. Supporting resilience: regional and international responses

Although responses can be uneven, outsiders regularly act to support democracy within countries. Democracy building has emerged as a significant global 'regime' or set of

negotiated international norms, rules and best practices, mechanisms for international monitoring and observation, and 'reactions to non-compliance' together with initiatives and efforts to build or develop local capacities through development assistance. Democracy building is closely related to the international global human rights regime, since democracy promotion norms and the post-World War II human rights regime developed concurrently (Farer 2004). The UN's role in democracy building has increasingly focused on the intersections between democracy and human rights, democracy and conflict prevention, and democracy and development.

While there is no definition of or universal agreement on democracy in international law, it is enshrined as a principle in a myriad of covenants, charters, and norms of global and regional international organizations. International solidarity and common action to 'protect' democracy are equally essential to its definition. In many regional organizations, democracy is a fundamental ground rule of international cooperation, which is at times—and often unevenly—enforced in reaction to breaches of these norms, such as electoral misconduct (Donno 2013; Montero et al. 2016).

### **Democracy assistance at a crossroads**

International and regional organizations work to define, promote, monitor and—at times—enforce democracy norms in many different ways. Building resilient democracies requires a continuing focus on reacting to democratic crises when they occur. Equally, outsiders seeking to help safeguard democracy internally need a long-term vision: if democratic resilience is primarily an internal (or endogenous) quality, it must develop organically from within. At the same time, the growth and science of public administration has developed extensive professionalized knowledge and best practices in the area of impartial governance.

A principal concern about international democracy-building efforts is their efficacy, particularly when outsiders have models and

methods that are coercively imposed on local contexts (e.g. through force or conditionality) that do not fit. Local contexts may feature political fragmentation, weak state capacity, restricted space for civil society, ethnic and religious division and intolerance, institutional logjams and disempowered citizens (Carothers 2016). International democracy builders have been criticized for placing too much emphasis on electoral processes, and neglecting the need for political pluralism and strong rule-of-law institutions, and for paying insufficient attention to the realities of local power dynamics; the concept of 'good governance' has been described as under-appreciating local realities (Grindle 2017).

The focus on international democracy building has turned to the critical role of regional organizations. At the forefront of norms to safeguard democracy are the evolving 'automatic' regional reactions to changes of power, as seen in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) response to the Gambia crisis mentioned below.

The Organization of American States (OAS) 'Santiago Commitment' of 1991 paved the way for regional organizations to play a role in safeguarding democracy. It called on the OAS to initiate immediate action if there is an 'interruption' in democracy within any member state (Montero et al. 2016; Pevehouse 2005: 130). The 2001 OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter was a landmark norm to safeguard democracy through such ostensibly automatic regional responses; it identifies the conditions under which the OAS would intervene to protect democracy in the region. During the 2016 Venezuelan constitutional crisis, some members of parliament in that country sought to invoke the charter to trigger an OAS intervention; Pope Francis instead stepped in to help mediate the crisis (Herrero and Malkin 2016). After the failed mediation attempt, Venezuela's multifaceted economic, political and social crisis deepened in April 2017 over a decision by the Supreme Court—widely seen as loyal to the ruling

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Nicolás Maduro administration—to assume the powers of Congress. Anti-‘dictator’ protests surged and turned violent as police clashed with protestors across the country.

OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro called in March 2017 to suspend Venezuela’s membership over the regime’s unwillingness to hold new elections. However, the body could not agree as some member state friends of the embattled Venezuelan regime blocked the suspension (Oré 2017). The OAS has been an arena of fierce debate over proposed US sanctions against the Maduro administration. For its part, the Venezuelan Government and its regional supporters have pursued a strong anti-imperialist narrative in relation to the legitimacy of Maduro’s proposed new constitution, the country’s economic free fall and related humanitarian crisis, and the conflict between protestors and the police that killed 70 in early 2017. The Vatican proposed new elections as a way out of the crisis (Esteves 2017). In July 2017, the disputed election to Venezuela’s Constituent Assembly led to an opposition boycott and public protests.

Regional and subregional organizations such as the OAS, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), ECOWAS, the Commonwealth, the Southern African Development Community and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Parliamentarians for Human Rights Forum have played a variety of roles in helping to safeguard and protect democracy in times of peril in defence of regional democratic norms. Indeed, participation in such regional organizations and initiatives may represent a critical avenue for inculcating democratic norms within countries and embeddedness in regional organizations may have a safeguarding effect for democracy; there has been learning within and across regional organizations on how best to act collectively to defend democracy (Cordenillo and Gardes 2013). For example, OSCE election monitoring of the October 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections in Belarus was critical to informing

international community debates about lifting targeted sanctions against the country for prior restrictions on democracy. While the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights determined that the 2015 polls were better than previous electoral cycles—including the fact that two opposition candidates won seats in the 110-member parliament—they found ongoing restrictions and procedural irregularities (OSCE 2017). In 2016, the EU and several states elsewhere eased some sanctions against Belarus.

### **Safeguarding democracy regionally: crisis response, long-term vision**

Crisis response measures for safeguarding democracy vary widely, and successful interventions such as the crisis management in the Gambia are by no means uniform either within the region or globally. As UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mohammed Ibn Abbas observed, former President Yahya Gammeh ‘didn’t have too many friends’ (Searcey 2017). Coercive regional and global reactions to democratic backsliding remain uneven, both in terms of regional spread and the types of responses.

Electoral mediation is a critical area of overall international (and often regional) engagement to safeguard democracy (Kane and Haysom 2016). Regional and subregional organizations in Africa, for example, increasingly partner with local civil society electoral mediators in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho and Kenya to promote subregional and continental norms that unconstitutional seizures of power are replaced with multiparty elections (Shale and Gerenge 2017). In the Democratic Republic of Congo’s constitutional crisis of 2016–17, as in Venezuela, the local bishops of the Catholic Church stepped in to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the constitutional crisis created by the delay of elections in 2017.

Building more resilient democracy requires immediate responses when democracy is in crisis, complemented by long-term efforts

to build local capacities for safeguarding democracy. In the near term, safeguarding resilient democracy requires measures to adapt democratic practices to rapidly changing social realities. Improvements and innovations to monitoring electoral processes and engaging to prevent election-related violence increasingly involve crowdsourcing and other uses of 'smart' mobile technologies.

Building democracy's resilience with outside assistance entails further developing local capacities and initiatives. Knowledge sharing and finding appropriate comparisons—of both fragility and resilience—may allow for cross-national learning. Spreading and facilitating the adoption of new technologies and expanding information sharing using such technologies can increase the inherent resilience of democracies worldwide. When there is a threat of institutional capture, outsiders can work to shore up the autonomy of local institutions—for example, by conferring legitimacy on judicial authorities or recognizing the legitimacy of their rulings.

Programmatic and project interventions may help political parties become more internally democratic and inclusive. Carefully designed support for institutional design and the provision of expert knowledge can assist during reforms or transitions.

## 2.9. Conclusions and recommendations: building more resilient democracies

Democracy as a system of reconciling such differences cannot be taken for granted: policymakers and citizens must undertake measures to support and safeguard democracy to make it more resilient. Concerns about declines in the quality of democracy globally have caused some to retrench from the long-term tasks of democracy building. However, it is time to renew support for democracy with a clearer focus on (a) when it can be flexible and recover from likely future challenges, crises and changes and (b) how it can be strengthened.

The following recommendations address today's most pressing concern for democracy: safeguarding it when it is under threat by building resilience from within. Those who seek to build more resilient democracy must be flexible, adaptive and innovative.

### Improving elections and representation

- *Continue to strengthen electoral integrity and election-related security* by ensuring a clear and fair legal framework, providing security at polling stations, and protecting the security of election technologies and communications. Renewed support for education, training and capacity development in election management bodies and civil society is required to build strong national and local capacities for ensuring electoral integrity
- *Expand and further professionalize regional organizations' capacities for capacity development, monitoring, and observation* by engaging in electoral processes to help prevent election-related conflicts from escalating into debilitating crises.

### Protecting and advancing fundamental rights

- *Protect citizens' rights to mobilize, protest, assemble and associate, blog and resist by safeguarding judicial independence, protecting fundamental rights such as open information, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the ability to organize peacefully, and by monitoring and denouncing at the international level state efforts to restrict rights or prevent the exercise of freedom of association.* Strengthen the capacities of associations of attorneys, legal aid societies and advocacy organizations for judicial monitoring.
- *Protect, reaffirm and advance the rights of minority and marginalized groups* in global norms and instruments of fundamental human rights. Examples include the best practices such as the International Labour Organization's norms related to resources and indigenous rights.



Building more resilient democracy requires immediate responses when democracy is in crisis, complemented by long-term efforts to build local capacities for safeguarding democracy

### Curbing corruption and state capture: accountability

- *Combat the influence of money in politics through holistic, integrity-oriented approaches that shift the culture of politics from personal enrichment and rent seeking to public service and trust.* Such approaches and networks should work domestically and globally to understand, share, uncover and confront illicit networks through regional information sharing, close engagement between state actors and community-based organizations, and market-based assessments of the local conditions that enable illicit networks to infiltrate government.
- *Adopt new mechanisms to give meaning to transparency* such as so-called sunshine provisions, which allow easy access to government information and technology-based reporting systems to track donations to parties, candidates and civil society organizations. Laws and accountability processes should be extended to improve transparency from national- to local-level politics, where capture and corruption may also be entrenched. Countries with high natural resource export revenues have become more resilient by adopting wealth-sharing institutions and procedures for government and citizen participation in global governance regimes such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative or the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species.

### Democracy that delivers: an inclusive, capable state

- *To reduce inequality, a renewed focus on local governance service delivery and optimizing public services is needed.* There must be clear electoral and political incentives to adopt

pro-poor service delivery, especially at the local level, where the state often directly provides services and public goods. Re-dedication to local governance capacities to deliver essential services such as energy, water and sanitation is needed to reduce poverty and thereby decrease the structural risks for democracy related to inequality.

- *Take innovative approaches to engaging non-citizen communities by creating social integration programmes to prevent the alienation and radicalization of non-citizens, supplemented by limited or local voting rights and structured community-level dialogue to give marginalized communities representation and voice.*

### Deepening and expanding participation

- *In conflict-affected contexts, building resilience into transitional institutions, such as constitution-making bodies and the new state, and emphasize continued negotiation and consensus-oriented policymaking.* Methodologies for social assessment and cultivation of representation in all segments of society are needed to improve the quality of participation in post-conflict contexts.
- *Ensure that civil society can participate in and perform their watchdog function in relation to government decision-making processes to enable long-term democratic resilience.* Preventing backsliding in democracy requires a resilient civil society, strong institutions, unending resolve and, at times, bold action. A resilient democracy requires citizen commitment to balancing ostensibly powerful institutions. Safeguarding democracy requires reinvigorating civil society participation, so that citizens acting equally with the powerful can ensure the popular control of governance.

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