Poverty, Participation, and Democracy

For too long a conventional wisdom has held sway suggesting that poor people in poor countries are not supportive of democracy and that democracies will be sustained only after a certain average level of wealth has been achieved. Evidence from twenty-four diverse countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America examined in this volume shows that poor people do not value democracy any less than their richer counterparts. Their faith in democracy is as high as that of other citizens, and they participate in democratic activities as much as their richer counterparts. Democracy is not likely to be unstable or unwelcome simply because poverty is widespread. Political attitudes and participation levels are unaffected by relative wealth. Education, rather than income or wealth, makes for more committed and engaged democratic citizens. Investments in education will make a critical difference for stabilizing and strengthening democracy.

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ANIRUDH KRISHNA

Duke University
For Aditi and Abhay
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Preface

The idea for this volume took root at a workshop on poverty and democracy organized at Duke University on February 17 and 18, 2006. Thanks are due to the sponsors of this workshop: the Center on Markets and Democratic Institutions (MADI); the Program for the Study of Democracy, Institutions and Political Economy (DIPE); and the Duke Center for International Development (DCID).
Contributors

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Michael Bratton is professor in the Department of Political Science and African Studies Center at Michigan State University (MSU). In 2006 he was the recipient of a university-wide Distinguished Faculty Award. He is also a founder and the director of the Afrobarometer, a collaborative, international, survey research project that measures public opinion on democracy, markets, and civil society in eighteen African countries. Professor Bratton received a PhD from Brandeis University and joined the MSU faculty in 1977. He has held a postdoctoral fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, served as a program officer with the Ford Foundation, and been a visiting scholar at the University of Natal (South Africa), the University of Zimbabwe, and Uppsala University (Sweden). In 2006, he spent a semester at Oxford University. Bratton’s main research and teaching interests are in comparative politics (democratization, social movements, and public opinion) and policy studies (development policy, development administration, and evaluation research). His current research focuses on public opinion in new democracies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, but also in broad comparative perspective. He is the author of sixty-five articles and book chapters, including contributions to World Politics, British Journal of Political Science, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Journal of Democracy, and World Development. His latest books are Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective, with Nicolas van de Walle (1997) and Public Opinion, Democracy and Market Reform in Africa, with Robert Mattes and E. Gyimah-Boadi (2005).

Anirudh Krishna is Associate Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Duke University. His research investigates how poor communities and individuals in developing countries cope with the structural and personal constraints that result in poverty and powerlessness. His books include Active Social Capital: Tracing the Roots of Development and Democracy (2002); Reasons for Success: Learning from Instructive Experiences in Rural Development (1998); Changing Policy and Practice from Below: Community Experiences in Poverty Reduction (2000); and Reasons for Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development (1997). His articles have appeared in Comparative...
Contributors

Adam Przeworski is the Carroll and Milton Professor of Politics at New York University. Previously, he taught at the University of Chicago, where he was the Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor, and held visiting appointments in India, Chile, France, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 1991, he was the recipient of the 1997 Lubbert Prize and the 2001 Woodrow Wilson Prize. He is the author or co-author of thirteen books and numerous articles, translated into seventeen languages. His recent publications include States and Markets (2003), Democracy and the Rule of Law (2003), and Democracy and Development (2000).

Mitchell A. Seligson is the Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University and is also a Fellow of the Center for the Americas at Vanderbilt. He founded and directs the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), which has received generous support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). LAPOP has conducted more than forty surveys of public opinion, mainly focused on democracy in many countries in Latin America but more recently including projects in Africa. He also served as director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. He has held grants and fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation, The Howard Heinz Foundation, Fulbright, USAID, and others, and he has published more than eighty articles and more than a dozen books and monographs. In addition to consulting for USAID, he also consults for the World Bank, the UNDP, and the Inter-American Development Bank. His
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