

## Evaluating democratic governance: a bottom up approach to European Union enlargement

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*WZB Discussion Paper*

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## Abstract

Although analyses of democracy and governance may be complementary rather than in conflict, they are not identical. This article compares the EU criteria for evaluating applicants for membership with those of democracy indexes. It uses data from the 13-country New Europe Barometer surveys of public opinion to provide a bottom up evaluation of democratic governance in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Ukraine. The results are compared, point by point, with the minimum evaluation of governance in the eight Central and East European countries admitted to the EU in 2004. Factor analysis confirms statistically that these measures are multi-dimensional; in other words, democratic governance cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional index of democracy. The conclusion emphasizes the advantages of thinking in terms of democratic governance not only for diagnosing and prescribing governmental reforms but also for academics monitoring democratization as a process that may only be partially successful.

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## Contents

### Introduction

I	Defining Democratic Governance: The Copenhagen Criteria .....	5
II	The Bottom Up Application of Copenhagen Criteria.....	9
III	To Aggregate or Not to Aggregate? .....	16
IV	Bringing the People in .....	21

### Notes

### References

## Introduction

Political scientists have elaborated quantitative indicators of democracy but the European Union's Copenhagen criteria do more, evaluating applicant countries in terms of democratic governance, a term that includes the rule of law, a functioning market economy, and an effective bureaucracy, as well as conventional democracy concerns. After comparing the two approaches, which are alike in using external observers to make top down evaluations of national governments, this article shows how New Europe Barometer surveys in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Ukraine can provide a bottom up evaluation by a nation's citizens. It draws on NEB surveys from the eight Central and Eastern European countries admitted to the EU in 2004 to define the minimum level of acceptable performance. Statistical analysis rejects the assumption that democratic governance can be aggregated into a one-dimensional index. Using the multi-dimensional Copenhagen criteria makes it possible to identify both strengths and weaknesses in country's system of democratic governance, a political advantage for EU policymakers considering whether and when to admit new members. Moreover, an applicant government finds it more difficult to reject evidence from a sample survey of its own citizens than evaluations made by outside intergovernmental officials or social scientists.

The global spread of regimes holding competitive elections has made democratic governance a major concern of political scientists and of policymakers.

However, the two groups tend to differ in their methods and in the uses made of assessments of a regime. Political scientists concentrate on democracy as a single analytic concept while policymakers are concerned with multiple dimensions of governance.

Contemporary political scientists construct quantitative indexes of democracy in order to test explanations of why some governments are democratic while others are not. Democracy is treated as of global relevance and index scores are computed for every country belonging to the United Nations (for a review, see UNDP, 2002: 37). The time period covered is most or all of the post-Second World War period; exceptionally Vanhanen (2000) and Polity IV (Marshall & Jaggers, 2006) go as far back as 1810 and 1800 respectively. Following Robert Dahl (1971), democracy is usually defined in terms of two criteria, popular participation and electoral competition for major public offices. Each criterion is disaggregated into several components, a multiplicity of indicators are assembled for each component, and each indicator is assigned a numerical score. All the indicators are then aggregated to create a one-dimensional quantitative index of democratization. While there are differences between democracy indexes in their criteria, components and indicators, there is a high correlation between different indexes (cf. Vanhanen, 2000; Munck and Verkuilen, 2002; Ward, 2002: 47).

Policymakers have given priority to governance, that is, the way in which a state's political institutions operate in relation to each other and to their subjects (Pierre and Peters, 2000). A system of governance need not be democratic to be powerful and durable. In *Finer's* magisterial three-volume history of government, democratic states appear only in the last half of the last volume (1997: 1568). While international organizations are hesitant about making references to democracy, given the number of undemocratic governments among their members, they are increasingly concerned with promoting good governance, given the political and economic costs of countries being misgoverned or, even worse, becoming "failed" states. For example, the World Bank Institute (2006) has created indexes for 213 countries intended to measure voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption.

The European Union (EU) is distinctive because it evaluates potential members in terms of their governance as well as their democratic character. Its Copenhagen criteria specify that in addition to being democratic, an applicant country must govern by the rule of law, respect human and minority rights, have a functioning market economy, and an effective public administration ([http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm)). These criteria are much broader than conventional democracy indexes that focus on participation and elections. Evaluating EU applicant countries such as Croatia, Turkey and Macedonia and aspiring applicants such as Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, is much more problematic than evaluating an application from Finland or Sweden (House of Lords, 2006). Although the 27 member states of the EU are only one-seventh of the countries included in global democracy indexes, they are a very disproportionate number of the countries classified as democratic.

Although analyses of democracy and governance may be complementary rather than in conflict, they are not identical. The first section of this article compares the EU criteria defining democratic governance with familiar democracy indexes. The second section uses data from New Europe Barometer sample surveys to give a bottom up evaluation of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Ukraine in terms of the Copenhagen criteria. Evaluations there are compared point by point with the minimum NEB evaluations of the eight Central and East European countries admitted in 2004. In the third section factor analysis provides statistical confirmation of the multi-dimensional character of democratic governance as against the one-dimensional conceptualization of democracy indexes. The conclusion emphasizes the advantages of a democratic governance approach for diagnosing and prescribing reforms for specific weaknesses in systems of governance, a characteristic that is specially relevant to academics too in monitoring progress, failure or stagnation in the dynamic process of democratization.

## I Defining Democratic Governance: The Copenhagen Criteria

There has always been a sense in which writers have defined Europe in terms of rejecting an alien other (Wolff, 1994; Neumann, 1999), the European Union has been more concerned with expanding rather than defining the boundaries of what constitutes Europe. Its founding Treaty declared that any European state may apply to become a member and did not define the geographical boundaries of Europe. In 1957 this was hardly necessary, for the Iron Curtain then divided Europe. The break up of the Communist bloc created the prospect of a dozen or more countries applying EU membership and prompted disagreements among members about which countries were suitable for admission (Zielonka, 2002; Wallace and Wallace, 2000: 440ff). Post-Communist regimes expressed a desire to “return to Europe”, a term that could equally refer to becoming a member of NATO or the EU. Whereas NATO evaluates potential members on grounds of military strategy and accepts non-democratic regimes, the EU had no explicit standards for evaluating candidate countries that were heirs to traditions of dictatorship and non-market economies. In their absence, the consideration of applicants could have resulted in a race to the bottom in which member states traded endorsements on behalf of their favoured applicants without regard to their system of governance. In terms of diffusion theory (Brinks and Coppedge, 2006), the issue was not whether countries wanted to emulate the democratic stability and economic prosperity of EU member states, but whether they had shown sufficient evidence of success in efforts to do so. At the June, 1993 European Council meeting in Copenhagen, what were then 12 member states agreed criteria for judging new applicants for EU membership. The Copenhagen criteria provide a mechanism for evaluating the achievements of would be members. Ten new regimes from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe were admitted in 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

The Copenhagen criteria. The practice of democracy is a pre-condition for a country to be considered an applicant for EU membership. Thus, there is no consideration of Belarus becoming a member because it is patently undemocratic, whereas a democratic turn in the 2004 Ukraine elections opened up the possibility of it applying for membership. The EU applies a minimal definition of democracy: there are free and fair elections to choose the government of the day. In making this judgment, EU officials can draw on reports by teams of observers sent to national elections in the Balkans, successor states of the Soviet Union and other countries within its sphere of interest (EU Election Assistance & Observation, 2006; Elklit and Reynolds, 2005). However, holding free elections is not sufficient to meet the Copenhagen criteria for admission.

Secondly, adherence to the rule of law is required if elections are to be free and fair. Political scientists working in long established democracies have taken the rule of law for granted, for it was present in Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden long before democratic



elections were introduced (Rustow, 1955; Daalder, 1995). European Union officials faced with making judgments about post-Communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans cannot do so. To introduce universal suffrage and competitive elections without the rule of law, as has been done in successor states of the Soviet Union, is to attempt to create democracy backwards (Rose and Shin, 2001).

A third criterion, respect for human rights and minorities, relates a country's statutory guarantees of rights and the behaviour of public officials. The EU's concern with minorities was an important issue in evaluating the admission of Estonia and Latvia, each of which has a substantial minority of Russian residents who are not citizens (Gelazis, 2003). Turkey's application for EU membership has prompted questions from the European Commission about Turkish practices and laws restricting freedom of speech, respect for human rights of prisoners and the position of Kurds (European Commission, 2006: 10ff).

Concern with a functioning market economy reflects the EU's origins as a Community integrating French and German steel and coal production, its evolution into a Single Europe Market, and creating a single currency, the euro, for many member countries. Vagueness about what constitutes a "functioning" market is intentional, given differences in economic ideology within the EU between social democrats, who stress the state's role; Christian Democrats, whose catch phrase is the social market; and Thatcherite advocates of a free market. Nonetheless, the term is sufficiently clear to determine whether post-Communist countries have made the transition from a state-controlled non-market economy to some type of market economy. Notwithstanding the EU's concern with economic growth and social cohesion, the Copenhagen criteria do not stipulate a minimum standard of Gross Domestic Product per capita, of social welfare provision or of income distribution, criteria which are sometimes invoked in discussions of democracy (cf. Lipset, 1960, 1994; Przeworski, 1991; Dalton, 2004).

The fifth Copenhagen criterion, bureaucratic effectiveness, is required if an applicant government is to implement satisfactorily the *acquis communautaire*, the political, economic and monetary regulations that are already in effect in existing member states. Acceptance of the *acquis* is a necessary condition of membership, because the EU does not want to re-negotiate policies previously agreed with great difficulty. The bureaucratic capacity of a government to implement the *acquis* is essential too, since the European Commission does not administer its own directives and regulations. It depends on national governments to do so. Since the 2004 enlargement, Brussels has found that infirmities in public administration have not only limited the implementation of EU bureaucratic regulations in new member states, but also their ability to complete the bureaucracy procedures necessary to claim EU funds earmarked for their use.

It is striking that European identity, a particular concern of many political science researchers (see e.g. Hooghe and Marks, 2004), is not regarded as relevant to a country's application for EU membership. This is just as well, given that the Commission's own Eurobarometer (2005: 92ff) finds that less than half the EU population identifies with

Europe as well as with their own country. While the Commission would like European identification to be higher, the decision facing the EU is not whether citizens of a given country think of themselves as Europeans but whether their system of governance meets European standards. Similarly, there is no requirement that an applicant country's citizens have a democratic culture, as long as the system of governance is democratic (cf. Klingemann et al., 2006; Welzel, 2006).

Contrasts in scope and method. Theoretically, the EU's Copenhagen criteria are extensive, covering conceptually distinct dimensions of governance, while quantitative indexes of democracy are intensive, detailing a multiplicity of components and indicators of democracy (see Munck and Verkuilen, 2002: Table 3). For example, the Freedom House (2006) score is constructed by summing more than 20 different indicators of political liberties and civil rights. Coppedge (2002: 37) argues against combining in a one-dimensional index dimensions such as governance and democracy in the absence of strong theoretical justification for doing so. In the meantime, he characterizes that averaging the information collected about these dimensions in a single quantitative index risks creating a 'meaningless mess'.

Reacting against the narrowness of one-dimensional indexes, some political scientists have extended their definition of democracy to include EU criteria. For example, Diamond (1999: 11f) has proposed ten criteria for a 'liberal democracy', including the rule of law and full respect for human and minority rights. Morlino (2004: 7) has stipulated five criteria of a 'good democracy', including as a distinctive element 'the progressive implementation of greater political, social and economic equality'. Rose et al (2006: chapter 2) have argued that democratic governance is inherently two-dimensional, because some regimes can respect the rule of law without having democratic elections, for example, Singapore, or hold more or less competitive elections without respecting the rule of law, for example, Ukraine or Moldova. Linz and Stepan's (1996: Table 1.1.) inclusion of rational-legal bureaucratic administration and a market economy as part of a 'modern, consolidated democracy' makes their definition as broad as the EU's Copenhagen criteria. For 119 low income and developing countries, the Bertelsmann Foundation (2005) has created a multi-dimensional series of quantified indices going far beyond democracy and governance.

The European Union must include the governance practices of a state because it is an intergovernmental body formed by treaties between states. Since a decision about a state's democratic status is taken before a discussion about membership begins, when considering a state's application the EU's central concern is with its quality of governance. Given the multiplicity of functional obligations that a state must carry out if admitted, it is appropriate that the European Commission pay close attention to an applicant's capacity for governance.

In geographical scope, the EU is intensive whereas democracy indexes are normally global. Global coverage has the advantage of producing a much larger number of cases for statistical analysis and it permits comparison of most different cases from Sweden to Saudi

Arabia. Since global organizations produce far more economic and social indicators than political indicators, the latter are in short supply. When conducting a global evaluation, the lack of many kinds of reliable or valid data encourages reductionism, the exclusion of considerations of importance to governance. The information available to assessors of a single country, as in the EU application process, is inevitably much greater than that available to coders working across countries and continents. The greater availability of information about European countries makes it feasible to employ multiple criteria of democratic governance.

To create a quantitative democracy index a methodology must be adopted that produces a numerical score for each component and indicator. Methods vary. University-based indexes can be constructed by scholarly experts supervising graduate students working from detailed instructions about how to code countries using library and WorldWideWeb-based searches, focusing on English-language and disproportionately American sources. In this way a high level of inter-coder reliability can be achieved, albeit this leaves open the question of construct validity. However, some indexes have scores assigned in ways that are undocumented and cannot be checked for reliability. For example, Freedom House refers to the use of many indicators to arrive at its ordinal classification of free, partly free and unfree countries, but the process of actually assigning countries to these categories is not reliably documented (Munck and Verkuilen, 2002: 20ff).

By contrast, the European Union does not assign quantitative scores for each Copenhagen criterion. Instead, it makes a simple nominal judgment: an applicant country can proceed toward membership or not. It may also identify changes that an applicant should make in its system of governance in order to proceed to accession. Copenhagen criteria are utilized in prose statements that the European Union issues at stated points in the process of reviewing a country's membership application. Dossiers prepared by EC staff include descriptive information about laws, events and history; quantitative information about population and economic activity; and diplomatic evaluations of national governments (for an example from Turkey, see European Commission, 2006). These inputs are materials that policymakers can interpret as they see fit. Since decisions are political, there will inevitably be differences of opinion between member states. Reliability, that is, agreement between different member states, is achieved through political bargaining leading to a consensus judgment about whether a country is now ready to be admitted to the European Union.

## II The Bottom Up Application of Copenhagen Criteria

The Copenhagen criteria and democracy indexes have a common feature: both are top-down political evaluations made outside the country being evaluated. This is the case of assessments by intergovernmental institutions in Brussels and in Washington; by activists working for international NGOs; and by academics in universities.<sup>1</sup> The government of a country being evaluated can challenge outsider judgments with the claim that it possesses superior knowledge of the country. In turn, its claim can be challenged as partial, because even though it represents the whole of the country in international law, free elections show it does not represent a substantial fraction of voters.

Relating survey data to the Copenhagen criteria. When democratic governance is the issue, it is especially relevant to hear the voice of the people. A representative nationwide sample survey provides a bottom up means for evaluating how people who daily experience government evaluate its performance. Moreover, a survey questionnaire can collect data about multiple features of government. The New Europe Barometer (NEB) of the Centre for the Study of Public Policy provides survey evidence from both 2004 enlargement countries and four wouldbe EU member states as of that year. Whereas the Eurobarometer asks citizens what they think of the European Union, the NEB asks people what they think of how they are actually governed. This also differentiates it from the World Values Survey, which concentrates on what people would like government to do. By contrast with democracy indexes, NEB surveys report differences of opinion between citizens about their system of government, a point specially relevant in societies with major ethnic divisions, such as Ukraine.

The data presented here comes from the most recent NEB round, which started in October 2004, a few months after the European Parliament election. It included the eight post-Communist countries that had just joined the EU, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Surveys were also conducted in three countries then seeking EU membership, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia and three post-Soviet countries, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus (for the full questionnaire, frequency distributions and sample details, see Rose, 2005; [www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp)). NEB survey results are presented here for Bulgaria and Romania, which were subsequently awarded membership as from January, 2007; Croatia, which was granted applicant status shortly after its survey was conducted; and Ukraine, where people were interviewed in 2005 shortly after its contested presidential election. Given the potential for ethnic differences to influence evaluations of democratic governance, in Ukraine attitudes of its two major ethnic groups are presented separately.

The EU must decide whether an applicant's governance is good enough to be an EU member. But how much is enough? By definition, half the EU's current members fall below the median country on each of the Copenhagen criteria. Therefore, it is unreasonable to judge applicants by the standard of the EU's best governed or median country. However, it would lower European Union standards to admit an applicant country that was worse governed than the lowest-rated existing member. Here, the EU member that is rated lowest on each Copenhagen criterion sets the threshold that an applicant country should reach in order to be described as up to the EU standard. The threshold is taken from contemporaneous and comparable NEB surveys in which citizens of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia<sup>2</sup> evaluate their own system of governance.

Democracy. Many surveys adopt an idealist approach to democracy, asking if people endorse democratic values. However, for EU membership the critical issue is not what people want but whether people see their national government as democratic. For this purpose, the NEB asks citizens to evaluate their current system of government on a scale in which 10 represents complete democracy and 1 represents complete dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> In all four countries, the national mean falls close to the midpoint between democracy and dictatorship (Table 1). Since very large majorities regard democracy as the ideal system for governing their country, there is a large gap—on average, 2.5 points—between the type of government that people want and what they get. For theories of democratic values, the high rating of democracy is more important. However, for European Union purposes, the rating of the current regime is more important. A critical view of democratic credentials is common in new EU member states too. The threshold for EU acceptability is set by Slovakia, 5.2. This was below the rating of Croatia, and not significantly different from what Bulgarians and Romanians thought of their governments. In Ukraine, where interviewing was conducted shortly after the electoral confirmation of an “Orange” president, ethnic Ukrainians on average were two-thirds of a point more positive about the democratic credentials of their system than were ethnic Russians.

One argument for admitting countries at or just below the EU threshold is that they will become better in future; this argument is especially salient in countries where democracy had been absent in the past. When the NEB survey asks people how democratic they expect their system to be in five years, the mean response is more positive, an average increase of 1.7 points. Bulgarians, Romanians, Croats and Ukrainian ethnics tend to be more optimistic about the future than the EU threshold country, Latvia, while Russian ethnics are less optimistic. If national expectations were met, then in five years all four member countries would be above the threshold rating of Slovakia today.

Elections are the central institution of democracy, but the occurrence of unfree and unfair elections emphasizes that a ballot is democratic only if it is fair. When the NEB survey asks electors whether they think their last national election was fair, the threshold is set by Estonians, where 63 percent of the population (which includes a substantial minority of non-citizen Russian ethnics) thought their election fair. In Bulgaria, where elections have frequently turned out the governing party, a big majority of electors gave

Table 1 POPULAR EVALUATION OF DEMOCRACY

	Bulg	Rom	Cr	Ukr Uk	Rus	Threshold enlargement		
Q. (Current status) <i>Here is a scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 10; 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. Where would you place our country at the present time?</i>								
	(mean)							
Mean score	5.1	5.1	5.5	5.4	4.7	5.2	Slovakia	
Q. (Expectations) <i>Where would you expect our country to be in five years time?</i>								
Mean score	6.7	6.8	6.9	7.5	6.0	6.5	Latvia	
(percentage)								
Q. (Vulnerability) <i>Some people think this country would be better governed if parliament were closed down and all parties were abolished. How likely do you think this is to happen in the next few years?</i>								
Unlikely	89	87	87	77	80	83	Poland	
Might happen	11	13	13	23	20	17		
Q. (Elections) <i>Would you say that the most recent election of parliament was conducted fairly or not?</i>								
Fair	72	37	na	63*	23*	63	Estonia	

\* Court-ordered second ballot on 26 December 2004.

Source: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, New Europe Barometer. 2004/5. Nationally representative sample surveys interviewing 13,409 persons. For details, see [www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp).

an unqualified endorsement to the fairness of their most recent election. In Ukraine, a clear majority of Ukrainian ethnics thought the election in which the court voided the first-round ballot was fair, while a big majority of Russian ethnics thought it was not.

New regimes are much more vulnerable to regime change than are established regimes (see Linz and Stepan, 1978; Rose et al., 2006). The repudiation of an applicant country's regime is thus a greater risk than in EU states that became democratic half a century or more ago. For that reason, the NEB asks how likely people think it is that their existing regime could be abolished (Table 1). In every country, a big majority think their current regime is the only regime in town (cf. Linz, 1990). In Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, the minority

Table 2 POPULAR EVALUATION OF THE RULE OF LAW AND BUREAUCRACY

	Bulg	Rom	Cr	Ukr		Threshold	
	(percentages)			Uk	Rus	enlargement	
<i>Q. (Corruption) How widespread do you think bribe-taking and corruption are among public officials in this country? (percent)</i>							
Most or all corrupt	88	85	78	92	93	82	Lithuania
Less than half, few	12	15	22	8	7	18	
<i>Q. (Equality of treatment) Do you think people like yourself are treated equally and fairly by government? (percent)</i>							
Yes	19	28	45	15	10	19	Hungary
No	81	72	55	85	90	81	

Source: As in Table 1.

thinking that regime change could happen (a weaker expectation than thinking it probably would happen) is only one in eight, above the threshold set by Poland. In Ukraine, the minority thinking that the suspension of parliament is possible is greater than in Poland.

Rule of law and bureaucracy. To be effective, a government's laws should apply to public officials as to ordinary citizens. In the Communist era, the chief political concern of government was not law enforcement but social control within or outwith the law. Citizens sought to escape control by evading the laws. In the economy, people used contacts to obtain under the counter what the market did not supply and producers made fraudulent reports in order to appear to be providing what the state plan required (Kornai, 1992; Ledeneva, 1998). The rich rewards arising from the disposal of state assets in post-Communist Europe and the unsettling effects of war in the Balkans have created fresh opportunities for corruption (Miller et al., 2001).

NEB respondents invariably see their national government as corrupt: the difference is simply about how corrupt it is. Among enlargement countries, the worst-rated government is that of Lithuania, where 82 percent see most officials as corrupt (Table 2). Bulgarians, Romanians and both ethnic groups in Ukraine see their systems of government as even more corrupt than that. Only Croatia appears marginally less corrupt than the threshold country. Corruption is not only a derogation from standards of good governance but also a violation of the EU requirement for a functioning market economy, since a corrupt political system reduces the transparency of the market and distorts the operation of a Single Europe Market.

Table 3 POPULAR EVALUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

	Bulg	Rom	Cr	Ukr		Threshold	
	(percentages)					enlargement	
				Uk	Rus		
<i>Q. (Freedom) Compared to our former system, would you say our current system is better, much the same or worse than the old system in terms of everybody having the right to say what they think? (percent)</i>							
Freer than before	76	92	74	81	69	63	Slovakia
Much the same	11	6	19	15	24	26	
Less free	13	2	7	4	7	11	
<i>Q. (Human rights) How much respect do you think this country's government has for individual human rights? (percent)</i>							
Some, a lot	45	30	51	31	14	42	Czech R
Not much, none	55	70	49	69	86	58	

Source: As in Table 1.

At the grass roots, fairness in delivering services to citizens is a defining attribute of governance, and laws set out the rules that bureaucrats ought to follow if services are to be delivered fairly. The fair delivery of services does not mean that everyone gets what they want, but that the refusal to provide benefits is not due to corruption or favouritism but to the impersonal application of rules regulating entitlements (Galbreath and Rose, 2006). Throughout applicant and enlargement countries, a majority of citizens do not expect to be treated fairly when dealing with public officials. The threshold is very low; only 19 percent of Hungarians expect fair treatment (Table 2). In Croatia and Romania, expectations are well above that and in Bulgaria they are at the threshold. Only in Ukraine is there an even more widespread expectation of unfair treatment.

Human and minority rights. Totalitarian regimes reject the right of individuals to enjoy freedom from the state (Berlin, 1958). To assess the consequences of regime change, the New Europe Barometer asks whether people feel freer today than under the former regime in terms of such basic rights as saying what you think, choosing a religion, joining organizations and deciding whether or not to take an interest in politics. Consistently, majorities in enlargement and applicant countries report they feel freer than before (Rose, 2005: 56; see also Rose, 1995). In all four applicant countries the sense of freedom is greater than in the threshold country, Slovakia, where assaults on political freedom under the government of Vladimir Meciar have had a continuing effect on popular attitudes (Table 3). The sense of greater freedom is highest in Romania, where suppression was great under Nicolae Ceausescu.



Even though very large majorities see their regime as granting greater freedom, there is a widespread perception that the government has little respect for individual human rights. The threshold is the Czech Republic, where only 42 percent see the government as respecting human rights. Bulgarians evaluate their government as just above this threshold, while Romanians place their government definitely below the threshold for human rights (Table 3). Notwithstanding major displacements of ethnic minorities, half of Croats say they believe their government does respect individual human rights. In Ukraine, big majorities of both Ukrainians and Russian ethnics are below the EU threshold in their evaluation of the government.

Functioning market economy. Communist regimes used bureaucratic power to allocate goods and services rather than the market (Kornai, 1992); thus, the transformation of the economy was integral to regime change. In order to “function” economically in an economy in transformation, households relied on a combination of unofficial and official economies (Rose, 2002; EBRD, 2006: 10f).

A defining attribute of a functioning market economy is that a household gets enough money from normal work or a pension to buy what it really needs. Insofar as this is the case, then people do not need to be involved in unofficial cash-in-hand “second” economies or grow food to augment a low income. In Slovenia, the most prosperous of the enlargement economies, 60 percent said money from the official economy met their needs. By contrast, in the threshold country, Slovakia, only 20 percent reported it was sufficient. Croats, Romanians and Ukrainians were all above that threshold, whereas Bulgarians were below it (Table 4).

The inadequacy of the official economy does not mean that a majority of the population is destitute, for people can combine resources from a portfolio of economies—the official economy, the unofficial economy and non-monetized household production—in order to get by. An indicator of success in getting by is that a household does not need to spend savings or borrow money. As long as this is the case, a household can indefinitely sustain itself. When the NEB asks whether people have got through the past year without borrowing money or spending savings, a majority consistently reports this is the case (Table 4). Bulgarians and the peoples of Ukraine are well above the threshold level set by Poland, where 41 percent were spending savings or borrowing money in 2004, and Romanians are just below that threshold.

National profiles. The Copenhagen criteria can be used to create a profile that represents how a country appears on its varied indicators of democratic governance. Unlike a democracy index, which reduces a country to a single score, a profile presents a rounded picture of a country’s system of governance. Given random fluctuations in public opinion surveys, a country whose citizens rate it within 3 percent of the lowest-rated enlargement country can be described as around the threshold for EU endorsement on a given indicator. If it is more than 3 percent higher, it is above the threshold, and if more than 3 percent lower, below the threshold.

Table 4 POPULAR EVALUATION OF FUNCTIONING OF ECONOMY

	Bulg	Rom	Cr	Ukr Uk	Rus	Threshold enlargement	
	(percentages)						
Q. (Official economy enough) <i>Do you get enough from your main source of income to buy what you really need?</i>							
Yes	15	37	48	28	25	20	Slovakia
No	85	63	52	72	75	80	
Q. (Coping with a portfolio of economies) <i>In the past year, has your household</i>							
Saved, just got by	68	56	na	66	71	59	Poland
Borrowed, spent savings	32	44	na	34	29	41	

Source: As in Table 1.

On the Copenhagen criteria, Croatia consistently ranks above the EU threshold. This is in accord with its history as part of the Habsburg Empire, by contrast with the Ottoman legacy of Bulgaria and Romania. It also reflects the substantial reduction of its Serbian minority in the war that followed the break up of Yugoslavia. However, the EU also stipulated an additional criterion that Croatia had to meet: co-operating with the International Tribunal in the Hague that prosecutes persons accused of war crimes, including Croats. On this point a majority of Croats reject EU standards. In NEB interviews in September, 2005, shortly before the apprehension of a Croat accused of major war crimes, 62 percent wanted war crimes trials held in Croatia; only 31 percent endorsed international trials; and 7 percent had no opinion.

Romanians see their system as above the threshold in the fair treatment of citizens and earning enough from their job in the official economy and around the threshold for coping with a portfolio of economic resources. Citizens also see their system of governance as around the EU threshold country in its claim to be a democracy now and in future, in vulnerability to replacement by a dictatorship, and corruption. They are virtually unanimous in feeling freer than before, but more likely to see their government as abusing human rights than do citizens of all enlargement countries.

Bulgarians see their national government as below the EU threshold in corruption and in securing a living wage, and around the threshold in its democratic character today and in future, in the fair treatment of citizens and human rights. On three indicators Bulgarians rate their national government above the threshold: there is confidence that parliament will not be suspended, a greater sense of gains in freedom, and getting by economically.

The European Union must deal with Ukraine as a unitary state, but a bottom up survey can separately examine how Ukrainians and Russians evaluate the system of governance. It turns out that both ethnic groups held similar opinions of the national government—and these are often negative. Both placed the government below the threshold in regard for the rule of law and a lack of respect for human rights. Both placed it above the threshold in gains in freedom and in economic terms. As for the regime’s democratic credentials, Russian ethnics saw it as below the threshold set by enlargement countries while Ukrainians saw it as around that threshold. Thus, the problems that Ukraine faces in meeting EU standards do not arise from unfair treatment of the Russian minority but from the misgovernance of ethnic Ukrainians as well as Russians.

Profiles of applicant countries cannot be compared with the threshold country admitted in 2004, because no enlargement country consistently comes bottom. Instead, seven of the eight are lowest on at least one Copenhagen indicator; Slovenia is the only country that is not at the bottom at least once (Tables 1-4). Although it would be statistically possible to create an overall ranking for each enlargement country, doing so would only be justified if there is a good reason to reduce the multiple characteristics of a country’s governance to a numerical score aggregating different rankings on different indicators.

### III To Aggregate or Not to Aggregate?

The dominant paradigm in comparative political science has shifted from the thick configurative description of a single country to the thin analysis of a single concept such as democracy across up to 200 countries (Coppedge, 2007). Since index numbers have little intrinsic meaning, reducing many countries to a single metric makes it possible to say that country X is more democratic (that is, has a higher score) than country Y or less democratic than country Z (that is, has a lower score). However, to make such a statement about a specific country requires a thick characterization with meaningful information. The EU’s Copenhagen criteria provide this information because each criterion is the object of a prose judgment.

The methodology of aggregation. Quantitative indexes of democracy are the result of a process of aggregating numerical scores. Although democracy is not inherently quantitative in the way in which election results are, social scientists have developed techniques for assigning numerical scores to all kinds of phenomena deemed relevant to democracy (Bollen, 1990; Coppedge and Reinicke, 1990; Inkeles, 1991; Marshall and Jagers, 2006, Freedom House, 2004: 711-718; 2006). The simplest classification is a yes/no response, which can be coded 1 or 0. An alternative is to give an ordinal score, for

example, high (3), medium (2) or low (1); or to create a continuous numerical evaluation, such as the percentage of people voting in a national election. Given that the scoring of a single indicator is often approximate, the use of multiple indicators can average out discrepancies, as long as there is no systematic bias in assigning numerical scores (On the process of disaggregation and aggregation of democracy indexes, see Munck and Verkuilen, 2002: 15ff.).

The second step is to aggregate the scores assigned to a particular country into a single component score and then, if democracy is defined in terms of at least two components, for example, individual participation and competition between parties, to combine the component scores into a single index number. Most democracy indexes have a score that discriminates between political systems that are more or less democratic, for example, the 100-point scale of Vanhanen (2003) or the seven-point scale of Freedom House (2006). Przeworski and colleagues (2000) follow the extreme strategy of a dichotomous classification of regimes into those that are democratic and those that are not. Elkins (2000) has re-analyzed their data set and concluded that it is both practical and desirable to think in terms of gradations of democracy

Decisions about aggregation are in the hands of the researcher and there are no easy answers to resolve practical problems that arise. The first problem is the conversion of indicators with different metrics (for example, yes/no as against a ten-point scale) in order to combine them. A second problem is whether to weight each indicator equally. Since unequal weighting requires specific justification by default indicators are usually weighted equally. Since national political systems are the unit of analysis, in statistical analysis each country is counted equally. Thus, the many countries in the world with a population of a few hundred thousand or a million count more than the smaller number of countries with a population of more than one hundred million.

Long-term analysis of the expansion of democracy is complicated by big changes in the number of countries in the world. When the United Nations was founded in 1945, it had 51 members; today 191 countries are members of the UN. Over the years, the achievement of independence by dozens of colonies has led to the great increase in the number of countries and in or around the edges of Europe, the collapse of the Communist bloc has created more than 20 new states.

Testing for uni-dimensionality. Since aggregating a multiplicity of indicators into a single index loses information provided by each indicator, it is statistically justifiable only if empirical indicators show a statistical association strong enough to support the assumption that multiple evaluations reflect a single dimension. When democracy is treated in isolation and indicators intensively measure features of participation and electoral competition, it is likely that multiple indicators will be associated with each other empirically and any indicators that are not can be excluded to maintain the index as a one-dimensional construct. However, the correlation between different criteria of governance such as respect for human rights, a functioning market economy and a fair bureaucracy is problematic.

Table 5 FOUR DIMENSIONS OF QUALITIES OF GOVERNANCE

	<u>Rule law</u>	<u>Democracy</u>	<u>Market</u>	<u>Vulner'le</u>
	(Factor analysis)			
Variance explained %	28.1	12.5	10.4	10.0
Eigen value	2.81	1.25	1.04	1.00
	(Factor scores: decimals omitted)			
Corruption	-73	-04	-06	-10
Respect human rights	73	21	12	-13
Fair treatment	62	20	25	07
Honest elections	61	11	-01	-39
Democratic now	12	86	00	-01
Democratic in 5 years	17	83	02	05
Coping multiple econ.	02	05	84	-06
Earns living wage	26	08	73	-00
Likely Parl't suspended	-01	-06	-05	92
Free to speak	10	44	15	-19
Variance accounted for: 61.1 per cent				

Source: New Europe Barometer 2004/5, as reported in Table 1.

A factor analysis of New Europe Barometer data can test the extent to which citizens associate various criteria of democratic governance with each other. If this is the case, then a factor analysis should group evaluations together in a single factor. However, if this is not the case, then democracy indicators should form a separate factor from one or more governance factors.

When individual responses for the ten Copenhagen indicators are subject to a factor analysis, there is a good statistical fit. A total of 61.1 percent of the variance is accounted for, nine of the ten indicators load at 0.61 or higher, and there is little cross-loading (Table 5). Substantively, the results are clear and meaningful. Good governance is a multi-dimensional concept, because four different factors are identified—the rule of law, democracy, markets and vulnerability to overthrow. Moreover, the idea that democracy is the leading characteristic of good governance is rejected, for it is not the first factor identified.

The rule of law, the first factor, shows a strong association between perceptions of the corruption of government, fair treatment of ordinary people, respect for human rights, and fair elections. Since corruption is about public officials violating public laws, there is a prima facie logic in it being part of this factor. However, respect for human rights is often treated as a civil or political right included in a democracy index. Fair treatment, a primary concern of Weber's (1947) definition of a rule-bound bureaucracy, tends to be overlooked in democracy indices. Elections are an indicator of democracy, but citizens in post-Communist countries are less concerned with whether elections are held—after all, they were held in the Communist era—but whether elections are conducted fairly.

That evaluations of democracy level of the regime today and in five years are associated in the second factor is hardly surprising. The challenging point to political scientists using democracy as a blanket term for many features of “good” or “liberal” government is that the evaluations that people make of their regime's democratic character are not associated with many other positive features of governance, such as respect for human rights, honest elections and freedom of speech.

The third factor, the market economy, combines indicators about individuals earning enough from the official economy for necessities and earning enough from a portfolio of official and unofficial economies. Although the polity and the economy were integrated in Communist regimes, the factor analysis does not associate the extent to which their household is participating in a market economy with the state of democracy. This finding is supported by multivariate statistical analysis of earlier NEB surveys, which find that the important economic evaluation is that of the national rather than the household economy (Rose et al., 1998: chapter 8; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981).

The perceived vulnerability of the regime to being overthrown is independent of other criteria of the quality of governance. This implies that the judgment that individuals make about the persistence of their regime is not related to whether it is democratic, a market economy, or respects the rule of law. Since the likelihood of a regime's repudiation has fallen significantly in the past decade, its independence from other indicators appears to reflect the pragmatic judgment that the current regime, however evaluated, is here to stay.

The failure of the freedom indicator to load on the same factor as a regime's democratic status is a caution against confusing two separate political concerns: the negative value of freedom from the state and the positive value of influencing the state through democratic procedures. The distinction is blurred in the Freedom House Index, which combines civil liberties measures of freedom from the state and positive political rights to influence the state.

Political advantages of not aggregating. People who live in a political system that has been transformed make discriminating judgments about their regime; they do not reduce their judgments to a single dimension. The identification of four distinct factors emphasises that democracy cannot be used as a synonym for governance. Moreover, the democratic

character of a government is not associated with crucial indicators of good governance; a regime may be democratic but dishonest. The functioning of the economy is also discrete: it is not determined whether a regime respects human and minority rights.

By contemporary social science standards, the Copenhagen criteria appear unsatisfactory because they are atheoretical and there is no concern with reliability or quantification. However, given the political requirements of the European Union they are useful tools. The fact that the criteria are pluralistic is a positive advantage, because the EU is itself a multi-functional institution with a range of political and economic concerns. Multiple criteria for evaluating democratic governance are consistent with a long tradition of European theorists who have integrated politics, economics and the rule of law, such as John Stuart Mill, Max Weber and Friedrich Hayek. Multiple criteria are consistent too with an uneven course in the development of democratic governance, as some attributes are established before others. For example, a state may develop a functioning market economy before it develops respect for human and minority rights, as the United States did in the era of slavery, or it may introduce free elections without a functioning market economy, as happened in Eastern Europe in 1990. The sequence in which different elements of democratic governance have been institutionalized has differed as between Huntington's (1991) first, second and third waves (see Rose and Shin, 2001).

The purpose of the Copenhagen criteria is diagnosing the strength and weaknesses of a country's system of governance and recommending actions. Strengths constitute reasons why a country should be admitted to the EU, while weaknesses emphasize the need for an applicant country to introduce political reforms. As a prod and incentive, the EU can make admission conditional on a country adopting reforms to remove weaknesses identified in the multi-dimensional evaluation of its system of governance (see e.g. Rehn, 2006; Vachudova, 2005; Jacoby, 2004). The EU offers the carrot of money and technical assistance for national governments needing to adapt laws and institutions to EU requirements.

The political advantages of conditionality are lost once a country becomes a member of the Union.

## IV Bringing the People in

Given the extent to which political scientists now make use of survey research (see e.g. Dalton and Klingemann, 2007), it is striking that the democracy indexes created by political scientists do not use surveys. A practical explanation is that data is not available for all member states of the United Nations. However, this is not a theoretical argument against the use of survey data and social science surveys are now conducted on every continent (see Heath et al., 2005).

Analyzing a universe of countries where survey data is available, such as states that are members or candidates for membership of the European Union, makes it possible to develop context-sensitive and nuanced indicators of differences among democratic countries that global analysis tends to blur or even bury (Croissant and Merkel, 2004; Lord, 2006).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, reducing the scope of the universe reduces the risk of using indicators that are not consistently comparable across diverse national settings. For policymakers, it avoids the complaint that existing indexes are culturally biased.

Applying generic concepts to a detailed contextual analysis of a single country is especially suitable to highlight linkages between elements of democratic governance that can be overlooked in broad-brush global analyses that rely on statistical inference rather than observation. Moreover, concentration on a single country can be justified because of its political importance, for example, Russia, the People's Republic of China or South Africa. Activist NGOs such as Transparency International and International IDEA (the Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance, Stockholm) particularly value single-country evaluations to support improvements in democratic governance. Moreover, leading American journals of political science routinely publish articles testing generic theories in a single national context.

Evaluating governance from the bottom up offers a counterweight to the existing information asymmetry in negotiations between the EU and applicant countries. Even though the EU has the power to decide whether, when and how to proceed with a government applying for admission, the applicant has much more information about how its system of governance operates. The EU's means of evaluating what it is told by a national government is limited. A national government can reject criticism from Brussels as showing a lack of awareness of its national traditions and circumstances. It is politically much more difficult for a national government to reject a national survey that reports negative judgments of its own citizens.

Evidence of shortcomings from a national survey is a reminder that applicant governments should strengthen their system of governance not only because the EU wants this done but also because it is what many of its citizens want. Democratic elections, respect for the rule of law and bureaucratic fairness and effectiveness are not values created by or confined to Brussels. Insofar as they are widely shared, then the EU is supporting citizens in



applicant countries when it offers “tough love”, that is, conditions for admission that will improve a country’s governance. Not to do so prior to admission is to encourage a downward drift in governance standards throughout the European Union, since EU institutions have yet to invoke sanctions against eurozone member states that have failed to keep budget deficits within limits set by the European Central Bank or members that rank well down the Perception of Corruption Index of Transparency International ([www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)). In theory, the EU has introduced the principle of post-entry conditions on Bulgaria and Romania to deal with crime and corruption, but the fact that they were admitted in 2007 rather than several years later, as Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn (2006: 51,53) preferred, emphasizes the political pressures to lower rather than enforce standards.

Bottom up evaluations are relevant but cannot be decisive for admission to the European Union, because that is a political decision taken by member states in the Council of Ministers. There is no consensus about how different Copenhagen criteria should be weighted and aggregated in arriving at a simple decision about whether to admit a country. Nor is there a political demand for doing so. An EU decision about admission or rejection can be informed by but not determined by social scientists producing evidence of strengths and weaknesses in a system of democratic governance. Ultimately, this is the collective responsibility of national governments that are already member states of the European Union.

## Notes

- 1 David Beetham (2004; see also IDEA, 2002) has sought to develop a methodology for citizens to evaluate their own country's democracy status with criteria going well beyond those involved in democratic governance and a methodology falling well short of social science criteria for reliability.
- 2 Since the NEB questionnaire is specifically designed for post-Communist countries, it does not undertake surveys in Cyprus and Malta.
- 3 A question about satisfaction with the way democracy works in this country would be unsuitable because there are ambiguities in the question, national contexts, and the replies. See Canache et al. (2001).
- 4 In a complementary manner, there is good reason for focusing on variations in a universe of countries that are semi-democratic or in which governance institutions are not evenly balanced (see e.g. Linz, 2000; Schedler, 2006), knowledge that is lost when more than one hundred countries are lumped together in the residual category of 'not democratic' regimes.

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