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Towards a Canadian framework for
promoting democracy
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**TOWARDS A CANADIAN FRAMEWORK
FOR PROMOTING DEMOCRACY**

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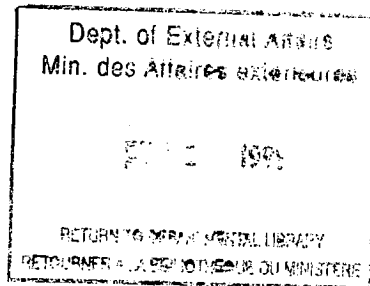


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Objective

The Global Issues Bureau has developed a Canadian foreign policy Framework for Promoting Democracy. The objective of the Framework is to assist foreign policy-makers with an understanding of the range of elements necessary for consolidating democracy abroad. Furthermore, the Framework indicates Canada's foreign policy tools for Promoting Democracy and points to meaningful interventions for assisting democratizing countries with the process of political transformation.

CIDA has its own Policy on "Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance" which examines democracy from a development perspective. For specificity in program design, CIDA separates the concept of democratic development into its three distinct parts: human rights, democracy and good governance. This paper does not make the above distinction. Instead it re-groups these elements under one coherent goals: the promotion of democracy. CIDA prioritizes civil society as an essential component in the planning of developmental activities. The Global Issues Bureau compliments this policy by emphasizing institutional strengthening (among other elements) as the central thrust of promoting democracy abroad, as institutions allow for the structural continuity of democratic reform.

Implicit in the Framework is the recognition that democratization will be a major global issue into the year 2000. As states-- indeed regions-- undergo political and economic transformation, democracy will increasingly become a standard requirement for legitimate inter-state relations. Canada should position itself accordingly, by choosing strategic issues and regions in which to lead on democratization. Canadian democratic values continue to carry moral authority in the global community. Canadian policy-makers must use this comparative advantage to serve the national interest, as laid out in *Canada in the World*.

The Framework defines democracy through four necessary but not sufficient elements: transparency, accountability, institutionality and rule of law. Transparency opens up the decision-making process to public scrutiny. Accountability demands checks on the system to ensure that government representatives and officials are ultimately accountable to the public. In so doing, corruption and the insulation of politicians and public servants are dramatically reduced. Institutionality describes a legitimate institutional framework which allows governments to carry out their requisite functions in a democracy. This may be contingent upon the ability of democratic governments to raise revenue for a professional civil service. Rule of Law must be respected within government and civil society in a well-functioning democracy. The law must be applied equally in a non-arbitrary fashion and be seen as an accurate reflection of a social consensus. In sum, the above elements of democracy legitimate the political and economic institutions of a state.

Although the Framework has a global reach, its utility lies in its applicability to both bilateral initiatives and multilateral contexts. Its intention is to be plugged into different regions and

massaged accordingly to fit specific countries. The outlined elements will be relevant to some regions and not others. Geographic bureaus should assess which elements should be promoted as priorities given their regional contexts.

This Framework assumes that although consolidation is the final objective of a democratic process, Canada's role is to assist countries to develop the key mechanisms of democracy and sound foundations for democratic consolidation.

1. Introduction

Democratization is a dynamic process. It develops in multiple forms and with varying speeds across a range of phases and contexts. As democracies around the world evolve, Canada is being called upon to assist new democracies into consolidation.

It is in Canada's interest to pursue a high profile foreign policy on promoting democracy, for two reasons. First, in *Canada and the World*, the Government outlines its principled commitment to supporting democracy the world over in coming years, and in so doing, work towards global security. Second, in assisting young democracies to consolidate democratic structures and institutions, Canada strengthens its relations with diplomatic and trade relations with allies throughout the world.

Canada's relations with the developing world demand that Canada is regularly called upon to assist countries in consolidating democracy. Canada's response has primarily been through development assistance in the following areas: electoral assistance, institutional strengthening, legal reform, police training and strengthening of civil society. Yet even with significant domestic reforms and the aid of donor countries, many new democracies continue to experience challenges from within.

This Democracy Framework acts as an instrument to assist Canada in establishing priorities for new democracies to overcome some of these challenges. DFAIT cannot affect normative change within a country-- but it can offer a relatively neutral set of criteria for both enabling a democratic transition and the successful consolidation of democracy.

The Framework is divided into three parts. Part One presents a definition of democracy for Canadian foreign policy. Part Two examines the elements necessary for a Canadian foreign policy to promote democracy. Part Three concludes with the Canadian instruments for action.

1.1 Challenges from Within new democracies

(i) Political Crisis

Many new democracies make valiant reforms without devolving power from the concentrated centre. When there is little structural change (or power distribution) then severe political and economic inequity can continue to act as de-stabilizing forces. This further contributes to the public perception of political illegitimacy at the government level. In extreme cases, failure of a political model or rampant corruption and fraud can also lead to crisis as governments/politicians seek to distract criticism. Similarly, insurgency wars can be escalated in terms of rhetoric and action to rally a population behind a floundering leadership. The spinoffs of such campaigns can fragment society and lead to crisis.

(ii) Economic Crisis

An economic crisis caused by any number of things (including currency speculation, devaluation, hyperinflation, and severe austerity measures associated with adjustment) has been the most prevalent challenge to new democracies in Latin America and Russia thus far. Governments and IFIs have not been highly successful in stabilizing these economies, thus crises are recurrent.

(iii) Crime and Banditry

Public safety is a primary concern under a newly democratic regime. Under authoritarian or totalitarian rule, crime tends to be systematic rather than random. When citizens feel their sense of public security is undermined by the transition from a controlled environment to the unpredictability of a democratic one, they may demand a return to the previous system.

(iv) General Disillusionment

Disillusionment caused by unrealistic expectations is another internal challenge to new democracies. Democracies take time to consolidate, but often citizens expect profound changes in both their personal and public lives to immediately accompany the transition.

2. Towards Defining Democracy

Democracy means different things to different people at different stages. For the purpose of framing a position, we propose the following working definition:

Democracy is a process which gives citizens responsive and representative institutions and mechanisms to pursue their economic, political, social and cultural affairs. Furthermore, it

enables both political winners and losers to pursue their political objectives and resolve disputes within rather than outside the democratic system. In short, democracy provides an open and routinized system for solving disputes.

This definition allows that in cases of new democracies, "democratic leaders" may not be necessary for the establishment of democracy. Instead, it underscores the importance of a structural and functional context of democracy where leaders operate within a set of institutions which are accountable and transparent in order to promote broad social participation and to prevent the imposition of individual preferences on society as a whole.

2.1 Examining the Elements of the Definition:

Transparency with Accountability

Transparency is crucial to the functioning of any legitimate democracy. Transparency is also a function of accountability, as it opens the substance of politics to other elites and the population at large. It reduces the temptation for corruption as politicians find it difficult to insulate themselves behind a veil of secrecy. Most importantly, it increases opportunities for participation, as the public intervenes in the policy-making process.

Democratic governments and institutions must be accountable to their populations. Accountability, in the form of legal remedies (ie. judicial review and appeals of all kinds), institutional oversight (ie. ombudsman, auditor general, human rights commission) and elections prevent systematic corruption. Furthermore, accountability must be public (transparent) and subject to scrutiny.

Rule of Law

Rule of Law is applied equally in a democracy. This means that citizens must perceive the law to be legitimate and reflective of what society deems to be just and equitable. In order for the law to be applied fairly, a well-trained, independent and credible judiciary is fundamental. The judiciary must use transparent instruments to apply the law. Rule of law ensures a non-arbitrary application of law and the eventual routinization of the democratic system.

If the legal legitimacy has been discredited by an undemocratic system, then a reform of the legal code might be in order. Legal reform must be accompanied by a campaign of massive public consultation, so that citizens recognize that the democratic system signifies change-- and they have a stake in that change.

Representation

Elected officials must be accountable to their constituents. This aspect of accountability buttresses the representative nature of the democratic system, as the mandate of politicians is ideally delegated by the citizenry. Different branches of government (such as Parliamentarians, Congress and Cabinet) are mutually accountable, therefore the process of policy-making and implementation must be reasonably transparent.

Professional Civil Service

Democracies require neutral and professional civil services. Enduring democratic institutions guarantee continuity and the eventual routinization of democracy. Civil servants must be paid a decent wage; if not, corruption becomes a subsidy for low wages. Public institutions should be seen as providing opportunity for social mobility with advancement by a merit based criteria. To maintain a legitimate democratic civil service, a generalized source of revenue may be required. Tax revenue may be the most effective means of bringing in revenue; yet, in many new democracies, taxes are systematically evaded. Tax reform may thus be an important accompanying element in the establishment of a professional civil service and democratic institutions.

Political Parties/ Movements

Political parties channel and accomodate interests into political mandates. Democratic parties attract members from all areas of greater society, and provide them with a vehicle for representation. In so doing, political parties give individual preferences and corporate interests a stake in the policy-making process. Legitimate political parties in opposition serve to balance the power of Government's use (and abuse) of the state apparatus, particularly during elections.

Democratic Watchdogs: the Media

The role of the media in a democratic society reinforces both transparency and accountability on the part of governments and corporations to the public. Citizens must have access to communications and recourse through the media. In democratic countries, the media sees itself as a watchdog of government and a protector of the public interest and right to know.

Instruments of Force

(a) Civil-Military Relations

In a democracy, instruments of force must be under civilian control, as civilians are subject to constraints of accountability. A necessary component of this principle is the distribution of civilians throughout the military establishment. A civilian figurehead is often left out of the

internal decision-making process and practices of the military. Thus, devolution of power from military officials to civilian personnel-- at all levels-- is key.

(b) *Civic-Minded Police*

Democracies have civic police forces. Beyond being under civilian control, police must be civic-minded in their professions. They must see their role as a public service, rather than as autonomous units. The principles which govern police behaviour must be reformed-- from those of control in protecting private interests to those of public protection in serving the interests of all members of society.

Individual Rights

In a democracy, the majority chooses which individuals, political parties and policies will govern a given country. Democracies operate on the mandate of the majority of their citizens while at the same time protecting the rights of their minorities. In addition to minorities, democracies protect individual human rights and liberties through transparent and accountable institutions and the rule of law. This prevents zero-sum outcomes, as election results do not determine total power over the minority or individual.

Routinizing Democracy

Democracy is not an ad-hoc and impromptu system. In fact, it depends on the routinization of rules: civic rules and obligations; rules which dictate the transfer of power through elections, and rules which govern the way power is distributed in a democratic society. A consolidated democracy is one which has become routinized-- when there are no longer threats to the system.

Inclusionary Democracies

Inclusionary democracies are more stable than exclusionary ones. We've learned through experience that inclusionary democracies where the majority of the population participates in the political and economic resources of a country, are more stable than exclusionary ones. Exclusionary regimes are characteristic of weak states and are vulnerable to extreme instability through popular mobilization. Inclusion gives voice and access to the political system and joins democratic institutions with its population. Democracy moderates the different voices within a society. With access, all of these voices have the possibility to participate within the system.

Vibrant Civil Society

Civil society describes all aspects of society which occur outside the control of government institutions. This category cuts across social cleavages to include a variety of associations (ie.

base communities, women's organizations, elite financial interest groups and academic associations). Civil society influences policies between election through mechanisms for redress and citizen influence. To consolidate democracy, civil society must participate as fully as possible to ensure that democratic institutions are legitimate and that political parties are transformed into institutions which are capable of representing their constituents.

Devolution of Power

Concentration of economic or political power leads to highly unstable societies, if the majority is struggling to survive alongside a minority which controls all the levers of power. Democracy, by definition, involves a distribution of power. Distribution promotes stability, as people are not as likely to be tempted by extreme alternatives for survival and legitimacy.

Culture of Democracy

Legitimate democratic institutions foster a culture of democracy. A democratic culture is the outcome of a successful democratic process. It is not a character trait which a society either has or does not have. It is fostered through the consolidation of a routinized democracy. Democratic culture requires democratic institutions as tools through which culture is formed. Democratic culture is also a function of broad public participation.

Democracy is a process, not an end point

All existing democracies are at different stages of development: from transition to consolidation. Democracies are flexible systems which allow for varied levels of the qualitative elements-- so long as the fundamental elements are in place.

3. Canada's Role in Promoting Democracy Abroad

In the context of a coherent foreign policy which places a high priority on democratic development, Canada should seek ways of exercising its comparative advantage in forwarding this goal.

Canada's Strategic Choices

As the desirability of democracy spreads, Canada is being called upon to contribute to its development through bilateral and multilateral channels. Canada has gained a solid reputation and is increasingly called upon to assist in various aspects of the democratic process. From electoral monitoring to police training and beyond it should choose its interventions according to two basic criteria: (i) the legitimacy of the democratic process and (ii) the value-added for Canada in promoting unity, Canadian values, ethnic ties and stability.

The depth of a Canadian democratic development initiative might be determined by answering three questions. First, how influential is Canada in a given country/region? How likely is Canada to affect change in the given country/region through its democratic intervention? How likely is Canada to affect successful outcomes from its democratic interventions?

To be a credible player in the international push for democratization, Canada must be associated with success stories in the developing world. Canada has mechanisms already in place for a concerted "democratic policy" which extend beyond elections and technical assistance. The idea is to choose key countries and target them with high profile initiatives in the area of democracy. Criteria for selection might be agreed upon in consultation; but we suggest three starting points: (i) the given country must have a Canadian presence-- political capital both within that country and in the given region; (ii) the country should ideally have a well developed relationship with Canada, in terms of diplomatic and trade relations (enlightened self-interest); (iii) the country must have constituencies which support Canadian efforts.

To determine which ingredients are required for reinforcing fragile democracies, one must first conceptualize the desired outcome of a democratic process. If the desired outcome is a narrow (or elite-driven) democracy, then elections and elite consensus are primary ingredients. If the desired outcome is more broadly conceived, then reinforcement must also be given to strengthening civil society; legitimizing institutions, and generally distributing power throughout the polity. Respect for rule of law through a legitimate legal system must be reinforced at the local, municipal, state-wide and even regional levels.

4. Canada's Evolving Instruments for Encouraging Democracy

Organizing Elections

The promotion of free and fair elections, technical assistance and observer missions are clear signs of support for a democratizing country. The work remaining on elections is in its wider reach: elections are part of a democratic process which avoids zero-sum outcomes, "organized uncertainty". Those who win an election may lose the next one. An election should be seen as one event on a continuum-- not a decisive signal of how power should be distributed within a society.

Free and fair elections are a good indication of the level of democracy or willingness to embark upon democratic reform. A country with questionable or unfair electoral practices is unlikely to have other important elements necessary for democratic development (among these, political will).

Canada's observer and technical assistance missions have already been evolving to allow for longer observations, technical assistance and training. Some of this technical training might also occur with the media of a new democracy in the lead-up to an election. If freedom of the fourth estate is also acknowledged as a component of free and fair elections, it expands the scope (in a very real way) of what has been criticized as superficial indicator of democracy, while at the same time giving Canada a visible profile within the media organizations of a given country.

NGOs and Civil Society

Canadian and local NGO activities, both at home and abroad are complimentary with Canada's interest in promoting democracy. NGOs are effective where the Canadian government cannot be, particularly at the base with various sectors of civil society. NGOs tend to be much more flexible than governments. Their hands on knowledge of local situations is indispensable and often beyond the reach of governments.

Police Training

Canada must continue to provide leadership in police-training. Canada is equipped with technical expertise and manpower skilled to train police in new democracies. RCMP and metropolitan police genuinely see themselves as protectors of the public good. This primarily civilian function is crucial for the enforcement of governance and public trust towards newly democratic institutions.

Promoting Civil- Military Relations

The creation and enhancement of civil-military relations in new democracies is crucial to democratic development. Actors within new democracies often find it difficult to reconcile past differences and entrench themselves in autonomous camps. Canada's continued participation in fostering more transparent and "civil" relations through seminars, conferences and technical training offers effective delivery of Canadian democratic policy.

Drafting Constitutions

Prominent Canadian justices, political philosophers and former politicians are assisting new democracies with in drafting democratic Constitutions. A Constitution must be based upon a social consensus about the way power will be distributed in a democracy, and the way individuals will be able to access and participate in decisions which govern their lives. Institutions and individuals, therefore, operate according to the rules as laid out in their Constitution.

Institutional Swaps

Institutional swaps between key municipal, provincial and federal departments, corporate elites and political institutions (such as political parties and Parliamentarians) can strengthen Canadian political and trade relations with democratizing states, while at the same time sharing Canadian experience with those countries. DFAIT can coordinate these institutional linkages between Canadian ministries which are relevant to the dissemination of Canada's democratic values. At the federal level: Department of Justice, Finance, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Canadian International Development Agency, International Development Research Centre and Parliament (to name only a few).

Fostering International Ties

Canada must encourage countries who have historically been isolated from the international community to make membership in regional and international organizations a domestic priority. In promoting international cooperation with such countries and their regional and international neighbours, Canada increases its trading opportunities, helps to open these states to democratizing influences and ultimately fosters international stability.

Third Country Cooperation

Canada should coordinate donor cooperation for the purposes of encouraging further democratization in new democracies. By working closely with third countries and the wider donor community, Canada can merge its resources with others to gain leverage in promoting democratic objectives.

Respecting Rule of Law

Canadian expertise and judicial institutions are well equipped to promote legal sharing and institutional approaches to law reform. This component is fundamental as it can reinforce all other elements of democratization. At the institutional level, rule of law ensures that institutions of government and the people act within the rules of game and are consistent.

Participatory civil society

Civil society-- in all its diversity-- must be included into the political and economic fold of the democracy. Participatory civil societies tend to feel they have something at stake in the continuity of that system. Voice and access gives them legitimacy within the democracy, as well the promise that some of their demands will be met. Canadian ODA contributes to this process in conjunction with NGOs, academics and special interest groups.

5. *Targets for Canadian Action*

Bilateral

Bilateral approaches to democratization are most effective in countries where Canada already has strong relations. In short, Canada should build on these already existing and developed links, rather than treating all sectors equally.

Bilaterally, Canada is in a position to further democracy in an environment where diverse contexts call for flexibility and adaptability. Canada can also contribute to the democratic process through its multilateral engagements.

Multilateral

Multilateralism is the most effective means for providing collective credibility on issues with normative underpinnings against which countries can assess their own democratic development. Multilateral initiatives must also be chosen strategically. Trans-regional or international issues should be dealt with multilaterally. This approach to cooperation, if linked strategically, can in turn strengthen bilateral links with key countries.

Multilateral organizations continue to be a central plank in Canadian action on democracy. As such, we must continue to work on common strategies for democratic development with member states through regional, sub-regional and international institutions. These institutions set democratic standards which in turn cause an amplifying effect among member-states.

At the inter-state level

Canada and other trading states should have tangible incentives to offer new democracies as part of the promotion of democracy. Economic incentives may be pragmatic: stable democratic markets attract foreign investment. As most new democracies depend in large part on the success of their economies, such an incentive is key to both business elites and governments. Thus far, many states have embraced the democratic project-- or least the outer appearance of it-- with the promise of democratic deepening, in order to be eligible for the economic benefits associated with being a modern democracy. To sustain this democratic momentum, economic progress must follow.

As mentioned above, if a state wants to project a modern image to attract investment, it links itself to the democratic project. Liberal democracy is equated with the free market and is viewed as one of the preconditions of joining larger free trade arrangements such as NAFTA. This is a powerful incentive for policy-makers to further democratize.

Within the State

The above is applicable to the elite level. Here, a consensus within the elite sectors must develop that democracy is in their best interest. The intellectual elite is often more wedded to the idea of democracy than financial elites. In some contexts, the outward stability of undemocratic traditions have aided business elites to prosper. Thus the carrots of increased trade and prosperity accompanying democratic consolidation should be targeted directly at this group.

Appendix A: Democratic Tool Kit¹

Qualitative Elements

Legitimacy
Distribution of Power
Degree of Inclusion/Exclusion
Representivity
Transparency
Accountability

Actors

Business interests
Military
Government representatives and public officials
Popular Sectors
Intelligencia
Police
Religious actors
Elected leaders/Parliamentarians
Media
Representative groups (labour, peasant organizations, professional groups)

Targets

Political Parties
Rule of Law
Judiciary
Elections
Representative Government
Bureaucracy
Civil Society

¹ These refer to federal, provincial and municipal Canadian institutions.

Appendix B: Canada's Domestic Tools

Elections

Elections Canada
CIDA
DFAIT
NGOs

Judicial Reform

Department of Justice
Solicitor General
Canadian Human Rights Commission
CIDA
DFAIT

Public Sector Reform

Public Service Commission
Canadian Centre for Management Development
Auditor General's Offices
IDRC
CIDA
DFAIT

Tax Reform

Department of Justice
Auditor General's Offices
Revenue Canada
Treasury Board
Statistics Canada
Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions
CIDA
DFAIT

Reforming Instruments of Force

DND
RCMP
Canadian Human Rights Commission
DFAIT
NGOs and other law enforcement agencies

Media Reform

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CIDA

DFAIT

NGOs

Environment

Environment Canada

Natural Resources

Fisheries and Oceans

DFAIT

IDRC

NGOs

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