CHAPTER III
DEMOCRATIC AUDIT: A CONCEPTUAL TOOLKIT TO ADDRESS POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN INDIA

The Indian experience of democracy shows that just bringing institutions into existence does not guarantee a democratically just political system. Procedures are frequently overlooked and are often ineffective in bringing the elite on the platform of justice. This brings forward the need to look out for an alternative framework where popular engagements could improve the present condition, which requires broader understanding of democratization so that democratic institutions become meaningful not just for the elite, but also for ordinary people. This is possible through an exhaustive assessment of Indian democracy on the basis of certain clear principles and values of democracy. This chapter tries to highlight the need of an exhaustive audit of Indian democracy, which, it will be argued, is a pre-requisite of any structural or policy reforms for addressing political corruption. The basic argument that this chapter tries to put forward is that no reform would prove to be effective unless the root cause of the problem is identified and one of the best possible ways is through democratic audit. The chapter insists that in order to address political corruption in an effective way, the approach must be “pro-active” instead of “reactive”. The idea should not be to straightaway jump to the question — “What is the solution?” rather the primary concern should be to address the question — “What leads to the problem?”

What is Democratic Audit?

Democratic audit, or in other words democracy assessment must be located in the context of general commitment to democratic values and failure of political leadership and institutions in practical realization of these values. Democratic audit is basically about asking the question — how democratic is the system in practice? The definition of democracy generally banks on the relationship between institutions and the values that these institutions ought to follow and with this understanding, the first task of a
democratic audit is to identify a defensible conception of democracy through which certain specific criteria of democracy assessment can be arrived at.

The primary challenge of democratic audit, therefore, is to distinguish between less democracy and more democracy and also between democracy and non-democracy. This dissertation attempts to make this assessment on the basis of the assessment of the state of political corruption, which is considered as an indicator of deficit of democracy. The principles of popular control of power and political equality are core principles to make such an assessment which are fulfilled in a representative democracy through some mediating principles like accountability, responsiveness, and transparency. It is also important to note that these principles lead to different institutional forms and the purpose of this thesis is not to make a choice of any one institutional form but to explore and work upon a wider choice of institutional forms.

There are different ways to assess democracy which are employed in different countries, but democratic audit is unique because it aims to generate an internal debate about the character of political institutions and public life, as it is done by local

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1 The thesis argues that in a democracy, presence of political corruption means that democracy has failed in ensuring a clean and accountable state, making democratic values inaccessible to ordinary people.

2 There can be other mediating values like authorization, representation, solidarity etc but this thesis identifies these three for studying political corruption in India.

3 There are at least four categories of democracy assessment. First category may be called Human Rights Survey that aims to identify where countries stand in a global comparison. The second category is Governance Assessment, which aims at selecting and monitoring aid projects in different countries. Third is Democracy Indices, which is concerned in finding out empirical relationships between democracy and other significant variables. The fourth category covers Democratic Audits, which are primarily concerned to raise consciousness and the level of public debate about issues of democracy. David Beetham comes up with three types of democracy assessments. First involves comparative and quantitative democracy assessment to identify a causal link between democracy and various economic variables. In such assessments quantitative indicators are collected in order to assess the co-relation with economic performance in the form of democracy index. The second type of democracy assessment involves the relationship between human rights and democracy. It provides a comparative study for a country’s performance with respect to others. This method is used for different purposes. It provides a guide for potential investors, a criterion for aid distribution and so on. The third type refers to the assessments conducted by international and government aid agencies to develop strategies for providing development assistance. (David Beetham, “Towards a Universal Framework for Democracy Assessment”, Democratization, Vol. 11, No 2, April 2004, pp. 1-17.)
auditors who are citizen of the country being assessed, hence the judgement about the character and nature of democracy is a domestic one and is not externally defined. A democratic audit assumes that the task of democratization is never complete and even the established democracies require critical assessment which makes democratic audit more comprehensive. The analysis is not limited and extends the analysis of political institutions to the issues of government openness, accountability and responsiveness and includes criteria to assess aspects of civil society and its relationship to government. The purpose of democratic audit is to help to differentiate between those aspects of a country’s political life, which are more satisfactory from a democratic point of view, and those which are cause for concern.4

A democratic audit is intended to create an impact upon governance. It is about measuring, understanding, reporting and finally improving the democratic performance of a system. A democratic audit helps in practical realization of the goal of effectiveness and efficiency of the government by ensuring accountability and transparency in its functioning. Apart from this, democratic audit can also serve as an instrument for assessing how effectively reforms are working out in practice. From comparative perspective, it may help in highlighting common problems shared by different countries. It may also help in highlighting innovative problem solving techniques. In short, democratic audit is intended to enhance participation, ensure inclusiveness, accountability, responsiveness and transparency, with a declared purpose of making an impact on the practice of democracy.

With a quite similar goal, social audit was introduced in India and it is being effectively used to expose government’s inefficiency and ineffectiveness. However, it has not proved to be effective in addressing political corruption, as it got restricted to the outcomes of the specific development policies of the government, and that too in limited sense. In this way social audit is deficient in its processes to deal with political corruption. It is, therefore, important to analyze the problems associated with social audit so that a strong conceptual and methodological base is developed for

conceptualizing the significance and need of democratic audit in addressing political corruption in India.

Social Audit in India: A Critical Appraisal

There have been different suggestions from different scholars and practitioners on how corruption can be reduced. Some suggest having proper monitoring and punishment system, while others propose increasing grassroots participation. The method of social audit adopted by the Indian government is one such attempt that seems to be a fusion of both these methods. It works on the principle that joint participation by community and government with increased awareness among the people about their rights can reduce corruption. “Social Audit is a tool with which government departments can plan, manage and measure non-financial activities and monitor both internal and external consequences of the department/organisation’s social and commercial operations. It is an instrument of social accountability for an organisation. In other words, Social Audit may be defined as an in-depth scrutiny and analysis of the working of any public utility vis-à-vis its social relevance.”

A more lucid and simple definition of social audit is provided by Social Audit Report published by Vision Foundation which is as follows:

Social Audit is a process in which, details of the resource, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public platform. Social Audits allow people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users an opportunity to scrutinize development initiatives.

Social audit is a process of monitoring and evaluating the planning and implementation of a scheme by the people, working together with the government. It helps in inducing accountability on those who implement the programmes of government. But the question is that to what extent social audit can help in ensuring

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accountability? It is important to understand that accountability can be enforced when there is some degree of hierarchy and the problem that social audit faces is that it has not been able to resolve the question of hierarchy. The relationship between the auditors and those who implement the programmes and policies, in a social audit, is weekly hierarchical and consequently social audits are unable to fulfil the minimum criterion of imposing a standard on the implementers, which in turn affects the possibility of imposing sanctions against the corrupt officials. All these complexities highlight the conceptual and operational problems with social audit.

An ideal social audit involves mobilization of community affected by the policies of the government, so that they are able to report the shortcomings of the policy and thereby situating these complaints within the formal rules, making officials accountable and imposing sanctions within the rule of law.7 “The purpose of conducting Social Audit is not to find fault with the individual functionaries but to assess the performance in terms of social, environmental and community goals of the organisation. It is a way of measuring the extent to which an organisation lives up to the shared values and objectives it has committed itself to. It provides an assessment of the impact of an organisation’s non-financial objectives through systematic and regular monitoring, based on the views of its stakeholders.”8 Social audit is based on the principle that democratic local governance should be carried out, as far as possible, with the consent and understanding of all concerned. In this sense it is a process and not an event.

A social audit draws from both government audit and people’s audit. Government audits are conducted solely by government auditors without the involvement of affected people. People’s audit, on the other hand, involves people and also looks at the outcomes of different policies of government. However, one of the problems with people’s audit is that its findings are not recognized by the government. A social audit tries to overcome the shortcomings of both these audits as it is

8 Ibid.
conducted jointly by the government and those affected by the scheme being audited. “An ideal social audit brings on board the perception of the people, examine outcomes (substantive goals of the scheme), not just outputs (i.e. compliance with procedures), involve the community in the task of verification, and its findings are supposed to be enforced by the government.”

For social audit to work it is important that people have access to information. It is important that all stakeholders are aware about social audit and participate in its meetings. A survey conducted in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan clearly spell out the difficulties associated with conducting a social audit. It was found that 63% of the participant and non-participants, and over half the NREG (National Rural Employment Guarantee) participants (60%) did not attend a public meeting in Rajasthan. Almost 80% said that they were not aware of a social audit. In Madhya Pradesh too, the story was similar. The study revealed that only key persons in the village, whose participation was mandatory, were aware of social audit and attended the meetings. Thus, the survey reveals that even the minimum requirement of ensuring awareness among people for the success of social audit, is often not fulfilled.

The study further nullified the assumption that dissemination of the findings of social audit in these meetings and during the process would educate the citizens and would enable them to monitor follow up actions and future compliance on the part of these officials. It was found that in both the states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the audit teams excluded NGOs and the process ignored social mobilization aspect. “Those who participated in the meetings did not feel secure enough to express their views freely since the officials conducting the meetings (eg. Sarpanch) were the ones who were also being audited.” Also, “since the auditors included government and elected officials who were also responsible for implementing the NREG, the process, particularly in MP and Rajasthan, was a self-auditing exercise rather than an external

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9 Shankar, op. cit, p. 5.
11 Ibid., p. 13.
Thus, the assumption that a public audit would ensure follow up actions from the officials too proves to be incorrect.

Though social audits reveal the discrepancies in the functioning of government officials, the enforcement remains minimal. The improvement in the quality of the decision making process is possible only when the decision makers are aware that they would be held accountable for their actions and they must also accept the legitimacy of the persons who impose standards of action upon them which is possible only when there is hierarchy between the auditors and the implementers, which is not true in actual practice. In order to enforce accountability, it is important that people speak as a community rather than as individuals. Substantive results would be gained only when there is social mobilization so that people stand as a community. The Jan Sunwais, conducted by the MKSS (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan) in Rajasthan, is an example of one such effort. The activists and the people collected the records of the development works in a particular area and read out these records in Jan Sunwais. Those people who testified against the documents were asked to record their statements and consequently an FIR was lodged as per the findings. These Jan Sunwais were quite successful. As in practice it is very difficult to get a villager to complain against village leaders, this was not the case with Jan Sunwais. The main factor responsible for its success was the fact that the testimonials were verified collectively by the residents of the village and thus it was a collective that accused the wrong doer and not a single person. Another important factor was that the Jan Sunwais were attended by the powerful persons like retired judges and bureaucrats, ministers etc, which made people believe that MKSS is a powerful organization and can address their grievances effectively. The activists mobilized people to strengthen the weak hierarchical link with the officials. Though these Jan Sunwais proved to be quite effective in acting as a deterrent to corruption for a short period, it could not ensure that the corrupt were punished.

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13 This thesis is not against individualism rather considers that when individuals stand as a community or a joint force they can effectively enforce accountability on public officials who misuse their power.
The general experience has been that social audits have been caught up between the bureaucratic nature of the audit team and less awareness among the people and lack of social mobilization. It is often seen that “when participatory audits conducted by team of non-governmental and state entities are integrated into the fabric of official procedures, as in the case of social audits in NREG, it does not result in enhanced effectiveness of the program. The actual implementation of the social audit in NREG gradually focused more on the audit part rather than the social mobilization aspect….The irony is that social audits cannot contribute to increasing accountability unless they become part of the administrative state. But once they are absorbed into the bureaucratic process, one is faced with the dilemma of ensuring that accountability does not lose its teeth.”

There can, however, be no two opinions to the fact that applying the method of Social Audit at the village level holds tremendous potential for contributing to good local governance and increased transparency and accountability of the local bodies. However, because of certain practical difficulties discussed above it becomes very limited in scope and is effective in some specific cases only. The problem with social audit remains that it focuses only on the outputs of some government policies and not on the outcomes and processes of assessing the policies in terms of their goals. It focuses on procedure compliance and relies on the documents and information that is available and accessible, ignoring the fact that facts on paper can be manipulated. Social audit brings out the importance of participation in ensuring accountability and transparency but fails to come up with any suitable mechanism to ensure such participation. In this sense, it can be argued that social audit takes into account only implementation side of politics overlooking the formulation end of politics, which involves assessment of the system. These problems associated with social audit make it practically ineffective in terms of ensuring accountability and minimizing corruption which brings in the need of democratic audit which has a much wider scope than social audit, as it focuses not just on the assessment of goals of specific policies but

14 Ibid., p. 19.
also assesses institutions and values on which the democratic system functions. Thus, democratic audit also focuses on the formulation end of politics.

Obstacles to participation is a big problem in Indian political system and it is perhaps because of these obstacles present in Indian democracy that India becomes a fitting case for testing democratic theories. But how this assessment of democracy can be carried out? What should be the starting point of such an assessment? Should the assessment be made on the basis of some universal value? In order to be able to provide satisfactory answers to these questions it is important to discuss some popular democracy assessment frameworks so that conclusive remarks can be made about the measures best suited for the Indian case.

**Popular Democracy Assessments: An Overview**

As it is highlighted earlier in this chapter that carrying out democracy assessment is important for addressing political corruption in India, it is relevant to discuss some of the democracy assessments so that some idea is developed about how democracy is being assessed which can help in developing some understanding about how Indian democracy should be assessed so that proper understanding about the nature and extent of political corruption can be conceptualized. The different approaches to measure democracy can be categorized into minimalist or maximalist conceptualizations.\(^\text{15}\) Minimalist approaches are usually strong in terms of reliability while maximalist approaches are generally satisfactory in terms of their measurement validity. Minimalist measures reflect Schumpeter’s idea that democracy is a method to arrive at decisions, as they focus upon few key benchmarks by concentrating mainly on the rules governing party competition for government office. The advantage of minimalist approach is that it helps to develop clear and unambiguous empirical indicators, precise operational definitions and reliable and consistent classification procedures and leaves little room for subjective judgments by emphasizing that coding decisions need to be transparent. Though focus on few benchmarks reduces the risk of including irrelevant attributes and measures, it increases the danger of missing out

some important benchmarks of liberal democracy. For instance, minimalist definitions may not measure the quality of democratic performance like extent of inclusive representation, accountability of leaders, freedom of expression, equality of participation and so on.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, the basic limitation of minimalist approach is that it may not consider some critical aspects of democracy.

In contrast to the minimalist approach, the maximalist approaches to defining and measuring democracy are mainly influenced by Robert Dahl’s work, who believed that democratic regimes are characterized by the presence of key institutions like elected officials, free and fair election, inclusive suffrage, right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information and associational autonomy. Thus, the two main attributes of liberal democracy, according to Dahl, are contestation and participation. Some recent democracy assessments employing maximalist approach have broadened the understanding of contestation and participation by including freedom of religious expression, academic freedom, equal opportunities and gender equality, constraints on the powers of the executives, openness of their recruitment and regulation of participations, apart from other indicators, as the assessment criteria. The attempt of these ‘thicker’ conceptualizations of democracy is to include all relevant aspects of contestation and participation to develop comprehensive scales to classify regimes.

Here it is also important to draw our attention to the two criteria that Gerald L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen think are important for any assessment of democracy — validity and reliability. They believe that these criteria are important to arrive at the indicators in social sciences.\textsuperscript{17} Valid empirical measures, they argue, reflect the concepts to which they relate. Any study of democracy involves the conceptualization of some normative concepts in democratic theory and also developing some operational empirical indicators so that we are able to make right inferences. Measures that are reliable are always consistent as reliability is derived from scientific research

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 57.

\textsuperscript{17} Gerald L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices”, \textit{Comparative Political Studies}, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 5-34.
by means of collecting data, performing analysis and so on. Therefore, any assessment of democracy should pass the test of validity and reliability in order to be effective in its task.

Before discussing different measures of democracy assessments it is important to state at the outset that no single best measure of democracy exists for all purposes. However, it is important to discuss different measures to assess democracy as they provide a good background for arriving at a comprehensive assessment framework for conceptualising political corruption in India. The measures of democracy assessment that are discussed below are chosen for this study as they assess those aspects of democracy that are relevant and important for understanding political corruption like accountability, political rights, electoral participation, rule of law and so on. They are also important in the sense that each one has got a different focus with Freedom House being an index of liberal democracy, Polity IV a measure of constitutional democracy, Vanhanen’s measure of participatory democracy, Prezeworski and others’ index based on contested democracy and the assessment framework of IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) providing a universal measure to assess different aspects of democracy.

**Freedom House’s Democracy Assessment Framework**

Gastil index of civil liberties and political rights annually produced by Freedom House is one of the best measures of liberal democracy and is also most widely used. Though it started assessing political trends in 1950s, it was only in 1972 that it launched a comprehensive study called “Freedom in the World”. Raymond Gastil used survey method and gave ratings of political rights and civil liberties for different nation state and then went on to categorize them as free, partly free or not free.

The index developed by Freedom House looks at the existence of political rights in terms of electoral processes, political pluralism and the functioning of the government. The presence of freedom of speech and association, rule of law and personal rights determine civil liberties. The research is based on different information sources, which are in turn based on different questions with some items separately
focusing on the existence of political rights and some specifically monitoring the existence of civil liberties. The assessment is based on the presence of institutional checks and balances through different mechanisms like existence of a representative and inclusive legislature, an independent judiciary and existence of political rights and civil liberties, with free and fair election. The values on which this measure emphasizes are basically the values of liberal democracy which makes it suitable for assessing a liberal democracy.

This measure, however, has been criticized for falling short on methodological fronts. Some scholars, in this vein, have argued that the procedures used by Freedom House lack transparency, and consequently the reliability and consistency of coding decisions cannot be cross-checked. It is further argued that the questions used for constructing the index usually involve two or three distinct items within each sub-category leading to ambiguous measurements. Critics argue that the concepts of freedom and democracy are not the same and in this sense measures like freedom of religious expression and absence of economic exploitation may be important in terms of monitoring human rights, but are not valid measures of democracy, making it less valuable as an analytical tool for policymakers.

Democracy Assessment Framework of Polity IV

Polity IV is the latest version of the project started by Ted Robert Gurr in the 1970s. It provides annual time series data in country-year format. It conceives democracy in terms of three elements — the presence of institutions and procedures through which people choose between different alternative policies and leaders, the presence of institutional checks on the power of the executive, and the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens. The emphasis is on institutional features. The recruitment of the executive, for example, is measured by leadership selection through popular election. Similarly, the openness of recruitment for the chief executive is measured in terms of the opportunity that people have to attain the position in regularized manner without any hereditary succession, forceful seizure of power, or military coups. Autocracies, on the other hand, are considered as regimes which restrict competitive political participation, where the chief executive is chosen from within the political elite and
when these leaders are in power they do not face any constraints on their power. Thus, this approach of measurement of democracy measures democracy on the basis of indicators like competitiveness of political participation, the competitiveness of executive recruitment and the constraints on chief executive. Hence it provides separate indices which help in disaggregating different components. However, this measure too is criticized for lacking transparency and hence lacks reliability.

*Vanhanen’s Measure of Democracy Assessment*

Tatu Vanhanen’s measure of democracy is a more minimalist approach, which measures democracy on the basis of two criteria — the degree of electoral competition and the degree of electoral participation. The former is measured on the basis of the votes won by the largest party in the national legislature and latter is judged by the number of people who voted in national legislative election. The advantage of this measure is that the measures or indicators used are easy to calculate and empirical data can also be easily collected. The ratio of total valid votes and the voting-age-population (Vote / VAP), Vanhanen argues, determines the democratic health of a country. Vote-VAP ratio also indicates the number of adults who voted and thus can tell about the number of adults who did not cast their votes, which can help in identifying the states that deny some adults from using their franchise.

However, questions can be raised on the validity of this measure. Scholars argue that ignoring other aspects like socio-economic condition of people that are important for fair and meaningful electoral contestation and considering only voter turnout may be misleading for measuring democracy.\(^{18}\)

*Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi’s Measure of Democracy Assessment*

Another measure of democracy was developed by Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi. According to this measure democracy is defined in terms of the ability of the citizens to replace their government through contested elections. It is argued that regular elections provide the opportunity to citizens to discipline their leaders, as the

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\(^{18}\) Norris, op. cit., p. 63.
threat of losing power compels the leaders to consider the interests of the citizens. Credibility of this threat can be ensured if there is effective party competition. “Parties are necessary to build and aggregate support among a broad coalition of citizens’ organizations and interest groups; to select and train legislative candidates and political leaders; to provide voters with a choice of governing teams and policies; and, if elected to office, to organize the process of government and to stand collectively accountable for their actions in subsequent contests. For all these reasons, political parties thereby form the cornerstone of a democratic society and serve a function unlike that of any other institution.”

According to Przeworski (and others) regular electoral opportunities for removing those in power is the essence of democratic states. It is important that more than one party competes in regular elections and the opposition must have some chance of winning elections, so that there is always some uncertainty about the outcome. It is also important that when the party in power loses election, it leaves its office. The point of consideration here is that by fulfilling these conditions parties in power can be held accountable for their actions. Thus, for Przeworski (and others), certain institutional rules make a state democratic. For example, if the lower house of legislature and chief executive is elected and there is more than one party then the regime is considered to be democratic, but if they do not have any of these features, they will be classified as autocratic. Even if the states have these democratic features but the incumbent party has never lost election such regimes are classified as autocratic.

This measure was an advance in the field of assessment of democracy by focusing on limited and clear rules. However, the basic limitation of this measure was that it did not take into account certain important dimensions of liberal democracy by overlooking aspects like the role of mass participation. It does not consider whether elections are held under conditions of a universal adult suffrage. Though certain sections of adult population always remain excluded from enjoying voting rights in every state, universal adult suffrage is still in principle necessary for democracy and

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Ibid., p. 65.
contestation without universal adult suffrage may result in restricted competition among oligarchs.\textsuperscript{20}

This measure is criticized by some theorists for the way it measures party competition, as it does not take into account other conditions that may be equally important for making party competition meaningful. For example, “without the protection of human rights, freedom of the press, free and fair elections and civil liberties, parties cannot compete effectively for electoral support, and citizens cannot evaluate government performances and party policies to arrive at an informed choice at the ballot box.”\textsuperscript{21} Apart from this, the existence of more than one party does not guarantee that all parties have an equal chance of winning elections. Finally, critics argue that classification of regimes as either democratic or autocratic is problematic as often the transition to democracy is a gradual process in which regimes pass through different stages. “The democratization process refers to the stages which regimes go through in order to become democratic. The process can be progressive (where regimes become more democratic) or degenerative (where states become more autocratic).”\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Kaufmann-Kray Indicator or the World Wide Governance Indicator}

The indicators developed by Kaufmann and others to measure good governance are one of the most widely used measures. It measures on the basis of six dimensions of governance and includes the views of experts, survey respondents and citizens on different issues of governance. The first dimension of governance is “Voice and Accountability” that measures the ability of citizens to participate in selecting their government. It also measures freedom of expression, freedom of association and free media. The second dimension is “Political Stability and Absence of Violence”

\textsuperscript{20} Relying only on Przeworski (and others) rules, we would end up classifying Britain after Glorious Revolution of 1968, a democracy, as it had rule of law, parliamentary sovereignty and limited power for the monarchy, neglecting the fact that the power rotated between only Whig and Tory parties and voting rights in many corrupt boroughs were restricted to a group of property-owning middle-class men. (Prior to the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884, 1919 and 1927)

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 67.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 69.
that looks at the possibility of unconstitutional overthrow of a government. The third dimension is “Government Effectiveness” that measures the quality of public services and civil services and also to what extent they are free from any political pressures. It also looks at the quality of policy making and implementation. Another dimension is “Regulatory Quality”, which measures the government’s ability to regulate private sector development. The fifth dimension “Rule of Law”, measures the extent of rule abidance in a society, particularly the government agents. Finally, “Control of Corruption”, studies the extent to which public power is used for private gain. It also includes the analysis of the influence of elites in government formation.

The basic limitation of this method is that it measures a number of aspects of democracy but fails to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of its findings which reduces it to a fact telling exercise.

**International IDEA Assessment Framework**

The International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) Assessment Framework has been developed to assess the democratic condition of any country with the basic purpose behind it to raise public awareness about the nature of democracy and public debate about the standards of performance people should expect from their government. The framework contains a list of institutions and practices to be assessed against given norms. The International IDEA Assessment Framework has been widely accepted because of certain distinctive features like clarity of principles, comprehensive framework, country ownership of the assessment process, flexibility and so on. The framework is based on two fundamental principles — popular control of public decisions and decision makers and equality between the citizens in relation to those decisions. The strength of the assessment framework is that it is based on clear democratic principles that are of universal application. Some

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critics have argued that focussing only on two principles does not cover some important aspects of democracy like socio-economic equality.\(^\text{24}\)

The different measures of democracy assessments that have been discussed focus mainly on the institutional features and make the assessment on the basis of the presence or absence of those features. What these measures at best can do is to detect the presence or absence of political corruption and accountability in terms of these institutional features. Even the International IDEA Assessment Framework, from which this study draws a lot, that tries to cover almost all aspects of democracy, does not provide a robust framework for addressing corruption. The point that these frameworks miss is that the aim is not just to identify the fact but also to find out the cause. A culture of corruption has taken root in India and the task is to transform this culture, which requires proper assessment of Indian democracy using valid and reliable measures to understand political corruption, which can effectively overcome the drawbacks of the above discussed measures of democracy assessments. Assessing democracy is important because it will help in conceptualizing the problem in a holistic manner as the general understanding of political corruption is partial or distorted which leads to ineffective and inefficient problem solving mechanisms. As pointed out earlier, the purpose of democratic audit is to raise awareness about the nature and extent of the problems of democracy, so that right measures are devised to address the problem.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to bring forward the significance and necessity of democratic audit to address political corruption in India. The chapter explains the concept of democratic audit and its role in the process of democratisation and stresses that democratic audit can work positively towards bringing about effective and transparent government. The purpose of democratic audit is to ensure accountability and transparency in the functioning of the government. For coming up with any kind of

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\(^{24}\) The assessment framework developed in the next chapter is to great extent based on IDEA’s assessment framework and there it is discussed why it is important to focus on these two principles of democracy.
effective and efficient reform process it is important to find out where and what kind of reforms would be most effective, which can be ensured, as it is argued, through democratic audit, which is one way to assess the positives and negatives of the functioning of democracy that can help in identifying the loopholes in the system. Some popular democracy assessments are discussed to see how democracy is being assessed all over the world. The effort in this chapter has been to build a strong background for the next chapter where an audit framework is developed for assessing democracy in India.