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Climate Change and Democratisation

A Complex Relationship

A Policy Paper by Peter Burnell

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Introductory remarks

Democracy and ecology constitute – among gender politics – the cornerstones of the work of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. Moreover, we consider ecology and democracy to be inseparable. But the interlinkages are not in every case obvious not to mention well explored. The relationship between democracy and climate change is case in point. We can assume that the political significance of climate change concerns democratization. But many pressing questions remain and this paper is meant a first step to bridge the gap.

The paper examines whether democracy at the country level and global climate change matter for another. It raises the question of how to support democracy's advance in the face of multiple challenges that include the adverse effects of global warming and extreme weather events merits much more attention than it has received so far.

With this paper the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung would like to initiate a debate within the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation as well as among selected policy makers, practitioners and scientists on the complex relationship between climate change and democratisation.

Comments and suggestions are highly welcome and should be send to Jost Pachaly (pachaly@boell.de). The paper will be reviewed in the light of the feedback. Following the review process it is planned to be published.

Introduction

The science of climate change and human responsibility, the economics of addressing the problem and technical solutions, and the aspect of "climate justice" in regard to North-South (developed-developing world) relations in particular have all received substantial exposure in public debate and specialized technical, policy, and academic literatures. We also hear about the imperative to "climate-proof" society, the poor, and even the state. Confident answers to big questions about climate change problems are widely circulated, for example the claim that climate mitigation requires nothing less than a dramatic change in economic lifestyles and aspirations, or the idea that better governance is essential to meet the pressing needs of climate adaptation in poor countries. Occasionally, we are also told the "right political framework" is needed, usually meaning, on the international level, an improvement on the Kyoto Protocol and, at the national level, the right mix of regulatory policies and other legislation for moving toward a low-carbon future.

A surprising omission is the balanced inquiry into what climate change and its effects mean for democratization, and what democratization could mean for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation. This paper draws attention to the little explored relationships between climate change and democratization. It is framed by four key questions of immense importance:

- Do global warming and its effects make democratic transition and consolidation easier or more difficult?
- Does democratization make it easier or more difficult for countries, especially in the developing world, to engage with climate change mitigation, compared to countries with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian political regimes?
- Does democratization mean that climate change adaptation, especially when it is intended to protect the most vulnerable social groups, becomes more likely?
- Can adaptation to climate change and the means to secure people from its harmful effects help countries that want to democratize, or will it get in the way of democratic reform and boost other forms of rule instead?

The questions look simple, but arriving at conclusive answers and establishing the right reasons for them is not. In order to get closer to some answers and their grounds, it is necessary to lay out the building blocks first. To do this the opening chapter (chapter 1) gives an account of two parallel trends in recent years: climate change and democratization. The paper then explores what climate change means for politics at the level of the national state (chapter 2), before investigating what democratization means for climate change (chapter 3) and summarizing the puzzles that emerge from exploring connections between the two (chapter 4). Chapter 5 cites some policy implications for international actors, especially their efforts to spread democracy worldwide.

A brief summary of answers to the four key questions that frame this paper can be found at the start of chapter 6. This chapter then goes on to raise further issues where more joined-up thinking by international actors involved in promoting democracy, development, and climate action could be beneficial, and where a better

understanding of politics *inside* countries is needed if negotiations *between* countries are to produce a viable, new international climate change regime. A coda (chapter 7) concludes by pleading for a better informed and more globally inclusive debate about the national as well as international politics of responding to climate change.

Throughout the paper there is an assumption that both democracy and environmental sustainability are regarded by most, if not all people, as intrinsically desirable, whether considered individually and separately or together. But of course this assumption also recognizes that there is much disagreement among and also within countries over how democratization should be brought about and over how binding policy measures concerning climate issues should come about, especially over the role that foreign actors and international institutions can play or should play. A further assumption is that the benefits of greater economic progress are much needed in many countries, especially the world's poorest communities, and that – up until now – economic growth and development has been a driving force behind greenhouse gas emissions, although whether one type of political regime excels over others in producing growth and development still occasions much dispute.

In his recent *The Politics of Climate Change*, Anthony Giddens argues that it is at the national level in the *developed countries* that progress on climate policy must first be made.[1] Of course he is right. Indeed, even the Europeans, "who have gone further than any other political actor to address the problem," have so far "capped the costs they are willing to incur more than their emissions."[2] And yet people in the developing world, too, know that more determined initiatives by the developed world alone will not be enough. For example, South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs has said that if dangerous climate change is to be avoided, then "substantial deviations below business-as-usual" baselines for emissions are needed in the emerging economies, too.[3]

So if there is to be a global solution to the problems of global warming and climate change more generally, we need to understand the political capacity of the emerging economies – including emerging new democracies and China – to act on climate change. Appropriate initiatives are likely to be at least as challenging politically for these countries as are the steps to address global warming that the OECD democracies should have taken already but which in many cases have met political resistance at home. Of course those steps by rich countries include not only substantial reductions in their own carbon emissions, but also the funding of practical adaptation to climate change and its consequences in developing countries that are not responsible for the accumulated man-made stock of greenhouse gases already present the atmosphere – many of whom lack the resources to cope with its adverse environmental, social, and economic effects.

1 Democratization and climate change: a time for action

Urgent action is needed both to mitigate global warming and to protect vulnerable people against its harmful effects. Much emphasis has focused on what the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries can do and should do to meet the challenge. This is only right. They were responsible for the vast majority of CO_2 emissions in the past, their current emissions are very high, and they have the financial and technical means to address the issues both at home and abroad. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities is a foundational guideline for countries contemplating action on global warming.

However, as United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit in February 2009, it is time to move on from arguing over who caused global warming. All countries should now accept a common, shared responsibility for reducing the problem in the future.[4] Neither the technical capabilities nor the financial means to take appropriate action are lacking in the world as a whole, even in the difficult economic climate of 2009. Rather, as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2007/2008, Fighting Climate Change. Human Solidarity in a Divided World* said, crucial determinants of whether the requisite action is taken lie with political imagination and government leadership.[5] Politics is the art of the possible. On that basis, we need a firm grasp of what is politically possible inside nations, including in the developing world, in order to understand fully the international politics of cooperation for addressing climate change. Even if climate problems are said to be global problems that require nothing short of a *global* solution, it is important to know whether an increasing number of democracies in the world would make that global solution more likely to happen – comparable to the way in which some international relations theorists argue that the more democracies there are, then the greater the likelihood that the countries will live side by side in peace.

The climate change debate has seen a growing consensus that alongside the major OECD economies, China and a number of developing countries like India, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, and Mexico are coming closer to the heart of the mitigation challenge, too. In the words of *The Greenhouse Development Rights Framework*, which fully endorses the developing world's priority of ending poverty, "It is now necessary to secure significant cuts in emissions in the growing nations of the developing world."[6] Or as the UNDP report puts it, "The credibility of any multilateral agreement will hinge on the participation of major emitters in the developing world."[7] This probably means binding targets. Indeed, the report advised that in order to avoid dangerous climate change, rich nations' emissions must peak by 2015, with 30 percent cuts by 2020 and at least 80 percent cuts by 2050, *and* major emitters in the developing world should peak by 2020, at around 80 percent above current levels, followed by cuts of 20 percent against 1990 levels by 2050.[8] However, new scientific data on future climate change is appearing all the time – see in particular the International Alliance of Research Universities' synthesis report

Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions (March 2009). Much of the new data appears to suggest that the problems have been underestimated: The imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize their harmful effects is greater and more urgent than previously appreciated.

Global warming has become a major trend in recent times. Another important development on the world stage has been a unique tide of democratization, beginning in southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and accelerating around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Many more countries, not just in Central and Eastern Europe but also in Asia and Africa, began to undergo political change. Some years on the democratic advance now seems to have come to a halt. Political commentators even talk about the possibility of a reverse wave, which might erode some of the democratic gains.

Debates about climate change and democratization have followed two parallel but largely separate paths. The former has been dominated by the growing body of scientific evidence and by consideration of the *international* politics of climate agreements, which refers to how responsibility for addressing global warming should be distributed among nations. For example the principle of common but differentiated responsibility dates from as far back as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992). So far, China, India, and other emerging economies have not been required to agree on binding targets to cut emissions, unlike OECD countries and transition economies, who agreed to reduce their carbon emissions mainly below 1990 levels in the Kyoto Protocol.

As the time for agreeing on a successor to Kyoto comes close, there is both a greater scientific consensus on global warming and its man-made causes *and*, for the first time, signs of the United States taking a constructive lead. While a US policy turnaround from the administration of President George W. Bush is hugely important, it tells us nothing about the political ability and the governance capability of other countries, especially in the developing world, to move forward on climate mitigation (emission reductions) and adaptation (coping with climate change and its consequences, through strategies ranging from risk-reduction to post-disaster reconstruction).

There are many arguments about whether the developed world should do more to cut carbon emissions *and* offer substantial technical and financial assistance to the developing world's own mitigation and adaptation. *However, these arguments do not go far enough.* Persuading governments to engage more closely in international cooperation is one thing. But the expectation that countries like China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa will play a fuller part in curbing a future increase in greenhouse gases must prompt questions about whether the political context inside these countries could permit this and the likely domestic political consequences, given the political priority to address poverty. Whether because democracy is valued for its own sake or because climate action is functionally connected in some way to it the importance of these questions is hard to avoid.

Combining development with climate change mitigation and adaptation *and with* the move toward democracy – or further consolidating and deepening democracy (understood in conventional liberal democratic terms) – presents an enormous

challenge, one that has recently become more demanding as a result of the global financial crisis and economic downturn, which will hurt some countries, especially in the developing world. Although there has been some talk of the need to "climate-proof" many things, including the economy, society, and the state, very little attention has been given to the issue of climate-proofing democracy or the prospects for democracy.

Of course, the political possibilities and the political consequences of mitigation are more significant for some countries than others. This is because only a small number of countries (namely China, the United States, Russia, India, and Japan, together with the European Union member states) easily account for the majority of all total energy-related CO_2 emissions. The addition of deforestation – a major contributor to the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – brings Indonesia and Brazil into the group as well. By virtue of their displacement, then, a fairly small number of large countries, together with Europe, can – and indeed must – account for the lion's share of all mitigation, and accordingly, it is they who merit the closest examination.

Nevertheless, other countries in the developing world are affected, too. Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, has been said to account for a mere 2 percent of global CO_2 emissions, and all low-income countries for just 7 percent of the total.[9] And yet, it is precisely the poorest countries, like those in Africa and small island states, whose well-being are threatened most by climate change. And it is the poorest people who are disproportionately vulnerable, partly because of their economic dependence on agriculture and a minimal capacity to adapt.[10] In post-colonial Africa, there is already a history of resource-based conflicts. These could well increase. In turn, all this can matter greatly for the political stability and also for the kinds of political systems these countries will be able to operate. So, whether from a climate mitigation perspective or from the perspective of climate adaptation/failure to adapt, there is a strong domestic as well as international political connection to climate change for a large number of very different states.

With the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 drawing near, and as a global agreement on arrangements to replace the Kyoto Protocol becomes ever more pressing, it is vital to know whether democratization helps or hinders an adequate response to climate change. It is no less important to know how global warming impacts on the prospects for enjoying democracy, especially in the developing world. The answers should matter to anyone concerned about global warming, to anyone concerned about the prospects for democracy and democratization, and to anyone concerned about the outlook for development in the developing world. Above all, they matter supremely to the people of the developing world, who ultimately will be the best judge and jury.

1.1 Democratization and climate change: the trends and connections

The last two decades have seen two major trends, one much applauded and the other a cause for grave concern. The first, a wave of democratization has helped more countries to become democracies than at any previous time in history. Democracy is a type of political regime with a distinct identity and, above all, a source of legitimacy

that is not to be confused with the term governance, even "good governance." Democracies enshrine the people's right to choose their government, which at minimum means elections and the possibility of political competition. In addition to free and fair elections, liberal democracy endorses a raft of civil rights and political liberties that respect equal rights for minorities, and at the same time uphold the rule of law. In what are sometimes called "electoral democracies," however, civil liberties tend to be incomplete and the rule of law less than perfect.

According to figures from Freedom House, a nongovernmental non-profit organization in Washington, D.C., whose data are widely used by political commentators, the number of democracies in 2008 stood at 119 and the number of what it calls free countries 89. The last accounted for 46 percent of the world's countries and 46 percent of humankind. Of course, this still leaves many countries that are not democracies, which Freedom House judged to be either partly free (62) or not free (42). The last category accounted for 34 percent of the world's population, half living in China. China's spectacular economic growth in the absence of liberal democracy is seen by some as a model for developing countries, especially those whose leaders reject Western ideas of liberal democracy or oppose attempts by foreigners to promote the spread of democracy. Nevertheless, the progress that democracy and liberal democracy have made around the world has been welcomed by many people.

Alongside democratization, the second major trend is global warming.

Of the countries that are not liberal democracies and, by virtue of their populations and emission trends, either are – or soon will be – responsible for considerable greenhouse gas emissions, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Iran stand out. In addition, there are some smaller non-democracies like Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Brunei whose carbon emissions are relatively and absolutely high when measured on a per capita basis. And some much poorer countries that do not have a consistent record of freedom and democracy also have relatively high per capita greenhouse emissions from land-use changes (deforestation) and agriculture, although their overall contribution to incremental global warming is still minor.

Of the remaining democratically organized countries that are undeniably relevant to climate change mitigation, India is, of course, a robust democracy of over 50 years standing. But several are fairly new to democracy or have regained democratic rule only fairly recently. South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico, for instance, now have a confirmed status as democracies and free countries. But there are so many uncertainties, like those affecting the economy – and, as in South Africa's case, the cumulative impact of HIV/AIDS – that the further consolidation and qualitative improvement of their democracy is hard to predict. Indonesia, where peat land and land clearance fires in the wake of logging place the country in the upper echelons of greenhouse gas emissions, occupies a similar position. This Moslem country's political transformation since the 1990s has been remarkable, but the long-term durability of its new political arrangements may yet be severely tested. Land-use changes are also responsible for the inclusion of some much smaller developing world democracies, for example Belize and Guyana, which feature very high on the lists of greenhouse gas emissions per capita.

1.1.1 Global warming and the developing world

A growing consensus on the urgency and magnitude of climate mitigation and on steps to protect vulnerable people from its harmful consequences means that China and some developing countries, like India, are absolutely central to both aspects of the climate challenge.

Developing countries are making growing contributions to all new greenhouse gas emissions and their contributions look set to increase. At present, agriculture and deforestation account for over one-quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, with 80 percent of these contributions coming from developing countries.[11] By 2030 some projections show that developing countries will account for just over half of all energy-related CO_2; factoring in emissions from deforestation in countries like Indonesia and Brazil brings that date forward, perhaps to as early as 2015.[12] Emissions by the developing world establishes a progressively larger lead ahead of the developed countries thereafter. At the same time, we should not forget that it is a small number of OECD countries that are responsible for a significant amount of the developing world's greenhouse gas emissions, in so far as the energy-intensive production of goods consumed by the former has been moving, and probably will continue to move, offshore to sites in the latter.

In contrast, without a doubt the people who are most at risk from suffering harmful effects from increasing climate instability, both in the future and right now, include the poorest people in developing countries. In numerous cases, their lives and livelihoods are badly affected. Even where national coping strategies for climate risk are put in place, these strategies themselves can have some perverse effects. In terms of mortalities, the poor and developing countries dominate the upper reaches of the *Global Climate Risk Index*, Vietnam and Haiti being good examples from among the non-democracies. The majority of countries at risk – including emerging democracies but barely-stable democracies like Honduras and Nicaragua – are extremely minor contributors to carbon emissions.[13] Bangladesh, where the livelihoods of 20 million out of the country's population of around 154 million are thought to be directly at risk from rising sea levels, is another example worth mentioning by virtue of the fact that it has taken steps to invest in new flood management schemes. The UNDP's *Fighting Climate Change. Human Solidarity in a Divided World* says that 98 percent of people affected by climate disasters live in developing countries; climate disaster is among the strongest engines driving increases in humanitarian aid. This UNDP report and *The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis* produced by the Global Humanitarian Forum in 2009 show just why stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions is essential to reducing world poverty and to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals – many of them already behind schedule in many least-developed counties. Climate change is called the greatest emerging humanitarian challenge of our time.[14]

So, not only are emission reductions by the developing world increasingly necessary in order to bring down global emissions, but that goal is vital to many of the world's poorest communities, too. The larger emerging economies, democracies included, are not immune to the effects either. For instance, around a third of Turkey's citizens – the highest figure in all 31 countries included in the Eurobarometer – say they have been directly exposed to the consequences of climate change. This helps explain why fewer Turks than in almost any of the other countries surveyed believe that the

seriousness of the threat has been exaggerated. Moreover, no less than 63 percent say they are prepared to pay more for green energy, a figure higher than in all but six (all of them much wealthier) European Union member states.[15]

What is more, a shared global commitment to reduce emissions growth may well be essential if OECD countries are to agree to, both, reduce their own emissions *and* accept responsibility for offsetting a share of the growth in emissions that will come from growth in the developing world. A global deal of this sort makes it more politically feasible for OECD governments to commit their own citizens to contribute to climate mitigation, as well as to adaptation, in the developing world. This reasoning is at the heart of the proposed *Greenhouse Development Rights Framework*, which in Page's words, offers "the most philosophically robust and policy-relevant vehicle for climate burden allocation."[16]

Raising energy-efficiency levels in countries like China and India that have inefficient coal-fired power stations (China is projected to account for around three-quarters of the total world increase in coal-related CO_2 emissions between 2006 and 2030)[17] is an ideal way forward, but these improvements have to be paid for through investment. There is no escaping the fact that countries face trade-offs between, on the one hand, pursing economic development – for example bringing commercial electricity to the 1.6 billion people mostly in South Asia (400 million in India alone) and sub-Saharan Africa who currently do not enjoy access – and, on the other hand, paying for climate mitigation and adaptation measures. In the words of the UNDP report, achieving a breakthrough toward a low-carbon transition "will impose substantial incremental costs on developing countries, many of which are struggling to finance current energy reforms."[18]

With respect to climate adaptation, developing countries differ in their requirements but the majority will need one or more of three kinds of international support: financial assistance, transfer of technical know-how, and investment in the capacity to monitor and respond to environmental threats. The more successful the global effort to reduce global warming becomes, the less the need to adapt and the lower the costs of adaptation. That, in turn, means the burden these costs place on future development will be smaller. Climate change mitigation makes good adaptation sense. Moreover, in the long run it promises benefits not only for human development but for democratization, too.

1.1.2 The hazards of democratization

Defined as a form of rule, or relationship, between the governors and the governed, a political regime is conceptually distinct both from the idea of a state and the particular government of the day.[19] In principle, a regime can be stable or unstable or somewhere in between; states can vary in terms of how strong or weak they are; and governments range widely in terms of their effectiveness as well as their popularity. How a particular regime, state, and government fare in practice may be linked in practice; for example, a bad government can weaken the state and be responsible for bringing down a regime.

Political scientists divide political regimes into different types and sub-types, and have attached a confusing assortment of labels. The most appropriate categorization for a country is not always obvious. But for the sake of convenience, three main types of regime can be identified: democracies; autocracies or authoritarian regimes; and semi-authoritarian regimes. As previously noted, democracies may be further divided into liberal democracies and what are sometimes called electoral democracies. The majority of the new and emerging democracies over the last two decades are, in fact, electoral democracies. They have yet to meet all the criteria for liberal democracy. Democratization, which has no obvious final point and is an unfinished journey everywhere, still has a long way to go.

Authoritarian regimes come in different forms: examples are absolute monarchy, theocracy, military rule, personal dictatorship, and de jure one-party states. Instances of the intermediate category, namely semi-authoritarian regimes (also sometimes called hybrids), may share some of the characteristics of electoral democracy. As with democracies, different combinations of stability, strength, and effectiveness are possible. For example, an unstable democracy but reasonably strong state and functioning government could exist alongside a country that has a fragile state or dysfunctional government but with a lengthy tradition of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rule.

While the borderlines between all the different categories are imprecise and remain open to discussion, one thing is for sure: Democratization is widely understood to mean movement away from the autocratic end of the spectrum and toward the values, principles, and practices of liberal democracy. It is a matter of changing political attitudes and changes in political behavior and not just in the institutional mechanisms or structure of government. But democratization does not have to reproduce in every detail the architecture that is associated with political systems in the West. Rather, democratization could aim at forms judged more appropriate to local circumstances and culture, for example forms that combine democratic ideas and Islamic beliefs. Even within the discourse on democracy that takes place inside the liberal democracies, there are ideas like social democracy that offer a distinct variant.

Even as democracy appears to be highly valued, there are some important caveats about democratization that are worth bearing in mind.

- Democratization is neither an inevitable nor irreversible process.
- Democratization is not bound to proceed smoothly.
- Democratization can provoke some unfortunate consequences along the way, for example increase in conflict, political violence even, between and within states, especially in the context of divided societies.
- Democratization on its own tells us nothing about the state's capacity to govern or the wisdom and ability of politicians to act decisively.
- Democratization does not guarantee good governance: Changes to government effectiveness and rule of law do not always move in step with changes in political participation by society and political competition.
- Democratization does not appear to *guarantee* a responsible approach to the environment generally or the climate specifically.

In fact, the story of democratization over recent years, while containing some inspiring examples, also supplies cases of:

- Profound resistance to democracy or backsliding and democratic decay in some countries that have experimented with reform. A number of new democracies have proven to be fragile, Thailand and Kenya, for example; recently-gained freedoms may be undermined and illiberal developments brought to the fore, in politics and in society: The advance of the Taliban in areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan is an example.
- Political instability as well as social chaos accompanying changes in the political regime. In some countries where democratic progress has started and then stopped, a semi-authoritarian or hybrid regime seems to stabilize and acquire a degree of permanence.
- Increase in violent internal conflict and even belligerence toward other countries, when politicians seeking votes at elections compete by mobilizing support on divisive grounds like ethnicity, religion, or sect, or on irresponsibly populist or nationalist lines. Former Yugoslavia is illustrative.
- Democratic reform or the circumstances in which reform takes place weakens executive power and the state's ability to deliver material goods, order, and physical security to society.
- Activities by some of the more prominent authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes to influence the maintenance (or, possibly, restoration) of like-minded regimes in their neighborhood. Russia, Iran, and Venezuela are often mentioned as examples; a model of authoritarian capitalist development associated with contemporary China is said to impress some developing-country ruling elites, even if China does not seek to intervene in their domestic politics.

Some democracies prove less stable than others, just as some authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes look more stable than do some emerging democracies. This fact could be highly significant if stability at that level is reckoned to be requisite or prerequisite for effective climate action. Taken *en masse*, democracies are generally reckoned to be more stable than non-democracies, in the long run. Some analysts believe this is connected with greater political legitimacy, which they believe comes from the idea of consent or rule by the people. However, this assumption may carry a certain Western or Enlightenment bias; and recent academic studies of societies where the regime is not liberal democratic show increasing willingness to recognize that other sources of legitimacy may exist or, at minimum, can lend valuable support to a regime and its power holders. Indeed, because democracy or its effects can stand in the way of urgent and effective action on climate change – owing to the political delays and unsatisfactory compromises that its decision-making procedures sometimes demand – proponents of alternative forms of rule might base the case around their potential to take speedy, bold, and decisive action, even if the measures are deeply unpopular.[20] But generally speaking, non-democracies are said to rely more heavily on their ability to perform – to deliver what the people value most – in order to secure whatever legitimacy they can garner in the eyes of their own people. While usually weighted toward material goods, personal security, and social order, this does not rule out the political role that religious beliefs, tradition, and the more symbolic goods founded in nationalism still play, even in today's world.

The reasons why some countries have had a satisfying experience with democratization whereas others have found it problematic are much discussed in the literature, but there is no final agreement. This is because democratization has so many different facets and may be influenced in complex ways by multiple factors operating on different timelines. A changing climate and its effects are potentially one source of influence whose impact in the future may increase. Even if the chances of environmental stress triggering conflict develop or become greatly magnified only in the presence of other adverse social, economic, or political circumstances, regime instability may be a strong candidate for such a category of "adverse" circumstance, and the same could even be true of regime transitions – especially those that have uncertain outcomes.

One theory that enjoys less support now than a few decades ago but which climate change brings back into play is the idea that developing countries face a *cruel choice*. The original thesis said a choice exists between doing what is necessary to achieve economic growth and development on the one side and building democracy on the other. The essence of the argument was that if a developing country is to secure economic progress, it must maintain a high rate of savings for the purpose of investment in physical capital. Welfare and consumption must be held back in the meantime. Unfortunately in a democracy, electoral competition drives politicians to promise improvements in living standards before the economy is ready. This diverts resources away from the investments that are needed. Short-term political rationality comes into conflict with long-term economic rationality. The popularity of this theoretical perspective meant that influential writers on development believed authoritarian rule was a better bet for development. They pointed to the strong performance of the so-called Asian tiger economies in the 1970s and 80s to bear them out.

However, because of changes in the ways we understand economics and its relationships to politics, the thinking just described lost support. Indeed, by the 1990s the view that democracy-building makes development less likely came to be replaced by the belief that development is perfectly possible in the presence of democratization, so long as the economic market is generally free. Of course, the impressive continual development of China and Vietnam also show that a rejection of liberal democracy does not necessarily prevent economic growth or reductions in absolute poverty.

Furthermore, the developing world may now be facing a *new cruel choice*. The challenge of building democracy against a background of material deprivation is demanding enough. But trying to persuade needy people to vote for economic sacrifices in the interest of reducing greenhouse gas emissions surely adds up to an unlikely – if not also an unreasonable – combination. A realistic view is that something has to give: democracy and development, or climate mitigation? China's leaders, for instance, appear to believe that economic growth rates of only around 3 or 4 percent would severely test political stability, even though China is a strong state. So perhaps it is easy to understand why the democratically elected rulers of a country like India would see policies that subordinate growth as tantamount to electoral suicide. If the political class were to collectively ignore the electorate's wishes, then democracy (rule by the people) can begin to look worthless; there is a chance that the system will be rejected or overthrown. Even greater turmoil from a government

decision to prioritize climate mitigation may be predicted in developing countries that are still undergoing regime change or political flux, or where democracy is not as well established as in India. Indeed, lying beyond the new cruel choice that sets climate mitigation against democratization and development is yet a further cruel choice that is specifically about choices on climate action: namely, whether to privilege future generations by putting efforts into climate mitigation or, instead, give priority to some members of the present generation and allocate the available scarce resources to measures for climate adaptation.

Democracies in the developed world face choices, too, but the opportunity costs simply do not compare. In principle, their economies can accommodate climate action more easily and without requiring anyone to become or stay very poor. But, of course, the politicians might still have to persuade voters that climate mitigation is the right thing to do. Nevertheless, social peace and the political system should be able to endure. Similarly, stable non-democracies that are affluent or where the regime enjoys a legitimacy that does not depend on its economic performance are also in a relatively advantageous position.

With the building blocks of climate change and democratization both now in place, it is time to explore more closely how climate change affects politics, in chapter 2, and what democratization could mean for global warming and its effects, in chapter 3.

2 What climate change means for politics

Global warming is already happening; further warming and increase in the ecological consequences over the coming decades cannot be avoided. In this sense, global warming may be viewed as the *independent variable.* This means we should examine what climate change means for politics, considered as the dependent variable, even while recognizing that the further we look into the future, the more the global climate will be affected by political events and decisions occurring now.

2.1 A changing climate affects politics

Beginning with the Western democracies, climate change is already producing a range of contrasting political effects.

On the one side is the impression that climate change is contributing to a loss of confidence by society in the ability of democracy to come up with solutions. This adds yet another layer to other criticisms deploring democracy's failure to prevent or adequately counter problems such as financial instability, economic recession, unemployment, a looming crisis for pensions, and international terrorism.[21]

On the other side, a well-known fact is that climate change and increased awareness of its man-made causes have fueled the formation and growth of nongovernmental actors interested in drawing society's attention to the global, national, and local consequences, and committed to shaping the public policy response. Voluntary associational life – the green movement in particular – has been energized, and civil society has been enriched. This contributes a valuable, and in some accounts defining, attribute of healthy liberal democracy. Newell, for instance, claims that civil society environmental groups have "succeeded in bringing a significant and often underestimated degree of democratic accountability to the global politics of climate change."[22] Inside some of the newer democracies, South Africa for instance, climate change and related environmental problems like water supply might already be propelling experimentation with participatory community solutions that enrich the country's approach to building democracy and the kind of democracy that it constructs.

In a comparison of the United States and China, Koehn makes the interesting observation that in both cases the principal impetus for bundling environmental with other big issues like public health and personal economic security that may influence policy toward emissions and lifestyle choices "is bubbling and spreading from the bottom up."[23] This development in society appears to transcend the obvious differences between the political systems of the two countries, even if it plays out in different ways.

Usually in non-democracies, civil society activists have a harder time trying to organize and put their message across. But as seems to be the case in China, environmental campaigners are being allowed some freedom to protest, so long as

they do not challenge – or because they are not trying to change – the fundamentals of the political system as a whole. Their grievances are focused on a specific area of policy or implementation, usually at the local level. This may be a mixed blessing from the perspective of democratization. As was shown in the communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, civil society can be the main actor driving wholesale political transformation. But in these examples, their horizons stretched well beyond grievances in just one policy sector. The chance that their experience will be repeated elsewhere depends, among other things, on whether the particular demands relating to environmental issues are addressed or, conversely, persistently ignored by the authorities.

Not all of climate change's political effects benefit democratization. The harm done can be immediate and *direct* or it may come about *indirectly* and over a longer term. On the second, the consequences for human development are a strong connecting factor. The main channels through which climate change can affect human development are well understood: declining agricultural production and growth in food insecurity look inevitable in some parts of Africa; increasing water stress, already found in regions like the Middle East and in Mexico City; increased risk of climate disasters, and rising sea levels affecting low-lying coastal regions and small island states; impoverishment of ecosystems and biodiversity; the direct effects on human health such as by increasing the geographical range of malaria. While the damage to human development is serious in its own right, it can have *malign* political effects as well.

- Where global warming and its effects generate economic scarcities, social discontent can be expected to increase and struggles for control over resources like water may become more intense, not just between societies but within countries. The predictions made by some are that public disorder, violent conflict, and even corruption and terrorism will all increase as a consequence. Where the economic burdens of climate change weaken state capacity or compete for public resources, already fragile or weak states may be pushed toward becoming failed or failing states. The concept of "conflict constellations" (causal linkages at the interface between the environment and society) captures the mechanisms of risk to social and thereby to political stability in weak and fragile states especially (see the 2007 report *Climate Change as a Security Risk*[24]). The maintenance of democracy or democratic progress becomes more difficult as a result.
- Where public order is undermined, the case for strong government is increased. While this objective may be compatible with maintaining liberal democratic institutions, authoritarian or semi-authoritarian tendencies could gain ground as well if the power-seekers elevate goals of preserving or restoring order over freedom. Hence Beeson believes that a growing environmental crisis is "likely to undermine the conditions under which democracy and political pluralism can flourish," especially where there is a previous history of such rule, as in East Asia and China in particular. Shearman and Smith make an even more sweeping prediction that liberal democracy everywhere is imperiled because of its inability to address damage done to economy and society by the environmental challenge.[25]
- The generally accepted view that good levels of social and economic development benefit stable democracy implies that where climate change

damages the prospects for economic development, the democratic outlook is undermined, too.[26] For example, sub-Saharan Africa is home to some new democracies, notwithstanding generally low levels of development, but it is also vulnerable to the threats that climate change will pose to agriculture and human security: A reversal of fragile democratic trends could be a real possibility.

- Climate change is reckoned to exacerbate existing social inequalities.[27] This adds further disadvantage to the poorest and most vulnerable groups: women, children, the elderly, sick, and the disabled. This, in turn, makes the core democratic value of political equality harder to achieve.
- If the effects of global warming lead to regional or wider conflicts between states over resources and increased numbers of "climate migrants" (the current estimate of 26 million "climate-displaced people" is projected to treble in the next 20 years[28]), the consequences inside states can be significant, even if they do not amount to violence. Public policy and governance there may come to be driven more by the concerns of national security framed in terms of energy security, economic security, food security, and territorial integrity, which in turn could create conflicts with a commitment to universal human rights and human development (or human security) in the world as a whole.
- Viewing climate change through the lens of "climate securitization" – how to secure reliable and inexpensive energy supplies and energy autonomy ("energy security") to meet the ends of national "economic security" and defense – may boost the claims of what has been called the "military-industrial complex" to public resources and political influence.[29] However, recommendations that urge OECD military budgets to be redirected toward "preventative security measures" – namely increased funding for international development cooperation initiatives in climate mitigation and adaptation[30] – would have contrasting effects and may be more neutral for liberal democracy.

Of course, the consequences of climate change are not, and will not be, identical everywhere. Indeed, some societies in the northern hemisphere will gain from global warming. An example from Canada is the extension of the growing season and frontier of agricultural production. Russia will acquire improved access to huge natural gas and oil reserves in Siberia and Arctic waters. Moreover, even where countries experience very similar economic and human development effects from climate change, the precise impact on politics is unlikely to be uniform. Some types of regime are more vulnerable to severe disturbance than others. But at least some of the political consequences of climate change and of how governments and people respond to it do look bad for democracy and democratization. And yet making no response at all to climate change is not a sensible option. That would simply make the problems worse, in most cases. So a slow down in global warming makes good sense for democratization. But in that case, the domestic political consequences of climate change *mitigation* should be investigated too. This is done in section 2.2.

2.2 Mitigating climate change has political consequences, too

Because just a handful of countries together with the European Union account for well over half of all greenhouse gases emissions, it is perhaps natural to assume that it is these countries that are most vulnerable to the domestic political fallout from taking steps to mitigate climate change. However, this would be a misleading assumption. The domestic political impact of steps to reduce emissions could be much greater in other countries that have weaker states or where the political infrastructure is less stable. And politics in countries that are the most at risk from the *effects* of climate change could be affected even more.

The extent and the ways in which societies try to reduce emissions and respond to the threats posed by global warming vary. This, too, means the political consequences will differ as well. The economic and financial merits of alternative policy responses have been much discussed elsewhere. They include emission pricing-strategies (taxation of carbon emissions; cap-and-trade); regulation of activities that produce emissions (which could be extended to tougher measures to stop actions that destroy the rainforests); research and investment in energy-efficient technologies, including carbon sequestration and renewable sources of energy.

The different implications that follow from these approaches for the balance between state and market and the role played by voluntary behavior have considerable political as well as economic significance, especially for a democracy where the power exercised by the state tends to be a sensitive issue. Libertarians and free market advocates oppose extensions to state power. They are also wary of delegating power to intergovernmental and supranational organizations. Even the deployment of social pressure as a way of encouraging people to reduce their carbon footprint – which is one way of making up for the shortcomings of both regulation and market incentives – could be judged an infringement on personal autonomy. In contrast, there are writers like Giddens who firmly believe that if such global public goods such as climate stabilization are ever to be realized, then increased action by states, individually and collectively, is unavoidable. Global warming itself has been called the greatest market failure the world has seen.[31] For Giddens, this means that a return in some form to long-term government planning, albeit without "heavy-handed" state intervention. Held, a prominent democratic theorist, concurs with this when he says there must be a "return to a form of planning" and an important role for governments in "editing choice, but not in a way that precludes it altogether."[32] The consequences for democracy and democratization are up for discussion.

A common denominator in all of the discussions is that mitigation entails costs, certainly an opportunity cost; somebody always pays, whether producers, consumers, or both. And in the case of public goods, the taxpayers usually have to pay, even if the state sub-contracts the practical arrangements for their delivery to non-state actors. Of course, this does not mean that no one gains. And the actual distribution of the burdens and the gains will matter a great deal. Interested parties will be sucked into making political representations as a consequence. The political voice of powerful lobbies of industrial interests that anticipate opportunities to make profit from climate change mitigation and adaptation by presenting themselves as part of the solution may be enhanced. The nuclear power lobby is but one example of what Helm calls the growing climate change "pork barrel."[33] In the United Kingdom, for example, public policy has shifted strongly toward building new nuclear power stations. At the same time, other well-resourced and politically well-connected industrial and commercial

lobbies seek to influence government against climate initiatives that would go against their interests, examples being large oil corporations and automobile manufacturers in North America and Europe. But what is the significance for democracy?

Liberal democracy undoubtedly thrives best in market-based economies. And industry, being a major source of all carbon emissions, is bound to try to influence public policy. In itself, this may be no bad thing. However, any set of circumstances (like, for example, climate change) that ends up privileging the political representation of some sectional or particularistic interests against others and, possibly, in contradiction to the general good may be unhealthy for democracy, especially if financial muscle, superior capacity for collective action, or a governmental predisposition to anticipate their interests are the major reasons. But, of course, opportunistic developments of this sort are not confined to democracies; and the larger they loom in the public policymaking process, the more inclined we might be to say either that democracy is absent or there are flaws in the institutional architecture.

Although in the West, the lobbying by special interests has featured in much of the day-to-day commentary on government responses to climate change, the politics of mitigation – which means the diverse political effects of the different ways of conceiving and responding to the challenge of mitigation – actually touches a much wider set of issues, including those that follow.

- Strategies for climate mitigation that require state intervention in the economy and society could increase public sector bureaucracy in ways that are difficult to bring under full democratic control. Proposals for taking decisions about the environment out of politics (or out of partisan political competition), or vesting trust in "experts" to reach the right decisions,[34] could also be seen to encroach on liberal democracy.
- Mitigation can potentially threaten democratic rule as well as constitute a political risk for governments precisely because the costs become salient immediately, whereas the main benefits only come later – the reverse order of what electorates deem most acceptable. Hence, it places a high premium on having leaders who possess not just the vision to look beyond the electoral cycle but strong powers of political persuasion.[35] This challenge looks greatest in the developing world. Although poor people are among the most vulnerable to climate change effects, poverty means they cannot be expected to elevate mitigation over development. In fact, prioritizing pro-poor development over mitigation can seem more logical as a strategy for adaptation in the long run, and easier to combine with democratic political representation.
- If the effect of efforts to reduce CO_2 reduces the value of oil and gas on world energy markets, then states that would otherwise expect significant foreign currency and tax revenues from supplying these commodities will face difficulties of economic adjustment and pressure on the public finances. "Rentier states" could be undermined; at minimum, governance will become less easy. The populous non-liberal democracies of Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Iran might be put at risk (without making democratization the most likely outcome), but so would countries that are struggling to strengthen state capacity and build democracy, like Nigeria and Iraq.[36]

- In international negotiations generally, states that are large, powerful, or wealthy usually have a strong voice; small countries and weak states tend to be norm-takers rather than norm-makers. Put differently, in some eyes a democratic deficit exists in international policymaking over how to respond to climate change. The United States and China both have enormous veto power in regard to the outcome of the Copenhagen meeting in December. The number of norm-takers greatly outnumber the norm-makers. In any case, international agreements that require governments to make concessions and, perhaps, accept supranational arrangements for the governance of climate action arguably impinge on national sovereignty and political self-determination. So even in democracies, the democratic inheritance that is bequeathed to societies in the future is impaired: internationally binding commitments to reduce emissions infringe upon the democratic entitlement of future generations to make their own choices. And yet: "Precious few attempts have been made to show that future people would prefer being born into a less democratic political environment than one shaped by the destructive environmental policies of their ancestors."[37]

As a tailpiece to the point above, research shows that democracies are more likely than non-democracies to reach international agreements that address global environmental issues. But the evidence also shows that democracies have difficulty honoring such agreements. The outcomes of cooperation on climate change are particularly disappointing.[38] The failure of OECD countries to fully deliver on promises of technology-transfer and assistance to developing countries – a pledge that was written into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 – is an example. And, in regard to greenhouse gas emissions, Helm judges that not only has Kyoto failed to make any appreciable difference (increased emissions from aviation alone offset the modest CO_2 reductions that can be attributed to the Kyoto Protocol) but "nor would it have done, had it been fully implemented and the targets delivered."[39] On that basis, the greater proclivity of democracies to reach international agreements compared to non-democracies looks somewhat hollow. Nevertheless, the domestic political consequences of the way international forces structure the global response to the challenge of mitigation should not be ignored, not least because they could have a bearing on how effective in practice that response turns out to be. Here, the *Greenhouse Development Rights Framework* offers a good illustration.

2.2.1 The Greenhouse Development Rights Framework as a political bargain

Even in the developing world, a growing number of people now enjoy standards of living well above the minimum. This makes the proposal of the *Greenhouse Development Rights Framework* particularly interesting, namely that developing world governments make citizens who are above a certain threshold of "development rights" assume an increasing proportion of the costs of curbing their own emissions. This attempt to incorporate what is sometimes called the problem of the "North in the South" into international burden-sharing on climate mitigation is presented as the political bargain that will persuade rich countries to take on the major share of the global costs of climate change mitigation and fund climate adaptation. Put differently,

it is offered as a solution to the perceived reluctance of developed world societies to commit fully to climate mitigation, so long as they believe there will be "free riders" in the developing world.

As countries develop economically, it is normal for the middle class to expand and increase its political influence vis-à-vis other social groups. Indeed, in non-democracies this group has sometimes been at the forefront of demands for government to become more accountable. However, any clause in a global bargain on climate mitigation that stands and falls by the willingness of this group to accept some responsibility for reducing emissions growth looks problematic, whether by paying higher prices for energy consumption, direct taxation, or in some other way.

A comparison with what happens to the distribution of incomes and wealth more generally in the most dynamic emerging economies suggests that the groups who benefit most from economic growth use their increasing political influence to transfer costs or burdens of adjustment to other social groups – including the most vulnerable, the least well-off. The political differences between democracy and non-democracy hardly seem to make a difference. The persistence of high levels of socioeconomic inequality in democracies like Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa and the increased inequality that has accompanied China's economic rise suggest a more significant influence is at work. The most likely candidate is the market economy and integration into global capitalism, whose reach is almost universal. One implication is that efforts of developing countries to reduce CO_2 emissions might have the effect of accentuating domestic social and economic inequalities; and if they impair national economic performance, then the main losers could be the poor, too. Trends like these undermine the cause of political equality that is central to the idea of democracy; once again, we see the possibility of unintended but adverse consequences for democratization. This is more than a theoretical issue for new or emerging democracies. The potential for "green taxes" to create social injustice and damage democracy in consequence of that has been alluded to in the context of established, developed, world democracies, too.[40]

Finally by way of concluding the political effects of approaches to mitigation, an important point to emphasize is that *in so far as mitigation slows the trajectory of global warming and reduces the costs of adaptation in the future, the long-run political impact of climate change overall will be lessened, too. In that sense, mitigation should contribute to improving the outlook for democracy and democratization in the longer term – so long as the present economic costs of mitigation do not bring pro-poor development to a grinding halt in the meantime.* However, whether political leaders will take the initiative on this is not something that can be predicted in isolation. And what that means is we should now turn to consider climate trends as the *dependent variable* in their relationship with democracy and democratization. Accordingly, chapter 3 inquiries into whether democratization can make an impact on climate change.

3 What democratization means for climate change

Does democratization aid political initiatives to address global warming? The answer, according to conventional wisdom, should be yes, so long as democratization leads to stable liberal democracy. This is because mainstream conventional wisdom maintains that democracies are more likely than non-democracies to care for the environment in general. The reasons for this are worth stating before going further to examine the contemporary evidence relating to climate change, which is less convincing.

3.1 Democracy as a condition for environmental sustainability?

The customary arguments for believing that liberal democracies will show a stronger commitment to environmental sustainability than non-democracies are straightforward.

First, democracies place a higher value on human life and the quality of life compared to non-democracies. Second, whereas autocrats tend to be preoccupied with preserving their own political tenure and maximizing personal gains, democratic procedures for representing the people force governments to take a broader (and, perhaps, longer-term) view – one that speaks to the long-term interests of society as a whole. Third, then, democratic institutions are responsive. They react to the people's concerns, which may include anxieties about the present and future environment. Fourth, democratic governments are accountable for success and failure in meeting goals, including any that concern the environment. Fifth, the political openness, diffusion of power, and ability of electors to change the government through the ballot box all help democratic rulers draw on a range of possible solutions when tackling problems like climate change. They can learn from and correct their policy mistakes. Over time, the quality of the decision-making process is superior even if democracy does mean rule by the people and the people are not always wise. Moreover, the liberties enshrined in liberal democracies also mean that citizens are free to experiment with solutions in their own private space. Sixth, the legitimacy that comes from the idea of rule by consent of the people means government should be able to count on society's cooperation when implementing tough decisions. In contrast, non-democracies may have to use more coercive means, which can be much less effective. Alternatively, non-democracies whose legitimacy in the eyes of the people derives from their present performance in delivering economic progress looks like a big disincentive from giving priority to long-term environmental sustainability.

A final reason revolves around the belief of some analysts that, in the long run, democracies outperform non-democracies in terms of providing economic development. By implication then, democracy may sooner reach the point in what has been called the environmental Kuznets curve. Beyond that point, the pursuit of further growth in incomes can be done in ways that are more environmentally sustainable. Moreover, wealth makes climate adaptation more feasible. Admittedly, the validity of the Kuznets curve itself is disputed among the experts, in particular its applicability to

CO_2 emissions. So the economic advantages claimed for democracy could be a double-edged sword.

Needless to say, not all of the above arguments and the different assumptions they make are mutually compatible. This means they cannot all be equally true. Disagreements over precisely what it is about democracy, and liberal democracy in particular, that serves environmental sustainability may be inevitable, given the complexity of the subject and the limits to understanding. One lesson is that more research could be given to the rather narrower purpose of establishing whether there is one (or more) principal distinguishing feature(s) of liberal democracy that can be singled out as most advantageous for climate action specifically, and its/their identity.[41]

Beyond that, there is a strand within green political thinking that says liberal democracy is inadequate to the task of providing sound solutions on most environmental matters, including climate change. Different political arrangements, such as those for a more deliberative form of democracy or that contain a large amount of direct participation by the community, are proposed instead.[42] Leggewie and Welzer, for instance, say: "It will only be possible to set plausible targets such as 'resource efficiency' if those affected participate and are involved in putting rational climate policies in practice."[43] So perhaps a different kind of democracy to the familiar model – one that is much less tried and tested in practice – might be needed. Even within the single category of liberal democracy, there is some evidence of variation in environmental performance, patterned in ways that make parliamentary democracies look greener than presidential democracies.[44]

However, it is certainly *not* the intention of this paper to dispute the *general* thesis that favorably compares the idea of liberal democracy with more authoritarian alternatives, but rather to note there are inconsistencies among the supporting arguments. Furthermore, the hard evidence relating specifically to greenhouse gas emissions up until now does paint an even more ambiguous picture (new climate policy initiatives announced in the run-up to Copenhagen in the United States, Japan, Europe, and elsewhere might cause this judgment to be revised later, but deeds will speak louder than words, and it is too soon to say what the initiatives announced late in 2009 and their consequences will mean in practice). A number of points can be made here.

First, the early empirical studies that compared the authoritarian Soviet Union and communist states in Europe with, for example, Scandinavian democracies certainly showed the latter to be more progressive in environmental terms. However, more recent studies of a larger number of cases suggest that we should take care to make some careful distinctions before arriving at generalizations.

The most relevant distinctions include distinguishing between environmental performance in general and climate-related emissions specifically; between the climate-related performance of different examples of liberal democracy – this means comparing not just presidential and parliamentary democracies but perhaps, more importantly, developed and developing world democracies; and between the performance of established democracies on the one side and different categories of alternative regimes on the other, so that any significant variations between stable and

unstable authoritarian regimes, between the different types or sub-types of authoritarian regime, and between regimes undergoing transition and hybrid regimes are all picked up in the analysis. Other distinctions already made but worth repeating are between what countries say when they sign international environmental agreements (which is what democracies seem to do better than non-democracies) and how they then behave and the actual results (where the contrast becomes less great). The concerns that people show about their own environment on the one side and the impact their activities have on the environment in other countries (such as by exporting highly polluting industries) on the other side is another area where differences may exist.

Big-picture evidence for climate action so far tells us the following:

- When the Kyoto Protocol came into force in 2005, not all developed country democracies had ratified it, and many of those that have are currently off track for reducing their domestic emissions. Where countries are on track, this seems for the most part not due to their mitigation initiatives but other reasons, such as economic ones[45] (in 2009 global CO_2 emissions look to fall by more than 2%, largely due to the recession in major economies).
- In the twenty-first century, leading liberal democracies as a whole continued to increase CO_2 emissions in total and on a per capita basis, notwithstanding modest reductions in a few European countries. Once “carbon leakage” due to the offshore sourcing of carbon-intensive goods consumed locally is taken into account, their record of mitigation to date looks even more woeful.
- Developing-country democracies such as India have consistently rejected binding targets to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.
- The lower per capita emissions of democracies compared to autocracies seems to be achieved in the early stages by changing the political regime away from autocracy and toward a hybrid or intermediate type; subsequent political developments toward liberal democracy appear to make little difference.[46]
- Some public opinion data appear to suggest there is a gap between opinion in developing countries and developed countries, and that it is the former that is more inclined to see climate change as a major concern, rather than there being a gap between what people in democracies and non-democracies think. Among Western democracies, people in the United States as a whole show less concern than Europeans, although marked variations exist across US states and within the European Union, too. (A Eurobarometer survey in 2008 found an average of 62% identifying climate change as one of the most serious problems: only world poverty was judged more serious. The figures ranged from very high numbers in Mediterranean countries like Cyprus (92%) and Greece (90%) all the way down to 45% in the Czech Republic and 50% in Poland.)[47]

3.1.1 Climate Change Performance Index

The Climate Change Performance Index, which measures both the level and the trends of energy-related CO_2 emissions (but not other greenhouse gas emissions) and includes expert local evaluations of the government’s climate policy,[48] offers yet

further evidence for saying that the findings from comparing democracies with non-democracies are ambiguous.

In the most recent Index (2009), the upper ranks of comparatively good performance are dominated by democracies, most of them long-established democracies, including India, but also some countries that restored democracy fairly recently, like Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Nevertheless, the two bodies responsible for producing the Index, namely Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Europe, decided that no countries – not even leading performers like Sweden, Germany, and France – deserve to occupy any of the top three places, which they left empty.

In contrast, countries that are not liberal democracies, such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, are clustered in the lower reaches of the Index. Similarly, among the group of 15 transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe, it is the non-democracies like Belarus and Kazakhstan that populate the bottom half. Nevertheless, the fact that Australia, the United States, and Canada also occupy low places in the overall list shows the pattern of evidence is very mixed. And in Europe's case, at least some credit for a relatively favorable performance stems from the policy lead that the European Union and the European Commission in particular have taken on climate change. Of course within the European Union, some member states have pushed for forceful action more strongly than others. Thus the contribution – whether it is positive or negative – made by what is widely called the European Union's "democratic deficit" merits close inspection. And although Japan, Canada, and President Putin's Russia also went ahead and ratified the Kyoto Protocol before 2005, these actors are said to have been "largely driven by prestige and reputational concerns" in international politics, not domestic electoral pressure. For example, for Japan it was a matter of national honor; Canada and the European Union were spurred on by US withdrawal from Kyoto; and in Russia's case, EU signals that it would support a Russian application to join the World Trade Organization were instrumental.[49] France's relatively low per capita emissions benefit from the very high proportion of electricity sourced from nuclear power – a solution whose green credentials are questionable. Other democracies, including India and Brazil as well as Britain, are currently planning to build new nuclear plants.

The Climate Change Performance Index 2009 awarded China a very favorable rating for *policy.* This could be highly significant, because policy will help determine future emission trends and levels. China compares favorably on policy not just with countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia, but also with developed world democracies such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, Italy, and the emerging economy of Brazil. Recent government announcements of planned emission cuts in Australia and Japan do not yet invalidate the overall comparison. In August 2009 Australia's parliament rejected government plans to introduce a carbon trading scheme, reflecting strong opposition by mining and other business interests. In September Japan's prime minister elect proposed increasing his predecessor's commitment of an 8 percent cut from 1990 levels by 2020 to a reduction of 25 percent, but now faces stiff opposition from industrial groups before the commitment can become law. In the United States, the progress of climate change legislation through Congress during President Obama's first year in office has yet to reach a conclusion.

That China is making vigorous efforts to reduce its emissions intensity (per unit of GDP) is widely acknowledged, even though the main policy-driver is probably to strengthen China's global economic competitiveness. In his February 2009 speech to Congress, President Obama said: "[I]t is China that has launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient." The country's 2008 White Paper, *China's Policies and Actions on Climate Change*, also set considerable store on public education to reduce carbon footprints – the kind of non-coercive approach that is normally thought to be a hallmark of free countries but which compares quite favorably with the public education initiatives of some countries in the West (where the Eurobarometer finds over 40% of people claiming not to be informed or very informed about climate change, and 31% claiming to have done nothing to reduce their carbon footprint).[50] A relatively very large component of the fiscal stimulus that China's government devised in response to the 2009 economic slowdown was earmarked for investment in renewable sources of energy. Apart from all of this, the country's long-standing population policy might be considered one of the greatest single contributions of any country to controlling the growth in carbon emissions, although attitudes in the liberal democracies, of course, disapprove of the policy and the way it has been implemented.

On balance, then, the general presumption that says democracies are more likely than non-democracies to act on climate mitigation is not completely refuted. There are strong theoretical grounds for believing that it should be true, but the available evidence does not provide unqualified support and certainly does not tell us that democracies are rising to the challenge in any way to the extent that climate science says is desirable. However, the evidence base will not stand still: Policy initiatives taken only very recently may start to make an impact on the Climate Change Performance Index in the coming years. More importantly, much of the comparison between countries (including between democracies and non-democracies) seems to depend on the particular choice of countries from within the categories of regime type and the choice of performance indicators and time period consulted. *The effect of factors – like a country's income level, economic growth rate, and industrial and technological development,[51] its carbon resource endowments and comparative advantage in international trade – in total appear to be more influential on climate performance than is the type of political regime, as well as being influences on what kind of regime a country has*. The quality of political leadership probably matters, too. But are political leaders espousing a strong commitment to act on climate change more likely to come forward and enjoy freedom of action in democracies?

3.1.2 Political leadership, institutions, and climate change performance

In any country, the quality of political leadership at the top and the institutional architecture should have some effect on the political capacity of government and its executive capability. These matter a great deal in the ability to take climate action. However, there may be no direct simple relationships.

Even inside China, the situation is not straightforward, notwithstanding the generally strong state and authoritarian rule. China's pursuit of "soft power" in its relations with the rest of the world, as well as a recognition that many Chinese citizens will be badly

affected by global warming, provide good reasons for the Communist Party leadership to want to slow the country's rising CO_2 emissions. The incentive to think ahead of a ruling party that believes it will have the responsibilities of public office for many years to come can be as great as for political parties in a competitive democratic system, whose tenure in office is uncertain. Even so, the Communist Party's ability to deliver the objectives already embodied in its 2008 *White Paper* has been hampered by a growing tendency in China "for the regulations and measures of sub-national governments to develop their own dynamics, speed and, partly, contents, thus deviating at least temporarily, and sometimes substantially, from national regulations."[52] Responsibility for policy implementation lies at the local level, with Environmental Planning Bureaus. But they are weak, in part because they depend on local government for support. Collusion between sub-national authorities and business interests that are indifferent to environmental consequences make matters worse. The policy pronouncements of the country's leaders are not a reliable guide to administrative practice and performance on the ground. So, although in principle the decentralization of environmental governance away from centralized command-and-control techniques may look attractive in the context of democratic ideas about devolution, local self-determination, and opportunity for diversity, in China's current situation there may be a case for arguing the very opposite.[53]

Indeed, analogous reasoning might be applied to some of the established democracies, too. In Canada, for example, the financial and economic interests of the province of Alberta, whose tar sands have vast reserves of "dirty oil," compete with federal government instincts to take climate mitigation more seriously. In the United States, too, there are states with a strong vested interest in producing electricity from coal even without "clean coal" technology. The burning of the rainforest in Indonesia is a developing-world example of where power has been devolved since democracy was introduced, but this may now be considered unhelpful from a global warming perspective.

In India inter-departmental rivalries and sluggish bureaucracy in the federal government are sometimes said to inhibit moves toward more effective action and central direction on environmental affairs, just as disagreements between ministries acting for different stakeholders have hampered government action in other democracies like federal Germany and non-federal Britain, too.[54] Across India there is significant variation in the take-up of wind power, which has been explained by reference to different relations between the authorities and the market at the state level. However, a more effective concentration of political power at the center does not necessarily offer a solution. The political reality is that election campaigns, especially in the large rural areas, often hinge on promises of electrification, which probably mean making use of the country's large, cheap coal reserves, at least until investment in solar power – a strategy outlined in the government's National Action Plan on Climate Change – becomes more competitive.

The point of these examples, then, is that getting the political and governance institutions right for climate mitigation may not be the same thing as getting the institutions right for liberal democracy (or for improving the quality of a democracy by distributing the governing power more widely): Tensions can exist between them. There may be few reliable general rules of thumb. For example, in contrast to cases mentioned above, the dispersion of institutional power that characterizes the United

States has allowed carbon-reduction initiatives to take place at the local, city, and state levels (California and New York, for instance), notwithstanding the federal government's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol. Similarly, in Australia, some states took climate initiatives even when the federal government was unenthusiastic. And yet some evidence from southern Africa has shown that by moving away from very top-down approaches to conservation during a process of democratic transformation, the consequences actually put environmental values at greater risk.[55] In coming to his conclusion that neither democratization nor democracy should be judged a panacea, Walker framed a question that is well worth repeating here: "The question should not be whether democracy is good for the environment but *how* and *when* democratization, in its varying forms, can change the structures governing decision-making and access and control over material resources in ways that favor social and environmental objectives."[56] Profoundly important in reference to climate mitigation, this is an insight that could be just as relevant to exploring how well societies adapt to climate change and its harmful effects – an issue addressed in the next section.

3.2 Democracies respond to climate effects: adaptation

In the long-run, climate mitigation is a sound response to the general problem of climate adaptation, but for many developing countries, adaptation is much more pressing in the short- and medium terms, and their own mitigation efforts will not change that reality. Can democratization help: Are democratic governments more likely than non-democracies to shelter citizens from the damage of climate change, and compensate or correct the harm done (disaster mitigation)? The grounds for believing that the answer is "yes" are very similar to those already given (in section 3.1) on democracy's commitment to environmental sustainability, but as before, there are qualifications.

In theory, the political liberties and civil rights that citizens enjoy in democracies render governments sensitive to expressed wants and felt needs, extending from the right to life that citizens have to their strong interest in the means to life. A famous illustration that flows from research done in South Asia several decades ago argues that democracies are less likely than non-democracies to permit great famines. This is because media freedoms make it hard to ignore a famine, and the electoral process gives rulers a political incentive to try to prevent extreme consequences, especially for the most vulnerable.[57] At the same time, the theory acknowledges that even in a democracy like India, sizeable pockets of malnutrition and undernourishment may be allowed to persist over time, and this constitutes a kind of famine by stealth.

Unlike the challenge of mitigating climate change, where many of the benefits from taking measures will come in the future but financial and economic costs have to be borne now, the returns from engaging in sound adaptation (and the political costs of not doing so) can be very tangible, even within the short lifespan of a democratically elected government. This appears to mean democracies, including those in the developing world, have a stronger incentive to engage in adaptation than in mitigation, by comparison with non-democracies. India's National Action Plan on Climate Change may be an example where it says government expenditure on adaptation is in excess of 2.6 percent of GDP. Moreover, the chances of people initiating their own adaptation strategies alongside the government's provision are

greater in "free countries" than elsewhere; the liberty of communities to take spontaneous, context-specific initiatives could make a significant difference at the local level, even in the absence of strong central government support.

However, although there are good reasons for saying progress toward democracy should serve the cause of climate adaptation and so should be supported for that very reason, this offers no certainty about the response, for several reasons.

First, there is the question of the overall financial and economic capacity and not just the political willingness to incur the costs of adapting to climate change and compensating citizens who suffer harmful effects. Obviously, developing countries are at a disadvantage here (they face a cruel choice between the adaptation needs of the present and the needs of future generations). By comparison, the OECD countries are likely to be less severely affected by global warming, precisely because their existing levels of prosperity insulate them against some of the effects, and furnish the means to adapt more easily. The disaster mitigation efforts tend to compare favorably in the wealthy democracies because of the resources they can mobilize. The issue, then, raises the larger consideration of whether democracy is more likely than non-democracy to bring about prosperity, by advancing development.

Here, the historical evidence suggests a strong correlation between democracies and high income levels. But the correlation has been progressively weakened over the last two decades by the very success of many developing-world countries with relatively low incomes in becoming more democratic. And quite aside from observations of income levels, political economists cannot agree on whether there is a connection between changes in income (economic growth) and type of political regime. The uncertainty is compounded by further ambivalence over the main direction of causality – crudely put, does democratization promote development or does development promote democratization. Thus, for example, a recent review by economists of the relevant literature concluded that "attempts to link economic performance to characteristics of the political system have not established clear findings"; whatever relationships do exist, they are poorly understood.[58] So, democratization is not a necessary condition for development, even though development will help ease climate adaptation, and it may not be a sufficient condition either.

Second, democracy is one thing, but good governance is something else. Good governance refers to the rule of law, secure property rights, and the ability to formulate sound public policy and then execute it efficiently and effectively, with minimal corruption. This may matter much more than democracy per se, both to the furtherance of development and to managing climate change. The relevant question then becomes whether progress toward democracy improves governance. Many of the international agencies for development cooperation claim to believe that it does; some of them now advance support for democratic reforms on the grounds that governance – and thereby the chances of economic aid being used well and the developmental performance that will ensue – will all improve in consequence.

However, although this reasoning furnishes grounds for democratization (and trying to assist democratic change) in the interests of better adaptation, once again the answer must be qualified. Evidence overall from the developing world about the

linkages between democratization and governance is mixed, and may be analyzed best by disaggregating ideas of governance into their different components, which do not necessarily all move in the same direction. For example corruption – which, although only one aspect, is often viewed as a major indicator of governance quality – has spiraled in some of the newer and emerging democracies, according to Transparency International, one of the most respected reporting bodies. The scores for perceived corruption are high in countries such as Nigeria, Indonesia, and Argentina. India and Brazil compare less favorably than China. Conversely, Singapore, which Freedom House rates only partly free, has always been regarded very highly for its governance. People's perceptions about government effectiveness in fighting corruption also vary, ranging from relatively favorable impressions in Singapore and Hong Kong as well as in democratic Ghana, to unfavorable perceptions in Japan and several Western democracies, along with Russia and Ukraine.[59] As democracy, "good governance," and strong executive capacity are not synonymous, then it is the impact that democratization has on those governance properties most relevant to managing adaptation that needs closer inspection – inspection that should be carried out at the country and sub-national levels.

Third, then, the process of trying to move from being a non-democracy toward democracy is potentially hazardous, as has been mentioned: An unsuccessful or troubled attempt to democratize can have damaging consequences for development *and* for the capacity to engage in climate adaptation, in the short- or even medium terms. The presence of other challenges like nation-building, state-building, economic transformation and, of course, climate instability will compound the problems. In fact, an unresolved debate exists over whether it is reasonable to expect societies to make progress in building democracy if the state is fragile or ineffective, or where the government's ability to deliver the goods and services that politicians promise during election campaigns is minimal. False promises that bring disappointment later will cause popular disaffection and alienation – a society's enthusiasm for democracy may then wane. In some places, then, state-building and efforts to increase government effectiveness, together with an emphasis on embedding the rule of law, might have to be given priority over trying to establish democracy – if sustained economic growth and more effective action on climate issues are to become possible later.

Fourth, the likelihood that rulers in stable non-democracies will have a political interest in climate adaptation should not be dismissed out of hand, notwithstanding Sen's early research on famines. If it really is true that non-democracies rely more for their legitimacy on delivering good performance than do democracies (whose legitimacy is intrinsic), then the political pressure on their rulers to protect and compensate climate change victims looks more compelling. In contrast to stable democracies, where voters can proceed to change the government as a way of expressing their discontent, the failure of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rulers to side with the people could bring down the entire regime. Just as in some countries where the weak response of the authorities to citizens needing help in a natural disaster like an earthquake has exposed the limitations of a regime that is not democratically accountable – and has even motivated societal demands for political change – so in China the Community Party leadership appears to have learned from past mistakes: Its prompt and high-level response to the massive Sichuan earthquake in 2008 attracted much praise.

A very different point, which concerns a different aspect of climate adaptation, is that autocracies are probably even more sensitive than democracies to the need to adapt the requirements of national defense to the physical threats that climate instability poses to their military capability, for reasons of both external and internal security.

In sum, while in general democracies may be committed to protecting the people from undue harm, this does not mean they all have the ability to do so. Nor does it mean that all non-democracies must compare unfavorably. Almost regardless of the political regime and especially where the state is weak, establishing the managerial and organizational infrastructure and the economic and financial means to counter the damaging effects of climate instability could mean that experimenting with contentious or hazardous democratic reform must temporarily take a back seat, in some places.

4 Summarizing climate change-democratization conundrums

Both climate change and what societies do in terms of climate action produce winners as well as losers. There are consequences for well-being and also for the distribution of power and influence. If the material that has been presented in earlier sections of this paper is tenable, then trying to model what democratization and climate change and the responses could mean for one another raises some difficult conundrums.

On balance, it seems that stable liberal democracy is more likely than the tried and tested alternatives to make a response to the climate change challenge. The precise reasons why this should be the case can be argued over – for example, the importance of civil society freedoms versus democratically accountable government. However, there is no certainty that democracies will do all that is required and in a timely fashion. The political horizons of democratically elected governments tend to be short; society may heavily discount the future and free individuals place high value on goods that compete with the environment or do irreversible harm. The political imperative to balance opposing interests and reach compromises can inhibit governments from taking essential and decisive action. If democratization really is good for economic progress, then the evidence from developed-world democracies tells us that per capita emissions will continue to increase with development, even while falling in relation to total national income. By adding in population growth, we arrive at the prospect of substantially increased emissions for years ahead. It seems that democratization – the establishment of more democracies – *of itself* offers no straightforward solution to global warming.

More imaginative forms of democracy than liberal democracy – for instance, those based on deliberative or highly participatory models and ideas of eco-democracy/ecological democracy – might look superior in theory, but are still largely on the drawing board. Where political arrangements like these are established, society and collective decision-making might behave more responsibly in relation to environmental values, but this has yet to be fully tested empirically. And the decentralized nature of such schemes could be a weakness in terms of addressing a problem like global warming, which requires a global solution. Moreover, because bold climate action is now urgent, the time for political experimentation is running out. And if pushing countries that are not liberal democracies to democratize ends up producing a stalled transition, regime fluctuation, or social chaos, then society and government will be distracted from reducing greenhouse gas emissions or tackling the climate change effects. From a global warming perspective, there are places where the maintenance of stable authoritarian or semi-authoritarian rule could offer advantages. Indeed, *if* it is true that democracy compares favorably as a political requisite of sustained economic development – which historically has meant an increase in CO_2 emissions – then retarding democratization might look like a good idea *if* climate mitigation is viewed as an overriding priority (and assuming the country's contribution to CO_2 emissions would be sizeable). But retarded development also reduces the economic capacity to engage in climate adaptation. In fact, not only is

China a non-democracy that is already developing fast, but it sees more development as a way of improving its ability to combat climate change.

Because the global climate is already changing, it could become harder for some non-democracies to achieve stable democracy because of the economic damage, the risk of a more fragile state, and the chance that authoritarian backlash will be provoked by increasing discontent and disorder. These observations, too, might be thought to suggest not just that democratic reform is no panacea for climate change, but that democratization should not even be encouraged where the ambition is unrealistic or could prove seriously disruptive. Strengthening state capacity and improving governance may be more important for goals of climate adaptation and improving human security. This kind of reasoning creates a moral dilemma for democracy's supporters. In this context, international bodies whose mission includes helping the international spread of democracy while at the same time committing to support climate mitigation and adaptation may face their own cruel choice.

Aside from which, the concentration of political attention and public resources that climate stabilization and the effects of climate change now demand at almost every level, including the international, seem bound to pose a distraction from supporting the worldwide spread of democracy. The trade-off here must now be reckoned one of the challenges facing would-be democratic reformers, including the international democracy-support organizations. Indeed, arguments like those in the report *Climate Change as a Security Risk* go beyond saying that greater international priority must be given to political stabilization and enhancing governments' ability to manage environmental risks in affected countries. They go on to suggest that the West's commitment to pushing for democratic reform could soon lose credibility, owing to a shift in the international human rights discourse, which is moving toward holding the West responsible for the accumulated man-made climate change and for the harm already done to economic, social, and, even, political rights (the chance of enjoying political order or democracy or both) in the developing world. This could place OECD countries formerly "regarded as models for democracy, human rights protection and economic development" increasingly on the defensive.[60] In the eyes of some developing-world critics, not promoting democracy but providing adequate funding for *universal* climate mitigation and adaptation might seem like the best way for the West to go about making amends now.

However, would the possibility of a better-resourced and smarter approach to international cooperation between the developed and developing worlds help resolve all the dilemmas? Chapter 5 seeks to open up a discussion on precisely this question.

5 Some international policy implications

As shown, climate change and evidence of a commitment to climate-related policy cannot be neatly mapped onto the distinction between democracies and non-democracies or, even, onto the distinction between developed and developing countries. Being a developed-country democracy does not *guarantee* a more favorable political disposition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And the changing climate is a global phenomenon whose effects do not respect the political or economic status of countries, although different countries are and will be affected differently. Some fragile democracies and developing countries that are attempting to democratize may be as, or even more, vulnerable to climate-induced harm, compared to stable authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes.

The many implications for international actors concern at least three groups: those whose commitment is to help create a new and effective international climate regime; those engaged in providing international development assistance; and the international democracy-support agencies, institutes, and foundations. The first group comprises world leaders, politicians, diplomats, and international civil servants at the forefront, together with leading climate activists from the global green network in civil society. It includes governments of emerging economies whose contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is, or soon will be, significant, and those whose countries badly need climate adaptation support. But all three agendas – climate change, development, and democratization or democracy support – have their own cluster of international organizations, multilateral agencies, and governmental, nongovernmental, and semi-autonomous agencies pursuing aims defined in their own mission statements. “Democracy practitioners” and their goals, for instance, are distinctive from more developmentally-focused international efforts to help build better governance.

The plurality of mandates and organizational diversity hinder holistic thinking and joined-up practice. There is no overall coordination. For instance, there is no mainstreaming of climate adaptation in development activities.[61] According to the UNDP, “planning and financing for climate change adaptation remain marginal activities in most donor agencies,” and there is no agreement on what integrating adaptation into development programs means or how it should be done.[62] Proposals to link international arrangements for supporting adaptation to a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions encounter political sensitivities. The same is even truer when it comes to linking offers of support on climate issues to political concessions over the form of rule – even though changes to governance (and, possibly, to type of regime) could be vital to securing an effective use of such support. Although conversations between the international democracy-support and climate change communities appear to be infrequent, there is a shared concern with some development cooperation specialists that sizeable new international transfers of concessionary resources to assist with either climate adaptation or mitigation could end up as a new kind of “resource course” – one that does harm to development, harm to the democratic prospects, and one that is inefficient as a response to climate change.

However, the different agendas and their aims do overlap, or at minimum have significant implications for one another. After all, development aid that advances human development both reduces vulnerability to climate change and makes the attainment of stable democracy more feasible. Taking people out of poverty arguably is the most effective strategy for climate adaptation *and* for securing long-term democratic stability. And in the long run, investing in climate mitigation makes sound economic development sense. Thinking no less positively, democratization and international support for building democracy could pay off in terms of development and the political willingness or capability to address climate issues, at both the national and international levels.

At a general level, then, there seem to be two main sets of implications. The first implication is that a better coordinated approach to devising policies for development and for democracy support – an approach that takes full account of the main issues in climate change, too – makes more sense than pursuing and acting on the three agendas in isolation.

The second, general-level implication is that if international negotiations among states on a new climate change regime and its implementation are to make good progress, the parties to the negotiations should have in-depth appreciation of the domestic politics inside states, in particular those who will be most crucial to achieving a successful outcome.

In the pursuit of both sets of implications, it is now worth turning to a number of questions that either could benefit from more research or, if the knowledge, beliefs, and understandings are already available, they could be given greater prominence, especially in climate change and democracy-promotion debates.

6 Some key questions answered but many more remain

At the outset of the paper, four main questions framed the investigation (see Introduction). In sum, the analysis so far has generated the following answers.

- Democratization does not necessarily make it easier and can make it more difficult for countries to engage with climate mitigation.
- Democratization might improve the chances of adaptation in the interests of protecting the most vulnerable, but should be considered neither a prerequisite nor a sufficient condition.
- Global warming may be problematic for democratization, but its effects on society can generate a variety of political demands, and the political outcome will depend on (among other things) how well the existing political arrangements respond to climate change effects.
- Adapting successfully to climate change and securing people from its harmful effects should help societies attain or sustain stable liberal democracy, but other types of regime (that may or not be preferred by the populace) could strengthen their position in this way, too.

However, these are very broad generalizations, worded in heavily qualified ways. They must take their local color from the specific context to which they are applied, where further refinements of meaning and some additional caveats may still be necessary, along with a more precise sense of the actual policy implications. Ideally, international policy recommendations must be informed first by what can be learned about further questions possessing a more detailed focus on the political constraints and on the political opportunity and political incentive structures that distinguish countries individually. The influence that these domestic political considerations exert on the negotiating positions governments take up in international forums and, just as important, the chances that effective action will be taken later, should not be underestimated. For the solutions to climate change problems are not simply technical, financial, and economic. They have fundamental *political* dimensions, too.

In this context, politics is not reducible to governance alone. The more we can learn about the domestic politics as a result of addressing questions like those identified in this paper, then the smarter the international political response to climate change will be. This is why debate about the domestic politics matters. It can serve the interests of both climate mitigation and adaptation *and* tell us more about how to climate-proof democracy and democratization against global warming's adverse effects.

The questions below fall into two broad categories: coordination questions of specific relevance to international organizations, and larger political questions. They range over three domains: instances where it is our understanding that is most deficient; instances where a greater stock of hard information is needed; and instances where value choices lie at the heart of the matter. All three are interconnected. The questions do not all apply equally to all countries or to all organizations. But some take on a special significance for organizations that quite explicitly combine democracy promotion with a strong commitment to climate issues, or to countries where reducing

mass poverty should be a very high priority and/or where stable democracy is absent or insecure. If some of the questions seem to be angled mainly to "developing countries" this is because the political constraints, political opportunities, and political incentive structures inside these countries are less familiar to many Europeans and North Americans than is the situation that exists much closer to home – although mutual lack of understanding and misunderstandings can also be found among countries in the West, even inside the European Union.

Coordination questions

- Should support for country adaptation and mitigation discriminate against non-democracies and countries with a poor human rights record?
- Do the societies that are striving hardest to build democracy have a stronger case for support against the threats that they face from a changing climate?
- Should the international promotion of democracy and human rights back off if it endangers the securing of a new global climate management regime?
- Is international democracy promotion still justified in places where it risks alienating the government or destabilizing politics more broadly and, in consequence, impedes effective climate action – mitigation or adaptation?
- Should the attachment of political conditionalities to development aid or the selective allocation of aid to countries that already meet certain political or governance requisites take account of the likely consequences for climate action?
- What kinds of international support for capacity-building in governance might benefit development, climate action, and democratization – a win-win-win situation?

Political questions

- Of the various political properties often closely associated with liberal democracy, which one(s) is/are most critical to making appropriate responses to climate change: representative government; strong civil society; accountable and effective public bureaucracy; administrative decentralization; the leaning toward a market-based economy; something else? Can the answers give guidance to international democracy promotion?
- Who are the main stakeholders in policy initiatives that address climate mitigation and climate adaptation and where do they stand in relation to the general distribution of political power and influence in society? Who are the main veto players and what determines their position?
- How do the political leadership in countries as diverse as China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil calculate the political feasibility of committing to climate mitigation? How do they compare the domestic political risk, and are they too risk-averse? Can international resource transfers make a difference? Or is climate policy driven too heavily by external (foreign) influences already?
- How do the efforts of political elites to influence public opinion on climate action compare? Can old and new democracies, or India and China say, learn from one another in this matter?

- What political influences determine climate adaptation-planning and execution and disaster risk-reduction for the future?
- Are there examples where community concern about the local effects of climate change or about activities responsible for greenhouse gas emissions has translated into political pressure on government to address climate mitigation, and what are the political lessons?
- In non-democracies could democratic reform by the political elites ever come about as a rational political response to popular discontent over environmental performance generally, and climate issues specifically?
- Where in the world is democracy or democratization most at risk from global warming and its effects, and where might international offers of technical, financial, or other assistance tip the scales?
- What practical examples of democracy, other than liberal democracy, have demonstrated climate-sensitive approaches to pro-poor development that could be scaled up, replicated, transferred, or emulated in some way more widely?
- Should we now be trying to climate-proof liberal democracy/democratization or, instead, set about reinventing our models of democracy and reforming the institutional architecture so that they can be even more fit for the purpose of responding to climate change?
- How can the global governance of climate action conform to democratic principles and practice?

7 Coda

The authors of a recent survey of the politics of climate policy in the European Union and the prosperous democracies concluded that research up until now has unearthed "no 'silver bullet' political strategies" for governments to escape from all the political constraints that impede radical action on climate change.[63] For this, if for no other reason, it is now crucial to invite countries other than just the developed-world democracies to share their thoughts on issues raised in this paper. More inclusiveness, greater mutual understanding, and, above all, constructive new political initiatives that can command broad-based legitimacy and support – national and international – are needed if the world is to combine needful action on climate change with meeting the democratic aspirations of ordinary people.

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Notes

1 Giddens, 2009.
2 Busby, 2008: 92.
3 South African Government Information, 2008. For the sake of simplicity, this paper refers to the developing world as if it were a homogenous category when in reality the differences among them (with or without China's inclusion) are as pronounced as the contrasts with the "developed world."
4 Reported in http://www.guardian.co.uk (February 5, 2009).
5 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2007: Overview, 2.
6 Baer et al., 2008: 5.
7 UNDP, 2007: 13.
8 UNDP, 2007: 48.
9 UNDP, 2007: 42.
10 World Bank, 2007: 200.
11 World Bank, 2007: 201.
12 UNDP, 2007: 42; United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2008.
13 Harmeling, 2008.
14 The Global Humanitarian Forum's report claims that today 325 million people are "seriously affected" by climate change's impact on hunger, disease, and poverty, and the number will double inside 20 years. The mechanism by which climate change threatens each one of the Millennium Development Goals can be found in Figure 13 (page 68).
15 Eurobarometer, 2008: 73, 37, 69.
16 Page, 2008: 573.
17 US Energy Information Administration, 2009.
18 United Nations Development Programme, 2007: 150.
19 The clear analytic distinctions were unfortunately muddied by careless application of the term "regime change" to efforts by US-led coalition forces to bring down by force particular governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, endeavors that had the further baleful consequence of damaging by (mis)association what had come to be known as "democracy promotion."
20 Shearman and Smith, 2007, for example can be placed in this category.
21 Leggewie and Welzer, 2008.
22 Newell, 2008: 149; also Newell, 2006: 123–53.
23 Koehn, 2008: 72.
24 German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2007.
25 Beeson, 2009, on East Asia; Shearman and Smith on the wider prediction that democracy will give way to a form of feudalism where power must lie with philosophers/ecologists.
26 Dating from Lipset, 1959. This view has been subjected to much empirical testing and generally found to be valid still.
27 For example, Global Humanitarian Forum 2009: 3.
28 Global Humanitarian Forum 2009: 49.
29 Floyd, 2008. "Military-industrial complex" comes from C. Wright Mills (1956).
30 See German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2007.
31 Stern, 2007.
32 Giddens, 2009; Held, 2009.
33 Helm, 2008: 226.
34 Giddens, 2009, argues for the first and Shearman and Smith, 2007, for the second.
35 UNDP, 2007: Foreword vi.
36 United States National Intelligence Council, 2008: 41–51.
37 Beckman, 2008: 620.
38 Neumayer, 2002; Bättig and Bernauer, 2009, forthcoming.
39 Helm, 2008: 212, 218.
40 Giddens, 2009.
41 Insight from Gudrun Benecke.
42 See for example Holden, 2002.
43 Leggewie and Welzer, 2008.
44 Ward, 2008.
45 UNDP, 2007: 8.
46 Li and Reuveny, 2006.

47 Poll findings from UNDP, 2007: 66–7; The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Busby, 2008: note 34; Compston and Bailey, 2008: 93–6; Eurobarometer, 2008.

48 Burk, Bals, and Kier, 2009. The weightings are energy-related emission trends 50%, emissions level 30%, and climate policy 20%. International shipping emissions fall outside the calculations.

49 Busby, 2008: 78, 83–6.

50 The British government's publication of a *Low Carbon Transition Plan* in July 2009 is one possible exception, but the attention it receives in the general election campaign due in 2010 and subsequent government action will be more revealing.

51 "Per-capita income is the most important determinant of carbon dioxide emissions per capita..." according to US EIA, 2009.

52 Cheng, 2008: 24.

53 Cheng, 2008; Mol and Carter, 2006.

54 Compston and Bailey, 2008; Newell 2006, 96-122.

55 Walker, 1999.

56 Walker, 1999: 297–8.

57 Sen, 1999: 178–84.

58 Williams, Duncan, Landell-Mils, and Unsworth, 2009: 7.

59 Transparency International, 2008; 2007.

60 German Advisory Council on Global Change, 2007: 174.

61 Global Humanitarian Forum, 2009: 76.

62 UNDP, 2007: 190; Bapna and McGray, 2008: 11.

63 Compston and Bailey, 2008: 274.