PIPPA NORRIS (ED) *CRITICAL CITIZENS: GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE*. 1999 OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Chapter 3

Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies[1]

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Two decades ago political analysts worried about the fragility of democracy. Governments were struggling with new issue demands, and political institutions were having difficulty adjusting to calls for a more participatory democracy. As discussed in the introduction to the book several scholars described this situation as a 'crisis' of Western democracy (Crozier et al. 1975; Huntington 1981).

The end of the Cold War has given rise to a new euphoria about democracy and the democratic process, including by some who had earlier trumpeted the warning calls (Huntington 1991; Fukuyama 1992). And yet, as democracy celebrates its triumph over communism, there are continuing signs of public doubts about the vitality of the democratic process. Joseph Nye and his colleagues (1997) demonstrate that low levels of political trust among the American public have continued into the 1990s. The large protest vote for Perot in 1992 and the term-limits movement signal Americans' continuing political doubts. Several cross-national analyses suggest this is not a distinctly American phenomenon (Dalton 1996). This chapter builds on Hans-Dieter Klingemann's global analysis (Chapter 2) by focusing on political support in advanced industrial societies. Our goal is to determine how citizens in these nations judge the democratic process today. Is there a popular crisis of democracy? We face two challenges in answering this question. First, there is the conceptual problem about what is meant by 'political support' or 'support for democracy'. Second, there is the empirical problem of assembling the appropriate cross-national and cross-temporal data to evaluate claims about changes in public opinion. This chapter addresses both of these topics to provide a framework for assessing public support for democratic politics in advanced industrial societies.

The Meaning of Political Support

One of the basic difficulties in studying political support is that the term has many possible meanings. The theoretical distinctions between different levels of political support are well known, but these are often blurred (or ignored) in the debate over public trust and confidence in democracy. Sometimes evidence of public discontent is no more than dissatisfaction with the incumbents of office--a normal and healthy aspect of the democratic process. In other instances, the theoretical significance of public opinion findings are uncertain because the wording of the survey questions is ambiguous. As discussed in the introduction we believe it is essential to distinguish between at least five objects of political support, and in reality this is a continuous dimension from evaluations of the immediate actions of government officials to identifying with the nation state.

<Table 3.1 here >

In addition to the objects of political support, it is important to distinguish between two types of political beliefs that are represented by the two columns of Table 3.1. Almond and Verba (1963), for example, distinguished between affective and evaluative beliefs. Affective beliefs involve an acceptance or identification with an entity; evaluative beliefs involve a judgment about the performance or appropriateness of the object. Similarly, Easton (1965) distinguished between diffuse and specific support (also see Muller and Jukam 1977). According to Easton, diffuse support is a deep-seated set of attitudes toward politics and the operation of the political system that is relatively impervious to change. Diffuse support has also been interpreted as measuring the legitimacy of a political system or political institutions. In contrast, specific support is closely related to the actions and performance of the government or political elites. Table 3.1 makes the distinction between general *affective orientations* that represent adherence to a set of values (what Easton labels diffuse support), and *evaluations* that reflect judgments about political phenomena (specific support).

If we combine these two dimensions--political level and the type of belief--this gives us a familiar map of public orientations toward politics and the political system. To illustrate this framework in more detail, the cells of Table 3.1 contain typical public opinion questions that might measure each type of belief. Affective orientations to the community might be tapped by questions such as feelings of national pride or a sense of national identity. Evaluations of the nation and political community might be measured by questions that ask which is the best nation in which to live. At the other end of the continuum, affective feelings toward political incumbents might be measured by feeling thermometers concerning leaders. By comparison, questions on leadership performance tap evaluative feelings toward presidents and prime ministers.

This is certainly not an original framework--but it is necessary to emphasize the distinction between various measures of political support. These differences are sometimes blurred, and these differences are politically significant in interpreting our findings.[2] The distinction between diffuse and specific support is important in understanding the significance of public attitudes toward the political process. Democratic political systems must keep the support of their citizens if they are to remain viable. Yet, since all governments occasionally fail to meet public expectations, short-term failures to satisfy public demands must not directly erode diffuse support for the regime or political community. In other words, a democratic political system requires a reservoir of diffuse support independent of immediate policy outputs (specific support) if it is to weather periods of public dissatisfaction.

Comparisons across levels of support also are important. Discontent with political authorities normally has limited systemic implications. Citizens often become dissatisfied with political officeholders and act on these feelings to select new leaders at the next election. Dissatisfaction with authorities, within a democratic system, is not usually a signal for basic political change. Negative attitudes toward political officials can exist with little loss in support for the office itself or the institutional structure encompassing this office. As the object of dissatisfaction becomes more general-- the performance of the regime or attachment to the political community -- the political implications increase. A decline in support for the political process might provoke a basic challenge to constitutional structures or calls for reform in the procedures of government. Weakening ties to the political community in a democratic system might foretell eventual revolution, civil war, or the loss of democracy. Therefore, "not all expressions of unfavorable orientations have the same degree of gravity for a political system. Some may be consistent with its maintenance; others may lead to fundamental change" (Easton 1975:437).

Having introduced this framework, we will draw together a variety of public opinion data to determine how contemporary publics view the political process in advanced industrial democracies.

Assembling the Empirical Evidence

It is not our goal to review the rival hypotheses on why public support for democratic politics may be eroding (see Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Nye et al. 1997). The general features of these theories, however, have implications for the types of empirical evidence that should be collected. Thus, we want briefly to discuss these theoretical explanations in the context of our data collection needs.

Many of the "crisis of democracy" theories link the decrease in public support for democracy to broad, on-going changes in the nature of advanced industrial societies. As subsequent chapters explore, if there is a extensive and long-term shift in public attitudes toward government, then it presumably results from equivalent processes of social and political change--and not coincidental political scandals or episodic policy problems.[3] For instance, some analysts have argued that the public's expanding issue interests have involved governments in new policy areas, such as protecting the quality of the environment, arbitrating moral issues, and assuring equality for minorities and women (Inglehart 1990, 1997a). This was coupled with popular demands for a more open and participatory style of democracy. From this perspective, the challenge to democracy arose because established institutions did not respond effectively or efficiently to long-term changes in public expectations for government. An alternative approach has focused on this same process, albeit with a different interpretation (Crozier et al. 1975; Huntington 1981). These scholars claimed that advanced industrialism weakened the ability of social groups to guide and moderate the demands of individual citizens. Furthermore, the mass media became critics of government and stripped away the cloak of anonymity that once shielded government actions from popular scrutiny (Patterson and Donsbach 1997). Governments consequently were being "overloaded" by the demands of citizen action groups and issue-based politics (see the chapters by McAllister and by Miller and Listhaug in this volume). As Samuel Huntington succinctly stated, the crisis of democracy arose from an excess of democracy on the part of the citizenry (1975, 1981). Yet

another approach to this topic stresses the change social and political patterns of advanced industrial societies. For example, Robert Putnam's research (1995a) suggests that changing social relations, the decline in social capital, and the intrusive influence of the media have contributed to a new political isolationism.

These explanations are very different in their theoretical premises and the causal processes they emphasize, but they all suggest that long-term changes in the social and political conditions of advanced industrial societies may be eroding public support for the political process. If we accept this brief review of the literature, it suggests the type of empirical evidence we should collect. Ideally, we should assess these theories with long-term trend data, especially data which begin in the more halcyon period of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although data from the 1980s and 1990s are relevant to the research question, they may come too late to test (or track) changes in public sentiments. In addition, we should be sensitive to the various levels and types of political support as outlined in Table 3.1, and we would like to collect varied measures of authority, regime, and community support. It would be ideal if comparable measures were available cross-nationally as well as cross-temporally.

These data needs are difficult to fulfill. There is a very long series of election studies and other opinion surveys for the United States that provides a rich, though not ideal, database for studying political support. In many other nations, however, the data series is normally much thinner. The most extensive data are available for more recent years, but the baseline measures from earlier periods are often lacking. Within these constraints, we have attempted to assemble long-term trends in political support from the national election study series, or a comparable data series, for as many advanced industrial democracies as possible. We emphasized the temporal dimension over the cross-national dimension. The results, we believe, provide a comparative overview of trends in political support in advanced industrial democracies.

Confidence in Political Authorities

Public concerns about the democratic process normally begin with questions about the holders of power. Americans might not doubt the institutions of governance, but they might criticize Richard Nixon's actions during Watergate, George Bush's involvement in the Iran-Contra negotiations, or Bill Clinton's multiple indiscretions. Questions that focus on specific politicians illustrate the public's doubts. For example, the American National Election Study (ANES) found that feeling thermometer ratings for both the Republican and Democratic candidates in 1992 had decreased to nearly historic low points. This may be a problem with the candidates themselves. However, there are also signs that the public has become more focused on leaders and more demanding in judging them (Wattenberg 1991: ch. 4). As an illustration, during a modest recession in 1992 Bush's popularity hit a low point that nearly matched Nixon's worst approval rating during the Watergate crisis or Harry Truman's in the midst of the Korean War (*Public Perspective*, April/May 1995:42).

Greater skepticism and doubts about political elites seem to be a common development in other advanced industrial democracies. In Britain, for instance, the low points of prime ministerial popularity have sunk steadily lower over the last five decades. At his nadir, John Major received lower approval ratings than any British PM in the postwar era (Rose 1995a). We can point to similar developments in other nations,[4] although the nature of such patterns tends to be cyclical. When incumbents lose favor, they are replaced by new political figures who restore public confidence at least temporarily--this is the nature of democratic politics. We would argue, however, that there appears to be a greater emphasis on individual politicians in contemporary politics, increased volatility in leadership evaluations, and increased public skepticism about the holders of office (e.g., Wattenberg 1991). Evaluations of individual politicians or public support for particular political parties is the most specific and short-term measure of political support (Table 3.1).

The most extensive evidence on public evaluations of political actors comes from the United States with its long series of American National Election Studies. A variety of evidence, described in Nye, Zelikow and King (1997), points to growing American skepticism of their government over time (Figure 1.1). The early readings described a largely supportive public. Most Americans believed that one could trust the government to do what is right, that there are few dishonest people in government, and that most officials know what they are doing. These positive feelings remained relatively unchanged until the mid-1960s and then declined precipitously. Conflict over civil rights and Vietnam divided Americans and eroded public confidence in their leaders; Watergate and a seemingly endless stream of political scandals may have pushed support even lower over the next decade.

Distrust of government officials reached a low point in 1980 then the upbeat presidency of Ronald Reagan temporarily reversed these trends. Reagan stressed the positive aspects of American society and politics--and opinions rebounded in 1984. However, further declines continued in later elections. By 1994 these indicators had hit historic lows. Only 22% of the American public felt one could trust the government to do the right thing most of the time, only 20% believed the government is run for the benefit of all, and only 48% thought most government officials were honest.

Cross-national evidence similar to these U.S. time series is relatively rare (Miller and Listhaug 1990; Dalton 1996: ch. 12). The most extensive effort to document cross-national feelings of trust in politicians was Ola Listhaug's (1995) analyses in *Citizens in the State*. Listhaug presented similar time series from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden that yielded mixed patterns. He concluded that the data "do not justify ... a uniformly pessimistic--nor an excessively optimistic--picture of developments in political trust" (1995: 294).

We have built on Listhaug's analyses for a larger set of advanced industrial democracies, and with a longer data series when available. We have focused on what might be considered evaluations of political authorities, including measures of trust in MPs, evaluations of politicians as a group, and feelings of confidence in government. We excluded measures that tap feelings of political efficacy, which are sometimes intermixed with confidence measures.

Table 3.2 presents measures of trust in politicians from fourteen nations. The table presents the regression coefficients for each time trend. Many of these items use similar wording because they were influenced by the ANES series and the University of Michigan's pioneering studies in electoral research. Individual nations sometimes include a slight variation on these standard questions, and new items to measure political support.[5]

<Table 3.2>

Again, we find that by expanding the cross-national and cross-temporal breadth of the empirical data, there is clear evidence of a general erosion in support for politicians in most advanced industrial democracies.[6] The patterns of decreasing confidence in the United States are well-known, and the regression coefficients show significant decreases in each of these trust measures. There is also strong evidence of decline in Canada, Finland, and Sweden (see, e.g., Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Borg and Sänkiaho 1995; Holmberg in this volume). Long-term trends for Austria similarly point to a long-term and deepening erosion in political confidence (Ulram 1994). Previous research found that political support grew during the postwar decades in Germany (Baker et al. 1981); but political trust has decreased since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Shorter time series for Australia, Britain, Iceland, Italy and Japan also point to growing public disenchantment with politicians. Furthermore, many of these opinion series begin fairly recently; in several nations there are indirect indications from other data sources that trust in politicians was higher before these data series began (Curtice and Jowell 1997; McAllister 1992).[7]

The sharpest deviation from the pattern of declining trust is the Netherlands. The two longest Dutch opinion series--MPs don't care and politicians are only interested in votes--show statistically significant improvements between 1971 and 1994. These are the only two statistically significant positive coefficients in the table. However, two of the three additional measures that are available for the 1977-94 period display a decline. We can speculate on why the Netherlands differs from other nations, but without further empirical evidence this will remain merely speculation.[8] Norway and Denmark also display a mixed pattern, which justified Listhaug's early caution. However, when we examine support measures across this larger set of nations, there is a pattern of spreading public distrust of politicians.

Confidence in Political Institutions

Dissatisfaction with politicians and parties is a normal part of the democratic process, but the question is how far these sentiments have spread to higher levels of political support. It is important to determine whether apparent dissatisfaction with specific politicians has generalized to broader, affective orientations toward political institutions--such as feelings of party identification. The concept of party identification has reached such a prominent position in electoral research because scholars see these orientations as key determinants of many different aspects of political behavior. In terms of our research interests, partisanship encompasses normative attitudes regarding the role that political parties should play in the democratic system. The formal theory for this view has been best expressed by Herbert Weisberg (1981), who argued

that among its several dimensions of meaning, party identification taps support for the *institution* of the party system in general, as well as support for a specific party.

Earlier research suggested a trend of decreasing partisanship, but the pattern was described as mixed (Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995:101). As part of a collaborative project on party change in advanced industrial democracies, we have collected long-term series on the levels of party identification in 19 nations.[9] By extending the time-span and the cross-national breadth of the data, the empirical evidence now presents a clear and striking picture of the erosion of partisan attachments among contemporary publics (Table 3.3). In seventeen of the nineteen nations, the regression slopes for overall party identification are negative--a striking consistency for such a diverse array of nations. Similarly, all of the coefficients for the percentage of strong partisans are negative, albeit of different strength and statistical significance. The United States, Britain and Sweden continue to display the decrease in partisanship that has long been observed in the literature, but now these cases are joined by most other advanced industrial democracies. If party attachments reflect citizen support for the system of party-based representative government, then the simultaneous decline in party attachments in nearly all advanced industrial democracies offers a first sign of the public's affective disengagement from political institutions.

<Table 3.3 here>

To see whether institutional confidence has spread beyond parties the best evidence again comes from the American National Election Studies. A series of questions suggests that the decline in public confidence is broader than just dissatisfaction with the party system. For example, several questions from the ANES examine the perceived responsiveness of government and political institutions (Dalton 1996: 271). These questions show a trend of decreasing belief that parties, elections, and the government are responsive to the public's interests. Another battery of questions taps confidence in political and social institutions and shows a similar decline in support from 1966 to the 1970s and 1980s, with new low points scored in the early 1990s (Dalton 1996: 267-69; Blendon et al. 1997). Americans' dissatisfaction with government now extends beyond just the incumbents in office to the institutions themselves.

This erosion of public confidence in political institutions does not appear unique to the United States. British citizens are well known for their support of democratic institutions. Yet these aspects of the British political culture also have eroded. The democratic political consensus has weakened among signs of growing popular dissatisfaction with political parties and the other institutions of government (Curtice and Jowell 1997; Topf 1989). As one illustration, in 1987 less than half of Britons believed that either civil servants, the national government, or local councils could be trusted to serve the public interest (Jowell and Topf 1988).

Unfortunately, comparable long-term cross-national data on trust in political institutions are not available. The best available evidence comes from Ola Listhaug and Matti Wiberg's analysis of the 1980-81 and 1990-91 World Values Survey (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995; Inglehart 1997a). They analyzed public confidence in government institutions and found a general pattern of decline for European publics. Table 3.4 extends their analyses to a larger set of advanced industrial democracies. Although this data series begins after the drop in political support that occurred before the 1980s, we still find a general decline in confidence in government institutions. Averaged across five different institutions, confidence decreased an average of 6% over this decade. Ronald Inglehart's analyses in this volume reaffirm and expands this point: support for institutions of political authority have weakened in advanced industrial democracies.

<Table 3.4 here>

When the signs of growing popular skepticism first appeared in American surveys during the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were reasons to link these findings to the immediate problems of American politics (Miller 1974a; Miller 1974b; Citrin 1974). These were exceptionally turbulent years for the United States. A decade of social protest, a divisive and costly war, economic recession, and unprecedented corruption by government officials strained the fiber of American politics far beyond its regular bounds. And yet, the continuation of these American trends into the 1990s, and parallel evidence from other advanced industrial democracies suggests that we are witnessing more than a temporary slump in politicians' performance. Rather than a transient phenomenon or merely linked to distrust of incumbents, public skepticism has at least partially generalized to political institutions and thus may be a continuing feature of contemporary democratic politics.

Evaluations of the Regime Performance

How far does the evidence of the public's political disenchantment extend? The next level of political support involves orientations toward the regime performance. There is a relatively long and broad opinion series on evaluations of the functioning of the democratic process.[14] Because these data have been extensively analyzed elsewhere (Fuchs et al. 1995; Morlino and Tarchi 1996; Clarke et al. 1993; Kuechler 1991), we will only summarize the results here. In broad terms, it appears that satisfaction with the functioning of the democratic system has been fairly stable from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, with a pattern of trendless fluctuations apparent in the early 1990s (see Klingemann Chapter 2, Table 2.13).[15]

Unfortunately, there is much less data available on the more important topic of public orientations toward the principles of the democratic process. To the extent that such data are available, they suggest that support for political rights and participatory norms have actually grown over the past generation. For instance, the available long-term data suggest that contemporary publics have become more politically tolerant during the postwar period (Thomassen 1995; McCloskey and Brill 1983).

In addition, there is at least indirect evidence that perceptions of the appropriate role for citizens now emphasizes a more participatory style and a greater willingness to challenge authority. Inglehart's (1990, 1997a) research on postmaterial value change--with its emphasis on participatory values as a measure of postmaterialism--reinforces these points. It would be extremely valuable to expand future data collections to focus on public norms toward how the democratic process should function. It is surprising that we know so little about what citizens expect of the democratic process, and how these expectations have changed over time. Therefore, we shift our attention to support of democratic principles to determine whether the malaise reaches to this level of political orientations.

Support for Democratic Principles

Many of the survey questions analyzed so far have measured support for the incumbents or institutions of the democratic process, or could be interpreted in these terms. One might argue that dissatisfaction with politicians is a sign of the vitality of democracy, and an objective reading of politics by the public. If there is a crisis of democracy, this dissatisfaction must have be generalized to the political system itself.

There is an abundance of empirical data on public attitudes toward democracy--the next level of political support. For example, a frequently used opinion survey asked whether democracy is considered the best form of government. Although there is not a long cross-national time series for this question, the presently high degree of support suggests there has not been a major erosion in these sentiments (Table 3.5).[16] On average, more than three quarters of the public in advanced industrial democracies feel that democracy is the best form of government. Hans Dieter Klingemann's (in this volume) more extensive analyses of these items in the 1995-97 World Values Survey indicate that these sentiments generally have continued into the 1990s. The two notable exceptions--Ireland and Northern Ireland--may be reflecting the political dissatisfaction that accompanied the violent conflicts in the North. Another question in this survey was less evaluative, tapping public support for the ideal of democracy. Even at the end of the 1980s, before the post-Cold War euphoria for democracy had begun, support for the idea of democracy is nearly universal within Western democracies. Reviewing this evidence, Dieter Fuchs and his colleagues (1995) concluded that these data and other measures of democratic values indicate that democratic legitimacy is widespread.

<Table 3.5 here>

A relatively long time series is available for another measure of system support, a question measuring support for social change through revolutionary action.[17] Table 3.6 provides data from nine nations. These data span the oil shocks and resulting economic crises of the mid-1970s and early 1980s, periods of political violence, the challenges of new social movements, and the miscellaneous political scandals we have described in this paper. Nevertheless, between the early 1970s and the present, support for revolutionary social change represents a mere trace element in each nation. Indeed, support for improving society through gradual reforms is consistently the most preferred response in each nation.

<Table 3.6 here>

In summary, contemporary publics are dissatisfied with the incumbents of office and even with the political institutions of representative democracy, but these feelings of dissatisfaction have apparently not (yet) affected basic support for the political system and the values of the democratic process. If we adopt a sports analogy, can citizens continue to like the game of democratic politics if they have lost confidence in the players and even how the game is now played? How long can this apparent incongruence in political beliefs continue, and how will it be resolved?

Support for the Political Community

Our final analyses of political support examine feelings toward the political community. Identification with the political community is the most fundamental of political identities--to think of oneself as American or British predates specific political identities, such as party or ideological ties. Almond and Verba (1963) described these feelings as "system affect," a strong emotional attachment to the nation presumably provides a reservoir of diffuse support that can maintain a political system through temporary periods of political stress.

One can imagine that these sentiments have not been immune to the dissatisfactions which have affected other aspects of political support. Expressions of patriotism seem less common, and more anachronistic, than they did a generation ago. Growing emphasis on multiculturalism in many societies has raised questions about the breadth and depth of a common national identity. In Europe, the development of European attachments may be weakening national identities. A decline in national identities would spell a crisis for the nation state, and not just a crisis of the political system.

One measure of such feelings involves pride in one's nation.[18] Figure 3.1 displays the percentage who feel proud of their nation for a set of advanced industrial democracies.[19] National pride is common in most states. The United States and Ireland display extremely high levels of national pride. Most other publics express their national pride in more moderate tones. Britons express relatively high degrees of national pride; the bifurcated division of the French political culture yields more modest rates of national pride. Germans are especially hesitant in their statements of national pride, which we attribute to the lingering reaction to the nationalist extremism of Third Reich (Dalton, 1996; Topf et al. 1989).

<Figure 3.1 here>

Beyond these cross-national variations,[20] it is apparent that national pride has not followed a systematic trend over the 1980-91 period.[21] Roughly as many nations display a slight increase, as display a slight decrease; all of these changes are also fairly small. Klingemann's (in this volume) more recent data for several nations shows continued patterns of stability. In addition, when earlier time series are available for specific nations, they also show a pattern of relative stability over time (Topf et al. 1989; Noelle-Neumann 19xx; US cite). In fact, the postwar nation-building process in some Western democracies has led to increasing national attachments over the past generation.[22] However, as one would expect from affective feelings of community attachment, these sentiments generally have proved relatively impervious to change in most advanced industrial democracies.

The Future of Democratic Politics

In their recent study of citizen orientations in European democracies, Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) discounted claims that there have been fundamental changes in the political values of democratic publics in the 1970s and 1980s. They summarize the findings of *Citizens and the State* in fairly sanguine terms: "The hypotheses we tested are based on the premise that a fundamental change had taken place in the relationship between citizens and the state, provoking a challenge to representative democracy...the postulated fundamental change in the citizens' relationship with the state largely did <u>not</u> occur" (Fuchs and Klingemann 1995:429).

Our reassessment and expansion of their empirical analyses yield different results.[23] We find that citizens have grown more distant from political parties, more critical of political institutions, and less positive toward government--this points to fundamental changes in the political orientations of democratic publics over the past generation.

We traced the present boundaries of these sentiments. The decline in political trust is most dramatic for evaluations of politicians and political elites in general. The deference to authority that once was common in many Western democracies

has partially been replaced by public skepticism of elites. Feelings of mistrust have gradually broadened to include evaluations of the political regime and political institutions. It is equally important to note, however, that public skepticism has not significantly affected support for democratic principles and the political community. As citizens are criticizing the incumbents of government, they are simultaneously expressing support for the democratic creed.

If we look beyond the empirical data, these findings continue the debate on the vitality of democracy that began in the 1970s (Crozier et al. 1975; Huntington 1981). Excessive public demands were supposedly overloading the ability of governments to perform, creating what some analysts felt was a crisis of democracy. Some conservatives used the elitist theory of democracy to offer a solution to this crisis. They maintained that if a supportive and quiescent public ensured a smoothly functioning political system, then we must redevelop these traits in contemporary publics. The centrifugal tendencies of democratic politics (and the demands of the public) must be controlled, and political authority must be reestablished. Indeed, Huntington (1975, 1981) saw American's commitment to the democratic creed as a weakness of the political culture--rather than a strength, as it should be seen.

An alternative view held that if the government was overloaded, it was because government had not modernized and reformed itself to match the new needs and demands of its citizens (Offe 1984; Barber 1984). These researchers noted that the decline in political support had not eroded support for democratic principles, the public was criticizing how these principles were functioning in a system of representative democracy. The solution was to improve the democratic process and democratic institutions, not to accept non-democratic alternatives.

I lean toward the latter interpretation of contemporary democracy (Dalton and Kuechler 1990, ch. 1 and 14). Popular commitment to democratic principles and processes remains strong. Citizens are frustrated with how contemporary democratic systems work--or how they do not work. I agree with Klingemann's conclusions (in this volume) that the new sources of dissatisfaction are not among those with anti-system views, but among those who want to risk more democracy. The "creedal passion" that so worried Huntington is actually a sign of the vitality of democracy, and the force that can generate progressive political reform.

Popular dissatisfaction with present democratic structures is fueling calls to reform the processes of representative democracy. For example, recent data from the 1996 British Social Attitudes survey indicates that the politically dissatisfied are more likely to favor constitutional reforms, such as changes in the role of the House of Lords, judicial protection of human rights, and greater public access to government information (Curtice and Jowell 1997). In addition, political parties in several nations have instituted internal reforms to address the procedural dissatisfactions of their supporters. The recent electoral reforms in Italy, Japan, and New Zealand are additional signs of public dissatisfaction with the electoral process, and attempts to reform democratic institutions. Ironically, however, as one nation moves towards more proportional representation as a solution, another moves in the opposite direction. This makes me skeptical that reforms to political parties and electoral systems are sufficient to address the present malaise. This skepticism is supported by survey evidence showing that public confidence in political parties ranks near the bottom among all political institutions. Widespread declines in political support and growing alienation from various institutions and forms of the democratic process suggest that the sources of dissatisfaction go deeper than can be addressed by electoral reforms. Contemporary publics are also expressing a more fundamental dissatisfaction with the system of representative democracy itself (Klingemann and Fuchs 1995, ch. 14; Dahl 1989). The problem is focused on the institutions and processes of representative democracy, not democratic values and principles. Thus another response to popular dissatisfaction has been a move toward participatory democracy.

The potential for citizen participation is limited by the traditional forms of representative democracy, especially in Western Europe. The opportunities for electoral input are low for most Europeans. The chance to cast a few votes during a multiyear electoral cycle is not a record of citizen input that should be admired. Furthermore, declining vote turnout in advanced industrial societies suggests growing disenchantment with this form of democratic participation. The fundamental structure of contemporary democratic institutions was developed in the nineteenth century; society has changed a good deal since then.

Strengthened commitments to the democratic ideal, and increased skills and resources on the part of contemporary publics, are leading to increased political participation beyond the present forms of representative democracy. For instance, research documents the growth of protest and direct-action methods among Western publics (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Jennings and van Deth 1989). Sidney Verba and his colleagues (1995:72) similarly show that while Americans participation

in elections has been declining, direct contacting of government officials and work with community groups has been increasing. Participation in new social movements, such as the environmental movement, has also increased substantially over the past generation.

These new participation patterns are creating pressure on governments to develop forms of more direct, participatory democracy (Budge 1996). For example, surveys of the German public and elites indicates that democratic norms are broadening to embrace more participatory forms of democracy (Buerklin et al. 1997; Fuchs 1996). The use of referendums and initiatives is generally increasing in democratic nations (Butler and Ranney 1994). Younger generations and the better educated are more likely to favor referendums, greater participation by the citizenry, and other forms of direct democracy.

A recent review of the social movement literature describes other ways that institutional reforms can increase direct citizen participation in policy making (Dalton 1993). In Germany, for example, local citizen action groups have won changes in administrative law to allow for citizen participation in local administrative processes. Italian environmental legislation now grants individuals legal standing in the courts when they seek to protect the environment from the actions of municipalities or government administrative agencies. Similar reforms in the United States provide individual citizens and citizen groups greater access to the political process (Ingram and Smith 1993). These institutional changes are difficult to accomplish and therefore are likely to precede at a slow pace; but once implemented they restructure the whole process of making policy that extends beyond a single issue or a single policy agenda.

In summary, the growth of critical citizens is really a challenge. Democracies need to adapt to present-day politics and the new style of participatory politics. The challenge to democracies is whether they can continue to evolve, to guarantee political right, and to increase the ability of citizens to control their lives.

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Table 3.1. Levels of Political Support

Level of Analysis	**Affective Orientations**	**Instrumental Evaluations**
Community	National pride National identity	Best nation to live
Regime: Principles	Democratic values	Democracy best form of government
Regime: Performance	Participatory norms Political rights	Evaluations of rights Satisfaction with democratic process
Regime: Institutions	Institutional expectations Support for parties Output expectations	Performance judgments Trust in institutions Trust in party system
Authorities	Feelings towards political leaders	Evaluations of politicians

Table 3.2. Trends in Trust in Politicians by Nation

	Trend	Standard Error	Time Period	N of Timepoints
Australia				
Trust government	.000	---	1979-88	(2)
Politicians knowledgeable	-3.556	---	1979-88	(2)
Austria				
Only interested in votes	-.385	(.228)	1974-96	(4)
MPs lose touch	-.577*	(.101)	1974-96	(4)
Politicians don't care	-.297	(.114)	1974-96	(4)
Canada				
Government doesn't care	-.541*	(.199)	1965-93	(7)
MPs lose touch	-.524*	(.149)	1965-93	(7)
Denmark				
Politicians don't care	-.185	(.194)	1971-94	(9)
No principles	.610	(.327)	1971-84	(5)
Make right decisions	-.169	(.281)	1971-94	(11)
Finland				
Only interested in votes	-.389	(.261)	1978-91	(11)
MPs lose touch	-.495*	(.158)	1974-94	(11)
A party furthers interests	-.891*	(.421)	1974-91	(15)
Germany				
Officials don't care (a)	-1.270*	(.249)	1969-94	(5)
Officials don't care (b)	-.661	(.505)	1974-94	(4)
MPs lose touch	-.525	(.318)	1974-91	(3)
Great Britain				
Only interested in votes	-.339	(.268)	1974-96	(6)
MPs lose touch	-.292	(.262)	1974-96	(6)
Party over nation	-.748*	(.257)	1974-96	(6)
Improve government	-.636	(.284)	1973-96	(6)
Iceland				
Politicians trustworthy	-.850	(.613)	1983-95	(4)
Italy				
Officials don't care	-.235	--	1975-91	(2)
MPs lose touch	-.118	--	1975-91	(2)
Japan				
Many dishonest politicians	-1.943	(.942)	1976-92	(3)
Netherlands				
Only interested in votes	.785*	(.200)	1971-94	(8)
MPs don't care	.903*	(.189)	1971-94	(8)
Promise too much	-.653*	(.102)	1977-94	(5)
MP friends	-.325	(.151)	1977-94	(5)
Personal interest	.150	(.188)	1977-94	(5)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Norway				
Only interested in votes	.115	(.284)	1969-93	(4)
MPs don't care	-.286	(.763)	1969-89	(3)
Trust politicians	.010	(.280)	1973-89	(5)
Waste taxes	.143	(.398)	1973-93	(6)
Politicians smart	.025	(.320)	1973-89	(5)
Sweden				
Only interested in votes	-1.326*	(.161)	1968-94	(9)
MPs don't care	-.815*	(.100)	1968-94	(9)
United States				
Politicians don't care	-.940*	(.157)	1952-94	(12)
Trust government	-1.417*	(.275)	1958-94	(10)
Leaders crooked	-.553*	(.155)	1958-94	(10)
Waste taxes	-.553*	(.232)	1958-94	(10)
Govt. benefits all	-1.176*	(.330)	1964-94	(9)

Sources: The respective national election study series in each nation; details are available from the author.

Note: Table entries are unstandardized regression coefficients of time on each variable; the associated standard errors are in parentheses. The original variables are coded so that negative regression coefficients indicate a decrease in trust over time.

Table 3.3. Trends in Party Identification over Time

		% Identifiers		% Strong Identifiers		
Nation	% with PID	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	**Period (N)**
Australia	92	-.146	.35	-.620	.00	1967-96 (7)
Austria	67	-1.120	.00	-.777	.00	1969-94 (9)
Belgium*	50	.039	.85	-.290	.07	1975-94 (20)
Britain	93	-.225	.02	-1.098	.00	1964-92 (8)
Canada	90	-.113	.09	-.066	.57	1965-93 (8)
Denmark	52	.126	.60	-.189	.57	1971-90 (7)
Finland	57	-.293	.49	-.147	.61	1975-91 (4)
France*	62	-.86	.04	-.60	--	1975-94 (20)
Germany	78	-.462	.02	-.449	.01	1972-94 (7)
Iceland	80	-.750	.02	-.449	.01	1983-95 (4)
Ireland*	61	-1.700	.00	-.950	.00	1978-94 (17)
Italy*	78	-1.300	.00	-.970	.00	1978-94 (17)
Luxembourg*	61	-.580	.02	-.470	.00	1975-94 (20)
Japan	70	-.386	.06	--	--	1962-95 (7)
Netherlands	38	-.199	.44	-.142	.45	1971-93 (8)
New Zealand	87	-.476	.01	-.750	.01	1975-93 (7)
Norway	66	-.220	.34	-.280	.18	1965-93 (8)
Sweden	64	-.690	.00	-.473	.01	1968-94 (10)
United States	77	-.409	.00	-.225	.05	1952-92 (11)

Source: Nations marked with an asterisk (*) are based on the Eurobarometer surveys; other nations are based on the respective National Election Studies (Dalton 1998).

Note: The % with party identification in column one is the average of the percentage expressing an identification in the first two surveys in each series.

Table 3.4. Confidence in Political Institutions

	1980-81	1990-91	Change
Austria	62	48	-14
Belgium	50	43	-7
Canada	61	46	-15
Denmark	63	66	3
Finland	72	53	-19
France	57	56	-1
Germany	55	53	-2
Great Britain	64	60	-4
Iceland	62	63	1
Ireland	66	61	-5
Italy	44	41	-3
Japan	46	41	-5
Netherlands	54	54	0
Norway	75	66	-9
Spain	53	45	-8
Sweden	61	54	-7
United States	63	56	-7
Average	**59**	**53**	**-6**

Sources: 1981-84 and 1990-93 World Values Surveys.

Note: Table entries are the average percentage expressing confidence in five political institutions: armed forces, legal system, police, parliament and the civil service. The armed forces item was not available for Iceland and the parliament item was not available for Denmark; the scores in these two nations is based on the remaining items.

Table 3.5. Support for Democracy

Nation	Approve Idea of Democracy	Democracy as the Best Form of Government
Norway*	--	93
Sweden*	--	93
Denmark	98	93
Greece	99	92
Switzerland*	--	91
United States*	--	88
Japan*	--	88
Netherlands	98	85
Portugal	99	84
Luxembourg	98	83
Australia*	--	83
Germany	96	82
Spain	96	78
France	95	78
Britain	93	76
Finland*	--	75
Italy	93	74
Northern Ireland	95	65
Ireland	93	65

Sources:

Eurobarometer 31a (1989); 1994-97 World Values Survey (nations with *)

Table 3.6. Attitudes toward Social Change

	U.S.		Britain		Germany		France		Belgium		Italy		Netherlands	
	1981	1990	1976	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990	1970	1990
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Change society by revolutionary action	5	6	7	5	2	2	5	4	3	4	7	7	6	2
Improve society through reforms	66	67	60	75	70	59	78	70	69	65	73	79	74	70
Defend society against subversives	20	11	35	13	20	28	12	20	14	18	10	9	15	23
No opinion	9	11	8	8	8	11	5	7	13	14	9	5	5	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Notes

1. I would like to thank Clive Bean, Harold Clarke, David Easton, Mark Gray, Olafur Th. Hardarsson, Ian McAllister, Rolf Röntgen, Risto Sänkiaho, Carole Uhlaner, Peter Ulram and Martin Wattenberg for their contributions to this research.

2. Two good examples of close attention to the theoretical and empirical differences between these various aspects of political support are Muller and Jukam (1977) and Fuchs (1989).

3. We agree with Nye et al. (1997) that performance-based theories seem insufficient to explain a broad scale and continuing trend of declining political support (also see Clarke et al. 1993).

4. For instance, Falter and Rattinger (1997) show that public evaluations of all three "established" German political parties has decreased from 1977 to 1994; there has also been a trend of decreasing trust in Canadian politicians (Clarke 1992).

5. For the specific question wordings and data sources please contact the author.

6. Listhaug (1995) studied support trends in only four nations (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden). In a broader cross-national context, we can now see that these four nations are not representative of advanced industrial democracies. Moreover, even in these nations the addition of later timepoints showed decreasing trust in Denmark, Norway and Sweden (Borre and Andersen 1997; Holmberg in this volume).

7. For example, if the American time-series had begun in 1976, as do many other national series, the marked drop in trust would be much less evident. The respective 1976-92 coefficients would be: Trust (-.337), crooked (-.182), waste taxes (-.556), and benefits all (-.241).

8. We suspect that the Dutch time series begins too late to capture the stable period of Dutch politics before the end of pillarization and the realignment of the party system in the late 1960s (equivalent to U.S. opinion levels before the drop in trust in the late-1960s). A Dutch series beginning in the early 1960s might follow the pattern of other advanced industrial democracies.

9. I would like to acknowledge my collaboration with Ian McAllister and Martin Wattenberg in the collection and interpretation of these party identification data. One reason for the difference from Schmitt and Holmberg (1995) is the inclusion of eight additional nations (Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States), and each of these nations displays a pattern of decreasing partisanship. In addition, extending the time-series in several other nations strengthened on-going patterns of dealignment. For more extensive analyses of the party identification trends and their sources see Dalton (1998).

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14. The specific question asks: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works (in R's country)?" Sometimes the question included a prompt referencing the functioning of political parties. Previous research is divided on whether this is a measure of specific or diffuse support (e.g., Fuchs et al. 1995). We interpret this item as a measure of specific support because they emphasize the performance of the system.

15. I see two additional limitations of these data. First, the question wording leads respondents to treat this as an evaluation of the political incumbents. In addition, the Eurobarometer series begins only in the mid-1970s (or later). It would be preferable to utilize a measure of democratic performance that was first asked in the 1960s or earlier.

16. The two questions were as follows: "Let us consider the idea of democracy, without thinking of existing democracies. In principles, are you for or against the idea of democracy?"
"Which of the following opinions about different forms of government is closest to your own? 1) In any case, democracy is the best form of government, whatever the circumstance may be, 2) In certain cases a dictatorship can be positive, 3) For someone like me, it doesn't make any difference whether we have a democracy or a dictatorship."

17. The question wording is as follows: "On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion: 1) The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action, 2) Our society must be gradually improved by reforms, and 3) Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces."

18. I want to thank David Easton for pointing out that what might be occurring is not the decline of national identities, but the addition of new identities (to regions, Europe or social collectives) or the nesting of multiple identities that may exist somewhat separate of national loyalties.

19. The question asked: "How proud are you to be (nationality)? The responses were: 1) very proud, 2) quite proud, 3) not very proud, and 4) not at all proud." The figure presents the "proud" and "very proud" responses

20. More interesting are two cases from Eastern Europe in the 1990-91 World Values Survey where the public did not identify with the nation; this raises warning signals for the polity and the system. National pride was relatively low in Czechoslovakia in 1990--within three years the nation had split in two. Similarly, at the time of this survey the Soviet Union was fragmenting and the reformed Russian Republic was born of economic failure and Cold War defeat. Less than two-thirds of Russians expressed pride in their nation in 1990.

21. Inglehart (1990: 411) describes a very large drop in national pride between 1970 and 1980 for a subset of European nations. This trend is not mentioned in Inglehart's most recent analysis of national pride trends (1997: 304-305). Because of the dramatic change, across differences in survey organizations, I am cautious about the 1970-80 comparisons.

22. For longitudinal trends in support for the nation or the political community, see: Austria (Ulram 1994: 91); Canada (Clarke 1992: 107).

23. The evidence available to Klingemann and Fuchs indicated declines in party identifications in only 8 of 14 nations (1995: 430); our updated and expanded data document declines in 18 of 20 nations. Similarly, while they found a 2-2 split for trust in politicians (1995: 430), we uncovered

declines in at least 12 of the 14 nations we examined.