

DEMOCRACY THINK TANKS IN ACTION

Translating Research
into Policy in Young and
Emerging Democracies

ARGENTINA

ECUADOR

GEORGIA

GHANA

LEBANON

ROMANIA

SLOVAKIA

SOUTH KOREA

TURKEY

The International Forum for Democratic Studies
National Endowment for Democracy

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments | vi

About the International Forum for Democratic Studies | viii

About the Network of Democracy Research Institutes | viii

Democracy Think Tanks in Action:

Translating Research into Policy in Young and Emerging Democracies

Christopher Walker | 1

Strengthening Civil Society Influence on Policy Formulation in Argentina:
The Identification of Economic and Institutional Consensus among Policy Makers

Gabriel C. Salvia | 9

Translating Evidence into Policies: Two Cases in Ecuador

Orazio Bellettini Cedeño and Andrea Ordóñez Llanos | 17

The Role of Democracy Research Organizations in Georgia

Ghia Nodia | 31

Translating Research into Policy: Two Cases from CDD-Ghana

E. Gyimah-Boadi, Regina Amanfo Tetteh, and Kojo Asante | 41

Turning a Research Idea into a National Movement:

How the LCPS's Advocacy Initiative Led to Municipal Elections

Sami Atallah | 55

Enhancing the Policy Impact of Democracy Research:

The Case of the Romanian Academic Society

Adriana Iordache & Simona Popescu | 67

Promoting Democratic Transformation:

The Role of Slovakia's Think Tanks, Watchdogs, and Human Rights NGOs

Martin Bútora | 74

Translating Research Into Policies:

The Experience of South Korea's East Asia Institute

Sook Jong Lee | 87

Enhancing the Policy Impact of Democracy Research:

The Case of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation's Democratization Program

Ozge Genç | 99

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ABOUT THE FORUM

The International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy is a leading center for research, discussion, and analysis on the theory and practice of democracy around the world. Established in 1994, the Forum strives to bridge the gap between academic research and the practice of democracy through several initiatives:

- Publishing the *Journal of Democracy*, the leading academic journal on democratization
- Hosting Fellowship Programs for international democracy activists, journalists, and scholars
- Organizing research initiatives and conferences to explore critical themes for democratic development
- Serving as the Secretariat for the American Political Science Association's Comparative Democratization Section (APSA-CD)
- Coordinating the Network of Democracy Research Institutes (NDRI), a global think tank network

ABOUT THE NDRI

The Network of Democracy Research Institutes (NDRI) is a global network of think tanks that conduct research and analysis on democracy, democratization, and related topics in comparative government and international affairs.

A key network of the World Movement for Democracy, NDRI is coordinated by NED's International Form for Democratic Studies to foster interaction among international think tanks, democracy scholars, and activists in order to:

- Analyze the status and problems of democracy, within individual countries and comparatively
- Identify examples of think tank and policy institute innovations
- Determine factors that contribute to the emergence and consolidation of democracy
- Promote policy discussions among citizens, and between citizens and government
- Foster and strengthen democratic values, principles, and ideas
- Disseminate major works and scholarship on democracy
- Enhance government capacity to address major public policy problems
- Identify and stimulate debate about institutional reforms to achieve these goals

Network Activities

To achieve the goals outlined above, NDRI conducts the following activities for member institutes to share ideas and information:

- Organizing international workshops on key issues in democracy research
- Promoting joint initiatives (conferences, panels, analytical projects) relating to the promotion of democracy and democratic development
- Producing *Democracy Research News*, a quarterly electronic newsletter
- Circulating Worth Reading, a semi-monthly email bulletin that recommends important articles, websites, and reports
- Meeting at World Movement for Democracy biennial Global Assemblies

For more information about NDRI, visit www.ndri.ned.org.

A note about data sources

All population data and GDP per capita data contained in the country header pages are 2012 estimates by the International Monetary Fund. Civil and political freedom status and press freedom status are as determined by Freedom House in the Freedom in the World 2013 and Freedom of the Press 2012 reports. Internet penetration data are 2011 figures obtained from the World Bank's Development Indicators.

DEMOCRACY THINK TANKS IN ACTION

Translating Research into Policy in Young and Emerging Democracies

Christopher Walker *

Achieving meaningful policy reform can be a devilishly difficult task in any political system, but especially so in countries with weak traditions of democracy. In relatively new democracies and states that can only be regarded as partly democratic, the essential supporting institutions of political accountability, media pluralism, and civil society have not grown deep roots. Decisions are made without broad consultation, public mobilization to support policy agendas is rare, and the goals of democratic reform are often at odds with the short-term interests of political incumbents.

In established democratic settings, by comparison, the environment for pursuing reforms tends to be more hospitable. No single political or economic power is able to dominate the discussion, and policy makers must answer to influential civil society groups as well as an informed public if they fail to address the country's pressing problems. This of course does not mean that achieving reforms in developed democracies is easy or seamless. As the difficult experience of recent years in the United States and Europe vividly demonstrates, even advanced democracies still wrestle with the challenge of identifying, adopting, and implementing sorely needed policy improvements.

Given the hurdles to achieving reform and the importance of ensuring that weaker democracies remain on a democratic course, it is all the more critical to have instruments capable of promoting change. In this regard, civil society has an important role to play in enhancing the quality of democracy. Think tanks that seek to inform policy through rigorous research and intellectual argument have carved out a unique place in the broader

COUNTRIES EXAMINED:

ARGENTINA, Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL)

ECUADOR, Grupo FARO

GEORGIA, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)

GHANA, Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)

LEBANON, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS)

ROMANIA, Romanian Academic Society (SAR)

SLOVAKIA, Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)

SOUTH KOREA, East Asia Institute (EAI)

TURKEY, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV)

* *Christopher Walker is Executive Director of the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies.*

array of civil society organizations. And within the think tank universe, those that specialize in democratic development are especially relevant to the pursuit of accountable and responsive governance.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the ways in which leading democracy think tanks are innovating and finding ways to make an impact in their countries, the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy asked nine members of its global think tank network (the Network of Democracy Research Institutes) to contribute essays that analyze their own efforts to achieve influence in young democracies or semidemocratic settings. These organizations are among the most highly regarded in the field.

It should be noted that there is no ironclad definition of “think tank.” Some of the organizations classified under this term tend to focus solely on scholarly policy research, while others also devote considerable resources to public outreach.¹ The organizations that have contributed essays to this study by and large engage in both rigorous research and public advocacy.

The Operating Environment for Reform

The think tank leaders who contributed essays to this project operate in a diverse range of political environments, each with its own distinct challenges to improving democratic governance. According to Freedom House, eight of the nine countries in the study were electoral democracies as of the end of 2012, signifying that they meet certain minimum standards of electoral competition. Lebanon is the sole exception.

Only one of the nine countries, Slovakia, earned Free status and top ratings (1 out of 7) on both political rights and civil liberties in the latest edition of Freedom House’s annual *Freedom in the World* report. Of the other eight, four—Ecuador, Georgia, Lebanon, and Turkey—are ranked in the middle-performing Partly

Free category. The remaining four—Argentina, Ghana, Romania, and South Korea—are classified as Free but exhibit weaknesses in their systems that cause them to fall short of the top numerical ratings.

While all of the cases possess multiparty systems with competitive elections, they also face challenging obstacles to transparent and accountable governance. **Ghana**, for instance, operates within a context of checks and balances, but government accountability suffers from the dominance of the executive branch. The country is also poised to obtain considerable oil wealth and must create systems that will prevent the onset of the “resource curse.” **Argentina** confronts weak transparency and rule of law, as well as indirect censorship that arises from the discriminatory allocation of official advertising resources. **Romania**, one of two EU members included in this review, has achieved impressive democratic success since the fall of the totalitarian Ceaușescu regime nearly a quarter century ago. However, it continues to face unstable governments, weak rule of law, and entrenched corruption. Although South Korea’s democracy is a relatively strong performer and has emerged successfully from a legacy of dictatorship, residual restrictions or distortions remain. The country contends with various forms of corruption and online censorship, for example.

Slovakia, the other EU member state in this study, has achieved a remarkable degree of democracy since the late 1990s. Indeed, following the collapse of Soviet communism, it has successfully overcome hurdles including the overhaul of a command economy, the creation of a new state after the division of Czechoslovakia, and the neutralization of dangers posed by the illiberal leadership of Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar (1993–98). Martin Bútora notes in his essay on Slovakia that a “part of the [civil society] sector has taken on the profile of a check on power,” a development that had its genesis in the quasi-authoritarian period under Mečiar. Civil society in Slovakia has continued to perform this

function since 1998, maturing and coming to represent a “source of alternative approaches to public policy.”

Meanwhile, the countries in this study that have weaker democratic profiles (Partly Free in the Freedom House analysis) face more complicated challenges.

In **Ecuador**, as part of an ongoing campaign to repress independent voices in the country, the executive branch has recently placed greater pressure on the news media and the judiciary in an increasingly populist and polemical environment.

In the decade since **Georgia’s** Rose Revolution, the country has enacted important if partial reforms, but it has also undergone violent domestic upheaval and a military invasion by Russia. While Georgia has made notable progress in tackling corruption and strengthening state institutions, and recently experienced a peaceful turnover of power, its democratic gaps include lagging judicial reforms and a polarized, personality-driven political arena.

Lebanon’s political system has relied on a rigid power-sharing formula under which parties representing the country’s main religious groups divide the top executive and legislative posts and hold quotas in the parliament, the civil service, and the security forces. The ongoing violence in neighboring Syria threatens to have harmful spillover effects on Lebanon’s governance.

As **Turkey’s** prospects for accession to the EU have dimmed in recent years, its domestic governance has become less transparent and accountable. Independent or critical journalists have been among the notable victims of this shift. In her essay on Turkey, Özge Genç notes that civil society in the country faces a range of risks from an uncertain political climate. Turkey’s persistent authoritarian tendencies have implications beyond its borders, as it is often held up as a potential democratic model for the Turkic world and the Arab Middle East.

To one extent or another, the countries in this study have vulnerabilities in their young or partially developed systems—including weak rule of law, inadequate transparency, and enduring corruption—that require dedicated reform efforts in order to prevent backsliding.

Diverse Obstacles to Overcome

The policy environments in these systems are partially developed and present challenges to the democracy research organizations operating within them. One problem lies in the nature of political parties in young democracies and their often sharply limited capacity to develop reform ideas and platforms. Parties in these countries frequently rely on personalities and do not always represent clear constituencies or societal interests. Even when they do, they may lack a sense of responsibility to the broader public interest. These parties therefore tend not to serve as the driving force behind reforms, and they may not be receptive to external advice.

The uneven quality and diversity of news media present another obstacle, hindering the emergence of an informed public debate about policy options. While the internet and other digital media platforms are affording new opportunities to foster these discussions and mobilize public support, the most popular news outlets, especially on television, are still dominated by either the government or partisan business interests. As a result, such media may be seen more as political instruments than as neutral forums for civic exchange.

In addition, because many of these countries have only recently made the transition from dictatorship or are still struggling to address poverty and economic underdevelopment, their civil society organizations must contend with such social obstacles as deeply rooted skepticism toward public engagement, immature private philanthropic traditions or incentives, and difficulty recruiting and retaining high-quality staff.

Finally, in systems with weaker democratic institutions, it can be said that the

nature of the reform challenge differs in kind, not just in degree. Instead of simply modifying existing policies and persuading decision makers that one or another option is the best way to achieve widely accepted goals, democracy think tanks in the more difficult environments are tasked with introducing fundamental reforms that may face strong political resistance. As Ghia Nodia of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD) shrewdly observes in his essay, "The task in Georgia is to help transform a superficially democratic—or predominantly autocratic, depending on the opinion of a given analyst—state into a substantively democratic political system. It is about changing the nature of the political regime."

All of these factors, and the limitations they present, have not prevented the think tanks in this study from making an impact. Despite the challenges, they have displayed a capacity for adaptation and innovation, and their experiences can help inform the efforts of counterparts in other countries.

Lessons on Making an Impact

The following are but a few of the broad lessons that can be drawn from the successes and setbacks of the nine democracy research organizations in this study.

The importance of effective communication. Grupo FARO in Ecuador observes that the "gathering of evidence is not enough." Findings and arguments need "to be communicated in a way that speaks to politicians and policy advisors (the top-down view of the policy process) as well as to journalists and ordinary citizens (the bottom-up view)." In other words, "evidence needs to be transformed into stories and narratives that capture the political and social imagination." In Georgia, as Ghia Nodia observes, "to date civil society organizations have generally been the primary instigators of and participants in public-policy debates that deserve the designation. They are also the main agents for spreading policy ideas and assessments through different media. Many

think tank figures in Georgia feel that they stand a much stronger chance of influencing policy through public opinion than through a direct approach to decision makers."

Working in conjunction with the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) utilized news media and government officials as intermediaries in a way that allowed for the spread of information and building of support. The media informed the public about a movement to call for local elections, while allied lawmakers were able to actively work within the parliament to persuade their colleagues. And in Argentina, in order to make as clear and compelling an impression on audiences as possible, the Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL) enlists a professional journalist to present the results of each question in its Legislative Barometer surveys in an attractive manner.

Grupo FARO developed assessments and rankings for government agencies and officials that measured their success at implementing reforms in the social-services sector, especially as regards the transparency of the reforms. This is a different type of "content" than the evidence used in policy making; it is a public information tool and a means of applying pressure. Similarly, as part of an environmental conservation project, Grupo FARO "had a clear strategy of direct communications with government, but it was intertwined with an advocacy coalition that actively promoted the same ideas among the wider public."

In Turkey, the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) launched a campaign to hold government officials accountable for their constitutional reform promises. This effort included making available online for public review the reports, letters, and presentations produced by civil society relating to the reform process, despite government refusals to do the same. The Turkish parliament had taken the step of removing from its own website

the comments from civil society. TESEV's campaign also surveyed public opinion on constitutional reform issues and held a press conference on the survey's results, pressuring the decreasingly transparent government to keep its promises. The Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) was a key player in the critical "OK '98" campaign in Slovakia, an effort coordinated by an eleven-member council of civic and activist organizations whose widely and thoroughly disseminated messages helped to ensure free and fair elections. This nationwide collaborative effort contributed significantly to the election of a democratic government in Slovakia, and the value of the civic activism it engendered there is immense.

In South Korea, among its other initiatives, the East Asia Institute has used frequent domestic and cross-national public opinion surveys, conducted in cooperation with major media companies, as a tool for reaching wider public audiences. The rapid growth of the internet and other information and communication technologies in the country has afforded think tanks new possibilities for public outreach.

The power of civic education and public awareness. A number of the organizations in the study leveraged civic education and public awareness to effect change. Sami Atallah of the LCPS observes that his "Center's experience demonstrates the power of ideas—that ideas relating to democratic representation, local government, or corruption, emerging from a fairly academic exercise, can provide the basis for sociopolitical collective action and become forces for change." As noted above, LCPS joined with LADE to create a petition demanding that municipal elections be held. The project "shifted politics to a new playing field that the government did not con-

trol, and reinvigorated grassroots activism in a country with multiple societal cleavages." LCPS credits its success in part to a strategy of enlisting the support of civic groups and political parties from all regions and confessions in the country. This helped to spread the petition to every community, demonstrate a broad and nonpartisan public demand, and build mutual trust among previously estranged constituencies. It is a prime example of how civic activism on behalf of a common cause can knit social groups together.

In response to instances of religious violence, CIPDD in Georgia carried out a program of religious tolerance workshops for schoolteachers, challenging assumptions that societal attitudes were too ingrained to be changed at the teacher level. At the end of the process, many teachers admitted that a rational discussion of religious pluralism helped them see this issue in a very different way.

The countries in this study have vulnerabilities in their young or partially developed systems...that require dedicated reform efforts in order to prevent backsliding.

The Coalition for a Clean Parliament in Romania, organized by the Romanian Academic Society (SAR), offered the public a means to demand the removal of corrupt parliamentarians. The

project created public lists of electoral candidates who were suspected of corruption, thus putting pressure on the various political parties to cull them from their slates. Citizens were then able to vote against those who remained. In essence, SAR effected change by linking a policy request with a public awareness tool. Using a similar approach, SAR persuaded the Ministry of Finance to make public the debts owed by state-owned companies, revealing the scale of their inefficiency and dependence on state bailouts and increasing pressure on officials to proceed with long-delayed privatization efforts.

Research can provide insight into how to set up these outreach efforts—and provide openings for popular participation that ordinary citizens may not have the expertise, resources, or creativity to initiate themselves.

The added value of joint initiatives.

Joint initiatives between organizations, especially between think tanks and more activism-oriented groups, can be of value in bridging human capital gaps. An individual group may have strong research products and connections with peer institutions or other nongovernmental sectors (private businesses, for example), but lack the expertise or capacity to carry out a full-scale public awareness campaign. Networks of nonresident fellows can be another useful way to share human capital and pull together disparate experts from across organizations and sectors. This approach requires less financing than a large in-house staff, although it also has limits and requires personal ties and mutual respect among members to succeed.

Democracy think tanks in the more difficult environments are tasked with introducing fundamental reforms that may face strong political resistance.

International connections also proved useful to the organizations in this report and were in evidence in five of the case studies. Developing partnerships with groups abroad can supplement the expertise of an organization, lend credibility to its proposals, and allow it to convey international “best practices” to the government. Such partnerships may require researchers to give up their exclusive ownership of ideas and share credit for any successes, but the fact remains that success is more likely when many advocates are working toward the same goal and the initiative rises above the particular interests or limitations of its originator.

The elusiveness of causal relationships in policy making.

Many organizations note that it is often impossible to quantify success or measure their true impact on the policy-making process. It is important to remember that public policy is usually formed through the work of many hands and the influence of external events, meaning a particular think tank may play only an indirect or facilitating role in the generation of a given outcome. But the difficulty of identifying a direct causal relationship does not diminish the value of the contribution.

As one author put it, think tanks can serve as “idea brokers” or “conduits” between “policy makers on the one hand and civil society, community leaders, interest group representatives, activists, academics, and students on the other.” Through this conduit, participants can exchange ideas and expertise in a wide public

discourse about the policy-making process. Helping to cultivate, sustain, and influence such a discourse is a public service that all think tanks should aspire to provide.

Meeting a Steep Reform Challenge

At a time when most societies are dealing with a rapidly changing governance environment, spurred in part by the ongoing communications revolution, young or weak democracies must find ways to adapt to the new landscape. Political fragmentation, information overload, and the complexity of modern policy making all increase the value of organizations that can bring clarity to difficult policy problems. Improving the quality of the discussion in the public sphere is a critical need in all democracies, and especially so in partial ones. In this respect, think tanks have an important role to play in addressing issues of civic consequence.

Effective instruments for encouraging reform are in demand in young and aspiring democracies around the world. The transitional states of North Africa are a prime example, as their leaders are facing terribly difficult policy decisions and very tight timeframes. But the experiences of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya will undoubtedly be repeated elsewhere in one way or another, given popular pressure for more responsive and effective governance in other countries in the Arab world and beyond.

For this reason, it is important to develop the capacity of democracy think tanks even in political environments that are currently hostile to their ideas. As Ghia Nodia points out with respect to Georgia, it is often the case that “ideas follow people.” When governments change, civil society figures migrate to official positions, bringing with them important knowledge about democratic practices. As democracy takes root and further rotations of power take place through elections, some former government officials may in turn move to the think tank world, enriching civil society with their expertise and experience. In the Georgian case, given the 2012 election results, there is reason to hope that this process will become institutionalized.

The environments presented by new democracies and partly democratic states offer particular challenges, but real opportunities as well. Unlike the patently corrupt and coercive governance that predominates in consolidated authoritarian systems, the countries included in this study to one extent or another feature competitive elections, space for news media, and the ability of civil society to operate with relatively few constraints. For the countries with more developed democratic systems, where the “rules of the game” are settled, democracy think tanks can play an important role in improving policies. In

the weaker democratic settings, the challenge is steeper. Democracy think tanks in such countries can play a similarly important part in improving specific policies, but they have the additional challenge of helping to enable more fundamental systemic reforms to deepen democracy.

In all of these cases, it is critical to maintain realistic expectations for civil society organizations, which do not operate in isolation. A range of social, economic, political, and others factors influence and compete with the efforts of think tanks in young or partial democracies. Despite this reality, some observers expect quick results on very specific matters. But as Gabriel Salvia of CADAL in Argentina observes, the work of a think tank is intended to bring results in the medium to long run, since successful reforms under democratic governments are necessarily gradual and require consensus.

While there are no “silver bullets” for achieving democratic reforms, the accounts in this study demonstrate the value of independent think tanks that are able either to directly incorporate an advocacy component into their work, or otherwise partner with organizations that can help promote their analytical efforts. Given the clear and persistent challenges to improving democratic governance, protecting and, ideally, institutionalizing the operating space for organizations that help inform the policy discussion, encourage consensus, and generally offer a thoughtful frame of reference for elite and mass audiences is an endeavor that deserves dedicated attention and continued support.

Endnote

1. For more on the subject of definitions, see James G. McGann, *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the United States: Academics, Advisors, Advocates* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY INFLUENCE ON POLICY FORMULATION IN ARGENTINA

The Identification of Economic and Institutional Consensus among Policy Makers



*Gabriel C. Salvia**

The Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to the defense and promotion of democratic values; the monitoring and analysis of political, economic, and institutional performance; and the formulation of public policies that contribute to good governance and individual well-being.

CADAL highlights, in both its objectives and programs, the importance of the rule of law and of merit and active transparency in the public sector; the role of private initiative in the generation of economic growth; the subsidiary role of the state in guaranteeing cohesion and social inclusion; and the necessity of an international commitment to the defense of human rights.

CADAL was created in February 2003 in the context of the political, economic, and institutional crisis that had recently taken place in Argentina and several other Latin American countries, and the related challenges of upholding democratic freedoms and pursuing economic growth with social inclusion. CADAL sought to promote the different facets of development in the region through initiatives of political, economic, and institutional opening.

In the case of Argentina, almost three decades after the end of military rule, the country has suffered important setbacks in the quality of democracy. These include political fragmentation due to the collapse of the party system in 2001, a federal structure that is not applied in practice, and, crucially, a federal legislative branch that is subordinated to the executive.

CADAL has worked to highlight the legislature's important constitutional role in the formulation and implementation of public policies. In 2008, the Center introduced

ARGENTINA

Capital: *Buenos Aires*

Population: *41.282 million*

Internet Penetration:
47.7 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and Civil Liberties Status: *Free*

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$18,202

**Gabriel C. Salvia is President and General Director of the Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America.*

the Legislative Barometer, a tool designed to help civil society influence the policy-making process. It is a self-administered, anonymous opinion poll that indicates whether or not a given policy measure enjoys sufficient consensus among legislators. That is, it casts light on the viability of initiatives proposed by civil society. This is important because civil society often works on proposals that do not enjoy a basic political consensus, meaning time is lost and resources wasted.

CADAL's team has experience in the use of this instrument. In 2008, two surveys were carried out (one in Uruguay and the other in Argentina), and in 2010 a further survey of Argentine legislators was conducted.

In the first case, which was supported by the Swiss embassy, the theme of the Legislative Barometer was the reform of the penal and incarceration system in Uruguay. The results of the survey were published in a book, in which several specialists underlined the advisability of introducing the proposed changes.

In the second case, the theme under investigation was public spending and taxation in Argentina. Thirty members of the budget and treasury committees of both chambers of the Argentine Congress were interviewed, and a broad majority was opposed to a budget deficit

and considered the tax on checks to be one of the country's worst.

Two years later, the Legislative Barometer entitled *Argentine Economic and Institutional Agenda 2010–2011* was implemented, surveying lawmakers on the following committees: budget and treasury, finance, economy, agriculture and livestock, industry, commerce, energy, and revenue sharing. This time, implementation of the barometer required seven months of work, two more than foreseen, due to the difficulty of obtaining responses (especially in the case of ruling party legislators). The major conclusions were as follows:

- More than seven out of ten legislators (73.3 percent) who sit on various economic, fiscal, and production-related committees of both chambers of Congress identified inflation as the main problem the Argentine economy would face over the next two years.
- According to the view of the Argentine economy espoused by thirty-five deputies and ten senators of all parties, the second major concern was structural poverty (57.8 percent). A slightly lower percentage (55.6 percent) cited judicial insecurity, while less than half of those surveyed expressed worry about the scarce level of investment present in the economy (48.9 percent).

About the Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America



The Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL) was founded in 2003 as a non-profit, non-partisan, private foundation with the mission of promoting democratic values; observing political, economic and institutional performance; and formulating public policy proposals that contribute to good government and well-being. Based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, CADAL also operates a satellite office in Montevideo, Uruguay and is supported by an advisory group consisting of academics, analysts, businessmen, and consultants in various Latin American countries.

To achieve its goals, CADAL organizes national and international conferences, conducts analysis, surveys, and research projects concerning public policy, provides educational courses for university students and professionals, and generates publications to spread ideas. In addition, CADAL conducts a number of activities with regional and international reach to promote international solidarity for democracy.

- When questioned about the best way to slow price increases for consumer goods, 60.5 percent of the legislators supported moves to reduce the value-added tax (VAT) on goods from the basic consumer basket, while a little more than half said they would “control the emission of money” (51.2 percent). As a third alternative, the legislators considered it best to “let the market operate freely and help the poor through direct cash transfers” (25.6 percent).

- In order to escape the tangle of subsidies on public-service tariffs, the majority (54.8 percent) indicated a preference to “negotiate a staggered increase of tariffs on all users,” while 38.1 percent of those surveyed would as an additional preference “establish adjustment mechanisms for the future.” Meanwhile, the options to “update tariffs automatically according to inflation” and “offer subsidies so that tariffs do not increase” did not receive a single affirmative response.

- The deputies and senators were in favor of balanced budgets (31.8 percent), prioritized health as the most relevant option for government spending (68.2 percent), considered the tax on checks to be the country’s most distortive tax (72.7 percent), and with regard to the agricultural sector, proposed the reduction or elimination of retentions and other bureaucratic or customs obstacles (31.8 percent). At the same time, they valued the role of Congress in the setting of export tax rates (50 percent) and the authorization of spending increases (62.8 percent).

- Regarding the state’s role in the economy, 77.8 percent justified the liberal reforms of the 1990s, although with certain reservations. Equal numbers of legislators (31.8 percent) thought either that state-owned companies are justified only when private

business has been shown to be deficient, or that state-owned companies should be the rule in key sectors, such as defense or public services. Nevertheless, they showed themselves to “generally agree” with the liberalization of the commercial airline market (59.4 percent).

- The politicians consulted also showed themselves to be in favor of commercial opening as long as it is reciprocal (54.5 percent), justified nontariff barriers in exceptional circumstances (34.9 percent), or rejected them with the argument that the imposition of tariffs is more transparent (37.2 percent). With regard to the regulation of local commerce, the majority (61.5 percent) of legislators said they agreed with the obligation to restrict medicine sales to pharmacies and sales of newspapers to kiosks.

- The legislators surveyed declared their principal countries of reference in Latin America to be Brazil (83.7 percent), Chile (72.1 percent), and Uruguay (65.1 percent), while only a few indicated that Argentina should emulate Bolivia (4.7 percent), Venezuela (2.3 percent), or Cuba (2.3 percent).

The Legislative Barometer was well received by the media, including the *Buenos Aires Herald*, which published a fairly detailed account of the results on 15 December 2010. Several other media outlets also covered the survey.

The success of this type of survey basically depends on its impact in the media. Good research by think tanks is often wasted due to flaws in the presentation and communication of the final product. It is consequently very important that the survey results are processed in such a way that they can be readily used by journalists. CADAL hires an experienced journalist to present the results of each question in an attractive manner. This

**See, among others, “Para los legisladores, la inflación será el principal problema en 2011” [For legislators, inflation will be the main problem in 2011], *El Cronista Comercial*, 14 December 2010; “Inflación oficial Argentina de 0,7 pct en noviembre” [Argentina’s official inflation rate was 0.7% in November], *Reuters*, 15 December 2010; “El Congreso sueña con bajar el IVA” [Congress dreams of lowering the VAT], (con’t on next page)

work, which bears no signature and is presented as an institutional text, includes the elaboration of an executive summary that synthesizes the data from the survey.**

Leaving aside the communications strategy, CADAL has encountered the following obstacles during its five years of work on this initiative:

- The legislators, with a few exceptions, do not respond rapidly to the survey and must be called and reminded week after week.
- Regardless of each legislator's predisposition to respond, it is necessary to remember that they receive many solicitations of this type. The Legislative Barometer is competing with numerous initiatives promoted by consultants, investigators, journalists, and other entities.
- In the case of the governing bloc the situation is even more complicated, whether due to a lack of contacts with advisers, the fact that CADAL may be perceived as politically opposed to the government, or the fear that individual responses may be made public. Furthermore, it is important to point out that in the case of Argentina, the legislative branch does not, in practice, enjoy independence from the executive and generally limits itself to considering and approving projects as indicated by the presidency.
- Several of the legislators surveyed reported that the *Legislative Barometer Argentine Economic and Institutional Agenda 2010–2011* contained too many questions (twenty).
- This initiative (in its Argentine version) does not have sufficient economic resources to hire full-time staff, and is carried out by volunteers, in-

terns, and members of staff assigned on a part-time basis.

CADAL has dealt with these obstacles as follows:

- We are dedicating more time to the implementation of the barometer, and as we receive responses we adjust our priorities for reminder telephone calls. The idea is to focus on the completion of surveys by those legislators who are necessary to offer the most representative survey possible, according to the number of legislators from each political bloc, each chamber of Congress, and each province.
- A telephone contact is established in each legislator's office, and distinct methods are used to obtain contacts close to the legislator to facilitate the completion of the survey. At times the survey may be completed by an adviser and simply approved by the legislator, and we seek to identify such a person. In other cases we appeal to mutual acquaintances to deliver and follow up on our request. We also take advantage of any opportunity to establish direct contact with the legislators and obtain their personal e-mail addresses, for instance at events in which they participate or social activities they attend, including receptions at foreign embassies.
- We also take advantage of CADAL's associates and especially members of the Business, Advisory, or Academic Councils who have direct or indirect contact with national legislators. Similarly, we appeal to friendly journalists, analysts, consultants, or academics.
- Because in many cases we are informed, upon calling the legislators' offices, that the printed survey has not been received, the same document is available in electronic form:

(cont'd from previous page) *La Nación*, 19 December 2010; "Encuesta hurgó en opinión de legisladores y se notan más coincidencias que las que expresan los discursos" [Survey explores the opinion of legislators and finds more agreement than is expressed in speeches], *Agencia Diarios y Noticias*, 28 December 2010; "Barómetro legislativo: Los legisladores se parecen más entre sí que lo que ellos creen" [Legislative barometer: Legislators are more alike than they think], *Perfil.com*, 29 December 2010.

both through a hidden link on CADAL's website and as a Word attachment that is repeatedly sent to the legislator's office by e-mail. Once the survey has been completed, the legislators have two options: print and sign the survey (to be picked up by a member of CADAL's team) or send it directly by e-mail.

- In response to the lack of replies from government party legislators, we are considering presenting the results of the latest survey as "The Opposition's Vision." This will allow us to exclude the few completed surveys from the ruling party legislators, as the bloc makes up the majority of both chambers and its low participation rate affects the representativeness of the survey. This alternative also takes into account the fact that it is possible to infer the probable responses of governing party legislators based on the policies of the government and projects previously approved by Congress. Moreover, we consider that it could be of greater interest to the public and more attractive to the media to identify the perspectives of the opposition, which is often criticized for failing to offer alternatives to the policies of the government.

- Meanwhile, a Political Opening Program at CADAL's Latin American School of Political and Economic Studies will be directed toward young students and university graduates. Beginning in 2013, they will be trained to participate in the institution's projects, including the Legislative Barometer and the Monitor of Legislators' Transparency. The goal is to recruit future volunteers and interns and increase the human resources at our disposal for future initiatives.

- To improve financing, CADAL's objective is to concentrate any fundraising directed toward businesses on this project. The survey generates considerable interest in the business community, as several of the questions directly or indirectly affect the investment climate and the develop-

ment of productive activity.

- Currently, the 2012–13 edition of the Legislative Barometer *Argentine Economic and Institutional Agenda* is being carried out, and all members of Congress (72 senators and 257 deputies) have been invited to participate.

As with any think tank, CADAL's main aspiration is to see some of its initiatives become public policy. This requires a favorable climate of public opinion toward the proposed policies, as well as political interest on the part of legislators or the government.

In adverse political and economic contexts, the second option of any think tank is to try to place some subjects on the public agenda that may influence a change among policy makers. With this second option in mind, the questions included in the Legislative Barometer are selected according to the following strategy:

- Surveys are performed every two years to show changes in the answers of legislators. For example, regarding "the vision of the Argentine economy," legislators are asked to select four answers to the following question: According to you, which are the main problems that the Argentine economy will face in the next two years? The possible options are: A) Judicial insecurity, lack of clear and stable rules; B) Economic dependence from abroad; C) External factors (international crisis, commodities prices, etc.); D) Low level of investments; E) High level of state interventionism; F) Structural poverty; G) Corruption; H) Political uncertainty; I) Tax pressure; J) Labor and/or union conflicts; K) High level of public debt; L) Protectionism and the lack of economic opening to the world; M) Unfair wealth distribution; N) Fiscal deficit; and O) Inflation.

- Similarly, legislators are asked to choose from the following options regarding the proper role of state companies: A) The government must provide a basic regulatory framework for

certain activities, but is not to manage companies directly; B) The government must not manage companies directly, but subsidize strategic sectors of the economy; C) Government companies are only justified in the cases where private management has proven deficient; D) Government companies should be the rule in key economic sectors; or E) The government should be the owner of all the means of production.

- To encourage debate on the issue of meritocracy as a rule in public administration, the legislators are asked: Would you agree that the heads of the technical government entities must be hired through a contest of experience and expertise, so as to prevent the post and its tasks from becoming a political matter?

Good research by think tanks is often wasted due to flaws in the presentation and communication of the final product.

- Legislators are offered a variety of choices as to the best mechanisms for reducing unemployment: A) The establishment of a "flexicurity" system, whereby companies pay less for social benefits and it is easier to fire workers, but the government provides unemployment insurance to those who have lost their jobs and are looking for a new one; B) Penalizing companies that fire employees, for instance by establishing a system of double or triple compensation; C) Nationalizing companies that are about to close and/or go into bankruptcy; D) Establishing a uniform unemployment insurance that does not favor the workers of big companies over those working at small and medium-sized firms; E) Creating more jobs in the public sector; F) Giving subsidies to companies that are having difficulties and agree not to reduce their staff; and G) Reducing the labor cost to companies, since current legislation provides incentives to rely on black-

market labor and favors investment in capital goods over the legal hiring of workers.

- CADAL has modified questions from previous editions of the Legislative Barometer as needed. For instance, one that asked lawmakers to identify the country's worst tax was replaced by the following question: Which of the following taxes would you eliminate? Ten tax categories were listed, along with the option of "None." According to provisional answers, the so-called "checks tax" (applied to bank credits and debits) was chosen by the overwhelming majority. The results of this question will be used by CADAL to advocate for the tax's repeal. There are currently a number of different proposals by experts for its gradual elimination, but one possibility in particu-

lar—that the revenue from the tax would be distributed among the provinces—would make its elimination nearly impossible.

- Legislators are invited to consider priorities for public expenditure, especially in light of questionable policies like the program "Football for All," through which the federal government subsidizes the broadcasting of soccer matches on television. In this case the question was submitted as follows: Would you agree to reallocate the budget for the program Football for All? The possible responses were: A) No, the government should remain in charge of the free transmissions; B) No, the government should remain in charge of the free transmissions, but government advertising should be regulated to avoid its use as political propaganda; C) Yes, I would use the funds for higher education, science and technology, and/or culture; D) Yes, I would allocate the funds for defense, internal safety and justice, and/or to fight against drug traffick-

ing; E) Yes, I would allocate the funds for health, social programs, and/or a pension system; F) Yes, I would allocate the funds for public works, infrastructure, and/or housing; G) Other; H) I don't know; I) No answer.

- The survey addresses institutional issues with important economic implications, such as the possibility of extending the legislative discussion period for important projects to allow more public consultation and the correction of any flaws. Major decisions like the repeal of the private pension system and the nationalization of the oil company YPF have been enacted after less than a month of legislative deliberation. By contrast, the creation of the private pension system and the privatization of YPF in the 1990s took place after more than a year of legislative discussion.

In comparison with the previous edition of the Legislative Barometer *Argentine Economic and Institutional Agenda*, the new survey for 2012–13 includes the following changes:

- The number of questions was reduced by half to make it easier for the legislators to answer them. Among the questions that were eliminated was the one related to expenditures in the federal budget, since many important social expenses like health and education are dealt with mostly by provincial governments, and because it is difficult for a legislator to openly prioritize tourism or sports over safety, justice, and national defense.
- Questions about policies for individual economic sectors were cut, since now we are sending the survey to all legislators, and many are not familiar with the reality of specific sectors. More general or institutional matters were prioritized instead.

Conclusions

Although the Legislative Barometer is a product that allows questions on any subject on the public political agenda, the survey that we have been imple-

menting for two years now on the Argentine economic and institutional agenda tries to foster debate on macroeconomic and political-institutional matters that affect the country's development.

The Legislative Barometer provides the field research, the information analysis, and the elaboration of diagnostics that are indispensable for the generation of constructive ideas. At the same time, the survey's data on the coincidence of opinions help to identify and prioritize initiatives that have more solid support and are therefore worth pursuing with additional resources. Moreover, consensus is the basis of collective intelligence. It is essential to the decision-making process and the formulation of state policies in the long run.

In light of the economic policies that have been implemented in Argentina in recent years, together with setbacks in the quality of the country's institutions, it could be said that CADAL has failed in its mission. However, one should consider the following:

- A civil society organization that promotes certain principles and propels policy initiatives owes its existence to those who see value in its task: its members, donors, and those who take part in its activities; the media outlets that use its research for news; and all those who in different ways engage in the work of the institution by attending events, receiving newsletters, and following its work through social networks. This social representation suggests that CADAL's point of view has achieved some resonance within the pluralistic democracy, notwithstanding the unfavorable political context or even our own inability to exert a more decisive influence.
- The work of a think tank is intended to bring results in the medium and long run, since successful reforms under democratic governments are necessarily gradual and require ample consensus. The organization must therefore not only survive for an extended period, but also guarantee the

continuity of its more innovative products.

- There is no doubt that the main challenge to taking full advantage of the results of this survey is improving its communication to the public. We are considering different alternatives that include greater diffusion through the internet, inviting the public and specialists to answer the survey, offering videos with experts giving their opinions on the results, and involving candidates for the legislative elections of 2013 to state their positions. At the same time, we are evaluating specific campaigns through social networks and strategic alliances, whether with peer institutions or well-known social referents.

Although many of the questions included in the Legislative Barometer *Argentine Economic and Institutional Agenda* list answers that are not especially popular at present, it is worth noting what John Stuart Mill expressed in his book *On Liberty*: "It is as evident in itself as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals; every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it is as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many, once general, are rejected by the present."

TRANSLATING EVIDENCE INTO POLICIES

Two Cases in Ecuador



*Orazio Bellettini Cedeño and Andrea Ordóñez Llanos**

*It has been said that man is a rational animal.
All my life I have been searching for evidence
which could support this.
— Bertrand Russell*

Think tanks, international institutions, and even politicians agree that policies grounded in solid research are superior to those based merely on political interests or ideology, and that such research can prevent crucial misunderstandings. In this paper, we will describe two cases in which evidence played an important role in the policy process in Ecuador, a country where this is still the exception. We analyze the factors that seem to affect the use of evidence in both cases. At the end of the paper, however, we will argue that the gathering of evidence is not enough. It needs to be communicated in a way that speaks to politicians and policy advisers (the top-down view of the policy process) as well as to journalists and ordinary citizens (the bottom-up view). Neither of these groups uses facts alone; both politicians and citizens need arguments to promote the policy changes they seek. Consequently, evidence needs to be transformed into stories and narratives that capture the political and social imagination.

ECUADOR

Capital: *Quito*

Population: *15.23 million*

Internet Penetration:
31.4 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Partly Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$8,616

I. CASES

In this paper, we will analyze two cases in which evidence has played an important role in the policy process in Ecuador: 1) Fighting Political Clientelism in Social Programs and 2) the Yasuní-ITT Initiative.

1. Fighting Political Clientelism in Social Programs¹

This case describes the efforts that Grupo FARO, a “think-and-do tank” that promotes public policies in Ecuador, carried out to reduce and prevent political clientelism in social programs, which resulted in a concrete agreement signed by nine social programs in 2006. During Lucio Gutiérrez’s presidency (2003–05) there was a general

**Orazio J. Bellettini Cedeño is Executive Director of Grupo FARO; Andrea Ordóñez Llanos is Grupo FARO’s Director of Research.*

perception of corruption, especially in the social sector. Furthermore, many investigations by the media exposed the use of social programs for political gain. Gutiérrez's removal from power in April 2005 opened a window of opportunity, as the phenomenon of politicized social programs was fresh in the minds of Ecuadorians. One month later, with a new government in place, Grupo FARO began researching the topic and cooperating with two programs—Alimentate Ecuador, a nutrition program, and Maternidad Gratuita, a health program—to implement concrete measures that would prevent clientelism. The initial research, an index on the opportunities for clientelism, illustrated the programs' weaknesses, including lack of compliance with the Transparency Law, the absence of a mechanism to receive complaints of manipulation at the local level, and underdeveloped mechanisms for citizen participation.

Grupo FARO considered the presidential election of 2006 to be an opportune time to bring the topic of clientelism back to the public agenda, since clientelistic practices can increase during campaign periods through the manipulation of candidates at the national or local level. On July 14, 2006, after lobbying efforts by Grupo FARO, the coordinators of nine social programs and six civil-society organizations (CSOs), including Grupo FARO itself, signed the "Agree-

ment for the Transparency and Protection of Public Funds of Social Programs during the Electoral Campaign." With the implementation of this agreement, Grupo FARO hoped to place the topic on the public agenda and pilot new mechanisms to prevent clientelism. Therefore, the agreement included concrete actions to be taken by the social programs, such as rescheduling their delivery dates and events if they coincided with electoral dates, and setting up mechanisms to receive reports of clientelism, among others.

The agreement stated that on behalf of the signatory CSOs, Grupo FARO would develop an assessment of the results of its implementation by the end of the 2006 presidential election. This monitoring component had two objectives: to inform social programs on their performance and to generate some evidence on the middle-term impact of the initiative. Probably the most innovative tool was the creation of a ranking system for compliance by the participating programs.

The signatory CSOs were actively engaged during the process, whether in promoting the agreement, monitoring it at the local level, or working closely with the social programs during implementation. Grupo FARO in particular worked with the social programs' management teams to design communications mat-

About Grupo FARO



Grupo FARO was established in 2004 as a "think and do tank" in Quito during a time of significant political instability in Ecuador to create an independent and non-partisan space to support the institutional capacities of the Ecuadorian government, civil society, and the private sector in generating public policy. Since that time, Grupo FARO has become globally recognized as a center that promotes public policies and sustainable development in Ecuador and Latin America.

Today, Grupo FARO's mission is to influence public policies in order to build a more democratic, innovative, sustainable, and inclusive society in Ecuador through research, informed dialogue, and collective action. Through a variety of projects, Grupo FARO focuses on four thematic areas: environment and society, equity and social opportunities, public governance, and information and knowledge.

erials that included posters, radio spots, joint press releases, and conferences. In this way, Grupo FARO was not only engaged in promoting the idea with public officials, but also in conveying it to a wider public.

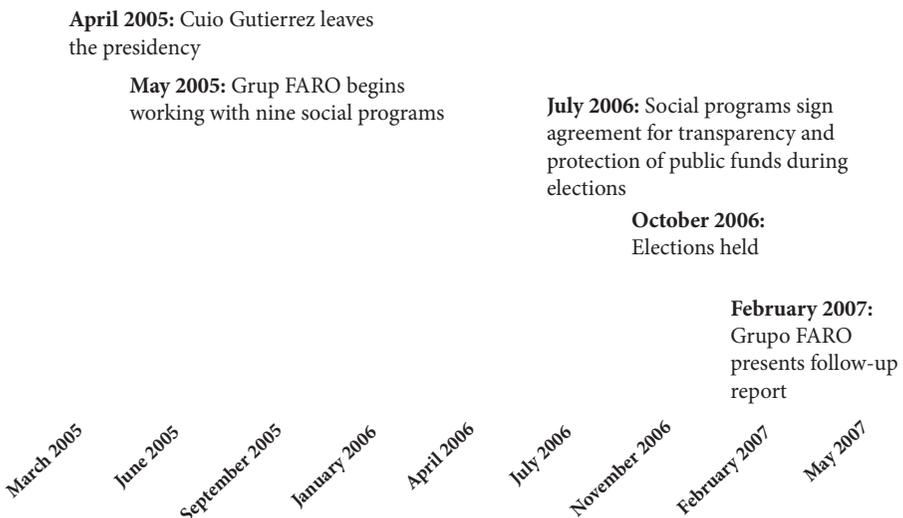
One concrete aspect that Grupo FARO monitored was compliance with the Transparency Law, according to which certain information must be made public through the social programs' websites. Grupo FARO had elaborated a methodology to evaluate compliance with these requirements and informed the programs at baseline, during the political campaign, and one year later, in June 2007. From this monitoring it was evident that the majority (six out of nine) of the programs improved their compliance with the law; however, this was not the case with all aspects of the agreement. As the final report concludes, "it is not possible to assure that signing the agreement produced structural changes within the social programs. However, what one can assure is that the main objective was achieved: setting the topic on the public agenda."² Furthermore, the implementation of these concrete actions to prevent clientelism gave Grupo FARO insights into the problems that social programs face when implementing reforms, and the organization was

able to recommend improvements in the general management of the programs to the new government.³

2. The Yasuní-ITT Initiative

This case summarizes the birth of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, which proposes to leave untapped approximately 944 million barrels of oil reserves located in the Yasuní National Park (a 983,000-hectare area in the Amazon region) in exchange for monetary compensation.⁴ The initiative is currently being debated in Ecuador, and the discussion has grown to include multiple new dimensions. However, this text focuses on the beginnings of the initiative, meaning the government's public commitment to leave the reserves untapped and the development of a compensation scheme. We will not touch on the events that occurred after the proposal by the official committee was finalized, and will concentrate on how evidence affected the adoption of the initiative rather than on the role it is currently playing in the public debate. In the 1970s, an oil boom began in Ecuador's Amazon region as major reserves were found by international companies. In the specific area of what is now Yasuní National Park, the national oil company conducted seismic studies to determine initial reserves, and additional wells drilled during the 1990s further outlined

Figure 1: Political Clientelism Timeline



the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT) oilfields. However, the operation presents significant technical challenges, which are among the reasons why it did not prosper in those years.

Meanwhile, Yasuní National Park was created in 1979 and declared a Biosphere Reserve by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1989. During the 1990s and 2000s, several studies measured amphibian, bird, mammal, and plant diversity in the Amazon rainforest. Two scientific stations are based within the park, and have attracted much attention from the international scientific community. Yet a significant portion of the area around the park has been contracted with oil companies, generating a constant threat to park's boundaries.

In 2004, about fifty scientists grouped under the collective "Scientists Concerned for Yasuní" systematized the findings of scientific research that point to the rich diversity and conservation significance of the park, as described in their letter to then president Gutiérrez when a plan to build a road into the park was put forward:

"Our first conclusion is that Yasuní National Park protects a region of extraordinary value in terms of its biodiversity, cultural heritage, and largely intact wilderness. . . . Overall, Yasuní has more than 100,000 species of insects per hectare, and 6 trillion individuals per hectare. That is the highest known biodiversity in the world."⁵

Using evidence from all available research, CSOs developed policy proposals to protect this area. The first proposal was a moratorium on a project envisioned by the national oil company, Petroecuador, to drill the ITT fields, meaning a prohibition on any exploration or extraction in the area. The idea was presented in June 2006 to the government of President Alfredo Palacio. Although the drilling project was not carried out, the government failed to issue an official statement endorsing the moratorium.

In January 2007, Rafael Correa became the new president, and some of the supporters of the moratorium became part of his cabinet. Most importantly, Alberto Acosta became minister of mines and oil, and promoted the initiative within the government until it was officially adopted. He reportedly encountered resistance from other ministries, and particularly from the head of Petroecuador, who was negotiating a possible oil concession with Brazilian and Chinese companies.⁶

The initiative was formally launched in June 2007 by President Correa, who announced that keeping the national park intact was the first option, but that drilling was still the second option. In its original form, the initiative envisioned a financial contribution from the international community equivalent to 50 percent of the potential government revenues from oil extraction—about \$350 million a year.⁷

However, this first proposal was unsuccessful in attracting funds, and a new political commission—Consejo Administrativo y Directivo de la Iniciativa Yasuní-ITT—and technical secretariat were established in February 2008. The commission made a substantial change to the proposal, creating the concept of Yasuní Guarantee Certificates (CGYs). They were designed to account for the carbon dioxide emissions that would be avoided by not extracting the oil. The emission credits could be traded in carbon markets worldwide, and the resulting revenues would be used to generate a more sustainable energy matrix for Ecuador.

II. FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE USE OF EVIDENCE

1. *Political Context*

Research-policy linkages are shaped by the political context in which decisions are adopted by policy makers. Both cases above illustrate the importance of finding a window of opportunity to introduce a proposal into the public debate. In the case of political clientelism, Grupo FARO pointed to two opportunities associated with the political context. First,

given that the previous government had been heavily attacked for clientelistic practices, the new administration was motivated to show that things had changed.⁹ The secretary of the Social Front (Frente Social), who was in charge of social programs, later stated:

“Obviously we came from a given government, there was a common characteristic among those working with Palacio, which was a general rejection of clientelistic practices, there was significant questioning of this topic; around social programs were many technical people that were not looking to work in a clientelistic way.”⁹

Second, the election became a unique opportunity to pilot concrete actions to fight political clientelism. It was a relatively short period of time in which actions were carried out, systematized, and later evaluated, giving visibility to the work done by the management teams of the social programs.

In the case of Yasuní-ITT, the political context was also crucial, at both the national and international levels. Although

CSOs and scientists had been advocating protections for the park, their impact on the previous governments had been marginal. But in 2007, the political context had dramatically changed, and in June the government announced for the first time that its preferred option was to preserve the park. Furthermore, in September, Ecuador was electing representatives for a Constitutional Assembly summoned by President Correa. The government aimed to change the constitution to reflect its new vision for development in the country, which was based on the concept of *sumak causay* (“good living” in Kichwa) and aimed to prioritize human rights and sustainability.¹⁰ The elections for the Constitutional Assembly took place on September 30, four days after Correa had officially launched the initiative at the UN General Assembly.

Internationally, the discussion on climate change had been of particular interest at the moment the initiative was launched. One day before the UN General Assembly, UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon had convened a high-level event on climate change that looked

Figure 2: Yasuni-ITT Initiative Timeline

November 2004: SCFY presents a letter to the President with concerns about a road being built in Yasuni.

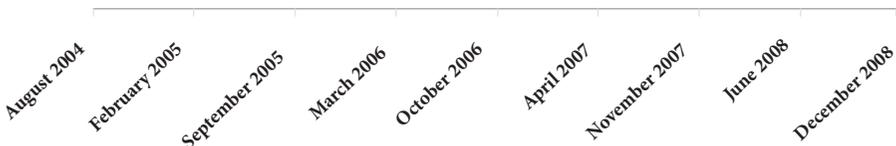
June 2006: Coalition of CSOs and activists present the moratorium proposal on both Yasuni and Block 31

September 2006: SCFY presents a letter to the President with concerns about a drilling project in Block 31

June 2007: President officially launches Yasuni ITT initiative

January 2008: Creation of the initiative’s commission and secretariat

Mid-2008 on: promotion of market-based CO₂ Proposal



forward to the next UN Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting.¹¹ In this context, it was relevant for the government of Ecuador to portray itself as a new and progressive force with innovative ideas. In his speech at the UN General Assembly, Correa said of the Yasuní-ITT proposal:

“This extraordinary initiative should set an example to be followed by the international community in order to reduce global warming on our planet, while at the same time inaugurating a new economic logic in the twenty-first century—that is to compensate for the generation of value and not only for the generation of commodities.”¹²

Research-policy linkages are shaped by the political context in which decisions are adopted by policy makers.

However, both cases also show that the windows of opportunity can only be taken advantage of when the proponents present the evidence to the “right” policy maker. In the case of clientelism, Grupo FARO had previously worked with the social programs and the coordinating agency Frente Social. It had found that within the current management, one could identify “champions of reform,” who ultimately played a key role in adopting and implementing the initiative against political clientelism. The nature of the proposal allowed the management teams, with aid from the coordinating agency, to carry out the initiative. In this sense, Grupo FARO selected interlocutors who were both interested and able to implement reforms. In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, ideas reached the highest levels of the government, including the president and the minister of mines and oil, since it required the government to adhere to a plan that would be presented internationally.

2. Linkages and Networks

Although the political context sets the scene for the implementation of policy reforms or initiatives, the actual link-

ages between the stakeholders involved in the process are equally important. As will be analyzed in this section, both cases described above demonstrate the key role played by different types of networks in promoting the use of evidence in the policy-making process. Researcher Harry Jones has identified an array of “policy network” models,¹³ of which several are featured in the cases at hand: the policy communities concept,¹⁴ epistemic communities,¹⁵ knowledge brokers,¹⁶ and advocacy coalitions.¹⁷

The clientelism case involves a particular policy community, understood as a network of professionals with experience in a particular domain who are actively engaged in the policy process. As mentioned earlier, Grupo FARO identified coordinators of social programs who were “champions of reform,” many of whom had previously been part of CSOs or had backgrounds in social policy. However, the initiative to sign a common agreement strengthened the concept of a policy community among the nine signatories, which began sharing a unified discourse on political clientelism.

In the Yasuní-ITT proposal, both the epistemic communities concept and the idea of advocacy coalitions may be applicable. The Scientists Concerned for Yasuní is a group of fifty scientists, from Ecuador and abroad, that actively communicated with the Ecuadorian government as new extractive projects and roads emerged as threats to the park’s existence. In a letter written in 2004 to then president Gutiérrez, they present themselves in the following way:

“We represent leading scientists of Yasuní National Park, and other tropical researchers concerned for the future of Yasuní. We come from Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Scotland, Spain, and from

across the United States including Puerto Rico. Together we have well over 100 years of experience conducting research in the park."¹⁸

They were essential in promoting the relevance of Yasuní National Park through scientific research; they also share common values, since they prioritize conservation. By joining values and knowledge, they were able to accumulate significant evidence from a variety of sources and greatly strengthen their advocacy.

The network had a clear strategy of direct communications with the government, but it was intertwined with an advocacy coalition that actively promoted the same ideas among the wider public through campaigns such as "Amazonía por la Vida."¹⁹ This campaign was born in 1989, joining many environmental activists who had made concrete proposals based on scientific evidence. In 2006, they presented to the Palacio government a proposal for a moratorium on the ITT project, which laid the foundations for what would later become the Yasuní-ITT Initiative.²⁰

Furthermore, for the actual implementation of the initiative, the direct linkages between CSOs, universities, and the government were crucial. In fact, according to a review of the relationship between political parties and think tanks in Ecuador, Alianza País, the governing party, was founded in part by "a group of intellectuals, researchers, and activists, some of whom participated in the project Jubilee 2000, while others came from NGOs, universities like FLACSO, and research centers such as ILDIS."²¹ In this context, some of the members of the advocacy community joined the government and were able to promote their ideas from within its structure. The coexistence of these multiple actors meant that the proposal was the result of a long process with many different stakeholders, rather than a single intellectual owner.²²

3. Characteristics of the Evidence Used

Any discussion on the relationship between evidence and policy must address the characteristics of the evidence being used. Specifically, we focus on its nature, sources, and presentation.

3.1 Nature of the Evidence

Education scholars Fernando Reimers and Noel McGinn establish four general categories of research: academic, planning, instrumentation, and action.²³ The distinction of the types of evidence used is relevant because the output generated by the different frameworks, designs, and methodologies is applicable at different points in the policy-making cycle.

Academic research is understood as that which helps us to understand the current reality we encounter through the lenses of models, conceptual frameworks, and theory. In both the clientelism and Yasuní-ITT cases, academic research was crucial to the development of the proposals, serving to frame and expose the problem and to lay the foundation for a narrative or discourse. Both cases demonstrate that "scientific knowledge in itself does not have intrinsic normative authority, nor are research-based judgments value neutral."²⁴ In the clientelism case, the academic review was biased by a belief that a political system is better when actors are independent and decisions are taken democratically, and that social programs are more effective when they are devoted to the most vulnerable instead of political supporters. In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, the bias was in favor of sustainability and social and cultural rights.

The second category, planning research, includes looking forward and identifying the possible results of implementing a given policy. A clear example may include cost-benefit analysis. Both of the Ecuadorian cases made use of this type of evidence to turn the frameworks from academic research into more concrete ideas and evidence. In the clientelism case, Grupo FARO carried out research on the weaknesses in the social programs that could contrib-

ute to clientelism. More than pointing at direct cases of clientelism, it informed program managers about the existing safeguards used in certain programs, as well as other possible measures to limit the chances of clientelism. In the case of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, the actual proposal used several technical reports and data on oil reserves to develop the concept and mechanisms of the certifi- cates (CGYs).

The evidence from academic and plan- ning research is translated through in- strumentation research, which focuses on making specific proposals for change. In the clientelism case, the components of the proposal were designed based on a variety of evidence, previously dis- cussed, as well as the instruments used in other countries. The Yasuní-ITT CGYs were a result of all the previous informa- tion. The generation of these new ideas is probably the step that requires the most creativity and ingenuity; it is the point at which policy entrepreneurs play a distinct role, considering the academic research as well as politics and the cur- rent context to come up with concrete and viable proposals.

Finally, only the clientelism case fea- tured what Reimers and McGinn call ac- tion research, which is used during the implementation of a policy and seeks to inform its performance primarily in the short term. The clientelism case includ- ed a component that monitored imple- mentation of the agreement constantly, and that allowed for the presentation of a final report on the initiative. This action research was particularly useful for motivating compliance, and to give early alerts on noncompliance. It was an essential part of Grupo FARO's proposal. This type of research has not been ap- plied in the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, as the proposal has yet to be implemented. Nevertheless, both cases used various types of research and evidence in their proposals, each of which had different objectives, but which jointly created a stronger argument (Table 1).

3.2 Source of the Evidence

The source of the evidence is sometimes

as important as the evidence itself. As policy researcher Enrique Mendizabal states, "It is very difficult for policymak- ers to check all the evidence available to them, therefore they often rely on the reputation of its source as a proxy for its accuracy."²⁵

Reputation, however, is subjective and depends on the decision maker. The two cases discussed here used research- based evidence from multiple, respected sources, increasing their legitimacy. In the political clientelism case, the evi- dence came from a CSO that was con- sidered independent and nonpartisan. Melania Carrión and Orazio Bellettini, in interviews done after the implemen- tation of the agreement, found that some program coordinators valued Grupo FARO's independence and technical ap- proach, as opposed to the more activ- ist stances of other CSOs.²⁶ At the same time, Grupo FARO used previous aca- demic research on clientelism to develop its narrative and analytical tools.

The Yasuní-ITT case featured a wider variety of sources of evidence, ranging from the purely theoretical to practical research carried out by companies for commercial purposes. As stated previ- ously, the evidence on Yasuní's conser- vation significance was backed substan- tially by Scientists Concerned for Yasuní. There was little opposition to its accu- racy in the public domain. Nonetheless, the actual economic value of the park's biological diversity, compared with the proven value of oil in international mar- kets, is still being debated. This contro- versy is accentuated by the fact that the Yasuní-ITT proposal is based on the lim- ited information on oil reserves. While such information is always uncertain, the fact that in this case it was collected decades ago, using existing technol- ogies, has opened a discussion on wheth- er the initiative's numbers are correct or more oil could be extracted from the ITT fields.²⁷

3.3 Presentation of the Evidence

Mendizabal suggests that the way evi- dence is communicated can be at least as important as the dimensions anal-

Table 1. Research Categories Applied to Case Studies

Research Categories	Political Clientelism Case	Yasuní-ITT Initiative Case
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual framework of political clientelism, transparency, and citizens' participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific research on biodiversity • Conceptual framework for indigenous social and cultural rights • Sustainable development analysis
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of opportunities for clientelism • Grupo FARO's previous work with the social programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on oil reserves and project viability
Instrumentalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experiences in other countries on techniques to combat clientelism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic proposal for carbon dioxide certificates
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of compliance with Transparency Law and the agreement • Handbook to reduce opportunities for clientelism in social programs 	

zed above: "Policy influence is affected by both topical relevance and, equally importantly, the operational usefulness of an idea; hence it helps if a new approach has been piloted and the document can clearly demonstrate the value of a new option. The other key set of issues here concern communication."²⁸ Both cases show that evidence should be communicated in accordance with its main audience, and when possible, tailored to its context.

The clientelism case exemplifies how information can be communicated to different audiences with different levels of detail. When addressing the general public, the project aimed to inform people on the "concept" of clientelism. For example, posters and radio spots

portrayed possible ways in which clientelism can take hold during electoral campaigns. Meanwhile, the managers of social programs were directly informed on their compliance with the Transparency Law through a letter that detailed every consideration taken in the analysis as well as concrete recommendations for improvement.

Scientists in the Yasuní-ITT case used direct letters to the president that contained, annexed to their statements, detailed reports on scientific evidence. In addition, each letter was context specific, referring to particular decisions that were being made by the government at the time.

In an interview, Roque Sevilla, the presi-

dent of the initiative's commission, commented on the promotion of the CGYs internationally. He argued that the technical and commercial information was crucial for foreign governments to understand and value the proposal. At the same time, the proposal was linked to the direct commitments of various countries with respect to climate change. In this case, the arguments were framed in accordance with those policy makers' particular contexts.

The two cases here show that there is no single method for communicating or presenting evidence. Instead, they illustrate that evidence can be contextualized and presented according to the researchers' objectives as well as their audiences. Generally, an initiative to influence policy will not have only one audience, and it will likely be necessary to present evidence differently to each interlocutor.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The two cases analyzed here present some lessons for those who hope to influence policy through research and the use of evidence. Both cases show that these endeavors take time to conceive, communicate, and implement. Whether ideas are concrete and time-constrained or wide and encompassing of various policies, researchers should not expect to make an impact immediately. However, some lessons from these cases may inform those who endure the process.

1. The Importance of Windows of Opportunity

The political context should be analyzed carefully to identify windows of opportunity as well as interested stakeholders. However, windows of opportunity do not necessarily occur spontaneously and can be opened with ingenuity. Approaches that can aid researchers in opening a window of opportunity include:

- **Identifying hidden or unexposed needs among policy makers.** In both cases, the ideas presented to policy makers were aligned with their needs and objectives, even though

these were not clearly evident in the public agenda.

- **Connecting research with social or public motivation.** Both cases show the relevance of linking research with public concerns. The Yasuní research was associated with concerns about the previous Texaco oil spills in the Amazon region. The political clientelism research was connected to specific scandals in the previous government.

Both cases demonstrate the importance of relationships between stakeholders in the use of evidence and in convincing policy makers to consider a proposal. These networks are complex and constantly shifting. To get them working to promote a given idea, researchers should be willing to "give up" their exclusive ownership of the idea. The Yasuní-ITT case shows how the lack of a particular "owner" can turn a proposal into a policy that the public in general can relate to. However, this arrangement makes it difficult for researchers to identify the extent to which their own research was influential, and should be taken into account when such endeavors are analyzed.

In these examples, it is also clear that the kind of evidence that is presented matters significantly, with different types used for different purposes in the political or public debate. Both cases indicate that academic research is fundamental for creating and supporting a narrative, while more applied research is influential as the debate becomes more concrete and actual policy options are weighed. This should be carefully considered by researchers when analyzing the context or timing for presenting their research.

Finally, responding to windows of opportunity requires flexible, innovative, and learning organizations. It requires the capacity to learn from context and adapt strategies without losing sight of one's core goals and values. Even when windows of opportunity are found, the process may be long. The Yasuní-ITT

Initiative shows that an idea needs time to evolve. Therefore, promoters should constantly work to increase their capacity to enrich proposals and increase their political, institutional, and social feasibility.

2. Policy as a Multiple-Way Process

Evidence-based policy influence is the result of a dialogue between several communities, including policy makers and researchers. In this sense, the different perspectives of policy makers, researchers, CSOs, and others are equally relevant in the process. Frequently, there is a perceived lack of understanding among these communities, leading to stagnation. Sometimes “knowledge brokers” can play an important role in reducing these “gaps.” Grupo FARO served such a function in the political clientelism case, presenting complex arguments regarding the negative consequences of politicized social programs for the quality of democracy and the effectiveness of social policies. It was essential to build close relationships with the social programs while retaining strategies to evaluate and monitor implementation independently. Researchers seeking to influence policy must be “close enough to light, not enough to burn.”

However, sometimes the most direct way to influence a government is to participate from within, as with the Yasuní-ITT case, in which a civil society proponent of the idea became part of the cabinet. This strategy, although it may have a strong and direct influence, can also affect the perception of an organization’s independence. This should be considered by those seeking to influence policy.

As Lewis Coser points out, “Knowledge may bring power, but, even so, men of knowledge have only rarely been men of power.”²⁹ He describes the clear distinction between the two communities, with researchers usually lacking the power to generate change. But this is not always the case. The Yasuní-ITT example shows the power of researchers and knowledge brokers to influence the public agenda

with ideas that politicians could consider to be against their own interests.

3. Evidence or Narrative?

The two cases indicate that evidence is not enough to capture the social and political imagination. As Claire Fox of the Institute of Ideas states,

“Today we are offered the thin gruel of ‘evidence-based policy.’ When we are told that scientific research demands particular courses of action, ever increasing areas of politics are ruled out-of-bounds for democratic debate; ideas and morality are sidelined by facts and statistics. Historically, what has moved millions to act upon the world and change things for the better has been big ideas, such as freedom, progress, civilisation and democracy.”³⁰

In the political clientelism and Yasuní-ITT cases, evidence was just part of a bigger narrative. It enabled the policy promoters to create a story that introduced a hidden issue to the public agenda, or supported a new development paradigm. Narratives are particularly useful for putting together facts, details, and other information in a sequential form, making the dissemination of concepts or ideas simpler. In both cases, narratives were crucial to engaging a wider audience in the discussion.

Researchers should develop capacities to see evidence in a broader perspective, connecting facts and statistics with a bigger story that can be used by politicians and policy makers (top-down), as well as journalists and ordinary citizens (bottom-up), to participate in the process. In other words, researchers who aim to influence public policy should be willing to get closely involved with the public debate and engage in discussions that can reach beyond the theoretical or scientific level and touch on current events, values, and philosophy.

Endnotes

1. This case is based on the initiative’s final report in 2007, a separate case study, and the authors’ participation during the process.

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THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS IN GEORGIA



*Ghia Nodia**

This paper is based on the author's personal experience as the leader of a democracy think tank in Georgia for about twenty years, but also on numerous interviews and discussions with colleagues in the civil society and political communities.

The initial intention was to focus on "democracy research organizations" or "democracy think tanks." However, one has to keep in mind that in Georgia, there are no clear lines dividing such organizations from, on the one hand, activist groups that try to influence policy primarily through advocacy campaigns, and on the other, public-policy think tanks that may concentrate on topics other than development of a democratic political system as such. The paper will at times describe this broader pool of organizations, often referred to as the "third sector," while at other times it will specifically address organizations dedicated to democratic development. This issue will be raised again below, but it is useful to make it clear at the outset.

GEORGIA

Capital: *Tbilisi*

Population: *4.44 million*

Internet Penetration:
35.28 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Partly Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$5,809

Measuring the Relevance of Public Policy Research

Are think tanks, particularly those focused on democracy issues, important for a fledgling democracy like Georgia? To be more precise, what is their role in a country that is often described as a "hybrid regime"—neither an autocracy nor a fully developed democracy? The answer largely depends on what one expects from these organizations, or the standards used for measuring their performance.

The United States is often used as a model, because it is the country where think tanks were invented. This model implies that the value of think tanks is measured by their ability to influence public policy. That notion in turn may rest on an assumption that decision makers require some additional intellectual resources to properly design their policies. Even if senior government officials are not prepared to recognize some gaps in their expertise, the fact remains that they do not have the time to concentrate on

**Ghia Nodia is Chairman of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development.*

careful research and analysis of specific policy issues. Think tanks, by contrast, have the time, resources, and professional staff to carry out such work, and it is their central mission to do so.

Think tanks do not necessarily need to conduct research commissioned by the government or political parties. However, they are supposed to produce ideas and projects that are usable in principle, and if they are lucky, their ideas will eventually find decision makers willing to implement them. For instance, the policy ideas underlying British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's liberal market reforms, or the "zero tolerance" policies carried out by the New York City Police Department under Mayor Rudy Giuliani, were first developed by think tanks. Whether one likes these particular policies or not, they are powerful examples of think tanks' ability to have a real impact.

It is difficult to find similar examples in Georgia. When this problem is raised in the country, civil-society organizations typically complain that the government does not listen to them. They often argue that the administration, at least that of the United National Movement (2004–2012), is arrogant and has autocratic rather than democratic instincts. The government headed by President Eduard Shevardnadze (1992–2003) is generally said to have lacked the capacity to implement coherent policies. When one talks to former government officials, however, they are likely to say that Georgian think tanks themselves

lack the capacity to produce ideas that would be useful in a real policy process.

This paper will propose that direct contacts and cooperation between government and public-policy think tanks, and the influence exerted by the latter on the former, while valuable in themselves, should not be the primary measurements of the productivity and impact of such organizations. Both the Georgian civil-society sector and the donor community tend to overestimate these factors when discussing the role and importance of think tanks.

The Georgian Context: Local Civil Society and the West

The role of think tanks is also related to the way in which Georgia positions itself in the world. They are supposed to be generators of ideas for improving public policies. But the grand idea that inspires the country's policies today is that Georgia should be like the West, and this is especially so in the realm of democracy. Therefore, the West serves as a kind of collective think tank. It is a reservoir of models that should be implemented in Georgia and an ultimate source of public-policy wisdom.

It is not just that Western democracies are there for Georgians to study and emulate. There are also numerous consultants who know how Western models were applied in other countries like Georgia. Western consultants may or may not be listened to, depending on their quality and on the readiness of local policymakers to follow their advice.

About the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)



The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) is a public policy think-tank, specializing in a broad area of democratic development. CIPDD was founded in 1992 in Tbilisi, Georgia, as a non-governmental and not-for-profit organization. It advocates policy goals such as the development of a vibrant and diverse civil society, effective and accountable public institutions based on the rule of law, and an integrated political community that at the same time respects and preserves the identities of different ethnic and religious communities in Georgia. CIPDD seeks to contribute to the implementation of these goals through producing relevant and high-quality public policy documents and encouraging a pluralistic and informed public policy debate in Georgia.

But a given Georgian decision maker is more likely to accept the recommendations of someone who comes from a country where the state and democracy are already known to work properly, or at least better than in Georgia. Policy suggestions that come directly from the West have greater authority and political clout.

When people from the Georgian “third sector” discuss their role and influence in the country, they tend to complain about a lack of political influence and attention from politicians. This raises the question of how to develop the desired influence.

Under the circumstances, the role of local think tanks and democracy-promoting organizations boils down to properly interpreting what exactly the country can learn from the West, or even more narrowly, what the West is actually recommending at the moment. Governments themselves claim that they are carrying out reforms aimed at making Georgia more like a Western democracy, and that they are following Western recommendations to that end. But civil-society organizations often have two advantages over government officials. First, they may speak better English and have a more thorough understanding of the ways in which Western democracies work. This entitles them to make suggestions and be listened to. More importantly, those involved in power politics may not actually be interested in making the system more democratic, particularly because they are more likely to lose power in a more democratic system. In fact, they can be expected to cheat or drag their feet. Therefore, the main activities of civil-society organizations are monitoring and advocacy. Their role is to verify whether government performance conforms to democratic standards and the government’s own commitments, to expose evasions, and to push for the government to meet democratic norms in practice.

In this effort, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can be considered junior partners and assistants to

the West, which, incidentally, also funds them. Of course, local organizations have some autonomy from their funders in prioritizing specific issues at specific moments, but they work within a pre-defined framework of transferring global (in practice, mostly Western) democratic norms and practices to their home countries. This is a legitimate and useful activity, but it is not necessarily about generating ideas—something think tanks are supposed to do. If local NGOs do generate ideas, they are usually fairly narrow and technical in character.

The situation tends to produce skepticism about the usefulness of think tanks as opposed to activist organizations. Georgians often question the necessity of discussing the institutions and ideas of democracy, arguing that the problem is not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of political will on the part of the government to follow democratic standards. Alternatively, they note that despite opinion polls showing widespread support for democracy, Georgian citizens are simply not active enough to force the government to conform to democratic rules.

In this environment, few resources are available for serious organizations focused on democracy research. Those that claim to be think tanks are rarely “pure” research organizations. But regardless of their self-identification as research or activist groups, NGOs are considered to be primary carriers of knowledge about democracy as well as the main support mechanism for the implementation of democratic practices.

Georgian Reforms and the Think Tank Community: Ideas Following People

If think tanks have few chances to directly influence policymakers in Georgia, how can thinking, research, and debate about democratic development be policy relevant? The first and most effective means is transfer of knowledge through professional rotation between civil-society organizations and the government. In this case, ideas actually follow people.

President Mikheil Saakashvili’s govern-

ment, which came to power after the 2003 “Rose Revolution,” was sometimes called an NGO government because it drew heavily on the human resources of the Georgian civil-society community. Its record on democracy is a matter of debate among scholars and commentators, both in and outside Georgia, but most agree that it has quite a strong record of public-policy reforms, especially but not only in the area of overcoming corruption. Therefore, its activities can be used as a positive case study.

It is difficult to precisely identify the intellectual sources of the Saakashvili government’s reforms. However, people who may be considered architects of reforms underline the importance of experience brought from past work outside government and politics. Some of these figures came from private business and international organizations, but the most typical background was one in the Georgian NGO sector. Its graduates, who largely defined the direction of the new government, carried with them two main assets. First, they had specific ideas and approaches that they had promoted for several years while criticizing the previous government. Second, but no less important, they brought an organizational culture that was oriented toward change and specific results. One of the influential reformers in the government, Vakhtang Lezhava (he usually served at the deputy minister level), believes that reforms slowed down after 2007 in part because there was no comparable new influx of people with NGO backgrounds who could bring fresh ideas and a spirit of radical change.

At the same time, the Saakashvili government was widely criticized for not listening to outside advice, and today its former members confirm that this was largely true. In the first years after the Rose Revolution, they did not have particularly good relations with international development organizations because of their approach to reforms: They did not have the sort of “roadmaps” that the donors tended to favor, inspired instead by a general vision and a desire to achieve results very quickly. Their

sense of urgency came from a belief that the political opening for radical reform might soon close. Only after the success of the reforms became obvious did the international entities agree to support the government’s vision.

Georgian officials, despite their civil-society background, similarly neglected the advice of the local NGO sector. They now explain this by citing several factors. First, after the new government “creamed” the NGO community of its best talent, the organizations required several years to recuperate. Second, being dependent on cycles of international funding, Georgian NGOs were rather slow in reacting to emerging needs and could not keep up with the breakneck speed of the authorities. Third, reformers in government mistrusted most leading Georgian NGOs, which they saw as “politically motivated,” meaning tacitly supportive of the opposition. Finally, there were ideological disagreements, as most Georgian reforms were inspired by a “neoliberal” vision, while many Georgian NGOs and international consultancies espoused more left-of-center beliefs.

For their part, the government’s critics explained its aloofness toward outside advice by accusing officials of arrogance, autocratic instincts, ideological narrowness, and being spoiled by power. Whatever one makes of these explanations, they can be summarized as follows. A background in civil-society organizations that combined some research with mostly advocacy-related activities ingrained in new members of the government a belief that they already had the best ideas. If they saw talent in the NGO sector, their first choice was to draw it into government positions rather than engage in cumbersome relations with independent organizations.

The transfer of power that followed the October 2012 parliamentary elections set off a new wave of migration from civil-society organizations to the government. It is too early to assess what major steps the new government will take in the area of public policy. How-

ever, it is reasonable to expect that if there are coherent reforms in any areas, the impulse and vision will come from graduates of Georgian NGOs. Meanwhile, with the previous ruling party, the United National Movement, moving to the opposition, some important members of the outgoing government—particularly those who played key roles in designing and implementing its reform policies—have migrated to the think-tank scene. There had previously been a few people in the “third sector” with experience in government, but large-scale relocation of successful government officials to the think-tank community could considerably enhance its capacity and professionalism.

With this change, turnover between think tanks and the government in Georgia may be becoming routine. This in itself is an important element of a functional democracy. But in the Georgian context, there is an additional

“It is clearly a mistake to primarily measure the impact and policy relevance of the think tank community by the level of cooperation between the government and think tanks”

reason to welcome the trend. The political party system is extremely weak, and while political opposition may be an effective tool for mobilizing public discontent, it rarely produces coherent policy ideas. More often, such ideas come from outside the political class. Civil-society organizations—especially those that do public-policy research—are therefore even more politically relevant.

Given such a dynamic, it is clearly a mistake to primarily measure the impact and policy relevance of the think-tank community by the level of cooperation between the government and think tanks at any given moment. Cooperation does exist, but its impact is limited. Quite a few government agencies have “public councils” through which they interact with think-tank representatives; this was the case under the previous government, and the new one is trying to continue and even broaden the practice. However, the public councils are not nec-

essarily a medium for influencing policy. They are rather a way for the government to spread its message, get some direct feedback, and generally demonstrate that it plays by democratic rules. Georgian governments do occasionally outsource some implementation tasks to NGOs, for example the training of mid- and low-level personnel. International donors tend to assess such projects as “successful” because they imply cooperation between the government and civil society. Government agencies also invite NGOs to discuss official strategy documents—the National Security Concept, the Strategic Defense Review, and others—before they are adopted, leading to some minor changes. One may ask, though, whether the government compiles these documents to coordinate the actions of its different agencies, or simply to present the international community with the expected general policy statements.

Such activities are useful in many cases, but if one focuses on these “success stories,” the assessment of the think-tank scene in Georgia will be rather narrow and inadequate. Civil society’s main impact, save for the occasions when its members actually join the government, may lie in another area.

Informing Policy through Public Debate and Civic Education

Shaping public opinion is an important method of influencing the policy environment, and sometimes also policy decisions, in Georgia. Even nondemocratic governments tend to be somewhat responsive to public opinion. If a government’s authority is ultimately dependent on elections, it has an even greater incentive to monitor and rise to the public’s expectations.

It is often said, with good reason, that Georgians are passive when it comes to

participation in civil-society organizations. There are very few NGOs that do not depend on foreign donor support. Most of what is called “civil society” in Georgia consists of professional organizations created to implement specific projects, rather than citizens’ associations that represent and promote the interests and agendas of large segments of society. However, given this environment, even relatively small groups of citizens who are able to organize themselves around a certain agenda can become a force that political actors, including the government, must reckon with. Georgian politics play out within a very small circle of people, and it may not take much in the way of civic mobilization to influence that circle.

Public-policy debate in Georgia takes a variety of different forms. There are numerous talk shows on television and radio; many discussion meetings on specific topics, sometimes with mixed participation by civil-society experts and politicians; and debates on internet forums and social networks like Facebook. All of these may be considered instruments for shaping public opinion. Although many of these exchanges degenerate into personal attacks and bickering, there are substantive discussions of policy issues as well. Policymakers from the United National Movement government recognized in private interviews that they sometimes changed or at least modified their political decisions if public opinion was clearly hostile to them, contrary to the image of their administration as immune to outside influences. The Georgian Dream government that came to power in October 2012, at least on some occasions, has appeared rather sensitive to feedback from the public on its policies.

As noted above, debates between government and opposition in Georgia are rarely about policies. Typically, the opposition attacks the government for being allegedly corrupt or autocratic, while the government responds by questioning the character and integrity of opposition leaders. No alternative policies are proposed. After the United National

Movement moved to the opposition, its leaders pledged to break this pattern and compete with the government based on a positive policy agenda. It is too early to judge whether the nature of political discussion will really change. But to date, civil-society organizations have generally been the primary instigators of and participants in public-policy debates that deserve the designation. They are also the main agents for spreading policy ideas and assessments through different media. Many think-tank figures in Georgia feel that they stand a much stronger chance of influencing policy through public opinion than through a direct approach to decision makers. A posting on Facebook may sometimes have a greater impact than a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the European Commission and carried out in cooperation with a given public agency. Of course, it is difficult to track and prove the policy effects of a specific NGO’s activities in these circumstances, which may be a problem for an organization that depends on donor funding and has to demonstrate that its work did have an impact.

Apart from instigating public debate, think tanks in Georgia—and, presumably, in other countries like Georgia—are tasked with broadening the scope and audience of public debate. In other words, they serve as civic educators. For instance, the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD), led by this paper’s author, devotes the bulk of its time and resources not to carrying out its research and producing its policy papers—which admittedly do not have much direct impact on policy—but to civic education broadly understood, which usually means encouraging new groups of citizens to get involved in debating public-policy issues. Other organizations that position themselves as think tanks are also involved in this kind of work. It is a rewarding, if not the most rewarding, part of think tank activity in Georgia, and it is especially relevant in terms of the long-term development of Georgian democracy. In order to understand why, it is necessary

to revisit a larger topic: how the Georgian context defines the role of think tanks, particularly those focusing on democracy issues. A brief history of CIPDD and its work on democracy promotion will provide an illustrative example.

An Alternative Model: CIPDD and the Development of Georgia's First Think Tanks

The history of CIPDD, created in August 1992, represents an alternative model to the more common approach of exchanges between think tanks and the government. CIPDD was the first independent organization in Georgia with democracy promotion as its chief objective. The few existing NGOs were mainly environmentalist groups. Even the term "civil society" was unusual, appearing principally in academic lectures. As for the term "think tank," it was unknown even to the group's founders. But in hindsight it can be said that our vision for the organization—vague as it was at that time—fit best into the concept of a public-policy think tank.

The period in which CIPDD was created can be considered a "dark age" in Georgia. It was a time of political and economic disaster. Economic output dropped by about three-fourths, the government did not control much territory beyond central parts of Tbilisi, and there were at least two civil wars running in parallel. The country was a textbook example of a failed state.

What could a public-policy think tank do in a country without a government capable of exerting control and implementing a coherent policy? We thought it could deal with the problems that led Georgia to the situation of a failed state in the first place. The simple diagnosis, shared by many of our friends, was that Georgian political thinking and behavior was not rational. Therefore a public-policy think tank was needed to instill more rationality into Georgian political life, or to begin with, into the ways we thought about and discussed politics. This did not necessarily mean influencing the specific decisions of politicians. The new Georgian government of Eduard She-

vardnadze included many reasonable people, and there was near consensus at the time that Georgia could not have a better one. The task was to create precedents for talking about political issues rationally (and not from the position of fighting for power) and to involve more people in the discussion. It was assumed that this would gradually change the political culture and, eventually, political behavior.

For us, "rational" also meant liberal and democratic. This is not necessarily correct from the point of view of political theory, because political behavior that does not conform to democratic standards can be perfectly rational as well. But we believed, and still believe, that for Georgia in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, liberal democracy was the only rational choice, and that autocratic temptations were a threat to Georgia's national goals.

Since 1992, Georgia has made very important steps forward. It has yet to become a fully functional democracy, but it has developed a state that performs its basic functions and pursues public policies successfully. Still, CIPDD's mission within Georgian society can be described in the same terms: we want to instill a greater sense of rationality in Georgian political thinking and behavior.

The first and most basic task is to take stock of the current reality, though that is far from simple. Many external observers complain that it is often extremely difficult to understand what is actually happening in Georgia, as different political actors and commentators give radically different views. Georgian media are also notorious for serving political interests rather than informing the public and providing a platform for different opinions. It would be extremely arrogant to claim that unlike everyone else, we were beyond bias. But we did try our best to provide the public (Georgian and international) with a balanced analysis of different segments of the Georgian reality.

Our very first projects, for instance, in-

cluded producing *Georgian Chronicle*, an English-language monthly summary and analysis of events in Georgia. We continued producing it through 1997, and quite unusually, we did not have any donor support for it. At the time this product was unique, because systematic analysis of Georgian developments was rare. To this day the Chronicle serves as an important source for researchers who want to make sense of that very complex period in Georgia's transformation.

Over the years, CIPDD has produced research on different aspects of Georgia's democratic development. In many areas, our research continues to be the most authoritative and comprehensive of its kind. This can be said, for instance of a study of Georgian political parties that was carried out by CIPDD staff in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy. The findings were summarized in a book coauthored by Ghia Nodia and Alvaro Pinto-Scholtbach, *The Political Landscape in Georgia—Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects* (Delft: Eburon Delft, 2006). A somewhat smaller publication written by Ghia Nodia, *Civil Society Development in Georgia: Achievements and Challenges* (2005), remains the most comprehensive account on that topic produced in Georgia. There were numerous other publications on the Georgian political system, on the regional media, on the state of local government, on the problems of ethnic minorities, on the state of civil-military relations, and the like. In all these areas, CIPDD continues to be an authoritative organization that is capable of providing comprehensive and reliable research.

Another important component of our work—by a rough calculation, some 70 percent of CIPDD activities fall into this category—is focused on public debate and civic education. The events in question include conferences, roundtable discussions, public debates, and trainings, among other formats. Participants range from government ministers to high school students, and the topics are similarly diverse. However, all of

these activities are unified by one general goal: creating a more informed and competent citizenry and encouraging a culture of rational debate on public-policy issues—something that, as most observers would agree, Georgia largely lacks.

Naturally, specific projects have specific objectives. For instance, when Georgia was shaken by numerous instances of religious violence, CIPDD initiated a program of religious tolerance trainings for schoolteachers. It was widely believed that most schoolteachers in Georgia spread a message of intolerance toward minorities, and there were many skeptics who thought that no trainings could change these attitudes. The assumption proved wrong. Many schoolteachers admitted that the project marked the first time they had taken part in any rational discussion of religious pluralism in class, and that they saw the issue very differently as a result.

It is extremely difficult to measure how such activities influence the political process, though we believe that they ultimately have an impact. In some CIPDD projects, we cooperated directly with government bodies, trained public servants, took them on study tours abroad, gave suggestions on specific issues, and submitted feedback on draft government documents. CIPDD has participated in numerous advisory councils set up by the government. However, the organization's indirect influences might ultimately be more important, even if they are harder to measure. A number of people who took part in our events, or worked directly for CIPDD, later became members of parliament, government ministers, or other government officeholders of varying rank. Presumably the approaches and messages they picked up from our events and activities have affected the way they act while in government.

Lessons from CIPDD: Conducting Democracy Research in a Semi-democratic Environment

When discussing the role and relevance of democracy research, it is important

to distinguish it from other kinds of public-policy research. In the latter case, the task is to improve the quality and efficiency of public institutions' performance in a specific area, such as health-care or law enforcement. The assumption here is that policymakers are really interested in achieving the stated objectives, and there is simply a difference of opinion on the best way to do so. Think tanks therefore have a chance to convince policymakers that the model they are proposing offers a superior means of achieving the established goal.

The role of democracy research in the Georgian context is qualitatively different. As noted above, it is still questionable whether Georgia's political system may be called democratic or not. The country is usually considered to be somewhere between democracy and autocracy; analysts often use the term "competitive authoritarianism." This means that the public-policy community is not simply fine-tuning specific democratic institutions so that they can adequately confront emerging challenges, as may be the case in "old" established democracies and in the new but largely consolidated democracies of Eastern Europe. Instead, the task in Georgia is to help transform a superficially democratic—or predominantly autocratic, depending on the opinion of a given analyst—state into a substantively democratic political system. It is about changing the nature of the political regime.

Consequently, one cannot presume that policymakers really want to achieve the objectives that democracy think tanks have in mind. If a political system is less than fully democratic, it is either because the ruling elites do not conform to democratic standards and are not interested in doing so (according to the agency approach), or because they do not confront strong enough balancing forces, such as alternative political and societal elites, developed structures of civil society, or whatever else may contain them (the structural approach). Either way, it is uncertain who the target audience for a democracy think tank's recommendations should be. Typical Georgian think

tankers will say that they produce policy recommendations because they believe they are right, even though they do not really believe decision makers will take them up. In that case, the target audience is some kind of ideal decision maker who does not really exist. Such an approach allows democracy think tanks to keep up their self-esteem—and retain the esteem of the Western donor community—without really being useful.

This raises the general question of how autocratic countries become democratic, or rather how so-called hybrid regimes or competitive authoritarian systems turn into full democracies. Despite voluminous literature on democratization, there is no real theory, save the assumption that it is all unpredictable and tends to be more dependent on agency than on structure. (Structural arguments are most often used to explain the failure of democratization, not its success.) The belief that removing an autocratic regime and replacing it with a new government, preferably one whose members have been exposed to Western democratic ideas and experiences, will by itself bring democracy seems to have been dispelled in the Georgian context. Although this method essentially worked in countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia, in Georgia there have been a number of replacements of real or alleged autocratic regimes with new governments that promised democracy but failed to deliver a genuinely democratic political system. In particular, the 2003 Rose Revolution brought to power a government dominated by graduates of Western democracy-promotion programs, and a large majority of analysts agree that it failed to entrench democratic practices in Georgia. It did bring some progress, becoming the first Georgian government to organize elections in which the ruling party lost and gave up power in a peaceful and orderly manner. But even this may not prove sustainable. The first steps of the new Georgian Dream government that came to power in 2012, which really does represent the hopes and aspirations of broad segments of Georgian society, raised significant and justified fears that it could

actually backtrack on democracy issues.

There are probably some deeper structural reasons for the failures of Georgia's democratization process. One may be that there is a shortage of democracy resources, which can mean a lack of "social capital" in general or of intermediate institutions of democracy such as political parties, civic associations, and other instruments of civic involvement.

A think tank focused on democracy research cannot pretend it is relevant in this environment if it simply offers ideas for institutional reforms that cannot bring any substantive change to the system, even assuming policymakers choose to take them up. It is rather obvious that the core problem of democratic development in Georgia does not lie in the deficiencies of the legal environment, though such deficiencies do exist. In a relatively recent example, the Georgian NGO community successfully advocated for two changes in media legislation. One made it illegal for media organizations to be registered in offshore zones, forcing them to be more transparent about ownership structures. The other obliged owners of cable networks to transmit the signals of all television companies, whether they wanted to or not (the so-called Must Carry rule). These changes might have been

welcome in themselves, but they could not address the root cause of substantive deficiencies in the Georgian media scene, namely the dependence of the media on their political patrons and the related ability of the strongest patron to dominate the media landscape.

Under these circumstances, the first task of democracy-research organizations may be to stimulate more honest and adequate debate with regard to the core reasons behind democracy failures, even though such a debate will not bring about any sizeable changes in the short run. At the same time, it is an important long-term task to strengthen democracy resources by involving more people and more groups in the democracy debate, encouraging the culture of dialogue at different levels of society, and producing more ideas and concepts that may be unconventional but nevertheless stimulate thought and activity. This could also include scrutinizing the core concepts of democracy, not to weaken commitment to democratic ideals, but to foster a more ample and realistic understanding of them. There are different obstacles to successful democratization in Georgia, one of which may be a deeply undemocratic notion of democracy as a preconceived template that can be applied thoughtlessly to any given country.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICY

Two Cases from CDD-Ghana



*E. Gyimah-Boadi, Regina Amanfo Tetteh, and Kojo Asante**

The Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) was established in 1998 as an independent nongovernmental institute dedicated to the promotion of democracy, good governance, and economic openness in Ghana and Africa through research and advocacy. The Center researches and rigorously analyzes observations and data, drawing on international comparisons and best practices. Its findings and recommendations are disseminated through seminars, workshops, publications, and other outlets to bridge the gap between research and the policy-making process.

The Center has earned a reputation as a source of high-quality research (such as the Afrobarometer), technical analyses, and reports on a broad range of democracy and governance-related issues. Its services and outputs are available to, and used by, various state and nonstate institutions (including government departments, parliaments, anticorruption agencies, election authorities, human rights commissions, and donor agencies) as well as media and civic groups in Ghana and Africa.

GHANA

Capital: *Accra*

Population: *24.96 million*

Internet Penetration:
14.11 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$3,257

I. PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN GHANA

Introduction

As in many African countries, persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Ghana are subject to various forms of exclusion, discrimination, and stigmatization. A combination of culture and political economy has ensured that PWDs must contend with barriers that are not faced by the general public. PWDs are also stereotyped and relegated to the fringes of society.¹ They experience discrimination in terms of access to education and public services as well as employment, and are more likely to suffer infanticide at birth.

The Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana (1992), particularly the Bill of Rights contained in it, provides the basic framework for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities in the country. Chapter 5 of the constitution guarantees the funda-

* *E. Gyimah-Boadi is Executive Director of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development. Regina Amanfo Tetteh is Program Officer at the Center, and Kojo Asante is Senior Research Officer.*

mental rights and freedoms of the individual. Article 12(1) enjoins all organs and agencies of government as well as all natural and legal persons in Ghana to respect those rights. However, enforcement of the specific rights guaranteed in the constitution has been highly uneven. Relative to civil and political rights, social and economic rights have often been deemed nonjusticiable and therefore tend to lag in implementation. Thus PWDs in Ghana have generally continued to face monumental obstacles in asserting and enjoying their fundamental human rights despite the undeniable liberalization of the political system since the early 1990s.

What follows is a summary of CDD-Ghana's research and other activities to help protect the rights of PWDs in Ghana and abate their marginalization. The Center's activities, largely undertaken in collaboration with other key stakeholders, eventually contributed to the passage of a law by the Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana to protect the rights and promote the welfare of PWDs in Ghana—Act 715—in 2006, after almost sixteen years of lip service by successive governments.

Research and Advocacy Programs to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

a. In 2002, CDD-Ghana undertook a review of the 1992 constitution as part of its regular diagnostic analysis of the country's democratic governance land-

scape and challenges. The review, which was timed to coincide with national activities commemorating the tenth year of the constitution's promulgation, confirmed that Parliament had failed to comply with one its constitutional obligations—the enactment of a law protecting the rights of the country's disabled people. The finding provided an entry point for the Center to embark on extensive programs, in collaboration with key state and nonstate interest groups and stakeholders, to push for the passage of legislation that would promote the rights of PWDs.

b. With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Center partnered with the Ghana Federation for the Disabled (GFD), and the Center for the Development of People (CEDEP) to organize a high-profile workshop with Ghana's print and electronic media. The forum was used to highlight the 12-year delay in the adoption of a disability bill, enhance media and public awareness of draft disability legislation under consideration by lawmakers, and underscore key factors impeding its speedy passage. The extensive publicity received by the workshop provoked widespread public debate on the plight of the disabled in Ghana in general and promoted awareness of the draft law under review. It also generated ideas for redressing the problems of the disabled.

c. Next, the Center commissioned ex-

About the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)



The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization based in Accra, Ghana. Established in 1998, CDD-Ghana is dedicated to the promotion of a society and government based on the rule of law, appropriate checks on the power of the state, and integrity in public administration.

CDD-Ghana carries out its mission through policy research, conducting roundtables, workshops, and conferences; providing technical support through consultant services; offering training and capacity-building programs; and collaborating with other organizations and networks on joint initiatives. Its research outputs and other services are available to and used by governmental and non-governmental agencies, African regional bodies, and development partners as well as researchers and the general public.

tensive research to assess the attitude of the private sector toward the draft legislation. The effort focused on gathering information from a select group of private-sector entities: an architectural and engineering consultancy, Twum Bofo and Partners; a construction consulting firm, G. Ampofo and Partners; a large intercity road transporter, Kingdom Transport Service; a quasi-public road transport company, Metro Mass Transit; a fast-food chain, Papaye Fast Foods; a membership organization for some private-sector entities, the Private Enterprise Foundation; a private university, Ashesi University; a high-end hotel, Plaza Hotel; a multinational bank, Standard Chartered Bank; the Coca-Cola Company; a private housing-estate development company, and Regimanuel Gray. Senior managers of each entity were carefully interviewed to ascertain their awareness of the draft legislation and knowledge of its contents, particularly the provisions imposing obligations on private-sector service providers. The initiative also sought to enhance the involvement of the private sector in the redrafting, passage, and implementation of the bill.

The findings of the research provided information for a multistakeholder forum organized (again with USAID funding) to discuss aspects of the draft bill that would impose financial and other obligations on private-sector operators. The workshop, chaired by the deputy minister of manpower, youth, and employment, The Honorable Frema Osei Opare, brought together thirty eight participants representing Parliament; government departments (such as the Attorney General's Office, the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Investment Promotion Council, the National Board for Small Scale Industries, the Non-Formal Education Division of the Ministry of Education, and the Information Services Department); business chambers and trade associations (such as the Ghana Employers' Association, the Ghana Hotels' Association, the

Trades Union Congress, and the Private Enterprise Foundation); the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice; print and electronic media (including the state-owned *Daily Graphic* and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation as well as many private newspapers and television and FM radio stations); and civic advocacy groups like the GFD and the Ghana Association for the Blind. The discussions at the workshop placed emphasis on specific provisions of the draft bill relevant to the private sector, including sections that would oblige owners and occupants of public places and service providers to provide access; encourage employers to hire PWDs, provide appropriate tools, and minimize impediments to their advancement; require educational institutions to promote access to educational facilities for PWDs and provide necessary learning facilities and equipment; improve the physical mobility of PWDs by reserving parking places at public parking lots and seats in public vehicles; and promote PWD participation in national activities by requiring that organizers provide the necessary access and facilities. These provisions were accompanied by an associated regime of incentives—including benefits for manufacturers of technical aides and appliances for the disabled—and sanctions for contravention.

d. Following the passage of the Disability Act, the Center initiated a series of programs to popularize the new law and to encourage compliance by the public and private sectors. This included the development, publication, and dissemination of a laypersons' version of Act 715 in English and five major local languages (Hausa, Ga, Ewe, Twi, and Dagbani). The Center also commissioned the development of a Braille version of the legislation. These versions of the act were disseminated widely in several seminars organized to educate PWDs, service providers, and the general public on the provisions of the law. In collaboration with the GFD, CDD-Ghana developed a television kit to publicize the content of the Disability Act, and launched a campaign against the stigmatization of PWDs in Ghana.

e. Next, CDD-Ghana embarked on a pilot project to audit the status of PWD access to existing transport and recreational facilities in Ghana. The premises of a select number of public and private-sector agencies were inspected for signage such as Braille character buttons and grab bars for the visually impaired, ramps to building entrances, elevators for multistory buildings, and the like. The facilities audited in three regional capitals—Accra (Greater Accra), Kumasi (Ashanti), and Tamale (Northern)—included government institutions such as the Parliament House in Accra, the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment, the new Presidential Office Complex, the renovated Peduase Lodge in Aburi, and the Kumasi and Tamale city halls; leading state health institutions such as the Military Hospital (Accra), the Accra Psychiatric Hospital, Tamale Teaching Hospital, and Komfo Anokye Hospital (Kumasi); and public educational institutions such as the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Kumasi), the University of Development Studies (Tamale), and Tamale Polytechnic. The public recreational and transportation facilities assessed included the main sports stadiums in Kumasi and Tamale, the State Transport Corporation Yard in Accra, Kwame Nkrumah Circle and Overhead/Pass in Accra (the main vehicular and passenger hub in Ghana), Metro Mass Transit Depot in Kumasi, and Tamale Airport. The private-sector facilities assessed included the Catholic Cathedral (Kumasi), Fosua Hotel (Kumasi), Manhyia Palace (Kumasi), Labadi Beach Hotel (Accra), Busy Internet (Accra), Gariba Lodge (Tamale), Mariam Hotel (Tamale), Picorna Hotel (Tamale), and SG-SSB (Tamale).

f. Another set of interventions to promote the welfare and rights of PWDs in Ghana focused on elections. The Center commissioned a national needs assessment for the GFD and its constituent organizations. The findings informed the development of a training program for the leadership and key officers of the GFD and other disability organizations in the country. The training program

sought to enhance the ability of the GFD and allied apex PWD bodies to fully utilize the guarantees in the constitution, Act 715, and other relevant laws in their engagements with officials and agencies responsible for disability issues. An important output of the training program was the production of a “Disability Manifesto,” which listed important issues of concern to PWDs to be incorporated into the programs of government and manifestos of parties and candidates competing in the 2008 polls. Next, CDD-Ghana organized interactive meetings between the GFD (and the leaders of other PWD organizations) and representatives of the “manifesto committees” of various political parties, at which participants explored possibilities for mainstreaming the needs of PWDs in party manifestos and the campaign process during the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections.

A program dubbed “Enhancing PWD Participation in Elections” sought to promote the inclusion of PWDs in the 2004 and 2008 general elections as candidates, election observers, and voters. A similar program was mounted for PWDs in the local government (district assembly) polls of 2006. It began with a nationwide awareness campaign. This was followed by the mounting of public forums as nearly sixty PWDs declared interest in contesting the district assembly elections (compared with a little over twenty in the 2002 elections), and workshops to help train PWD candidates on how to conduct effective campaigns. The Center also provided platforms in selected constituencies for PWDs to directly engage parliamentary aspirants on disability issues. CDD-Ghana’s direct negotiations with the Electoral Commission resulted in the provision of Braille ballot papers, which enabled the visually impaired to cast their votes without assistance in 2008.

g. The Center has helped to build the organizational and technical capacities of leading PWD organizations. In addition to the aforementioned training programs for the GFD and other disability groups, it supported the GFD’s develop-

ment of a database to streamline the collection, management, and storage of information on PWDs in Ghana. The database is helping PWDs in the country to lobby the government more effectively.

h. The Center undertook activities to counter the stigmatization of PWDs. These included research and analysis, as well as the organization of seminars and dissemination of publications on the topic.

i. Finally, the Center initiated a research project aimed at exploring private-sector responses to the Disability Act. A workshop was organized for the private sector—comprising transport companies, universities, financial institutions, and construction firms, among others—to provide participants with in-depth knowledge of the act and its legal, financial, and engineering ramifications.

Challenges Encountered

PWD rights and other welfare issues in Ghana are in keen competition with many other pressing social concerns in a political and economic context of resource scarcity and a genuinely overcrowded legislative agenda. This partly accounts for the delay on the part of the executive branch and Parliament, which share legislative power under the constitution, in passing legislation to promote the rights of PWDs. Moreover, the marginal status of PWDs, generally low levels of education among PWDs in Ghana, and the short attention span of the media regarding PWDs make it easy for government and society at large to ignore disability issues.

With this in mind, the initial focus of CDD-Ghana's programs was to draw the attention of the media and policy makers to the unfulfilled constitutional obligation to PWDs, and to get it placed on the legislative calendar of the Attorney General's Office and Parliament. The induction of members of the new Parliament in early 2005 (following the December 2004 polls) provided a good opportunity for raising public awareness and securing the commitment of Parlia-

ment and its new leadership to address the matter.

This was preceded by the identification of a number of state and nonstate stakeholders and interest groups for collaboration on multiple, interrelated programs aimed at improving the welfare of PWDs in Ghana: the GFD; the Parliamentary Select Committee on Employment, Social Welfare, and State Enterprises; the Select Committee on Constitutional, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs; the Select Committee on Subsidiary Legislation; the Attorney General's Office (responsible for developing draft legislation on behalf of the executive branch); the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ); and the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment, among others.

Mindful of the overcrowded nature of the legislative agenda as well as the limited and often overstretched technical capacities of Ghana's legislative agencies, CDD-Ghana facilitated the development of the draft legislation at the Attorney General's Office by researching international best practices (including the Americans with Disabilities Act in the United States) and collating suggestions from independent experts, state and nonstate human rights advocacy groups, and the public at large. For the same purposes, the Center collaborated with the GFD to organize several workshops on the subject for the media, religious leaders, and other key stakeholders, to educate them and solicit their support for the draft disability bill and actions to address disability issues in general.

The Center and its collaborators also held workshops on the draft disability bill for officials involved in developing the legislation—the drafting section of the Attorney General's Office and the Parliamentary Committees on Constitutional and Legal Affairs and Subsidiary Legislation. These workshops provided a platform for the state representatives, advocacy groups, and independent experts to jointly deliberate on the draft legislation. Strong media participation in the workshops generated significant

publicity and garnered public support for the agenda.

In addition, the teams that conducted the pilot accessibility audit from October 23rd to November 6th 2007 were also strategically composed. Each team included CDD-Ghana (which took care of the research, analysis, and report writing), the GFD, and other key civic advocacy bodies dedicated to PWD issues, such as the Ghana Association for the Blind, the Ghana National Association for the Deaf, Action for Disability and Development, and the Ghana Society for the Physically Disabled; members of the Parliamentary Select Committee on State Enterprise, Social Welfare, and Employment (the body responsible for overseeing implementation of the legislation); the Ministry for Manpower, Youth, and Employment and Architectural Engineering Services Limited (the official implementing agencies); the CHRAJ; the CEDEP (a nongovernmental organization dedicated to empowering economic and social minorities); and the electronic and print media. The inclusion of individuals with physical disabilities as well as those with visual and hearing impairment in the teams enabled the assessment exercise to test accessibility in a relatively accurate and practical manner, and the inclusion of the parliamentary and ministry representatives ensured effective policy uptake.

The research on the attitudes of selected private-sector operators toward the draft disability legislation helped to ascertain the degree of notional support for the bill in that sector and the potential material and financial costs of compliance with the bill's provisions. It found, for instance, that a provision requiring airlines to reserve a certain number of seats for PWDs on each flight was considered too costly by the industry. The research and the seminars held with the private industry group provided suggestions for refining the draft legislation to address the needs of diverse stakeholders—both service providers and PWD customers.

Other research, seminars, and publica-

tions helped to draw attention to the link between PWD marginalization in Ghana and prevailing social practices, and hence the need to look beyond legislation for effective inclusion of PWDs. For instance, it found that among the Akan ethno-linguistic group, a person born with a disability or who becomes disabled is precluded from holding any traditional political office or occupying any leadership position in the community. Religious groups (Christian and Muslim), private companies, and the public at large tended to see PWDs as objects of pity whose needs were best addressed through the giving of alms to begging PWDs by the roadside and highly publicized public-relations events in which philanthropic individuals and organizations make donations to PWD institutions (especially during the Christmas and Easter periods). Research also helped to highlight the fact very few PWDs have broken the glass ceiling to enter national politics. It showed that there have been only three PWD parliamentary candidates since 1992, and only one was successful in winning a seat.²

The pilot audit assessment findings provided an estimate of the huge gap between the aspirations of Act 715 and the reality of PWD accessibility. Even over a year after the passage of the law, the study confirmed that levels of accessibility were low to abysmal. It found, for example, that most facilities lacked designated parking spaces for PWDs, with the notable exception of the Presidential Office Complex, then under construction, which had included these in its design, and the Baba Yara Stadium, whose main entrance, seating arrangements, and washrooms accommodated PWD needs. The premises of many new and old public- and private-sector transportation and recreational facilities, as well as government agencies, were inaccessible to one category of PWDs or another. Although most facilities could boast of ramps, they tended to be designed for delivery of goods and were not necessarily suitable for wheelchair use; pathway width was adequate for wheelchair access in only about half of the 28 public transportation facilities inspected. Most

multistory buildings lacked lifts, facilities lacked Braille character buttons and grab bars, entrances to washrooms and elevators of recreational facilities lacked international disability signage, and none made any provision for sign-language interpreters.

The pilot assessment audit also provided a rough gauge of the levels of elite commitment and resource mobilization that would be needed for effective implementation of the legislation. The participatory nature of the exercise actually helped to stimulate such commitment among PWD advocacy groups, policy makers, and the public.

Policy Successes

a. The Center was able to get busy policy makers to place the PWD protection legislation on the legislative calendar in 2005 and keep it there until passage.

b. The generally good quality and progressive nature of Act 715 can also be considered a success. The law's main features include guaranteed PWD access to public places, free general and specialist medical care, education, employment, and transportation. It also regulates the commitments and other responsibilities of public and private service providers. Act 715 mandates the creation of PWD at the various employment centers nationwide, and provides for the formation of a National Council on Persons with Disability. The ten-year moratorium on mandatory compliance with the accessibility and mobility provisions of Act 715 substantially addresses the concerns expressed by private-sector representatives (in the CDD-Ghana research on the attitudes of the private sector to the draft PWD legislation and subsequent interactive forums for PWDs and private-sector operators) over the cost implications of making all existing infrastructure disability-friendly.

c. The National Council on Persons with Disability was established as mandated by the act, charged with monitoring and evaluating government policies and programs to ensure that they are in line

with the Disability Act, and the head of CDD-Ghana was appointed as chair of the new council. It is also worth noting that the membership of the council included leaders of the prominent disability advocacy bodies that were active in the CDD-Ghana/GFD "coalition," such as Bashir Koorof of the Ghana Society for the Blind. This, of course, provided additional opportunities for PWD advocacy from the inside.

d. The Center succeeded in creating enthusiasm among the Parliamentary Select Committee on Employment, Social Welfare, and State Enterprises as well as other state stakeholders about joining CDD-Ghana, the GFD, and other PWD advocacy groups to undertake the accessibility audit, a project which also established a baseline for monitoring progress.

e. PWD protection and welfare issues have been placed on the election campaign agendas of political parties in district and national elections since 2004; the Center promoted the historic rise in the number of PWDs contesting the 2006 local assembly elections, with seven winning seats; CDD-Ghana brought representatives of political parties together for a workshop to articulate their programs for addressing PWD issues ahead of the 2008 elections; and the political parties contesting the 2008 elections included disability welfare issues in their election manifestos and campaign promises, printed copies of their manifestos in Braille, and provided sign-language interpretation at major campaign events.

f. The new administration headed by President John Atta Mills and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party formally inaugurated the National Council on Persons with Disability within its first hundred days in office, fulfilling a campaign pledge.

g. CDD-Ghana received sustained funding from USAID over a seven-year period to undertake research and advocacy programs to promote the rights of PWDs. This can be considered a vote

of confidence in the effectiveness of the Center's disability welfare efforts.

h. The Center is regularly inundated with requests to participate in, serve as speakers for, or provide resource personnel to PWD welfare projects by local PWD organizations, Parliament, government departments, state constitutional bodies, human rights advocacy groups, student groups, researchers, and donor organizations, indicating broad national recognition of its expertise and interest.

i. The GFD has maintained some level of activity in keeping PWD welfare issues on the development agenda and in pressing for the implementation of Act 715; various PWD organizations have threatened to boycott national polls as a means of pressing for shows of commitment to PWD issues on the part of the government and the national political leadership.

The bitter disputes over the results of presidential polls that nearly derailed Ghana's democratic transition in the early 1990s were perhaps a more direct trigger for CDD-Ghana's election work.

cal parties to pay lip service to the lofty goals contained in Act 715. The law was passed in 2006, but it took roughly two years for the administration of President John Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to take the first concrete step toward implementation. The National Council on Persons with Disability was formed in early 2008, but by the end of the Kufuor government's tenure in January 2009, it had not been formally inaugurated and still lacked office premises and a secretariat. The Mills government

recomposed the council and inaugurated it within its first hundred days in office. But the new body has been far from proactive in pressing for compliance with Act 715 on the part of the government and its agencies, not to speak of the private sector. It is true that council has worked with the Ministry of Local Government to develop guidelines for the disbursement of the 2 percent of the District Assembly

Common Fund (a form of central government grant to the districts) that is earmarked for PWDs. It has initiated discussions with the National Youth Employment Program for allocation to PWDs. Unfortunately, this is temporary employment involving largely unskilled labor, and the program is riddled with partisan politics. It is therefore a poor substitute for the requirement in Act 715 that the government equip PWDs with the appropriate employable skills and tools to make them self-reliant. Moreover, the levels of cooperation between the leadership of the new council and leading disability advocacy groups such as the GFD appear to be weak.

Outstanding Challenges

a. The implementation of Act 715 has been extremely weak. For instance, the Disability Law provides for nondiscrimination against PWDs in terms of employment and professional development. But very little of this has been achieved five years after the passage of the law. Available data indicate that the rate of employment of PWDs (69 percent) is much lower than that of the general population (80.2 percent). The situation of women with disabilities is even worse; about 53 percent of them have no formal education, compared with 37.3 percent of males with disabilities. When PWDs are employed, there are questions as to the quality and level of employment and the constraints and frustrations faced in the workplace.

b. There has been a marked tendency on the part of government and the politi-

c. Major gaps persist in the technocratic and advocacy capacities of the GFD and other PWD organizations, despite the Center's earlier technical capacity build-

ing and leadership training programs. In addition, factional disputes continue to dog the PWD community and its leadership. There has been a recession in activities to push the PWD rights protection and welfare agenda since the Center took a back seat on those issues. For instance, there has been no disability accessibility audit since the pilot audit led by the Center in 2007. Thus there are no scientifically objective data for ascertaining the status of compliance with the law by the government or the private sector.

d. Sustained USAID funding was crucial to the Center's ability to undertake a number of complementary activities directed at promoting the rights of PWDs in Ghana. A reduction of USAID funding and the Center's inability to secure alternative or additional funding has substantially brought the Center's PWD research and advocacy programs to a halt.

e. Given that at least some of the problems of Ghana's PWDs are rooted in local cultures, social practices, and religions, addressing them is bound to be a medium or long-term project. Yet the attention span of the government, the legislature, the media, and the public remains limited.

f. A unique combination of factors that are not easily replicable may, at least partially, explain the substantial success of CDD-Ghana and its partners in getting the attention of policy makers focused on disability issues, culminating in the passage of Act 715: an individual at the helm of the Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment, Frema Opere, with a background in civil society as head of Action Aid-Ghana prior to her ministerial appointment; CDD-Ghana's relatively strong access to the attorney general and leaders of the relevant parliamentary structures under the previous administration; and the close focus on poverty reduction in official economic policies of the 2000s (the government was happy to report policy progress on PWD issues as a poverty-reduction achievement).

II. ENHANCING ELECTION TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS THROUGH CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Introduction

A number of remote and immediate factors account for CDD-Ghana's sustained commitment to electoral fairness, credibility, and peace in Ghana since 2000. They include the following: the emergence of the ballot box rather than military coups as the primary instrument for changing governments and selecting political leaders; the establishment of regularly scheduled elections as an accepted feature of Ghanaian and African political life; and the high-stakes nature of Ghanaian and African elections, whose outcomes are often bitterly disputed by losing contestants and their supporters (a reflection of autocratic regimes and leaders trying to cling to power by rigging elections, and/or of high-strung opposition parties that see victory as the sole end of electoral contestation).

The bitter disputes over the results of presidential polls that nearly derailed Ghana's democratic transition in the early 1990s were perhaps a more direct trigger for CDD-Ghana's election work. The electoral disputes provoked violent public protests by opposition supporters, and eventually the boycott of the ensuing parliamentary elections by the main opposition parties. This in turn produced a one-sided Parliament that was practically devoid of an opposition presence. Thus politics in the first administration of the Fourth Republic were characterized by parliamentary rubber-stamping of presidential initiatives, while opposition parties continually engaged in vigorous extraparliamentary activities that generated serious political tension.

A greater effort was made in the 1996 elections to make the polling process more transparent and credible. Some domestic groups (notably the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Ghana Legal Literacy Foundation, and Ghana Alert) together with international groups (such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Carter Center, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems) took

advantage of the relative openness of these elections to mount independent poll-watching projects. While they helped to improve transparency and credibility, the projects were faulted on the following grounds: the confinement of observation mainly to the day of the election and neglect of the preelection period; extremely limited geographical coverage, with a focus on polling stations in cities and towns; and inadequate professionalism.

Additional factors significantly informing CDD-Ghana's rationale for developing programs on election transparency, fairness, and peacefulness in Ghana for the polls of December 2000 and subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections include the following:

a. The Center's maiden Afrobarometer Survey in Ghana in 1999,³ and of the follow-up elite survey,⁴ found widespread support for democracy among Ghanaians and strong identification of democracy with multiparty elections, along with deep concerns about the integrity of the Electoral Management Body (EMB), the absence of a level playing field for all political parties, and other electoral irregularities. (We took the mixed popular attitudes toward democratic reform in Ghana as something of an "early warning" regarding the need to enhance election credibility in 2000.

b. The 2000 elections had a special importance in that they marked the exit of President J. J. Rawlings, who had been military ruler for the eleven years preceding the Fourth Republic and whose constitutionally mandated two terms in office were coming to an end.⁵ They were also the first elections in which the presidential candidates of both the ruling and opposition parties had no military antecedents.

c. The 2000 polls were likely to be closely fought given the roughly equal levels of popular support enjoyed by the main opposition NPP and the ruling NDC.

The Center employed several strategies to mount a politically and technically

credible independent election-observation project for 2000 and beyond.

a. It formed a broad-based coalition of secular and religious civic bodies to independently observe Ghanaian elections—the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)—comprising some of the largest and most influential civil-society groups in Ghana (currently 35), such as the Christian Council, the Catholic Secretariat, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, the National Association of Muslims, the Ghana Bar Association, the Trades Union Congress, the National Association of Teachers, the National Association of Graduate Teachers, and the Nurses and Midwives Association. The coalition was cochaired by Justice V. C. R. A. C. Crabbe, a retired judge and former electoral commissioner, and Miranda Greenstreet, a retired university professor and administrator. The diverse nature of CODEO (horizontally and vertically composed, middle and working class, religious and secular) gave it across-the-board legitimacy. Similarly, relying on the member organizations to select personnel for training and deployment as election observers helped to minimize perceptions of partisan political bias.

b. Significant expansion in the number of citizens involved in poll observation under CODEO—from under two thousand in previous domestic election-monitoring projects to several thousand (5,500 in the 2000 polls, 7,000 in 2004, and 4,000 in 2008)—has made it possible to deploy observers nationwide.

c. The Center introduced more comprehensive observation projects covering the preelection, election-day, and post-election phases of the electoral cycle. CODEO observation projects since 2000 have also addressed issues critical to strengthening Ghana's electoral democracy in particular and democratic development in general, such as candidate selection processes,⁶ media coverage of elections,⁷ electoral boundary demarcation processes,⁸ election violence early warning systems and peace promotion,⁹ incumbency abuse prevention,¹⁰

issue-based campaign promotion,¹¹ and state financing of political parties.¹² The Center's active research agenda has produced thirty or more publications, including research papers, briefing papers, critical perspectives, and manuals and guidelines.

d. The development and use of a more comprehensive and technically proficient checklist of the incidents observers must scrutinize and record has significantly reduced reliance on anecdotal evidence to back claims of electoral fairness or unfairness. The use of Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology in 2008, which involved a nationally representative sample of polling stations and SMS text-messaging to independently verify the results of the presidential poll, brought CODEO election observation to a new and unprecedented level of technical proficiency.

CODEO today is the largest citizen observation group in Ghana. Its presence continues to enhance electoral transparency and credibility in Ghana. The Electoral Commission, political parties, the media, security agencies, and the general public have fully embraced local election observers and respect their pronouncements on the quality and credibility of the electoral process and the EMB.

CDD-Ghana has served as the technical secretariat of CODEO. The Center has also been responsible for the initiation, implementation, and analysis of all CODEO election credibility enhancement research. The above research-oriented initiatives (such as monitoring the incidence of violence, abuse of incumbency for electoral gain, and balance in media coverage) have helped to provide empirical evidence for assessing the overall quality of elections. The data gathered have also informed the development of appropriate interventions by Ghana's election authorities and other stakeholders. Some of these innovative research activities have brought limited improvements in policy and practice. For instance, the Center's work on identifying and preventing the abuse of incum-

bency in 2004 has helped to increase popular knowledge of the exploitation of administrative, budgetary, and media resources. Incumbency abuse has now become a routine criterion for measuring election quality, and both candidates and citizens are able to identify certain types of abuses and speak out against them. To date, the Center appears to be the only institution on the African continent to have elaborated and developed indicators for measuring incumbency abuse. The Center completed its work and submitted it to Parliament in 2009. Similar effects have been felt in the Center's pioneering work on monitoring election violence in collaboration with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Center.

In recognition of the Center's expertise and experience, it has been called upon to provide technical support to a range of election stakeholder groups in Ghana and Africa. It has trained election observers, prepared election manuals, managed election-observation missions, deployed technology for election observation, and offered preelection political analysis. In 2008, CDD-Ghana trained the CHRAJ to observe human rights compliance and political corruption during the preelection and election-day periods. Similarly, the Center trained and deployed 300 members of the GFD to observe the elections in 2008. CDD-Ghana has also provided support to citizen observation groups in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Sudan, Malawi, Burundi, Nigeria, and the Central African Republic.

Success at Influencing Policy

The Center measures the results of its policy-influencing activities at two levels: outcomes and impacts. The first level of measurement is less problematic, because it is relatively easy for the Center to attribute the outcomes to its intervention. The second level of measurement is much more difficult, since there are factors outside CDD-Ghana's control that contribute to the overall impact of an intervention.

In the specific case of enhancing elec-

tion transparency, peace, and credibility, all the major research and programmatic activities are measured. Evaluation forms are often handed over to participants to assess the usefulness of an activity to them. The Center conducts external and internal evaluations of entire programs as well as aspects of the programs to determine the quality of delivery and the degree to which project goals were met. For example, this was done for the Center's 2008 election program with respect to the PVT component.

For research on aspects of elections that have been either understudied or completely overlooked, the Center measures the direct impact of the knowledge generated and received by election stakeholders and the public, particularly where CDD-Ghana's research is cited as a basis for discussion. This is true of the Center's work on abuse of incumbency and state

financing of political parties. In the case of the latter, as indicated earlier, Parliament contracted the Center in 2009 to produce a background paper to guide lawmakers in the consideration of draft legislation on the matter.

In some cases, the impact has been instant. In the 2008 elections, the Center's pioneering work on monitoring election violence directly influenced the behavior of political party supporters. The monitoring reports were disclosed to election stakeholders, including the police and EMB, and subsequently disseminated to the public through the media. The naming and shaming of individuals and groups involved in various threats and acts of violence helped to put a stop to such behavior.

CDD-Ghana Has Achieved the Following Impact:

a. Institutionalized, professionalized,

and popularized domestic election observation

b. Enhanced transparency in the electoral process and broad-based acceptance of electoral outcomes since 2000 through CODEO interventions

c. Increased knowledge and public awareness of new issues like incumbency abuse, state financing of parties, and election violence monitoring

d. Skill building and knowledge sharing on management of various aspects of elections for a number of stakeholders in Ghana and Africa

In recognition of the Center's expertise and experience, it has been called upon to provide technical support to a range of election stakeholder groups in Ghana and Africa.

Challenges to CDD-Ghana Election Support Work

A key set of challenges relates to the highly competitive nature of elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic, the roughly even electoral strength of the two main parties (NDC and NPP), and their

shared conviction that it is possible to clinch victory by out-rigging and out-manuevering the opponent. This sets CDD-Ghana/CODEO and other election-monitoring projects on a collision course with those who seek to manipulate their way to electoral victory. The friction is compounded by the extreme polarization and hyperpartisanship of Ghanaian politics. Parties, candidates, and their supporters are often resentful of CDD/CODEO activities that seek to check direct and indirect forms of poll rigging.

The Center has adopted three methods for dealing with this set of challenges. First, it has sought to assure key election stakeholders and the public of its independence, integrity, and professionalism. The creation of a broad and diverse coalition has been critical to this end. Furthermore, CODEO's advisory board is composed of individuals who enjoy widespread public respect and a

reputation for impartiality.

Second, the Center has ensured that the information it collects and disseminates is credible and of the highest quality. It has employed personnel with appropriate election-related qualifications, and tapped its research skills and experience extensively to undertake electoral studies. All aspects of its work, including media engagement and election observation and management, are professionalized. Election observers are armed with a checklist of indicators and undergo several days of training and trial runs before being recommended for accreditation by the Electoral Commission and eventually deployed by CODEO.

Lastly, CDD-Ghana/CODEO has demonstrated in its public and private engagements and statements that it works principally to support the EMB and other election stakeholders to advance electoral peace, transparency, and credibility. For example, CDD-Ghana/CODEO has provided information about shortages of electoral materials to the EMB, and shared documented reports with the Ghana Police Service regarding threats of election violence in parts of the country during the 2008 polls.

A second set of obstacles relates to the sustainable financing of these initiatives. Moving Ghana toward democratic consolidation through the enhancement of the quality of electoral processes and outcomes is a long-term goal. As a not-for-profit institution in Africa, CDD-Ghana has been fully reliant on the generosity of various development partners to successfully pursue this agenda. In 2000, when it began its substantive work on elections, the Center had been around for just two years and needed to persuade donors that it had the capacity to deliver. Fortunately, the leaders of CDD-Ghana were very experienced people with a track record in managing these types of programs; they had been influential in bringing a similar group of civil-society organizations together in the 1996 elections. The Center was able to leverage the bona fides of its managers to obtain financing for the interven-

tion in 2000. Subsequently, the Center has relied on the success of its previous interventions and research work on elections to attract support for further activities.

A third set of challenges has to do with the recruitment and retention of expertise and experience for work on long-term projects of this nature. The Center has to compete with the international and national public and private sectors for high-quality personnel. Often, it is unable to retain talented and experienced staffers who have been important in advancing the agenda successfully. In other cases, personnel who have built extensive networks with policy makers and gained the trust of such officials are recruited by international organizations, and the Center is forced to begin anew the process of cultivating relationships. CDD-Ghana's approach in dealing with this problem is to provide understudies for senior and more experienced staff, creating the capacity for sustaining initiatives even in the absence of the lead officer. In addition, the Center ensures that it can build its corporate brand as an independent, nonpartisan, professional think tank, so that the reception of its products and engagements are defined by its reputation.

Endnotes

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TURNING A RESEARCH IDEA INTO A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

How the LCPS's Advocacy Initiative Led to Municipal Elections

*Sami Atallah**



On April 3rd, 1997, the Lebanese parliament approved the prime minister's draft law to extend the mandate of the country's municipal councils. Although this was not an unusual decision by the government, which had been regularly postponing local elections since 1969, the response by civil society was different this time. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) joined with a number of other civil society organizations to launch a national movement calling for local elections. After thirteen months of work, LADE managed to enlist more than a hundred associations along with political party representatives, activists, and volunteers to collect more than 60,000 signatures. It also mobilized the media and parliament members. By June 14th, 1998, the government had held municipal elections in 600 out of 708 municipalities, more than 1.2 million Lebanese voters had applied for election cards to exercise their constitutional right, and 10,000 municipal council members had joined the political class.

LEBANON

Capital: *Beirut*

Population: *4.01 million*

Internet Penetration:
52 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Partly Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$16,104

This paper examines how the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS), a policy research center that has become the hub of intellectual activity on pertinent public issues including elections and decentralization, established LADE, whose primary goal is to monitor voting and lobby the government for electoral reform. This is a case study in which the founders and members of LCPS found merit in generating activism from research. It is also a story of how LADE, which used the intellectual resources of LCPS, brought over a hundred nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into a focused campaign and steered the movement through a politically constrained environment and a divided social terrain.

The primary lessons of this experience can be summarized as follows: the founders and members of LCPS realized early on that research ideas, having been studied and debated in workshops and conferences, are best advocated by a separate NGO, since the work, activities, skills, and even the character of researchers are different from those

**Sami Atallah is Executive Director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.*

of activists. The government's decision to postpone the elections gave LADE the opportunity to fulfill its mandate, which it did well. The strategy of using a petition to convey its demand shifted politics to a new playing field that the government did not control, and reinvigorated grassroots activism in a country with multiple societal cleavages. LADE also managed, through its focus and levelheadedness, to avoid pitfalls among its own NGO members as well as opportunism on the part of the political elite.

This paper presents the story in four sections. The first introduces LCPS and relates how it was formed and developed over the years. Section two describes the political system and actors in the postwar period. It provides the reader with the political context in which the municipal elections were postponed and then held. The third section explains how LADE responded to the postponement and led the national campaign. It then analyzes the strategies used to influence decision makers. The fourth section highlights LCPS's influence in the policy sphere beyond the municipal elections campaign.

Section 1: The Making of LCPS¹

LCPS was designed as a public-policy think tank that would produce educated and nonpartisan analysis and guidance to inform the Lebanese policy-making process. It was born of a conviction that the minds and methods usually found in academia should be brought to bear on issues of public affairs and the public

good. It was also built on the acknowledgement that the country has strong universities and an intelligent and capable intellectual class, but that these institutions and individuals have not focused their capacities sufficiently on realistic policy choices. LCPS was conceived as a bridge between the halls of academia and the corridors of policy making—an institution that would both channel the unique abilities of academics and intellectuals toward proposing practical solutions to policy makers, and convey the constraints and concerns of policy makers to the intellectual class.

LCPS was founded in 1989, in the fourteenth year of the Lebanese civil war, when the country was divided into two governments and several cantons, and still under the influence and occupation of several foreign armies. The Center's founders were a group of Lebanese academics, civil-society activists, former government officials, and business leaders who believed that one of the main reasons for Lebanon's collapse—along with regional tensions, internal divisions, and international competition—was poor policy. In other words, Lebanese policy makers before the war failed to develop the state's institutions, laws, and governance practices in ways that would preserve the country, manage challenges and changes, and avert catastrophe. Although there was little certainty in 1989 that the war would be over within a year, the founders were focused on postwar Lebanon, and were committed to creating a think tank that

About the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS)

LCPS

المركز اللبناني للدراسات
The Lebanese Center
for Policy Studies

Based in Beirut, the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) is a respected voice in national and regional debates on issues pertaining to transparency and government accountability. Established in 1989, LCPS operates as an independently managed, politically neutral non-profit and non-governmental think tank with extensive experience in research, advocacy, and training. LCPS' mission is to produce independent, high-quality research relevant to policymaking and to promote active reform through advocacy and raising public awareness. Over the years, LCPS has started many advocacy initiatives for judicial reform, transparent budget processes, decentralization and local governance, and the enhancement of the role of business associations in policy making.

would analyze the country's interests and examine politics and policy in a programmatic, intelligent, and nonpartisan manner—an institution committed to the belief that a state that does not reform and develop is doomed to regression and collapse, and that politics is not only an art, but also a science that requires dedicated and sustained study.

LCPS was started with a shoestring budget, a staff of two, and little conception of how to run a think tank or an NGO, let alone how to do so in the midst of an ongoing civil war. Its first product was the *Lebanon Report*, a monthly examination of political developments that tried to provide sound and nonpartisan analysis within a polarized environment. In what turned out to be the final months of the war, the Center's offices, in the Sin el-Fil area near Beirut, were often inaccessible or bombed out in ongoing street battles or shelling campaigns.

After the war ended in October 1990, LCPS gradually came into its own and began to grow. It had been established with support from local business philanthropists, and in the postwar period it applied for and received program funding from international foundations and institutions. It moved first to establish a quarterly journal, the *Beirut Review*, which supplemented the *Lebanon Report* with more in-depth analysis of postwar developments and challenges. The *Beirut Review* pioneered analysis of the Taif Agreement and the new set of treaties and pacts binding Lebanon and Syria; it also did important work on Lebanon's regional and international environment, and in tackling key issues of Lebanese political identity and civil society. Soon thereafter, the Center launched an Arabic quarterly journal called *Abaad* (meaning "horizons" or "dimensions"), which published groundbreaking research on Lebanon's identity, politics, and economics as well as on the judiciary, the environment, social justice, and other key public-policy issues.

By the mid-1990s, LCPS had become a hub of activity, with a pool of academics, intellectuals, journalists, and civil society activists interacting in the Cen-

ter's many workshops and conferences and collaborating on research projects. This complemented similar interaction taking place among other NGOs and institutions in the country, and represented a significant civil society moment in Lebanon. It created a sense of common identity and common purpose that transcended the particular activities at hand. This in turn fostered the potential for common action. Indeed, issues that had been first studied rather academically through the Center's workshops and research projects soon evolved into activist causes. Such was the case with the issue of elections, as a series of workshops and books published through the Center indirectly gave birth in 1996 to LADE, whose aims were to address the problems unearthed by the research, to improve electoral laws and practices, and to reduce fraud and vote rigging.² A similar process unfolded on the issue of local government, as a collection of workshops and publications produced by LCPS gave rise in 1997 to the National Movement for Local Elections, grouping more than a hundred NGOs under the slogan "My Country, My Town, My Municipality."³ Research on the issue of corruption also contributed to the establishment in 1999 of the Lebanese Transparency Association.

The Center grew steadily to a staff of over twenty-five by the late 1990s. It published sixty-three books in Arabic and English and dozens of journal issues; held hundreds of meetings, workshops, and conferences; and undertook studies of various kinds. Its main focus remained Lebanon, but it developed important partnerships with other research centers in Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, and elsewhere, and became part of a general trend of think tank dynamism and civil society activism in the Arab world. Regionally, it played important roles in promoting issues related to civil society freedoms, local government empowerment, electoral reform, anti-corruption progress, and the like.

In addition to thinking and writing on public policy, LCPS is now playing a central role in advocacy and capacity building for local and regional institutions.

The Center continues to create and develop civil society movements, the latest of which is Youth for Electoral Reform, or in Arabic, Chaen.

Overall, the Center's experience demonstrates the power of ideas—that ideas relating to democratic representation, local government, or corruption, emerging from a fairly academic exercise, can provide the bases for socio-political collective action and become forces for change. Many of these ideas have permeated the public political discourse in Lebanon well beyond their core constituencies. Some have even made it all the way into government decision making, as for example with the step taken by the government in 2005 to establish a National Commission for Electoral Law Reform. This Commission reflected thinking on the need for electoral reform that had been pioneered by LCPS over the previous ten years, and included individuals who had learned about electoral law reform through the Center's research and workshops. Scholars and experts who had worked with LCPS on issues including decentralization, corruption, economic reform, and budget issues also went on to serve as consultants or experts in the government, the UN Development Programme, the World Bank, and other key institutions.

The LCPS experience shows that ideas can be the starting point of change, and that change does not only come from interest, money, or power. The experience also shows that an idea whose time has come can attract a large following, well beyond its original audience. The idea to promote local government, which took its first steps in small workshops, eventually became a national movement that gathered 60,000 signatures and was joined by a majority of the political class.

Rising from humble beginnings, LCPS became a significant player in Lebanon's postwar civil society and policy environment. It spawned a number of civil society movements and, along with other NGOs, showed that much could be done

with a good idea, basic resources, and a small but committed staff.

Section 2: Political Actors Flirting with Local Elections in Postwar Lebanon

On October 22, 1989, Lebanon's surviving parliament members signed the Taif Agreement, which officially brought an end to the fifteen-year civil war.⁴ The Agreement led to the amendment of the constitution and formed the basis of Lebanon's postwar political system. Although it left the sectarian system intact, it shifted power from the president (who must be a Maronite Christian) to the prime minister (who must be a Sunni Muslim) and Council of Ministers (CoM), and to the parliament and its speaker (who must be a Shiite Muslim).⁵

The Taif Agreement entrusted the CoM with executive authority (Article 17).⁶ The president, who had previously enjoyed sweeping and solitary executive powers, was largely reduced to the "head of the state and the symbol of the nation's unity" (Article 49).⁷ The accord spelled out the practices of cooperation and power sharing between the president and the prime minister, by which it became a custom for the two to govern jointly, setting policy together, and implementing it through the CoM.⁸

Article 64 expanded and formalized the functions of the prime minister.⁹ Meanwhile, the role of the parliament was enhanced,¹⁰ and the tenure of the speaker was extended from one to four years, essentially strengthening the position of the Shiite community (Article 44). Article 58 weakened the ability of the executive authority to bypass the parliament in times of crisis. In addition to introducing concrete amendments, the agreement called for, among other things, the abolition of confessionalism, administrative decentralization, and the strengthening of Lebanon's municipalities and large local administrative units.

Despite the constitutional changes, the country was in effect governed by a trika of the president, the parliamentary speaker, and the prime minister. This

weakened the role of institutions in the policy-making process. More precisely, the CoM's role as the executive authority was reduced to approving the policies decided by the troika members, and the parliament speaker became a participant in intra-executive decisions rather than being confined to his legislative authority. Within the troika, each member came to represent his own sectarian community and its interests, often at the expense of the formal institutions over which he presided. The working of this system was regulated by the Syrian regime, which exerted significant influence over the country's politics. At best, it acted as a mediator among the three principal leaders, but most often it called all the shots.

Elias Hrawi, who was elected president in 1990, proceeded with the implementation of the amendments to Lebanon's constitution as envisaged by the Taif Agreement. To balance Christian and Muslim representation in the parliament and replace deputies who had died during the war, the government took the unusual step of appointing 40 new deputies. Though the appointments were unconstitutional, the government argued that holding parliamentary elections in the tense postwar political environment would have been inflammatory. The first parliamentary elections were held in 1992, followed by four subsequent polls in 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2009.

However, beyond these initial amendments, reforms stagnated, and the overall situation was becoming politically less free. The government reined in labor unions and students who protested against its socioeconomic performance, as a September 1993 law against holding rallies remained in effect. To further

control public opinion, the government restricted the role of the media by passing a new audiovisual law that gave licenses only to stations owned by or close to political parties and politicians. As for electoral laws, districts were drawn for the benefit of certain politicians. The political elites opted for a majoritarian voting system even though a proportional system would produce better political representation. The extension of the mandate of the president, who is constitutionally permitted to serve one term, at Syria's behest, delivered another blow to the country's democratic institutions.

Overall, the Center's experience demonstrates the power of ideas—that ideas relating to democratic representation, local government, or corruption, emerging from a fairly academic exercise, can provide the bases for sociopolitical collective action and become forces for change.

It is against this background that the LCPS research agenda on elections and local governments was formed. In anticipation of the 1996 parliamentary elections, the Center organized workshops at which academics, policy makers, and journalists discussed different electoral systems to ensure better representation. It also launched two studies that examined Lebanon's first parliamentary elections and documented fraud and vote rigging. These studies produced knowledge and generated ideas for reform. Equally important, they evolved into causes that galvanized common action. It was at this moment that the founders and research associates at LCPS decided that a different organization had to be set up to lobby for electoral reform. Hence LADE was founded to monitor the electoral process and ensure the enactment of a representative electoral law.

In March 1996, a twelve-member steering committee was established, primarily made up of activists, civil-society members, lawyers, academics, and journalists. To be legally recognized, the

committee submitted founding documents to the Ministry of Interior, which refused to accept them. A few weeks later, an executive committee was elected, but because the brother of the secretary general, Laure Mughayzil, became a candidate in the upcoming parliamentary elections, she stepped down in accordance with the association's bylaws, and LCPS director Paul Salem was elected as LADE's new secretary general. Several of the new executive committee members were also LCPS research associates. In the summer of 1996, LADE monitored its first parliamentary elections.

By the following winter, disagreements among the troika members had reached new heights. This effectively brought to the fore a host of divisive issues, as each leader tried to outmaneuver the others. Against this background, the upcoming municipal elections, which were scheduled for June 1st and June 8th of 1997, exacerbated political tensions. Both the president and the prime minister were initially in favor of the elections, as their chances of influencing the outcome were good. The parliament speaker, on the other hand, was reluctant, since the local elections seemed likely to favor Hezbollah, the rival party of his Amal movement. As for Syria's position, it was concerned that local elections could shift the balance of power among the Lebanese political actors and become a source of conflict.

On February 18th, 1997, the government submitted three draft laws that were concerned with municipalities—two relating to municipal elections and one on administrative decentralization. The draft laws would in fact expand the power of the *muhafiz* (governor), who is appointed by the central government, at the expense of the elected municipal council president. As for elections, the laws would require citizens to vote where they are registered rather than where they reside.

In a sudden shift, the prime minister backtracked on holding the municipal elections, fearing that endorsing them

would become a pretext for Syria to clip his wings, as Damascus was uneasy about his trip to the United States four months earlier.¹¹ The prime minister, without consulting the CoM, withdrew the draft law on municipalities. The parliament speaker supported the decision, as he already saw the municipal elections as a way to weaken him politically.

On April 3rd, 1997, the parliament approved the prime minister's proposal to postpone municipal elections.¹² This act, which effectively extended the mandate of the existing municipal councils, precluded the possibility of reinvigorating democratic life at the local level. It also delayed the prospect of local development, which could only be launched by elected leaders who knew their own constituents' needs and wants.

By that time, conditions in the municipalities were dismal. More than half of the municipal councils had been dissolved. The central government had effectively taken over the role of the councils by appointing officials from the *muhafaza* (governorate) and *qada* (district) to manage local affairs.¹³ This was unfortunate, since municipalities are entrusted by law with a broad range of responsibilities.¹⁴ In fact, any work having a public character or utility within the area of the municipality falls under the jurisdiction of the municipal council.¹⁵ Furthermore, these responsibilities are accompanied by taxing authority, as municipalities have the power to impose and directly collect sixteen taxes and fees.¹⁶

Section 3: Civil Society Responds¹⁷

In response to the postponement of local elections, LADE convened a meeting on April 16th, 1997 that was attended by fifteen NGOs representing various sectors, including environmental, developmental, cultural, human rights, public liberties, civil rights, and persons with disabilities.¹⁸ After studying several alternatives, the participants agreed in principle to launch a national movement complemented with a call for public freedom and recommendations to amend the election law.¹⁹

The meeting concluded by forming a committee whose purpose was to draw up an action plan for the movement based on the proposed strategy. Almost two weeks later, on April 29th, 1997, the committee shared with the members of the "forum" its plan of action.²⁰ The members decided to primarily focus their campaign on calling for municipal elections through a mass petition, and to use only peaceful means to avoid confrontation with the authorities. Equally important, they rejected the idea of distributing pamphlets with the petition or issuing any announcement that dealt with public freedom in general. In other words, the group's demands would be limited to holding local elections.

In the next four months, the committee held several meetings in different regions of the country to prepare the groundwork for the movement, and to ensure that the movement attained national reach.²¹ On August 8th, 1997, as civil society organizations convened to launch the "National Movement for Local Elections," they were met by internal security forces who tried but failed to prevent the campaign participants from assembling. Five opposition members of parliament who were at the scene to support the cause managed to negotiate with the security personnel and convince them to let the event proceed as planned.²²

In the meantime, fourteen members of parliament who contested the constitutionality of the law that extended the mandate of the municipal councils drew on the national campaign. On September 12th, the Constitutional Council ruled in favor of the challenge, dealing a major blow to the government.

On an operational level, the campaign adopted a three-step strategy. The first step was to hold weekly meetings to reflect on the situation on the ground, follow up on the work of different committees, and take appropriate decisions. These meetings, which were open, involved between twenty and sixty people. The second step was to enlist NGOs, political parties, and other organiza-

tions in the campaign to keep up its momentum and increase the number of volunteers who could help in collecting signatures. The organizers imposed two conditions on those who joined the campaign: 1) they could not carry or lift any banners except those of the campaign, and 2) they could not use the campaign for any other purpose, such as promoting a candidate or their own political views. In total, seven political parties participated to various degrees.²³ The third step was identifying key activists or NGOs in each region of the country, as these would become the focal points for collecting signatures. In order to get as many signatures as possible, the forum members sought to approach family, friends, neighbors, and people from their villages, as well colleagues and acquaintances in political parties.

The organizers also engaged the media to cover the campaign. Two television stations, two radio stations, and seven newspapers responded positively, and this had a tremendous impact in terms of publicizing the campaign and collecting signatures.²⁴

Between December 18th and December 22nd of 1997, the parliament, under public pressure, convened to debate the municipal election law. The campaign organizers mobilized their members to hold a peaceful protest demanding municipal elections. Some of the participants found in this occasion an opportunity to express their political views and respond to an earlier sit-in by another party few days earlier. The organizers intervened and requested that all members abide by the conditions of the campaign, namely the rule against raising any political or sectarian interests. Instead, the organizers held banners reading "No for appointment, No for cancellation." On December 22nd, the parliament voted in favor of holding municipal elections, except in areas that were under Israeli occupation and in mountain areas where those displaced by the civil war had not yet returned to their homes.

In reaction to the new law, the orga-

nizers reformulated their slogans: “Yes for ensuring that the municipal elections will be held, Yes for protecting the people’s decision, Yes for the public interest.” Five months later, there were 60,083 signatures on the petition calling for municipal elections.

Finally, between May 24th and June 14th of 1998, four rounds of municipal elections were held in the governorates of Mount Lebanon, North, Beirut, South, and Bekaa—in 600 out of 708 municipalities overall. Participation rates were high, as 1.2 million voters applied for new election cards, and the voting was considered free and fair, though with some irregularities. A total of roughly 10,000 municipal council members joined the political class. Once the elections were over, the National Movement for Local Elections dissolved itself.

A Synthesis of How LADE Successfully Managed the National Movement

Several factors contributed to the success of the national movement. First, the founders and research associates at LCPS, where policy ideas and the call for change began, had the foresight to create a legally independent organization to monitor and lobby for elections. This step ensured that LCPS’ research capability was not compromised by the advocacy that was about to be launched through LADE, and that its mission remained clearly defined. It also implicitly acknowledged that the skills and activities needed in a research center are different from those needed to lead an advocacy group. The establishment of LADE therefore fulfilled two goals: it left LCPS to carry on with its proper work, and it mobilized activists under the platform of LADE to call for fair and free elections.

LADE’s focused mandate, which is to advocate for a democratic and representative electoral law and to ensure that elections are fair and free, provided it with a clear mission. Furthermore, its bylaws addressed, among other things, how to deal with conflicts of interest,

providing credibility to the organization when they were enforced. For instance, as noted above, when the first secretary general’s brother decided to run in the 1996 parliamentary elections, which were to be monitored by LADE, she resigned from her position. The observance of these rules later allowed LADE to impose its conditions on other NGOs participating in the campaign, to ensure impartiality.

In launching the campaign for local elections, LADE managed to narrow the goals of its members and the participating NGOs to a single political demand, which was to hold municipal elections. In the earlier meetings, participants had suggested other aims, such as launching a movement for freedom and democracy or amending the election law. These did not necessarily conflict with the first goal, but most likely would have diluted the message and even hijacked the campaign. The single demand ensured the cohesion of the campaign, since it was agreed upon by all the members. In addition, the organizers resisted the temptation among some of its members to nominate their own candidates for the municipal elections. For LADE, the objective was to have the government hold the elections, and for as many voters as possible to participate, regardless of the party or candidate they voted for.

The instrument used to effect change—the petition—was appropriate to the general political environment, though it remained risky. Given the restriction of public freedom through the media law and the ban on protests, a petition was one of the only options that was constitutional and required no prior approval from the government. It also provided a peaceful means of expression and allowed participants to interact directly with the public, unlike distributing pamphlets or publishing a protest announcement. In this way, the forum preempted a debate with the government on the legality or the legitimacy of the movement, and avoided any conflict. The petition shifted politics to a new playing field that the government does not

control, namely public opinion. However, the effort had to overcome the multiple cleavages—religious and political—that divide society in Lebanon.

In order to ensure the greatest reach possible, the forum worked on enlisting a large number of NGOs throughout the country to maintain momentum and recruit volunteers who could circulate the petition. Moreover, the forum identified key players in each region, whether individuals or organizations, to appeal to citizens and gather signatures. Once these were in place, the forum asked volunteers to approach their families, friends, and neighbors, followed by networks of political-party acquaintances.

The forum also recruited political parties in all the regions of Lebanon to show that the National Movement for Local Elections was a general public demand and did not favor or target one sect over another. The forum called for meetings with political parties, but it also managed to impose its conditions on their participation.

The role of the media in promoting the movement and the participation of members of parliament provided major impetus to the campaign. The media spread word of the effort to the whole country, and the politicians who joined acted as intermediaries between the campaign on one hand and the parliament on the other. They were subsequently able to effect change from within the political institutions.

Finally, the individuals who ran the campaign on a weekly basis—their beliefs, their background, and how they related to one another as members—played a crucial role in building mutual trust and a sense of common purpose. Their commitment to the objective of the campaign and their willingness to invest time and resources on a voluntary basis with a very limited budget is a key factor that needs to be further explored.

Section 4: LCPS's Influence beyond Municipal Elections

LCPS's effort to strengthen the decen-

tralization process did not end with the municipal elections. In fact, the Center launched several municipal projects with the aim of producing policy knowledge through fieldwork, interviews, and surveys on the topics of local administration and fiscal decentralization. LCPS also conducted dozens of workshops on decentralization with experts, decision makers, and activists, which not only provided a forum for discussion and debate, but also created momentum for change. Although these studies, workshops, and books did not automatically lead to concrete reform, it is through them that we have developed and advanced our policy knowledge and expertise.

After years of research and knowledge accumulation, the first moment for real change came in the summer of 2012, when the parliamentary committee for defense and municipalities called upon the author, who is also a fiscal decentralization expert, to provide a roadmap for municipal finance reform. More recently, LCPS board member and former minister of interior and municipalities Ziyad Baroud and the author were both appointed to the decentralization committee established by Prime Minister Najib Mikati, as president and member, respectively. A third member of the eleven-member committee, Karam Karam, is an LCPS alumnus, having served as head of research at the Center between 2004 and 2009 and worked extensively on political decentralization. The committee provides LCPS with the opportunity to advance the policy agenda of local administration and development in Lebanon after years of striving to reform municipal governance. Beyond Lebanon, the author is now being sought to provide advice on municipal finance to the Tunisian parliament, which is currently debating a new decentralization law in light of the Arab Spring.

LCPS's influence in policy making is not confined to decentralization. Since the early 1990s, the Center has been advocating electoral reform to enhance political representation in the country. After years of policy research and lobbying for

change, the government in 2005 established a seven-member committee to draft a new electoral law, and the panel included three LCPS board members and research associates—Paul Salem, Ziyad Baroud, and Nawaf Salam.

As indicated above, the Center's alumni have carried its reputation into a variety of other positions, and LCPS in turn has drawn notable individuals into its orbit, enhancing its place in Lebanese political and economic circles. LCPS's founding director, Paul Salem, is now the director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, which is based in Beirut. He is an expert on Lebanese politics and the Arab world. Ziyad Baroud, who is currently a board member and research associate, served recently as the minister of interior and municipalities in two successive governments. Nawaf Salam, who was a board member and research associate, is currently Lebanon's ambassador to the United Nations. LCPS alumnus Michael Young is the opinion editor of the *Daily Star*, a leading English-language newspaper in the country. Other former LCPS members have joined international organizations like the World Bank and the United Nations, and academic institutions like the American University of Beirut.

Over the last twenty-two years, the Center has published sixty-three books and more than sixty policy papers on topics like parliamentary and municipal elections, political parties, decentralization, sectarianism, national budget and fiscal analysis, economic development and growth, sectoral policies, and labor issues, among others. The Center has held more than 117 conferences and workshops, including fifty-two regional ones, bringing together experts, scholars, decision makers, activists, and media to discuss and debate pertinent political, economic, and social matters. In order to articulate and disseminate its policies, LCPS has created a series of policy briefs, each of which offers a four-to-five page synthesis of key issues and recommendations for decision makers. To enhance our communication strategy, the Center periodically issues

a bimonthly newsletter highlighting the topics we are working on, the workshops and conferences we are holding, and the publications we are releasing. In addition to its policy agenda, LCPS has also incubated three NGOs: LADE, to lobby for electoral reforms and monitor elections; the Lebanese Conflict Resolution Network, to disseminate the principles and skills of conflict resolution; and the Lebanese Transparency Association, to fight corruption and promote the principles of good governance. In a testament to LCPS's continuous efforts to provide policy knowledge and influence decision makers, the University of Pennsylvania's 2011 global think tank survey ranked LCPS as the top Lebanese think tank and eleventh out of 210 Arab think tanks.

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Mahmoud Jaber, who was an intern at LCPS, for his excellent research assistance. I would also like to thank Paul Salem—director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, the founder of LCPS, and cofounder of LADE—and Karam Karam—head of research at the Common Space Initiative and former head of research at LCPS—for sharing with me their experience in the national campaign for municipal elections. Paul Salem contributed a large part of this section.

2. Between 1994 and 2011, the LCPS held five workshops on elections: the first in 1995 on the "Reform of the Electoral Law for the 1996 Parliamentary Elections"; the second in 1996 on the "Role of the 1992–96 Parliament"; the third in 2000 on the "Lebanese Legislative Elections of Summer 2000"; the fourth in 2001 on "Administrative Costs of Elections"; and the fifth in 2005 on "The 2005 Legislative Elections in Lebanon in Light of Local and Regional Transformations." The center has also published the following nine books on elections: *Lebanon's Postwar Election: Facts, Figures, and Analysis* (1992); *The Techniques of Electoral Fraud and Ways to Combat It* (1996); *The Lebanese Parliament* (1997); *LADE Report for Parliamentary Elections* (1997); *The Legislative Election of 1996: The Crisis of Democracy* (1998); *The Lebanese Municipal Elections of 1998: The Tribulations of Democracy within Local Communities* (1999); *The Legislative Elections 2000: Between Reproduction and Change* (2002); *The Techniques of Electoral Fraud and Ways to Combat It* (2005); and *The Legislative Elections 2005* (2007).

3. The LCPS also has a track record of research work on local governments. It has organized the following eight workshops: "Administration Decentralization" (1993); "Local Government and Municipal Reform in Lebanon" (1994); "The 1998 Municipal Elections in Lebanon" (1998); "Fiscal Decentralization in the Arab World" (1998); "Development and Institutional Reforms in the MENA Region: Justice and Local Governance" (2000); "Municipal Development in Lebanon" (2001); "Empowering Local Government Institutions in the MENA Region" (2002); and "Arab States Local Governance Forum" (2003). The center has published four books on local governments and decentralization: *Administrative Decentralization in Lebanon* (1996); *The State of Municipalities in Lebanon: Obstacles to Local Participation and Balanced Development* (1998); *Municipal Development in Lebanon: A Survey Research and Critical Review* (2002); and *Challenges of Decentralization and Local Governments in the Arab World* (2005).

4. The agreement takes the name of Taif, a Saudi resort town where the meeting between Lebanese politicians and international actors took place.

5. Furthermore, the Taif Agreement distributed the 128 seats in the parliament equally between Christians and Muslims. Previously the seats were apportioned on the basis of six Christians for every five Muslims.

6. The responsibilities of the CoM include the following: setting the general policy of the government in all fields, preparing bills and organizational decrees, executing laws and regulations, and appointing government employees. Furthermore, the CoM has its own special offices, apart from those of the president and prime minister.

7. His prerogatives include presiding over meetings of the CoM "without participating in voting" (Article 53, Clause 1) and other procedural functions in issuing decrees and laws. The president can no longer propose or execute laws (Articles 18 and 51), both of which are functions of the CoM. All decisions and decrees must be countersigned by the prime minister (Article 54).

8. To this end, Article 53 requires the president to undergo binding consultation with the speaker of parliament and the deputies as a group on the selection of the prime minister. This essentially terminated the prerogative of the president to freely appoint a prime minister of his choosing, and put Christian and

Muslim communities on more equal footing.

9. The prime minister "is the head of the government" and is responsible for "executing the general policy that is set by the CoM." Among other responsibilities, he is entrusted with the following: conducting parliamentary consultation to form a cabinet, countersigning all decrees, scheduling the meeting of the CoM and setting its agenda, supervising the execution of policy, and overseeing the general course of government administration.

10. As noted above, the seats in the parliament are now distributed equally between Christians and Muslims (Article 24). The seats increased from 99 to 108, and were later expanded to 128. The new seats were distributed in such a way that Shiites and Sunnis are equally represented, followed by the Druze. On the Christian side, the Maronites have the largest share, followed by the Greek Orthodox and the Greek Catholics (Article 24).

11. After the Friends of Lebanon meeting in Washington in December 1996, the Syrians were concerned that Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, with U.S. support, could potentially weaken their influence over Lebanon.

12. Out of 128 members of parliament, 36 voted against the withdrawal of the decentralization and local elections draft laws.

13. Lebanon is a unitary country with four tiers of administration: central, governorate, district, and municipality. There were six governorates, twenty-six districts, and 708 municipalities in 1998 (as of 2011 there were 968 municipalities).

14. This is based on the Municipal Law of 1977.

15. According to the Decree-Law 118, the elected municipal council has, among others, the following duties: formulating and adopting the municipality's annual budget; managing the municipal funds; planning, improving, and expanding the streets; and establishing or managing schools, mass transit systems, shops, parks, racing places, playgrounds, toilets, museums, hospitals, dispensaries, shelters, libraries, and the like.

16. Municipalities can now collect up to 36 different taxes and fees. Note that the central government determines the nature of the tax, the tax base, and the tax rate for municipalities to collect. As for fees, municipalities have the right to decide the amount to be charged within a range set by the central government.

17. This section is largely based on a 1999 paper authored by Karam entitled "The Role of Civil Associations in Local Elections: The Experience of the Forum for Municipal Elections," in a book entitled *The Quest for Democracy in Local Societies*, published by LCPS.

18. Some of the organizations that attended the meeting were as follows: LADE, Human Rights Movement, Citizenship Movement, Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedom, Green Line, Green Platform, SOS Environment, Cultural Council for South Lebanon, Caritas Lebanon, and Arab Institute Alumni of Bhamdoun.

19. The agenda for the meeting was as follows: 1) review the current situation regarding municipal elections and their postponement; 2) assess options, including the launch of a petition; 3) draft a common announcement that could be published; 4) set up a coordination committee to prepare for a national day demanding municipal elections based on a modern law; and 5) identify the next steps for action.

20. The paper uses "forum" and "organizers" interchangeably, as they both refer to the LADE-led campaign with other NGOs.

21. In the meantime, members of the forum met on weekly basis to make decisions as events unfolded. The number of participants ranged between twenty and sixty members.

22. The five members were Mansour al-Bon, Boutros Harb, Nasib Lahoud, Nayla Mouwad, and Kamil Ziadeh.

23. The political parties that contributed to the campaign were as follows: Aounist Party, Hezbollah, Lebanese Communist Party, Lebanese Forces, National Movement Party, and Phalange Progressive Socialist Party.

24. The two television stations were LBC and MTV, the two radio outlets were People's Voice and Lebanon Voice, and the seven newspapers were as follows: *Al-Nahar*, *Safir*, *Nida' al-Watan*, *Daily Star*, *Al-Anwar*, and *Kifah al-Arabi*.

25. The occupied municipalities remained under Israeli control until 2000.

ENHANCING THE POLICY IMPACT OF DEMOCRACY RESEARCH

The Case of the Romanian Academic Society (SAR)

*Adriana Iordache & Simona Popescu**



The Romanian Academic Society (SAR) was founded in 1995, when there were no other think tanks in Romania. Shortly thereafter, in 1996, the country held a presidential election and experienced its first democratic transfer of power. Emil Constantinescu, the candidate of the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), managed to defeat incumbent Ion Iliescu, the candidate of the former Communist Party, known then as the Party for Social Democracy in Romania. SAR played a significant role in the election, conceiving a key marketing concept for the democratic candidate. The idea was to have a “Contract with Romania,” inspired by the U.S. Republican Party’s “Contract with America.” The Romanian version incorporated its U.S. model’s “first hundred days” element (a deadline by which to fulfill at least some of the promises), but of course, not the policy aspects. As SAR President Alina Mungiu-Pippidi explained, “The policy plan was unfortunately negotiated within the parties in the democratic coalition, so it was not really achievable.”

ROMANIA

Capital: *Bucharest*

Population: *21.34 million*

Internet Penetration:
44.12 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and Civil
Liberties Status: *Free*

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$12,952

Nevertheless, our original contribution was the concept of a contract between citizens and politicians. This was an innovative idea in the Romanian context at that time, because it offered a clear change from the former Communist rhetoric. Although the contract was broken by the politicians immediately after they won, the victory was absolutely momentous for SAR, especially given the resources we then had. Our staff consisted of only three employees, and our offices were barely adequate, yet through this marketing device we managed to have an important impact.

Between 2001 and 2003, SAR implemented the Early Warning Program with the support of our donor, the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The project worked in the following way: The UNDP negotiated with the government and then signed a contract through which the government was to be provided with professional advice. The form of advice was referred to as the Early Warning Report, which was supposed to be

**Adriana Iordache is a Communications Assistant at SAR and a Project Assistant for the “Anticorruption Toolbox for Civil Society.” Simona Popescu is Coordinator for the “Alliance for a Clean Romania.”*

published monthly and advise officials on imminent crises and policy threats. This marked the beginning of a golden period for SAR. The aim of our organization was to reform the public sector, which helped us gain knowledge and expertise on the country's general reform topics and challenges. SAR became the only professional entity in Romania that was objectively reflecting on the existing policy problems and formulating potential solutions. As a result, we managed to reach the standard set out by the UNDP, which has in turn contributed significantly to the development of our organization. It has provided additional opportunities for SAR, as our staff members have had the chance to visit many countries and to network with the then PDSR government. While the government was not always receptive to our advice, we at least managed to establish a framework allowing us to have our statements heard by the government and the general public.

At this time we also had the capacity to produce the Early Warning Report each month in both English and Romanian, covering every notable story from all policy fields. Our editing skills and expertise were strong, and some of the

reports were quite influential. In addition to the monthly report, we issued more frequent news alerts on important events. Because of their timeliness, these were actually the more influential products. For example, if the European Commission released a statement related to Romania's EU accession requirements, we were able to promptly formulate recommendations for the government on how to comply with the EU demands.

SAR's Role during Romania's Accession to NATO and the European Union

By 2002, SAR had become a leader in its field, and had gained popular acceptance. Armed with this reputation, we began to turn our attention to Romania's adherence to international governance standards. This was very important, because public knowledge on these matters was very weak. Moreover, during that year, Romania was applying for NATO membership, and there was a strong political conditionality attached to the process. One of the conditions imposed by NATO was for the Romanian government to adopt a law granting free access to public information. Since the government and opposition were sharp-

About the Romanian Academic Society



The Romanian Academic Society (SAR) is the longest-standing think tank still active in Romania. Established in 1996 in Bucharest as an academic association of well-known figures, SAR has operated as a public policy research institute, a leading force in the promotion of good governance, a consultant for the Romanian Government and other governments, and a long-term partner during transition and state reform processes for the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union.

SAR's mission is to create an evidence-based policy-making framework by:

- *providing public policy training for young experts via informed debates, seminars organized in cooperation with international partners, and original research projects;*
- *promoting democratic consultation-based solutions to public policy issues in public forums;*
- *contributing to good governance and development through policy research;*
- *contributing to the European integration of Romania, the Western Balkan countries, and Moldova through the transfer of best practices and advocacy;*
- *enhancing the contribution of independent policy institutes to the policy formulation process through advocacy and public debate;*
- *contributing to (re)building applied social sciences and public policy fields in Romania and South-Eastern Europe after fifty years of communism.*

ly divided, SAR seized the opportunity to make its voice heard. Shortly before the law had to be passed to meet the NATO calendar, SAR managed to convince the government and the opposition to collaborate on drafting the legislation, and to accept civil society as a mediator. As a basis for discussion, our organization contacted the NGO Article 19 in Great Britain, and asked them for recommendations regarding best practices in this field, which they provided. The working session on the draft law lasted for nine hours, and the resulting text was very similar to the guidelines offered by Article 19. The bill was passed and became Law 544/2001 on free access to public information. It is a very strong law, and it greatly improved the public administration. Ten years later, SAR is still using it and winning litigation on the basis of its provisions.

In 2004, SAR carried out one of its most prominent projects: the Coalition for a Clean Parliament (CPC). This was an anticorruption campaign that prevented nearly one hundred controversial members of Parliament from being reelected. Funding was provided by the Balkan Trust, the Romanian Soros Foundation, and Freedom House. The CPC was considered original by many observers. Yet the problems it addressed are widespread in the post-communist world: political elites who at times look more like predatory elites, high levels of state capture, and constituencies with low civic competence and low interest in politics. This situation sometimes looks hopeless in the Balkans and former Soviet Union. But it is not. By and large, what we present here is a success story. On the occasion of the local elections in June 2004 and the legislative and presidential elections in November and December, Romanian civil society organized itself for the first time into a broad coalition for integrity in politics. Frustrated by the government's lack of effectiveness in fighting large-scale corruption, civil society took matters into its own hands.

The CPC first determined the criteria that would make a candidate unfit for a

clean Parliament. These criteria were 1) having repeatedly shifted from one political party to another in search of personal profit; 2) having been accused of corruption on the basis of published and verifiable evidence; 3) having been exposed as an agent of the Securitate, the Communist-era security service; 4) being the owner of a private firm with sizeable tax arrears to the state budget; 5) being unable to account for a discrepancy between one's officially stated assets and one's income; 6) turning a profit from conflicts of interest involving one's public position. The second step was to discuss these criteria with the leadership of the political parties represented in Parliament. The most important ones were the ruling Social Democratic Party/Humanist Party coalition (PSD+PUR), the opposition Justice and Truth Alliance (DA), and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians from Romania (UDMR). They agreed with the civil-society criteria and process, and publicly announced their support for the CPC's campaign. Only the radical populist Greater Romania Party (PRM) resisted any cooperation.

The third step was to gather information about the candidates of these parties. The CPC collected material published in the press over the years and searched the websites of various public authorities in charge of financial and commercial matters. Then it double-checked the information. The fourth step was to draw up lists of those candidates who met one or more of the agreed-upon criteria for being unfit to hold a seat in the future Parliament. The resulting "blacklists" were sent to the political parties, with the request that they reexamine each case and decide whether to withdraw the candidate in question.

The CPC also offered to analyze any cases in which individual candidates contested its findings. Step five consisted of the withdrawal by the political parties of significant numbers of their initial candidates. Some candidates appealed to the CPC, which approved or rejected their appeals and adjusted its lists accordingly. The last step was to release the final CPC blacklists in the form of

nearly two million flyers. Print media readership is low in Romania, which remains a largely rural country. Although most of Romania's 21 million people are literate, less than 20 percent regularly read political reports in newspapers. Moreover, because parliamentary elections at the time were conducted according to a party-list system, people seldom knew their representatives.

As the process unfolded, the CPC encountered some difficulties. Smaller parties proved difficult to track. The Hungarians tried to claim an exception by virtue of their being a minority when they were asked to resign positions that represented conflicts of interest. For its part, the PUR generally recruited from other parties, meaning it was structurally resistant to such monitoring practices. (After the elections the PUR sided with the winning DA, although it had been allied with the PSD.)

After the results of the CPC screening showed that far more unfit candidates belonged to the ruling PSD than to the opposition, that party denounced the whole procedure, encouraging its candidates to sue coalition members and ask the courts to stop distribution of the flyers.

In public statements and open letters, the PUR (and Antena 1, the private television station owned by its leader) accused the CPC of "conspiracy," calling its members "civic terrorists" and criminals. The PSD and PUR also asked the Central Electoral Bureau, Romania's highest electoral authority, to ban the CPC flyers, but judges from both the bureau and the ordinary courts ruled in favor of the campaign. Opponents found a more effective tactic, however. In many counties, they circulated fake flyers, using the CPC format but replacing the names of PSD candidates with those of opposition candidates.

A large number of domestic and international media outlets covered the activity of the coalition, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Reuters, the Associated Press, *Le Monde*,

the *Financial Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Presse*, and countless other European newspapers. With the help of students and grassroots organizations such as the Civic Alliance and the Pro Democracy Association (APD), the flyers were distributed in nearly all of Romania's 41 counties. More than two thousand people, from students to trade union members, participated as volunteers in the campaign.

As a result of the blacklist campaign, the CPC initially documented 143 cases of unfit PSD candidates, including some on the county level. Subsequently, under pressure from civil society, the party withdrew about 30 candidates from its electoral lists. The CPC also dropped from the blacklists some candidates who appealed its findings, so that the final count of unfit PSD and PUR candidates was 95. Among the other blacklisted candidates were 10 from the opposition DA (which had withdrawn some of its initial 28 unfit candidates), 46 from the PRM, and three from the UDMR. A final accounting shows that 98 candidates on the original blacklists lost their seats, having been either withdrawn by their parties or defeated at the polls. At the same time, 104 blacklisted candidates won reelection. Measured in this way, the CPC's rate of success was just below 50 percent. On the other hand, the PSD fell from power.

In the wake of the campaign, Romanian civil society was saddled with the task of defending itself against eleven lawsuits for defamation, filed by a former head of the secret service, a former minister of justice, a former minister of defense, and other top PSD politicians. However, by the time of Romania's entry into the European Union in January 2007, the coalition had won all the cases.

Making Corruption a Priority Issue

A parallel accomplishment of the CPC was its influence on the anticorruption-themed governing program of the new president, Traian Băsescu, and his new DA-led cabinet. The national context of that time was a very corrupt one. SAR had realized that although it was making

progress in the area of evidence-based policy making and gaining expertise in various policy areas, this did not address what we identified as being the key problem of the period. Indeed, state capture was progressing at alarming speeds. For example, the total amount of unpaid debts owed by state-owned companies was very difficult, if not entirely impossible, to document. On the basis of the newly adopted law on freedom of information, we eventually persuaded the Ministry of Finance to post the debts of all such companies. As a post-communist country, Romania had only privatized about 10 to 15 percent of its state enterprises at that time. Consequently, large segments of the economy were simply not paying taxes, and unprofitable companies received repeated bailouts from the government. Adding to the urgency of the corruption problem was the fact that it stood as the only major obstacle to the signing of Romania's EU accession treaty.

SAR's efforts during the election period made political corruption the number-one issue of the campaign, and Băsescu and the DA embraced it as a core part of their platform. Once in office, the new president named one of our colleagues, Monica Macovei, as minister of justice. This was a historic moment, as it marked the first time a completely independent minister of justice had been appointed. The minister then appointed the country's first chief prosecutors to be selected through a competitive rather than a political process. The developments gained a great deal of international and national media coverage and consolidated SAR's reputation.

In 2005, as a result of our campaigns, the government passed an ordinance, O.U.G. 14/2005, which required all politicians to provide a statement of assets

and interests for the first time. This measure amended Law 115/1996 and Law 16/2003 by extending the scope of the required declarations. Within the category of assets, the 2005 ordinance stipulated that politicians must declare—in addition to real estate and bank accounts—all investments, loans, and gifts received. They also had to declare their and their spouses' exact incomes and any other jobs they held, such as seats on the governing boards of trade unions, professional associations, or economic agents.

Romania now also has an office of government ethics, similar to the one in the United States, which provides an analysis of various segments of the assets owned by public officeholders. This office was created 10 years after the Contract with Romania, and was adopted by a totally different coalition from the one mentioned above. SAR contributed to this achievement by working to ensure such an office was included as a requirement in Romania's EU accession conditions.

The year 2007 was a very important one for Romania, marking its formal accession to the EU. Yet only two weeks later, the government fired Macovei, the minister of justice, who had done most of the work.

Initially the European Council refused to sign the accession treaty with Romania until an international audit could assess the country's anticorruption policies and show that the country was doing something to resolve the problems identified. SAR had only two months to arrange an international audit, so we called on our partners, Freedom House, to provide assistance, despite the fact that they had never audited all the anticorruption policies in any country. We worked intensely, and created an action plan that then became part of Romania's accession conditionality in March 2005.

The year 2007 was a very important one for Romania, marking its formal accession to the EU. Yet only two weeks

later, the government fired Macovei, the minister of justice, who had done most of the work. While the government in power was the same one elected in 2005 as a result of SAR's anticorruption campaign, its members were now divided between the party of the president, who was still supportive of anticorruption efforts, and the prime minister's liberal free-market party. Our NGO organized a rally in response to Macovei's dismissal. Despite widespread support online, only about one thousand people joined us—a very small number in a city of two million inhabitants.

Current Developments at SAR

Since Romania's accession to the EU in 2007 and the related decline in pressure to meet international standards, SAR has continued its strategy of influencing the government with the help of the European Commission. However, the Commission only retains a certain degree of leverage, linked to its pending decision on Romania's accession to the Schengen area. This situation will probably continue for another year or so, after which the commission's influence on Romania will essentially be over. Therefore, one of SAR's main goals has been to create a grassroots social movement strong enough to push the government toward further reforms.

In September 2008 SAR carried out a project called Performance, Transparency, and Responsiveness in Local Public Administration, financed by the EU through its Phare 2005 program. As part of the project, we have drafted a policy brief on the topic of property restitution in Romania (SAR Policy Brief No. 34).

The post-communist property restitution process in Romania had two main features that were not encountered in other Central and Eastern European countries. The first was the state's failure to opt

decisively for one of the two alternative approaches: in-kind restitution and financial compensation. This has led to the adoption of successive laws that were not based on a coherent long-term strategy, and created confusion and overlapping rights. The second feature was a series of discretionary court decisions in cases filed under these laws, and large-scale abuses at the central and local levels of the public administration, causing inexplicable discrepancies in the interpretation of the laws.

Our organization's policy brief on the topic has provided the first numerical indicator analysis of the restitution process. The paper describes the context and identifies the main actors responsible for the current state of affairs.

One of SAR's main goals has been to create a grassroots social movement strong enough to push the government toward further reforms.

The unresolved property issue continues to be extremely relevant for Romania. A large number of citizens who were dissatisfied with the national courts' treatment of their cases have turned to the European Court of Human Rights, placing Romania among the

three countries with the highest number of decisions on violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights (right to private property) and Article 6 of the Convention (due process of law). In a decision made final on January 12, 2011, the court adopted a pilot judgment (*Atanasiu and others v. Romania*) asking the government to take the steps necessary to address this issue within 18 months. The ruling suspended the examination of the 644 cases still pending until the problem is addressed by the Romanian state.

SAR has been involved in conducting litigation on the basis of Law 544/2001 on free access to public information. For example, in January 2010 we obtained a court decision ordering the director of Romania's powerful privatiza-

tion agency, AVAS, to disclose details of the privatization agreement with Automobile Craiova, which the agency had signed with Ford. Our organization requested this information because we believed the contract involved some acts of corruption. Initially, the agency refused to comply, arguing that the information was not public and that the contract included a confidentiality clause. Nevertheless, the court decided in our favor, obliging the director to provide the requested information and charging a fine equivalent to a quarter of his salary for each day of delay. The director complied with the court decision in a matter of days.

The first case on the basis of the information law was filed by SAR in 2002, and it involved the disclosure of information related to water pollution. In the court of first instance, the judge ruled that "such information should not be public." However, the court of second instance reversed that finding and decided that the public has the right to be informed about water pollution levels.

In recent years, our organization has gained expertise in litigating on the basis of Law 544/2001, and we have had a very high success rate in court. Our strategy is not to reach the court

of second instance, but to convince the public entity in question to provide the requested information without spending further public funds on litigation. The letters sent to the relevant officials are made public online, increasing the pressure on them to comply, which they generally do.

In 2010 SAR launched an online platform called the Alliance for a Clean Romania (ARC), which aims to uncover corrupt acts and provide the general public with the tools to fight against corruption. The concept is similar to that behind the "I Paid a Bribe" website in India, but more aggressive. For this project, our organization engages a large number of collaborators who contribute articles about corruption in Romania, as well as volunteers from all over the country. The platform also includes other resources, such as rankings of public institutions based on their degree of transparency, in accordance with the principles of good governance. This initiative has become quite popular in Romania, as we have counted over seven hundred thousand online visitors since January 2012. The project has received the financial support of the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE Trust) and the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a project of the German Marshall Fund.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION

The Role of Slovakia's Think Tanks, Watchdogs, and Human Rights NGOs



*Martin Bútora**

1. Civil Society's Contribution to the Democratic Transformation of Slovakia

Over the last twenty-five years, Slovakia's "third sector," meaning nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), has gone through several phases of development.

Shortly after the fall of communism in November 1989, new laws on freedom of association and assembly generated a boom in civic mobilization. New political parties, professional or business organizations, and independent trade unions were founded; scores of voluntary groups sprang into existence; and free media entered the public scene. Various ad hoc initiatives, both local and national, also took shape. Organizations that had been suppressed by the previous regime, including church associations, began to reappear, and many entities that had existed under communist rule transformed themselves and continued their work.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there were already several thousand associations operating in Slovakia. In 1994, a steering panel called the Committee of the Third Sector was established and gained the status of a partner to the government. The goal of this umbrella entity was to improve legislative and tax conditions for the third sector and inform the general public about NGOs' activities.

The second half of the 1990s was a more problematic time, as a semiauthoritarian government attempted to limit the sector's independence. Civil-society organizations joined with other actors in a battle over the democratic character of the state, and the road to victory for democratic forces was difficult and bumpy.

Immediately after the end of the communist regime in 1989, three demanding tasks became evident: firstly, to replace one-party rule with a modern, pluralistic politi-

SLOVAKIA

Capital: *Bratislava*

Population: *5.45 million*

Internet Penetration:
72 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$24,284

* *Martin Bútora is Honorary President of the Institute for Public Affairs.*

cal system; secondly, to transform the state-run economy into an effective market economy; and finally, to find an appropriate political arrangement for the coexistence of Czechs and Slovaks in a common state. In June 1990, the first free elections took place. Soviet troops left the country, and democratic rules and institutions were gradually implemented.

At the same time, new problems emerged. Rising unemployment—three times higher than in the Czech part of the state—had become a painful reality in Slovakia. A decreased standard of living created major social tensions, and new inequalities in the previously homogeneous society deepened feelings of frustration and discontent.

Two years of negotiations on a new constitutional arrangement had not brought results, and after the 1992 elections, the “Velvet Revolution” was followed by a “Velvet Divorce.” On January 1, 1993, two sovereign states were created: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. The nonviolent manner of the separation was generally praised as a success, but many citizens regarded this development with disapproval or ambivalence. In Slovakia, doubts remained not only over the legitimacy of the dissolution without a referendum, but also over the democratic bona fides of the winners of the 1992 elections, particularly Vladimír

Mečiar, leader of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

Mečiar’s brand of nationalism and populism was not the only complicating factor. Nation-state building proved an arduous challenge. While the Czech lands had a history of statehood, a working state apparatus, democratic traditions, ethnic homogeneity, and a stronger economy, the new Slovak Republic was in a less favorable condition. The state bureaucracy and new institutions had to be built, some of them from scratch. A market economy had to be fostered, a task rendered difficult by Slovakia’s history of delayed modernization and the dominance of heavy industry, including arms manufacturing. Forty years of life under the socialist welfare state led many Slovaks to believe that the drastic rise in unemployment was too high a price to pay for freedom.

An unscrupulous politician with autocratic inclinations, Mečiar built his popularity and power on promises that he would solve the country’s problems if only he were allowed to rule as uncontested leader. His antidemocratic style of governance, soon dubbed “Mečiarism,” left its imprint on the political culture. A winner-take-all majoritarianism, an unwillingness to seek consensus, disrespect for minority opinions, and the labeling of critics as “enemies,” “anti-Slovak,” or “anti-state” spread across

About the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)



**INSTITUTE FOR
PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), based in Bratislava, Slovakia, is an independent, non-governmental think tank bringing together experts from many different areas of study. IVO was founded in 1997 with the aim of promoting the values of an open society and a democratic political culture in public policy and decision-making.

As an independent center of public policy research and analysis, IVO’s activities strive to nurture the expert intellectual potential of Slovakia. IVO’s research is primarily focused in two areas: democratic institutions and processes, and social problems and public policy. IVO seeks to influence the formulation and implementation of key decisions of public importance by providing expert points of view and offering policy alternatives; formulating recommendations for sustaining reform policies; promoting democratic values; and striving to contribute to positive changes in Slovakia’s overall development.

the country. Political elites were highly polarized, and the sharp divisions reached deep into Slovak families. Though Slovakia had a vocal political opposition, some independent media, relatively autonomous trade unions and universities, and a vibrant civil society, not to mention an independent Constitutional Court and president, the country fell behind its neighbors in failing to meet the criteria for integration into the EU and NATO.

However, the government's authoritarian behavior also had unintended positive outcomes. Citizens began to pay greater attention to the question of democracy. In 1994, issues of democracy and the rule of law became increasingly important. Thanks to massive public mobilization and civic activities, as well as cooperation between democrats in different parties, Mečiar was defeated in the 1998 parliamentary elections amid 84 percent voter turnout, and a broad democratic coalition came to power.¹

Over the next eight years, two consecutive administrations led by Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) implemented a series of extensive structural reforms. They also created positive conditions for Slovakia's EU and NATO integration, and accession to both blocs took place in 2004. The subsequent coalition government, led by Robert Fico of the Smer–Social Democracy party, ran the country from 2006 through 2010. Its tenure featured signs of deterioration in the quality of democracy, including numerous incidents of party cronyism, corruption scandals, the undermining of control mechanisms, problems in the judiciary, and the use of anti-Hungarian rhetoric as a tool of voter mobilization and power legitimation.

In a reaction to these tendencies, the 2010 elections brought to power a new center-right government devoted to fighting corruption, opening the state administration to greater transparency, improving the judiciary, and cooperating with civil-society actors. The government, headed by Iveta Radičová of

the SDKÚ, also promised to be more sensitive to the needs of ethnic minorities. However, due to internal conflicts, the ruling coalition collapsed, and early elections in 2012 enabled Fico and Smer–Social Democracy to return to power with a one-party government.

The metaphorical glass can now be viewed as half full or half empty. According to the more favorable view, Slovakia is a successful country that has suffered many defeats, but also has managed to pick itself up again, renewing democratic rules and returning to the path of Euro-Atlantic integration. Because of these successes, shifts or breaks in political power no longer have the same urgency. However, Slovakia still suffers from an ineffective state bureaucracy, widespread corruption, and problematic judicial conduct. A network of public institutions has been put in place, but some of them are not infused with authentically democratic content, and too often they are not run by genuine democrats.

Under these conditions, civil society can play an important role in improving the quality of democracy.

* * *

Slovakia's third sector has created a rich, diverse, and flexible network of forums, organizational schemes, initiatives, and ideas that have moved society forward. It has established an intellectual foundation for societal reforms; provided mechanisms for the control of power; defended the interests of various groups of citizens; opened forums for previously unheard voices; offered useful services; participated in resolving environmental, social, and health issues; and reacted to the needs of villages, towns, communities, and regions. Thousands of small organizations, initiatives, associations, and volunteer groups have proven their usefulness, undertaken work that no one else could do, and made unique achievements. Civic actors and volunteers engage and motivate a broader public because they offer understandable, acceptable concepts of freedom,

solidarity, and activism that are in line with democratic modernization and have broken down the previously prevailing ethos of civic helplessness. They have demonstrated an outstanding ability to weave together meaningful activities, engage in social campaigns, find ways to help socially excluded groups, engage local elites in useful activities in many fields, and find support both at home and abroad.

There are around forty different platforms, federations, and ad hoc coalitions of civic organizations operating in Slovakia, associated on the basis of common social or regional interests. Among more than 37,000 officially registered NGOs there are some 33,000 civic associations. In recent years, there has also been more informal, unregistered civic participation—in community and urban activism, volunteering, the work of professional associations, and civic actions organized through online social networks.²

Democracy research institutes, analytical centers, and think tanks, together with human rights NGOs and watchdogs focused on accountability and good governance, have become an indispensable component of a healthy nongovernmental sector. Even if they comprise a relatively small proportion of the whole nonprofit sector, they have a crucial influence on public life. These NGOs have advanced democratization, observance of human rights, realization of economic reforms, and good governance, in part by setting the agenda and framing the public debate on important social problems and implementing many social innovations. However, such groups sometimes have difficulty making their ideas accessible to the public and to policy makers, reaching out to different groups and constituencies, becoming relevant and influential, and translating their research into policies.

Using the experiences of one of these organizations—the Institute for Public Affairs (Inštitút pre verejné otázky, or IVO), a public-policy think tank located in Bratislava—this paper will provide

concrete examples of cases in which its work and products have entered into the public debate, reached policy makers, and influenced policy.

IVO is one organization among a constellation of effective watchdog organizations in Slovakia, some of which include: Citizen, Democracy and Accountability, which focuses on the accountability of public authorities to the people and human rights; Alliance Fair-Play strives for ethical, transparent, professional, and effective public administration and political representation; Via Iuris—Center for Public Advocacy helps citizens protect their rights and participate in public affairs decision-making, participates in the reform of the Slovak judicial system, and draws attention to injustice and legal violations; and Transparency International–Slovakia pushes for the introduction and implementation of anti-corruption measures and improved transparency in the public sector. The Charter 77 Foundation offers free legal advice and advocacy to citizens and NGOs, reviews the legislative process, and functions as a “judicial watchdog”; and the Slovak Governance Institute focuses on good governance and the allocation of public resources to ensure accessible, transparent, and effective public services. The account of IVO’s activities that follows will be complemented by a description of the work of some other prominent NGOs in Slovakia.

2. The Institute for Public Affairs as a Player in the NGO Community

IVO was established in 1997 as a civic association of experts on public policy. Its founders had long been active in Slovakia’s public life. Some had participated in informal or dissident structures before 1989 as well as in the Velvet Revolution; others entered the public scene after fall of communism. All were researchers, public intellectuals, and authors dealing with the topics of democracy, civil society, public opinion, and societal transformation.

Since its founding, IVO has released more than 130 publications (includ-

ing monographs, studies, conference proceedings, and working papers) and dozens of research reports. It has also conducted dozens of public opinion polls and sociological surveys (quantitative representative as well as qualitative ones) and organized a great number of conferences, seminars, workshops, presentations, and lectures. IVO experts have been involved in public discourse on many important political topics.

3. Examples of IVO's Outreach, Influence, and Impact

The following examples were selected in order to illustrate IVO's experiences with entering into public debate, addressing various groups and constituencies, reaching policy makers, and influencing policies.

Global Report on the State of Society (1995–2011)

Originally launched as a "white book" challenging the semiauthoritarian political establishment of Vladimír Mečiar, the *Global Report on the State of Society* gradually developed into the most comprehensive annual report on Slovak society. Intended for a wide variety of audiences, including experts, media, policy makers, entrepreneurs, civic actors, students, diplomats, and interested lay readers alike, each report was divided into four thematic parts: domestic politics, foreign policy, economics, and society. The final product was the result of a collective endeavor by an informal nationwide coalition of think tanks and academic institutions that formed thanks to IVO activities and remains unparalleled, not only in Central Europe but also among all new EU member states. Typically there were about a hundred people—authors, reviewers, editors, proofreaders, and translators—involved in the preparation of the report. The annual presentation was always a public event; policy makers, experts, and media felt obliged to respond and react.

For three years (2001–2003), IVO also prepared a unique *Pictorial Report on the State of the Country*, a very popu-

lar photographic testimony by the winner of a public competition organized by IVO. Thus an academic, scholarly, and objective report was complemented by a fascinating subjective personal account created by renowned artists. In 2011, IVO published a CD-ROM compilation of all the annual reports, comprising more than 17,000 pages written by more than 200 authors and reviewed by dozens of experts.³

The Civic Campaign for Free and Fair Elections "OK '98" (1997–1998)

Through its involvement in OK '98, a project designed to help ensure free and fair elections, IVO arguably contributed to the victory of democratic political forces in the 1998 parliamentary elections. OK '98 was a large-scale effort by numerous NGOs, volunteers, and donors; IVO was a founding member of its 11-member coordination council. The acronym, which stood for Občianska kampaň '98 (Civic Campaign '98), signaled a sense of optimism about the positive effects of public political engagement. Dozens of NGOs organized educational projects, cultural events, concerts, and discussion forums and issued publications, video clips, and films. Hundreds of volunteers across the country attracted thousands of concerned citizens to election-related events. Through the use of the annual *Global Reports*, which offered reliable arguments to politicians and civic activists in their confrontation with authoritarian forces, and regular public opinion polls conducted by IVO, the campaign was able to convince citizens of the importance of their personal involvement in the electoral process.

IVO's educational and analytical materials were aimed at journalists, commentators, public intellectuals, civic and student leaders, politicians, and the general public, including young people and first-time voters. Publications addressed the fundamental principles of democratic electoral systems, the parliamentary mandate in Slovakia, and the electoral programs of the competing political parties and movements.

The impact of OK '98 among citizens was

reinforced by six targeted public opinion polls, which contributed to the ongoing public discourse about the approaching elections. A May 1998 poll conducted by IVO showed that the majority of citizens supported the activities of NGOs in the OK '98 campaign. The findings of other extensive surveys and analyses were presented regularly at press conferences and published in a series of articles in the widely read daily *SME*, as well as in two books aimed at both domestic and foreign audiences. The largest and most visible OK '98 project was "Road for Slovakia," a march organized by the civic association GEMMA 93. During a 15-day march, some 350 civic activists visited more than 850 towns and villages across Slovakia (almost one-third of all townships and cities), distributing 500,000 brochures to inform voters about the elections. Door-to-door campaigning explained voting procedures, stressed basic principles of parliamentary democracy, and emphasized the importance of citizen participation in the elections. Members of IVO took part in the march and attended public meetings and gatherings. The atmosphere was both tense and hopeful. Pro-government politicians, journalists, and state-owned media attacked NGOs and their leaders, accusing them of undermining the independence of Slovakia, serving Slovakia's enemies, and not respecting the law. However, public mobilization generated a great deal of enthusiasm, and thanks to the public's civic activities, as well as cooperation between democrats in different parties, Mečiar was defeated and a broad democratic coalition came to power.

It was in this period that Slovakia's think tanks began to position themselves as independent civic institutions providing an expert review of developments in the country and bringing policy recommendations. Key themes included the defense of democracy, the need for reforms, and guiding Slovakia in a Euro-Atlantic direction. Thanks to collaboration with researchers, journalists, and civic activists, the third sector began to build its own knowledge base.

Research-Action Project on Slovakia's NATO Integration (1998)

This project focused on the integration of Slovakia into Euro-Atlantic security structures, a process that was delayed and almost halted during the Mečiar era. Part of the final publication consisted of interviews with leading politicians, both from the ruling coalition and the opposition, focused on security and foreign policy issues. The book was coauthored by thirteen experts. Fifteen students were involved in conducting and elaborating the interviews, and most of these young people later became well-known public figures. The presentation of the book and the following seminar became a closely watched public event, receiving numerous responses in the media and by politicians, and it appeared to help the public better understand the dangers of Slovakia's potential exclusion from the Western political and security community.

The main book was preceded by other publications, such as *Facts and Illusion on Neutrality: NATO and the Price for Security* (1997), and continued with other projects, such as *Slovakia after the Washington Summit* (1999–2000). Since 2004, IVO has also taken part in the annual international research project *Transatlantic Trends*; the results of the most recent comparative survey were published in 2012.

Election Analysis and Studies of Political Developments between Elections (1998–2013)

Publications of this type provide not only an assessment of election results, but also an overview of public opinion and the value orientations of Slovak citizens. One of the early examples was the book *Democracy and Discontent in Slovakia: A Public Opinion Profile of a Country in Transition* (1998; published in Slovak under the title *Slovakia before the Elections*). It examined the extent to which people in Slovakia had embraced democratic political culture, how they perceived contemporary political reality, how they interpreted Slovakia's history, what thoughts and values appealed to them, and what foreign policy direction

they saw as most desirable.

Several publications have monitored developments between elections, including *The Country in Motion: Political Attitudes and Values in Slovakia* (2001), *Intentions and Reality: Evaluation of the Fulfillment of the Mikuláš Dzurinda Government Program Manifesto* (2002), *Public Administration Reform in Slovakia 1998–2002* (2002), and *Intentions and Reality: Evaluation of the Fulfillment of the Mikuláš Dzurinda Government Program Manifesto II* (2006).

IVO also released an economic study entitled *A Survey of the Economic Elite's Opinions on Topical Issues Concerning the Slovak Economy* (2001); a study on the political system called *Party Government in Slovakia: Experience and Perspectives* (2004); two publications on proposed reforms, *Reforms and Responsibility: Players, Impact, Communication* (2004) and *Slovakia: Ten Years of Independence and a Year of Reforms* (2004); reports on the public mood before and after elections, *Slovakia after the Elections: Public Opinion, Political Players, Media* (2003) and *Slovakia before the 2006 Election* (2006); and a report on the media, *Public Service Media in the Digital Age* (2009). IVO's books on elections and related social and political developments have attracted regular attention from the media, experts, civic actors, and politicians, and have substantially contributed to voters' ability to make informed choices.

Work on Minority, Age, and Gender Issues

IVO has released several foundational works on the Romany population of Slovakia, including *Čačipen pal o Roma: A Global Report on Roma in Slovakia*, published in 2003 and coauthored by 44 scholars as a knowledge reservoir for experts, the media, and policy makers; *Sociographic Mapping of Roma Communities in Slovakia*, the first-ever multifaceted description of all Romany communities in Slovakia; *Roma Voices: Roma and Their Political Participation in Transformation Times* (2002); and the documentary film *Black Word/Kálo láv*

(1999), a critical and forceful testimony from a Romany settlement. Chapters on Roma have been a regular part of the annual *Global Reports* on Slovakia as well as the annual publication *IVO Barometer: Trends in Quality of Democracy* (2009–2013). A critical overview of the situation of the Roma and their coexistence with the majority population was included in the collective book *Where We Are? Mental Maps of Slovakia* (2010).

In 1996, IVO published *She and He in Slovakia: Gender Issues in Public Opinion*. A decade later, IVO's experts conducted a project called "Plus for Women 45+" (2005–2008) that dealt with modern gender issues, resulting in the publications *Women, Men, and Age in Labor Market Statistics; Here and Now: Probes into the Lives of Women 45+*; and a seminal collective work entitled *She and He in Slovakia: Gender and Age in the Period of Transition* (2009). The project attracted much attention with its imaginative social campaign "My Mom Wants to Work," which was carried out in electronic and print media in 2008. In 2001, Zora Bútorová, a key IVO expert on gender and age issues, compiled the publication *Fragile Strength: Twenty Interviews about the Life Stories of Women*, drawing public attention to women leaders of all generations. In 2005, six analysts authored the publication *Violence against Women as a Public Policy Problem*. Another IVO study, *Twenty Years of Maturing: Slovak Women Exploring the Frontiers of Democracy* (2009), offered an extensive overview of research findings. In 2010, IVO published a research report dealing with the topic of *Discrimination and Multiple Discrimination*.

Public Campaigns to Preserve the Rule of Law and Confront Nationalism and Extremism (2006–2013)

IVO's experts have been active in responding to growing tensions between ethnic Slovaks and ethnic Hungarians and demonstrations of extremism. Hundreds of prominent figures and many thousands of citizens throughout the country signed IVO's appeals against ethnic intolerance and racism. This

civic engagement has been systematically equipped with arguments based on scholarly findings. IVO's analysts coauthored *National Populism in Slovakia* (2008) and *National and Right-Wing Radicalism in the New Democracies: Slovakia* (2009) and have published a plethora of articles and studies on the subject, some of them in cooperation with foreign partners and colleagues from academic institutions. IVO has also organized or participated in many roundtables, public forums, town-hall meetings, and media debates.

Public Opinion Surveys and In-Depth Studies on Political and Social Transformation (1990–2013)

The activities of IVO in this field have three basic dimensions. First, the surveys have collected data on public attitudes toward the hottest political issues, such as the role of the state security service in the 1995 kidnapping of the son of President Michal Kováč, an opponent of then Prime Minister Mečiar. Second, they have raised awareness of the public's perception of issues relevant to electoral choices. Third, they have built valuable data collections on perceptions of many topics related to social transformation, including trust in political bodies and public institutions, civic participation, the direction of the country, reform efforts, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia's neighbors, EU integration, the United States, and minorities.

IVO scholars have been frequent guests in television and radio debates about a wide variety of issues. More importantly, the accumulated data and in-depth analysis from IVO's projects have provided an indispensable base for the designing of public policies as well as a tool for public mobilization.

IVO Barometer: Trends in the Quality of Democracy as a Mirror for Politicians and the Public (2008–2013)

The principal objective of the IVO Barometer, a quarterly analytical project, is to reach a broad public audience with expert assessments in four areas: democratic institutions and the rule of law; legislation; protection and implement-

ation of human and minority rights; and performance of independent and public-service media. An additional part of the IVO Barometer, the European and transatlantic dimensions of foreign policy, was replaced in 2012 with the topic of civil society and the third sector.

These regular assessments of recent developments in particular areas have become an issue in the public arena. Even if it is sometimes criticized by the government, the IVO Barometer offers extraordinarily valuable feedback for citizens, the media, and the political establishment as a whole.

Contributing to the Research of Civil Society, Serving as a Knowledge Hub for Civic Organizations

This aspect of IVO's performance has been a natural, intrinsic, and organic part of the public presence of its key protagonists for more than two decades.

The founders of IVO conducted a series of research studies before the creation of the think tank, and their activities continued in the following years. Every annual *Global Report* has a long chapter on NGOs, the nonprofit sector, and volunteering. In addition, IVO has published books like *To See Round the Corner: 21 Politicians on NGOs* (2003) and *Corporate Philanthropy in Slovakia: Analyses—Opinions—Case Studies*. In 2001, IVO produced a documentary film on volunteerism called *Volunteers*.

In 2007–2010, IVO became a member of the Centre of Excellence for Research on Citizenship and Civic Participation: Facing the Challenges of the 21st Century (COPART), operating under the auspices of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. This collaboration by eight institutions across multiple disciplines resulted in a monumental monograph, *Citizenship, Participation, and Deliberation in Slovakia: Theory and Reality*. IVO was the key force behind the collective book *When Indifference Is Not an Answer: Civic Associating in Slovakia after the Fall of Communism* (2004). In 2012, IVO's experts published the well-received overview *Active Citizenship and*

the Nongovernmental Sector in Slovakia: Trends and Perspectives.

A new dimension in IVO's involvement emerged through a research project that explored more efficient means of cooperation between the state and NGOs, initiated by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the Development of Civil Society in 2011. For this purpose, IVO created a consortium consisting of two other NGOs: the Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia and the Center for Philanthropy. More than fifty experts and twenty executives from state institutions prepared studies on the current situation of civil society in Slovakia as well as an assessment of the trends in its development. The outputs of this project, which became publicly accessible, were the *Study on the State of Civil Society in Slovakia* and the *Study on the Trends in the Development of Civil Society in Slovakia* (2011). They analyzed topics including general state policies toward NGOs and policies developed within ministries and departments, the preparedness of NGOs to cooperate with the state, social innovations created by NGOs, the conditions necessary for partnership between the state and NGOs, and the economic parameters of cooperation between the state and NGOs. They also sought to summarize economic arguments related to possible partnership between the state and NGOs.

Digital Literacy and E-Governance

The report *Digital Literacy in Slovakia* (2005) studied the preparedness of the general public to use modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the structure and depth of the "digital divide" in society as a potential source of social problems. *Citizens Online* (2008) looked at the needs and expectations of citizens in the area of public online services. *E-Governance in Slovakia 2006–2008* (2008) reported on the deepening ability of civil-society actors to use ICTs for the promotion of open-society principles in public life and the increasing interest of NGOs and other civil-society actors in the development of e-governance.

The study *Social Network Sites in Slovakia* (2012), based on a representative survey, offered an overview of the incidence and usage of these communications platforms in Slovakia.

Improving the Precarious State of the Slovak Justice System

In 2011–2012, IVO carried out a research project called *The Slovak Judiciary as Seen by the Public, Experts, and Judges*, mapping the opinions of a variety of actors on the Slovak justice system, the causes of its existing deficiencies, and potential solutions. While the representative sample of the population revealed popular convictions, beliefs, and opinions, two panels unveiled the opinions and arguments of experts and judges. Due to the unsatisfactory situation of the judiciary, as well as the interest shown by the media, the project generated considerable public discussion and controversy.

4. Other Think Tanks, Policy Institutes, Watchdogs, and Human Rights Organizations

As indicated above, IVO is part of a broader community of analytical centers, think tanks, watchdogs, human rights NGOs, and action-oriented civil-society organizations participating in the democratic modernization of the country.

In 2012, questions emerged about the possible impact of the recent elections on the civic sector. The outgoing government of Iveta Radičová had not only declared its readiness to take the voice of citizens seriously into account, it had also implemented practical measures to make this happen, including the creation of the Office of the Governmental Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society, tasked with improving communication between the state, the third sector, and the general public. However, after the election of Robert Fico's one-party government and its emphasis on the role of the state, the future of the existing policy was cast into doubt. In other words, it was unclear which type of relationship the government would

have with the third sector (cooperation, confrontation, or complementarity), how receptive the new cabinet would be to outside controls and criticism, and how it would communicate with the actors of civil society.

From the very beginning, the representatives of the civic sector expressed their interest in continuing the dialogue with the government so that the potential of active citizens and their organizations could be used to improve quality of life in Slovakia. After some hesitation, the new cabinet agreed to such a dialogue. Representatives of the third sector currently operate within the Council of the Government for Nongovernmental Nonprofit Organizations, and also within the Council of the Government for Human Rights, National Minorities, and Gender Equality. The Office of the Governmental Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society continues its work. Even if the results of this cooperation have yet to be seen, it creates a framework for more systematic communication between the cabinet and civil society than existed in 2006–2010, under Fico’s first government.

In addition to communication with the cabinet, many watchdogs, think tanks, and civic activists have continued their work as independent voices criticizing the performance of the government and public institutions. In September 2012, the conference of the representatives of the nonprofit sector agreed on ten requirements addressed to the government, calling for changes in securing the financial sustainability of the sector, in legislation, and in improving control over EU-based structural funds.

Policy institutes, researchers, and ad hoc groups of experts and scholars have also

been involved in a number of advocacy initiatives, like an initiative to reform the public administration structures (“For a Real Reform of Public Administration,” 2000), an initiative for improving waste management (“For a Good Law on Waste Management,” 2001), or those focused on raising public awareness about violence against women (“Every Fifth Woman Campaign,” 2002). Civil-society organizations have regularly created broader alliances and carried out joint campaigns. Perhaps the most important successful example was the 2000 nationwide campaign for a good freedom of information law called “What Is Not Secret Is Public,” which was supported by over 120 NGOs and brought together over 100,000 members. Legal experts played a very important role in this campaign.

A relatively new phenomenon is the growing role of online social networks and new media in mobilizing citizen activism.

A relatively new phenomenon is the growing role of online social networks and new media in mobilizing citizen activism. During the period from 2004 to 2011, more than 200 campaigns, calls, petitions, initiatives, declarations, and public reviews of proposed legislation appeared on the website of the internet-based civic daily *Changenet*. They were supported by tens of thousands of citizens. The ranks of signatories usually included well-known personalities in public life, civic activists, and representatives of NGOs; experts from various fields and professions; members of local governments and other politicians; and many ordinary citizens. These campaigns, initiatives, and controversies have concerned various topics: public policies and issues of democracy, the rule of law and implementation of justice, social and economic problems, public administration and local government, the position of minorities and human rights, nationalist threats, protection of the environment and cultural heritage, conditions for the media, and the employment policies of public insti-

tutions. They have encouraged review of the problems and often include calls to action as well. Mass reviews strive to achieve changes in proposed legislation and usually have a solid level of expertise.

The most successful of these campaigns was an environmentalist initiative by the Slovak branch of Greenpeace and a coalition of allied groups that was able to combine research activities with action. The campaign demanded that the country's local communities have a say in uranium mining projects in their areas. In Slovakia, any petition obtaining 100,000 signatures must be discussed by the national parliament. This petition garnered 113,000 signatures and was delivered to the parliament in September 2009. In March 2010, legislators agreed on legal changes to geological and mining laws that would grant local communities as well as municipal and regional authorities more power to limit the development of uranium deposits. This was not only a huge achievement for the Slovak environmentalist movement and an inspiration for similar groups around the world, but also a strong example of effective action for Slovakia's civil society as a whole.

The uranium initiative was a textbook example of the effective concurrence of numerous factors: a "strong" theme, qualified preparation and systematic work, knowledge of legal and administrative norms and regulations, the ability to find allies and offer them a meaningful benefit (for the Association of Towns and Villages and the Union of Towns, this meant the prospect of strengthened local authority); an attractive campaign; the internationalization of the controversy; and intensive cooperation with the media.

* * *

A research project carried out by the Center for Philanthropy has shown how third-sector leaders understand the workings of the civic sphere.⁴ They consider it important for NGOs to "fill the gaps" and meet the needs of society and

individuals, including through experimentation and the testing of innovations. They believe that NGOs should serve as a kind of civic control, providing critical feedback to state power. They think it is essential for NGOs to help various disadvantaged groups and to strengthen the voices of those who would otherwise not be heard. They see it as necessary to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation with the public and business sectors in serving citizens, while respecting the principles of true partnership.

In contrast with these beliefs, state representatives sometimes show a tendency to reduce the nonprofit sector to a provider of services and suppress civic participation. But weakened public rights are at odds with EU norms. For example, after twenty Slovak environmentalist NGOs submitted a complaint to the European Commission regarding violation of the right of public participation in decision making that is essential to environmental protection, the commission began an inquiry on Slovakia in 2008. Facing the potential loss of several billion euros in EU funds, the Slovak parliament amended the corresponding law so that civic initiatives, associations, and organizations, as well as ordinary citizens, could express their views on the environmental impact of government policies.

5. Challenges Ahead

The fruits of association have raised the quality of life in Slovakia. NGOs have created, disseminated, and reproduced three specific kinds of wealth in society: cognitive wealth, a wealth of practical experience, and wealth of prosocial patterns of behavior. They have used several approaches to contribute to cultural change and the democratic modernization of their country.

A part of the sector has taken on the profile of a check on power and became an important bulwark against authoritarian tendencies in 1993–1998. This amounted to a mental revolution for a country steeped in fear and civic helplessness, with a long history of subju-

gation to incumbent authorities. Since 1998, civic organizations have continued to carry out this function. Another part of the third sector demonstrated its expert potential by becoming a source of alternative approaches to public policy. The creation of proposals, together with critical reviews of existing state policies, increases competition in the “marketplace of ideas” and enables better-informed public debates and political decisions.

A further segment of the third sector has established itself as a service provider. These activities are not just a supplement to state care, but often offer a distinct and superior alternative. NGOs have brought competition to the field of service provision and served as a well-spring of innovation and experimentation. They work with a certain “social-risk capital” that allows them to test new approaches on a small scale. Dozens of service innovations have been developed and piloted by Slovak NGOs, and this trend continues.

One of the more controversial topics in the third sector is civic participation. Comparative data from representative sociological surveys suggest that the ranks of active citizens engaging in public affairs in Slovakia do not expand. One of the underlying reasons might be a mental shift generated by the onset of a market economy—a growing individualism and weakening interest in the problems of others. In a time of crisis, people struggling with poverty and social insecurity concentrate all their energy on making ends meet. Another reason might be an overall decrease in social trust, which is the lubricant of people’s willingness to associate and cooperate. Moreover, some people put off participation because they realize what a major effort is needed to change their conditions and how rarely this kind of effort is crowned with success.

And yet, despite these tendencies, several spontaneous civic initiatives have emerged in recent years, especially among young people. Obviously, civic participation cannot be reduced

to electoral participation. It can take various forms, including public debates; demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, or rallies; charitable collections and petitions; engagement in solving local problems; and working for a political party. One also has to take into account the various spheres of public life in which citizen participation appears. In 2011 and 2012, another type of public protest emerged: public rallies organized by young people to criticize the corruption of politicians, the intertwining of business and politics, and the inadequacy of the institutions of representative democracy. They called for more transparency and probity in politics and public life, and for strengthening the elements of direct democracy in the political system.

In some areas, civic activism has shown an upswing. Participation by citizens in community development has increased, and various forms of urban activism are developing as well. Professional organizations are entering the legislative process and fighting for their rights and interests. At the same time, members of various professions have begun to engage more for the benefit of the public interest. NGO activities continue to develop in the social sphere, focused on care for senior citizens, those with long-term illnesses, hospices and crisis centers, and filling societal needs that are not or cannot be addressed by the state and private business. Formal and informal volunteering is expanding, most intensively in the social and environmental spheres, but also in culture. Public support for charitable giving and volunteerism is growing. Internet activism has gained momentum, and thanks to social media, more citizens have become involved in public affairs.

Despite these positive trends, one cannot ignore the many obstacles to more efficient input by analytical centers, think tanks, and watchdogs on improving quality of democracy in Slovakia, but perhaps also in other new democracies:

1. Party politics play a role. The political establishment sometimes creates a "political class" that operates in closed circles of mutual support and is unwilling to listen to outside or independent voices.

2. A frequent change of leaders, administrators, and staff generates a certain lack of "institutional memory," making it difficult to preserve continuity and build on previous achievements.

3. Mindful of the electoral cycle, politicians often perceive some topics as unpopular or untimely. A typical response to proposals is "This is not the proper time to deal with it."

4. Cooperation between the state and NGOs is marked by formalism. Public administration representatives invite NGOs to take part in preparing strategies, policies, and legislation, and in discussions and legislative review, but ultimately their opinions, proposals, and demands are largely ignored.

5. Fragmentation of civic initiatives and NGOs weakens their ability to act as an organized partner or opponent to incumbent powers.

6. Many NGOs lack the capacity to invest in voluntary activities. Civic participation is undermined by insufficient financing from the state and paltry support from domestic "social philanthropists." The dissipation of foreign funding that occurred mainly in 2004, after EU and NATO accession, has not been compensated for. Current EU funds remain poorly allocated and managed.

7. Think tanks in new democracies still have to work hard to improve their communication skills and upgrade their ability to address different constituencies.

8. In some areas of the nonprofit sector, generational change has not yet occurred; new, young leaders are emerging only gradually.

9. A significantly negative exogenous factor has been the global economic cri-

sis, which has hampered individual and corporate fundraising as well as state and EU support for NGOs. Thus far, the crisis has only rarely been perceived as an opportunity, especially for imaginative civic initiatives and NGOs to help people adapt to worsened living conditions. Such projects deserve financial support from multiple sources.

10. The prevailing preoccupation with economic agendas, indicators, numbers, and "hard facts" indirectly nurtures a mentality that is less sensitive to concepts like solidarity, social cohesion, social bonds, and social capital, which could become worthy thematic orientations for democracy resource centers in Slovakia and beyond.

In the face of all these complications, think tanks are striving to contribute to the quality of democracy, and their efforts remain a work in progress.

Endnotes

1. For a more detailed description, see M. Bútora, "OK '98: A Campaign of Slovak NGOs for Free and Fair Elections," in J. Forbrig and P. Demeš, eds., *Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington: German Marshall Fund of the United States and Erste Stiftung, 2007).

2. For an overview of Slovakia's civil society and the third sector, see M. Bútora, Z. Bútorová, and B. Strečanský, *Active Citizenship and Nongovernmental Sector in Slovakia: Trends and Perspectives* (Bratislava: Včelí dom, 2012).

3. *Slovakia 1996–2010: A Global Report on the State of Society*. Nine of the fourteen reports were published in English as well as Slovak. This release attracted interest from various audiences and was quickly sold out.

4. B. Strečanský, "Slovakia," in T. Nicholson, ed., *"We and They": NGOs' Influence on Decision-Making Processes in the Visegrad Group Countries* (Bratislava: The Sasakawa Peace Foundation/The Sasakawa Central Europe Fund and Center for Philanthropy, 2008). The Center for Philanthropy supports the development of philanthropy and civil society, participates in civic campaigns, and together with other NGOs negotiates with the authorities on legislation related to the third sector.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICIES

The Experience of South Korea's East Asia Institute (EAI)

*Sook Jong Lee**



The World of Think Tanks in South Korea

Think tanks have become an integral force in the contemporary policy processes of most countries. Public-policy scholar Diane Stone defines them as “a vehicle for broader questions about the policy process and the role of ideas and expertise in decision making.”¹ Think tanks serve both government and civil society by generating influential policy ideas and ultimately enabling better governance. These functions are not limited to domestic issues. Aided by a rapid transmission of information, today's think tanks copy and learn from one another as they address similar policy questions. A significant number of think tanks disseminate their research output widely, and engage in international networking and exchanges. Political sociologist Inderjeet Parmar even argues that institutes involved in global affairs engage in unofficial diplomacy through international conferences.²

American think tanks in particular have been widely recognized as influential in both domestic and international public affairs. Political scientist David M. Ricci writes that about one hundred think tanks thrive in the metropolitan Washington area, and that the ideas circulated there make a commendable contribution to society's perennial search for political wisdom.³ He finds that today's Washington think tanks emerged during the 1970s and 1980s to support a nationwide campaign by conservatives against what they saw as the dominant liberal policies and ways of life. Furthermore, he argues, the trends of the new American politics—the rising importance of expertise in campaigning and governing, an increasing dissonance in values, and the need to market political wares—have contributed to the growth of think tanks.⁴ Historian James A. Smith says that the proliferation of U.S. think tanks reflects the distinctive way in which Americans have sought to link knowledge and power.⁵ The knowledge and analytic techniques of experts are increasingly utilized in public service, as rational planning and scientific methods have come to be widely recognized as practical tools for improving policies. Emerging countries require planning and advisory institutions as much as developed countries, leading to the rising number

SOUTH KOREA

Capital: *Seoul*

Population: *49 million*

Internet Penetration:
81.46 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and Civil
Liberties Status: *Free*

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$33,397

**Sook Jong Lee is President of the East Asia Institute.*

of think tanks around the world. Policy experts R. Kent Weaver and James G. McGann maintain that officials in both information-rich and information-poor societies need research that is understandable, reliable, and useful, and such demands have helped to foster the development of independent public-policy organizations, or think tanks.⁶

The 2012 *Global "Go-To Think Tanks" Index* shows the proliferation of think tanks around the globe.⁷ Although North America and Western Europe dominate with 59 percent of the world's 6,300 think tanks, the report suggests that other regions are catching up. Among non-Western regions, Asia has the largest number of think tanks, accounting for 19 percent of the global total. Broken down by country, China has 428 think tanks (the second most in the world), India has 261 (fourth), and Japan has 108 (ninth), though all three trail well behind the top-ranked United States, with 1,815.

The rise of think tanks can be understood within the larger context of the growing number of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in the world. As policy researcher Lester Salamon has expressively put it, the "associational revolution" in the last quarter of the twentieth century—aided by the information revolution, democratization, and globaliza-

tion—is a key force behind the rise of think tanks.⁸ These organizations help to develop and assess policies and mediate between civil society and more formal political institutions, such as political parties, the executive branch, and legislatures. At the same time, think tanks operate in a variety of political systems, meaning their organizational forms and roles vis-à-vis political powers can differ. In this sense, the global presence of think tanks in itself does not mean that most countries have a marketplace of ideas like the United States. Although the majority of think tanks aim at producing quality research and ultimately seek to influence public policy, the ways in which they engage the public and formal governance institutions vary considerably.

In South Korea, as in many other countries, scientific planning of public policies and democratization contributed to the rise of think tanks. In fact, South Korea's major think tanks were only established after the country's rapid industrialization, with the aim of assisting the government's policy planning. Democratization would likely have contributed to the growth of private think tanks, but it is difficult to determine how many were built following the 1987 democratic transition in South Korea.

Weaver and McGann divide think tanks

About the East Asia Institute



EAI
EAST ASIA INSTITUTE

The East Asia Institute (EAI) was established in 2002 as an independent think-tank dedicated to developing ideas and formulating policy recommendations on the main challenges facing the region. Based in Seoul, South Korea, EAI strives to transform East Asia into a society of nations based on liberal democracy, market economy, open society, and peace. To this end, EAI works to promote liberal values and ideas, including diversity, tolerance, accountability, and transparency, through research, education, and international exchange. EAI was established to pursue and develop innovative and fresh ideas and is rooted in the belief that knowledge and good ideas can change the world.

EAI seeks to achieve its goals by creating influential publications that result from the hosting of scholarly seminars, forums, and education programs. EAI conducts research activities through two main programs: foreign affairs and security and governance research. Working together with recognized scholars and leading policymakers, EAI seeks to lead the way in forming a true knowledge-network community in Northeast Asia by setting up a system of joint research and scholarly exchanges in the U.S., China, and Taiwan, as well as many other countries.

into four types: academic (university) think tanks, for-profit contract researchers, advocacy think tanks related to interest groups, and those that represent the research arms of political parties.⁹ In Northeast Asia, advocacy think tanks dedicated to winning the war of ideas are rare, and party think tanks tend to be relatively new, weak, and not very influential. The Youido Institute was the first think tank created by a political party. It was founded in 1995 to improve the policies and strategies of the Grand National Party, South Korea's main conservative party. The Democratic Party, the leading progressive party, reconstituted its advisory organization as the Institute for Democracy and Policies in 2008. Most political parties established think tanks after a 2004 revision of the Political Party Law required them to do so with government subsidies. The purpose of the legislation was to encourage political parties to develop better policy platforms.

As public-policy scholar Makiko Ueno observes, the majority of think tanks in Northeast Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) are affiliated with or have strong ties to government ministries or higher education institutions.¹⁰ I divide think tanks in South Korea into the following three categories based on their funding source: public think tanks established and funded by the government, profit-seeking think tanks created by big business, and nonprofit think tanks, including those affiliated with universities and civic movements.

Public think tanks in South Korea are large institutions created and funded by the central and local governments. Those formed by the central government will be referred to hereafter as "national think tanks." Most were founded in the 1970s and 1980s based on a specific act to financially support and monitor them. For example, the Korean Development Institute (KDI), the most famous and oldest national think tank, was founded in 1971 following the promulgation of a law to that end in the previous year. KDI's website states that it was founded "in recognition of the need for a think

tank that researches economic policy issues concerning Korea in both systematic and applicable ways, and assists the government in formulating the 'Five-Year Economic Development Plans' and related policies."¹¹ The Institute is funded by the Economic Ministry and has changed its official title over the years. Local governments have also established their own think tanks. The Seoul Metropolitan Government formed the Seoul Development Institute in 1992 to respond to various urban challenges facing the capital. The Gyeonggi Provincial Government founded a think tank in 1995, and other local authorities followed suit.

In order to cultivate research autonomy and encourage revenue activities, the Korean government passed the Act on Foundation, Management, and Growth of Government-Financed Research Institutes in 1999. Centers dealing with science, technology, economic, social, and humanities policies were created under the Prime Minister's Office with the aim of reducing redundant research and facilitating interministerial policy research. Currently, there are two centers coordinating national think tanks: the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities, and Social Sciences (NRCS) for twenty-three related national think tanks, and the Korea Research Council for Industrial Science and Technology (ISTK) for thirteen national think tanks. The country's national think tanks maintain an arms-length relationship with each government ministry in choosing policy agendas and promoting specific public policies. The Ministry of Knowledge Economy and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology fund a greater number of national think tanks than other ministries. In terms of annual expenses and number of experts, Korea's national think tanks are quite large when compared with those in the West. Table 1 shows the scale of the major national think tanks' annual expenses, with revenues from government funding and other sources, and the main government ministry with which they work.

South Korea's conglomerates also began

TABLE 1: MAJOR NATIONAL THINK TANKS IN SOUTH KOREA

1.	Korea Development Institute / KDI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$62,452,210	(69%)
2.	Korea Energy Economics Institute / KEEI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$27,703,486	(31%)
3.	Korea Environment Institute / KEI	Ministry of Environment	\$22,953,897	(50%)
4.	Korea Information Society Development Institute / KISDI	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$24,448,577	(24%)
5.	Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation / KICE	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$123,632,904	(22%)
6.	Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs / KIHASA	Ministry of Health and Welfare	\$25,352,478	(54%)
7.	Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade / KIET	Ministry of Knowledge Economy	\$21,451,432	(62%)
8.	Korea Institute for International Economic Policy / KIEP	Ministry of Strategy and Finance	\$27,007,179	(72%)
9.	Korea Institute for National Unification / KINU	Ministry of Unification	\$10,418,649	(82%)
10.	Korea Institute of Public Administration / KIPA	Ministry of Public Administration and Security	\$10,836,433	(75%)
11.	Korea Institute of Public Finance KIPF	Ministry of Strategy and Finance	\$19,285,529	(83%)
12.	Korea Labor Institute / KLI	Ministry of Employment and Labor	\$14,138,050	(78%)
13.	Korea Legislation Research Institute / KLRI	Ministry of Justice	\$9,403,166	(72%)
14.	Korea Maritime Institute / KMI	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs / Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	\$26,694,923	(42%)
15.	Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements / KRIHS	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs	\$34,642,332	(45%)
16.	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training / KRIVET	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$30,918,606	(47%)
17.	Korea Rural Economic Institute / KREI	Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	\$27,270,997	(47%)
18.	Korea Transport Institute / KOTI	Ministry of Land Transport and Maritime Affairs	\$33,798,979	(27%)
19.	Korean Educational Development Institute / KEDI	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$29,385,866	(42%)
20.	Korean Institute of Criminology / KIC	Ministry of Justice	\$7,934,435	(86%)
21.	Korean Women's Development Institute / KWDI	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family	\$13,419,254	(75%)
22.	National Youth Policy Institute / NYPI	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family	\$7,881,671	(73%)
23.	Science and Technology Policy Institute / STEPI	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology	\$14,864,631	(61%)

* The numbers in parentheses refer to the share of governmental funding in the organization's total expenditure. Dollar amounts are based on a 2010 conversion rate of 1,156.1 won per U.S. dollar.¹²

to establish think tanks. The Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) was created in 1986, and the Hyundai Research Institute was also founded. The

POSCO Research Institute (POSRI) was established in 1994, nine years after the Pohang Steel Company built its own technical research institute. These private

think tanks are funded by their business groups and primarily study economic trends and related topics. They disseminate information and engage in consulting or educating business personnel and ordinary citizens. These major private think tanks are interested in promoting business interests, and their research is often customized to meet the demands of their donor conglomerates. Although some programs are dedicated to corporate social responsibility, they rarely engage in framing public policy, other than through the narrow scope of industrial or business inquiries. It is difficult to ascertain their revenue sources and expenditures due to lack of transparency in their finances and management. SERI's annual budget equals that of the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), the largest national think tank in terms of expenditure (see Table 1).

There are only a few independent nongovernmental and NPO think tanks in South Korea. They tend to be fairly small and are usually connected with higher education institutions. University-affiliated think tanks are more oriented toward academic research even when conducting policy studies, and are often isolated within the academic community and lack full-time researchers. Notable think tanks in this category are the Asiatic Research Institute at Korea University, the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University, the Institute of East and West Studies at Yonsei University, and the Center for Social Sciences at Seoul National University. Among nonprofit think tanks that are not affiliated with universities, the Sejong Institute is the largest and oldest. It has its own endowment and foundation. However, the Blue House (South Korea's presidency) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have influence on the selection of its board members and chairman due to the legacy of government intervention

South Korea's major think tanks were only established after the country's rapid industrialization, with the aim of assisting the government's policy planning.

when it was founded. Some civic movement organizations also created think tanks. The Hope Institute was formed by civic movement leaders in 2005 with the mission of providing alternative public policies on topics like small businesses and the environment, and helping the development of rural and local communities. News media, in particular several newspaper companies, have set up in-house think tanks, though their impact is very limited. Many NPO think tanks are in essence run by an individual with a limited number of staff. They tend to be ephemeral and rarely noticed by the Korean public. The biggest challenge for NPO think tanks is gathering enough financing to maintain staff and operate programs, as they face a tough and competitive environment for fundraising activities.

The establishment of more NPO think tanks is certainly desirable as a means of capacity building in the civic sector and promoting more

democratic governance in South Korea.¹³ However, the think tank environment of South Korea makes it difficult for them to survive. Unlike their government- and conglomerate-funded counterparts, NPO think tanks are in a desperate struggle for funding. There are two basic types of grant-making foundations that can fund the work of NPO think tanks. Government foundations, such as the National Research Foundation, distribute large grants for research, but to academic institutions rather than independent think tanks. Private foundations tend to be more focused on student scholarships and other philanthropic activities. Therefore, it is very difficult for NPO think tanks outside universities to find financial resources. This funding issue is one of the main reasons why there are not many NPO think tanks in South Korea.

The East Asia Institute's Growth

The East Asia Institute (EAI) was founded in 2002 by Korea University professor Kim Byung-kook. While it began with a handful of staff members, EAI has grown rapidly, doubling its expenditures and increasing its endowment sevenfold. The number of full-time staff with master's and doctoral degrees has increased to fifteen. EAI has also built a strong reputation at home and abroad. It has been ranked either fifth or seventh among foreign-policy think tanks in South Korea by the daily newspaper *Hankyung*. It was also recognized as twelfth among Asian think tanks in the 2010 *Global "Go-To Think Tanks" Index*.¹⁴ EAI's research programs are carried out by six centers: the Center for Public Opinion Research, the Asia Security Initiative Center, the Center for China Studies, the Center for Japan Studies, and the Center for Values and Ethics. More routine or ad hoc research panels are created to examine specific issues and challenges. Around one hundred scholars participate in EAI's network for various research projects. EAI's strength also lies in its capacity to produce and disseminate public opinion surveys. Cross-national surveys are carried out in collaboration with a diverse range of international partners, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The Institute hosts conferences and roundtables with experts under the names Smart Talk, InfraVision, and Global Net 21. Its EAI Fellowship program draws scholars based in Asia, Europe, and North America every year. Academically, the EAI publishes the *Journal of East Asian Studies* and thematic books and reports, and offers internships to college students at home and abroad. As of

The biggest challenge for non-profit think tanks is gathering enough financing to maintain staff and operate programs, as they face a tough and competitive environment for fundraising activities.

summer 2011, 236 students had participated in this program.

The rapid growth of EAI relies on four strategies. The first is proactive external project financing. With a small endowment of US\$2 million, EAI has to mobilize funding to meet an almost equal amount of annual expenditure. In 2011, roughly 70 percent of expenditures were composed of research funding from outside institutions or individuals. With a very competitive funding environment for NPO think tanks at home, EAI has been looking to overseas institutions to raise funds for research and other programs. Currently, the MacArthur Foundation, based in Chicago, supports EAI's Asia Security Initiative Program. Other research funds come from the government, newspaper companies, and some domestic grant-making organizations. Government projects have been limited, however. Among programs other than research, the Luce Foundation in New York has supported the *Journal of East Asian Studies*. The Chang Ching Kuo Foundation and the Japan Foundation are both supporting the EAI Fellowship program, together with YBM, a South Korean educational company. The Samyang Company, another Korean firm, supports EAI's essay competition for students. In order to stabilize individual contributions, a group called Deseo was created to bring together prominent business figures to support EAI. Its members and other individuals contribute about 20 percent of the Institute's annual expenditure. This proactive search for varied funding sources has been quite successful. However, the heavy reliance on outside funding results in financial insecurity, and the Institute

is attempting to increase its endowment to facilitate sustainable growth.

The second strategy is utilizing research networks of nonresident scholars. With a limited budget, EAI is unable to host a large number of experts. Instead, it has reached out to external scholars, most of whom are teaching at leading universities in South Korea. Independent research carried out by EAI's in-house staff has been limited mainly to opinion research. This network-based approach is useful, as it allows the Institute to target a group of distinguished experts according to a specific research topic. Every year, ten to twelve groups of scholars carry out research projects. The opportunity to collaborate with other leading academics in their field is a major incentive for scholars to participate. The leadership of a senior scholar who can convene colleagues and coordinate collaborative research is a key to the success of such projects. Since scholar networks operate voluntarily, personal ties and mutual respect play an important role in sustaining these networks.

The third strategy is active international networking. Most public think tanks in South Korea are government funded and therefore have a principal-agency relationship with a particular ministry. For NPO think tanks, with no principal or official customer for policy research, establishing a reputation is a very difficult challenge. International attention is often effective in attracting more focus from the policy community within South Korea. As a latecomer in South Korea, EAI has looked out to the larger world and tried to develop networks with international think tanks and institutions as well as individual scholars and experts. Rather than competing at home, where the idea market is very much compartmentalized between agent think tanks and funding principals, many of EAI's activities have focused on operating outside of the country and drawing international attention to South Korea. Publishing the Social Sciences Citation Index-accredited *Journal of East Asian Studies* through networks of internation-

al scholars is one example of this strategy. Engaging in cross-national opinion surveys with overseas think tanks and media outlets is another.

The fourth and final strategy is innovative dissemination. Effective dissemination of research products is a requirement for any think tank that wants to have major impact. EAI is a front-runner among South Korean think tanks in electronically disseminating research products. The twenty-first century idea market is globalized and moves at a rapid pace. Naturally, an English-language website with readable content is critical for interacting with experts around the world. EAI has benchmarked the websites of renowned global think tanks in order to follow international standards and qualities. Distribution via e-mail lists and social-networking services like Twitter has also been introduced. Creating extensive English-language content is challenging, since much of the original research output is in Korean. EAI's staff translates these Korean texts into English to expose them to a wider global audience. A Chinese version of the website was recently developed, with Chinese translations of several research products.

EAI's Efforts to Translate Research into Policies

Think tanks collect, synthesize, and create a range of information products, often directed at a political and academic audience, but also sometimes for the benefit of the media, interest groups, business circles, international civil society, and the general public of a nation.¹⁵ Producing research for the government or the legislature is a more direct path for translating policy ideas into public policies, and it can be difficult to determine whether think tanks have had influence on policy changes when they take the indirect path of informing the general public or interest groups. One could argue that merely shaping public opinion with no consequential policy changes should be considered a major contribution by think tanks. All think tanks are aimed at influencing public policies directly or indirectly, but they

are more sensitive to their own influence on the government, the media, and civil society.

Think tanks in South Korea tend to direct their products to the relevant government department. Under the legacy of the “developmental state,” in which the government has played a strong role in both assisting and regulating business and society, it is natural for South Korean think tanks to harmonize their policy interests with those of specific public officials in order to gain policy influence. At the same time, the phenomenal development of internet-based communication has driven an increase in the provision of information and policy ideas to the media and the general public. Demand for think tank ideas among both the public and the private sectors has grown.

The policy-making process has become increasingly complex to meet external demand and global standards. Technological convergence and market integration are driving forces in this process. Internally, there is also a greater need for more customized policy responses to satisfy increasingly fragmented and diverse social groups. With these changes in the policy-making environment, the South Korean government has identified the need to tap into the expertise of think tanks for the sake of more effective and efficient public policies.

Translating ideas into policies may be easier for government-funded national think tanks, since their research is more readily adopted by the government bureaucracy due to their principal-agency relations. The policy ideas these think tanks submit are usually instrumental to making selected policy goals feasible. National think tanks essentially have an automatic path to influence decision makers. One could view this relationship from a critical standpoint, arguing that the think tanks are employed by the government as tools to provide intellectual legitimization for policies. In this sense, they would have little impact on the government.

Translating ideas into public policies is particularly difficult for NPO think tanks, which do not have a principal government office that commissions specific research projects. Accordingly, NPO think tanks are more willing to participate in the hot issues of public debate. With organizational and financial independence from the government, their output is likely to be bolder and even critical of contemporary government policies. Preserving intellectual autonomy from the government and partisan politics is desirable for NPO think tanks as they seek to maintain their credibility and influence in civil society. At the same time, NPO think tanks need to have some kind of engagement with government to influence policies. Therefore, they try to strike a delicate balance between dependence on government and total isolation from it.¹⁶

EAI is a nonpartisan NPO think tank. It does not receive regular financial contributions from governments or political parties. On occasion, the central and local governments have commissioned research projects related to public-policy issues. Although the portion is small when compared with the total annual research output, some research commissioned by the government is important to have an impact. For example, a three-year research project on South Korea’s mid-term foreign policy is an effort to help the Foreign Ministry with its overall policy goals and strategies over the next five years. In this project, public officials participate regularly in seminars to exchange views and discuss ideas suggested by experts. Aside from projects commissioned by the government, EAI seeks to maintain interaction with government officials and politicians to influence policy debates. They are frequently invited to speak at seminars and conferences. Dialogue between policy implementers and experts in the private sector is continuously undertaken, in addition to unilateral dissemination of EAI’s research to officials and politicians.

Finding concrete examples of the impact that EAI has made on policy is not

easy, since such causality is rarely clear. For instance, many experts from EAI's research networks are advising the government as policy council members. They are also frequent contributors to the media through columns on policy issues. Therefore it is difficult to discern whether these "idea brokers" are influencing public policies through EAI's research output or through their other activities.

Nevertheless, there are cases in which EAI's influence is demonstrable, including the following:

Research on Presidential Transitions

EAI has engaged in a great deal of research on democracy and good governance in South Korea. Amid the presidential election campaign in late 2007, the Institute launched a special research project on a successful presidency in South Korea. By delineating what a president should and should not do during a transition, EAI tried to assist the new administration that would be inaugurated in late February 2008. Taking a bipartisan approach, EAI consulted key advisers who had participated in the presidential transition teams of three past administrations. The study integrated some theoretical concepts from political science literature with the voices of experienced high-level government officials, and the results were published in December 2007 in the form of a book entitled *Presidential Transitions in Korea*. The new presidential transition team set up after Lee Myung-bak's victory then requested the book and debated its policy recommendations.

There are two reasons why this book had an impact. First, there had been very little research focused on the role and tasks of a presidential transition team. While many suggestions had been made on a successful presidency in the past, they had not paid due attention to the transition period, since it would not last longer than two months. Second, the book included vivid recollections and advice from participants in past transition teams. Many of them had served new governments as high-ranking

public officials. Tapping wisdom from these experienced policy elites made the suggestions in the book more persuasive. Whether some of the recommendations were adopted by the new government is difficult to determine. However, Kim Byung-kook, who planned this research project, was nominated as senior secretary on foreign affairs and security in the President's Office, though he himself was not a member of the transition team.

A New Foreign-Policy Paradigm for "Complex Diplomacy"

Scholars belonging to EAI's National Security Panel, chaired by respected senior scholar Ha Young-sun of Seoul National University, have coined the concept of a "complex diplomacy" as a new paradigm for South Korea's foreign policy. International-relations literature has emphasized the increasing role of NGOs, multinational corporations, and intergovernmental organizations in international affairs, which have traditionally been dominated by the world's governments. With increasing market integration and institutional networking across national boundaries, foreign-policy issues are now addressed across bilateral, regional, and global levels of interaction. In addition, the realm of foreign policy has been diversified from conventional security and trade policies to nonconventional challenges such as development assistance, climate change, energy security, science and technology, and human rights. Multiple actors, multilayered spaces, and the issues encompassed by foreign policies increasingly require policy makers to view international affairs in a much more complex way. EAI's foreign-policy scholars argue that South Korea must adopt this way of thinking, as its future success lies in proactive networking with the rest of the world, in addition to major powers such as the United States, China, and Japan.

After several years of advocating a "complex diplomacy," EAI has seen this notion become incorporated into the thinking of the Foreign Ministry. At his inaugural speech on 8 October

2010, Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan described new foreign-policy strategies including “total diplomacy” for multiple actors and “complex diplomacy” for issue contents, as well as “digital-network diplomacy” and “soft-power diplomacy.” Several EAI scholars also participated in a workshop with the Foreign Ministry to discuss new visions and goals. And as noted above, EAI has been commissioned to carry out a project on the government’s mid-term foreign policy.

In this case, the translation of EAI ideas into actual policy strategies can be said to have occurred. There were many factors behind this success. Inviting key public officials to EAI and engaging in dialogue with them was very effective. Another factor was the individual involvement of scholars from EAI networks in advisory councils. Both individual and organizational ties and institutional research output can be important in creating policy impact.

Opinion Survey Research

Both domestic and cross-national opinion surveys are areas in which EAI has enjoyed a competitive edge over other think tanks in South Korea. Designing opinion surveys on public issues and offering good analysis serve both decision makers and civil society. EAI engages in six or seven polling projects a year, and in every election year an election study panel is chaired by Professor Lee Nae-young of Korea University. Its accumulated data set is open to the public and contributes to both academic and policy studies of election and voting behaviors. Other leading data sets include polling on institutional trust, national identity, and national security.

After polling, EAI has published opinion briefings and sent them to politicians and public officials, in addition to posting them on the website. For the general public, survey analyses are usually disseminated through newspapers. As a majority of polling is carried out in partnership with major media companies, it is relatively easy to diffuse polling

results to a wide audience.

It is difficult to analyze the causal relationship between EAI’s opinion surveys and any policy changes. Still, the main purpose of opinion surveys is to diagnose what the public wants regarding contentious ideas and concerns. In doing so, opinion surveys can also help raise citizens’ awareness of public issues and encourage their participation in the debate. For decision makers, opinion surveys can serve as reference points, so that politicians and government officials are able to deliberate legal or policy matters in the context of public preferences. In addition to these broader contributions, the distribution of opinion surveys via the media has the benefit of promoting awareness of EAI itself. The Institute is one of the most searched-for think tanks on major internet portals, and its survey results, such as the approval ratings of presidents and other politicians, are often quoted.

Lessons from EAI’s Experiences

EAI’s growth and performance have been widely recognized at home and abroad. In an environment where government-funded think tanks dominate, EAI has provided an alternative model for NPO think tanks that have to operate with limited resources. This model is based on active projective funding, network-based research, and proactive international contacts. It is difficult to follow this example without a group of policy-minded scholars who are committed to building an innovative institution independent of both the government and the universities to which they may individually belong. In order to manage the nonresident scholar networks, EAI has relied on able program officers and staff who conduct their work autonomously. The leadership of EAI delegates most routine tasks to its staff, focusing instead on strategic decisions such as funding and research planning.

In order to translate research into policies, EAI has tried to directly engage in dialogue with public officials and politicians, and reached out to decision

makers and opinion leaders through the active dissemination of research products. EAI also places a high priority on providing information to civil society as a way of educating and engaging citizens on major public issues. Despite these efforts, it is still difficult to clearly establish where research has had a policy impact. This is largely due to the fact that the policy-making process is often a black box, with little public information on which individual or institution is responsible for specific policy choices. In addition, it is impossible to separate the contributions of EAI's scholars from their other channels of influence. Nevertheless, in several cases it is quite obvious that the policy influence of individual experts would not have been possible without EAI's collaboration with the government and media.

Although EAI experiment has so far been very successful, it faces several challenges in organizational sustainability. Financial dependence on external project funding is one of the main concerns. In order to stabilize an internal source of financing, EAI is searching for more philanthropic donations from individuals. Moreover, most of EAI's staff spends much of their time on administrative tasks rather than direct production of research output. For the Institute to grow further, it will need to develop a research capacity made up of resident experts. This matter is of course related to the need for stable funding.

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ENHANCING THE POLICY IMPACT OF DEMOCRACY RESEARCH

The Case of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Democratization Program



Özge Genç*

Part I: Civil Society and Research in the Turkish Political and Social Sphere

Despite its ups and downs, Turkey is on a path of democratization from which there is no return. Civil society is stronger, more vocal, more active, and more demanding than it has ever been in the country's history. It has become the engine of change behind political and social reforms, notwithstanding certain limitations on its policy impact. And while there are still obstacles to freedom of expression, issues that were until recently considered to be politically taboo are now discussed openly and critically.

The quantity and quality of civil society work has increased substantially over the past decade. As Turkey proceeds toward European Union (EU) membership, EU governance mechanisms that involve civil society in policy making have been introduced, and more EU funds have become available for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Turkey.

Meanwhile, the number and variety of research-based policy organizations have also increased. While the majority of these institutions have focused on foreign policy, more are now working in the field of domestic politics and producing research and opinion on political reforms that Turkey must undertake for democratic institutionalization. The quest for reform in Turkey remains alive due to (a) the EU accession process, the related transposition of *acquis communautaire* into the national legislation, and its implementation; (b) Turkey's commitments to the Council of Europe and its obligation to address the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), as it is the country with the highest number of violations under the European Convention on Human Rights; and (c) the inevitability of compliance with the universal criteria of democracy and the rule of law as part of Turkey's pursuit of regional and international recognition and influence. In addition to these factors, as Turkish society integrates with the world, a growing portion of the population expects conformity with the normative values of democracy, respect for individuals, and a better quality of life.¹

TURKEY

Capital: *Ankara*

Population: *74.89 million*

Internet Penetration:
42 percent

Press Freedom Status:
Partly Free

Political Rights and
Civil Liberties Status:
Partly Free

GDP per capita, PPP
(Current Int'l Dollars):
\$15,029

* Özge Genç is the Program Director of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation's Democratization Program.

At the same time, there is restlessness and mistrust within society, as Turkey is unable to solve one of its most fundamental problems—the Kurdish question, which arises from the authoritarian, nationalist, and monocultural approach of the Turkish state.

Some of Turkey's research-based policy organizations are sponsored by political parties and their circles, attached to universities, or operated as branches of foreign think tanks. Others, such as the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), are more dependent on external funding and receive funding from a variety of sources, having been founded by business groups, academics, politicians, journalists or retired bureaucrats.² Institutions affiliated with political parties may suffer from a lack of independence, while university research institutes may have to operate under the legal, institutional, and ideological restrictions of the higher education system in Turkey. However, independent research institutes with a variety of financial resources, especially from international donors, enjoy more liberty, working according to preset foundational missions and visions. In TESEV's case, a core mission is to support reform movements based on the principles of democracy, equal citizenship, and human rights.

Democratization in Turkey has provided a larger space for civil society to operate

at the policy level. In providing grants to NGOs, external donors such as the EU, the United Nations, and the World Bank have made involvement in policy making a criterion for funding. Similarly, donor funding for public institutions made it compulsory for them to include civil society. This has resulted in a certain degree of interaction and exchange of knowledge and expertise between policy circles and NGOs.

The democratization process has also provided more tools for realizing civil-society aims at a supranational level. These tools include petitions to the European Court of Human Rights and engaging in advocacy efforts at the EU, especially during the preparation of the European Commission's annual progress reports. Civil-society organizations started to use international benchmarks (such as the Copenhagen criteria, the European Convention on Human Rights, and other Council of Europe standards) in their advocacy work. The EU came to the civil-society sphere with its own democracy and human rights agenda that provided a roadmap for NGOs in Turkey. The union provided an invaluable incentive and an "excuse" for certain reforms, especially from 2002 through 2003, when the Turkish military was forced out of the political scene and key steps were taken toward full civilian control. At the same time, the European human rights framework, first utilized by the Kurdish movement, has provided

About the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV)



The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) is an independent non-governmental think tank, analyzing social, political, and economic policy issues facing Turkey. Based in Istanbul, TESEV was founded in 1994 to serve as a bridge between academic research and the policy-making process in Turkey. TESEV's programs focus on three key areas of policy research: democratization, foreign policy, and good governance.

By opening new channels for policy-oriented dialogue and research, TESEV aims to promote the role of civil society in the democratic process and seeks to share its research findings with the widest possible audience. To carry out this mission, TESEV organizes regular seminars and conferences, bringing together specialists and policymakers from Turkey and abroad to discuss issues of current concern. TESEV publications include project reports, books, pamphlets, policy watch briefings, and seminar proceedings aimed at a general readership.

a valuable arena for rights-based litigation. Kurdish lawyers were able to bring cases, especially those related to the abuses and rights violations under the state of emergency in the 1990s, to the ECHR. Later, non-Muslim minorities (the Armenian and Greek communities) brought their own cases, especially on property issues, and Alevis filed freedom of religion cases with the court. The judgments of the ECHR against Turkey have affected laws and practices in the country to some extent, as they are incorporated into the national laws to prevent similar violations in the future. The court therefore has been instrumental in the reform of the Turkish legal system, leading to changes on pretrial detention, trial procedures, freedom of expression, and freedoms of assembly and association. Some of the court's recent decisions are expected to lead to changes in "propaganda for terrorism and terrorist organization" charges, as well as the elimination of the statute of limitations on crimes relating to torture.

There is no doubt that the European framework plays an extremely critical role in facilitating political reform and democratization in Turkey. However, one could say that the EU is less of an engine for democratization in the country at present. Turkish society has created its own internal dynamic for reform and democratization. One can even argue that the internal motivation of civil society and its pressure on the Turkish government to continue with reforms have almost rendered the EU benchmarks and incentives obsolete. Civil society and minority groups in Turkey developed and went beyond the EU agenda, and in some instances even started to criticize the EU framework (especially on the headscarf issue).

The democracy research organizations stand at the core of this active civil sphere by providing information, reference tools, and platforms for reaching democracy and reform goals. In the field of activism and advocacy for rights and liberties, there is a need for data and research outlining the problems, formulating roadmaps to

solve these problems, and laying out the international examples and benchmarks in a comparative way.

As Turkey becomes more pluralistic, the public sphere is becoming more lively and crowded with opinion leaders, activists, researchers, and journalists, as well as print, visual, and social media and NGOs. However, in this enlarging "open society," there is a tendency to produce opinion and ideas based solely on impressions and political, socioeconomic, and ideological positioning, instead of on neutral and analytical data. Academic production in Turkey also has its problems due to the authoritarian and extremely bureaucratic structure of the universities, as well as the dominant nationalist and statist ideology of the university administrations, which is reflected in the work of likeminded researchers and in self-censorship by the rest. Therefore, one can argue that the political liberalization in Turkey runs the risk of backsliding as far as the quality and content of information is concerned. Moreover, the new "public" does not necessarily represent minorities and dissidents—groups and individuals on the margins of political and civil society—as it is still dominated by socioeconomically and culturally advantaged groups.

The civil society sphere in which TESEV operates has many problems, internal and external. One cannot overlook these problems when assessing an organization's impact on public debate and policy making. First of all, not all civil-society groups have equal access to the policy-making process, and the communication channels (especially mainstream print and television media) are still not wide open to civil society groups. Second, public institutions, governments, and opposition parties have very little contact with civil society at large and utilize its expertise at minimum levels. As stated in the 2012 EU progress report, the parliament's efforts to achieve systematic consultation with civil society and other stakeholders are very limited. Most of the policy actors have their own favored and closely allied civil society organizations, including research insti-

tutions.

One exception to this pattern has been the latest constitutional drafting effort. Turkey is now in the process of adopting a new constitution, which is expected to imply a restructuring of its institutions and the reformulation of the relationship between the state and citizens. The outdated 1982 constitution, which was prepared by a military junta, is expected to be replaced with a document drafted by the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission convened under Turkey's parliament, comprising representatives from each of the political parties represented in the parliament. The Commission opened its doors to civil society organizations and enabled them to offer proposals based on their past and ongoing work. This has been a unique opportunity for civil society organizations in Turkey, especially those involved in democracy research. The Commission, which started its work on October 19th, 2011, had met with forty-two political parties, universities, and various institutions; thirty-nine professional associations and unions; and seventy-nine civil society groups under three separate "subcommissions" as of the beginning of May 2012.³ During the same period, through its official website, e-mail, and postal mail, the Commission has received input from about 64,000 people. Of these, 440 were from civil society organizations. Some of the consultation on the new constitution has consisted of initiatives conveying the opinions of wide segments of society.⁴ However, the parliament has not engaged in an analytical evaluation of these contributions to date. As of May 2012, the political party representatives were still discussing the most contentious issues of the new constitution. But as it is described in the media, the debate is most often shaped by the "red lines" and habitual limitations of the political parties, instead of the data collected from civil society organizations. It is apparent that the views of citizens are not reflected in the Commission's work. This may lead to a lack of public confidence in the process, which could render it a failure. On the other hand, upon review of the sug-

gestions coming from civil society, it is apparent that many groups that stand out for their activism lack the necessary skills when it comes to intervening with politicians and decision makers.⁵

Not all civil-society organizations play a constructive role on the path to democratization. Turkey has a long history of statist civil-society groups that nurture political conservatism and promote the status quo, and even engage in alliances with antidemocratic forces. These organizations have at times been manipulated as a counterforce to elected parties. During military interventions in the democratization process, a number of Turkish universities and civil-society organizations have joined media outlets and the judiciary as key partners to the military. Even in ordinary circumstances, some civil-society groups—including those which are developing research and advocacy on critical issues like minority rights and the Kurdish question—can take nationalism, authoritarianism, and "conditions specific to Turkey" as their standards instead of universally accepted norms and benchmarks.

However, one can say that there is a certain degree of maturity in Turkey with regard to civil-society actors. The state has historically silenced minorities, journalists, and activists through institutional, legal, and social mechanisms that rely on broad definitions of (a) terrorism, in an infamous antiterrorism law dating back to 1991; (b) the indivisibility of the state, in the 1982 constitution; and (c) criminal offenses, in the penal code.⁶ Collective and individual disempowerment and suppression of minorities have created a deep distrust among dissidents toward state institutions such as the judiciary, the military, and the police. For these groups, the only option was to unite under and collaborate within a civil society framework, as forming a political party and securing representation in the parliament by passing the 10 percent electoral threshold has proven difficult. Civil society was their only means for access to citizenship. Consequently, Turkey has been home to a fairly advanced feminist movement

since the 1970s, a Kurdish movement since the late 1980s, and a variety of other groups representing gay men and lesbians, headscarved women, Alevites, and politically active trade unions and professional associations.

These organizations operate within a highly polarized political and social sphere. The long-standing ideological polarization in Turkey hampers democratization in general, and more specifically the production of dispassionate and constructive knowledge that could eventually have a policy impact. It prevents a holistic approach to human rights, instead promoting a hierarchy among rights-seeking groups. Each group tends to place its own goals at the center of the debate and ignore or oppose similar campaigns by other groups. Polarization also creates closed communities (secularist, religious, progovernment, antigovernment, promilitary, and the like) that position themselves and produce knowledge according to their ideological affiliations.

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In such an environment, democratic research institutes like TESEV play a vital role in producing information on the basis of academic and analytical work, and by engaging actors with different positions on a given issue in the course of the research. The information is ultimately translated into policy suggestions and advocated in policy circles. TESEV's clearly defined mission is not to function like an opposition political party or activist organization, but to support the policy-making process and put pressure on decision makers through research and advocacy. While the research often contributes to the academic literature, the foremost goal is to advance democratic reforms by providing the relevant actors in the government and bureaucracy with specific and technical information and by bringing them together with civil society members from across a broad spectrum.

Part II: TESEV's Democratization Program as a Democratic Research Institute

TESEV's Democratization Program (DP) offers research-based analysis and policy suggestions in order to assist the strengthening of a civil, pluralist political system and counteract the effects of a hierarchical type of modernization, a history of coups d'état, and an authoritarian administrative structure.⁷ In addition to defending the growing authority of the parliament on the basis of democratic elections, TESEV DP aims to develop the organs and channels necessary to increase the participation of citizens, organized social movements, and civil society organizations in decision-making processes.

In recent years, the program has contributed to the development of democratic politics by placing taboo topics on the public agenda, such as judicial reform; security-sector reform; the Kurdish question; minority rights and constitutional citizenship; the relationship between religion, state, and society; and media and democracy. The studies on these topics have been designed to support one another, creating the possibility of a holistic approach to political and social problems that need to be solved as part of Turkey's democratization.

One of the primary aims of TESEV's DP activities is to involve and influence the policy-making process in Turkey. The program is widely perceived as an independent, nonpartisan, and impartial organization that produces reliable research with strong academic credentials. As a result, the publications of TESEV's DP are regularly followed by policy makers, and its events and conferences are attended by government representatives, members of parliament, and bureaucrats.

Because the formal mechanisms for accessing policy makers—such as advising them through consultancy or participating in parliamentary committees—remain weak, think tanks and NGOs are left with more modest means of influencing the policy-making process. The most common and effective strategy employed by TESEV's DP is to release reports aimed at a broader public-policy audience. The publications of TESEV's DP are utilized by state bodies such as the offices of the president and the prime minister; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Interior; the parliamentary committees for the constitution, justice, and human rights inquiry; and the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission.

Another effective strategy used by TESEV's DP is to enter into direct relationships with policy actors. TESEV's DP staff can easily access state bodies and bureaucrats for advocacy or research purposes. For example, in preparing a report on the headscarf ban in 2011, TESEV's DP researchers conducted bilateral meetings with the minister of state for women and family issues; the heads of the parliamentary committees on human rights, justice, the constitution, and equal opportunity for women and men; and lawmakers from the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the Democratic Left Party (DSP), and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). In a similar vein, in 2010 TESEV representatives had the opportunity to meet with the justice minister and his subordinates to discuss the ministry's Judicial Reform Strategy and the overall problems regarding the judiciary in Turkey. At a workshop organized in Ankara in June 2010, TESEV's DP brought together bureaucrats from the ministry, members of the high courts, representatives of a professional organization of judges and prosecutors (Demokrat Yargı, or Democratic Judiciary), and academics to discuss the findings and policy proposals contained in its report on constitutional amendments. TESEV's DP has also had several meetings with the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission to gather information on the drafting process and

share the outputs of its monitoring project.

On some occasions, TESEV's DP has a more formal involvement in the policy-making process by contributing to legislation. TESEV's DP has been asked on several occasions since 2004 to comment on the various drafts concerning the Law on Foundations, with a view to addressing the specific property and self-management issues of non-Muslim communities. A similar advisory role was requested in the context of the government's "Democratic Opening" initiative, aimed at addressing the Kurdish question. A former interior minister, who was tasked with coordinating the project, organized consultations with think-tank representatives, and TESEV's DP made acknowledged contributions in the form of policy reports that provided political and social guidelines for a solution.⁸ TESEV and its different programs have more recently undertaken several studies linked to the new constitutional drafting process. First, TESEV's 2011 study *Towards Turkey's New Constitution* includes recommendations to the parliament and policy makers on crucial issues such as the preamble and preliminary articles, fundamental aims and duties of the state, citizenship and cultural rights, rule of law, separation of powers, freedom of conscience and religion, and decentralization and local government.⁹ The recommendations were uploaded to and shortly after removed from a parliamentary webpage on the new constitution that collects the views and demands of organized initiatives and the public at large.¹⁰ TESEV's DP also prepared monitoring reports on the new constitutional process.

Two important issues currently being tackled by TESEV are of utmost importance to democratization and the EU accession process in Turkey: judicial reform and constitutional reform. A closer examination of these study areas will help illustrate TESEV's policy impact and opportunities for future influence.

Judicial Reform

The current judicial apparatus in Turkey

does not provide citizens with fundamental rights, and its structural governance does not conform to democratic principles. TESEV's DP analyzes the reform policies carried out by judicial officials as part of the EU integration process, and it aims to intervene and reshape such processes by opening up the issue to public discussion. Accordingly, workshops and conferences are being organized by TESEV's DP, and its research products are being submitted to the interested parties in the form of policy reports and bulletins.

The program takes the issues in the Justice Ministry's 2009 Judicial Reform Strategy and Judicial Reform Strategy Action Plan as a reference in its work, and seeks to push for the fulfillment of Turkey's commitment to align its judicial mechanisms with EU norms.¹¹ To date, the effort has focused on the areas of access to justice and fair trial procedures. TESEV's DP also monitors implementation of the constitutional amendments related to the judicial system that were accepted in a referendum on September 12th, 2012. The program edited opinions and recommendations on the amendments by different law professors, thereby supporting the changes and demanding further reforms. One of the changes adopted in the referendum increased pluralism in the membership and structure of the High Council of Judges and Executives. To monitor the effects of this restructuring, TESEV's DP brought together different stakeholders—the president of the new council, members of the judicial professional organizations, and academics—in a roundtable and published the discussion minutes as well as the points of consensus on further reforms at the council. The participants debated the extent to which the new council had succeeded during the nearly eighteen months since the referendum in achieving the anticipated results. A major accomplishment of the meeting was the fact that, despite their political differences, the participants were able to pinpoint similar problems and develop common solutions for the council in particular and the judiciary's structure and functioning in general.

These proposals were channeled into the concluding remarks of the report. The roundtable meeting helped to address the lack of adequate dialogue between legal and political communities in Turkey, which is necessary for the sustainability of the judicial reform process. The report was distributed widely in Ankara and opened to discussion at a press conference.

As part of the judiciary study area, TESEV's DP has also been working on human rights litigation in Turkey. It has monitored and raised public awareness of critical court cases, brought together human rights lawyers and defenders to develop common strategies for litigation, and liaised with the parliament to advocate legal reforms that would end impunity by, for example, removing the statute of limitations for crimes against humanity. TESEV's DP closely scrutinizes the conduct of public security officials who served under the state of emergency in the Kurdish-majority regions in the 1990s and are now being tried in key cases. Since 2011, for example, it has followed the hearings of the Temizöz case, which concerns the alleged actions—such as extrajudicial killings of Kurdish civilians—of an illegal group led by Colonel Cemal Temizöz and composed of former Kurdish militants, village guards, and state informants.

The ultimate aim of these activities is not only to increase the capacity of the human rights movement in Turkey, but also to help create a bottom-up movement for judicial reform through litigation.

Constitutional Reform

The AKP is now in its third term as the ruling party, having committed to undertake EU accession reforms a little over a decade ago. The new government formed after the 12 June 2011 general elections is expected to replace the 1982 constitution, which was instituted by a military junta. Meanwhile, EU integration will still be on the agenda, and the government has been in the process of harmonizing laws and regulations with the EU *acquis*. There will now be

added urgency to revise laws and regulations in the spirit of the new constitution. Within this overarching reform agenda, political parties as well as the media, interest groups, and civil-society organizations have a crucial role to play.

During the constitutional drafting process, a variety of actors have flexed their muscles to exert civil society influence on the new parliament and government's policy agenda. The wealth of information and ideas produced by civil society organizations across Turkey, including TESEV's own study,¹² and the citizen sentiments already voiced at the local level and in the periphery, need to be carefully scrutinized and communicated to the parliament, the government, and the public at large. TESEV decided to help meet these needs through intensive monitoring of policy makers, civil society actors, and the media; stronger ties to lawmakers who are in a position to draft and ratify the new constitution; and better engagement with mechanisms such as Constitutional Reconciliation Commission.

With the opening of the new parliament in October 2011, TESEV's DP started to monitor the policies, behaviors, and performance of the key political and civil actors in the constitutional drafting process. These include political parties, NGOs, social groups that are not necessarily assembled around NGOs (religious and ethnic minorities in particular), and media outlets. In the resulting monitoring reports (two have been published to date), TESEV's DP pinpoints the obstacles and opportunities posed by these actors and regularly informs Turkish and foreign public opinion. The ultimate goal is to hold the political parties represented in the parliament, the parliament itself, and the government accountable for their preelection promises regarding a new constitution and other reforms. In the meantime, the monitoring effort assesses the performance of civil society and the extent to which it can influence the draft constitution. The project is expected to put pressure on all actors to do their best throughout the process, and maintain their awareness that their

actions are being recorded.

The project includes a website that allows the general public to follow the drafting process.¹³ Currently, the only other such resource is the website initiated by the parliament, and the information available there is not updated regularly or prepared to give a day-to-day account of the constitutional commission's agenda and progress. Moreover, the parliament removed the civil society views and recommendations sent or presented to the commission from its website, citing "confidentiality." TESEV's DP makes all of these reports, letters, and presentations available to the public on its websites.¹⁴

The project expects to have built, clarified, and advocated policy positions on the themes of the constitution debate in order to feed the agenda of the government and parliament. TESEV regularly reaches out to policy makers in Ankara and attempts to establish working relations with lawmakers, parliamentary committee members, staffers, consultants, ministers, ministerial cadres, journalists, and fellow civil society members. It also seeks to act as a conduit between policy makers on the one hand and civil society, community leaders, interest group representatives, activists, academics, and students on the other.

TESEV's first monitoring report covered the period from October 2011 to January 2012, and the second covered February to June 2012. The latter period includes the establishment of the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission under the parliament, which gathered contributions from citizens and social groups and convened in May 2012 to begin drafting the articles of the new charter. As a result of the decreasing public visibility of the drafting process, TESEV's DP also conducted a public survey to illuminate society's expectations from a new constitution. The survey drew the attention of policy makers back to the will of the people, and invited them to be responsive to society's real needs and demands. The results have attracted considerable media attention. The press

launch in Ankara brought together commission members from each party, civil society representatives, journalists, and academics for a debate on the process.¹⁵

Future Challenges for TESEV's Democratization Program

The problems facing civil society in Turkey, most of which are outlined in the first section above, are also the challenges facing TESEV's DP in particular. The most difficult problems are the external risks related to the overall political climate, such as failures in Turkey's EU accession process, a lack of political will on the part of the government for undertaking reform, and the inability of political parties to come to terms with the political, legal, and social steps that are necessary for reform. Project-related challenges can include a lack of cooperation between NGOs and other stakeholders (especially politicians, media actors, and researchers) due to political and ideological differences. In order to minimize this obstacle, TESEV's DP seeks to establish good relationships with the reformist members of the political parties and within the state bureaucracy. More internal challenges involve the functioning of TESEV itself, and most importantly the availability of funding for research activity. Like other organizations, TESEV has been dealing with these challenges on a daily basis. The ever-changing strategies and tools employed to overcome such obstacles make civil society a dynamic and indispensable actor in the process of political and social change toward the ultimate goal of democratization.

Endnotes

1. The results of a recent public survey offer critical analysis on the extent to which society is transforming and adapting itself to universal norms and principles. See *Anayasaya Dair Tanım ve Beklentiler—Saha Araştırması* [Definitions and Expectations from a New Constitution—Public Survey] (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, November 2012).
2. Şule Toktaş and Bülent Aras, "National Security Culture in Turkey: A Qualitative Study on Think Tanks," *Billig* no. 61 (Spring 2012).
3. All of the contributions are compiled at Tesev's Constitution Watch blog at <http://anayasaizleme.org/index.php/yenianayasaonerileri/>
4. For details see Mehmet Uçum, Özge Genç, and others, *Making of a New Constitution in Turkey: Monitoring Report 2: February–June 2012* (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, 2012).
5. TESEV compiled civil society organizations' contributions and recommendations to the commission and made a critical analysis of the points that are reconcilable and irreconcilable.
6. Dilek Kurban and Ceren Sözeri, *Caught in the Wheels of Power: The Political, Legal and Economic Constraints on the Independent Media and Freedom of Speech in Turkey* (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, June 2012), 39–40.
7. See the program's page on the TESEV website at <http://www.tesev.org.tr/en/program/democratization-program>.
8. The outputs on the Kurdish question are available on the TESEV website at <http://www.tesev.org.tr/en/working-area/kurdish-question>.
9. The study can be accessed on the TESEV website at <http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/341774d7-7e6f-4078-9149-445ede629d51/TESEV%20Report%20on%20TR%20Constitution.pdf>.
10. The webpage is located at <http://yenianayasa.tbmm.gov.tr/>.
11. The Judicial Reform Strategy is available at <http://www.sgb.adalet.gov.tr/yrs/Judicial%20Reform%20Strategy.pdf>. The action plan is available at <http://www.sgb.adalet.gov.tr/yrs/Reform%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan.pdf>.
12. Mustafa Erdoğan and Serap Yazıcı, *Towards Turkey's New Constitution* (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, June 2011), available at www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/341774d7-7e6f-4078-9149-445ede629d51/TESEV%20Report%20on%20TR%20Constitution.pdf.
13. The website can be found at <http://anayasaizleme.org> and <http://turkeyconstitutionwatch.org>.
14. See <http://anayasaizleme.org/yenianayasaonerileri/>.
15. The survey report is available in Turkish here: <http://anayasaizleme.org/anket/>. In English: <http://turkeyconstitutionwatch.org/>.



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