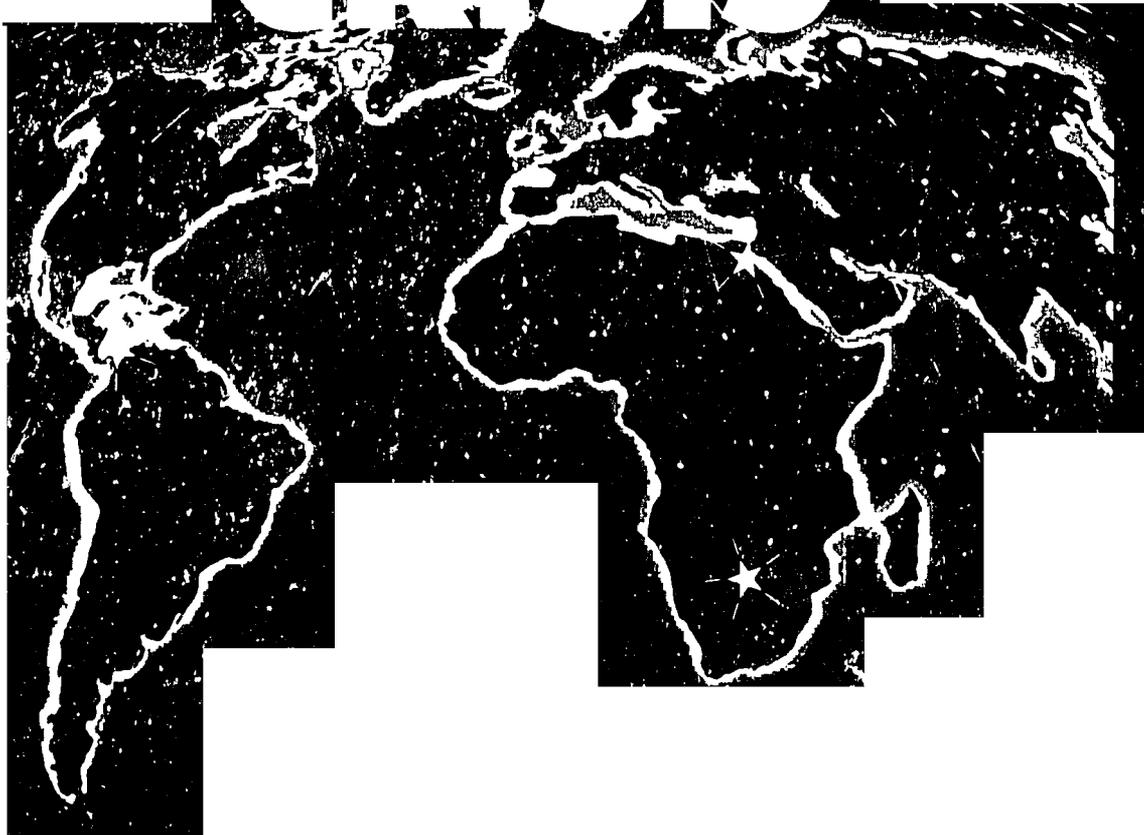


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BOTSWANA · COSTA RICA · ISRAEL

DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

E R R A T U M

**Page 2, paragraph 3, sentence 3
should read as follows:**

**"The NDI-sponsored conference in
Sedom, Israel took place
January 8-10, 1987, before the unrest.**

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DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS

BOTSWANA COSTA RICA ISRAEL

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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducts nonpartisan political development programs overseas. By working with political parties and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions and pluralistic values in new and emerging democracies. NDI has conducted a series of democratic development programs in nearly 30 countries, including Argentina, Barbados, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Hungary, Liberia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, South Korea, Taiwan and Uruguay.

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NDI President Brian Atwood, Executive Vice President Kenneth Wollack, Director of Public Information Sue Grabowski and Senior Consultant Larry Garber edited the text, which was prepared under the auspices of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. While there was a great deal of consultation in preparing the material, NDI assumes full responsibility for the contents of this volume.

To the Reader

This book is the result of three years of research, conferences and interviews with politicians, academics, journalists, military officers, economists and ordinary citizens from Israel, Costa Rica and Botswana. These three democratic nations have survived and even thrived in regions of crisis. We hope that this study will contribute to a better understanding of the institutions and practices that constitute successful democratic systems.

The Middle East, Central America and southern Africa have captured the world's attention over the past decades because conflict, terrorism, discrimination, ethnic strife and economic boycotts make news. The three subjects of our study have been in the midst of these crisis areas, but they have remained stable and strong. We believe that the contribution the democratic systems of these nations made to their societies' stability and strength is a story worth telling.

We began this study in 1985 when NDI was being established as a political development institute affiliated with the Democratic Party of the United States. Our research uncovered little in the literature of international development or political science that revealed those societal qualities that contributed to the success of a political system. Needing also to establish international

contacts and introduce our Institute, we decided to hold a series of seminars to examine the institutions of democratic nations that were under the pressure of serious external threats. We believed that the stress created by these threats would serve best to illuminate systemic strengths and weaknesses.

Israel, Costa Rica and Botswana are nations with very different histories, cultures and governmental systems. Each has adapted democratic principles and created a unique system. Yet, they share the fundamental values that characterize democracies everywhere. They protect the civil rights of their citizens and give them the freedom and responsibility to express themselves and vote. They respect the rule of law and they have nurtured pluralism as a matter of law and policy. They were the subjects of our study because of these common threads and because their democratic systems have proven extraordinarily resilient in the face of everpresent danger.

The world has changed dramatically since NDI began this study. The desire for human rights and democracy has swept every region of the world and has even transformed East-West competition into the early stages of cooperation and collaboration. We believe that the new democracies of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia can learn from the experiences of the three democracies examined in this work. Their systems cannot be replicated, but the techniques they have used to withstand great external pressure and the institutions they have developed present a range of options for those nations that are attempting to build their own democracies.

On behalf of NDI's Board of Directors and its chairman, Walter F. Mondale, whose participation in this project contributed greatly to its success, NDI thanks the many participants in our conferences and all those who contributed to this study.

J. Brian Atwood

President

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

December 1989

Introduction

“Democracy is the worst possible form of government except for all the others.” Winston Churchill’s famous epigram succinctly summarizes the lesson of NDI’s three-year study of “Democracies in Regions of Crisis,” a far-reaching look into how three democratic nations have survived and flourished despite enormous political, social, economic and military stresses. Botswana, Costa Rica, and Israel are three countries with different histories, cultures and political institutions but with a common belief that democracy is the most effective way to provide security from external and internal threats, economic prosperity at home and dignity for their citizens.

This study examines how these nations have built their democratic governments, and the challenges they face in maintaining them under often trying circumstances. In a series of three conferences sponsored or participated in by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, political and military leaders, scholars and journalists from the host country, the United States and from the international community discussed the complex issues of making democracy work in regions rife with instability and conflict. Through these conferences, the Institute and participants were guided by two principle purposes, as set forth by NDI’s Chairman, former Vice President Walter F. Mondale: “1) to apply the lessons of

successful democracies to other nations struggling to make full democracy a reality, and 2) to demonstrate that democracies can work well even under severe external and internal pressures.”

The first phase of the NDI project examined Israel's democratic system, which has flourished despite six wars, terrorist threats, periods of economic dislocation, and a diverse immigrant population with little direct experience of democratic government. The second phase was a conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, that sought to ascertain how that thriving democracy has maintained its stability amidst the military dictatorships and civil wars that have ravaged Central America. The final phase involved NDI's participation in an assessment of democracy in Botswana, the most democratic nation in strife-torn southern Africa, and arguably, in all of Africa. The three principal chapters of this book summarize the discussions and conclusions reached in each of the three conferences.

Israel

Of the three nations that form part of this study, the history of Israel is perhaps most familiar to an American audience. The United States played an important role in the birth of the nation; President Truman was the first world leader to recognize Israel's independence in 1948. Over the years U.S. ties to Israel have grown stronger, spurred by a shared commitment to democratic values, respect for individual liberties, and security interests. Israel today receives the largest share of U.S. foreign economic and military aid, and is seen by most Americans as a reliable friend and partner.

These close ties have made those in the U.S. all the more aware of the latest challenge to Israel's democracy one of the most dangerous periods in Israel's 40-year history of war and terrorism. The unrest in the West Bank and Gaza, the *intifada*, or uprising, has strained Israel's legal and political systems, and has spotlighted for the world the difficulties of maintaining democracy and civil liberties under such volatile conditions. The NDI-sponsored conference in Sedom, Israel took place during the very early days of the *intifada* (January 8-10, 1988) before its scale became clear. But the lessons of that meeting can offer some insights into why these new developments are so agonizing to Israel and to her friends, and, at the same time, why the

fundamental strengths of Israeli democracy provide confidence that Israel will succeed in meeting this difficult challenge.

These strengths are rooted in Israel's pluralism – of cultural, social, economic and political institutions – coupled with a keen sense of individualism in her people. The unique circumstances of Israel's creation – the political philosopher's dream of building a structure virtually from scratch – provided Israel's founding leaders an opportunity to draw from history and other nations' experience. As the discussion in the first chapter shows, Israel borrowed many institutions from other nations that have become integrated into its democratic system.

But creating a sustainable democracy is not an academic exercise, as Israel's founders so well understood. For borrowed institutions to grow, they must be compatible with, or adapted to, indigenous and traditional practices. Although most of Israel's citizens emigrated from non-democratic societies, the communal, egalitarian traditions of Jewish villages in Eastern Europe and the preindependence institutions of the early Zionist settlers in Palestine provided fertile soil in which to transplant the more formal mechanisms of democratic government. The history of repression and persecution suffered by Israel's founders and their ancestors before coming to their new land created a heightened appreciation of the need for tolerance, so essential to democracy. The experience of Israel's immigrants in their native countries created a profound distrust of centralized authority.

Not surprisingly, this distrust of authority and boisterous pluralism has led to a proliferation of political parties, which, in recent years, has tended to produce political fragmentation and stalemate. Many at the Sedom conference supported calls for electoral reform to reduce the influence of marginal (often extremist or single issue) parties and to strengthen the hand of the executive in addressing the nation's political and economic challenges. But most participants warned that if reform led to excluding important (albeit small) segments of public opinion from the Knesset, internal conflict would be heightened, not suppressed. In the colorful language of one participant "It's better to bring everybody inside the tent to throw stones out, than to have them standing outside throwing stones at the tent." As the first chapter concludes, "inclusivity is strength."

This commitment to inclusivity and sense of family helped pave the way for Israel to cope with one of its most difficult social challenges – the integration of millions of North African and Middle Eastern Jews into a society that had been dominated by the Ashkenazic Jews of Europe. But even tougher problems lie ahead. The integration of Israeli Arabs (who, although full Israeli citizens, still face discrimination) is, in the words of one Israeli conference participant, “a problem we have not solved.” And Israel remains deeply divided over the political status of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza, a debate that cuts to the very heart of Israel’s future.

Jewish tradition also helps explain another key cornerstone of Israeli democracy – respect for law. Although Israel lacks a written constitution, the reverence for law dating back to biblical times has given the Israeli Supreme Court and its highly independent attorney general unique authority to challenge even the most powerful political leaders, and serves to constrain the temptation of sacrificing democratic principles for expedience.

One of the most remarkable features of Israeli democracy is the extraordinary degree of civilian control over the military in a nation that is so dependent on its armed forces for day-to-day survival. Israel has turned the need to maintain a large military, which so often proves the undoing of democracy, into one of its greatest democratic bulwarks; at the same time, it has built one of the most effective military forces in the world. Even still, one military officer present at the NDI conference worried aloud about the long-term negative effects of using the military as an occupying force on the West Bank.

The Israeli experience is a crucial lesson to those who would suggest that the need to confront security threats justifies a more authoritarian form of government. Despite the misgivings expressed over the occupation role and the *intifada*, the Israeli “citizens army” continues to make a strong contribution to Israeli democracy.

Israel has also demonstrated that a vibrant free press is not inconsistent with national security. Although Israel maintains a form of military censorship, most conference participants, including journalists, asserted that censorship rarely, if ever, leads to suppressing significant information or viewpoints. Ar

important exception is the Arab press in the West Bank, which is subject to considerably greater restriction.

Costa Rica

Like Israel, Costa Rican democracy has just celebrated a 40th anniversary. But in Costa Rica, democracy's roots go much deeper than the 1949 Constitution that established the current framework of government. One hundred years ago, the first democratic election occurred in Costa Rica, and only twice since 1889 (1917-1920 and 1948-49) has democracy's strong hold on Costa Rica's political life loosened.

Costa Rica is not the only Central American nation with experience in democracy and democratic institutions, but alone among its neighbors Costa Rica has been able to sustain and extend democratic practice for most of the last 100 years. The conference held in San Jose in June 1988 explored the historical and cultural antecedents of Costa Rica's vibrant democracy, the political institutions that have evolved to sustain democracy and the contemporary challenges faced by this small Central American country.

Costa Rica has been uniquely fortunate in the circumstances surrounding its development as a nation. The Spanish settlers who arrived in Costa Rica came to cultivate and settle on the land. The absence of a significant native population meant that settlers had to depend on their own labor. Consequently, Costa Rica (unlike its Central American neighbors) never developed a large landless underclass. In addition, Costa Rica's geographic isolation allowed it to develop away from much of the military conflict and political intrigue that troubled Central America in the years following independence from Spain.

By the mid-19th century, Costa Rica had emerged as a highly individualistic and relatively egalitarian society — a sort of agrarian democracy. Because land holdings were relatively small, wealth was more widely distributed and the landed oligarchy a less dominant political force than in neighboring countries. Class and social lines were blurred and a sense of community developed. Moreover, the lack of a hostile “subject” social class meant that the economic and political elites did not come to depend on a professional military and the use of force to protect

their interests. A proclivity to solve problems by consensus, an attentiveness to the plight of the less fortunate, and respect for the rule of law – the “Tico” way – became the hallmark of political life in Costa Rica.

One of the most distinctive features of Costa Rica’s political development during the late 19th and early 20th century was the central importance placed on education, which played such a critical role in supporting the spread of democracy. By some estimates, literacy in Costa Rica increased from 11 percent in the 1860s to between 50 percent and 75 percent by the late 1920s, and today Costa Rica has a literacy rate of 93 percent – higher than the U.S. As a nation, Costa Rica has prided itself on having “more teachers than soldiers.”

The extension of education to the working and peasant classes created a citizenry that is more actively engaged in politics, yet more resistant to populist demagoguery than can be found in many other developing nations. The colorful and noisy *fiesta civica* (Costa Rica’s election day) is an emblem of the Ticos’ deep commitment to democracy.

The 1948 Revolution was a decisive moment for Costa Rican democracy. After leading an armed rebellion against the supporters of former President Rafael Calderon (who had attempted to retain power after apparently losing the 1948 election), Jose Figueres Ferrer (“Don Pepe”) assumed control of the government, and after a relatively brief period of rule by junta, returned power to the civilian leaders who had won the 1948 election.

Judged by the histories of *caudillismo*, coup and counter coup in its neighboring states, the conflict over the 1948 election and the ensuing civil war was a modest challenge to Costa Rica’s democratic traditions. But it left an enduring mark on the Costa Rican people, for whom democratic stability is a source of great national pride. The constitution writers of 1948-49, set out to assure that democratic control would never again be threatened.

The work of Figueres and his colleagues has stood the test of time. Since 1949, Costa Rica has held nine elections, with the party in opposition replacing the governing party in seven of those elections. If peaceful transition of power among parties is one paramount mark of a successful democracy, then Costa

Rica has more than proven the sturdiness of its institutions and its cultural commitment to democratic practice.

The conference in San Jose identified four distinctive features of Costa Rican democracy that have contributed to its remarkable record: a system of checks and balances that disperses power among many political institutions; an activist state deeply involved in the economic and social life of the country through "autonomous institutions" (which, because of their considerable independence from the political branches of government, provide policy continuity despite frequent changes of party control); the highly independent and respected Electoral Commission, which protects the integrity of the electoral process; and the absence of a professional military (abolished after the 1948 civil war).

The elaborate system of checks and balances built into the Costa Rican Constitution has served to guard against the concentration of power. The existence of multiple sources of power reinforces the dynamic pluralism of Costa Rican society, and provides stability in policy over time. Indeed, some critics have argued that unlike most developing nations, Costa Rica's problem is too much, not too little stability. The system of constraints on power, they suggest, inhibits the kind of strong leadership necessary to confront Costa Rica's pressing economic, political and security challenges.

The challenges Costa Rica faces today are serious: an economic crisis triggered by rising oil and lower commodity prices in the late 1970s and early 1980s that destroyed Costa Rica's balance of trade and led to a spiraling national debt; widening disparities of wealth and rapid urbanization that are altering the social fabric and threatening the national consensus; and the impact of the civil wars and military conflict throughout the region. The economic crisis is particularly acute – Costa Rica's massive foreign debt has forced the government to adopt politically unpopular austerity measures (especially cutbacks in public sector programs) that threaten the implicit social contract that has sustained Costa Rican democracy. Although the Administration in Washington and the international financial community have once again turned their attention to the problem of debt relief, a solution is not at hand. It is clear that unless creditors and the Costa Rican government can agree on

some coordinated approach to relieving the pressure of the debt problem, the economic crisis will deepen and the attendant threat to Costa Rican political stability will grow.

The military turmoil that has gripped Central America over the past decade has not spared Costa Rica. Though geographically isolated, the presence of contra forces in that part of Costa Rica bordering on Nicaragua has embroiled Costa Rica in the regional conflict, and raised questions whether Costa Rica can continue to maintain its security without professional military forces. Under the Reagan Administration, the United States pushed for a more active role by the Costa Rican Civil Guard in the border areas, an effort that was resisted by Costa Rica's political leaders. But some Costa Ricans at the San Jose conference questioned whether Costa Rica could continue to rely exclusively on the Inter-American Defense System for its security.

President Arias has been the moving force in seeking to bring peace to this troubled region; leadership that stems not only from Costa Rica's own interest in assuring its security and tranquility, but also from the Tico tradition, as one conference participant put it, "to first seek negotiations, to first seek compromise, before resorting to force." Although the odds against President Arias' dream of a peaceful and democratic Central America remain daunting, the persistence of his efforts may yet be rewarded, a fitting monument to the "Tico" way.

Botswana

Botswana is the youngest of the three democracies examined in this study and, to a much greater extent than Israel or Costa Rica, it is a democracy that is still evolving. Botswana's traditions, and its political experience since independence in 1966, have been unusually propitious for the development of democracy, and the results, as the conference in Gaborone demonstrated, have been remarkable. But a sense of caution pervaded the proceedings: democracy in Botswana remains a fragile bloom, which could be threatened in the future.

Botswana once again illustrates the importance of building on existing democratic traditions in creating the institutions of government. From the pre-colonial days, the Botswana tribal

tradition of *kgotla*, the tribal assembly, established a predilection for consultation and consensus in governance. During the struggle for independence, a new form of communal political activity, the “freedom squares” became a principal forum through which the nascent Botswana political parties debated and discussed political issues. Although elites, including tribal chiefs, headmen, cattlemen and the civil service, have and continue to play a dominant role in Botswanan political life, the practice of involving adult males in major decisions involving communal life has proved a durable foundation for modern Botswanan democracy. The *kgotla* itself remains an important feature in Botswana government today, and freedom squares provide the public with an alternative source of news and information to the state-owned press and radio.

Although traditional Botswana society was ruled by strong, hereditary tribal chiefs, other Botswana traditions, including a strong tradition of respect for the rule of law and a judicial system in the community assemblies that was independent of the tribal chief, provided a check on the chiefs’ power and helped create a climate in which democracy has subsequently flourished.

History has looked kindly on the young Botswanan democracy. Despite the presence of eight major tribal groups, there is considerable cultural unity among the Botswanan people, and the dominant tribe, the Tswana, have been solicitous of the interests of the smaller tribes. The absence of deep inter-tribal divisions has spared Botswana the often bloody conflict that has emerged in many post-colonial African nations.

Similarly, the transition to independence proceeded relatively peacefully in Botswana. The anti-colonial movement spawned Botswana’s four principal political parties rather than an armed political movement, and all of those parties remain active today. Unlike many of its African counterparts, Botswana had no single revolutionary leader who wielded autocratic power in the newly independent nation. Instead, the civil service proved the strongest political institution in the early years and dominated Botswana’s political life through the 1960s and into the 1970s. Although the civil service lacked true democratic accountability, rivalry among the different agencies, and the continued influence of traditional elites, prevented a concentration of power that could have led to a more authoritarian state. More recently, a

new generation of Botswana's politicians has emerged and begun to challenge the civil service stranglehold over policy in a way that should strengthen democratic accountability.

Although Botswana has been ruled by a single party – the market-oriented Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) – since independence, Botswana shows little risk of becoming a one-party state. The opposition parties, particularly the Botswana National Front (BNF), have established support in the country's urban centers. Elections are fair and open, and dissent tolerated in a liberal spirit. The decentralized political structure protects the political rights of the various sub-ethnic groups within the society.

But democratic activism in Botswana is still primarily the preserve of the well-educated, with eligibility to Parliament restricted to those who can read and write English, and party leadership, especially in the ruling BDP, held by elites. Fortunately for the Botswanan people, the elites in that society seem committed to democracy although, as several conference participants noted, "it is not clear which way the ruling elite would turn if they were to be confronted with a truly serious challenge to their political dominance."

Botswanan democracy has also benefitted from the dramatic economic gains achieved since independence. Annual per capita income has increased more than fivefold in the past 10 years, thanks in part to the effective marketing of mineral and agricultural resources and to generous foreign aid, which has been used wisely by the Botswanan government to invest in long-term infrastructure and human capital (health care and schools). As the report concludes, "[t]he relative economic success of Botswana has clearly contributed to its democratic success."

But a major uncertainty hangs over Botswana's economic future – its deep dependence on South Africa. South Africa is the source of the bulk of critical imports such as petrochemicals and food, and virtually all of Botswana's exports (other than diamonds) must pass through South Africa to reach their foreign markets. South African mines provide employment for about 20,000 Botswanan workers and the wages they send home are vital to the Botswanan economy.

South Africa's power to disrupt the Botswanan economy could pose a grave danger to the stability of the democracy. South Africa has repeatedly warned that it will spread the pain of economic sanctions to the Front Line states and the potential of South Africa economic coercion hangs like Damocles' sword over the head of Botswana's government.

South African military operations also pose risks for Botswana's democratic institutions. Traditionally, the military has not played a dominant role in Botswanan society. The primary source of military personnel during the tribal and colonial times was a form of universal conscription (or citizen-army). Military activities were controlled not by full-time military leaders, but by tribal chiefs who were primarily concerned with their "civilian" responsibilities. For the first 10 years of independence, Botswana (like Costa Rica) maintained only a police force, but no standing military.

During the last decade, the situation has begun to change. Repeated South African cross-border raids in pursuit of members of the African National Congress (ANC) led the Botswanan government in 1976 to create the Botswana Defense Force (BDF), in order to protect Botswana's sovereignty as well as to control the movements of ANC fighters in the country. Over the past decade, the BDF has grown in importance, increasing from 1,000 to 3,000 soldiers: by 1986 the BDF consumed 2.3 percent of the nation's gross national product (up from zero percent prior to 1977).

Some conference participants expressed the fear that growing dependence on the military could destabilize Botswana democracy. A new National Security Act has enhanced the powers of the attorney general and the police to act against foreign agents; opposition parties and minorities fear that the law could be used against them as well. To date, however, the law has rarely been invoked, and does not appear to have been used to violate civil liberties.

Despite the turmoil in the nations surrounding it, Botswana has remained relatively free from external military aggression and internal political strife. Botswana, in effect, has had a 20-year breathing space in which to develop its unique form of democracy. While there remain significant uncertainties over the future, the evolution of Botswana's political structures continues

to broaden and deepen the grip of democracy through all aspects of the nation's life.

Much remains to be done, particularly in extending democratic culture to rural areas, where the bulk of the population lives, literacy is low, and the popular commitment to democracy is weakest. The importance of interest groups as a political tool in democracy is just beginning to be understood. But on a continent where democratic governance is still struggling to take hold, Botswana is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished in a remarkably short period of time.

The Common Threads

Three nations, three histories, three distinctive approaches to democracy. Yet, each has successfully built democratic institutions in a region where democracy is the exception, not the rule. Each has sustained its commitment to democracy in the face of military, political, economic and social conflict, and each has demonstrated that democracy can prove an asset, not a hindrance in coping with these challenges.

Despite their differences, the three case studies suggest that there are several important common features in these nations' approach to democracy. While generalizations are always perilous, there are certain patterns that help explain why democracy works in these distinctive regions, and may provide lessons for those seeking to foster democracy in nations where it does not exist today.

It is perhaps ironic that the first, and arguably most important, generalization about successful democracies is their very diversity. Rather than trying to mold themselves to some "ideal type" of democracy, each of these three remarkable democracies is built upon an indigenous foundation. Democracy is not an exotic transplant in Israel, Costa Rica and Botswana — it has deep roots in the histories and cultures of each nation. The democratic leaders of all three countries have understood that to build well and enduringly, the building materials must be made of native clay. Even where institutions are borrowed from other successful democracies, they must be adapted to local conditions and practices.

A second central lesson that each of these democracies has learned is the importance of dispersing and decentralizing power among a variety of institutions in the society. This is true not simply because, as Lord Acton's maxim has it, absolute power corrupts absolutely. The real danger of concentrating power in one institution, especially the executive branch, is that power becomes an "all or nothing" proposition – too valuable to risk losing through the democratic process (for the party or group in control), too attractive for those out of power who may be tempted to seize it by non-democratic means. By contrast, where there are multiple sources of power in a society, even those out of office have a continuing stake in the orderly functioning of the political system – because those who have lost an election are not entirely excluded from exercising influence. Concentrated power is the stuff of autocracy and coups, diffused and multiple institutions of power support democratic stability.

For this reason, the legacy of democratic revolutions, dating back to the Magna Carta, has been a belief in the importance of the separation of powers. As James Madison, one of the principal architects of the American democracy, observed: "the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."

In Costa Rica, the Constitution of 1949 takes this principle far indeed. Even though Israel lacks a formal constitution, it has developed a strong and independent judiciary, as well as independent institutions such as the attorney general and ombudsman. Checks and balances come naturally to the government of Botswana, where even in traditional tribal society, the autocratic power of the chiefs was checked by the *kgotla*.

The case studies also suggest that the importance of decentralizing and dispersing power is not limited to the formal institutions of government; successful democracies tend to develop non-governmental institutions of political power and influence that provide further safeguards against despotism and can help assure that all the voices within a society have a chance to be heard.

Decentralizing and diffusing power promotes greater freedom, which in turn helps sustain diversity and pluralism, touchstones of successful democracies. But pluralism must operate in a

climate of an underlying social consensus: if not, the healthy competition between ideas and interests in a successful democracy can disintegrate into violent struggle among warring factions. As political theorist Robert Dahl has noted:

Prior to politics, beneath it, enveloping it, restricting it, conditioning it, is the underlying consensus on policy that usually exists in the society among a predominant portion of the politically active members. Without such a consensus no democratic system would long survive the endless irritations and frustrations of elections and party competition. With such a consensus, the disputes over policy alternatives are nearly always disputes over a set of alternatives that have already been winnowed down to those within the broad area of basic agreement.

Each of the three nations studied has a strong social "glue" that helps keep its political system from splitting at the seams. Both Botswana and Costa Rica are relatively homogenous culturally. By contrast, cultural diversity at one time appeared to threaten the stability of the political system in Israel, but a growing recognition by the old elites (the European Jews) of the need to spread the civic consensus to the new arrivals from northern Africa and the Middle East through education helped overcome that obstacle.

Formal separation of powers can be meaningless in preventing despotism if one segment of the society has a monopoly on the tools of coercion — military force. For this reason, democracies have been at pains to constrain the domestic role and influence of the military. Americans recall that one of the grievances lodged against King George III in the Declaration of Independence was that "he has kept among us in times of peace standing armies without the consent of our legislatures" and "he has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to the civil power."

Yet no democracy, no matter how well wrought, will survive unless it can defend itself against hostile neighbors and domestic insurrection. As Alexander Hamilton stated: "Safety from external danger is the most powerful director of national conduct... The violent destruction of life and property incident to war, the continual effort and alarm attendant on a state of continual danger, will compel nations the most attached to

liberty to resort for repose and security to institutions which have a tendency to destroy their civil and political rights. To be more safe, they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free.”

The people of Costa Rica have resolved this dilemma by eliminating the military entirely, relying on diplomacy and the rule of international law to maintain Costa Rica’s sovereignty and independence. Botswana also tried this route, but circumstances have led to the creation of a professional military.

For Israel, embroiled in mortal conflict since its creation, a strong military force has been a necessity. But Israel has demonstrated that Hamilton’s proposition can in fact prove a false conundrum: that with appropriate safeguards, a military that is subject to civilian control and that respects political rights can provide security superior to that offered by the military in a dictatorship. Israel’s military forces are effective precisely because they are so responsive to civilian society and democratic principles. In other words, there need be no fundamental trade-off between effective security on the one hand and democracy and civil liberties on the other – the two can be mutually reinforcing.

But the military is not the only source of concentrated power in a society that can threaten democracy. Extreme economic inequality can create a small, economically powerful elite, which not only has the incentive to retain power, but the muscle to do so. At the same time, the persistence of an economically disenfranchised class is a breeding ground for revolution – and not necessarily democratic revolution. Each of the three nations studied was historically fortunate to have escaped the extreme inequalities of wealth that elsewhere created powerful anti-democratic oligarchies, and each in turn has nurtured a more egalitarian society through enlightened social and economic policies – such as land reform, labor rights and adequate social welfare programs – that have benefitted the less fortunate. De Tocqueville’s description of the requirements of successful democratic development provides a universal lesson: “Nations are less disposed to make revolutions when personal property and its distribution grows among them and there grows the number who possess it.”

Critical to the spread of economic egalitarianism is education, which allows even the poorest in the society to escape the trap of perpetual poverty and to become informed participants in the political life of the nation. It is no accident that these successful democracies have much higher literacy rates than their non-democratic neighbors, and that education remains for all three a preeminent social priority.

The politics of these countries are healthy because strong political parties have demonstrated a capacity to vie for popular support and to govern when selected to do so. These parties have grown strong because they have understood the importance of grassroots organization. They have won elections because they have delivered a convincing message to the voters. And they have governed successfully because they have respected the role of the loyal opposition and the need for compromise in a democratic system. While the loss of executive power has not yet been tested in Botswana, the parties of all three nations seem to understand that electoral defeat and opposition status is honorable within a democratic framework even if generally undesirable as a fate. These three nations demonstrate once again that political parties are integral institutions in democracies.

These lessons not only help explain why democracy has flourished in the three countries, but also highlight the sources of danger in the future. Paramount is the need to respond to security threats, and the danger that measures taken to strengthen the hand of the military in dealing with these threats will undermine democratic institutions. This danger is present in all three countries: the dilemma posed by the enhanced police role of Israel's military in responding to the *intifada*; the growing importance of the Botswana Defense Force in meeting the challenges of the ongoing conflict between South Africa and the ANC; and the pressures to militarize Costa Rica's Civil Guard. For this reason, efforts to promote regional peace are vitally important not only to end the suffering and destruction, but also to buttress the democratic institutions of the three countries.

The second great danger is economic. A shrinking pie exacerbates social conflict, and raises the stakes over who controls the levers of power that determine the allocation of diminished economic benefits. Both Costa Rica and Israel have

experienced severe economic difficulties. By forcing the government to reduce and eliminate social and economic programs that combat inequality and disadvantage, these economic difficulties threaten the domestic social consensus. Botswana faces a similar challenge as a result of economic sanctions against South Africa and the potential for even more serious economic dislocation if South Africa should retaliate against those Front Line states that challenge its policies.

Responding to these challenges can prove difficult for democracies, because the very diffusion of power that creates democratic stability can be seen as a cumbersome check on the power to act in a time of a crisis. In Israel and Costa Rica, conference participants expressed concern over political paralysis that has hindered the ability of their governments to meet the most serious political problems. These participants acknowledged that the alternative of an unfettered executive acting unilaterally in time of crisis is even worse: without the political legitimacy conferred on decisions made through the democratic process, the population is less likely to accept the need to sacrifice and compromise.

The economic, social and military threats are real, and we should not underestimate their potential for eroding the institutions that have sustained democracy in all three countries. And yet, it is important to keep in mind that even the most well entrenched democracies have had to adapt to crisis. The suspension of *habeas corpus* during the U.S. Civil War, the constraints on free speech during World War I and during the McCarthy era, the internment of Japanese-Americans during the World War II are all illustrations of how far our government has abused fundamental tenets of our political system to respond to perceived national security needs.

The United States has been able to step back from periods in which civil liberties were threatened because its democratic and liberal values are so deeply rooted in its political consciousness. An informed citizenry, supported by an active free press and non-governmental associations, such as political parties, citizen organizations and labor unions, has proved the most durable check on encroachment by government.

In all three of the nations examined, the culture and values of democracy, free speech and tolerance of dissent run deep.

Indeed, the holding of such freewheeling discussions – often critical of sitting governments – is a testimony to how deeply committed these societies have become to democracy. Their experiences should help sustain them through the challenges of the future – and can serve as a model and inspiration to others who are struggling to build democracy and human rights in their own lands.

ISRAEL

Introduction

At a three-day conference held at Sedom, near the Dead Sea, from January 8-10, 1987, NDI brought together 50 prominent U.S. and Israeli government officials, legislators, military officers, political party and labor leaders, journalists and academics. (See Appendix A for a list of participants.) In addition, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres addressed the gathering, which was held at the Dead Sea Moriah Hotel.

The conference was divided into four workshop sessions, which focused on security, political, social and economic issues. Examining subject areas with practical relevance to other geographic regions, the conferees discussed safeguards for ensuring effective checks and balances; the relationship between security and the rule of law; civil-military relations; institutional development and democratic values; rights and responsibilities of a free press; tolerance for diversity; crisis management; civil-military relations; and economic austerity measures. (See Appendix B for the conference agenda.)

NDI Chairman Mondale led the U.S. delegation. In his opening address he noted that the conference was unique for

NDI since the Institute usually works in new or emerging democracies. "This time NDI is doing something different," he said. "We are here to study an example of a solid, stable democracy that operates in an environment of crisis."

Beating the Odds

In his opening remarks to the conference, Hebrew University Professor Shlomo Avineri asked the participants to imagine themselves as political scientists in 1948 who have been given the following scenario:

A small state has been established in a region of non-democratic regimes. Surrounded by larger, hostile states it will not see one day of peace for the next 40 years.

Five major wars and chronic terrorism force it to organize as a besieged nation. The army emerges as a dominant institution, absorbing a large percentage of the GNP.

Immigrants flood in from over 100 countries, quadrupling its population. Most have known only non-democratic regimes. The state's social welfare ideology generates high expectations among the newcomers that cannot be fully met.

What kind of government would you predict this country to have after 40 years? Avineri asked. A democracy, or something else?

The country, of course, is Israel. Like many newborn states, Israel started life with a liberal democracy modeled after the Western system. Unlike many others, Israel's democracy has survived.

How has Israel maintained its democracy? What lessons from the Israeli experience may be of use of democrats elsewhere struggling to build and maintain democratic systems? The Sedom conference sought to address these questions.

The Israeli system, like all democracies, is neither complete nor flawless. While not ignoring the problems of Israeli democracy, this report focuses on what can be learned from its strength and vibrancy. The sections of this report roughly parallel the sessions of the conference.

Origins of Israeli Democracy

Why was Israel originally founded as a democracy?

Roots in Judaism? Countries of Origin?

Two reasons are often given for Israel's democratic origins: 1) Judaism extols democratic values; and 2) the early settlers brought a democratic system with them from Europe.

Both explanations miss their mark, although both also contain an element of truth. Traditional Judaism, like most religions, contains democratic as well as non-democratic elements. On one hand, it is based on principles such as respect for individuals, juridical resolution of disputes, and the pluralism inherent in Talmudic discourse, which allows for questioning and alternative interpretations of text.

On the other hand, biblical history and Judaic traditions contain much that is undemocratic. In his prepared remarks, Avineri observed, "The rulers of the First and Second Commonwealths were Eastern potentates. If you want a good example of oriental despotism, read the Book of Kings." The Torah teaches that higher laws take precedence over majority opinion, as in Moses' confrontation with his people over worship of the golden calf.

Similarly, one cannot conclude that the early settlers simply brought their political system with them. The early leaders came almost exclusively from Eastern Europe. Moreover, they came precisely from those places where Jews and others minorities were most persecuted. As Avineri concluded, "If the founders had copied the governmental institutions of their countries of origin, we would not have democracy today."

The most direct source of Israeli democracy may be found not in the normative tenets of Judaism, but in the practical life of the village; not in the political systems of countries of origin, but in the ideals of the Enlightenment that inspired Zionism. Both sources shaped the democratic style of the two precursors of Israel government, the Zionist organizations and the self-governing bodies of the Jewish settlers in Palestine.

Born in the Shtetl

Jewish village communities in Eastern Europe, known as *shtetls*, were each governed by local councils, known as the *kehillot*. The *kehilla* was elective and consensual. Each autonomous community worked out its own rules of governance, with many variations. The results were relatively liberal by then-current standards. The most severe legal punishment, rarely invoked, was excommunication.

As a persecuted minority in autocratic societies, the Jews had to cope with a hostile environment and externally imposed decisions. National authorities were hostile and capricious. The *kehillot* had to deal with crises and make decisions under pressure. It is ironic that among an oppressed minority struggling to survive the whims of empire, the seeds of an electoral process, as well as consensus and representation, emerged. Avineri noted, "The mayor of Kiev was appointed by the Czar, but the head of the Jewish community in Kiev was elected by those downtrodden and persecuted Jews."

Inspired by the Enlightenment

In the late 18th century, the precarious but enduring life of the *shtetl* was buffeted by social change and the fresh ideas sweeping across Europe. Jewish life was shaken by political upheavals and violent oppression, and it was inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment – nationalism, democratic liberalism, social revolution and egalitarianism. Out of this storm emerged Jewish nationalism, or Zionism, fired by visions of return, redemption and national liberation. Political Zionism's secular and assimilated founder, Theodore Herzl, was far better versed in the modern ideologies of his time than in Judaism.

Representatives to the first Zionist Congress in 1897 were not elected. Herzl invited prominent figures based on reputation and representation of diverse communities. But immediately they adopted a constitution calling for regional elections. All dues-paying members, including women, could vote. At this time, no country except New Zealand allowed women's suffrage. Soon factions formed, the precursors of Israel's political parties.

In the early 20th century, Zionist settlers arriving in Palestine created self-governing, agrarian communities – the *kibbutzim*.

Highly idealistic and founded by voluntary association, the kibbutzim experimented with democratic decision-making and egalitarian, socialist economics. As Avineri noted, "When they came and decided to set up a kibbutz, there was no central committee to do it for them. So they sat around a table and decided to vote because they knew what voting was." During British rule following World War I, as earlier under the Turks, each religious community developed its own institutions. The Jewish community in Palestine, known as the Yishuv, was granted a remarkable degree of autonomy. The Yishuv developed its own governing bodies, opened schools, provided services, taxed and organized for defense.

Elections to the Jewish national assembly, the precursor to the Knesset, began in the early 1920s. Fifteen parties represented the various Zionist movements with diverse ideologies. There, they elected the national committee, or executive committee. As Avineri pointed out, "Years before the founding of the state, the Yishuv had developed all of the elements of a polity, except sovereignty and coercive power.

A Crucial Variable: Leadership

Tradition alone cannot explain the emergence of democracy; there are many examples of states such as Spain, with long histories of dictatorship, in which democracy has recently taken root. Leadership plays an undeniable role.

The giants of Zionism and founders of the state, Theodore Herzl, Chaim Weizman and David Ben Gurion, were all profoundly committed to democratic values. As Israel's first prime minister and defense minister, Ben Gurion exerted his immense personal prestige to forge a unified, non-political army out of several militias associated with political factions. He also institutionalized the practices that later made the Israeli army among the most respected and most democratic in the world.

Israel's Citizen Army: Safeguarding Security and Maintaining Democracy

How has a small nation under constant threat, with a huge military establishment, managed to maintain civilian control and prevent undue military influence in politics?

A Tiny Nation Under Siege, A Regional Power

Immediately after Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab states declared war and invaded. Since then, Israel has been in a constant state of conflict with its neighbors, punctuated by large-scale wars in 1956, 1967, 1970, 1973, and 1982. Terrorism, border conflicts, and the threat of total war have been a daily fact of life for all Israelis.

To defend itself, Israel has built a large military establishment. Nearly one-third of the government's budget, and 17 percent of the GNP, is allocated to defense. The army is arguably the dominant institution in Israeli life.

Over 90 percent of Jewish Israelis serve in the Israel Defense Force (IDF). Men serve for three years at age 18, and continue to serve one or two months of reserve duty every year until age 55. Women serve for two years and single women remain eligible for duty until age 34.

Israel defies the conventional wisdom that democracy interferes with military success. Israel's military victories over numerically superior foes are legendary. The prowess of its armed forces is admired by military professionals the world over.

Some Israeli military and political figures maintain that it is precisely Israel's democratic nature that enabled it to overcome great odds. One Knesset member pointed out the fallacy that authoritarian systems are more effective militarily than democracies:

Totalitarianism is intrinsically inefficient in the military sense. They always lose. There is no historical example of a totalitarian state which ever had long-term military success. Totalitarian states all build up their army, idolize it, then lose their wars with a uniform consistency which must affect people with any historic imagination.

Total Integration With Society

An Israeli political scientist commented on the relationship between the military and society, "If you look at societies in which there were successful *coup de etats*. . .[you find] that the military had a very high level of corporatism and and alienation from civilian society. In Israel, you never had that gap between society and the military."

The country's small size and large defense needs dictated the structure of the IDF — a citizen army characterized by compulsory universal service, modeled in part on the Swiss system.

Since almost all Jewish citizens serve, the army mirrors Israeli society — reflecting its beauty, blemishes, and diversity. The army is neither separate nor distinct from the rest of society. Soldiers and military institutions are integrated in virtually every conceivable way.

The IDF may be the most permeable military institution in the world. Soldiers constantly come and go between the army and civilian life. They take leaves during compulsory service. Neither officers nor the rank-and-file live in closed communities, as in many countries. When possible, soldiers live at home. One Israeli political scientist noted, "Israel has no West Point, no St. Cyr, no Sandhurst. In fact, Israel has no military academies whatsoever. Soldiers study in regular high schools and universities, even during their period of service."

The same political scientist contended that the Israeli practice of integration could be applied elsewhere:

Many of the Israeli officers do study in the universities during the military period so they are mixed with civilian society, which by the way is a very important remedy for the Latin American problem where there are major rivalries between the universities and the officers.

And if you send university people to the military and you send officers to the university, you can change that sort of relationship.

As another indicator of integration, the same analyst reported on a study in which, "We asked officers how many of your five closest friends are military men. It was not more than two [out of five friends, on average]."

Career Tracks: No Military Caste

Built on its reserves, the IDF maintains only a small professional officer corps. Professional officers emerge out of the compulsory service; there is no separate officers' track. The only career ladder leads from basic training to private, to noncommissioned officer, and finally to officer candidacy.

Frequent rotation of commands prevents excessive personal loyalties from developing between units and their commanders. Each chief of staff serves only three to five years. Mandatory early retirement – between ages 45 and 50 – ensures a dual career pattern. Officers must integrate with civilian society as they prepare for a second, civilian career. An Israel participant said that, “Even the most professional of them [officers] regards it [military service] as a transitory state in a career which had a previous revelation and which will have an expression later on.”

The army takes responsibility for ensuring that officers are adequately prepared for their return to civilian life. During their service, they are allowed to spend up to two years in liberal arts study at universities. Before they retire, professional education for their civilian career begins, again, at regular universities.

No Tilt to the Right

The officer corps, like the reserves, reflects society. The demographic composition of the professional corps is similar to that of other elite segments of Israeli society. There is no bias toward the right, as described by one political scientist:

In the West, you'll find the majority of officers reflect the right-wing, conservative, authoritarian pole of the political and personality spectrum. In Israel, you don't find that.

I've interviewed 100 generals, brigadiers, and colonels, and I found that they reflect the entire political spectrum, from right to left, from socialist to capitalist, from doves to hawks, from conservatives to radicals, etc.

...[There is] even an inclination to reflect more the progressive pole than the conservative pole.

This modest but seemingly surprising bias toward left-of-center politics among Israeli officers is partly historical. The

IDF grew out of the underground of the pre-state Haganah. The Haganah was associated with the dominant Labor Zionist groups and their associated kibbutzim. Kibbutz traditions of service and heroism fostered outstanding military contributions among kibbutz youth, and these traditions still persist. Although kibbutz members today represent only three percent of Israel's population, they constitute roughly 20 percent of the officer corps.

Army Education: A Top Priority

An unusual emphasis on liberal education in the IDF also contributes to the lack of authoritarian tendencies among officers. The IDF takes education very seriously. A special Education Corps headed by the senior education officer, currently a brigadier general, defines its mission as not only preparing recruits for army service and leadership, but socializing young Israelis as citizens during a crucial phase in their development.

In addition to military subjects, soldiers study Jewish and Israeli history, geography, cultural arts and current social and political issues and controversies. Vocational training is available prior to demobilization. Throughout its curriculum, the IDF relies heavily on civilian educators, sending "university people to the military and officers to the university," according to one participant.

Army education programs do not shy away from the most controversial issues of the day, emphasizing diversity of opinion and critical thinking. In 1986, in response to polls revealing that many Israeli youth had developed undemocratic attitudes towards ethnic minorities, the IDF augmented its studies of democracy, minority rights and the role of the army in a democratic state.

A current IDF Education Corps brochure reads:

Deriving from the essence of the IDF as the army of a democratic state and an inseparable part of Israeli society, the *hasbara* (dissemination of information) activity strives to achieve the involvement of officers and soldiers in Israel's problems of existence and their personal commitment to the rules of democracy...

The Education Corps promotes intensive treatment of the various elements of growing polarization in the Israeli political system: the borderlines between religious and secular; the awakening problem of relations with Palestinian Arabs; the problems with which the IDF has to contend in Judea, Samaria and Gaza; and the lowered level of tolerance among the Israeli public, with its accomplished blurring of commitment to the principles of democratic government.

The same brochure notes that time spent away from military duties provides for open discussion and relaxation in an education setting. Independent thinking – during and after military service – is constantly stressed:

Within the army, there is no indoctrination towards particular positions, but rather explanation of all; education on the personal right of every citizen and soldier to independent thought and to the strengthening of his own opinions by knowledge and understanding.

Democracy Within the Army

As in the rest of Israeli society, informality characterizes relations among soldiers of all ranks. Customs indicating rank, such as saluting and formal address, vary from unit to unit. Israeli soldiers tend not to be overawed even by high officers. One's commander during reserve service may be one's neighbor or insurance salesman in civilian life. Israeli soldiers take pride in independent thinking and are instructed to disobey unlawful orders. No Israeli officer contemplating issuing questionable orders can count on the automatic compliance of his troops.

Communication is fluid up and down the hierarchy. Two different army ombudsmen provide channels of communication across lines of command. One serves soldiers, the other civilians. A soldier can complain about his commander, and even visit the chief of staff at his home on Saturday.

The army itself, along with a free press, can serve as a check on military misbehavior. An Israeli correspondent who reported on army negligence during the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militiamen at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982, recalled that "out of the blue I got into my

hands a top secret telegram,” contradicting official army statements.

Civilian Control Established Early

The principle of civilian supremacy was firmly established even prior to the creation of the state. The socialist ideology of the early Zionist groups dictated that “the party will control the gun.” This legacy of civilian control continued with the Labor movement, and later the Knesset.

Soon after victory in the War of Independence, Ben Gurion saw the danger of preserving independent militias allied to competing political factions. He quickly imposed a non-political, unified army with the main features of today’s IDF – universal service, rotation of command, no separate track for officers, early retirement and dual career patterns.

Ben Gurion also separated the IDF’s general headquarters from the powerful civilian-run defense ministry. One retired Israeli military officer noted that separate general headquarters and defense ministries exist in many countries. However, he asserted that in Israel the degree of separation is greater than in most countries. The military budget and logistics are all controlled by civilians.

Ben Gurion further insisted that the chief of staff may not be promoted directly to minister of defense. In fact, he denied the request of his friend and protege, the then-IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, to become defense minister. To ensure what this participant called a “cooling-off period,” Ben Gurion appointed Dayan minister of agriculture. “[A decision] for which we all suffered because of the drop in projected revenue from tomato production,” quipped another Israeli conferee.

Danger Points Openly Discussed

All of the above factors contribute to the paradox noted by one conference participant, that “Israeli society is militarized but not militaristic.” Yet no institution is perfect, and Israelis remain concerned about the danger of excessive military influence, lapses in civilian oversight, and the possible adverse effects on professional and reserve soldiers who must police the West Bank and Gaza.

The popularity of leading generals once made the army a major avenue of mobility to top political echelons. One Israeli politician observed that no other democracy in the West has so many former generals in its cabinet, and so many former officers in its parliament. However, others countered that only one former general (Yitzhak Rabin) has ascended to the premiership, while many highly visible military men have failed in their bids for high office.

The military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza remains a major concern, but Israelis disagree about its effect on the army and society. Several Israelis expressed their conviction that military occupation is incompatible with democracy and will inevitably lead to a decline of democratic values. Another cited a study showing that service in the West Bank and Gaza has not adversely affected soldiers; they return from service with the same political attitudes with which they entered. Participants added that the problem of restraining the behavior of soldiers in the territories is not one of principle, but of implementation and control at the squad level.

The army openly discusses these issues and takes steps to address them, notably through its educational programs. This reflects one of the greatest strengths of the Israeli system, which partly accounts for its persistence and resiliency; its capacity for self-criticism and self-correction.

The Political Institutions of Israeli Democracy

What institutions have played important roles in maintaining Israeli democracy? Without a constitution, how does Israel protect civil liberties and manage relations among the branches of government?

No democracy is ever complete: its very essence is ongoing political evolution. Israel's political system, only 40 years old, is clearly still in its early stages of development. Interestingly, where some institutions are weak – or nonexistent – other institutions have expanded to fill the void. In other cases, strong but informal democratic norms and traditions compensate for institutional weaknesses.

Proportional Representation: Too Much of a Good Thing

One Israeli politician commented, "Israel's system is the most democratic in terms of representation, but the most inefficient in terms of governing."

Israel's founders adapted an essentially European parliamentary system to the small size of the country, to its unique circumstances, and to the traditions already established in the Yishuv. Israel has no electoral districts. All voters choose from the same party lists. Each party submits a ranked list of 120 names, and is awarded seats in the 120-seat Knesset in proportion to its share of the popular vote.

In the 1984 elections, 35 parties appeared on the ballot. Since only one percent of the popular vote is needed to win one seat, some 15 parties found their way into the Knesset. Virtually every point of view is represented, which is both a strength and a weakness. The wide range of choice may contribute to Israel's relatively high turnouts: roughly 80 percent of the electorate votes in national elections. (Ease of registration undoubtedly also contributes to Israel's high voter turnout. Everyone, 18 years or older, whose name appears on the census list and who has been issued an I.D. card is automatically entitled to vote.)

But a number of conference participants argued that the plethora of parties means that no single party can form a government without forming a coalition with smaller parties. This gives the small parties disproportionate bargaining power. In particular, the religious parties whose ideology permits them to coalesce with either of the major blocs, Labor or Likud, often extract concessions far out of proportion to their numbers. Dependence on coalitions can paralyze the government if neither block can assemble a governing coalition.

Also, the low, one percent minimum has allowed embarrassing personalities to appear in the Knesset, such as Meir Kahane's extremist Kach Party and French fugitive Shmuel Flatto-Sharon's one-man party.

Many Israelis express concern about weak ties between voters and their representatives because Knesset members are not accountable to any constituency. Instead, they are dependent on party leaders, who can grant or deny them a "safe spot" on the party list.

These concerns have led to calls for electoral reform, such as adopting a district system or a mixed system of districts and at-large seats. Advocates claim that in a district system, representation of the large parties would grow, the power of small parties would shrink, and tiny fringe parties would disappear. Also, district elections could open up local avenues for new young leaders to emerge, thereby weakening the influence of party leaders. Knesset members could be held accountable by a specific geographical constituency, and a citizen could then petition a specific representative.

Opponents of reform warn that if highly ideological, geographically dispersed communities such as orthodox Jews are not adequately represented in the Knesset, disaffection could occur, and Israel would lose one of the main ties binding its diverse factions.

Strong Political Parties

Nowhere in the West do political parties play as dominant a role in daily life as in Israel. As one Israeli scholar noted, "We don't have the problem of establishing strong political parties; the parties established the state of Israel."

Before the formation of the state, parties provided most services. Today, organizations affiliated with political parties are still involved in housing, sports, medical services and almost every aspect of economic life.

Several U.S. conference participants envied the level of party discipline found in Israel. In the U.S., they noted, legislators are accountable more to their constituents and funders than to their party. The two-party system further weakens party platforms by forcing both parties to vie for the center. This structure, and the growing dominance of television as the medium of political communication, has led to an undue focus on personalities — and money — instead of issues.

In Israel, party loyalty and platforms still dominate; money is controlled by the parties and not by individual candidates. The Israeli system gives tremendous power to party leaders. Until recently, lists of candidates were drawn up by the central committee in a long, smoke-filled bargaining session. Because this system limited access by young politicians, both parties

introduced reforms to open up their parties and provide more rank-and-file participation in drawing up the lists.

The Likud bloc in opposition from 1948 until 1977, could never match Labor's constituent services and Labor's penetration of all aspects of Israeli life. Likud became, instead, a different type of party: a coalition of factions. Seeking to attract members from the new immigrant groups from middle Eastern and North African countries (Sephardi Jews), Likud was the first to make it easier for young leaders to move in and up quickly. In 1987, Likud could count 12 Knesset members age 40 or under; Labor had only one.

During its reign, Labor became a gerontocracy. One Labor Party leader admitted that "one party being in power for nearly 30 years is disastrous, for the ruling party as well as the political system." A complete democracy, he argued, implied rotation of power.

Only the shock of defeat, first in 1977 and again in 1981, forced Labor to begin the painful, slow process of self-examination and internal reform. Now a number of seats on Labor's central committee are reserved for young leaders, a broader group names the lists to be put forth in election, and grassroots activists more often question the decisions of party leaders.

Some advocates of electoral reform believe that internal party reforms are equally important. One Labor member of Knesset warned, "If we only change the national electoral system without changing the way our party functions, nothing is going to happen."

The Knesset: A Lively Legislature

No Israeli institution reflects the openness, range and intensity of Israeli public debate better than the Knesset. The Knesset has become almost synonymous with vociferous and occasionally unruly discourse. However, several Knesset members at the conference complained about their lack of subpoena and investigatory powers. Speaking of his experience in the U.S. Congress, one American participant agreed:

If I had only three powers and had to give up two, I would give up the powers of appropriations and legislation and retain the discovery process.

The power to subpoena, to interrogate, to search out the truth on public issues is one of the greatest engines of a stable democracy we have [in the U.S.]...

The gravest threats to our democracy in our history have been runaway presidents and bureaucrats who tried to run free of restraint, law and trust. We hauled them before these committees and forced a return to sanity.

Others pointed out that one cannot compare the discovery powers of the U.S. Congress with those of the Knesset because the legislative and executive branches are less distinct in parliamentary system. Majority members in any parliamentary system almost never pursue an investigation to the point of exposing a scandal that could lead to a no confidence vote. Robust, aggressive legislative investigation is almost unique to the U.S.

In Israel, special investigatory commissions partly fill the gap. The Israeli prime minister has the authority to name such commissions to investigate and report on government failures. For example, the Agranat Commission investigated the intelligence failure prior to the surprise Syrian and Egyptian attacks in 1973, and the Kahan commission investigated charges of army negligence in regard to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila in 1982. Both commissions produced harsh reports, which recommended strong corrective actions and led to resignations of top officials.

Constitutionality Without a Constitution: Filling the Void

If representation of public opinion is one of Israel's greatest institutional strengths, underdeveloped checks and balances and lack of a constitution are perhaps its greatest structural weaknesses. Some Israelis worry that their system lacks formal safeguards against majority despotism. Nevertheless, minority rights are generally well-protected in Israel. Other legal institutions – the Knesset, the Supreme Court, and the attorney general's office – have expanded and innovated to fill the void created by lack of a single constitutional document.

In 1949, Israel's first Knesset deliberately deferred drafting a constitution, in part because basic issues concerning state and religion had not yet been resolved. Orthodox religious parties

insisted that Jewish religious law become Israel's civic law. Others demanded a separation of "synagogue and state." To force this issue would have proved extremely divisive. Moreover, Ben Gurion and his ruling party, Mapai (precursor to the Labor Party), did not want to enter into a bargaining situation that would have required concessions to the opposition.

Instead, the Knesset decided to draft a constitution piecemeal, through a series of Basic Laws covering constitutional matters. The Basic Laws deal mostly with the structure of government – the Knesset, the army, the office of the president, and the cabinet. Some require super-majorities for rescission.

Drawing on British tradition, Israeli courts protect individual rights (e.g., *habeas corpus*) through various methods of legal construction, such as reference to Israel's Declaration of Independence (see Appendix C) or to the general democratic nature of the state. In their interpretations of laws, the courts rely on a strong legal presumption that the Knesset never intended to curtail human rights.

The Supreme Court's high prestige derives from its image as a non-political body in a country where partisanship pervades almost every other aspect of national life. Like the army, the Court stands above the fray, symbolizing unity and national survival.

A special committee of representatives from the Knesset, the Cabinet, the Bar Association and the Supreme Court appoints Supreme Court justices. This insulates the appointment process from the bitter partisanship and mistrust that often characterizes court appointments in other democracies.

The Court's high public prestige and the loosely-defined mandate have allowed it to extend its authority, partly compensating for the lack of a constitution. Sitting as the High Court, it may intervene whenever necessary to serve justice, passing judgment on actions by any individual or organization in society.

The system is accessible; anyone may bring a complaint about misuse of authority directly to the Supreme Court. The cost is low and the procedure simple. If a case has constitutional significance the Court will consider it. As a result, the Court each year considers, by one estimate, 10 times as many cases as the equivalent institution in England.

The Court's scope and power remains fluid and largely informal. Without a constitution, it cannot declare new legislation unconstitutional, but it interprets how a law shall be applied and may rule new statutes in contradiction with previous laws. Theoretically, the Knesset could simply pass revised legislation to overturn any Court decision, or the government could nullify a decision by executive action. But the other two branches almost always refrain from directly challenging the Court because to do so would undermine their own legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In turn, the Court refrains from issuing a decision that goes so far beyond the popular consensus that it could provoke the Knesset to override the Court's decision, thereby lowering the status of the Court.

This is one of many examples where restraint of governmental abuse in Israel rests not on a constitution or institutional checks and balances, but on a democratic political culture that constrains politicians from violating democratic norms. The Court protects individual rights, but the democratic culture protects the Court.

The attorney general's office has similarly expanded to fill the constitutional void. Like the Court, the attorney general enjoys nonpartisan public prestige. The chief Israeli judicial officer generally views himself as more independent of the chief executive than is his U.S. counterpart. The attorney general stands outside the government, a watchdog over civil liberties and the rule of law.

The state comptroller is another link in the chain that restrains the government in lieu of a constitution. The comptroller, nominated by the Knesset and appointed by the president, supervises a staff of hundreds who audit all government agencies, broadly evaluating their performance and reporting back to the Knesset. This is one of the Knesset's strongest tools for holding the executive branch accountable.

The Press – “The Single Most Important Safeguard of Democracy”

An Israeli journalist made the following observation:

There are different systems of democracy all over the world. You can have proportional representation or

regional representation. You can have an independent attorney general or a politically-appointed attorney general. You can have separation of powers or non-separation of powers. You can do without checks and balances or with them.

But you never, anyplace, have a democracy without a free press. And this is my message to all other countries which are trying to build a democracy.

An Israeli legal expert agreed that an unbridled press is “the most important and effective safeguard of democracy in Israel,” because those who control the centers of power fear the press more than the legislature or the courts. Authorities must always consider the possibility – indeed, in Israel, the probability – that their acts will be leaked and exposed. This possibility is “the main check against arbitrary, unwise or inefficient decisions,” he added. In this respect, he continued, Israel’s “well-developed and widespread system of leaks from the government, what you call ‘leaking government,’” is a strongly positive feature for maintenance of democracy.

At the same time, the tradition of leaking has not crippled the effectiveness of Israel’s foreign policy, as one might fear. On the contrary, it acts as a constraint against abuse and as a corrective mechanism.

A nation at risk is a news-hungry nation. Everywhere in Israel, including buses, radios are played almost continually. Ten Hebrew dailies reach some three million people. Another seven foreign language papers appear in Tel Aviv alone. And, as one Knesset member noted, the papers all have “one common denominator: they all criticize the government!” Like the American press, the Israeli press is competitive, aggressive and, at times, brutal.

Freedom Despite Censorship

One Israeli legal expert made this observation: “According to the formal legal situation, freedom of the press does not exist in Israel. Yet, as a matter of fact, we know we have a press as free as in any other country.”

No Israeli law specifically prescribes freedom of speech. Rather, freedom of the press has been established through High

Court decisions, which in some cases, were drawn from British common law. Efforts to restrict press freedom have been resisted by defiant editors and the public.

As a country in a constant state of war, Israel must allow military censorship. Through an agreement (based on a law from the British mandate) between the publishers of the dailies and the military, a military censor reviews material related to national security and excises portions deemed harmful. The military censor is regarded as independent, accountable only to the chief of staff, so his judgement cannot be influenced by political considerations.

In practice, the system works surprisingly well, perhaps because both sides exercise restraint. Only in rare instances have sanctions been applied to a Hebrew newspaper. An Israeli journalist expressed the defiant and confident attitude that make censorship difficult to enforce in Israel.

If there is something about which I feel strongly, and I know it won't be permitted, I will just not submit it [to the censor], so there is nothing, absolutely nothing the censor can do.

It won't be brought to court, and he won't want it in front of the court... Once in a blue moon they'll fine me, and the Association of Journalists will get the money. It's very much a family affair.

Arab-language and far-left newspapers experience closer scrutiny and greater restrictions. The East Jerusalem Palestinian press, oriented toward the West Bank, is heavily censored and occasionally shut down. Yet several East Jerusalem Palestinian newspapers such as *Ai-Fajr*, which identify with the PLO, continue to publish. They are extremely critical of the Israeli government, condemn the occupation in the harshest terms, accuse the army and settlers of the worst abuses, reaffirm the leadership of the PLO, and call for continued struggle toward the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Israeli journalist pointed out:

There is no precedent whatsoever in any Arab country for an Arab newspaper to publish what they publish in Israel – against the government, against the military,

against the regime, against the system, against anybody.
I'm proud of it.

Maintaining freedom of the press is a two-way street, a former Israeli government official warned. Many Israelis view some segments of the press as irresponsible, emphasizing sensationalism, failing to check facts, and mixing commentary with the news. Continued loss of public respect could lead to increased restrictions, this official argued. He suggested that mechanism for self-regulation to maintain high standards are needed. A journalist countered that low standards and sensationalism result from market demand. Some members of the press, he said, will always print whatever the public wants to buy.

Another Key Element: Free Trade Unions

Israeli's federation of trade unions, the Histadrut, is far more than just a bargaining instrument. The Histadrut and its related institutions play an entrepreneurial role, taking responsibility for generating national wealth in addition to redistributing it.

The Histadrut has founded corporations, schools and hospitals and provides a myriad of social services. Through the development activities of the Histadrut, which accounts for roughly 20 percent of Israel's economy, Israel's workers have become industrialists, property owners, and exporters, with a stake in the growth of the economy.

The Bedrock: Israel's Culture of Democracy

What informal norms and cultural elements contribute to the maintenance of Israeli democracy?

One participant summed up the key to Israel's success this way:

The strength of Israeli democracy is not based on strong democratic institutions.

The strength of Israeli democracy comes from the political culture...the fact that people do not keep secrets. People are involved in politics...80 percent of Israelis take part in elections.

While some Israeli institutions are very strong and help compensate for those that are weak or missing, the strength of even those institutions rests largely on Israel's democratic way of life. The egalitarianism found in the IDF pervades Israeli society.

Israelis constantly question authority. The defiance expressed by the journalist towards the military censor is typical, as is the following anecdote told by a conference participant:

An English politician from the Labor Party became a very good friend of Israel's some years ago. I asked him why, because leftist groups in Europe are not generally strong friends of Israel. So he told me a short story.

When he came to Israel 15 years ago as a guest of the foreign minister, he had a cab driver for four of five days, an Oriental Jew. On the last day they went to see the foreign minister, and the driver entered the room. The minister spoke at length about many topics. When the minister finished, the driver interjected, 'Ah rubbish. Now I'll tell you the truth.'

That minute, the Englishmen became a friend of Israel. 'This,' he said, 'is real democracy.'

Consensus Amid Contention

"It's very much a family affair." — An Israeli journalist.

Beneath the partisan clamor lies a family-like desire for consensus. It is natural for a small, endangered people to seek to avoid internal divisions, especially on matters of survival. The core principle of the political system established in 1948 was *inclusion*; it was designed to overcome divisions. One conference participant put it this way, "It's better to bring everybody inside the tent to throw stones out, than to have them standing outside throwing stones at the tent."

From the beginning, no factions were excluded. Even the Arabs, who remained under military government until 1966, were granted voting rights in 1948. Inclusiveness and consensus may help explain the success of the otherwise unwieldy electoral system. Because of these factors, it works despite its complexity.

American participants noted that the U.S. system, created by those fleeing England and the tyranny of the crown, is based on individual liberties. The U.S. system was specifically designed to protect individuals from encroachments by government. The Israeli system appears to be rooted more in groups and belonging. Whereas an American might inquire, "Are you a liberal or a conservative?" an Israeli would ask, "To which party do you belong?" An Israeli scholar put it this way, "In the U.S., an individual is seen as a bundle of rights; in Israel, the individual is a bundle of relationships."

Israel's 1984 national unity government came as a surprise, through force of circumstance, but Israelis generally welcomed it. A narrow left or right coalition could probably never have successfully extricated Israel from Lebanon nor enforced the tough austerity measures that restored the economy in 1985-86.

But a coalition of the two major political blocs carries dangers as well. No viable opposition exists to serve as a check. The Knesset becomes almost irrelevant as decisions are hammered out in the inner cabinet. Moreover, the unity government offers no alternative. If the government should fail to govern effectively, there will be no democratic alternative to which to turn, and the public could begin to lose faith in the system itself.

When You Can't Agree, Postpone

Israelis have mastered the art of postponing divisive decisions. As noted earlier, Israel's founders postponed drafting a constitution when it became clear that the process would deeply divide the country. Sometimes postponing a decision may be better than forcing resolution, if resolution is likely to lead to deep and irrevocable splits.

On the other hand, several Israelis conferees agreed that indefinite postponement carries a price. One suggested that a middle ground might be to take incremental steps toward preparing the country, starting now to build the mechanisms for decisionmaking on constitutional questions such as religion and the state, and the status of minorities.

Another speaker proposed that democracies may be well-advised to postpone a decision when: 1) a new, untested issue presents itself; 2) a clear majority favors postponement; or 3)

accumulated evidence suggests that the passage of time works in favor of resolution. But none of these now apply, he argued, to the state/religion question in Israel.

Threats to Democratic Values

Two recent trends are of particular concern to Israeli experts on democracy.

Anti-democratic Attitudes Among Youth. Following the election of Meir Kahane to the Knesset in 1984, an Israeli institute conducted a series of studies of political opinion among Israel's high school youth. The results shocked the nation. The studies showed that over 40 percent of Israeli teenagers shared Kahane's anti-democratic and extremist views toward Arabs. While espousing democratic values in the abstract, these youngsters said they would deny specific democratic rights to Arabs.

These disturbing findings triggered a variety of educational efforts in the army, schools and local communities. Such efforts, combined with general condemnation of Kahane, produced some improvement in attitudes of youth, but Israelis from both Labor and Likud continue to express deep concern.

Some point out that extreme positions among youth are later moderated in young adulthood. Others warn that erosion of democratic values will inevitably continue as long as Israel remains in the role of occupier in the West Bank and Gaza.

Disillusionment, Alienation from Government. A second concern among some Israelis is gradual disillusionment not with particular leaders or parties, but with the system and government itself. U.S. participants pointed to a similar problem among Americans who view the government as part of the problem, not part of the solution. While Israelis generally still look to government to help solve their problems, some point out that high expectations can lead to disillusionment. Party reform may be particularly important in this respect, because the parties can become a barrier between the citizens and the government.

Alienation may be expressed as lack of respect for leaders and the law, withdrawal from public affairs, growth of non-democratic factions, or talented youth rejecting political careers.

The Guardians: Democratic Elites

Some participants pointed out that in almost all democracies the bulk of the population neither fully understands nor fully supports the nuances of democracy, especially the rights of groups they oppose. For example, in opinion surveys taken in the U.S., large numbers of citizens have refused to endorse the concepts embodied in the Bill of Rights.

Ironically, defense of democracy may depend more on the willingness of certain elites – the legal community, the press, politicians, academicians, social and ethnic elites – to stand up in defense of civil liberties than on popular opinion. A former Israeli official put it this way:

The strength of democracy depends very much on the small minority of people who are courageous enough, who are committed enough, to stand up when it's needed, to criticize, to struggle, to defend against certain developments which might endanger the democratic forces.

Israeli democracy has withstood this test. Despite anti-democratic attitudes among some sectors of society, democratic values remain deeply embedded in elite culture.

The Importance of Education

Israelis, like most democratic peoples, tend to take democracy for granted. One senior Knesset member observed, "It [democracy] is not mentioned even incidentally in the Declaration of Independence, not because we were not democratic but because nobody thought about anything else."

Increasingly, Israelis are realizing that democracy must be recreated by each generation, that a democratic environment alone is insufficient for inculcating democratic values and behavior. Democracy must be taught both implicitly, through models in daily life, and explicitly, through formal education.

Social Tensions and Israeli Democracy

Israeli society is cleaved by three deep social divides. How has Israel prevented intergroup conflict from rending the democratic fabric of society?

The Diminishing Divide: Sephardi-Ashkenazi Relations

An Israeli scholar said at the conference, "If I would have been asked 15 or 20 years ago to identify the area from which a threat to the democratic structure of Israel would emerge, I would have said social and ethnic cleavages."

In its early years, Israel absorbed immigrants from 102 countries, speaking dozens of different languages. The early Zionists came mostly from Eastern Europe. After 1948, masses of Jews fled their homes in North Africa and the Middle East for Israel. Most arrived very poor, many illiterate. Few spoke Hebrew. Neither the European Jews (Ashkenazim) nor the Jews from Arab countries (Sephardim) came from societies with direct experience in democratic government.

While conventional wisdom suggests that such an influx might destabilize a democratic system, there was a lag before the effect of immigration was felt. A conference participant observed that the immigrants were essentially conservative, seeking acceptance and absorption. It was their sons and daughters, the first generation of native Israelis (*sabras*), who began to reassert their identity, demand equality and reshape society.

Recipe for Resentment: The Bureaucratic Melting Pot

Israel opened its gates to Sephardi immigrants, providing them with food, clothing, housing, education and work, and sought to absorb them into Israeli society. With the best of intentions, the Ashkenazim sought to educate and "rehabilitate" their impoverished brethren from the East, to integrate them into a variant of European culture. But the Ashkenazim unavoidably carried a sense of cultural superiority with them from Europe.

Moreover, the young social welfare state often treated the immigrants bureaucratically. Sons of immigrants from such places as Morocco and Yemen still speak angrily about the

indignities their parents suffered, from being doused with DDT upon arrival, to living in tent camps, to cleaning the homes of the more affluent Ashkenazim. Paralleling in some respects the U.S. civil rights struggle, Sephardi frustrations surfaced in the 1960s. Advocates spoke out forcefully about their experience of exclusion and denigration.

The System Responds

The system was challenged to respond to Sephardi demands. A major reevaluation and reorientation took place. Substantial investments were made to redress Sephardi grievances and overcome inequality. Resources were quickly reallocated in housing, education, community activities, and social welfare programs. Sephardi activists were brought into communal activities and into municipal government. Much more money is now spent on the education of socially deprived children than on those who are better off. The army, always a major integrating institution, encouraged promotion of Sephardi officers.

In the past 15 years, the first generation of Sephardi *sabras* have made dramatic progress. Not only has their socioeconomic status improved, but, perhaps even more significantly, Sephardi culture has reasserted itself, moved from the periphery to the center of society where it is shaping Israel's language, culture, symbols and values. The melting pot model of social integration has been replaced by a pluralist model that values cultural diversity.

A Sephardi elite has emerged that serves as an effective voice for disadvantaged groups. Municipal politics in the 1970s and 1980s have been increasingly dominated by this upcoming Sephardi elite. Both deputy prime ministers, one a former president, are Sephardis. Perhaps most telling, the intermarriage rate between Ashkenazim and Sephardim now exceeds 20 percent of all marriages.

Full equality, as elsewhere, remains elusive, so efforts continue. Because the improvements in Sephardi status are so noticeable, most Israelis are surprised to learn that the economic gap between descendants of Ashkenazim and Sephardim has not narrowed in the past 20 years as the whole society has moved upward. The gap is closely tied to differences in education level.

Yet most Israelis agree that this conflict is diminishing in intensity, and with intermarriage it may eventually dissipate altogether. A devastating internal split was avoided through the reorientation of Israeli society — the assertiveness of the Sephardim and the response of the establishment. As a result, the social gap does not seriously threaten democracy. In retrospect, it is remarkable that Israel successfully managed to adapt, through deliberate efforts to integrate the disadvantaged sectors and to shape a new pluralist model of society that respects cultural distinctiveness.

The Growing Gulf: Religious-Secular Tensions

If the Ashkenazi-Sephardi gap appears to be shrinking, the religious-secular gulf is clearly widening. According to one conference participant, “The problem of state and religion is the major social problem in Israel today, with no solution in the foreseeable future.”

Ironically, the Jewish state is in some ways a profoundly secular society. Most Israeli Jews practice little or no formal religion. Partly as a result of the socialist heritage, most Israelis feel that working to build a Jewish state where Jewish culture predominates gives adequate expression to their identity.

Yet a substantial and growing ultra-orthodox minority insists that the meaning of a Jewish state is precisely the embodiment in civil law of Jewish religious practice, known as Halacha. Moreover, this minority has been able to impose certain demands upon the secular majority due to an anomaly in the electoral system. The religious parties are the only significant “swing parties” that can coalesce with whichever bloc is willing to grant the most concessions on religious issues such as observance of the Sabbath, orthodox control over marriage and family matters, and funding for orthodox institutions.

In recent years, resentment over imposition of religious law and expansion of ultra-orthodox neighborhoods has sharply increased tensions. This conflict, more than any other, still impedes agreement over a constitution, for it concerns the very nature of the state. Should Israel, as a Jewish state, have strict separation between church and state and full equality for all citizens? Or a Halachic state, where the law of the land is

Jewish religious law? Or something in between, some new synthesis?

Israel, like other countries, is experiencing a resurgence of religiosity. Some conference participants expressed concern that fundamentalism combined with militant nationalism, as expressed in elements of the West Bank settler movement, forms a highly volatile mixture. Electoral reform might diminish the disproportionate influence of the religious parties, but for this very reason reform may prove impossible to achieve.

For Israelis, the religious-secular tensions are more perplexing than the Sephardi-Ashkenazi gap because they cannot be addressed by traditional social programs, nor are amenable to compromise solutions.

Every Sixth Israeli: Arab Citizens in a Jewish State

The missing citizens in many discussions of Israeli democracy are Israeli Arabs. Within the pre-1967 borders, Arabs constitute 17 percent of the population. Increasingly, they view themselves as both *Israeli*, loyal citizens committed to achieving equality, and *Palestinian*, part of the dispersed Palestinian nation engaged in a struggle with Israel.

This contradiction places them in a uniquely uncomfortable situation. The vast majority of Israeli Arabs are loyal, voting citizens of the State of Israel. In many elections, the Arab voting rate has matched – and in many years has surpassed – the Jewish voting rate. When asked whether they would move to a Palestinian state in the West Bank if one were someday established, most reply that while they support independence for Palestinians in the territories, their own future lies in Israel. They say their own struggle is for equality.

On one hand, Israeli Arabs have enjoyed many of the benefits of a liberal, modern society. Their standard of living far exceeds that of most Arab citizens in neighboring countries. They enjoy the full benefits of citizenship in a democracy, unavailable anywhere else in the Middle East, including the right to demonstrate, to openly criticize the government, to form political parties, and to vote.

Yet, according to an Arab Knesset member, Israel's 700,000 Arabs experience discrimination in all fields – housing, employ-

ment, education, treatment by police, etc., and statistics generally bear this out. Some discrimination occurs because Israel metes out some special welfare benefits to army veterans and Jewish religious institutions. These two categories cover virtually all Israeli families, except Arabs. At another level, Arabs in Israel, like ethnic and racial minorities elsewhere, suffer from mundane, everyday prejudice, expressed in negative stereotypes and slurs.

Many Israeli Jews admit that Arab complaints are at least partly justified, but they are quick to point out that: 1) Palestinians receive far worse treatment almost everywhere else in the Middle East; 2) every society, democratic or not, has minorities and concomitant problems with discrimination; and 3) the unrelenting hostility of Israel's Arab neighbors, who share cultural and familial bonds with Israeli Arabs, creates an extremely difficult and unparalleled situation. Under such circumstances, they argue, Israeli democracy has performed reasonably well. All three points have validity, but nevertheless the role of Arabs in the Jewish state remains painfully problematic for both sides.

The Jewish-Arab gap cuts across almost all Israeli institutions, but it is most obvious in the IDF. When Israelis refer to "universal conscription," it is understood that most Arab citizens (as well as ultra-orthodox Jews) are excluded. Almost no Arabs, other than Druze or Bedouin, serve in the IDF. Arabs are neither conscripted nor encouraged to volunteer.

Israeli Jews say that it is unlikely that the Arabs would wish to take up arms against their brethren, and therefore it would be unfair to conscript them. Some Israelis have called for alternative, national service, but this has never been pursued.

The consequences of not serving in the army are very significant. The IDF is Israel's major integrating institution, bringing together people from all walks of life. Just as army service has helped heal the Ashkenazim and Sephardim rift, exclusion reinforces the alienation of both the Arabs and the ultra-orthodox.

Seven Arabs sit in the Knesset. The major blocs have agreed never to coalesce with the Arab-dominated Communist Party, neutralizing its influence and bargaining power in the Knesset. A Knesset member noted that the highest civil service

position ever achieved by an Arab is deputy chairman of the Arab department in the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, another participant pointed out that Arabs have received high political appointments. There have been a number of Arab district judges, two Arab deputy-ministers, and, for many years, an Arab Knesset member served as deputy-speaker of the Knesset.

Can Israel absorb, include and enfranchise its Arab citizens with the same commitment and respect it has accorded the Sephardim? Or will the Arab and Jewish communities move toward further alienation and separatism? For now, the role of Arabs in a Jewish state remains, in the words of an Israeli participant, "a question mark" for Israeli democracy. He added, "We have a problem here we have not solved, and I don't think we should sweep it under the rug or the carpet."

Democracy and Economic Stress

Why haven't economic problems threatened Israeli democracy? Why – despite triple-digit inflation, a huge national debt, high unemployment, problems in the banking system – has Israeli democracy neither collapsed nor even been placed in great jeopardy?

Riding Out the Storm

In 1984, inflation in Israel soared to an annual rate of over 600 percent. Israel's national debt reached a level that make it the highest per capita in the world. Scandal had recently rocked the banking system. In 1985-86, unemployment rose and real wages dropped 20 percent as the government applied draconian measures to stem inflation.

History teaches that such conditions destabilize regimes and threaten democracies. Yet none of this occurred in Israel.

Several factors contributed to Israel's safe passage through these economic straits. A far-reaching system of indexation and other automatic compensation measures insulated most Israelis from the worst effects of rampant inflation. Also, massive doses of foreign economic aid undoubtedly eased the pain. But both of these were supplementary factors.

The main explanation lies in how Israel finally resolved the crisis: through consensus. Instead of forcing through emergency regulations, the government entered intense negotiations with labor and business to reach consensus on economic policy. After a long month of negotiations, representatives of the government, the Histadrut and private employers agreed upon a package of drastic austerity measures (the so-called "package deal"). Austerity lowered the standard of living for almost all Israelis, but it quickly slashed inflation from over 600 percent to 18 to 20 percent.

Forging Consensus: Israel's "Social Contract"

How was this remarkable consensus achieved? Obviously, the presence of a national unity government played a large role. It brought the two major blocs "into the tent" leaving no strong opposition outside to attack the plan. An Israeli pointed out that economic stress may only threaten the system when an alternative, demagogic leader, promising salvation, arises to tap fear and discontent. In Israel, no serious alternative presented itself.

Second, the depth of the crisis created an atmosphere of dire threat to national survival, triggering Israel's consensus-forming reflex. This generated public demand for cooperation among the major actors in the mixed economy. Israel is a crisis-oriented society, prone to postponement of difficult issues when possible, but geared to quickly pulling together when gravely threatened.

Third, an institution representing all three economic sectors was already in place. A voluntary social and economic board had been meeting for three years, ready to be activated. When the hard negotiations began, top leadership, including the prime minister, took part.

Fourth, centralization and integration of Israel's major political and economic institutions facilitated consensus. Ninety-five percent of hired workers in Israel belong to trade unions. The trade unions are closely tied to the general union, Histadrut, which in turn is affiliated with the Labor party, whose leader, Shimon Peres, was prime minister at the time. The government, too, is relatively centralized, and the manufacturers association is strong enough to speak for its membership. [In contrast, a

former Carter administration official recalled that when the U.S. grappled with high inflation in the late 1970s, the administration was unable to assemble an effective coalition because neither labor nor the manufacturers could speak decisively for their membership. Also, merely the suggestion of a tripartite economic board drew charges of “socialist central planning.”]

Finally, while consensus permitted implementation, strong leadership provided direction. The government never yielded on its essential priorities and targets.

Continuing Problems

Israel's economy remains troubled. The economic program that stemmed the massive hemorrhage of hyperinflation failed to restore growth. Several participants believe that dependency on foreign aid enables Israel to avoid painful but necessary restructuring of the economy. Such restructuring would entail privatizing the Israeli economy, reducing the public service sector, one of the largest in the world relative to the GNP, and making further cuts in the defense budget. But economic difficulties are normal for all societies. They do not take away from Israel's remarkable achievement in riding out the worst economic storm in its history with its democracy intact.

Key Lessons from the Israeli Experience

Throughout the conference, participants were urged to articulate concrete lessons from the Israeli experience that might be of use to others seeking to build and maintain democratic institutions. To stimulate thought and discussion, a summary of these lessons is provided below.

Origins

- *Build on indigenous traditions.* Even societies that have never lived under democratic regimes may contain seeds of democratic values and practice in their culture. Rather than basing democratic institutions on ideology or foreign models, look for indigenous, traditional practices — such as village councils — suggestive of democratic principles such as pluralism, self-rule, voting, power-sharing, accountability, or individual rights. Then

ask, "How can these democratic practices be nurtured and expanded?"

- *Consider how charismatic leaders use their prestige.* Do they use it to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions or to enhance their own position? Democratic traditions can sometimes be institutionalized by deliberate decisions.

- *Borrow institutional concepts.* Israel, like all successful democracies, borrowed many institutions and much of its law from other systems, particularly the British. It also adapted from other systems, e.g., the Swedish ombudsman, the office of attorney general and the Swiss compulsory universal military service.

The Role of the Israeli Army

- *Democracy is not only compatible with military success, but may actually foster it.* Democracy contributes to national strength and Israel's ability to overcome great numerical odds. For defense, the benefits of democracy exceed its costs.

- The principle of *civilian supremacy* was established early by Ben Gurion.

- *The citizen army.* Universal, compulsory service brings most sectors of society into the army. Officers' ideologies reflect the full political spectrum.

- *Integration of the army and society.* The Israeli army's practices keep soldiers in contact with the rest of society. These include:

 - No barracks; much coming and going between army and civilian life.

 - No military academies; education in universities.

 - Annual reserve duty for all men until age 55.

- *Officers' career path prevents emergence of a military caste.*

 - Dual career pattern produced by early retirement, and anticipatory education for a second, civilian career before leaving the service.

 - Officers emerge out of compulsory service; no separate track for officers.

Mid-career liberal education: officers can leave the army for one to two years of study in any field.

Rapid rotation of commands prevents special bonds forming between a command and a particular commander.

- *Separation of general headquarters and the defense ministry* supports civilian control. Chiefs of staff are limited to three- to five-year terms, and may not immediately thereafter become defense minister.

- *Great emphasis placed on army education.* The army is seen as a vehicle for socializing youth in democratic values. The army does not shy away from discussing even the most sensitive political controversies facing society, emphasizing pluralism and independent thought. Civilian educators teach many courses.

- *Democracy within the army.* The army encourages egalitarianism, informality and independent thinking among soldiers and officers. Soldiers are instructed to disobey illegal orders.

Israeli Political Institutions

- *Inclusivity is a strength.* Bringing representatives of all factions into governing institutions adds strength, not weakness to the system.

- *Proportional representation with only a one percent minimum contributes to fragmentation.* Fragmentation grants undue influence to small swing parties.

- *Compensate for weak institutions by expanding others.* Lacking a constitution or a strong formal system of checks and balances, Israel has compensated by expanding the role of other institutions, e.g.,

Legislating the Basic Laws in lieu of a constitution.

Strengthening the politically independent attorney general's office.

Stretching the scope of the Supreme Court.

Using the state comptroller's office to evaluate government agencies.

Appointing special investigatory commissions.

- “You will not solve all your social and economic problems through governmental structure, but you can *create structures in such a way that they will not stand in the way of a solution.*”
- “*Encourage parties to move toward dealing with the problems of society rather than focusing on ideology.*”
- *Rotation of parties in government is essential to the health of the parties as well as the system.*
- The internal democracy within parties may be as important as electoral democracy in empowering – or alienating – individuals.
- “The press may be the *sine qua non* of democracy,”
- *Free trade unions are another essential element.* Involving trade unions in development gives workers a stake in the economy.

Israel’s Culture of Democracy

- Preservation of democracy requires *more than legal and institutional arrangements.* Cultural elements such as democratic beliefs, values and attitudes and informal understandings, may be even more crucial than well-designed institutions. “Trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens.”
- “If Israelis have a national characteristic it is that *we are undisciplined, we defy authority.* Governing Israel is almost an oxymoron.”
 - “We never adhere to the principle of infallibility.”
- *Postponement can be beneficial* when the costs of forcing a decision outweigh the costs of delay.
- Identify and *strengthen elites that have a vested interest in preserving a pluralistic society* – e.g., trade unions, some traditional elites, regional elites.
- *Expose the entire population to diversity and choice* in political decision making.
- *A political culture based on consensus is one basis for democracy in Israel.*
- “*Democracy is something which must be taught.* It cannot be taken for granted. It must be inculcated.” “Not as dogma but as a way of life which has a history.”

“Not as an abstract idea of institutions and politics, but what democracy means to your everyday life and the life of your neighbor.”

- *Identify traditions conducive to consensus building and the creation of pluralistic elites.* These may be old traditions disdained by intellectuals, e.g., certain religious traditions. Then move these traditions, intact, in the direction of modernity, instead of trying to supplant them with modern practices.
- *Anti-democratic attitudes can spread in even the strongest democracy.* Disillusionment and alienation from government is another danger.

Social Tensions and Democracy

- *In the 1950s and 1960s, Israel faced problems similar to those of the Third World today, such as widespread illiteracy, unsettled masses of people, little foreign aid and rapid development activity.*
- *To avoid social upheaval, special efforts are necessary to help disadvantaged groups.* These efforts can succeed in defusing potentially explosive situations .
- *Well-intentioned efforts to integrate ethnic groups may backfire if based on bureaucratic “melting pot” model of society rather than a pluralist respect for diversity.*
- *Rising fundamentalism among all three major Western religions stems from a revolt against the excesses of modernity. It can endanger democracy because it does not accept even the concept of pluralism.*
- *Don’t disdain religion as a mediating, conciliatory force supporting democracy.*
- *Religion and politics often clash because both compete for “public space.” Separation of church and state defines the level at which the issue is fought, but does not eliminate conflict.*
- *Israel, like other democracies, contains deep contradictions, but these contradictions are recognized and discussed. Religion and state issues and the role of Arabs in the Jewish state remain painfully unresolved but not ignored.*

Economic Stress and Democracy

• *Consensus-building among the three major economic actors – government, labor and business – allowed Israel to manage the recent crisis and emerge with her democracy intact. Several factors contributed:*

Prior existence of a tripartite board.

Central federations of labor and manufacturers authorized to enter agreements on behalf of their members.

Centralized government.

Involvement of labor in economic development gave them a stake in the overall economy.

Ties between labor and the party of the prime minister.

A cultural tendency to form consensus under crisis conditions.

• *Democracy is incompatible with gross inequalities of income. At the same time, democracy may be incompatible with a centrally-planned economy.*

General Comments on Democracy

• *Democracy is a process.* It is neither an edifice to be erected, nor an ideal state to be achieved. It is fluid, changing and never finished. “We have to fight for democracy all the time.” Democracy is a balancing act based on accepting human fallibility, balancing inherently incompatible values, and seeking approximations of the truth through the interplay of contending voices.

• “At the very bottom of any democracy, *the most important safeguard is the ability to cope with ambiguities, question marks and uncertainties.*”

• *Accept imperfection, incompleteness, incrementalism.* Democracy is not based on the concept of perfectability. It is based on compromise. Don’t try to solve all problems at once. Democracy is not suited to a radical transformation of society.

• *Pluralism is messy.* People who wish to preserve democracy must accept that their governments will make many blunders, but this should not discredit the concept of government itself.

- “Rule #1: *When you are solving one crisis, you are starting the next one.*”
- *The key to survival of a democratic system is adaptability*, rather than rigidity (e.g., Lebanon).
- *A signpost to look for: which way is the system moving?* In what ways are attitudes and institutions becoming more democratic? Less democratic? Is it deepening citizens’ capacity for participation, leadership, accountability?
- *An alarm signal: growing disillusionment with democratic institutions.* Governmental effectiveness is crucial to the maintenance of democracy.
- “When offering assistance, don’t try to introduce morals or lessons; *try to identify common problems* and study alternative solutions.”
- “*Be wary of analogies.*” No single institution can be replicated in another society. “Try to extract useful pieces.”

Conclusions

Despite continual stress, Israeli democracy has demonstrated its resiliency again and again. Certain themes ran throughout the conference: reliance on a democratic culture more than perfect institutions; inclusively – bringing everyone “under the tent;” the importance of building on traditions; education for democracy; the integration of the army and society.

But the core strength of Israeli democracy may be precisely the openness with which Israelis engage in self-examination and self-criticism.

Open and frank discussion of strengths and weaknesses carries costs, but it permits the Israeli system to adapt, to self-correct. Without adaptability, even the most democratic system would ossify and eventually break under the stress of change.

The following quote from Pericles regarding ancient Athens, inserted into the conference record by an Israeli participant, eloquently captures this quality:

We throw open our city to the world and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning

or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality.

Trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens...we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger.

A conference participant echoed this attitude: "We'd rather take our chances with openness than risk the costs and dangers of excessive secrecy."

COSTA RICA

Introduction

In June 1988, NDI sponsored a conference in San Jose to examine those practices and institutions that have made Costa Rican democracy work. The conference, led by the Institute's chairman, former Vice President Walter Mondale, focused on Costa Rica as a democracy in a region of crisis. (See Appendix D for the conference agenda.) Experts from Israel and Botswana, two democracies also faced with external threats, joined with participants from around the region to assess the Costa Rican experience. (See Appendix E for conference participants.) As Botswana's Minister of Presidential Affairs P.H.K. Kedikilwe noted, "The best way to defend democracy is to consider it an endangered species."

The Institute called upon Costa Rica's political, social and economic leadership and democratic friends abroad to examine several questions: Why has Costa Rica escaped the violence and political crisis that have wracked its neighbors? Is its political leadership providing the direction necessary to keep the country free of such problems in the future? Is Costa Rica's democratic tradition a by-product of its higher standard of living, or is the higher standard of living enjoyed by Costa Ricans a consequence

of its democracy? What democratic institutions have been central to making democracy take root?

While specific recipes for democratic government are not exportable, democratic values are. The Costa Rica conference gave participants the chance to consider what ingredients make the system work.

“We have come here to examine a democracy which for more than 30 years has provided a model for the nations of this hemisphere and beyond,” Mondale said in opening the San Jose meeting. “We are here to find out what Costa Ricans mean when you proudly refer to the ‘Tico’ way of governing. This series of seminars on democracies in regions of crisis has two principle purposes: 1) to apply the lessons of successful democracies to other nations struggling to make full democracy a reality; and 2) to demonstrate that democracies can work well even under severe external and internal pressures. We want to deal with those who argue that democracy is expendable in time of crisis... We want the story of Costa Rica to be told over and over again.”

Costa Rica’s Democratic Fabric

Costa Rica, whose name in Spanish means “rich coast,” is often compared with Switzerland, with mountains covered by rain forests instead of snow. To all eyes, Costa Rica is a democratic oasis amidst the violence and political turmoil in Central America. Except for war-torn El Salvador, Costa Rica is the smallest country in mainland America, covering some 19,965 square miles. Costa Rica’s population is a mere 2.25 million people, illustrating that small nations can grow in stability and freedom if given a chance by their own people and the outside world.

Visitors have long been accustomed to describing Costa Rica in superlatives: it has the best climate; endless parks (12 percent of the national territory); and the most varied and beautiful ecosystems. Arguably, one of the most democratic countries in the world, Costa Rica does not have an army – since 1949 the constitution forbids it. Costa Ricans have the longest life expectancy (74 years) in Central America, the lowest infant mortality (less than 19 per thousand) and the highest calorie

consumption per capita (2,800). Costa Rica also has the highest literacy rate (93 percent), boasting more teachers than police, and among the highest percentage of university graduates in Latin America.

Unlike neighboring countries that experience extremes of wealth and poverty, Costa Rica has few desperately poor, and even fewer extravagantly rich. Although underemployment is high and per capita income is relatively low, unemployment is a manageable six percent. Costa Rica is the only Central American nation that is not besieged by leftist guerrillas, (aside from the obvious exception of Nicaragua) or run by a prosperous, undemocratic elite.

Some trace Costa Rica's democratic will and roots to the time of Spanish Conquest. Since independence from Spain in 1821, only three of some 50 Costa Rican presidents have been military men, and only six could fairly be called dictators. Alone among its neighbors, Costa Rica existed as a republic for five decades before a military officer took power. In 1813, Costa Rica became the first Latin American nation to abolish slavery. It was also the first to provide, in 1869, free and compulsory education. And, in 1882, it became the first to abolish capital punishment.

The success of modern-day Costa Rica's democratic experiment can be illustrated by some comparisons with the experiences of other Central American countries. The election of Oscar Arias as president in 1986 was the 9th time since Costa Rica's 1948 revolution that political power was peacefully transferred by means of the vote. In nearby Guatemala, power has changed hands 20 times since 1944. In El Salvador, the government had changed hands 18 times. In both countries, elections accounted for only nine changes in the political guard; the rest were the results of coups, wars or revolutions. In a similar period, Honduras and Nicaragua had 12 and 13 presidents, respectively. But in each country only six took power through elections. To understand what has set Costa Rica apart from its neighbors, one has to examine the persistence and viability of its democratic institutions.

At various times, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador have all had constitutional governments. During these periods of constitutional rule: political parties competed; periodic

elections were held; and the judicial, legislative and executive branches functioned with a degree of independence. Yet common to the recent histories of these nations has been the lack of the single characteristic that has made Costa Rican democracy work – the willingness of contending political forces to present their cases to the people in an election, and to abide by the outcome.

In Costa Rica, the practice of democracy has become a tradition. In nine presidential elections, from 1953 to 1984, the party out of power won seven times. Democracy, as Costa Ricans know, is presenting your best case to the people – and accepting their verdict.

Costa Rica's System of Government

Costa Rica's constitution provides for the effective separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. When delegates attended the 1949 constitutional convention, the events that had led to the civil strife one year before were still fresh in their memories. The delegates remembered their countrymen's fear of concentrated power, their limited endorsement of the role of government, and their passionate adherence to the rule of law. And so the new constitution changed the distribution of power. No longer was government highly-centralized and led by a strong president. Instead, the executive was subjected to numerous checks and balances, with the legislature established as the leading power.

The president is elected for a single, four-year term – without the opportunity for reelection. Presidential powers include command of the civil guard, appointment and removal of ministers, and the presentation of a detailed annual message to Congress. The symbolic representative of national unity, the president, acts as chief of state on ceremonial occasions.

Today, Costa Rican school children are taught that the Legislative Assembly – rather than the president – is the country's principal power. Representatives to the Assembly, or *diputados*, are elected for four years and can be reelected only after four more years out of office have elapsed.

The legislature has broad powers. It passes, amends, and repeals laws. It approves trips abroad for the president, ratifies

international agreements, approves foreign loans, and levies taxes. All these powers can be exercised by simple majority. To amend the constitution or to override a presidential veto, however, a two-thirds vote is required.

The role of the presidency, and the limits to its power, reflect both the concerns of the nation's modern democratic founders, and the wisdom of its architect: Jose Maria Figueres Ferrer. Figueres, revered as "Don Pepe," had led a rag-tag army to victory against the government after the country's electoral process had been undermined in 1948. After more than 2,000 fatalities – Figueres' troops lost only 60 men – victory was secured, and Figueres became the president of the Founding Junta of the Second Republic of Costa Rica. The army was disbanded, and Figueres ushered in suffrage for women and instituted numerous social welfare programs. Eighteen months later, in a gesture virtually unheard of in Latin America, Don Pepe relinquished power to the man who had won the 1948 election, a person not even of Figueres' own party. As one North American scholar has noted:

It was during the 1940s and early 1950s that the process of political development in Costa Rica took a decisively different path than that followed in the rest of the region. While authoritarian governments headed by strongmen [a system known as *caudillismo*] were becoming institutionalized in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras during the 1940s, only in Guatemala and Costa Rica were the democratic forces strong enough to break with the authoritarian model. And as the new Cold War altered the contours of U.S. foreign policy toward the region, only in Costa Rica did the democratic forces retain the upper hand.

"Four decades ago, Don Pepe showed the way," recalled NDI Chairman Mondale at the San Jose conference. "From the start, President Figueres showed that force alone, while sometimes necessary, cannot ultimately sustain a nation's leadership. After his triumph on the battlefield of civil insurrection, he answered those who asked why he did not retain the power of a dictator: 'The health of democracy in Latin America demands that men who have seized power by force go home when normalcy is restored. We restored normalcy and went home.'

Pepe Figueres then returned to the political arena and was elected three times to the presidency.”

Another important component of Costa Rican democracy is its independent and highly-respected judiciary. Costa Rica's courts enforce constitutional checks on presidential power. They also serve as an important guarantor for the rights of free expression, assembly, suffrage and worship. They have ensured that constitutional prohibitions on arbitrary arrest, exile, torture and capital punishment are respected.

There is also a constitutionally-recognized fourth branch of government in Costa Rica. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal is synonymous with Costa Rica's tradition of electoral integrity and fairness. The Tribunal oversees the formation and functioning of parties. It distributes identification cards necessary for voter registration and serves as an independent watchdog during campaigns. And it oversees and counts the vote. It says something about the Tribunal's reputation that, when grade-school children hold mock elections, they compete to be election magistrates as well as political party standardbearers.

A Brief History

While the Revolution of 1948 ushered in the creation of Costa Rica's modern democratic state, many trace the prosperity of its republican institutions to the time of the Spanish Conquest. In part, its good luck is reflected in the fact that the Spanish name was a misnomer. Although in 1522 Captain Gil Gonzalez had been given a virtual fortune in gold by natives while exploring the Nicoya Peninsula, the first settlers found that there was little in the way of riches in Costa Rica, if these were defined as the gold, silver and other treasure sought by the *conquistadores*.

Costa Ricans often attribute their austerity, sense of isolation, and rugged individualism to behavioral patterns established in colonial times and the 300 years of Spanish rule. The relatively late arrival of the Spanish conquerors to Costa Rican soil meant that there would be less lawlessness and a stricter compliance with imperial law in the colony. The indigenous population that inhabited the territory was small. As a result, Costa Rican society has always been racially homogeneous. The

poverty of the land – especially the absence of mines – meant that the Spanish settlers had to work the land. This helped to create a more egalitarian economy, one that was not dependent on a large slave population. The type of immigrant who settled in Costa Rica was also different from immigrants residing in its wealthier colonial neighbors. Few peasants or members of the nobility came to this neglected province of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. Those who did, found that their Indian serfs fled into the forests, or were unsuitable for their tasks. Instead, the land was tamed by independent farmers, with small holdings becoming the norm.

The unique conditions of colonial settlement created a certain degree of free thought, a generalized sense of equality and a respect for the law as the *ordinador*, the designer and regulator of society. Perhaps even more important, however, was Costa Rica's privileged status as free from the praetorian pretensions of an armed elite.

In most of the Central American region, the military served as an instrument of armed oppression or simply as the means by which a modicum of order and national cohesion were maintained. Costa Rican historian Samuel Stone has noted that Central American economic elites have called on people of other social classes to wield political power. Frequently, willing allies have been found in the barracks. However in Costa Rica, as there was no indigenous population to exploit, the army did not assume a prominent role in the maintenance of internal security. Thus, while it had a military, Costa Rica escaped the endemic militarism that affected most of the region.

Independence from the Spanish crown came to Costa Rica in 1821. Costa Ricans did not play a central role in the struggle against rule by Spain; Central American independence was decreed in Guatemala on September 15. The four main cities on Costa Rica's Meseta Central – a relatively flat stretch of land in the Central Valley – all claimed the right to lead, and only after two years of infighting was San Jose declared the capital. In 1824, Juan Mora Fernandez was named president by an elected Congress; Costa Ricans are proud that their first chief of state was a schoolteacher.

In the following two decades, coffee became Costa Rica's leading export. It was coffee that fulfilled the old Spanish

dream of treasure and *costa rica*, although it was not grown on the coast but rather the Meseta, where most Costa Ricans lived. There, a near perfect combination of volcanic soil, rainfall, altitude and temperature provided Costa Rica with a competitive edge over its neighbors. By the 1840s, coffee became Costa Rica's primary export crop, while in the rest of the region it was not until the last two decades of the century that the industry reached its peak. Coffee profits provided the capital for Costa Rica's first bank, while the development of a second key export crop – bananas – led to the construction of a railway system in the 1880s.

The cultivation of coffee gave many a share in the bonanza, with much of the harvest produced by medium-sized and small farmers and peasants who owned their land. Unlike the rest of the region, absentee landlords were the exception rather than the rule; this impeded the creation of a large feudalistic structure. In addition, noted former Economy Minister Ennio Rodriguez, "to find people to work the coffee fields not only meant they had to be paid well, but also less authoritarian social relationships were established."

The creation of a class of prosperous small holders is often cited as a key factor in the development of Costa Rican democracy. For as Alexis de Tocqueville noted in *Democracy in America*, nations are less disposed to make revolutions when personal property and its distribution grows among them, and there grows the number who possess it. By the end of the 1800s, coffee workers in the Central Valley earned more than agricultural workers in the United States. "Costa Rica became a land of opportunities," noted Ennio Rodriguez, "and in a land of opportunities democracy tends to flourish more easily."

The foundations of Costa Rican democracy were laid in the 19th century. In 1869, the Costa Rican Constitution made primary school education obligatory and free for both sexes, without regard to race. The death penalty was abolished, establishing the inviolability of the individual as a national creed. The separation of church and state occurred at the end of the century amid fierce political battles, but with little violence. While a coffee-growing elite remained entrenched as political leaders, a developing free press stimulated debate and helped to

control their excesses. In 1889, Costa Rica held its first free and fair election.

The success of modern-day Costa Rican democracy can be traced to the gains made before the turn of the century: a firm commitment to the rule of law; pragmatism; an electoral vocation tempered by respect for minorities, as guaranteed by the constitution; a system of that promotes strong political parties; and a modified presidentialism.

Another event occurring in the early decades of Costa Rica's independent existence decisively shaped the Ticos' view of themselves and of their neighbors. In March 1856, American adventurer William Walker, supported by southern U.S. slaveholders, invaded Guanacaste, in northwest Costa Rica, as part of his effort to take over the fledgling nations of the region and form a "Confederacy of Southern American States." Walker's private army was ousted by a Costa Rican volunteer force and driven deep into Nicaragua. The Costa Rican military effort, comprising all social classes, instilled a sense of nationalism among a people who had been divided on municipal and regional lines.

Two decades into the 20th century saw liberal democracy firmly entrenched in Costa Rica. Export-led growth — fueled by revenues from coffee and bananas — was the norm. Organized labor was slowly gaining strength and political legitimacy. Improvements in transportation and communications reinforced the sense of unity and national purpose.

The business of politics, though, remained in the hands of an agricultural elite. In 1936, Leon Cortes, a Nazi sympathizer backed by the coffee-growing elite, was elected president, putting a quick end to the modest social reform program initiated by his predecessor. Cortes' rule strained Costa Rica's constitutional framework to the limit; his refusal to permit a communist elected to Congress to take his seat sparked the resignation of the National Electoral Council.

With the outbreak of World War II, there was considerable political and social ferment in Central America. As the region recovered economically from the Great Depression, the local *caudillos* — political strongmen — saw the underpinnings of their power being undermined. New social forces were unleashed

against creaky authoritarian structures that had lost their credibility. However, only in Guatemala did a democratic alternative shatter the *ancien regime*.

In 1940, Leon Cortes and the coffee elite eased Rafael Angel Calderon into the presidency. Calderon, however, was inspired by the progressive Catholic social doctrine expressed in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and had a view of politics and its role in society that differed radically from that of his predecessor. A program of social security was instituted. Peasants were able to acquire fallow land by tilling it. A labor code ushered in the creation of a ministry of labor and guaranteed workers the right to organize. Calderon also succeeded in establishing a minimum wage and making collective bargaining mandatory in labor-management disputes. His reform program — while infuriating the anti-communist landowners — won the support of both the Catholic Church hierarchy and the Costa Rican Communist Party.

The essentially modernizing program pushed by Calderon created other enemies as well. Middle class professionals and intellectuals moved by social democratic ideals saw Calderon's efforts as too directed towards the peasantry and the working class. Independent farmers found the program threatening to their traditional way of life. Meanwhile, Cortes and like-minded members of the political Right, bolted from Calderon's coalition to form their own party. The scent of official corruption, and the growing cult surrounding his person, gave Calderon's enemies an easy target.

Although Calderon was strong enough to hand-pick his successor in 1944, the reforms generated increasing conflict. The cauldron boiled over in the presidential elections of 1948, when Calderon ran against an opposition united around a conservative foe. Although the national election commission declared Calderon's opponent the victor, his supporters had the election annulled through their control of Congress. Charges and countercharges of fraud added to the confusion.

The impasse was broken only by a 40-day civil war. Supported by Guatemala and the democratic leftists of the Caribbean Legion, the irregulars led by the charismatic coffee planter Pepe Figueres quickly overwhelmed the Calderonistas. Figueres' victory was also aided by support from the United States.

Emerging Cold War tensions help keep Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza from aiding the communist-supported Calderon.

At the end of the strife, Costa Rican society was ready for a new political consensus. The revolution saw armed communist groups defeated militarily, while their conservative allies were defeated politically. A negotiated peace treaty guaranteed a general amnesty and provided indemnities to all, regardless of political creed. Figueres also wisely signalled that his victory would not mean the rolling back of the social gains made under Calderon. He let stand a clause stating that "the social rights and guarantees of all employees and workers will be respected and extended."

The Contemporary Period

Nearly 40 years passed from the end of the Figueres-led democratic revolution to the time of the NDI conference held in June 1988. The stability of democratic government is often the consequence of a mixture of great leadership, good fortune, historical accident, and the consolidation of viable institutions. As conference participants acknowledged, all played a role in molding what is now accepted as Costa Rica's democratic tradition.

A bipartisan consensus was forged that permitted the flourishing of a semiautonomous state apparatus, which aggressively fostered economic growth and mediated conflicts among social classes. A constituency grew up with a vested interest in maintaining and supporting this bipartisan consensus. And institutional mechanisms and practices were created that channelled party competition and disputes over political power within the parameters of this consensus.

To understand the richness of such a process, various questions were posed at the San Jose conference as a framework for further investigation. What factors helped shape Costa Rican democracy and the structures of its political system? What explains the commitment to democracy among Costa Rica's elite, and how is the elite held accountable? How has Costa Rican society promoted democratic expression, and tolerance for diversity? What accounts for the ability of the political system to absorb conflict without resort to violence? What has been

the role of the legal system in developing and maintaining democracy? To what extent do Costa Rica's political parties and its electoral system contribute to the viable functioning of Costa Rican democracy? What was the impact of the 1949 Constitution of the Second Republic in the strengthening of Costa Rican democracy? How has the concept of a loyal opposition been developed and sustained? In what ways have freedom of the press and freedom of speech performed effectively as countervailing powers in the system?

A look at what has happened to Costa Rica's neighbors is instructive as to what occurs when democratic forms and procedures do not set down roots, when they do not reach the "critical mass" necessary to ensure their survival as institutions. As one scholar has noted: "Throughout much of Central America, the authoritarian conception of the role of the state that emerged in the period of *caudillismo* remains deeply rooted in the outlook of traditional elites. Members of these elites view government, like the army, as merely an additional instrument for maintaining their power and privilege, and they view any concessions by the state to other social classes or groups with suspicion and hostility. During the 1970s and 1980s, such attitudes have repeatedly led them to oppose with force all reformist political projects..."

The same author contrasted this dismal prospect for change with the process of democratization that took place in Costa Rica. The authoritarian state model, which had taken root in nearby lands during and after World War II, was rejected.

At the same time, one Costa Rican warned that there is a constant danger that Costa Ricans might one day fall into complacency, promoting a static view of democracy, and thus the view "that what we have is perfect, that it will last forever, that we do not have to reevaluate and renew." As part of the conference, four mechanisms were highlighted as particularly significant in maintaining and strengthening Costa Rican democracy. All four distinguish it from its neighbors in the region: The state role in the economy, and the development of autonomous institutions; the absence of a military; an elaborate system of checks and balances; and the role of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

Conference participant Jose Luis Vega Carballo added the following caution, and posed additional questions: "As Costa Rican democracy faces today's challenges, it does so from a position of 40 years of consolidation and fine tuning. In Costa Rica these institutions and values did not develop at once, but over time. This is important to remember when we consider other countries in the region who are just beginning, or who have not yet begun the process. What is the *sine qua non* for democratic development? What constitutes the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for its survival?"

The State's Role in the Economy

Costa Rica has traditionally enjoyed a bipartisan consensus, in essence a political contract, concerning the social role of the state. Since 1948, the nation's modernizing forces – guided by social democratic influences – carried out their work not in opposition to most conservative groups, but in alliance – albeit a sometimes contentious one – with them. That this occurred was in part due to the fact the nation's economic elite, which in the 1930s and 1940s had decided who became president, lost political power as a result of the nationalization of Costa Rica's banks. The elite concluded that their interests were best protected by moderation and compromise. Costa Ricans say formal and informal understandings about the role of the state allow it to ameliorate the sharpest features of class hostility, correcting the worst manifestations of poverty and, in so doing, reduce the disparities of wealth. Costa Rica's cooperative sector represents 10 percent of the national economy, making it the largest in the Western Hemisphere.

North American political scientist George Vickers, a participant at the NDI conference, has outlined several reasons why Costa Rica achieved a bipartisan consensus on state activism. The current major parties, he said, can both legitimately claim to have helped mold the social system that emerged in the 1940s. A relatively large middle class exists whose interests are tied to continuing state activism. "The size of the public sector helps to explain the bipartisan consensus over the general features of a social democratic state, i.e., both parties seek the support of public sector employees," Vickers noted. "At the same time, the bipartisan consensus works against third parties. Parties repre-

senting sectors of the traditional elite who favor the kind of authoritarian model of the state found in some other countries have little appeal outside their own circle, while parties supporting more radical reforms find their issues partly co-opted.”

State-sponsored private-sector growth with a social welfare tint was immediately evident in Figueres' first presidential term, from 1953 to 1957. From that time until 1982, the state made heavy investments in human capital and material infrastructure. Road, electric power grids, and educational opportunities were given priority in consecutive national budgets.

During the 1950s, Costa Rica established 20 autonomous institutions — publicly-financed but politically independent. Seventy-six were added between 1960 and 1978. In 1973, the state acquired the nation's oil refinery. A year later, the publicly-held Costa Rican Development Corporation (CODESA) began substantial investments in fertilizer, transportation, sugar, cotton, aluminum and cement production.

As one participant observed, the large, state-owned and/or autonomous institutions perform a number of important functions. They serve as a vehicle for the state's social role, as well as providing a constituency that promotes a continuing bipartisan consensus. They offer the parties an ongoing arena for political competition in terms of patronage, influence and the ability to test the appeal of issues and programs that go beyond the marketplace of elections every two or four years.

The extent of the cooperatives' role can best be seen in agriculture. The so-called Golden Age of the cooperatives in Costa Rica was the 1960s, and no more so than in the agro-industrial sector, most notably among coffee producers. Today, 95 percent of the dairy industry, one-third of the meat production and one-quarter of the sugar industry is in the hands of the cooperatives. The cooperatives in the rural sector are credited with a key role in helping maintain social stability in the face of the strains of competition, falling prices and increasingly scarce land.

The state's role in planning the economy was one of the questions most sharply debated at the conference. Some say the consensus must be renegotiated, or even undone, for the sake of economic efficiency. Critics point out that in the 1950s and

1960s, foreign investment in Costa Rica fueled much of the country's development; in the 1970s, it was high coffee prices and an intelligent policy on the production and marketing of bananas.

Today, however, Costa Rica's economy is no longer robust. Without reform, the argument runs, the country faces the fate of Uruguay. In that nation, the massive state sector and social welfare system are often blamed for draining the economy and helping to destabilize that country's longtime democracy. "While Costa Rican society developed a sophisticated structure to provide for public welfare and development projects," complained one Costa Rican participant, "it did not undertake construction of productive structures that could finance the development and infrastructure upon which it must be based."

Others, however, defended the state's continuing role. Some, such as sociologist Jose Luis Vega Carballo, pointed out that by undermining and eliminating the autonomous and state-run institutions, a bulwark for democracy and an arena for consensus-building are also destroyed. Noted Vega Carballo:

The autonomous institutions are extremely important as places where social tensions are worked out and consensus is achieved. They may be inefficient in terms of some original purposes, but these tension-management functions are more important than economic efficiencies... A fundamental condition of Costa Rican democracy is the separation and differentiation of economic and political power in the structure of society. The point is that the state is able to have access to and control over resources to achieve social goals. Privatization destroys this ability.

The Absence of an Army

Several participants noted that the decision by Pepe Figueres to abolish the military became one of Costa Rican democracy's most enduring and notable features. For Costa Rican political scientist Mary Burstin, lack of militarism is one of two pillars upon which the country's democracy is based (the educational system is the other). Unique among Central American nations, Costa Rica owns not a single tank, artillery piece, warship or

combat helicopter. Internal security is the sole domain of the police, which has less than 12,000 personnel in uniform.

Several Costa Rican participants point to their country's international standing as its most effective security guarantee. The decision to eliminate the military, it was noted, was intimately connected to a conscious effort to play the role of international good citizen. Costa Rica is active in both the United Nations and the Organization of American States. It is also a signatory to all major international human rights treaties and accords. As a result, Costa Rica is the site of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and its citizens have played key roles in international human rights monitoring. [For example, former Foreign Minister Fernando Volio is the U.N. special rapporteur for human rights in Chile.] Costa Ricans point out, though, that their policy of neutrality in foreign disputes does not imply an ideological neutrality.

In recent years, as most of the region has been plunged into war and civil strife, the lack of a military has also been the subject of some controversy. Some participants wondered aloud whether future social crises might not require a larger security establishment. Others said they worried about the ultimate purpose of the more than 100,000 troops maintained by Nicaragua's Sandinista regime. Former Foreign Minister Volio warned that Costa Rica's external security is dependent upon something "which is functioning badly" — the inter-American defense system, a hemispheric-wide security umbrella established in the postwar period. Another participant said bluntly: "We can't count on the inter-American system for protection."

Costa Ricans were in general agreement, however, that the absence of the military has had several positive effects on their country's democracy. First, it has meant the lack of an institution that, in the case of almost every other Latin nation, has at one time or another destabilized democracy. One participant cited a recent incident, where customs officials confiscated texts they considered "subversive," as a lesson in the abuse of authority, a danger that would be exacerbated in a militarized state. Vega Carballo said he was worried that the same sectors in Costa Rica who were demanding the creation of an army, were socially-privileged elites with anti-democratic attitudes. His concern was that an army would not so much be used for

preparing for battle against [Nicaraguan President Daniel] Ortega or [Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel] Noriega, but for use as new social problems arise.”

A second benefit of Costa Rica’s demilitarization was economic. Because of small expenditures for security, resources have been freed for other projects that tend to create more jobs and other benefits for society. Political scientist George Vickers noted that the lack of a military also made an important contribution to the political environment. The absence of an army within Costa Rican society, he said, “creates a fundamental pressure to *first* seek negotiations, to *first* seek compromise, before resorting to force.”

Several participants warned that Costa Rica’s security faced new threats, such as the international narcotics trade. Panamanian Christian Democratic leader Guillermo Cochez said that it was not military conflict but rather drug trafficking — together with arms trading and generalized corruption — which represented the principal dangers to Costa Rican democracy posed by the Noriega regime. He cited recent testimony by Noriega’s former pilot to the effect that Costa Rica was being used as a transshipment area for the Medellín drug cartel in connivance with some Costa Rican authorities. He said that Noriega’s intelligence agents have boasted that they have penetrated their northern neighbor’s security services. In 1985, the decapitated corpse of longtime Noriega foe Hugo Spadafora was found on Costa Rican soil, Cochez said.

Although a consensus was not reached concerning how to deal with Costa Rica’s growing feeling of vulnerability, several participants emphasized that any solution must be consistent with the country’s democratic traditions. One practical suggestion did emerge at the conference: Costa Rica’s security would be enhanced if more international organizations, such as the Organization of American States, were headquartered there. This would add to the nation’s prestige, while providing a tangible buffer to expansionist aims of Costa Rica’s neighbors.

Checks and Balances

Costa Rica's highly developed system of checks and balances was also highlighted as important for the maintenance of the democratic system. The system evolved in large part as a reaction to the abuses in the 1930s and 1940s. The executive, legislative and judicial branches are all relatively independent of one another, except for the fact that the Legislative Assembly exercises a significant control over the actions of the president. For example, at the time of the NDI conference, President Arias was engaged in intense negotiations with the Assembly over how much time he would be able to travel outside the country.

The current system came under some sharp criticism from those who argued that elaborate checks and balances may be leading to political immobilization. Social Christian leader Christian Tattenbach complained that the president of the Assembly did not have the right to set the Assembly's agenda and, for an issue to be brought up for special consideration, a two-thirds vote is required. It was also suggested the executive branch be given more attributes of power in order to free it from the "inertia" of the legislative branch. "We have generated a system of rules that keep us from arriving at far-reaching decisions," complained economist Ennio Rodriguez. "It obliges us to [be dependent upon] an extreme consensual system."

A related criticism focused on ties between a sitting president and his party. One negative effect of the perceived depoliticizing of the presidency, one participant argued, was that the head of state need not listen to an important institutional actor – the party – which might follow a longer-term agenda. The *desvinculación*, or "unlinking" of the president and his cabinet from their party, also was seen as making them more dependent on special interest groups, as the executive branch was thus deprived of the consensus-building function associated with party work. Part of the problem, Ennio Rodriguez said, was that Costa Rica's electoral legislation lagged behind that of its party development. He pointed out that the single, four-year presidential term favored decisions made on short-term calculations, causing necessary measures to be postponed – perhaps indefinitely.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal

In Costa Rica, the electoral system plays a vital part in the promotion of political harmony. The electoral system works because of the underlying consensus among social groups to make it work. The nation's political leaders, regardless of their partisan affiliation, have confidence in the electoral process. "The party which loses an election does not look for vote fraud or tricks," noted Supreme Electoral Tribunal Magistrate Rafael Villegas. "Instead it looks at the party's procedures or its internal workings that produced the defeat." In addition, the one-term limit on officeholders has helped put an end to the *continuismo* of the party in power, as was the case from 1921 to the civil war of 1948.

The key institution generating confidence in the integrity of the system is the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. The Tribunal acts with total independence from the other state institutions, thus limiting the advantages of the party in power. For example, when the National Assembly seeks changes relating to the conduct of elections, it must consult with the Tribunal. If the Assembly wants to press ahead with a measure despite opposition from the Tribunal, it must garner a two-thirds vote of all of its members. And when an election is called, the police are placed under the control of the Tribunal.

The electoral registry is composed of permanent lists, with the Tribunal generating more information than the parties are capable of producing. Births and deaths throughout the country are registered by computer within 10 days of their occurrence. Electoral lists are published at least twice in the year before the election in all of Costa Rica's electoral districts. The parties have access to the Tribunal's electoral system and can obtain information 24 hours a day.

Eight days before an election, the Tribunal distributes packets to the 7,000 electoral *juntas* all over the country. "You know what it means when we hand over, eight days ahead of time, the documentation for 7,000 voting stations in the entire country?" asked Magistrate Villegas. "These are received by the presidents of each electoral board (*junta receptora*), which are made up of people from all types of political, social and economic backgrounds, and the documentation is then given to a

professional person, to a barefoot peasant, to a young university student, to a housewife.” Each treats the procedure with reverence, he said. “You know what it means when eight days later the information is returned to the electoral boards, without so much as a pencil missing?”

“The inscription forms part of the list of future voters, so we can give the political parties not only a report about potential voters in February 1990, but also – if a party asks – we can give them a report on the number of voters in February 1994 and February 1998, and February 2002,” said Villegas, adding, “The youngest voters in February 2006 have not been born yet.”

Costa Rican student elections faithfully reflect their elders’ democratic practices, providing hands-on training in civic education and political participation. Mock election tribunals form an integral part of these elections; the position of electoral magistrate is recognition of a young person’s fairness and leadership.

From Bucolic... To Where?

Despite the strength of Costa Rica’s institutions, current challenges test the inventiveness of Costa Rica’s political class in devising solutions that are both effective and consistent with democratic practice. “The bucolic, isolated Costa Rica of yesteryear has changed,” noted Mary Burstin. “The question is how will Costa Ricans maintain their democratic system now that the country is not so isolated.”

Former Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo offered some of the most scathing critiques about the way the nation is today facing these new challenges. “At this moment, Costa Rica’s economic elite does not have any commitment to the democratic system,” he declared. An enormous financial group, he argued, has been able to penetrate both parties, “so that things are not debated, which traditionally formed part of the public discussion. We Costa Ricans are threatened today by the fact the ‘bearers of the Truth’ [in the media] are people who handle financial interests, determine the economic policies of the two parties and the mass media, which communicate to the Costa Rican people a series of illusions.” He added: “Here there is freedom of the press for the owners of the media.”

Carazo, who as president presided over a program of strict economic austerity, found that an "anti-communist paranoia" is threatening the traditional tolerance of Costa Ricans. He warned that if political channels are denied to those whose political beliefs conflict with those of the establishment, the people's will may manifest itself in ways outside the traditional institutions of Costa Rican democracy. He added:

There is no tolerance because there is a vested interest in silence, a silence which in the mass media ignores those things that are not in the interest of the owners of the media, and a forced silence against all those with different points of view. This breaks down communication and erodes the basic guarantee of democracy — tolerance...

From the point of view of the limitation of the debate among the political parties and the difficulty of other parties from becoming registered, the doors are being closed on political groups who might run the risk of other kinds of political activity, things which do not fall in the category of traditional Costa Rican electioneering.

As he did several times during the conference, Father Benjamin Nuñez, a former Costa Rican ambassador to Israel, questioned the grim picture being painted by Carazo, calling his comments "apocalyptic." Things in Costa Rica, he said, "are not like that. Costa Rica continues to be a vigorous democracy." Nuñez pointed out that in Costa Rica, there was no extreme rightwing party, as there are in several neighboring countries. "There are a few extreme rightwingers," he admitted, "but we see them as a joke." Nuñez added that he saw discontent with Costa Rican reality as a positive sign, quoting Henry Ford's famous remark that "the discontented construct the world."

Political and Social Organizations and Their Role in Democracy

Several questions might be asked about how the interaction among Costa Ricans, individually or as groups, has contributed to the consolidation of democratic institutions. In what ways has Costa Rica's system been strengthened, for example, by the framework for conflict resolution used among competing social

and political groups? How has Costa Rican democracy dealt with inequalities arising from differences in race, sex or social class? What role does the Costa Rican family play in the nation's democratic life? How has the educational system affected the functioning of democracy? What role has the labor movement played in promoting and maintaining democracy?

The debate over the country's institutions comes at a time of growing economic uncertainty. Costa Rica has the largest per capita debt in the region, and the debt service has forced retrenchment and reductions in the country's social services.

Costa Rica's economic travails reflect region-wide patterns. Throughout the last decade, Central America has endured severe external shocks. There have been wildly fluctuating and often unfavorable international markets for its primary export commodities. Between 1978 and 1984, the region's terms of trade fell by nearly one-quarter, while the region's exports declined. By 1986, exporters were earning less in foreign exchange than they had six years earlier. These depressed commodity earnings have translated into less import capacity, low tax revenues and reduced government and private-sector saving. Costa Rica is unique in Central America for having a debt profile like that of the larger Latin American nations — its scheduled interest payments would require about one-quarter of export earnings and claim nearly 10 percent of GNP.

In order to continue receiving loans, Costa Rica has been forced by international creditors to implement austerity measures that have weakened its once-strong bipartisan consensus. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Costa Rica was devastated by a deterioration in the terms of trade, while domestic savings plummeted to half their previous levels. In an effort to keep living standards at traditional levels, the government kept imports flowing; the result was a trade deficit of nearly \$900 million.

At the beginning of the 1980s, a burst of inflation led to enormous debts in the parastatal institutions and state agencies. These could cover costs only with heavy borrowing both at home and abroad. Because of the high debt service, it will take years for Costa Rica to regain creditworthiness in the private market.

To many Costa Ricans, the question is whether the debt, and its necessary remedies, might threaten the country's democratic

institutions. Already, expenditures in education, which were once a third of the national budget, have been pared in half. "The debt is not repayable and should not be repaid," said former President Carazo, "because if it is paid we will be robbed of our future and even our possibility to survive."

Political scientist Mary Burstin said she believed Costa Rica's economic crisis went beyond external factors, however. "We are talking as if we came from developed countries, and it was through contact with the rest of the world that we became underdeveloped. It's not like that at all."

The economic crisis has sparked widely divergent proposals for its resolution. Most Costa Ricans agree the country needs foreign debt relief and that the only lasting solution is to reinvigorate development. ("We are the Switzerland of Central America without the Swiss banks," complained Burstin.) Yet the debate over what needs to be done at home reflects uncertainty over both past practices and orthodox financial remedies.

A key ingredient in any solution to Costa Rica's current economic problems is the role of agriculture. Unfortunately, trends in this sector have not been positive. According to economist Ennio Rodriguez, even in 1970, statistics showed that for the three previous decades agricultural productivity had increased only because of colonization and the incorporation of new lands. Access to land has been a cornerstone of Costa Rican attempts to democratize the economy. Costa Rica traditionally relied on a very favorable ratio of population to resources. Because it was scarcely populated, there was an almost limitless access to property. Yet today the colonization of virgin land is almost an exhausted process, and the seizure of untouched and unused land is becoming more and more conflictive.

The pressure for land is only one factor in the limitation of Costa Rica's possibilities for growth through agriculture. What kind of crops are produced is another problem. Prices for traditional exports have plummeted. Internationally, sugar is being increasingly supplanted by manufactured substitutes; coffee prices have plummeted; and meat consumption is decreasing due to changing tastes. As Nicaraguan participant Virgilio Godoy noted, the changing patterns of the international division of

labor can, and likely will, have an impact on Costa Rica's future democratic development.

It was made clear at the conference that the economic formulas of international financial institutions were on a collision course with the Costa Rican view of the state's role in the economy. A few participants, though, placed the blame on an "inefficient" economy that is in need of reform. Former Foreign Minister Volio singled out the banking sector for criticism, saying it had lost its original spirit and should be modernized. A representative of the U.S. Republican party, Keith Schuette, speculated that Costa Rica might have benefitted from the flight of capital from Panama, if the banks had been privatized.

One individual even questioned the assumptions upon which Costa Rica's economic policies are based. "The state substitutes individual initiative, crushes originality, makes people submissive and worst of all — this state paternalism creates among the lower strata of society a dependency on their rulers," he said. "This conditions their vote; it replaces their participation with their manipulation."

However most criticisms heard at the conference centered on the inappropriateness of orthodox recipes when applied to Costa Rica. One participant pointed out that strategies based strictly on market forces cannot hope to solve all problems of development. Another stated his belief that "if the accumulation of wealth in private hands was the path to democracy, we wouldn't have any problem in Central America."

The role of new economic groups acting in the political arena was repeatedly criticized by conference participants. For Social Christian leader Roberto Tovar Faja, the primary challenge facing Costa Rica today is precisely one of "economic democratization." He warned that there was "a very dangerous concentration" of wealth in the hands of certain political and social sectors. Tovar noted:

The economic concentration of power means the concentration of political power as well. Economic concentration of power is out of step with political pluralism and, for that reason, Costa Rica may well be entering into a period of political instability. This could happen notwithstanding outside threats based on armed conflicts,

on drug trafficking, and on the inability of the system to satisfy all of society's needs. It could happen because the 'understanding' between the neo-liberals of the National Liberation Party and those of the Social Christians, could result in the disappearance of Costa Rica's traditional political pluralism.

Several participants echoed the charge that a financial capital group was "acting in, and above, the two parties with such aggressiveness," that it constituted "violence" against the country's institutions.

While some participants gave credit to President Arias for trying to privatize some autonomous institutions, several argued that privatization in itself is not a solution. Carazo blasted the "phantom of privatization," saying that "Costa Rica has had a social equilibrium which is being destroyed by an economic formula which forgets the central role of the individual in the construction of democracy."

One participant charged that organized labor is being emasculated by foreign-imposed solutions to the debt crisis. This, he argued, undermines a central tenet of Costa Rican democracy. "Labor is being shut out, they are not active in negotiations, and this is necessarily the result of imported formulas being used to treat social problems." Father Nuñez noted that public sector unions grew much faster than other Costa Rican labor organizations "because they were much easier to organize."

Another conferee noted that there had been a higher degree of political participation by the middle and working classes in the 1940s than there was today. This, he said, was in part due to the weakening of the labor unions. The Liberation Party could have done more to strengthen the unions, he added, but have only been involved in union affairs when it suited their partisan interests. He decried the fact there was no education in democratic unionism in Costa Rica. Instead, he said, education was geared to "unthinking peace" – a tradition of rejecting war and militarism in an undisciplined manner.

The issue of privatization was raised – heatedly and repeatedly – by the Costa Rican participants. "If Costa Rica begins to privatize in the way the international financial organizations

are pushing, the equilibrating factor of our economy — that for which the country has fought for almost half a century — will disappear,” Carazo charged. “The possibility that we Costa Ricans will have a positive instrument for the redistribution of wealth will also disappear.” Carazo added that the prescriptions of the international financial organizations have had several deleterious effects, such as promoting an agricultural policy that has led to a halt in production of such foodstuffs as rice. “I could tell you many anecdotes about my time in office,” he said. “But when it comes to the International Monetary Fund, I believe that, as has been said before, sometimes it is not necessary to have an army to make a coup. The IMF can take care of that itself.”

Social Christian leader Christian Tattenbach said improved access to U.S. markets was vital to Costa Rican economic recovery. “If we do not have better access, all these reflections on democracy and peace will be carried away by the torment... If there is not economic development, Costa Rica will not have peace or democracy in the future.” Liberationist Vega Carballo charged that neo-liberal economic policies, particularly as they are presented by the North American government, “can destabilize Costa Rican democracy.”

Carazo singled out one aspect of U.S. financial policy for criticism. Carazo said that U.S. credits must go to private banks rather than to the state-controlled financial sector, thus “setting aside the democratic participation of the Costa Rican people.” He complained that there had not been support from the U.S. for Costa Rica’s traditional democratic ways. “I remember when I was president being told by a U.S. ambassador, ‘Costa Rica is always trying to use its democracy to win support, and it’s getting a little trying.’ But I also remember that U.S. policy has rested on supporting many dictatorships, favoring the ‘loyal friend’ over real democracies.”

Panamanian Christian Democratic leader Guillermo Cochez said he believed the Central American crisis had adversely affected the Costa Rican economy — immigration of unskilled workers has increased; inter-regional trade has plummeted; and unemployment and underemployment has grown along with the number of displaced persons.

Several participants mentioned the necessity of revitalizing the Central American Common Market. In 1981, regional trade reached \$1.3 billion dollars annually; by the time of the conference this trade had slumped to \$400 to \$500 million. One participant noted that the Common Market had been one way member countries were able to moderate fluctuations in the price of their traditional agricultural exports.

Vice President Mondale asked what role money played in Costa Rican politics. Mondale noted the growing concern in the United States – then in the midst of its presidential campaign – about spiraling campaign costs. “This growing spectacle, that somehow government is up for sale, that you can rent democracy for your own purposes, means – if true – that the role of the average citizen becomes less and less important,” he said. “The fundamental theory of democracy is that it is controlled by the people and not by anybody else.”

Tovar Faja said he believed the present system, while well intentioned, is not working. He explained that Article 96 of the constitution allows for public financing of political parties, in order that special interests not control the politicians. “So that he who pays for the orchestra does not direct the dance,” Tovar said. However, he noted, the public financing does not deal with how candidates for president are chosen within their party. “There is no possibility of becoming the presidential candidate of one of the two major parties without the support of [those] social and economic sectors that Article 96 tries to keep from selecting the presidential candidate.” This, he added, makes efforts at economic democratization even more difficult.

Several participants stressed the importance of education in the consolidation of Costa Rican democracy and its reaffirmation in the face of current and future crises. Education, it was pointed out, helped instill democratic values, while at the same time had a homogenizing effect on the differing social classes. Costa Rica’s educational system is based on two precepts: equal opportunity for all, and meaningful social mobility. For Social Christian leader Tattenbach, the solution for Costa Rica’s current ills was, “Education, education and more education.”

Several criticisms of Costa Rica’s educational system were voiced. Some participants focused on excessive technical, administrative and budgetary centralization in the system. This

centralization, it was pointed out, tends to stifle initiatives by parents and teachers. At the same time, teacher accountability was questioned, given that Costa Rican teachers are civil service employees who are not dependent on the minister of education.

Some participants criticized a curriculum they considered "authoritarian," whose emphasis was on rote memory. Others pointed out that the problem extended beyond *what* was taught, to a larger question of opportunity. One participant pointed out that only 55 percent of Costa Rican preschool needs are met, while just 36 percent of the eligible population attends secondary school.

Political scientist Mary Burstin expressed frustration that the university system appears unable to adapt to the country's future needs. "We are educating most students as if they belonged to the elite, and this is unfair," she said. "Costa Rica ought to be opening up technical schools and agricultural institutes, because that's where the country is headed."

"Even though social classes intermingle in the universities, the panorama awaiting the students once they leave is very difficult — those who can do what they want, or not do anything at all, and those who are frustrated at finding they can't do what they wanted to do," Burstin said.

Conclusion

At the San Jose conference, one participant was heard to remark that even Don Pepe Figueres has said that Costa Rica's institutions are not those he thought he was setting down decades ago. Yet there has been much that has worked. North American political scientist George Vickers noted that, despite being neither wealthy nor heavily industrialized, Costa Rica has maintained a vibrant democracy. This suggests that economic development is not a necessary precondition for democracy.

A snapshot of Costa Rican democracy in June 1988 suggests a country in transition. Clearly, Costa Ricans feel the need for both a renegotiation of the social pact that has served to cement their democratic institutions, and the creation of a new political consensus in order to incorporate emerging social forces. There is something healthy about the fact that Father Nuñez, one of the founding fathers of the modern Costa Rican state, can both

defend its record and admit that a sizeable underclass "is shameful for our democracy."

Costa Rica today is indeed a democracy in a region of crisis. Geographically isolated, it is bordered by the Sandinista regime to the north, and Gen. Manuel Noriega's narco-militarist state to the south. There was wide agreement at the conference that the survival of Costa Rican democracy is fundamental to regional democratization as well. There was a similar feeling that Tico democracy cannot survive merely through the acts of individual Costa Ricans — the democratic system needs international support, both in terms of its debt and its physical security. Costa Rican participants made it clear that despite disagreements, the United States remains of vital political and economic importance to Costa Rica.

Israeli political scientist Shlomo Avineri suggested several similarities between the establishment of democracy in his country and that of Costa Rica. First, since Israel was founded in 1948, its leadership has sought to provide institutional structures that allow for consensus and political compromise. Both societies were initially without great concentrations of power and wealth, and both were blessed with a relative social and ethnic homogeneity. In Israel, as in Costa Rica, the role of the state is accepted by the major political parties. And the two major parties compete across class lines, accepting the rules of the game and always — in the last analysis — seeking consensus.

In Costa Rica as in Israel, Avineri noted, there are strong public sectors — particularly the unions and the cooperatives — which nonetheless were not directly state controlled. There were also some mechanisms for an equitable (though not equal) distribution of wealth, with the state playing the role of arbiter of class conflict, not the enforcer for any given side. Although their geopolitical situations are markedly different, both Israel and Costa Rica share the same goal of protecting civil society from military domination. Israel's citizens' army, with its egalitarian traditions, is a product of those efforts. Lastly, although both nations are highly politicized, both enjoy an independent judiciary, which provides for a respected arbiter in highly charged situations.

Costa Rica also shares several characteristics with Botswana's democracy, Minister Kedikilwe noted: both are predominantly

agricultural; both have firm roots in responsive local government; each enjoys a relatively impartial public administration; both have relatively homogenous populations; and each shares the ideals of a common quest for peace and social justice.

The success of Costa Rican democracy, noted former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Viron Vaky, came from three sources. First, all major elements of Costa Rican society accept the rules of the game. Second, there is a respect for the rule of law. And finally, there is a preference for compromise as a means of conflict resolution.

BOTSWANA

Introduction

NDI staff participated in a "Symposium on Democracy in Botswana," held in the capital city of Gaborone, in August 1988. (See Appendix F for agenda.) The symposium was organized by the Botswana Society and the Democracy Project. Attending the symposium were senior Botswanan political and civic leaders, as well as participants from six other African nations, the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany. NDI also sponsored three South African journalists as conference participants. The information contained in this report was presented at the August 1988 conference. While the structure of the conference was somewhat different than that of the NDI-sponsored conferences in Israel and Costa Rica, the information and analysis on the Botswanan democracy was thorough and penetrating. The oral and written presentations enabled NDI to prepare a report that we believe captures the essence of Botswana's democratic experience.

The empirical basis for much of the discussion in this chapter comes from the research conducted by faculty involved in the University of Botswana's Democracy Project. During 1987-88, they conducted a mass survey of 1,300 respondents, interviewed many politicians, civil servants and others involved in democratic

processes in the country, and did extensive archival research. The members of the Project presented their initial analyses at the Symposium on Democracy in Botswana. Updated versions of their papers appear in *Democracy in Botswana* edited by John Holm and Patrick Molutsi, copublished by Macmillan Botswana and Ohio University Press. The members of the project staff are K. Datta, J. Holm, M. Lekorwe, P.T. Mgadla, A. Molokomme, M.G. Molomo, P.P. Molutsi (coordinator), L.D. Ngcongco, R. Nengwekulu and G. Somolekae.

Botswana's Democratic Tendencies

In the brief, quarter century of Botswana's existence as an independent nation, the rapid pace of change in its political, economic, and cultural institutions would have thrust a less adaptive people into either chaos or dictatorship. Instead, Botswana enjoys a reputation as the most democratic nation on the African continent, despite the trepidations of some observers that this new nation has yet to meet successfully many fundamental challenges to its efforts to build a democratic system. While historic circumstances and tendencies provide Botswana with a democratic infrastructure that seems strong and stable, important elements of, and opportunities for, authoritarianism also exist, and could presumably be activated by a serious security or economic crisis. Hence the question: will the democratic seedling in Botswana take root and grow during its present period of rapid change amidst the political turbulence that prevails in southern Africa?

The Democratic Tendencies

Botswana has a long tradition of consultation between its leaders and their people. In Tswana communities (*morafe*), tribal chiefs (*kgosi*) have over centuries regularly consulted with senior royal relatives and headmen (*dikgosi*) of the major wards and subject groups within the tribe. Occasionally, on issues of broad importance, consultation has included the calling of all adult males to a tribal assembly (*kgotla*). This consensual style of decisionmaking still persists at the district and village level, with elected officials and civil servants rather than chiefs using the forum much of the time.

Despite their military achievements of earlier centuries, Botswana's elites have a strong cultural preference for nonviolent competition. This is accompanied by a pervasive emphasis on communication, consultation, maintenance of an independent judiciary, respect for the rule of law, and deference by the police and the military to civilian authority.

Under a British protectorate from 1885 to 1966, Botswana's chiefs and other nobility were subject to British parliamentary laws. At independence in 1966, however, the new nation adopted a system that provides for a strong presidency. In practice, the national bureaucracy has been an even stronger institution.

Political power is structurally dispersed in theory, but fairly concentrated in practice. There is a multiparty system, with one party overwhelmingly dominant. The themes of Botswana's political discourse carry a strong egalitarian tone, but an elite of bureaucrats, cattlemen, businessmen, elected politicians, and chiefs, in that descending order, have the greatest influence. There is decentralization of authority to local elected councils, although the national bureaucracy plays the major role in council decisions. There is competition among the agencies of the national bureaucracy, which, overall, has been mainly accountable to themselves. Civil rights are respected, albeit with some ambivalence. Botswana's military development is modest. Its educational needs are great.

The Tests of the Future

Unlike other democracies in regions of crisis, such as Costa Rica and Israel, Botswana's democracy is relatively new and untested by the traumas of foreign invasion, civil war, economic depression, military coups, and the like. The possibility of such tests is real.

Neighboring Zimbabwe has been the base of guerrilla forays into Botswana's territory. South Africa has frequently invaded Botswana's territory in hot pursuit of African National Congress guerrillas passing through or crossing over the border. To meet these incursions and protect its sovereignty, will Botswana have to build a more potent and expensive military force? If so, would the leaders of a potent military force begin to think in terms of coups and personal aggrandizement? Would the costs

of a large military force drain funds away from a national budget that is dedicated to economic development?

After two decades of spectacular economic growth — from being one of the poorest nations in the world to becoming one of the richest in Africa in terms of per capita income — how would Botswanan democracy handle an economic plateau or decline? Will growth in urban populations, political parties, organized interest groups, and trade unions introduce new and disruptive forms of political competition? Will established elites find it difficult to accommodate to the quick pace and pressures of change?

Origins of Botswanan Democracy

The British protectorate of Bechuanaland became the Republic of Botswana and a member of the British Commonwealth on September 30, 1966. Since independence, Botswana has put a democratic constitution into effect and become one of the most healthy, prosperous, and educated nations in Africa. Male life expectancy is 55 years, female is 61 — both close to the highest in the continent. The country has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in Africa: 72 deaths per 1,000 births. Ninety-six percent of Botswanan children are enrolled in some form of primary school, but only 21 percent are in secondary school, which, although low by some standards, happens to be one of the highest in Africa. Although elementary schooling is relatively widespread, only 35 percent of the total population is literate in English, the official language. This is a fact of some political significance since English-language skills are a constitutional requirement for members of parliament and a practical requirement in other areas of public service.

Landlocked, Botswana is bordered on its south by South Africa and Namibia, both lands troubled by racial strife, and by Zimbabwe to its northeast, a nation that has only recently calmed its own internal tensions. Surrounded on all sides by nations experiencing political turmoil, it is of more than passing interest how this small country — the size of Texas and with a population slightly more than a million — has inaugurated and pursued its march toward a democratic system.

Despite its vast areas of desert, swamp, and scrubland, the country was settled some 2,000 years ago by tribes engaged in hunting, farming, and animal husbandry. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, the territory was principally occupied by the Tswana people, although others – the Kgalagadi, the San, the Herero, the Kalanga, the Yei, and the Mbakushu – also were present. There are today eight Tswana tribes, the principal being the Bamangwato (35 percent of the population), followed in size by the Bakwena, the Bangwaketse, and Bakgatla. While Botswana has an ethnically varied population, a preponderant number of its citizens come from similar or overlapping origins. Nevertheless, ethnicity remains a significant feature of contemporary Botswanan politics.

Early Tswana tribal chiefs were the military, religious, economic as well as political leaders of their communities. They successfully defended themselves from Zulu and Afrikaner incursions into their territory and protected their strategically situated trading operations in the center of southern Africa. They absorbed, in a relatively smooth manner, the arrival of Christianity, although limiting its influence. Today, most Batswana practice indigenous religions; only about 15 percent of the population is Christian.

The chiefs adapted shrewdly to the arrival of European traders. They worked out a system for licensing and otherwise participating in the trade of goods north and south through their territories. The chiefs exploited the British desire to forestall German expansion from South West Africa (Namibia) and to counter Afrikaner migration from the Transvaal; they invited the British to declare Bechuanaland a protectorate. This was done in 1885.

The British gave moderate and generally respectful attention to Bechuanaland self-governance during the protectorate (1885-1966). While most local affairs were left to the management of the chiefs, the British territorial bureaucracy slowly assumed control of most aspects of territorial administration, often with the proclaimed intention of nationalizing and democratizing some Tswana political practices.

The appeal of independence came in the decolonization era following World War II. Independence required an era of rapid change. Initially, the principal expertise for managing this

transition came from the largely expatriate (British and European) civil service, Tswana bureaucrats, major cattlemen, and businessmen (mostly small local businesses). The chiefs brought the general populace along.

All through the 1960s and 1970s, the civil servants increased their political influence. Cattle and crop farmers and businessmen could exercise only a veto in certain policy areas. The governing Botswana Democratic Party, meanwhile, created democratic local institutions, such as district councils and landboards, that diminished the influence of the chiefs. Because of the growing importance of the political parties, elected politicians joined civil servants, cattlemen, businessmen, and chiefs in the leadership of the country.

A Mix of Tribal and Parliamentary Political Institutions

By the 17th century, the basic political institutions of the Tswana tribes appear to have been firmly established. The roles of *kgosi* (chief, ruler), *dikgosi* (chief's royal advisers), and headmen were fairly well defined. The political organization of the *morafe* (tribal community) and the *kgotla* (tribal assembly) had their modern features. These and related institutions persist to this day, with an overlay of a democratic constitution, political parties, interest groups, and other modern political institutions.

Kgosi was a hereditary ruler who made final decisions on all matters concerning the *morafe* (the entire tribal nation). *Dikgosi* were the uncles, headmen of wards (local districts), and other persons of status, all of whom advised the *kgosi*; in effect, a royal court. Most *morafe* issues were decided following the consultations between *kgosi* and *dikgosi*.

Kgotla was the formal assembly of all male adults convened to discuss issues of general and significant concern. *Kgosing* was the central or main *kgotla* of the *morafe*. There were separate *kgotla* in the wards. Women and children were occasionally present at *kgotla*, but, since they were considered minors, never contributed to the discussions.

The Tswana tribes tended to be settlers, usually in extensive towns, that is, the subdivisions referred to as wards. Wards varied greatly in area and size of population, but all had fixed

locations, names, and relatively stable family groupings. The latter were either related to the ward headman or residents from non-Tswana tribes.

Despite the hierarchical structure of the tribal community and the authoritarian appearance of the *kgosi*, fundamental elements of democracy were operative and enduring, not unlike those of the early kingdoms of the English. All adults eligible to attend the *kgotla* enjoyed free and unrestricted speech, even to the point of criticizing the *kgosi*, so long as certain customs of etiquette were observed. Among the *kgotla* rules, for example: harsh language was forbidden, severe criticism of the *kgosi* had to be expressed in poem or song, drunkenness among those in attendance was forbidden, seating was according to age and social status, and *kgotla* meetings were to take precedence over all other tribal events. Most decisions were taken by a Quaker-like consensus as announced by the *kgosi*; voting was rare. This included those occasions when the *kgotla* served a judicial function, that is, as a people's court without benefit of lawyers or judges. When considering a dispute or crime, any member of the *kgotla* could attend, cross-examine, and participate in the resolution of a dispute or the judgment of the alleged offender.

Thus, some of the principal attributes of democratic communal life were present for centuries: constant consultation by and among chiefs and between chiefs and their people; at the *kgotla*, open and safe communication on any and all matters; the requirement of courteous conduct even during intense disagreements; and decision by consensus rather than dictatorial proclamation. Gatherings at *kgotla* were held almost daily so that word about new laws could be heard and people could be available for assignments from their rulers. As Professor L. D. Ngcongco has pointed out: "[T]he system operated in such a way that it checked and restrained the powers of the leaders. It prevented autocracy. Thus, while not resembling the Athenian model in the selection of leaders, the Tswana precolonial form of democracy emphasized the behavior and activities of the leaders rather than their mode of selection... It was not Greek or American democracy, it was Tswana democracy."

However, there was a significant authoritarian side to this traditional pattern of self-governance. Tribal sovereignty did,

after all, lay in the *kgosi's*, rather than the people's, right of final decision. The political system was dominated by a royal elite and Tswana adult males. Women, children, commoners (non-royal Tswana and loyal immigrants or conquered peoples), foreigners (immigrants and others who maintained their separate identities), and serfs (in effect, contractual slaves) comprised minorities that held few rights and were frequently exploited or otherwise abused. Slave trade was not unknown.

Further, in Tswana, as in other traditional African societies, civil rights, as understood today, usually adhered to communities rather than to individuals. For example, tribes and wards had the right of representation, but not the individuals in them. There were no rights of citizen representation or vote. Personal rights were not inherent, but derived from membership in the ward *kgotla* and the tribal *morafe*, very much in the manner theorized in Plato's classic communism. From this perspective, an individual Tswana was entitled to parcels of communal land on which to build his home, graze his cattle, and plant his crops. In practice, such entitlements were not extended to minorities (women, commoners, foreigners, or serfs).

Religious freedom, which usually was manifest by personal conversions from traditional religious practices to adherence to a Christian church, was generally interpreted as a form of political rebellion, and was often penalized. Ostracism, for example, was an appropriate penalty. Until as recently as the 1920s, freedom of movement was also strictly limited. Commoners could move freely within the tribal area, but going to nearby states or settling outside one's local ward required the chief's permission.

External Influences

These views and practices began to be challenged during the late 19th century by the foreign philosophies of liberalism, capitalism, and nationalism. Thus, the liberal concept of individual freedom, the capitalist concept of free markets, and the nationalistic concept of national ascendancy over the local community made their way into elite conscience through foreign education and pressure from the British colonial administrators. Under the British protectorate, slavery, serfdom, discrimination against subject peoples, obstacles to freedom of movement

(employment in South Africa, for example), and similar constraints were denounced. These denunciations were less than immediately effective, instead, setting the stage for later post-colonial changes.

Under the protectorate declared in 1885, the British were explicit about not interfering with the indigenous system of governance and administration. Six years later, the British High Commissioner in Cape Town, South Africa, was authorized to legislate for Bechuanaland by proclamation, but directed to do so only with full respect for native law and custom. As the years passed, however, the high commissioner and the *dikgosi* fell into disagreements over the administration of the territory, with the influence of the *dikgosi* gradually diminishing.

In 1920, a Native Advisory Council to the Protectorate Administration was established by the British to facilitate dealings with Botswana affairs on a national basis. The representatives to the Council were chosen by the *dikgosi* rather than by any popular election. The following year the British set up a European Advisory Council to handle separately the affairs of Europeans residing in the protectorate. The latter council evolved into a parallel system of protectorate government, which, in time, further weakened the influence of the *dikgosi*.

By the 1930s, the *kgotla* was also a much debilitated institution, particularly since it was rarely consulted on matters of colonial policy. The Protectorate Proclamations of 1934 were particularly offensive because they introduced British procedural law and empowered the high commissioner to recognize or ignore the *dikgosi*. At this point, a new and better-educated generation of *dikgosi* began to resist the encroachments of the British.

Restoring Original Forms

During World War II, and as the postwar decolonization of European empires began, new Protectorate Proclamations began a process of returning Botswanan political control to the chiefs, the *dikgosi*, and the *kgotla*. By the early 1960s, the pressure for independence heightened as political parties began to emerge: the Bechuanaland (later, Botswana) Peoples Party (social democrats), the Botswana Independence Party (originally a BPP

faction), the Botswana Democratic Party (centrist and favoring Western-style democracy), and the Botswana National Front (Marxist).

One of the most pronounced changes in Botswana political institutions to accompany independence was the arrival of the political parties and their "freedom squares" (campaign rallies). Because Botswana, Gambia, and Mauritius are former British colonies, their political leaders have been aware of the parliamentary system of representation and the party systems that enable parliaments to function. Each country now has a multiparty system, but those of Botswana and Mauritius may be the most operational.

During the anti-colonial movement in the 1950s, members of the Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP) participated in freedom square meetings conducted in South Africa by the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress. Subsequent efforts to hold similar meetings at the *kgotla* of Bechuanaland were resisted by the colonial administration and by the chiefs. In response, the BPP began holding its own separate freedom square meetings. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) found itself similarly handicapped when it was formed in 1962, and it, too, adopted the freedom square method of popular communication.

Unlike the *kgotla*, behavior at freedom squares was extremely informal. Harsh language was plentiful. Seating was determined by comfort rather than age and status. These meetings were held whenever and wherever the party politicians could gather a crowd. Singing and heckling were in order. Speech was free and usually consisted of unrestrained attacks upon the competing party. There was neither agenda nor decisions.

Another change relates to minority groups. Since independence, there are, legally and technically, no subject groups. Most Batswana share the same political, economic, and cultural rights. Today, civil rights problems are in large measure practical ones: employer refusal to allow time off from work to attend *kgotla*; failure of the government to provide absentee ballots for migrant workers; conservation programs that threaten ownership of ancestral land; extremely low wages for farm labor; limited educational resources and high illiteracy; and popular failure to

understand the fundamental political, economic, and cultural changes being wrought by rapid modernization.

The System of Government

Botswana's government is a presidential-parliamentary system. The president is the head of state and government. The parliament consists of a National Assembly and a consultative House of Chiefs. The judicial structure includes a High Court and a Court of Appeals.

Thirty-four members of the National Assembly are directly elected by universal adult suffrage. Four additional members are selected by the Assembly. Parliamentary eligibility remains restricted to those who can speak and read English, a talent of the well-educated. The majority party in the National Assembly selects the president from among its members, along with certain cabinet officials, particularly the attorney general. The president has no veto power. The president's term is the same as the National Assembly's. Elections are held every five years.

The house of traditional leaders, the House of Chiefs, consists of 15 members: the chiefs of the eight major tribes, four elected subchiefs, and three members chosen by the first 12. The House of Chiefs occasionally contributes to the debate on national issues in matters of traditional law and population control, but does not vote on legislation.

The political influence of the national civil service is central to governmental operations. At the time of independence, British colonial administrators and other European foreigners were employed by, or served as consultants to, the new Botswana government. In effect, they directed the establishment of the new government. Expatriate civil servants and development experts have, until recently, been among the most influential policymakers. In contrast, also until recently, chiefs and elected politicians have been relatively uneducated, uninformed, and uninfluential. What political clout they have had came from their accessibility to their constituents. As political party leaders have become more sophisticated, civil servants, domestic and expatriate, have had increasingly to justify their role.

From the perspective of the national bureaucracy, government agencies engage in thorough consultation, in the *kgosi*

tradition, with those citizens likely to be affected by proposed policies and programs. However, consultations tend to come after, rather than before, policy decisions, and have more to do with implementation than with consensus. Civil servants defend these procedures on educational and administrative grounds, arguing that public administration need not necessarily be democratic.

Developing Local Autonomy

Decentralization is one mode of dispersing power in a democracy. It is not coincidental that Botswana, with its elaborate provisions for local government, has also been the most democratic on the African continent and the least victimized by ethnic conflict. Political autonomy and policy participation for each locality and ethnic group have been crucial to the regime's legitimacy, the strong influence of the national bureaucracy notwithstanding. Some analysts argue for giving even more policy independence to the local councils.

Botswana's local government consists of nine districts and four towns. All are governed by councils — modern versions of the *dikgosi*. Traditional chiefs head five of the district councils, elected officials the remaining four. The district councils have the power to levy personal income taxes for revenue purposes. These revenues may be supplemented by grants from the national government, thus giving the national bureaucracy substantial leverage in local decisions.

The Political Parties

The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) is the ruling party, and has held power since 1966. The BDP currently holds 28 out of the 34 elected seats in the National Assembly. The party has favored a market economy and a democratic political system, and has been protective of the country's civil rights record. The Botswana National Front (BNF) is the principal opposition party, with only five seats in the National Assembly. While also favoring a market economy, the BNF disagrees with the BDP over how much the government should participate in economic development and over the role that labor unions should play in the economy. Botswana's oldest political party, the Botswana

Peoples Party (BPP), currently has only one representative in the National Assembly.

Botswana's four major urban centers, with populations ranging from 80,000 to 25,000, have, since the mid-1980s, become the strongholds of the opposition parties. Rural areas, where more than 75 percent of the population lives, remain the stronghold of the ruling BDP. After two decades, Botswana's ruling party, the BDP, is still basically a collection of local notables rather than a mass-based party.

Democratic rectitude has been a prominent feature of the ruling elite. Public financial management has been "Simon pure" for the most part. Elections have been free and fair, notwithstanding reports of minor infractions by opposition parties. Open dissent has been tolerated in a relatively liberal spirit. What seems to worry outside observers most is the fact that the government of the BDP has not yet faced the kinds of daunting challenges and acute political insecurity that have frustrated and terminated many other new regimes in Africa. Hence, it is not clear which way the ruling elite would turn if they were to be confronted with a truly serious challenge to their political dominance.

Botswana's Military Past and Security Future

Surprisingly little attention was given at the Gaborone symposium to discussion of Botswana's military development and security problems. Yet, the incursions from and civil conflicts within Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia were generally perceived as among the major threats to Botswana's democratic development. However, Botswana's military history should be reassuring because of its emphasis upon defense, nonviolence, and deference to civilian authority.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the growth of the four largest Tswana tribes — the Bamangwato, the Bakwena, the Bangwaketse, and the Bakgatla — was contingent upon their successes in war and trade, and because of the strong leadership of the chiefs. These tribes defended themselves effectively against the Zulu armies moving up from the southeast in the 1820s. A few decades later, they parried attacks from the Afrikaners trekking northward to escape British colonial rule.

This constant need to protect themselves against outside military threat helped develop the Tswana sense of community. In addition, there have been no notable episodes of Tswana aggression against others. Together with the consensual system of the *kgotla*, these military threats also had their impact on the relationships among Tswana chiefs.

Since the chiefs controlled all aspects of communal activity, they performed many roles: military, political, economic, and religious. What should be noted is that their military role was one among many, just as the president of the United States has many roles, one of which is commander in chief of the armed forces. Unlike full-time tribal warriors or full-time modern generals, the chiefs' military role had to be reconciled with other responsibilities. There were no tribal "generals" among the Tswana. Since the Tswana chiefs (again, as in the case of American presidents) are primarily civilian officers, the concept of civilian supremacy over the military was inherent, indirectly institutionalized as an aspect of their official positions.

The 19th century period of Tswana warfare also coincided with the emergence of the Tswana tribes as centers of trade in southern Africa. As a predominantly civilian activity, trade undoubtedly compelled the chiefs to give precedence to their civilian roles, relegating the military to the subordinate function of protecting the conduct of trade.

Among the chiefs' military duties were control over the tribal age regiments, which have been the primary vehicle for military organization. The age regiments were a form of universal military service for eligible males, in effect, a citizen army. Citizen armies, however, tend to be pillars of democracy precisely because they are part-time and nonprofessional. They do not readily lend themselves to easy control by would-be military dictators.

During the 1880s, looking for allies to help them cope with the increasing incursions of Afrikaners, the Tswana chiefs collectively invited the British to declare a protectorate over the area. As civilians and traders, the chiefs undoubtedly felt that the price of adequate self-defense was beyond their means or interest. London agreed to the arrangement because it wanted to assure itself a potential military base in southern Africa and a road link with its colonies to the north.

The degree of control the British chose to exercise over Bechuanaland was initially modest. However, under the protectorate treaty, the chiefs did give up their prerogative to make war, a concession hardly typical of a militaristic leadership. As noted in the comments below, the consensus feature of Tswana culture has been reflected in the relative absence of political violence among them or by them against others.

During the period from 1975-80, Botswana's main security concern was Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Several border incidents during the Rhodesian civil war, and following Zimbabwe's independence, aroused concern. Later, Botswana's attention became focused on South Africa. Following a series of raids from 1984-1987, which Pretoria claims were carried out to defend itself against nationalist revolutionary groups like the African National Congress (ANC), the Botswana government began to look upon South Africa as its main security problem.

The Pretoria government has wanted Botswana to expel any public supporters of political organizations seeking to overthrow or radically alter the political system of South Africa. In response, the governing Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has been partially compliant, only allowing nonmilitary persons to remain in the country. But, Botswana's ability to enforce even this policy has been minimal. South Africa consequently launched cross-border raids whenever it judged that Botswana was not doing enough.

Some Botswanan politicians argue that they have no option but to augment the country's military force and police substantially. The great fear is that such dependence on the military will have destabilizing consequences for Botswanan democracy. The military and the police will presumably become more influential as they come to control a greater share of the budget. Also, military and police pursuit of South African rebels could bring on a state of virtual war in which Botswana citizen rights could be suppressed under the pretext of a military emergency.

Examination of the military statistics sheds some light on these concerns. For the first decade after independence (1966-1976), the country had a police force but no military organization, a situation comparable to Costa Rica's. In response to the incursions from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and then

South Africa, the government began to create an army, the Botswana Defense Force (BDF).

There was no national armed forces budget for Botswana prior to 1977, although there were about 1,000 regularly armed national police and some unspecified number of youth regiments. In 1977, the first national military expenditure was \$6 million (1977 dollars), growing to \$25 million in 1986, according to data compiled by the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Thus, from zero percent of the Gross National Product prior to 1977, military expenditures rose to 2.3 percent in 1986. Botswana's military expenditures as a percentage of GNP, now ranks it 120 out of 142 countries for which data have been gathered. The armed force, now separate from the police, consists of 3,000 personnel, or about three soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants.

Botswana's armed forces is mainly occupied with controlling the movements of guerrilla forces (mostly members of the African National Congress) moving through Botswana on their way to South Africa. The government would prefer to keep these fighters out of Botswana entirely. Unable to accomplish this, Botswana's military engage in a tactic of interrupting guerrilla transit as much as possible so as to avoid having the South African military take matters into its own hands. The government also wants to prevent the ANC guerrillas from becoming a disruptive issue in Botswana's internal politics.

The security situation is strained by the fact that Botswana has no diplomatic relations with South Africa, nor is a South African representative in Gaborone. Botswana refuses to exchange diplomats as a protest against apartheid.

For domestic purposes, Botswana has attempted to tighten security by, among other things, the passage of a new National Security Act which increases the powers of the attorney general and the police to deal with foreign agents. While the act is intended to control these agents, opposition parties claim the law is ambiguous enough to encompass opposition party adherents as well. The act departs from Botswana's tradition of civil liberties guaranteed in law, but, in practice, it has rarely been invoked.

A Traditional Political Culture In Modern Context

Although it experiences a great deal of ethnic diversity, Botswana enjoys a large degree of cultural unity. This unity flows from the similarity in language and cultural traditions of the Tswana tribes. This similarity is reinforced by the fact that the dominant tribes have maintained an accommodating stance toward other tribes and groups, thereby making it easier for cultures to mesh and acquire a certain homogeneity. Tswana are reluctant to impose cultural and political hegemony. For example, even though the ruling BDP can carry a parliamentary majority almost exclusively because of the monolithic support it would receive from the largest subethnic group (the Bamangwato, 35 percent plus) and an alliance with one other group, the party has instead chosen to treat all groups alike, even leaning over backward to provide government services and resources to less politically friendly groups. From the point of view of minorities, the decentralized political structure of Botswana ensures considerable autonomy for its eight subethnic groups of the Tswana people, thereby making accommodation a desirable approach to diversity.

Perhaps the most fundamental cultural habit with political implications is that of consultation and communication. It is customary for the male head of a household to consult with his brothers and uncles at the *kgotla*. The issue may next be carried to the ward *kgotla*, and then to the central *kgosing*.

Other democratizing attitudes have been nurtured in the age regiments, where the virtues of obedience, loyalty, respect for seniors, and a sense of responsibility were developed. For many, good citizenship has been considered a special gift from God.

Unlike developments in many other African nations, where articulation between ancient cultural traditions and modern democratic systems have failed to occur, the continuity between past and present in Botswana helps explain its atypical success. The ruling party (BDP) has built on the tradition of the *kgotla* as the forum in which to consult public opinion and mobilize public support when seeking local approval for development policies. BDP has also used the traditional chiefs, who retain popular esteem, to legitimize the new political structure and solicit community support. Although traditional political

structures were highly authoritarian in many respects, the traditional emphasis on moderation, nonviolence, and obedience to the law, along with public discussion and community consensus, have clearly facilitated the development and persistence of Botswana's democratizing effort. Botswana's leaders' commitment to democratic values is clearly linked to the country's relative success in these efforts, with the qualification that challenging tests of that commitment still lie ahead.

Dimensions of the Emerging Competitive Politics

John D. Holm, former coordinator of the Democracy Project at the University of Botswana and NDI consultant, described the main attribute of the democratization process in Botswana in these words:

The striking thing about the process of democratization in Botswana is that it continues on a regular but unspectacular basis. There are no dramatic events that stand out, except to those who are immediately involved in the change. Most of the demands for change come from groups outside of government. But the cumulative effect is clear. A paternalistic government dominated by an organizational bourgeoisie is becoming more accountable and more involved with institutional structures of social compromise.

Two additional perspectives are related to this observation. One, democratization in Botswana is *in process* and cannot be divorced from the reformist efforts that remain high on its political agenda. Changes occurring in Botswana over the past two decades required generations and even centuries in some of the older democracies.

The second perspective is that the changes in social and economic organizations are accompanied by an emergent political pluralism and a competitive politics that will, as they have in other nations, promote further reforms. Inherent in a pluralist and competitive polity is the dispersion of political power.

Institutionalized dispersion of political power may be organized in several ways: federal systems, multiparty systems, separation of the branches of government, civilian supremacy over the military establishment, bills of rights limiting the

prerogatives of government, equitable apportionment of representation throughout the political community, and so on. Dispersed political power may be both a prerequisite and a consequence of competitive politics. Botswana's democratic future depend a great deal upon the extent to which current institutional trends will continue to disperse power and to encourage pluralistic, competitive politics.

The current trends in Botswana's practical politics were examined in the papers presented at the Gaborone symposium, including survey reports from the University of Botswana's 1987 Democracy Project. Some of the relevant findings and observations, particularly those relating to institutional change and competitive politics, are summarized below. Each trend was, of course, applauded by some and declared inadequate by others.

Election System

In Botswana, both constitution and statute construct an election system that is in many ways typical of other democracies and, inevitably, has components that are not fully implemented or are controversial in concept.

Botswana has universal suffrage for all citizens 21 years of age and older. Discrimination based on sex, race, and ethnicity are illegal. However, practice has not yet caught up with the law. In what is still predominantly male politics, very few women are candidates for, or winners of, public office; the turnout of women voters is much lower than for men. Eighteen-year-olds cannot vote, and their enfranchisement has become a party issue, with the BDP opposed and the BNF in favor.

Election administration is, by and large, efficient and honest, although irregularities do occur and opposition parties try to make the most of these cases. Voting takes place on Saturdays, so that the work force can participate. Colored coded ballots are available to facilitate the participation of those who are illiterate. However, well-run elections do not necessarily make for ease of voter participation. Botswanan migratory laborers working in South Africa are in effect disenfranchised because they must return to register for each election and there is no absentee ballot.

Botswana's apportionment arrangements, according to critics, are in some cases blatantly biased. Urban areas are generally under-represented. Some wards are grossly under-represented, by 17-to-1 in at least one extreme case. This bias may in part be explained by the widely accepted notion that representation is a community right rather than the right of individual citizens. The problem of malapportionment, however, is hardly unique to Botswana. Rural over-representation is common in societies where urbanization is occurring, particularly where the rural vote is important to the majority party, as it is for the Botswana Democratic Party.

Following the British system, Botswana has a winner-take-all single-member district system, which produces outcomes favorable to the majority party. This gives rise to debates about the relative merits of single-member districts versus proportional representation.

What does public opinion have to say about the election system? In their 1987 opinion survey of citizen and voter attitudes, the University of Botswana's Democracy Project found that:

the more educated the citizen, the more he or she preferred the election system of government over the chieftan system. Among those with 8th grade or higher education, this view was held by 95 percent. Those with no formal education split: 56.5 percent for the election system, 43.5 percent for the chieftan system. The younger the voters, the more they preferred the election system.

Does the election system connect the leaders with their constituents? The Democracy Project survey reports that:

71.9 percent of the citizens know their representative in the National Assembly; 58.8 percent know their district councillor. Only 27.3 percent know their mayor or the chairman of the district council. The difference, which is the reverse of what one might expect, may in part be explained by the fact that members of parliament and district councillors are directly elected by the voters. Mayors and council chairmen are chosen by their council colleagues.

Most voters (35.5 percent) see their local councillor as the best problem solver when compared to members of parliament, chiefs, and civil servants.

Political Parties

The Botswana Democratic Party is, as noted earlier, overwhelmingly dominant, but the challengers – Botswana National Front, Botswana People's Party, Botswana Independence Party, and Botswana Progressive Union – are unfettered and active. As in all party systems, oligarchies run each party. What makes the system democratic are the motivation to expand the participating citizenry and the open competition among the parties.

It is also common in other evolving democratic party systems for one party to hold majority status firmly for the first years, even decades, of the new nation; the familiar American example is the so-called "Era of Good Feeling" (1808-1824) during which the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republican Party was the country's dominant party. Thus, it is not unusual for a party such as the BDP to prevail in a new democracy such as Botswana.

Another indication of further democratization in the party system is the fact that the parties, particularly the BDP, are taking first steps to establish primary election systems. In the case of the BDP, this may well be a response to increased competition from the other parties in urban areas, since open primaries are a way of co-opting opposition leaders and constituencies. However, to date, primary election rules are not widely known or understood, and this lack of information tends to favor incumbents. In contrast, the BNF and other parties continue to be secretive about their nominating and party officer selection procedures. All parties have to contend with the inclination of many politicians to change party affiliation, reflecting the lack of party discipline.

What of public attitudes toward the parties? The Democracy Project survey found, not surprisingly, that:

the better educated, more urban, more group-affiliated citizens preferred a multiparty system over a one-party or no-party system; and

as many as 68.5 percent could see no difference between the BDP and the BNF.

Press and Free Speech

There can be little argument about the tradition of free speech in Botswana. It is deeply ingrained in theory and practice. However, the issue of a free press is a source of controversy.

The government publishes the only daily newspaper, the *Botswana Daily News*, and owns the only radio station, Radio Botswana. Both use English and Setswana languages. The country has three privately-owned weekly newspapers, a government monthly organ, and two political party (BDP and BPP) monthlies. Radio Botswana operates six stations. The *Botswana Daily News* has a daily printing of 35,000 copies distributed free, whereas the combined print run of the three weeklies is only 33,000, and these are sold commercially.

Defenders of the government press claim that all points of view are represented in its columns and broadcasts and that, in view of the size of the private media, it offers the best coverage of party differences and election campaigns. The private press point to their financial handicaps, and are unrelenting in their criticism of government policies and actions. Radio Botswana is seen by critics as simply a political monopoly.

From what source do citizens get most of their political information? The Democracy Project survey found that three-fifths of the public obtain most of their information from the radio, about 10 percent from the newspapers, another 10 percent from *kgotla* (a category that includes elected politicians, public meetings, and civil servants), and seven or eight percent from neighbors. If the information pertains to political party policy positions, one-third discover them at the freedom squares.

Looking at the citizen-to-politician side of the communication process, the survey found that 75 percent of the public consider the *kgotla* and the freedom squares to be useless as channels for reaching and influencing politicians. In this connection, the more educated respondents would like to see the *kgotla* and freedom squares become more useful, and would like to see the

parties "clean up" the rough language and conduct displayed at the freedom squares.

Organized Interest Groups

The traditional interest groups were the family groups, age regiments, geographic communities, and ethnic groups. These groups, it was believed, existed to serve the *morafe*. The character of organized interests has been changing radically in recent years. There is a growing number of economic interest groups. In agriculture, for example, there now are marketing cooperatives, dip groups, and farmer associations. Other types of groups deal with development, health, schools, public safety, and women's issues. There are trade unions, teachers associations, business associations, and conservation groups. Growth of interest groups is encouraged by the civil servants in relevant ministries. However, civil servants keep their contacts with interest groups extremely formal and subject to relatively elaborate procedures.

The Democracy Project survey found that 40 percent of the public seek to influence politicians through interest groups, 40 percent prefer to use *kgotla*, and 20 percent rely on an important person. To date, interest groups have not endorsed parties or nominees. For their part, the parties do not seek to encourage involvement of interest groups in election campaigns, although they do encourage their members to raise issues in the interest groups that favor their party.

The importance of interest group organization as a political tool is beginning to be understood, although, as just noted, most prefer to influence politicians through *kgotla* and important persons. Many older citizens, raised in the *kgotla* tradition, are doubtful about the usefulness of parties, elections, or interest groups. However, younger citizens are optimistic about the role parties and pressure groups can play.

Public Bureaucracy and Separation of Powers

Most public policies originate with the civil servant bureaucracy at the national level. Civil servants are among the most educated and politically informed individuals in the country, and are perceived by some as displaying an arrogant attitude toward politicians, the citizenry, and tradition. A positive feature of this

bureaucratic influence is the fact that the various government agencies are highly competitive in the struggle for resources for their programs. Many, but a diminishing number, of civil servants are expatriates from Europe, hence both a strength and a weakness in Botswanan self-governance.

While national civil servants, because of their technical knowledge, have often played a dominant role in public policy issues, a new generation of politicians is becoming more assertive through the BDP. In addition, many younger civil servants, wanting to earn more income on the basis of their expertise, are beginning to resign in order to seek second careers in the private sector.

A major problem in the recruitment of political leadership is the requirement that public employees – civil servants, teachers, police, soldiers, and chiefs – may not actively engage in elective politics. This restriction removes 75 percent of the politically sophisticated population from practical politics. This problem is further exacerbated by the requirement that only those citizens who speak and read English are permitted to run for the National Assembly.

The Economy: Maintaining and Sharing Prosperity

At the time of independence, Botswana ranked as one of the poorest nations in the world, with a per capita income of about \$60 per annum. Its economy had virtually no infrastructure, and prospects for the future were generally considered to be dismal. Today, annual per capita income is about \$1,600, up from \$290 just 10 years ago. This increase occurred in the face of a seven-year drought. Government-financed relief projects, however, succeeded in preventing starvation and, in most cases, malnutrition.

Botswana's remarkable economic achievement is largely due to foreign aid and private development by foreign investors, the latter with the active encouragement of the government. The major contributor to the economy is the mineral sector, producing 50 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Other major portions of the GDP come from the trade, hotel, and government sectors. Somewhat surprisingly, agriculture contributes less than five percent of the GDP. However, livestock

ranks second only to mineral exports as an earner of foreign exchange.

In Tswana tradition, cattle has been the recognized form of wealth. Hence, Botswana agriculture has been dominated by livestock production. Ownership, however, is highly skewed, with 6.7 percent of rural households owning 54 percent of the national herd. Other forms of agriculture are not geared to cash crops nor are they sufficiently productive to feed most families, even in years with favorable rainfall. As a consequence, various household members simultaneously engage in agriculture at home and wage employment elsewhere. Only about 15 percent of the labor force is in the agriculture sector.

Job opportunities for the uneducated and the untrained are limited. Moving into the 1990s, it is predicted that the formal sector of the economy will generate only enough jobs to employ about 50 percent of the working age population. The rest will have to resort to employment in the informal sector where productivity tends to be low and underemployment is high; this despite the fact that the formal sector has an acute shortage of skilled workers.

Nearly half of government spending goes to development, with large proportions devoted to the development of health clinics and schools, even in remote rural areas. The government is endeavoring to create work opportunities in the private sector and to increase arable land for cash crop production. Much attention is also being given to the need to improve the quality of the education system.

The relative economic success of Botswana has clearly contributed to its democratic success. Although Botswana has had the benefit of mineral deposits, the keys to its growth have been moderate, prudent policies and effective, honest management. Botswana has been one of the few African countries to give priority to the long-term development of agriculture and economic infrastructure. Large and well dispersed investments have also been made in social services, education, health, and housing, while administrative expenditures and political and bureaucratic corruption have been contained. Parastatals (government-regulated private enterprises or industries) are generally self-sufficient and even profitable.

Key Lessons from the Botswanan Experience

Botswana has not been a dictatorship making a transition to democracy, as is the case in so many other nations in the world. Nor has Botswana been a young but well-established democracy, striving to reform and mature its institutions. The transition in Botswana has been from a democracy-like traditional society to a modern democracy, being accomplished in a short span of time. Other African nations have tried to make the same leap forward, but have faltered. Therefore, one would expect to find distinctive elements in the Botswanan experience.

Origins

- *Build on indigenous traditions.* As in Costa Rica and Israel, Botswana's traditional social and political practices have important democratic elements that must be isolated and nurtured in the modern context. The measure of progress should be how much of the traditional democratic practices have been preserved and extended, rather than how much they match practices in today's advanced industrialized democracies.

- *Traditional ways of dispersing community power.* Federal systems and divisions of power among branches of government are the exception among ways of spreading units of power within a community. However, the dispersion of power is an essential feature of democratic structure, and should be built upon. In Botswana, relations among *kgosi*, *dikgosi*, and headmen as well as the procedures of the *kgosing* and the *kgotla* tended to spread participation and power widely among royal elites and adult males. This has been carried over into the dispersion of power in the party system, interest group life, and some aspects of the bureaucracy.

- *Debate about the identity of threats to future development.* The most visible threat may not be the most serious. Botswana's security problems are serious, and not to be disregarded. However, in today's international context, is foreign invasion or domestic militarization probable; is either of these the most serious threat to Botswana's democratic development? Failure to educate its next generation quickly and thoroughly may be the greater threat if the political passivity of the present unedu-

cated older generation is to be taken as a serious predictor of a possible future.

Botswanan Political Institutions

• *Provide a forum for dissent and loyal opposition.* The indispensable companion of free speech and expression is loyal dissent. The formality and etiquette of the traditional *kgotla* provided for this, as does the multi-party political system.

• *Independent and open procedures for dispute resolution.* Conflict between individual citizens and between citizen and government are inevitable aspects of civic life. Here again the *kgotla* was the traditional place for an open people's court, paving the way for an independent judiciary in contemporary Botswana.

• *Legitimately declared law must exist and be respected.* Another function of the *kgosi* and *dikgosi* was to promulgate general rules of conduct for the members of *morafe*, that is, declare the laws. These laws were disseminated in the *kgotla* and applied to specific cases in open meetings of the *kgotla*.

• In Botswana, this process began with Tswana tribal accommodation to the presence of numerous ethnic, sex, and age minorities. It continued when the British denounced discriminatory practices during the Bechuanaland protectorate. Next, the independence constitution recognized civil rights for all. In today's Botswana, it is popular attitudes that are changing, encouraged by the "natural" ambitions of the political parties.

• *Promote the establishment of more than one political party.* Two- or multiparty systems provide an assurance that politics will be open and competitive. Some one-party systems allow for a vigorous internal factionalism, but factional competition is not always public and is almost always difficult for the electorate to evaluate. The dominance of one party for a long period in a multiparty system, however, is not intrinsically undemocratic, particularly if the party conducts its internal business openly and is amenable to establishing a primary election system for itself, as has the BDP. In Botswana, the freedom square campaign rallies are another contribution to an open process in party politics.

The Influence of Botswanan Culture

• *Preserve all activities and processes that reinforce consultation and consensus.* Not only are consultation and consensus decisionmaking intrinsically democratic, they activate other democratic processes. Consultation leads to communication with, and respect for, advisers as peers, and strengthens the principle of equality. Consensus assumes the legitimacy of dissent and makes choice a collaborative and nonviolent act.

• *Promote nonviolence through cost-benefit analysis.* The use of violence may bring short-term returns, but it is almost always costly and ineffective over the long term. Tswana chiefs preferred trade and the gains of long-term investment when they gave up war-making powers under the protectorate. They are making similar cost-benefit analyses in their current cautious approaches to the incursions from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Non-confrontation and nonviolence pay in the long term.

• *Retain and encourage toleration.* Given the past propensity for inter-tribal hostility in much of Africa, the Tswana have been *relatively* benign toward their "lesser" populations. Settling in close proximity, majority and minority tribes and groups have been willing to tolerate one another. Furthermore, toleration did not necessarily interfere with exploitation, for which a pecking order is always needed.

The Tensions of a Competitive Politics

The participants in the Gaborone symposium gave a great deal of attention to the stresses *currently arising* from an emerging competitive political environment. These stresses, after all, come from the most immediate complaints and demands in the change process. The election system, for example, is new and awkward in many respects. The political parties are not yet fully accepted. Speech may be free, but the mass media through which much of it may be expressed are not yet in democratic balance. Organized interest groups are proliferating, but there is much inexperience in pursuing their causes. The national bureaucracy offers needed technical expertise, but often remains removed from elected officials and constituencies.

- *Aspire to a perfect system of election administration.* Of course, there is no perfect system. However, there is enough readily available technical experience and technology in other democracies so that no new democracy need resort to trial-and-error approaches in designing its own new system. Botswana, for example, needs obvious improvements in its registration and absentee ballot arrangements.
- *Attend to the development of the party system.* Political parties are the engines of democracy. They are at once the dispersers of power and the mobilizers of consensus. Their structure and function should be matters of constant debate and reform. Any change that transforms parties from elite oligarchies to mass constituency-oriented organizations is to be applauded and promoted. The democratic chain of accountability is complete only when party leaders truly worry about the views and votes of mass electorates. In Botswana, the BDP seems most involved in this grassroots effort.
- *A free press is a private enterprise.* Most governments own or control newspapers and electronic media. Where the government press is the only media, there is a tendency toward authoritarian political systems. Where government media are surrounded by competing private-sector media of equal or greater influence, democracy has its best chance. Media ownership and distribution in Botswana is lopsided. This will undoubtedly change with greater popular education and increasing political competition.
- *Facilitate freedom of association.* Joining an organized interest group is one of the first and easiest ways a citizen can participate in democratic politics. Group membership legitimizes self-interest and provides a ladder to political power. To petition, campaign, and be heard nourishes confidence in and loyalty to the democratic system. Botswana offers a good example of the ease and speed with which, in just one or two generations, organized interest groups can become a major political institution.
- *Promote a democratic bureaucracy.* Academic volumes by the score have been written about democracy in the modern bureaucratic state. Experience varies widely in both old and new democracies. The best advice seems to be that the bureaucracy should be representative, responsive, and competitive — repre-

sentative of the population at large; responsive to popular needs and demands, usually as heard from their partisan-appointed bureau heads; and competitive among themselves for public appropriations and other resources and opportunities. As it develops its first national bureaucracy, Botswana appears to be achieving some degree of bureaucratic responsiveness through the *kgotla*. There is admittedly much bureaucratic competitiveness for programs and administrative funds. Presumably when Botswanan political parties produce stronger executives, the bureaucracy will become more representative.

Economic Development and Democracy

- *Emergent democracies need prosperity quickly.* Poverty and gross maldistribution of national income undermines democratization. The inexperienced rich in a prospective democracy fail to understand that their own wealth and safety depend greatly upon the prosperity of the population at large. It may seem a cliché to argue that democratization and a large middle class go together, but the examples abound in many of the older democracies, as well as South Korea, Taiwan, and, presently, Botswana. These three have also accomplished prosperity quickly.

- *Market economies work.* Because its participants must adapt to change promptly or perish, market economies tend to be cybernetic marvels. Profit may be a prime motive, but the bottom line is an ultimate test. Government may be the designated referee for keeping the market free and fair, but only the entrepreneurs, traders, workers, and consumers can maximize the benefits of their market freedoms. The relationship is circular: market economies require political freedom, and political freedom is reinforced by market economies.

- *Mixed economies are necessary.* Most developing nations need an economic infrastructure: water systems, energy sources, roads, soil conservation, bridges, an educated populace, etc. Providing these should be a principal function of government. With half its government budget going for development programs, Botswana appears to be an excellent example of the wonders that an honestly managed mixed economy can produce. Where public investment in infrastructure is lacking, democracy languishes.

• *Foreign aid helps.* For postwar Europe, it was the Marshall Plan. For Botswana, it has been a generous influx of foreign aid from several sources. What may distinguish Botswana from other Third World aid recipients is its carefully accounted-for investment of the funds in human capital (education and training) and productive equipment (mining and agriculture).

Conclusions

Democracy is a system of government that produces at least three essential outcomes:

Meaningful and extensive political competition among individuals and organized groups, especially political parties, for all consequential positions of government power, at regular intervals, without the use of force;

A highly inclusive degree of popular political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, through free and fair elections, such that no major social group is excluded; and

A degree of civil and political liberties – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations – sufficient to ensure the reality and the integrity of political competition and participation.

Political institutions have to be deliberately organized if they are to produce the desired democratic outcomes. Given the propensity of power-holders to concentrate power in order to prevent or limit disagreement and competition with themselves, perhaps the most fundamental issue for democratic institution-builders is the adequate design the dispersion of power. In successful democracies, institutional arrangements for dispersing components of power have taken such forms as the division of responsibilities and prerogatives among and within the branches of government, the design of election systems so as to promote and sustain more than one political party, and the construction of systems of political decentralization such as found in federal systems or functionally-powerful local communities.

Botswana appears to be attending to each of these arrangements. If the freedoms of speech, association, petition, and religion, respect for the rule of law, and an independent judiciary stay in place, as they seem very likely to, Botswana's continuing

democratization seems assured, barring, of course, invasion by an autocratic power.

Of particular interest is the history of democracy in Botswana. There is often a tendency for analysts of democratic development to focus primarily upon current or recent attitudinal and institutional changes, thereby inadvertently missing the profound mold set by the historical data. The Botswanan case demonstrates the need to give great emphasis to historical time in analyzing democratic development. The principal elements of Botswana democracy, for example, were long ago embedded in elite competition, elite transactions, and egalitarianism among chiefs. Revisit 9th century England, and one finds a similar scene among the nobility of competing English tribes. The Magna Carta of the 13th century was a fundamental contract among the principal nobility recognizing their equality and civil rights.

It took several additional centuries for equality and civil rights to trickle down to the ordinary English citizen. Progress was slow, but England was blazing a new political trail as the first democratic model for other nations. With the experience of England and others now available, new democracies such as Botswana can immediately incorporate the major concepts of democracy into their constitutions, whether or not they can operationalize them at once. The constitutional commitment is simply a first important step in the construction of democratic institutions. Traditions, such as those in Botswana, help in this ongoing process.

APPENDICES

**DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS: ISRAEL
CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**

COSTA RICA

ENRIQUE CARRERAS
Executive Director
National Liberation Party

BENJAMIN NUNEZ
President, Costa-Rica/Israel
Friendship Center
Former Ambassador to the UN
and Israel

ISRAEL

SHULAMIT ALONI
Member of Knesset, Citizens
Rights Movement

YOSSI GINAT
Advisor for Arab Affairs
Prime Minister's Office

ZEIDAN ATASHI
Member of Knesset, Shinui Party

HIRSH GOODMAN
Defense Correspondent,
Jerusalem Post

SHLOMO AVINERI
Professor of Political Science
Hebrew University
Former Director General
Foreign Ministry

DAN HALPERIN
Consultant
Former Economic Minister
Embassy of Israel
Washington, DC

NAHUM BARNEA
Editor, *Koteret Rashit*

MICHA HARISH
Member of Knesset, Labor Party

BENJAMIN BEN-ELIEZER
Member of Knesset, Yahad Party

YEHUDIT KARP
Deputy Attorney General

ARYE CARMON
President
Israel-Diaspora Institute
Tel Aviv University

DAN MERIDOR
Member of Knesset
Likud Party

NEHEMIA DAGAN
Chief Education Officer
Israel Defense Forces

MENACHEM MERON
Consultant
Former Director General
Ministry of Defense

SIMCHA DINITZ
Member of Knesset
Labor Party

AMNON NEUBACH
Former Economic Advisor to
the Prime Minister

ABD-EL HAMAD DRAWSHA
Member of Knesset
Labor Party
Chairman, Foreign Affairs and
Defense Committee

EHUD OLMERT
Member of Knesset, Likud Party

AMOS EIRAN
Director General, Mivtachim
Former Director General
Prime Minister's Office

YORAM PERI
Professor of Political Science
Tel Aviv University

ITZHAK GALNOOR
Director, Levi Eshkol Institute
for Economic, Social and
Political Research
Hebrew University

ZVI RAFIAH
Consultant
Former Political Counselor
Israel Embassy, Washington, DC

E. OZER SCHILD
Professor of Psychology and Sociology
University of Haifa

MEIR SHITRIT
Mayor, Yavne
Member of Knesset, Likud Party

EHUD SPRINZAK
Professor of Political Science
Hebrew University

GAD YA'ACOBY
Minister of the Economy and Planning
Labor Party

AHARON YARIV
Director
Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies
Tel Aviv University
Former Minister of Information
and Chief of Military Intelligence

YITZHAK ZAMIR
Former Attorney General

HANNAH ZEMER
Editor, *Davar Daily*

UNITED STATES

BRIAN ATWOOD
President, NDI
Former Assistant Secretary of State

HOWARD BERMAN
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
Democrat, California

MORRIS BLACHMAN
Associate Director
Institute of International Studies
University of South California

WOLF BLITZER
Washington Correspondent
Jerusalem Post

JAMES BOOE
Secretary-Treasurer
Communications Workers of America

JOHN BRADEMAS
President, New York University
Former Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives

FRANK DI MONDI
Chairman, Republican Party
State of Delaware

THOMAS DINE
Executive Director
American Israeli Public Affairs
Committee

STUART EIZENSTAT
Attorney
Powell, Goldstein, Frazer and Murphy
Former Assistant to the President
for Domestic Policy

BILL GREEN
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
Republican, New York

PATRICK GRIFFIN
President
Griffin and Johnson
Former Secretary for the Democrats
U.S. Senate

LEROY KLEIN
Chairman, Republican Party
Kent County, Delaware

SAMUEL LEWIS
President
United States of Institute of Peace
Former Ambassador to Israel

WALTER F. MONDALE
Chairman, NDI
Former Vice President
of the United States

DANIEL SCHORR
Senior News Analyst
National Public Radio

ARLEN SPECTER
Member, U.S. Senate
Republican, Pennsylvania

JOAN SPECTER
At-Large Councilwoman
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ARI WEISS
Attorney
Former Chief Legislative Aide
to the Speaker of the
U.S. House of Representatives

KENNETH WOLLACK
Executive Vice President, NDI

**DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS: ISRAEL
CONFERENCE AGENDA**

Thursday, January 8

Luncheon:
12:30-2:00 pm

Chair: Walter F. Mondale

Presentations: Shimon Peres
*Deputy Prime Minister and
Foreign Minister of the
State of Israel*
Shlomo Avineri

Afternoon Session: Safeguarding Security and the
2:30-6:00 pm Practice of Democracy

The use of military and police forces to meet internal and external security threats has led to the direct or indirect control of governments and the violation of numerous rights of the citizenry in many countries. Why has this not been the case in Israel?

How can the successful management of the military by civilian authorities be explained?

In what ways has universal national service affected Israeli democracy?

What effect has the education provided by the Israel Defense Forces had on Israeli democracy?

What incidents might have led to a threat to Israel's democracy and how were they overcome?

What stands in the way of a military takeover in Israel?

What limits are there on restricting Israel's democracy because of security concerns? How are those limits enforced?

How does Israel reconcile its security needs with the maintenance of a free press?

Moderator: Hirsh Goodman

Reception: 7:00-7:30 pm **Chair:** Walter F. Mondale

Dinner: 7:30-9:00 pm **Presentation:** Yitzhak Shamir
Prime Minister of the
State of Israel

Friday, January 9

Breakfast:
7:30-8:30 am

Morning Session: 8:30-12:15 pm **The Political System and the
Exercise of Democracy**

What has been the role of the legal system in developing and maintaining democracy?

In the absence of a written constitution or bill of rights, how is it that no tyranny of the majority has been imposed? In particular, how has Israel managed the complex relationships between and among the Knesset, the government and the courts?

How has Israeli society promoted the toleration of dissent and diversity?

What accounts for the ability of the system to absorb most conflict within the political system and without resort to violence? How has the concept of a loyal opposition been developed and sustained?

In what ways have freedom of the press and freedom of speech performed effectively as countervailing powers in the system?

What shaped the conception of Israeli democracy and the structures of its political system, and what continues to do so? And, in that context, what explains the commitment to democracy among Israel's elite, and how are they held accountable?

To what extent do Israel's political parties and the particular form of its electoral system contribute to the viable functioning of Israel's democracy?

What role has the labor movement played in promoting and maintaining Israel's democracy?

Moderator: Amos Eiran

Luncheon: OPEN
12:30- 3:30 pm

Afternoon Session: Social Organization and Social Tensions
3:30- 6:00 pm

How has the educational system affected the functioning of democracy?

In what ways has the treatment of social tensions between the differing ethnic and religious groups promoted or strengthened Israeli democracy?

What has been the relationship of micro social institutions such as youth groups, community centers, and synagogues to Israeli democracy?

What role, if any, has the family played in Israel's democracy?

How has Israel been able to absorb peoples from nondemocratic cultures and yet preserve a democratic culture?

What safeguards are there in Israeli society against the emergence of a non-democratic leader?

How has Israel's democracy dealt with inequalities rising from differences in race, sex or social class?

Moderator: Arye Carmon

Reception and Dinner
7:30- 9:00 pm

Saturday, January 10

Breakfast

7:30- 8:30 am

Morning Session I: **Reconciling Economic
8:30-10:15 am Constraints with the Practice of
Democracy**

*What role does outside financial
assistance play in sustaining Israel's
democracy?*

*How is it that in the face of serious
inflation, a huge national debt, problems
in the banking system and
unemployment, Israeli democracy neither
collapsed nor was placed in great
jeopardy?*

*Can last year's economic accords be
said to illustrate the strength of Israel's
democracy? If so, how?*

Moderator: Dan Halperin

Morning Session II: **Practical Lessons from the Israeli
10:30-12:15 pm Experience**

Luncheon: **Summary and Conclusions**
1:00- 3:00 pm

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL, 1948

In the Land of Israel the Jewish people came into being. In this Land was shaped their spiritual, religious, and national character. Here they lived in sovereign independence. Here they created a culture of national and universal import, and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

Exiled by force, still the Jewish people kept faith with their Land in all the countries of their dispersion, steadfast in their prayer and hope to return and here revive their political freedom.

Fired by this attachment of history and tradition, the Jews in every generation strove to renew their roots in the ancient Homeland, and in recent generations they came home in their multitudes.

Veteran pioneers and defenders, and newcomers braving blockade, they made the wilderness bloom, revived their Hebrew tongue, and built villages and towns. They founded a thriving society, master of its own economy and culture, pursuing peace but able to defend itself, bringing the blessing of progress to all the inhabitants of the Land, dedicated to the attainment of sovereign independence.

In 1897 the First Zionist Congress met at the call of Theodore Herzl, seer of the vision of the Jewish State, and gave public voice to the right of the Jewish people to national restoration in their Land.

This right was acknowledged in the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, and confirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations, which accorded international validity to the historical connection of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel, and to their right to reestablish their National Home.

The holocaust that in our time destroyed millions of Jews in Europe and proved beyond doubt the compelling need to solve the problem of Jewish homelessness and dependence by the renewal of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel, which would open wide the gates of the Homeland to every Jew and endow the Jewish people with the status of a nation with equality of rights within the family of nations.

Despite every hardship, hindrance and peril, the remnant that survived the grim Nazi slaughter in Europe, together with Jews from other countries, pressed on with their exodus to the Land of Israel and

continued to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in the Homeland of their people.

In the Second World War the Jewish community in the Land of Israel played its full part in the struggle of nations championing freedom and peace against the Nazi forces of evil. Its war effort and the lives of its soldiers won it the right to be numbered among the founding peoples of the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel, and required the inhabitants themselves to take all measures necessary on their part to carry out the resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their own State is irrevocable.

It is the natural right of the Jewish people, like any other people, to control their own destiny in their sovereign State.

Accordingly we, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and the Zionist Movement, have assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate for Palestine, and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, do hereby proclaim the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel --- the State of Israel.

We resolve that from the moment the Mandate ends, at midnight on the Sabbath, the sixth of Iyar 5708, the fifteenth day of May 1948, until the establishment of the duly elected authorities of the State in accordance with a Constitution to be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than October 1, 1948, the National Council shall act as the Provisional Council of State, and its executive arm, the National Administration, shall constitute the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, and the name of that State shall be Israel.

**DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS: COSTA RICA
CONFERENCE AGENDA**

Sheraton Herradura
San Jose, Costa Rica
June 3-5, 1988

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

Inauguration of Conference

11:30 am-12 pm Welcoming Remarks
Victoria Garron de Doryan
Walter F. Mondale

Background

3-3:30 pm NDI Israeli Conference
Shlomo Avineri
Origins of Costa Rican Democracy
Victoria Garron de Doryan

The Political System and the Exercise of Democracy

3:30-6:30 pm Topics for discussion:

What factors helped shape Costa Rican democracy and the structures of its political system?

What explains the commitment to democracy among Costa Rica's elite, and how is the elite held accountable?

How has Costa Rican society promoted democratic expression and tolerance for diversity?

What accounts for the ability of the system to absorb conflict within the political system without resort to violence?

What has been the role of the legal system in developing and maintaining a democracy?

To what extent do Costa Rica's political parties and its electoral system contribute to the viable functioning of Costa Rica's democracy?

What was the impact of the 1949 Constitution of the Second Republic in the strengthening of Costa Rican democracy?

How has the concept of loyal opposition been developed and sustained?

In what ways have freedom of the press and freedom of speech performed effectively as countervailing powers in the system?

Moderator: Mary Burstin

SATURDAY, JUNE 4

*Political and Social Organizations
and Their Role in Democracy*

9:30 am-12:30 pm and
2:30 pm- 3:30 pm

Topics for discussion:

In what ways has Costa Rica's system been strengthened by the framework for conflict-resolution used among competing social and political groups?

How has Costa Rican democracy dealt with inequalities arising from differences in race, sex or social class?

What role, if any, has the family played in Costa Rican democracy?

How has the educational system affected the functioning of democracy?

What role has the labor movement played in promoting and maintaining Costa Rica's democracy?

Moderator: Guillermo Solis Rivera

*Economics, Elites and the Myths
and Practice of Costa Rican Democracy*

3:45-6:30 pm

Topics for discussion:

To what extent is Costa Rica's democratic tradition a by-product of its economic development? To what extent is prosperity a consequence of political democracy?

What has been the impact of the Central American political crisis on Costa Rica's economy?

What are the prospects of reforming the Central American Common Market?

How can regional trade be structured to provide increased security for member nations?

Has Costa Rica's growing debt endangered democracy?

Have the country's politicians responded in a way that ensures that strains on democracy caused by the debt are manageable?

How much social mobility is there among Costa Rican political elites?

Are economic issues sufficiently addressed in the context of maintaining democratic institutions and practices?

Have international financial institutions shown enough sensitivity on questions of debt and democracy?

How has the nationalization of banks contributed to strengthening Costa Rican democracy?

Moderator: Rafael Alberto Grillo Rivera

SUNDAY, JUNE 5

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 9:30-11 am | Economic session continues
<i>Safeguarding Security and the Practice of Democracy</i> |
| 11:15 am-12:30 pm | Topics for discussion:
Does the last decade of political strife in the region threaten the essence of Costa Rican democracy?
Did abolishing the military contribute to political stability?
Do international treaties need to be strengthened or reformed to provide greater protection for Costa Rica's security?
Are the Costa Rican security forces sufficiently trained and equipped to provide for the requirements of the 1990s?
How can Costa Rica avoid becoming the target of drug traffickers? |
| 2:30-5 pm | Session continues followed by comments and the closing of the conference |
| 7:30 pm | Closing Ceremony |

**DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS: COSTA RICA
CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS**

BOTSWANA

P.H.K. KEDIKILWE
Minister of Presidential Affairs

PAUL RANTAO
Mayor of Gaborone

COSTA RICA

ROLANDO ARAYA
Former Secretary General
National Liberation Party

JOSE FIGUERES FERRER
Former President of Costa Rica
National Liberation Party

RODRIGO ARIAS SANCHEZ
Secretary of the Presidency
National Liberation Party

LUIS FISHMAN ZONZINSKI
Parliamentary Deputy
United Social Christian Party

ROMAN ARRIETA VILLALOBOS
Archbishop of San Jose

**NORA RUIZ GONZALEZ DE
ANGULO**

GONZALO BRENES
President
Supreme Electoral Tribunal

Director
Noticias Monumental Radio

MARY BURSTIN
Professor of Political Science
Dr. Chaim Weizmann Public Institute

**RAFAEL ALBERTO GRILLO
RIVERA**
Former Parliamentary President
United Social Christian Party

**RAFAEL ANGEL CALDERON
FOURNIER**
Former Foreign Minister
United Social Christian Party

MARVIN HERRERA ARAYA
Former Education Minister
United Social Christian Party

RODRIGO CARAZO ODIO
Former President of Costa Rica
United Social Christian Party

JOSE HINE GARCIA
Presidential Candidate
United Social Christian Party

ENRIQUE CARRERAS JIMENEZ
Member, Political Directorate
National Liberation Party

RODRIGO MADRIGAL NIETO
Foreign Minister
National Liberation Party

**CARLOS MANUEL CASTILLO
MORALES**
Former Vice President of Costa Rica
National Liberation Party

RODOLFO MENDEZ MATA
Parliamentary Deputy
United Social Christian Party

EDGAR CERVANTES VILLALTA
Magistrate of the Supreme Court
United Social Christian Party

CARMEN NARANJO
Director
Editorial Costa Rica
National Liberation Party

VICTORIA GARRON DE DORYAN
Second Vice President
National Liberation Party

RODOLFO NAVAS ALVARADO
President
Banco Popular
National Liberation Party

MARIO ECHANDI JIMENEZ
Former President of Costa Rica
United Social Christian Party

BERND NIEHAUS QUESADA
Former Foreign Minister
United Social Christian Party

GONZALO FACIO SEGREDA
Former Foreign Minister
United Social Christian Party

MICHELLE NISMAN
Former Health Minister
Calderon Guardia Hospital

BENJAMIN NUNEZ
Former Ambassador to Israel

DANIEL ODUBER QUIROS
Former President of Costa Rica
National Liberation Party

ENNIO RODRIGUEZ
National Secretary for Plans and
Programs
National Liberation Party

MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ
Presidential Candidate
United Social Christian Party

GUILLERMO SOLIS
Foreign Affairs Advisor
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CHRISTIAN TATTENBACH
YGLIAS
President
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ROBERTO TOVAR FAJA
Former Parliamentary Deputy
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JOSE JOAQUIN TREJOS
FERNANDEZ
Former President of Costa Rica
United Social Christian Party

JOSE LUIS VEGA CARBALLO
University Professor

LEONEL VILLALOBOS SALAZAR
Parliamentary Deputy
National Liberation Party

FEDERICO VILLALOBOS
Leader of the Parliamentary Caucus
United Social Christian Party

RAFAEL VILLEGAS ANTILLON
Magistrate
Supreme Court

FERNANDO VOLIO JIMENEZ
Former Parliamentary President
National Liberation Party

EL SALVADOR

RICARDO GONZALEZ CAMACHO
General Secretary
Democratic Action Party

GERARDO LECHAVALLIER
Personal Secretary to President Jose
Napoleon Duarte

GUATEMALA

RAMIRO DE LEON CARPIO
General Secretary
National Center Union Party

CATALINA SOBERANIS
Vice President of Congress

HONDURAS

RAFAEL LEONARDO CALLEJAS
Party Leader
National Party

RAFAEL PINEDA PONCE
Presidential Representative
Liberal Party

ISRAEL

SHLOMO AVINERI
Professor of Political Science
Hebrew University

UNITED STATES

J. BRIAN ATWOOD
President, NDI

JAMES BOOE
Board of Directors, NDI

WALTER F. MONDALE
Chairman, NDI

LEON NARVAEZ
Professor, St. Olaf's College

STEPHEN C. SCHLESINGER
Director of Communications
Governor Mario Cuomo

KEITH SCHUETTE
President
National Republican Institute for
International Affairs

VIRON "PETE" VAKY
Senior Fellow
Carnegie Endowment for
International Peace

GEORGE VICKERS
Director
Institute for Central American Studies

INTERNATIONALS

ANDRES HERNANDEZ
Director
Washington Office
Organization of Christian Democrats
of America

SUSAN JOHNSON
Director
Liberal International

DEMOCRACIES IN REGIONS OF CRISIS: BOTSWANA
CONFERENCE AGENDA

AUGUST 1: MONDAY

MORNING: THE OPENING

7:30 AM REGISTRATION

9:00 AM WELCOMING REMARKS: Chairman of Botswana Society, G.W. Matenge

9:15 AM UNIVERSITY DEMOCRACY PROJECT: Prof. T. Tlou, Vice Chancellor, University of Botswana

9:30 AM OPENING SPEECH: President of Botswana Society, The Hon. P.S. Mmusi, Vice President and Minister of Finance and Development Planning

10:15 AM TEA

10:30 AM KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Prof. B. Crick, London University

12:30 PM LUNCH

AFTERNOON: AFRICAN EXPERIENCES WITH DEMOCRACY

2:00 PM PANEL: Other African Democracies — Chair: The Hon. A.H. Mogwe, Minister of Mineral Resources and Water Affairs

(a) The Experience of Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe — Prof. A.R. Nsibambi, Makerere University, Uganda

(b) The Experience of Francophone Africa — Prof. B.C. Sine, Director-General Du Cesti, Centre D'etudes des Science et Technique D'information, University of Dakar, Senegal

The two papers will look at other African states and will examine why they have come to practice a form of democracy that differs in character and extent from that followed in Botswana

AUGUST 2: TUESDAY

8.30 AM REGISTRATION

MORNING: SOME PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY

9:00 AM PANEL: Botswana's Traditional and Colonial Experience with Democratic Practices: To what Extent a Democratic Tradition? Chair: Prof. T. Tlou, Vice Chancellor, University of Botswana

- (a) Pre-colonial — Prof. L.D. Ngcongco, Democracy Project, University of Botswana

A discussion of the character of Tswana pre-colonial political institutions with special focus on the extent to which these institutions utilized democratic and authoritarian rule

- (b) Colonial — Dr. T. Mgadla, Democracy Project, University of Botswana and A.C. Campbell, Vice Chairman, Botswana Society

A consideration of the changes which took place in Tswana political structures under colonial rule both at the territorial and local levels. Special attention will be given to the extent the British promoted democratic development in Botswana

- (c) Minority Groups — Dr. K. Datta, Democracy Project, University of Botswana and Dr. A. Murray, Lecturer, University of Botswana

Particular attention will be given to how minority groups were dealt with both during the pre-colonial and colonial periods relative to their right to participate in politics and their opportunities to maintain and evolve their particular cultures

Discussants: B.S. Gaseitsiwe, President for Customary Court of Appeal; D.K. Kwele, President of the Botswana Progressive Union

10:15 AM TEA

10:45 AM PANEL: Citizenry and Democracy in Botswana. Chair: J. M. Nganunu, Attorney

- (a) **Do Batswana Think and Act as Democrats? — G. Somolekae, Democracy Project, University of Botswana**

An examination of the extent to which the attitudes and behaviour of Batswana, as reflected in the Democracy Project's mass survey, are supportive of the new liberal democratic structures. Concern will also be given to what subgroups show the most and the least inclination to move toward support of the new institutions.

Discussants: The Hon. D.N. Magang, M.P.
The Hon. L. Tlhomelang, M.P.

12:30 PM LUNCH

AFTERNOON: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

2:00 PM PANEL: The Schools and Democracy

The School System: Is it Teaching Democracy? Chair: Dr. Q.N. Parsons, Hon. Secretary, Botswana Society

- (a) **Pro: P. Ramatsui, Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation**
- (b) **Con: G. Phorano, Botswana Federation of Secondary School Teachers**

An evaluation of the schools as training grounds for the youth in studying democratic practices and gaining experience in self-government

Discussants: The Hon. K.P. Morake, Minister of Education; P. van Rensburg, Foundation for Education with Production

3:15 PM TEA

3:45 PM PANEL: Class, Status and Democracy. Chair: H.C.L. Hermans, Governor, Bank of Botswana

- (a) **Which social groups rule in Botswana? Dr. P.P. Molutsi, Democracy Project, University of Botswana**

A critical evaluation of the role various class and status groups play in the government of Botswana

- (b) What role should the chiefs play in Botswana's Democracy? Kgosi Linchwe Kgafela II

A chief delineates the various ways in which the chieftaincy can promote the effective working of democracy in Botswana

Discussants: B. Egner, Economic Consultancies (Pty. Ltd.) The Hon. C.J. Butale, Minister of Works and Communications.

AUGUST 3: WEDNESDAY

8:00 AM REGISTRATION

MORNING: SPEAKING FOR THE PUBLIC

9:00 AM PANEL: Public Representation by Councillors and MPs. Chair: C. Schmittlein, Friedrich Ebert Foundation

- (a) Botswana's Councillors and MPs: Who and What do they Represent? — Dr. P.P. Molutsi, Democracy Project, University of Botswana

An analysis of the social background, policy concerns, role perception, and effectiveness of the elected representatives. To assess the extent of change a comparison will be made between newly elected representatives and those who have served since independence

- (b) Problems of Being an Effective Representative — The Hon. R.K. Sebego, Assistant Minister, Local Government and Lands

A delineation of the problems MPs are having as they seek 1) to serve their constituents needs and 2) to make critical evaluations of Government policy

Discussants: His Worship the Mayor P. Rantao, Secretary for Publicity, Information and Propaganda B.M. Setshogo, Member, Committee for Political Education, Publicity, Socio-Cultural Affairs, and Elections (BDP)

10:15 TEA

10:45 AM

PANEL: Representation of Groups. Chair: B. Mookodi, Manager (Botswana), The Employment Bureau of Southern Africa

- (a) **How effective are organized groups in representing their members — Dr. J. Holm, Coordinator, Democracy Project, University of Botswana**

An evaluation of development in lobbying of government by major economic groups, including civil servants, teachers, and private employees and employers. Attention will also be given to the limits that government places on interest group activity

- (b) **What should be the Role of Trade Unions? — E. Mbonini, Chairman of Botswana Federation of Trade Unions**

A trade union leader will talk about 1) what he thinks should be the role of trade unions in government policy making and 2) what changes will be required in trade union organization and government regulations to realize this end

- (c) **Are Cultural Minorities being represented? — M.K. Mpho, President of Botswana Independence Party**

Consideration will be given to several questions: To what extent do cultural minorities have fair representation in the policy making process? Who represents them? And, how could their voice in the political process be improved?

Discussants:

M.J. Mbaakanyi, Executive Director, Botswana Employers Federation R. Molomo, Central Committee Member (BDP)

12:30 PM

LUNCH.

AFTERNOON: THE LEGAL STRUCTURE

2:00 PM **PANEL: Human Rights and Democracy in Botswana**
—Prof. P. Takirambudde, Dean, Faculty of Social
Science, University of Botswana

- (a) **Political Rights in Botswana: Regression or
Development?** — A. Molokomme, Democracy
Project, University of Botswana

Examination of the theory and practice of political
freedoms of speech, assembly, organization and
press, as they apply to individuals. Particular
attention will be paid to court decisions and popular
support for these rights

- (b) **What is the Reality of Group Rights?** — The Hon.
M.D. Mokama, Attorney General

This paper would answer the question: Does
Botswana's constitution protect group rights? Groups
to be considered include women and ethnic groups

- (c) **What is the role of the BDF and the BPF in
Democratic Botswana?** — The Hon. P.H.K.
Kedikilwe, Minister of Presidential Affairs and
Public Administration

Discussion of the ways and means by which the
military are both instructed as to the virtues of
democratic practice and monitored to insure that this
end is achieved

Discussants: M. Methobi, Assistant General Secretary (BNF) R.N.
Mannathoko, Director and General Manager, BP
Botswana

3:15 PM **TEA**

3:45 PM PANEL: Elections and Democracy. Chair: I.S. Kirby, Attorney

- (a) How Democratic is the Process? The following will present papers: Member of Project Staff, Representative of the BNF (T. Motswagole), and Representative of the BDP (L. Serema)

Each paper will examine the extent to which the electoral law and its implementation conform to democratic practice. Attention will be given to the eligibility of candidates and voters, apportionment of boundaries of districts, rules governing campaigning, and procedures of the voting process itself

AUGUST 4: THURSDAY

8:00 AM REGISTRATION

MORNING: MECHANISMS OF CITIZEN CONTROL

9:00 AM PANEL: Political Communication in Botswana. Chair: D. Inger, Managing Director, Rural Industries Promotions

- (a) The Kgotla and Freedom Square: One or Two Way Communication? — M. Lekorwe, Democracy Project, University of Botswana

Attention will be focused on the extent to which politicians and civil servants use these public assemblies to mobilize the people and the conditions under which they respond to concerns articulated by the public

- (b) The Kgotla and Freedom Square: One or Two Way Communication? — Kgosi Seepapitso IV

The Kgosi evaluates the two considerations mentioned in (a) above

Dicussants: T.B. Mongwa and B.K. Sebele, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Lands

10:15 AM TEA

10:45 AM **PANEL: The Role of Political Parties in Botswana.**
 Chair: H.H.B. Murray-Hudson, Liaison Officer, BCL
 (Ltd.)

- (a) Are Botswana's Political Parties Facilitating
 Democracy? — R. Nengwekhulu, Democracy
 Project, University of Botswana

An examination of how political parties in Botswana
 are organized. Particular attention is paid to the
 effects of this structure and whether it promotes or
 hinders the articulation and recognition of various
 sectors of public opinion

- (b) Some Critical Comments by Party Organizers — C.
 Olsen (BDP); J.Z. Mosojane (BPP); E.R. Mokobi
 (BIP); D. Kwele (BPU); M.M. Giddie (BNF)

It is presumed that the foregoing paper will be
 somewhat critical of the parties as democratic
 organizations. The party organizers will thus be
 given an opportunity to respond

12:30 PM **LUNCH**

AFTERNOON: TWO INSTITUTIONS OF INFLUENCE

2:00 PM **PANEL: The Bureaucracy and Democracy.** Chair: B.
 Gaolathe, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and
 Development Planning

- (a) When and how do Civil Servants Listen to the
 Public? — Dr. G.M. Molomo, Democracy Project,
 University of Botswana

An examination of when and how civil servants
 attend to or block various public influences including
 elected representatives, interest groups, newspapers,
 and village opinion

- (b) Does the Civil Service Really Consult? The Cases of
 TGLP, NCS, and SHHA — L.S. Liphuko, Director
 of Town and Regional Planning, Ministry of Local
 Government and Lands

An evaluation of the content and the process of several consultations of public opinion relative to major government programmes. It is expected that this paper will be presented from the point of view of the Civil Service.

Discussants: T.C. Moremi, Co-ordinator of Rural Development. G.C. Dijeng, Vice Chairman, Central District Council

3:15 PM TEA

3:45 PM PANEL: The Media and Democracy. Chair: R. Khan, Attorney

- (a) Is the Government Media Facilitating Democracy? — L. Mpotokwane, Administrative Secretary, Office of the President

A government spokesperson will explain how the government uses the Daily News and Radio Botswana to develop an informed electorate. He will also state what government would like to see done with these media to further this goal and what barriers are inhibiting these developments

- (b) Is the Private Press Facilitating Democracy? — S. Grant, Director of Phuthadikobo Museum, B. Egner, Economic Consultancies (Pty. Ltd.)

A spokesperson for the private press will consider what that press has been able to achieve in terms of informing the public. In addition, he will look at what still needs to be done to make it more effective, and what barriers prevent this from happening.

Discussants: E.L. Setshwaelo, Director, Institute of Development Management, K. Moesi, Public Relations Officer, Botswana Development Corporation

AUGUST 5: FRIDAY

- 7:30 AM REGISTRATION
- 8:30 AM ROUNDTABLE: What do outsiders think? Chair: Prof. K. Sharma, University of Botswana
- Speakers: Dr. Ibbo Mandaza, Ministry of Public Service, Zimbabwe; Prof. O. Nnoli, University of Nsukka, Nigeria; Prof. Richard Sklar, University of California, Los Angeles, USA; Prof. William Tordoff, University of Manchester, Great Britain; and Dr. Bernard Weimer, Foundation for Science and Politics, Germany.
- These observers of the conference will address a series of questions: How effective is Botswana's democracy? Is it different from other African political systems? And what should be done to improve Botswana as a democracy?
- Discussants: Dr. K.T.T. Maripe, President, Botswana Peoples Party, The Hon. P.H.K. Kedikilwe, Minister, Office of the President
- 10:30 AM TEA
- 11:00 AM ROUNDTABLE: What should Botswana do? Chair G.W. Matenge, Chairman, Botswana Society
- Participant's reactions to preceding conference. A panel of observers will provide some initial suggestions regarding what problems and developments need to be considered to further strengthen Botswana's democracy. Members of the audience will then react to these suggestions and propose alternatives
- 12:00 PM Summary session and closing