DEMOCRACY IN RETREAT?: VOX POPULI, CUSTODUM ACTA

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Introduction[1]

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." If democracies are extended families of citizens, would Tolstoy's adage apply to them as well, or are the underlying nature and consequences of malaise in contemporary democracies widely shared? This is the topic of my address and since it may be foolhardy to challenge the iconic Russian, let me start by stating the parameters of my inquiry. First, just as Tolstoy wrote mainly about the aristocracy, I restrict this study to the so-called advanced industrial democracies of Europe and the English-speaking settler societies. Second, by happiness and unhappiness in democracies, I mean the public's level of support for and confidence in their leaders and political institutions. Accordingly, I present information about the beliefs, values, and behaviors of citizens, relying primarily on data from the reputable World Value Survey (WVS), European Social Survey (ESS), International Social Survey Program (ISSP), and the American National Election Studies (ANES). The data presented update previous reports by analyzing polls conducted between the late 1990s and the present, a period spanning the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the onset of the present economic crisis.

This paper is divided as follows: 1.the documentation of recent trends of public attitudes toward democratic regimes; 2. the identification of the social and political correlates of political support and mistrust; 3. an analysis of how the public's conflicting expectations pose severe obstacles for governments seeking to regain citizens' confidence; 4. a review of the main factors that have contributed to the secular decline in public confidence in government; and 5. a discussion of how

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mistrust has spawned new mechanisms of governance that comprise weakened representative institutions and transfer power to unelected bodies.

Background

Even before the recent convulsions that toppled the governments of Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Italy, and Spain, happy democracies were hard to find. The erosion of political support has been widely asserted and heavily studied for the past thirty years. In 2004, Russell Dalton, perhaps the most assiduous chronicler of the phenomenon, began *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices* with a long series of quotations from prominent Cassandras asserting that growing public distrust threatened the legitimacy and potentially the survival of democratic institutions in the United States and Western Europe. Today it is just as easy to compile a large inventory of statements that the political systems of these countries are broken. In November 2011, the magazine *Commentary* asked fifty public intellectuals whether they were pessimistic or optimistic about America's future. The numerous pessimists consistently bemoaned a dysfunctional government unable to operate in a coherent manner, controlled by moneyed interests, and impervious to reform.

Distrust is based on the incompetence or betrayal of the trustee. So even if one accepts the diagnosis of pervasive malaise, it is necessary to specify the "object" of popular disenchantment. To use David Easton's familiar terminology, are citizens withdrawing support from the sitting political authorities and their policies, from democratic institutions and democratic values, or from the contours of the nation-state itself? Moreover, one needs to distinguish between legitimacy and trust. Legitimacy refers to the procedures that determine who governs and how laws are made. Trust refers both to acceptance of those rules as just and the presupposition that they are followed. These beliefs need not coincide. For example, people may believe that elections are the only appropriate mechanism for

choosing leaders, yet believe that particular electoral rules are unfair or that the conduct of elections are corrupt. In a sense, trust breathes life into legitimacy, making it more likely that people will accept outcomes with which they disagree.

Dalton's review of American and Western European citizens' orientations toward government between 1965 and 2000 concluded that trust of government, belief in the integrity and responsiveness of politicians, confidence in parliament, and identification with a political party had all declined (Dalton 2004, pp. 28, 29, 32, 38). Moreover, despite differences in their party systems and electoral laws, voting in national elections decreased between 1950 and 2000 in virtually every one of the advanced democracies. The emergence of protest parties on both the left and right further indicates that dissatisfaction goes beyond unhappiness with particular leaders. Faith in the institutions of electoral democracy, the historical guarantor of representation and political change, seemed in 2000 to be at a low ebb in the advanced democracies, an ironic contrast with the concomitant surge in democratic aspirations and reforms in the developing world.

At the same time, Dalton found continuing commitment to democratic principles and values. There was no evidence of a significant desire to replace democracy with a more authoritarian form of government. In addition feelings of national pride actually grew between 1970 and 2000 (Dalton 2004, pp. 41, 42, 45). What had grown, then, was the contingent of *dissatisfied* democrats—people unhappy with the performance of the prevailing processes of government and hence potentially ripe for changes in the regime. Though disentangling support for the regime and for the authorities remains difficult, this paper's analysis of more recent trends in opinion stresses that the main locus of malaise remains a sustained sense of dissatisfaction with the current performance of government.

Recent Trends in Political Support

Has trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy eroded further between 2000 and 2010, a decade which began with the 9/11 terrorist attack and ended with a global economic recession? And despite the obvious differences in the political and economic experiences of individual countries, did public attitudes generally move in the same direction? In organizing the available data to address these questions, I follow as closely as possible the earlier analysis of Dalton, relying on many of the same questions and more recent data from the same cross-national surveys.

Table 1 tracks changes in public opinion on five questions: confidence in parliament and the judiciary, rejection of the idea that a good political system would replace parliament and elections with a strong leader, judgment about how well the political system as a whole is functioning, and pride in one's nation. This large array of data does not support the proposition of growing unhappiness across-the board. Favor for democratic values and national pride remain intact. It is true that aggregate expressions of confidence in political institutions remain relatively low, with mean scores on a 1-100 scale generally below 50. Nevertheless, only 6 of 20 countries registered statistically significant declines in confidence in parliament and 9 countries registered a positive shift in opinion. In the case of the judiciary, 11 of 22 countries recorded a positive shift while only 2 saw declines. Some of these changes were small: in the case of parliament the largest positive gain were 13% in New Zealand and 10% in Denmark, and the largest decline—not difficult to explain—was 17% in Iceland.

On the other hand, responses to the question about how well the political system is performing support the hypothesis of growing malaise in established democracies. (This item was asked only of European samples). In fully 14 of the 16 European countries satisfaction with political performance declined significantly between 1999 and 2010: Denmark and Sweden are the lone exceptions. The pattern recurs when we contrast additional questions about the value of democratic principles, such as opposing rule by experts or the army, and an item asking about "how democracy in your country is

developing." There is little change from the high levels of support for democracy as a good political system overall, although somewhat more people agree that it fosters indecision and a "bad economy." At the same time, there is a further erosion of belief in the quality of democratic performance in 12 of 16 European countries. The group of "dissatisfied democrats" has grown in many countries, with unhappiness fueled by the perceived failures of existing leaders.

Figure 1 summarizes the pattern of change by plotting public opinion on two axes: change (between 1999 and 2010) in confidence in institutions (measured by a summary index of beliefs about parliament, the judiciary, civil service and the police) and change in perceptions of the system's performance. Public opinion in seven countries (Austria, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United Kingdom) moved in the negative direction on both dimensions. In six countries (Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Luxemburg, and Spain), there were slight increases in confidence in institutions along with more negativism about political performance. Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden reported more satisfaction on both dimensions.[2] I take this result to reinforce the interpretation that the confidence in institutions index measures a more abstract assessment of regime institutions while the performance questions zero in on incumbent authorities and current circumstances.

In sum, the use of three different measures of support that are statistically and conceptually distinct provides a nuanced picture that shows no overall decline in regime support between 1999 and 2010 but a large drop in assessments of political peformance. There is only a puny decline in the level of commitment to democratic values and confidence in political institutions actually increases in most countries. Where there is a clear erosion of support is in public opinion about how well the political system is functioning.

[2] Hamlet would be happy to know that things are rotten almost everywhere except Denmark.

An important question is whether the prevailing patterns of continuity and change varied across demographic and political sub-groups or whether we are witnessing a "period" effect with virtually everyone moving in the same direction, presumably in response to assessments of the state of the nation. It would be too cumbersome to report the vast array of data collected to address this question. Suffice it to say that the results of the polls overwhelmingly favor the latter interpretation: young and old, those without and with a college education, the religious and those who do not attend church, and people identifying themselves as left, center, or right generally shifted in the same way—becoming slightly more confident in political institutions and substantially less satisfied with the way the political system is functioning.

Evidence of an across-the-board *trend* in internal patterns of political support over the past decade does not mean, of course, that there are no group differences in *levels* of confidence and satisfaction. Tables 3A and 3B present the correlations between age, education, religiosity, and political self-identification, on the one hand, and three summary measures of support for democratic values, political institutions, and systemic performance, respectively. In all countries, more educated respondents tend to exhibit more support on all three of the measures. By contrast, age has a more varied relationship with these dimensions of support, with older respondents usually more likely to express more confidence in political institutions and more satisfaction with the performance of the political system. Still, there are exceptions to this pattern, and it must be remembered that the analysis here presents simple bivariate associations. Religiosity, measured by frequency of church attendance and self-reported importance of one's religious beliefs, is associated with higher levels of confidence in political institutions and the performance of the system but with lower levels of belief in the value of democracy. This pattern of belief among the religious suggests that they have an underlying disposition to favor order and worry about the hurly-burly of democratic politics, a surmise that is supported by the

fact that when confidence in the police is excised from the summary index of support for institutions, the reported relationship with religiosity is sharply reduced. The connections between political support and the respondent's ideological self-identification resemble this pattern. Conservatives are less supportive of democracy as the best political system but more positive about political institutions and the way the government is working. This too may reflect the value conservatives place on order and their greater deference to authority. At the same time, conservatives are more favorable about how government is working in countries where their political parties are in power.

The final step in this inquiry into the extent and underpinnings of political support is to search for the deeper political and social anxieties that undergird political trust and support. To do this, following recent papers by McLaren (2010) and Sides and Citrin (2007) I employ a multiple regression analysis that controls for social background characteristics and country fixed-effects and test these propositions:

Hypothesis 1: people who express general satisfaction with their personal circumstances, which generally is founded largely on a sense of economic well-being, will be more politically trusting of political institutions and authorities. Personal unhappiness feeds political unhappiness.

Hypothesis 2: people whose philosophical orientation emphasizes a strong role for government rather than individual responsibility will have lower levels of political support, in part because neo-liberal policies dominated in most of Europe between 2000 and 2010 and in part because demands for government support are in principle open-ended. As Anthony Downs once wrote, government is always too small in a democracy.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals opposed to growing immigration (and its presumed impact on the national community) will be more distrusting of political institutions and authorities.

The reasoning underlying this expectation regarding immigration attitudes requires more elaboration. Modern states are built on shared identity and values. The particular attributes that create a sense of nationhood may be malleable and contested, but as Anthony Smith points out, strong states were built on the foundation of a common ethnic core. That is, most modern states developed around share cultural heritage and norms. These identities, which are a mixture of civic and ethnic components, are still extremely relevant to European and North American nations (Citrin and Wright 2008; Wright 2010). Immigration brings "strangers" into "our" land, sharpening the perceived dividing lines between us and them. Europeans continue to believe that a common language and culture is the preferred basis for nationhood (Citrin and Sides 2008) and suspicion of immigrants is tied to the perception that "they" threaten "our" way of life (Sides and Citrin 2007, Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004). To the extent that people have strong national identities—witness the high levels of pride in one's nation reported above – and regard immigration as weakening common values and cultural norms, the recent patterns of migration into Europe, and Muslim immigration in particular, might have boosted mistrust of the political class, who generally have been more sympathetic to immigration and immigrants than ordinary citizens. In other words, those with the strongest sense of national identity are likely to be most attuned to the cultural threat posed by immigrants and hence most likely to blame political institutions and authorities for allowing large-scale immigration to occur. This latent sentiment has been mobilized by right wing parties in even the Scandinavian countries where political trust is relatively high.

The regression analysis summarized in Table 4 affirms all three hypotheses. The results reflect pooled data from the 22 established democracies included in the most recent waves of the WVS and EVS data. Data for the four Anglo-American countries was collected between 2004 and 2006 while results for the eighteen European countries span the period 2008-10. Respondents are weighted to

adjust for the surveys' sampling designs and the countries' populations. In both cases, I do not display the coefficients for the control variables (age, education, religiosity, gender, and political self-identification) so as to concentrate on the political and social attitudes implicated in the hypotheses spelled out above.

Happy family members make for happy families. Even after controlling for demographic and attitudinal factors that affect both personal happiness and political support, such as age, education, membership in an organization, and unemployment, an increase in life satisfaction produces an increase in support. Though life satisfaction, which we know from the research literature is founded primarily on a sense of economic security, affects all three indices, its effect decreases the more diffuse the support measure becomes. The effect of life satisfaction on rating of system performance is almost three times the size of its effect on support for democracy. Like the unhappy family member who vaguely wonders about the value of the very institution of family but harps on particular gripes about his own family's behavior, the dissatisfied democrat disdains the structure of the system slightly more than the satisfied citizen but focuses his angst on its performance.

A similar pattern emerges in the relationship of preferences for government responsibility to political support. Those who desire the government to do more about providing for their publics and to exert greater control over business, and who are skeptical about the virtue of competition and the free enterprise system are substantially less pleased with how their governments have performed. Since both the center-left and center-right have pursued largely neoliberal agendas in the past decade, and since challenges to this order have emerged on both sides of the ideological spectrum, it comes as no surprise that controls for respondent ideology and tolerance for income inequality leave the relationship intact. And, of course, decades of research show that professed conservatism in mass publics often fails

to align with a small government orientation, even on social welfare issues. Downs' quip transcends ideological divisions.

In contrast to personal satisfaction and a preference for government to do more, a desire for greater limits on immigration affects all three support indices strongly. Anxiety that immigration will dilute national identity and impose economic burdens translates into more profoundly diminished support. Not only do the opponents of immigration blame the political class for failing to stem the influx of "others," they also appear to be less assured that the institutions of popular control are capable of doing so. For these citizens, if democracy threatens the erosion of the traditional national identity by bringing in people who are not like "us" and who share in the benefits of "our" citizenship, then its underlying principles and norms are brought into question and support for radical right parties seems a plausible response.

To the extent that immigration is perceived as a threat to an embedded sense of collective identity, the institutions and actors promoting a "multicultural polity" are politically vulnerable. Opposition to immigration thus chips away at belief in the superiority of democracy as a system, although the impact of this should not be overstated. Ethnic change in Western democracies has not substantially eroded support for that system's basic principles.

I replicated, as closely as possible given the surveys' slightly different measures, this analysis with data from the 2010 ESS (not shown). Once again, opposition to increased immigration, economic dissatisfaction, and the desire for government to assume a large role in economic and social life are significantly associated with less confidence of trust in political institutions and more negative judgments about how the democratic political system is performing. And while I do not show these results here to avoid drowning you in a sea of coefficients, the impact of immigration attitudes on

distrust is greater in countries where citizens perceive, even if incorrectly, that the influx of immigrants is growing Sides and Citrin 2007) and where governments adopted multiculturalist policies that validate cultural differences rather than promoting the assimilation of immigrants (McLaren 2010).

Though they are not central to the present analysis, several other findings are worth noting. Consistent with Dalton's account, post-materialists are both *more* enthusiastic of democracy as a system of government and *less* satisfied with how its institutions have performed. But education, as in the bivariate analysis, is positively related to all three measures. The post-materialism finding thus may not reflect frustrated participatory aspirations among the educated generally and only among a segment with a distinct set of values. That joiners – people who are members of at least one organization – are more supportive of democracy and less pleased with government performance corroborates this idea. Self-identified conservatives are significantly less supportive of democracy, but the relationship of ideology with performance assessment is weak and, unsurprisingly, inconsistent across countries. Paradoxically, conservatives are less supportive of democracy while those who desire the government to take more responsibility are also less supportive. The reason may be that a preference for more individual responsibility is consistent with democracy's support for freedom of choice, while the type of conservatism tapped by the right tail of the ideology distribution is more similar to religiosity, which is also negatively associated with support for democracy but positively correlated with the measures of more specific support. Both orientations indicate a preference for greater order and strong leadership, and a suspicion of the tumult of political deal-making.

To examine the consistency of these relationships among the set of countries surveyed, I turn to Figures 2 to 4. For each country in our sample individually, I regressed scores on the confidence in institutions and system performance indices on the same set of covariates – minus, of course, the country fixed effects. I plot the coefficient on immigration attitudes, life satisfaction with life, and

preference for government responsibility from each country's regression equation. The dots in figures 2, 3, and 4 are the point estimates while the capped spikes show the boundaries of 90% confidence intervals. Thus, for example, the top panel of Figure 2 shows the coefficient on immigration attitudes (and its confidence interval) from 22 country-specific models, each regressing the confidence in political institutions index on the same set of covariates.

In the case of immigration attitudes and life satisfaction (Figures 2 and 3), these data imply—contra Tolstoy---that most unhappy democracies are alike. In all but a few countries, a preference for reducing immigration yields significantly less political support while greater life satisfaction yields significantly greater support. The factors that trigger a loss of political confidence anxiety about the cohesion of the national community, economic dissatisfaction, and a desire for more government protection---cut across state borders. And in both figures, comparing the top and bottom panels demonstrates that in a majority of the countries in our sample the effect of immigration attitudes and satisfaction with life are greater on the shorter-term performance rating and smaller on the more diffuse confidence in institutions measure.

In the pooled model reported in Table 4, a preference for a more robust government was significantly correlated with assessments of the system's performance, but not with confidence in political institutions. Figure 4 (top panel) shows that this pattern holds in most individual countries. In addition this attitude is less widely associated with political support than Preference for a stronger government is only significantly positively associated with political support in Austria, while there are negative relationships in 8 other countries. We have not systematically explored the possibility, but it might well be that this variation reflects h the ideological coloration of the governments in power at the time the surveys were taken.

These results pose an immense challenge to governments seeking to rebuild political support. Citizens want more government while the hallowed system of social protections is everywhere on the firing line. Citizens want less immigration and continue to prioritize their national identities while elites call for more European integration and—albeit much more softly now than previously—for reorienting citizens to think of themselves as belonging to a multicultural nation.

Why Political Trust Declined

What then are the causes of happiness and unhappiness in established democracies? Here it is important to distinguish between short-term factors that cause the public mood to fluctuate and macro-level processes that produce an enduring secular trend. Clearly trust in government reflects the nature of the time. People expect peace, prosperity, and reasonably honest government. When these conditions prevail, trust in government rises. Put another way, the performance of incumbent authorities matter. In the United States the long slide in trust in government began in the 1960s when a failed war was accompanied by civil strife in college campuses and urban ghettos. Watergate and a period of stagflation furthered lowered trust in government. Public opinion simply recorded a series of national failures in a rational fashion; upticks in trust occurred only in the period of economic revival between 1980 and 1986 and 1996 and 2000. Improved economic performance and charismatic leadership can make a difference. However, despite brief periods of revival, political support never returned to the halcyon days of the early 1960s. One reason is that, once lost, trust, like religious faith, is not easily regained; what goes down need not come up again.

A more enduring source of eroding trust in government, however, is the process of modernization itself. Modernity replaces the authority of habit and tradition with that of rational-legal

norms based on technical knowledge. As individualism, secularism, and science come to reign, a critical outlook tends to become the default outlook of citizens, particularly the young and better-educated whose formative experiences increasingly legitimize the slogan “question authority.” Indeed, more permissive child-rearing habits launch the youth in advanced industrial societies onto this cultural path. Families and schools are less inclined to preach the virtues of obedience and deference of to portray their country’s history through purely rose-colored glasses; the withdrawal from organized religion in most Western democracies removes a counterweight; and the rise of an adversarial culture in the mass media makes it harder to adopt trust as one’s Bayesian prior in thinking about political institutions. Moreover, there has been a decline in confidence in institutions outside government such as business, labor unions, education, the church and the media (Dalton 2004).

To the extent that generational change, the spread of formal education, secularization, and the emergence of a “post-materialist” outlook that demands more political participation contribute to skepticism of authority, the cultural basis of political mistrust are likely to endure, making it harder to reverse the trend that began several decades ago. And on the political front, both fractionalization and polarization make it unlikely that there is a shift to a consensual sense of trust in government. When, as in the United States party politics takes the form of a war of attrition among two heavily armed camps, the losing side is unlikely to view the processes bringing about their defeat positively. More generally, social complexity complicates the task of building political consensus and generalized trust.

Institutional Development in the Era of Mistrust

In contemplating an arms reduction agreement with the Soviet Union, Ronald Reagan famously pronounced: “Trust, but verify.” In many of the advanced democracies today, mistrust has led to verification run wild. The result is the development of a set of institutions and practices that together

amount to a kind of regime change that constrains if not paralyzes governments based on the premise of majoritarian rule. For reasons laid out above, it is virtually certain that there will not be a stable return to high levels of trust in political authority. In other words, mistrust has become a constitutive rather than a temporal feature of modern democracies. While the precise flow of cause and effect may be hard to establish, the disenchantment born of governmental failures in economic management, foreign policy, and administrative integrity has spawned a set of institutions and practices that taken as a whole have institutionalized mistrust.

What might be termed an enduring tendency toward negative democracy, then, is a consequence of the decline of political trust. In making this claim, I am not speaking of responses at the individual level such as support for anti-incumbent parties or non-compliance with particular laws but rather of the institutionalization of mistrust? Those governing in modern democracies must cope with the diminution of power and constant oversight embedded in new practices based on suspicion and cynicism.

Let me list some of leading examples of the institutionalization of mistrust, beginning with the United States. There, the period of divided government that has prevailed for most of the period from 1968 to the present produced an entrenched pattern of Revelation-Investigation-Prosecution. Accusations of executive malfeasance emerge—through media investigations, internal leaks or whistle-blowing. The legislative opposition then launches hearings demanding information from the executive branch as part of their oversight function. The administration generally resists, claiming executive privilege, and then either a negotiated settlement or judicial intervention establishes what is to be released. If there is grist for the mill, the Special Prosecutor Law or alternative investigatory procedures are invoked, sometimes leading to highly publicized trials and convictions. The Lewis Libby case is a recent illustration. The Freedom of Information Act and an adversarial media institutionalize the testing

of leaders through acts of denunciation and revelation, but these elements of oversight provoke responses based on counter-expertise, leading to a kind of "he said, she said" pattern that can only boost hostility to most of the disputants.

The emphasis on oversight is part of the development of a robust form of "negative democracy" (Rosanvallon 2004). In addition to the emergence of prosecutorial institutions, mistrust fuels an insistence on transparency with practices ranging open meetings to either formal or informal requirements that candidates make their tax returns and medical records available to voters. "Checking up" on elected officials has become a major task of advocacy groups and media institutions.

The growth of civil society in the form of NGOs, an ever-expanding number of activist groups, internet blogs, and investigative journalism both invigorate democracy and fuel mistrust. Virtually all these actors take and oppositionist stance. For all the good they do in boosting civic participation and holding government accountable, it must be remembered that they are almost always a negative voice. They are muckrakers, whistleblowers and reformers, finding fault with how politicians behave and how policies are implemented. Their constant message is the pervasiveness of scandal, corruption, and incompetence. The evolution of communications technology and media outlets makes this siren song of mistrust a staple of contemporary political culture and it is hard to envisage a return to what might be called an era of deference and good feeling.

Mistrust of government also has generated the erection of independent institutions shielded from the control of elected executives and legislators. The United States provides many examples with its "independent" regulatory agencies. Their creation had primarily symbolic uses, with rhetoric portraying them as somehow bastions of impartial expertise which pursued the general interest rather than partisan goals. Independent central banks and constitutional courts with the final say on what

majorities can do are additional institutional expressions of “negative” democracy. Electoral democracy presumes the dependence of politicians on voters, but “negative” or indirect democracy is designed to constrain the influence of partisan preferences on policy.

Indeed, the judicialization of politics is a widespread feature of modern democracies. To some extent, this limitation on the power of representative government is self-imposed. In Europe, nations acquiesced in the expanded power of the European Court of Justice. In the United States, legislation created a system of environmental reviews that make the courts the final arbiter of matters such as nuclear safety, the construction of dams, building or roads and pipelines, and the size of jail cells. Their decisions based on contested expert testimony intrude upon the traditional power of elected governments to tax and spend. In other words, “law” and “technocracy” vetoes politics. In part, this is due to the inability of elected governments to eliminate entrenched benefits. In the United States, for example, closing military bases, reforming social security, and deficit reduction all have been addressed by the extra-constitutional device of a committee of experts and party leaders whose recommendations could not be amended through the normal legislative processes. An additional development designed to limit regulatory growth is the requirement in the United States that all new administrative rules pass a stiff cost-benefit test, a procedure that strengthens the hand of technocratic civil servants against politicians and their interest group allies.

This procedure can be defended as the only way to overcome the political incentive to maintain selective benefits. But as Rosanvaillon rightly points out, the enhanced role of judges and experts in democracy means that “impartiality” trumps electoral mandates or the popular will. Taking power away from elected representatives in this way resembles the strategy of pre-commitment by Ulysses when he avoided ensnarement by the Sirens. Term limits, a pledging never to vote to raise taxes, and the attempt to ban congressional earmarks are additional, mainly American, examples of political self-

denial, although these responses occur in electoral systems with single-member constituencies a rather than those who select legislators from a party list.

Interestingly, direct democracy, that is, referenda and initiatives, has become a feature of what I have termed negative democracy. True, in an era of mistrust, governments have turned to the referendum to legitimize divisive proposals such as legalizing divorce or adoption, limiting national sovereignty, or raising taxes. Citizen initiatives, which have proliferated in many American states, wrest power over policy from disdained legislatures and implement change. But in some countries, such as Italy, participatory democracy takes the negative form of repealing legislation rather than building a positive coalition in favor of change.

To summarize, durable unhappiness with the outcomes of electoral democracy combined with more polarized politics facilitated the imposition of sanctions on power. One consequences of the spread of institutions that indict, oversee and circumvent elected authorities is to limit the visibility of and accountability for political outcomes. Paradoxically, these sanctions on power make it more difficult for governments, already hobbled by the strictures of globalization, to act decisively during a crisis. And this can create a negative feedback loop in which the constraints spawned by a lack of political confidence results in paralysis that further erodes trust.

The current situation in the eurozone is an obvious example. Governments fall as external powers such as the bond markets, the rating agencies, the German Chancellor and the IMF rather than citizens lay down the law of austerity. What now must be asked is whether there remains a sufficient reservoir of trust to allow existing institutions to function effectively during a period when entrenched expectations must be lowered and a hallowed social contact renegotiated. The surrender of popular sovereignty to unelected and unaccountable supra-governments represents a retreat from democracy,

imposed from above. The revitalization of electoral democracy based on closer ties between national sentiment and elite projects is the traditional path toward rebuilding popular support. A more desperate alternative is to recruit a modern day Cincinnatus. Given the institutional legacy of mistrust now firmly in place, however, the long-run need may be to reconstruct legitimacy on a new institutional platform that acknowledges the dissemination of power both internally and across national borders. This will not be a simple or short-term project.

Appendix: Questions used in Analysis

1. National Pride: How proud are you to be a [COUNTRY] citizen (very proud, quite proud, not very proud, not proud at all)?

2. Democratic Values

a. Political System Attributes: Would you say the following is good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad

i. having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections?

ii. having the army rule the country?

iii. having a democratic political system?

Note: Support for democracy index consists of the mean of the foregoing three items, rescaled 0-100, where 100 is maximum support.

iv. experts make decisions?

b. Beliefs about Democracy (agree strongly, agree, disagree, disagree strongly)

i. In democracy, the economic system runs badly?

ii. Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling?

iii. Democracies aren't good at maintaining order?

iv. Democracy may have problems, but it's better than any other form of government?

3. Confidence in Political Institutions: How much confidence do you have in [institution: parliament, justice system, civil service, police]? Is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much, or none at all?

Note: Confidence in political institutions index consists of the mean of these four items, rescaled 0-100, where 100 is maximum confidence.

4. System Performance Rating

a. People have different views about the system for governing our country. Here is a scale for rating how well things are going…(1=bad – 10=very good)

b. On the whole are you very satisfied, rather satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in our country?

Note: System performance rating index consists of the mean of these two items, rescaled 0-100, where 100 is maximum satisfaction.

5. Preference for Government Responsibility: How would you place your views on this scale

a. 1 = private ownership of business should be increased – 10 = government ownership of business should be increased?

b. 1=people [EVS: individuals] should take more responsibility for providing for themselves – 10 = the government [EVS: state] should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for?

c. 1=competition is good: it stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas – 10=competition is harmful: it brings out the worst in people?

d. 1=the state should give more freedom to firms – 10=the state should control firms more effectively?

Note: Preference for government responsibility index consists of the mean of these four items, rescaled 0-100 where 100 indicates greatest preference for government responsibility.

6. Religiosity

a. Please say, for each of the following, how important it is in your life: religion (very important, rather important, not very important, not at all important).

b. Apart from weddings, funerals, and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days (1 = more than once a week – 8 = never or practically never)?

Note: Religiosity index consists of the mean of these two items, rescaled 0-100, where 100 is maximum religiosity.

7. Immigration: How about people from less developed countries coming here to work. Which one of the following do you think the government should do (let anyone come who wants to, let people come as long as there are jobs available, put strict limits on the number of foreigners who can come here, prohibit people from coming here from other countries)?

Note: item is rescaled 0-100, where 100 is most restrictionist.

8. Satisfaction with Life: How satisfied are you with your life these days (1=dissatisfied – 10=satisfied)?

Note: item is rescaled 0-100 where 100 is most satisfied.

9. Libcon (ideology): In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale? (1=left – 10=right)?

Note: item is rescaled 0-100 where 100 is most conservative.

10. Tolerance for income inequality: How would you place your views on this scale (1=incomes should be made more equal – 10=we need larger income differences as incentives)?

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