

## Challenge of Semi-Authoritarianism

By [Martha Brill Olcott](#), [Marina Ottaway](#) **Publisher:** Carnegie Paper No. 7, October 1999

The post-cold war world has seen the rise of an increasing number of regimes that cannot be easily classified as either authoritarian or democratic, but display some characteristics of each—in short, they are semi-authoritarian regimes. These regimes have adopted some of the formal traits of democracy, such as constitutions providing for the separation of powers and contested presidential and parliamentary elections, and they allow some degree of political freedom to their citizens; nevertheless, they are able to protect themselves from open competition that might threaten the tenure of the incumbents. Such regimes abound in the former Soviet Union: in countries like Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan, for example, former communist bosses have transformed themselves into elected presidents, but in reality they remain strongmen whose power is barely checked by weak democratic institutions. Semi-authoritarian regimes are also numerous in Sub-Saharan Africa, where most of the multi-party elections of the 1990s have failed to produce working parliaments or other institutions capable of holding the executive accountable. In the Middle East, tentative political openings in Algeria, Morocco and Yemen appear to be leading to the consolidation of semi-authoritarian regimes rather than to democracy, following a pattern first established by Egypt. In the Balkans, the communist regimes have disappeared, but democracy remains a distant hope even in countries that are at peace. Even more worrisome is the example of Latin America, where steady progress toward democracy has been interrupted by the new semi-authoritarianism of Peru and Venezuela.

Several factors explain why a growing number of regimes are adopting outwardly more democratic political systems: the loss of appeal of socialist systems during the 1990s, the creation of newly independent states, and the corresponding need felt by an increasing number of governments to legitimize themselves in the eyes of their citizens and of the international community; the pressure by donor countries, which have launched democracy promotion programs and in some cases even make economic aid contingent on the implementation of democratic reforms; and the demonstration effect of democratization in the neighboring countries.

A combination of external pressures and countervailing forces created by domestic opposition has limited the capacity of most governments to impose their policies unilaterally and to continue governing in an authoritarian fashion. But these pressures have not been sufficient to bring about a new distribution of power in most countries. As a result, reforms have remained incomplete and the new regimes have been able to prevent further change through their successful manipulation of the new institutions and often of the opposition as well. The new semi-authoritarian regimes continue to go through the motions of a democratic process, but they have become masters at stifling electoral competition or at keeping parliaments powerless and judiciary systems cowed. They have also learned to manipulate public opinion: on the one hand, they claim that they are committed to popular empowerment and the redistribution of power; on the other, they emphasize that the risks of instability they claim are inherent in untrammelled competition and by so doing succeed in deflecting criticisms and reducing internal pressure for democratization.

The existence of regimes that combine formal democracy, a modicum of political openness, and fundamental authoritarian tendencies has been noted by other analysts. Such regimes, however, are often classified as either transitional or imperfectly democratic ones. We believe that the concept of semi-authoritarianism captures their nature better. The concept of transitional regime is too broad and doesn't allow us to distinguish between regimes that have not yet fully consolidated their democratic institutions and those which have no intention of allowing that to happen. For example, both Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic can be considered countries in transition, but in the former a democratic outcome is highly unlikely, while in the latter it is probable. Furthermore, semi-authoritarian regimes may be transitional, but they need not be. Egypt, for example, has consistently displayed the same semi-authoritarian characteristics for two decades.

Similarly, the concept of imperfect or limited democracies—literally dozen adjectives have been used to qualify such regimes, including illiberal, electoral, or virtual—is also misleading when applied to countries where, despite all the formal trappings, power remains concentrated in the hands of an unaccountable government that cannot be removed by democratic means.

In choosing the term semi-authoritarian, we are not seeking to engage in a semantic discussion, but to highlight what we view as the defining characteristic of these regimes: *the existence and persistence of mechanisms that effectively prevent the transfer of power through elections from the hands of the incumbent leaders or party to a new political elite or political organization.* These mechanisms function despite the adoption of formal democratic institutions and despite a degree of political freedom granted to the citizens of the country. Semi-authoritarian countries may have a reasonably free press, for example; the regime may leave space for autonomous organizations of civil society to operate, for private business to grow, and thus for new economic elites to rise. The regime may hold fairly open elections for local or regional governments or even allow backbenchers to be defeated in a parliamentary election. But there is no room for debate over the nature of political power in society, where it resides, and who should hold it. Above all, membership in the core power group is not determined by election. At the center, competition is a fiction; even if elections are held, outsiders are not allowed to truly challenge the power of the incumbents. These regimes cannot be considered democratic because they lack the essential characteristic of democratic systems: elections are not the source of the government's power and thus voters cannot transfer power to a new leadership. If elections do not provide an opportunity for the alternation of elites, the country is not a democracy, not even an imperfect one. But such regimes cannot be considered purely authoritarian, either, because of the degree of openness of the political process and because of the fact that they tolerate at least partial challenges and allow a degree of freedom for competing organizations.

The issue of what is the source of the government's power is central to any discussion of semi-authoritarian countries. There are conceptual difficulties in confronting this, but the problem cannot be avoided. A definition of democracy, and consequently of semi-authoritarianism, that hinges on determining what are the sources of the government's power is admittedly inconvenient, because the source of power is not easy to ascertain in practice. Despite common expressions such as "seizing power" or "assuming power," power is not something concrete, that can be easily detected or seized, as Samuel Huntington pointed out long ago. Power is something that is defined and redefined through protracted engagement of the governors and the governed

in society. In democratic systems, it is relatively easy to see how power is generated and how it is exercised. Access to positions of power is consistently determined by election results, although other factors enhance or decrease the ability of an elected leader to shape policy. Decisions are made by elected leaders operating within institutions, and while many pressures are brought to bear on those institutions, the process is relatively transparent and the outcome clearly visible. Furthermore, independent media help ferret out information about the pressures and influences to which decision-makers are exposed. Non-democratic systems are more opaque. Power is the result of relationships established among individuals and these relations are not institutionalized, thus they are difficult to map out and explain. The fact that the press is often intimidated into self-censorship makes the task more difficult.

The allocation of power in many semi-authoritarian regimes is remarkably stable over time. These are systems in equilibrium. In general individuals and groups do not encounter much government interference, and if they do the impetus for government intervention is usually quite predictable. Thus from the point of view of those seeking a democratic transformation, these systems are seen as stalemated. One of the mechanisms that the rulers of these countries use to compensate for this stalemate is to allow some areas of openness, but to limit the potential impact of this openness through the state's monopoly over, and periodic use of, instruments of repression.

## **THE CHALLENGE**

Semi-authoritarian regimes pose a number of challenges for those interested in advancing the cause of democracy. The first challenge is analytical. These regimes are not following the three stage process in which analysts have broken down the process of democratization: a period of liberalization; a democratic transition by means of multi-party elections and the development of formally democratic institutions; a period of democratic consolidation. In semi-authoritarian countries the old order has been undermined by new political and economic challenges, but the government's responses to these challenges do not necessarily lay the basis for a liberal regime. The new processes and institutions do not penetrate deeply enough or function well enough to sustain a democratic reallocation of power. Thus no democratic transition has taken place, and consequently the process of democratic consolidation has not begun. These regimes, thus, cannot be considered to be either in the phase of liberalization or in the phase of democratic transition. Least of all can they be thought to be undergoing democratic consolidation, and so we clearly need a new analytical model to understand these countries.

The second challenge is political. The United States government is committed to democracy promotion, but obviously it is also committed to safeguarding its security and economic interests. In many semi-authoritarian countries, these interests clash, at least in the short term. If a regime is friendly to the United States and appears reasonably stable, it fosters an open market and economic growth, and it maintains a favorable business climate for US companies, why should it be pressed for more change? The choice is particularly difficult when the regime is not guilty of terrible human rights violations, is reasonably open politically, and is clearly preferable to a traditional authoritarian state. Should the United States accept a glass that is only half full? Or should it insist that it be filled completely, even if there is a risk that all the water will be spilled

in the attempt? US policy toward semi-authoritarian countries shows a lot of wavering on this question.

The third challenge concerns policy instruments. If we decide to put more pressure for change on these regimes, what sort of intervention is required to break the mechanisms that prevent a reallocation of power despite the existence of areas of openness and of formal democratic mechanisms? The normal devices suggested by donors to consolidate democracy do not appear to have much effect. Projects to strengthen democratic institutions have little impact, because power is not channeled through those institutions. Assistance geared to stimulate the strengthening of civil society may summon new organizations into existence, but again this has no decisive effect. In some cases this is because the society is already quite pluralistic, but the government has learned to handle pluralism. In others it is because the new non-governmental organizations have little leverage to use in forcing the hand of the government. Elections have the least impact of all; they are regularly used to return the incumbents to office and often with little outward sign of ballot box stuffing or gross cheating.

## **THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT PROJECT**

The challenges posed by semi-authoritarian regimes are likely to acquire greater importance in the coming years. After a decade of change in most authoritarian countries, we are beginning to be able to measure the real gains of the democratization drive of the 1990s. We are discovering some great successes, but many more cases of incomplete transformation. If we want to meet the growing challenge posed by semi-authoritarian regimes, we must understand the phenomenon better.

The Democracy and Rule of Law Project of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is seeking to contribute to the understanding of semi-authoritarian countries and to help meet the challenge of dealing with them through a three part undertaking, comprising a study group, the present working paper, and a more extensive, two-year research project.

A study group organized by Tom Carothers, Martha Olcott and Marina Ottaway met five times between October 1998 and February 1999. It devoted three sessions to analyzing semi-authoritarian countries and two to discussing how democracy might be promoted in these countries. Its goal was to help the participants sharpen their thinking about these issues, rather than to produce a final report which distilled the group's conclusions.

To facilitate the discussion, the study group selected eight countries that could be considered broadly to fall into the "semi-authoritarian" category. Since this was an exploratory undertaking, we did not try to develop strict criteria to guide the choice of the countries. Rather we decided that it was more useful to start with a group of interesting countries that displayed many authoritarian characteristics but simultaneously had also arenas for political competition, to learn from the comparative examination of these countries, and in the end to arrive at a better understanding and a more rigorous definition of semi-authoritarianism. As a result, we chose a very varied array of countries. The sample included China, a country with limited political space but which is in the midst of a very dynamic period of change, as well as Indonesia, a country in

the throes of a transition from decades of authoritarianism with still unpredictable outcome. The group also discussed Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Uganda and Zambia.

The present working paper grows out of the work of the study group, but it is not a report on its discussions. It does not seek to represent the ideas of the group as a whole, but primarily those of two of the study group convenors, Martha Olcott and Marina Ottaway, with inputs from the third, Tom Carothers. But the paper is inspired by the study group's discussions and owes much to the ideas expressed by the participants. Ultimately, however, this is the authors' own attempt to set forth a coherent analysis of the phenomenon we call semi-authoritarianism.

The paper draws on the authors' knowledge about many semi-authoritarian countries, their prior field work in some of them, and on the contributions made by members of the study group. The goal of the paper is to raise questions rather than to provide answers. It suggests what we need to understand about semi-authoritarian countries in order to deal with them effectively, but it does not try to provide policy guidelines. This is a working paper in the true sense of the term, a step leading to further research.

The last component of the Carnegie project is a research project building on the ideas developed here that is being launched by one of the authors, Marina Ottaway. The study will look systematically at the problem of semi-authoritarianism in five countries in different regions of the world. On the basis of the research findings, it will then discuss how further democratization can be encouraged in semi-authoritarian countries.

## **EXPLORING THE BASICS: POWER, OPENNES AND CLOSURE**

From the definition and sketchy discussion of semi-authoritarian regimes provided earlier, three issues appear crucial to understanding the phenomenon : the sources of power, the extent of openness and the persistence of closure.

### **Power**

The status of democracy in a country is often assessed in procedural terms. A procedural approach has the advantage of simplicity, in that it is based on clearly visible indicators. Unfortunately, such approach does not help in the case of the numerous countries where democratic procedures appear to be in place, but have little or no discernible impact on the distribution of power. This is particularly clear in those countries where multi-party elections return to power the old authoritarian leadership. No matter how good the procedure, and seemingly free and fair the election, the question about the real source of the elected officials' power remains. If communist party secretaries are re-elected as presidents, or military rulers are transformed by an election into democratic presidents, what are the sources of their power? Is it the elections? Is it control over the military or the remnants of the old party apparatus? The question becomes even more poignant when the same leadership is re-elected repeatedly and thus proves as entrenched as it was before the democratic procedures were introduced.

The study group found several different patterns of power generation at the central level. In addition, there are other sources of power at the local level and in the economy, which complicate the task of understanding how power is generated and allocated.

One pattern of power generation we found was the anointing by election of leaders of the old regime to head the new so-called democratic system. Examples abound in countries where the transition appears to owe more to external factors than to the growth of a strong demand for democracy and of strong organizations capable of carrying forth such demand. Among the countries discussed by the study group, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan provided examples of this pattern. In Azerbaijan, the wane of communism saw the rise of a large and powerful pro-democracy movement, the Popular Front, whose leader Abulfaz Elchibey held power in 1992-1993 but was then ousted by Brezhnev-era communist boss Heydar Aliiev. Aliiev has twice won election as president, but done so without facing the major political figures of the opposition movement. The continuity in Kazakhstan is even more striking. Successful public movements in that country always had at least a partly orchestrated character. Olzhas Suleimenov, the leader of the country's largest political movement, the Anti-Nuclear Nevada-Semipalatinsk, has never tried to run for president or openly oppose the government. Instead, he has chosen the role of "in-house critic" and has been well rewarded for it. Kazakhstan is a good example of a state which has held hastily organized elections designed to please a western political audience that seemed to tolerate no other mechanism. Here, as in so many other places, a former party secretary-general with a finger on the levers of power and access to resources dutifully became elected president. In Kazakhstan the abuses were particularly glaring during January 1999 presidential elections, in preparation for which the existing constitution was suspended in order to allow the incumbent, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to compete under more favorable political and economic conditions.

An interesting variant of this pattern where elections only serve to reconfirm the position of officials that derive power from other sources is provided by Egypt. Despite the considerable degree of political space that opened in the 1970s, power continues to be transferred only at the death of the incumbent president and even then to his handpicked vice-president. It happened at the death of Gamal Abd El Nasser's in 1971, when power was transferred to Anwar Sadat under the aegis of the then existing single-party system. It happened again in 1981 at Sadat's death when power was automatically transferred to Vice-president Hosni Mubarak, with whom it has resided for eighteen years despite the regular holding of elections.

Zambia provides an example of a different pattern. In 1991, Zambian citizens, disgusted with a president and single party that had brought nothing but economic decline and maladministration to the country for twenty years, voted in a new president and party by an overwhelming majority. The 1991 elections thus truly transferred power to a new leadership. The victory of the new party, however, was so complete that the country was left without a viable opposition. As a result, power was soon captured anew by a political machine that made further transfer impossible. Power thus did not retain the democratic base acquired in the first elections. Five years later, the elections returned to office the same party and president with a similar overwhelming majority. This second victory, however, was not due to popular enthusiasm, which had waned rapidly, but to maneuvering by the president that excluded the only serious contender and by the subsequent refusal of opposition parties to participate in the elections. Furthermore, the incumbent party was

further strengthening its hold on power by organizing the population into a dense network of party cells in the best tradition of single-party regimes—one for each ten households was the stated goal. It is difficult to conclude from this picture that power in Zambia today is still derived from an electoral mandate and thus transferable by elections.

In Iran, on the other hand, elections led to a bifurcation of power. The Iranian presidential elections of 1997 were considered to be among the most democratic held in the Middle East, and they did give the president a genuine mandate. On the other hand, the religious establishment that has controlled the Iranian society and polity since the deposition of the shah allowed the elections to take place but was unaffected by the elections and showed no intention of relinquishing its own hold. The end result is a divided political system in which power is contested by elected officials and by the religious elite.

Not all countries discussed by the study group submitted their leaders to the test of a multi-party election, whether genuine or manipulated. In China, power rests firmly in the hands of the party apparatus; in Uganda it resided originally in a victorious guerrilla movement that subsequently transformed itself into a de facto single party, willing to allow some competition among individual candidates but not among organized political parties. Yet, these two countries that openly refuse electoral competition at the center do not differ radically from those discussed previously that pay lip service to such competition. Whether or not elections are held, in all these countries power is largely based on a mixture of control over a party machine and an entrenched bureaucracy, the efficiency of a repressive security apparatus, the acceptance of the regime by the military, and in some cases the alliance with an increasingly important private sector. In Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, open political competition is severely curtailed and it is thus the opaque internal politics of the apparatus that allocates power; in both these cases the presidential apparatus was built at least in part on the old communist party structures and personalities. In Zambia, where the disintegration of the old party apparatus in 1991 allowed a turnover of leadership, the new president wasted no time in developing a new machine. In Uganda, power was purely rooted in military control originally, but while the military retains its importance a reorganized bureaucracy and a new party machine have become equally important. Patronage is an additional source of power in all these countries.

We have so far only considered the patterns of power that are found at the center of semi-authoritarian political systems. A comprehensive assessment would also require a discussion of how power is generated and exercised at the local level as well as of the importance of economic power. The study group did not discuss the issue of power at the local level in any detail, so we will only raise a few points here. First, semi-authoritarian regimes are not as concerned about controlling power tightly at the local level as they are at the center. The result is that local patterns of power vary widely. In China, for example, the government is deliberately allowing some experimentation at the local levels, with the elections of village committees—it is too early to tell where this experiment will lead. In many other countries, including Uganda, Zambia, and Indonesia, the government has very little reach in remote rural areas, and as a result party officials and bureaucrats share much power with traditional authorities or other local notables. Even in countries with stronger bureaucracies such as Egypt, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, local government is affected by informal or traditional processes. Elites that are rooted in social, ethnic

or religious structures compete for influence with government authorities for control of the population.

The greater competition for power at the local level can be mechanisms of semi-authoritarian control rather than steps toward democracy. In semi-authoritarian African countries, including Uganda, local and district councilors are voted in and out of office in surprisingly open elections, even when power at the center is not allowed to be challenged. Local officials, who have very little power in the formal system, can be sacrificed in the name of democracy with no loss of control by the central government, and if they perform their tasks well they also help take pressure off the regime. Thus, decentralization and democratic openness at the local level may in fact help the perpetuation of semi-authoritarianism by providing a safety valve that allows the populace to express its discontent without affecting the government.

The issue of economic power is also quite complex. The relationship between economic and political elites undoubtedly affects the allocation of power in semi-authoritarian countries. Much of the writing on democracy treats as axiomatic that economic liberalization facilitates democratization by creating more interest groups and thus greater pluralism and democracy. But this positive relationship between economic liberalization and democracy does not necessarily hold true in semi-authoritarian countries, particularly those that have seen the rapid emergence of new economic elites as a result of structural economic reforms.

In Indonesia, political and economic elites were part of the same system of crony capitalism, with the president's family and close associates controlling shares of corporations which in turn received favorable treatment and protection. Crony capitalism is also a problem in the countries that were part of the former Soviet Union, where the new economic elites are generally being drawn from the nomenclature of the communist party or were closely associated with them. Azerbaijan's oil sector is dominated by the family of President Heyday Aliev. His son Ilkham is first deputy president of SOCAR, the state oil company, and Aliev himself has decades-old ties to the Soviet oil industry. In Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev's daughter was awarded the license to run the one independent television station, while his son-in-law is one of the country's major anti-corruption figures, as he heads the country's tax police. If reform inadvertently empowers the wrong people, then the government also has the capacity to coopt potentially inconvenient new economic elites. We see this in Kazakhstan in the person of former Minister of Energy, Industry, and Trade Mukhtar Ablyazov, a young entrepreneur who managed to amass a fortune despite the lack of political contacts.

There are exceptions to the pattern of crony capitalism, as in Uganda, where the fact that the core of the business community is Asian while the political elite is African initially produced a degree of separation between economic and political power. But even here there are signs that crony capitalism is becoming a growing problem, as more Africans seize the economic opportunities provided by high positions in the government or the military, or by personal ties to those occupying such position. Uganda's intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular has opened the way for the formation of such political-economic networks through the trading of Congolese diamonds. Indeed, the common trend, particularly in countries emerging from some form of socialist control over the economy, is toward collusion rather than antagonism between economic and political elites. Although leaders of semi-authoritarian

countries are often suspicious of liberalization, precisely because they fear that it will cause them to lose control, in reality economic reform may reinforce the power allocation in semi-authoritarian countries rather than challenge it. Twenty years of private sector growth in Egypt have not altered significantly the character of the political regime.

It is clear from the above discussion that power in semi-authoritarian countries is not monolithic, but that there are no organized centers of power that challenge the control at the center of the system. Governments recognize the legitimacy of some political activities, the desirability of some power-sharing between the central and local governments, and the need for a private sector. Yet, they do not accept true political competition and they succeed in controlling the process so that their power is not really threatened.

## **Openness and Closure**

The existence of areas of openness in the society differentiates semi-authoritarian countries from fully authoritarian ones, while the persistence of areas of closure differentiates them from democratic ones. We shall explore the forms of openness and closure in semi-authoritarian countries in three major areas: political institutions, the economy and civil society

Political Institutions. In most countries the most obvious sign of openness is the adoption of a multi-party system and the holding of competitive elections. At the same time, this is also an area of closure, because there are many obstacles to the formation and strengthening of political parties, ranging from restrictive laws to the government's ability to limit their sources of financing. Above all, the playing field in semi-authoritarian countries is never level, and ultimately, power at the center is not open to competition.

Less obvious, but possibly more important in determining the degree of openness and closure of semi-authoritarian countries, are the relationships within the governing institutions and/or the dominant party, because it is at this level, away from public scrutiny and control, that the greatest areas of dynamism or, conversely, the greatest obstacles to change are often found. The example of China illustrates this point. If we were only to look at procedural indicators of democracy such as multi-party electoral competition, China could only be rated as an authoritarian country. But such a rating ignores the extent to which change is taking place and areas of openness are developing. Minxin Pei, a participant in the Carnegie study group, identified the following five indicators of openness in China: 1) the existence of institutional mechanisms for changing the executive and replacing second-tier government managers, indicating a new openness and contestation within the ruling party; 2) the emergence of a regime that is not monolithic, but is a coalition of political currents that have to renegotiate the political agreement constantly; 3) decentralized rather than centralized governance, which allows experimentation that can lead to further reform; 4) sustained economic growth, that disperses control over resources and develops a middle class; and 5) extensive engagement with the international community on cultural and political matters as well as economic ones. These particular indicators are based on the experience of China, and they would probably not be useful in assessing incipient openness in other countries. The list, nevertheless, is a useful reminder of the necessity of looking further afield than the formal political process in evaluating the degree of openness of a country.

The Economy. We have already mentioned that in semi-authoritarian countries the expected relationship between market reform and liberalization does not appear to be emerging. The reasons are complex and analysts are just beginning to understand why this is the case. A very important one is that hurried and corrupt privatization programs transferred control over major economic assets from government officials as state representatives to the same government officials as private entrepreneurs, but many other factors also contribute to the problem. The result is that we cannot take it for granted either that market liberalization always leads to free economic competition or that privatization always leads to the separation of economic from political elites. The linkage between economic liberalization and democratization is complex, and it is dangerous to assume that the former always encourages the latter.

The privatization of small businesses is usually less corrupt, and it can create genuine competition and openness—the prize is not large enough to attract the big players. But semi-authoritarian regimes can cripple even these businesses to some degree, in part because of the pervasive pattern of corruption, but also because of the layers of regulations which hamper the actions of private entrepreneurs and because small enterprises cannot compete with the dominant sector. Nevertheless small businesses still can give rise, over a period of time, to a middle class which is not dependent on the government for its livelihood. The consequences of this development are likely to become more significant over time. For example, the mentality of many people will change as they turn from public employees to small entrepreneurs; people will start looking to private efforts rather than to the government for the solution of many problems; and a thriving private sector will be able to contribute to the financing of independent political parties and NGOs of all types. In other words, even in countries where market reform and privatization have not altered suddenly and dramatically structures of power and government control, social and economic change with significant political consequences may emerge over time.

Civil Society. A lively civil society is regarded as a fundamental underpinning for democracy, as it provides the social capital on which democracy can be built and, more concretely, the avenues through which ordinary citizens can have an impact on government policies that goes beyond the choice of leaders at the polls. Furthermore, autonomous civil society organizations supposedly strengthen the impact of democratic political institutions.

Many semi-authoritarian countries appear to have healthy civil societies. While their governments usually impose many restrictions on openly political organizations, there is ample space within which a variety of civil society organizations can operate. Egypt, for example, has a rich array of organizations independent of the state, ranging from Islamic charities to modern professional associations. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan first experienced a flourishing of civic organizations in the period of political liberalization under former USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev, but new organizations have sprung up even in the somewhat less free period of independence. Many of these NGOs have relatively non-controversial agendas, such as refugee assistance in Azerbaijan, or ecology in Kazakhstan, but they nevertheless contribute to pluralism. The growth of NGOs of all types has been noticed in China.

Yet, in semi-authoritarian countries the contribution of civil society to openness are more limited than they appear. First, there are the very real and visible obstacles that governments place in the

way of civil society organizations, including restrictive registration laws and overt and covert pressures not to engage in some activities—in 1999, for example, Egypt enacted a restrictive new law on voluntary organizations that continues to make registration difficult and limits the range of activities they can undertake, just as the old law did. But even more fundamentally, organizations of civil society in many countries are a manifestation of a social pluralism that is not democratic in character, or they contribute to organizational pluralism but not to political pluralism.

The social pluralism of religion and ethnicity, for example, is reflected in the associational life of a country—there may be Moslem or Christian organizations, or ethnic associations. In Kazakhstan a number of prominent organizations have been formed along nationalist lines. It is often difficult even for democratic minded organizations to overcome the social barriers to operating across ethnic or religious barriers, or across gender lines. Thus civil society easily ends up by reflecting old social divisions. All countries provide examples of this, but Egypt, with its proliferation of Islamist groups, offers a particularly stark reminder of the extent to which the organizational life of a country is inevitably rooted in its social structures. The paradox here is that the same organizations that reflect ethnic or religious divisions may be working for goals that are associated with democracy—religious freedom, for example—while creating barriers to it by perpetuating old divisions.

In all semi-authoritarian countries, there are also some organizations that overcome these social legacies. Most of the donor-supported NGOs formed during the last decade to promote human rights, carry out civic education, or advocate a variety of policy reforms considered to be associated with democracy fall in this category. These are referred to by donors as civil society organizations, although they constitute but a small part of the organizations that exist in a country. The problem is that these groups often have shallower social roots than the less democratic ones.

Democracy assistance programs have put much emphasis on promoting non-governmental organizations, with results that are often dramatic if one looks only at the number of organizations that have developed. But this pluralism of organizations is often not truly political pluralism, in that many of these organizations do not represent distinct constituencies bringing different interests and demands into the decision-making process.

Semi-authoritarian countries, in conclusion, suggest that it is possible to combine a considerable amount of social, institutional and organizational pluralism with a very low degree of genuine political pluralism. If this assessment is correct, the challenge of transformation in semi-authoritarian regimes is the promotion of genuine political pluralism, rather than mere strengthening of institutions and organizations of civil society in general.

## **BEYOND THE BASICS: EQUILIBRIUM, DECAY, AND DYNAMIC CHANGE**

We argued earlier that semi-authoritarian regimes are not simply transitional ones half way between authoritarianism and democracy, but stable regimes with recognizable characteristics. This idea needs elaborating because no regime, even a stable one, is static and immutable, and semi-authoritarian ones are no exception. We differentiate among three types of semi-authoritarian regimes: regimes in equilibrium, which are quite stable, having established a

balance among competing forces; regimes in decay, where the authoritarian tendencies appear increasingly strong and the counterbalancing factors weak, suggesting the possibility that they will revert to full authoritarianism; and regimes that are experiencing dynamic change that may undermine the government's ability to maintain the status quo, forcing it into opening up new areas and thus providing the possibility of incremental progress toward democracy.

All three types of semi-authoritarian regimes could become democratic at some point—we are not assuming that democratic transformation is impossible anywhere. However, while semi-authoritarian regimes experiencing dynamic change may become democratic through incremental change, regimes that are in equilibrium would need an event causing a sharp break with the present situation before such change can take place. Decaying regimes are probably those least likely to democratize.

Equilibrium - The semi-authoritarianism of equilibrium is the purest form, a stable condition that has already persisted over a long period and/or is likely to continue in the absence of major events provoking a break. Semi-authoritarian regimes in equilibrium have proven that they can handle ordinary challenges, from opposition parties to the structural change brought about by a steady period of economic growth, without a major modification in the structure of power. The two countries discussed by the study group that represented more clearly the semi-authoritarianism of stagnation were Egypt and Indonesia before the fall of Suharto.

The stable semi-authoritarianism of Egypt is well illustrated by a two-year attempt by organizations of civil society to get the government to liberalize the law on the registration of voluntary associations. A coalition of NGOs formed for the purpose; a new law was drafted and redrafted through a broad consultative process; the draft law was presented to a seemingly accepting government. When the new law was promulgated in early 1999, however, it did not follow the NGOs' draft, but it was essentially a new version of the old law. There was no confrontation between government and NGOs, and nobody tried to stop the consultative process; the government allowed the NGOs to talk, but it did not feel it had to listen. This episode is a metaphor for Egypt's semi-authoritarianism of equilibrium.

Indonesia, on the other hand, provides an example of how a major crisis can alter the equilibrium of a semi-authoritarian regime. The financial meltdown of 1997 and the dissatisfaction it created in the population were a challenge the regime could not handle without change. While the outcome of the turmoil was unclear at the time of this writing—election results did not make a change in the power structure of the country inevitable—in 1998 and 1999 the equilibrium that had allowed the system to maintain its stability for decades appeared at least temporarily broken.

An interesting feature of both countries was that political equilibrium, or stagnation, persisted even while the countries were experiencing rapid economic growth. Until 1998, Indonesia was one of the most dynamic emergent Asian economies; Egypt's growth was more modest, but the country had undergone far-reaching economic restructuring since the 1970s and healthy, very steady economic growth in recent years. Rapid economic growth per se does not necessarily break a semi-authoritarian regime. Indeed, what made it possible for the political equilibrium to be broken in Indonesia was not economic growth. Rather, it was a sudden economic crisis that

caused widespread economic hardship and eroded the legitimacy of a regime, whose major accomplishment had been economic growth.

Decay - Semi-authoritarianism of decay is found in countries that are stagnating economically and socially, and where the government as a result does not meet the constant challenge that would encourage it to maintain a degree of openness. This is the most discouraging form of semi-authoritarianism, because it is likely to regress toward full-fledged authoritarianism. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Zambia represent the semi-authoritarianism of decay in our sample. In these countries, the democratic stimulus was relatively weak from the beginning. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan were pushed toward a new political system not so much by internal pressure as by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Once the countries found themselves on their own, they had little choice but to introduce democratic or seemingly democratic institutions, because the international climate of the time virtually precluded other choices. In both countries, former communist party first secretaries were elected to the presidency in elections that were either uncontested or seriously flawed.

The transition in Zambia appeared initially much more promising and indeed a great deal of enthusiasm greeted it both in Zambia and among foreign observers. After years of declining living standards and muted discontent under the single party rule of Kenneth Kaunda, people appeared to have had enough. A broad movement joining churches of all denominations and labor unions developed, and it showed enough muscle to convince a reluctant Kaunda that he had no choice but to accept the challenge of multi-party elections and eventually the overwhelming electoral defeat. But popular mobilization was short-lived. Without a coherent program, the broad-based coalition fell apart after the elections and the general public returned to apathy. A combination of a disengaged general public, lack of opposition in parliament, scant commitment to democracy by President Frederick Chiba and the tradition of personal rule prevailing since independence caused the government to slide quickly toward semi-authoritarianism. The more liberal members of the coalition were pushed aside, and the small, discouraged opposition became ever more fragmented, with new parties forming and disbanding without acquiring a lasting base of support. With both the economic and political situation deteriorating, the question was no longer whether democratic consolidation would take place, but whether semi-authoritarianism was simply a short interlude between the old authoritarian regime and the consolidation of a new equally authoritarian one.

In all three countries, there are residual areas of openness. There has been no formal return to the single party system, and opposition political parties as well as civil society organizations are still allowed to form. Independent media still operate despite the many restrictions, the frequent arrest of journalists and, above all, the ever present possibility of forced closure.

Despite the superficial similarity to stable semi-authoritarian regimes, these governments are in reality quite different, because the balance of power is slowly shifting in favor of the incumbent government. In a country like Egypt, there is an established political culture that makes it difficult for the government to close the existing areas of openness. There is real political pluralism, with political parties, NGOs and think tanks that have proven their capacity to get the necessary political and financial support to continue operating. There are independent media and a rich intellectual life, although there is also a regime that has been able to prevent real

competition for eighteen years. But in the case of semi-authoritarian countries in state of decay, the future is less predictable. There is no established political culture that precludes complete closure, and pluralism is fragile, with political parties forming and folding all the time, and organizations of civil society heavily dependent on outside donors and still poorly rooted in their own societies.

Economic conditions do not facilitate further political change either in these three countries. The private sector is weak and it may remain so. The natural resources sector does not lend itself to privatization and even less to the development of many medium and small business. Monopolies or oligopolies dominate in the oil industries of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, in the copper mines of Zambia and in the various metal industries of Kazakhstan. In the latter case there is a strong privatization program in place, but it seems doomed to lead to powerful oligarchies rather than the allegedly desired result of new entrepreneurs. In these countries, as elsewhere, the privatization process has not given rise to an independent business class but to one that has close connections to government officials. Corruption becomes the defining factor in these systems, further reducing the development of small and medium sized enterprises. This greatly diminishes the pluralism of the political system by reducing the autonomy of economic interest groups vis-à-vis the government.

As one of the study group participants put it, semi-authoritarianism is probably "as good as it gets" in decaying countries. In the absence of some major new factor affecting the balance of power, the semi-authoritarianism of decay is more likely to regress to authoritarianism than to evolve toward democracy.

Dynamic Change - The third group of semi-authoritarian countries is also characterized by lack of equilibrium and thus by the likelihood of further change. China, Iran and Uganda are the three countries discussed by the study group that fall in this category. In these countries pressure for change comes from both the political leadership and from autonomous forces operating outside the government and independent of it, although the government's role is probably the most important. China, Iran and Uganda have reformist governments rather than democratic ones. They have leaders who want to promote economic growth, free trade, better integration in the international community—a set of goals which they view as critical to the modernization of their respective countries. Such governments want to retain control of the process of change, thus are diffident of popular participation, but they also recognize that the modernization they envisage is bound to lead to political change as well.

From the point of view of democracy promoters, these are especially challenging countries, displaying promising traits but also susceptible to sudden reversals. China is the starkest example of this dynamic process. The country has experienced an extraordinary economic transformation encouraged by the leadership. This economic transformation has led to a new social dynamic and it has required far-reaching institutional reforms in all political spheres—the party, the structure of the leadership, the role of local governments, the legal system. The process has been promoted and controlled from the top. Popular demands for further change and more democracy have been repressed ruthlessly—see Tiananmen Square and, less dramatically the repression of democracy activists and dissidents. In both China as in Iran, the process of change is influenced by the continuing tension between conservatives and reformers within the leadership. President

Mohammad Khatami cannot openly defy the religious establishment and can only move slowly; at the same time, this slow process of reform may also serve the interests of the religious establishment, helping to defuse discontent and thus providing stability. In China as well, the tension between reformers and conservative elements may be the reason why the government has succeeded in carrying out far-reaching reforms without losing control. In Uganda, a small country with an African tradition of personal rule, the process of change is more linear, since it is driven by a president who does not face strong opposition.

What we have dubbed the semi-authoritarianism of dynamic change is the most encouraging form of semi-authoritarianism, not because countries in this category are more democratic at present—if anything, they are less democratic than many semi-authoritarian countries in equilibrium—but because their governments are likely to fail in their goal of both promoting the rapid modernization of their countries and yet maintain full political control. These countries thus may become more democratic not because their leadership wants that outcome, but because it may be unable to prevent it. The government's reforms, no matter how cautious, may in the end put the country on the proverbial slippery slope of uncontrolled change. The final outcome for these semi-authoritarian regimes characterized by dynamic change remains unpredictable. But as long as the governments' commitment to modernization remains strong, a complete political closure does not seem likely.

### **REFINING THE ANALYSIS FURTHER: STATE CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP**

As part of our effort to distinguish between the three principal types of semi-authoritarian regimes we came to appreciate the importance of two additional factors that are often neglected in discussions of democratic transitions, namely state capacity and political leadership. Both of these play a critical role in explaining the fragility or durability of semi-authoritarian regimes. State capacity is usually neglected because discussions of democratization take the existence of a sufficiently well-developed, institutionalized state for granted. Leadership, on the other hand, is often neglected because attempts to explain political change on the basis simply of the personal bias and decisions of individuals appears a very simplistic, unsatisfactory approach when compared to more sophisticated explanations based on structural and institutional factors.

The issue of political leadership cannot be ignored, because structural explanations by themselves cannot provide the whole answer. Structural factors create predisposition toward certain outcomes, make possible some choices and preclude others. But it is very rare, and perhaps impossible, to find situations in which structural factors preclude all but one choice. Good leaders, furthermore, have the ability to create new political alternatives. The pressures that existed in Egypt at the time of Nasser's death made it difficult for the system that he developed to continue without change, but did not dictate Sadat's choices. China did not have to choose economic reform—it could have continued inflicting on its citizens even more hardship. In these crucial choices, leadership plays an important part. Any analysis of semi-authoritarian regimes thus needs to look at leadership issues as seriously as at structural characteristics.

The issue of state capacity also deserves a fuller discussion. State capacity cannot be taken for granted in the less developed parts of the world, where non-democratic countries are located. The state must be capable of providing basic services to its citizens and able to stimulate a sense of

political loyalty. State capacity has a significant impact on the development of democracy, and the relative incapacity of the state creates strong incentives for regimes to become or remain semi-authoritarian.

Democratic countries require a much greater degree of state capacity than do authoritarian ones, because democratic governments need to be accepted by their citizens, thus must allocate scarce public goods in ways that are acceptable to them. This requires good administration, but also the empowering of the population to play a greater role in deciding how public goods are to be distributed. Authoritarian governments, on the other hand, allocate resources without consulting their citizens, and crack down on dissent. Thus, they require above all capacity in the security apparatus. Semi-authoritarian regimes fall somewhere between the two extremes, relying on state-supervised or state managed forms of participation to try and buy greater legitimacy. The semi-authoritarian states may in fact lack the state capacity to become fully functioning democracies.

All democratic institutions require greater capacity than do their counterparts in authoritarian states. A democratic, active parliament requires members who can obtain information independently of the executive and have the ability to process it—this means they require facilities and staff; a rubber stamp parliament only needs party discipline. An independent, honest judiciary needs well trained judges, rather than judges willing to do the bidding of the political authorities in major cases and to take bribes to settle minor ones.

The issue of capacity affects not just major institutions like parliaments and judiciaries, but all institutions at all levels. Effective decentralization is often stymied by the lack of qualified personnel at the local level, particularly in countries with low educational standards. It is difficult to train a police force that abides by the law and follows strict procedural rules when starting with barely literate recruits steeped in a culture of authoritarianism. The enforcement of libel laws to check the irresponsibility of mass media is a much more complex process than ordering the closure of a newspaper or the arrest of its editor. The greater capacity required by democratic governments may be at least one of the reasons why democracies have been found not to thrive in the least developed countries, which have low income, low educational standards, and in general low capacity in all fields.

The issue of capacity may affect the evolution of semi-authoritarian countries. Semi-authoritarianism is a difficult balancing act. Like authoritarian governments, semi-authoritarian ones see control as an essential requirement. The government's hold cannot be allowed to be challenged to the point where it is called into question. But the degree of openness that exists in such semi-authoritarian countries makes it more difficult to maintain control through repression alone, thus requires a greater degree of state capacity both to deliver tangible benefits to the citizens and to manipulate institutions.

Semi-authoritarian states vary widely as to their capacity to assert control.

Stable semi-authoritarian countries—those that are stagnating from the point of view of political change—have the proven capacity to balance control and participation successfully. Semi-authoritarian regimes in state of decay fear participation but also have scant control. For example,

Azerbaijan has already seen two presidents ousted from power, and there have been two attempts against the current incumbent. Semi-authoritarian countries characterized by dynamic change have much greater capacity, but also meet ever changing challenges. Even stable semi-authoritarian countries become very vulnerable when sudden economic changes affect their capacity to deliver the public goods to which the population is accustomed. In Indonesia, for example, the semi-authoritarian regime lost control in the wake of a financial crisis that impaired its capacity to deliver the economic growth the population expected.

Destabilization of a semi-authoritarian regime offers a window of opportunity for change. However, change can lead not only to greater liberalism but also to greater repression. It is possible that destabilization is a positive factor for democracy when it only affects the regime, but that it is a negative factor when it also affects the capacity of the state. The economic crisis in Indonesia affected the position of President Suharto, and in that sense it enhanced the possibility of democratic transformation. But it may also have eroded state capacity, and that may work against democracy in the coming years. In Kazakhstan, the failure of economic growth to keep pace with predictions is already having a negative impact on the development of democracy. The country's poor economic performance seems to be demonstrating the weakness and incapacity of the Kazakh state, leading President Nazarbayev to feel that he must accumulate more personal power to compensate. The issue of the impact of state capacity on democratization deserves much more systematic research.

### **Beyond Analysis: Semi-Authoritarian Regimes and Democracy Promotion**

As the wave of democratization of the 1990s recedes, it is leaving behind many democratic states but also many semi-authoritarian regimes. Today's formal and informal ground rules for full participation in the international community make it less likely that most countries where democratization has not succeeded will revert to crude forms of authoritarianism, although this will undoubtedly happen in some cases. Promoting democracy will increasingly mean seeking to encourage the transformation of semi-authoritarian regimes, but the programs currently used are not likely to have much impact. The issue of how this can be done will be discussed in the next phase of the Carnegie project. Our comments here are limited to explaining why we think that present democracy promotion programs are unlikely to be effective in semi-authoritarian countries and to outlining questions that need to be answered before a new approach can be devised.

First, semi-authoritarian regimes have already demonstrated their capacity to allow a degree of openness of their political systems while retaining their power largely intact. Thus, they are impervious to the type of small incremental changes donors usually promote in consolidating democracies. It is difficult to believe that semi-authoritarian regimes will not be able to absorb and neutralize the impact of more media training or funding of NGOs, for example.

Second, democracy promotion programs assume that countries are in one of the three stages of a democratization process—they are in the stage of either liberalization, or democratic transition, or consolidation. But semi-authoritarian countries cannot be fitted meaningfully in this scheme. Take liberalization and democratic transition, for example: none of the countries discussed by the study group experienced the two in the expected sequence and with the expected results. Some of

them moved to the transitional elections without a real process of liberalization: instead, a sudden shock weakened the old regime, leading to elections even in the absence of either widespread acceptance of democratic values or of the existence of strong competing political parties capable of checking each other's power. Thus elections simply brought to power a new elite not different from the old one, as in Zambia, or restored the old elite, as in Kazakhstan or Azerbaijan. China, on the other hand experienced a protracted period of political and economic change that altered the structure of power considerably, but it did not liberalize-- it has not broadened the area within which individuals can exercise formal political and civil rights. Uganda has liberalized in some areas—it has a remarkably free press, for example—but this has not led to a democratic transition. Egypt has experienced various periods of liberalization in its history, going as far back as the 1920s, and even had a formal democratic transition, but political space remains narrow. Semi-authoritarian countries, thus, can have transition without liberalization or liberalization without transition. Or take democratic consolidation: even the semi-authoritarian regimes discussed by the study group that underwent a formal transition are not truly in a consolidation phase because power is not generated by the election process and cannot be reallocated by it.

Third, democracy promotion programs do not address the fundamental problem of semi-authoritarian countries, that of how power is allocated and generated. Neither programs that target government institutions nor those that focus on organizations of civil society get to the heart of the problem. Programs that target government institutions assume that legislatures and judiciaries have the power to play their proper role in a democratic system but still lack the know-how to perform their role well. Elected parliaments, it is assumed, could make laws independently of the wishes of the executive if they had the capacity to draft their own bills or to evaluate those introduced by the executive; donors can solve the problem by training parliamentary staff or even members of parliament, or by installing information retrieval systems. Judiciaries could act independently and honestly if judges had better access to country's body of laws. Projects targeting civil society assume that the major obstacle to citizen influence on public policy is lack of organization and lobbying capacity. Thus civil society assistance funds civic education programs that seek to teach the general public about the functioning of democracy and about their rights and duties in a democratic system. It also promotes the formation and the training of non-governmental organizations that advocate human rights, democracy, women's rights, and lobby parliaments and other government agencies on behalf of such causes.

A major problem with this approach is that in semi-authoritarian regimes power does not reside in the institutions. This means that training cannot have the intended effect. A member of parliament who owes his position to the decision of the party hierarchy to put him high up on the party list is going to respond to the demands of the party hierarchy and not to those of the constituents no matter how much training he receives. Under such conditions, the lack of independence of a parliament is not the result of ignorance about what a good MP should do, or by lack of information about the matters being legislated. Rather, it is the result of the power of the party hierarchy to reward and punish. Training and capacity building do not affect such structure.

The issue of where power resides is also important for civil society assistance. Organizations that are effective in lobbying a parliament that has the power to make laws have no impact at all in a

situation in which power is held tightly by the leadership of a party or by a political mafia. This does not mean that citizens cannot do anything under such conditions—on the contrary, they can have a dramatic impact, but not by lobbying a powerless parliament. Indonesia offers a telling example here: it was the Indonesian civil society—citizens organized to demand their rights—that convinced President Suharto to resign; they did so, however, not by lobbying institutions, but by taking their demands to the streets and even resorting to violence. In other words, the organizations of civil society that are effective in a semi-authoritarian political systems are not necessarily the same ones that are effective in a democracy.

Promoting democracy in semi-authoritarian countries thus does not mean strengthening institutions through training and restructuring, but helping break down the existing mechanisms for allocating and exercising power. The extent to which outsiders, through their assistance, can play a positive role in helping bring about such redistribution of power is open to question. The answer probably varies from country to country, depending on the political situation, the degree of the government's dependency on donors, and the donors' willingness to do more than pay lip service to the virtues of democracy.

For this reason, we will not try to prescribe here an overall approach to democracy promotion in semi-authoritarian countries, because we do not believe that a general approach is viable. Rather, we will outline questions that need to be answered about a semi-authoritarian country if we hope to devise programs that can help its democratic transformation. We believe that the answer to these questions will provide guidelines about what can be done in a specific country .

## **A Research Agenda**

Semi-authoritarian regimes are certainly not the worst that can afflict a country, but they have many shortcomings. We thus believe that there is no reason why the United States should give up the long term goal of bringing about more change in these countries. We have no illusions that devising effective programs will be an easy task. Fortunately, it is clear what the starting point of such endeavor should be: to develop a better understanding of any regime whose transformation we want to promote. In particular, we suggest the need to address six sets of questions about fundamental issues affecting semi-authoritarian countries, which taken cumulatively will help us formulate strategies for change:

### I. We need to understand the political dynamics in the country

- What are sources of political power in the country? The possibilities are endless here: control over a party apparatus, control over the military or a liberation movement, a strong security apparatus, tradition, control over the major source of revenue such as oil, patronage, etc.
- Have elections, if held, altered at all the way in which power is generated and allocated? Have they increased or decreased the importance of the military, or of ethnic or religious elites? Have they created new centers of power or revealed the importance of new political forces?
- How concentrated is power? All semi-authoritarian regimes have powerful executives, but they differ in other important ways. Parliaments can be almost completely powerless,

or they can have some life in them as well as a potential to become more assertive. Judiciaries can be totally intimidated or have a degree of independence. Regimes vary also in terms of the concentration of power in the executive—some come close to being strongman regimes, others have more complex power structures. We need information on all these issues.

- Where is power located? Is all power exercised at the center, or is there a degree of decentralization? There may be greater democratization at the local or regional level, even if this is not true at the central level.
- Is the distribution of power in the country a long standing one? Does it appear to be secure? In other words, is a particular regime stable, decaying, or in a situation of dynamic change?
- Is power becoming more institutionalized?

## II. We must understand the nature of the leaders we have to work with

- Is the leadership united or divided?
- Does it have a reformist agenda or is it mostly concerned with holding on to power?
- Is a new leadership emerging not only in the government, but in opposition groups, civil society, or the private sector?

## III. We have to figure out whether we are working with a popular government or an unpopular one, and be sensitive to the fact that our efforts to promote democracy might put us in conflict with key groups in society.

- How much legitimacy does the regime have in the eyes of various groups? What is the legitimacy based on?
- What is the mixture of legitimacy and coercion that keeps the regime in power?

## IV. We must ascertain whether we are dealing with a political system that is static or one that has the possibility of being changed from within.

- Is the basis of the regime's legitimacy being eroded by the passing of time (e.g. the memory of the bad old times is fading), by lack of economic progress, by military prowess, or by the ill-health and old age of the incumbent leader?
- Has economic reform created new power centers or has it strengthened the old ones?:
- Are new elites emerging, for example through education or urbanization, and if so does the new generation have different values and outlook?
- Are nationalism or religion spreading or losing force?

## V. We must identify whether or not there are alternative political groups that can be supported, and whether they are likely to prove easy to work with.

- Is there evidence of open dissatisfaction? If so, what kind of organizations are forming? Are they elitist groups or mass based ones?
- Can these organizations expand easily?

VI. We must be sensitive to the existing arenas of political competition. How much space is there for action by independent groups ?

- Does the opposition see the possibility of having an impact by means other than violence?
- Is political space perceived to be growing or shrinking?