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**THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND CIVIL SOCIETY.
AN UNDERDEVELOPED DIALOGUE.**

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THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND CIVIL SOCIETY

AN UNDERDEVELOPED DIALOGUE

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Abstract

Reflecting a wider trend in global governance, the IMF and civil society groups have over the past fifteen years developed increased contacts with each other. Nevertheless, these links remain in significant ways underdeveloped. Many relevant associations have no interchanges with the IMF, most of the relationships that do exist are shallow, and to date the Fund and its civic counterparts have generally been disinclined to engage in a critical, veritably reciprocal dialogue. These shortcomings have resulted from various institutional as well as deeper structural circumstances. In consequence important opportunities to inject greater democracy into a key global economic institution are being missed.

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THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW POLITICS

With contemporary globalisation, governance is no longer what it used to be. Sovereign statehood persists in name, but in practice regulatory authority has become dispersed across a host of substate, suprastate and private bodies as well as states. To be sure, states retain a central place in governance and show no sign of making an exit from history. Yet in the 1990s not even the best-resourced government can exercise absolute, all-encompassing, unshared authority over its territorial jurisdiction in the way that state sovereignty has traditionally implied. Certainly, private, substate and suprastate institutions with regulatory functions often refer to – and are generally heavily influenced by – states, particularly major governments. However, many of these other loci of contemporary governance have also acquired a degree of relative autonomy, especially in regard to weaker states. World governance is therefore no longer reducible, on the neat Westphalian formula, to the states-system. Accordingly, too, democracy cannot today be achieved through the state alone.¹

In this emergent situation of post-sovereign governance – marked by dispersed and overlapping authorities – various networks of communication, cooperation and conflict over regulatory matters do not directly involve states. For example, many substate regional and local governments have established transborder links between each other, bypassing their respective central state institutions. Likewise, global foundations (e.g. Ford, Soros) have often become involved in grassroots politics, with little or no intervention from the states in whose jurisdiction those involvements take place. In the European Union, suprastate regional institutions have been sponsoring substate regional development. In addition, much collaboration has occurred between agencies of the United Nations system without constant reference back to the member-states.

Another such trend in contemporary post-sovereign politics has been the proliferation of relations between public multilateral institutions on the one hand and civil society groups on the other. Today most of the main public-sector global regulatory bodies have developed some degree of formally institutionalised links with what are commonly but rather imprecisely called nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).² (For reasons explained below, in the present study a terminology of 'civil society' and 'civic' associations is preferred to that of 'NGOs'.) Exchanges between these parties have

¹I have elaborated this general argument in 'The Globalization of World Politics', in J. Baylis and S. Smith (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 13–30; and 'Global Capitalism and the State', *International Affairs*, 73 (July 1997), pp. 427–52.

²See, e.g., S. Qadir (ed.), 'Nongovernmental Organizations, the United Nations, and Global Governance', *Third World Quarterly*, 16 (Fall 1995); P. Willetts (ed.), 'Conscience of the World': *The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System* (London, Hurst, 1996); T.G. Weiss and L. Gordenker (eds), *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder, Rienner, 1996).

taken the form *inter alia* of correspondence, briefings, consultations, and operational collaboration.

The growth of relations between global governance agencies and civic associations raises a host of issues. Who is involved and through what channels? What aims do the various parties have in engaging with one another? How effective is the communication between civil society bodies on the one hand and public global institutions on the other? How do the parties affect one another: in terms of both general outlooks and specific policies? What repercussions, if any, do these relationships have on the policies and general position of states? Finally, and on a more explicitly normative note, what do these networks tell us about the prospects for democracy in the present globalising world? A start is made at exploring such questions below with regard to contacts between civic groups and the International Monetary Fund (IMF or 'the Fund').³

Expansion of the IMF

The proliferation of IMF activities well illustrates the accelerated growth of a global public sector since the 1960s. During the first quarter-century after it started operations in 1945, the Fund was mainly concerned to establish and manage the international fixed-exchange rate regime. Its interventions were relatively infrequent and brief, generally limited to countries of the North, and mainly restricted to monetary and trade policy measures.

Although the IMF lost much of its old role with the end of the dollar-centred fixed-rate system in 1971, increased globalisation of production and finance have propelled the institution into many new areas. The Fund's activities have considerably broadened to encompass, *inter alia*:

- comprehensive and detailed surveillance, both of individual member-states' macroeconomic policies (including annual so-called 'Article IV consultations' with governments) and of the world economy as a whole;
- interventions in dozens more countries (up to sixty per year), generally to make much more substantial policy adjustments, often requiring far larger credits, and frequently lasting for considerably longer periods (up to fifteen years in consecutive IMF programmes);

³This research would appear to be unprecedented. Earlier academic investigations of 'NGO' involvement in global governance have completely overlooked the IMF.

- additional conditionalities in areas such as fiscal policy, debt management, structural economic reforms, social policy, and – most recently – so-called 'good governance';⁴
- training of official macroeconomists, including more than 10,000 by the IMF Institute since its establishment in 1964;⁵
- technical assistance missions to governments, which started in 1964, sharply increased from the 1980s, and now number around 600 per annum;⁶
- the development, since 1996, of global norms for government publication of economic and financial data (the so-called Special Data Dissemination Standard);⁷ and
- large-scale emergency interventions in financial market crises – e.g. in Mexico in 1994–5 and Asia in 1997–8.

At the same time, with decolonisation and the end of most communist regimes, the membership of the IMF has risen from 62 states in 1960 to 181 states in 1996.

To handle this enlarged agenda and membership, the IMF has grown institutionally as well. For example, staff numbers have more than tripled, from 750 in 1966 to 2600 (including 400 contract staff) in 1996.⁸ Since the 1970s the Fund has developed its own 'diplomatic service' of sorts, with Resident Representatives stationed in 22 countries by the early 1980s, 38 countries in 1991, and 68 countries by 1996.⁹ The organisation has supplemented its traditional stand-by arrangements with medium-term credit facilities since 1974 and longer-term concessional loans from 1986. Since 1970 the Fund has had its own money form, the Special Drawing Right (SDR). IMF quota subscriptions have grown from the equivalent of 21 billion SDRs in 1965 to 145 billion

⁴'IMF Adopts Guidelines Regarding Governance Issues', *IMF Survey*, 26 (5 August 1997), pp. 233–8.

⁵'IMF Institute Program 1997', p. 2; G.M. Teyssier, *The IMF Institute in Retrospect and Prospect* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, 1990).

⁶*The Technical Assistance and Training Services of the International Monetary Fund* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, Pamphlet Series No. 43, 1989); 'IMF: 50 Facts (30. IMF Technical Assistance to Member Countries)' (Washington, IMF External Relations Department, 1994).

⁷<http://dsbb.imf.org/>.

⁸IMF, *Annual Report 1966* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, 1966), p. 133; IMF, *Annual Report 1996*, p. 218.

⁹IMF, *Functions and Organization of the Staff Financial Year 1991* (Washington, IMF Budget and Planning Division, 1990), p. 3; *Annual Report 1996*, p. 217.

SDRs in 1995.¹⁰ The supplementary General Arrangements to Borrow (GAB) have almost tripled from the original 6 billion SDRs (in lenders' currencies) in 1962 to 17 billion SDRs since 1983.¹¹ Four additional borrowing agreements concluded between 1979 and 1986 have at one time or another given the Fund access to a total of 27.6 billion further SDRs in credit lines.¹² It was recently proposed to double the GAB with the so-called New Arrangements to Borrow, and member governments are currently deliberating a further 45 per cent increase in IMF quotas.¹³

To be sure, it would be mistaken to depict – as some observers have done – the International Monetary Fund as an omnipotent ruler of the world economy. Indeed, in terms of staff numbers and its annual operating budget of under half a billion dollars, the institution's means are comparatively small. For example, the World Bank engages nearly four times as many permanent staff (plus hundreds of consultants at any one time) and makes an annual profit of over a billion dollars. The central banks of major states also dwarf the Fund in terms of payrolls and expenditures. For instance, the *Banque de France* has almost three times as many employees as the IMF. Even many medium-sized cities have more personnel and budgetary resources than the Fund.

All the same, the Fund has clearly experienced a major growth in responsibilities and authority over the past several decades. Its voice carries far in global financial markets, national macroeconomic policies and – eventually – local and household budgets. Like other public multilateral bodies, the Fund can suitably be called an agency of 'global governance' rather than, following traditional terminology, an 'international organisation'. IMF regulation covers the entire world, is formulated at least in part with regard to the world as a single economy, is approved by boards representing the world as a whole, is executed by staff from across the world, and extends to policies within as well as between states.

Not surprisingly, given the far-reaching significance of IMF surveillance and conditionalities in much contemporary public policy, numerous civic organisations across the world have sought contact with the Fund. In addition, the IMF itself has in the 1990s proactively cultivated many links with civil society. Fund management and staff have reasoned that their prescriptions will have greater success if citizens of the member-states are informed about and receptive to that advice. It is now common to hear a Fund official declare that 'a broad-based social consensus is needed to sustain

¹⁰Treasurer's Department, *Financial Organization and Operations of the IMF* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, Pamphlet Series No. 45, 1995 4th edn), p. 28.

¹¹Ibid, pp. 45–6.

¹²Ibid, pp. 41–9.

¹³'IMF Executive Board Adopts New Arrangements to Borrow', *IMF Survey*, 26 (10 February 1997), pp. 33–4.

[an IMF] programme' or even that 'by making sure that all voices are heard we increase the success of a programme'.¹⁴ Gone are the days when, in the words of one Executive Director of the IMF, 'the Fund snuck in and out of a country, denied any involvement, and told the government to explain the agreed policies'.¹⁵

Expansion of Civil Society

As noted earlier, the present study examines 'civil society' rather than 'NGOs' alone. NGOs are public-service agencies that deal with various questions including community improvement, consumer protection, demilitarisation, relief and development, environment, human rights, promotion of ethnic and indigenous cultures, status of women, youth welfare, and so on. However, civil society encompasses also business associations, labour unions, farmers lobbies, religious bodies, foundations and academic institutes – i.e. several other types of nonofficial, nonprofit organisations that many people do not usually associate with the label 'NGO'. The present analysis excludes political parties from the realm of civil society, since their activities aim at direct participation in governance through the state. The mass media are excluded from the scope of the study except when they serve as a mouthpiece for one or the other lobbying organisation. In short, then, civil society is taken here to encompass all those associations and activities that specifically aim, from outside official circles, to reinforce or alter prevailing norms and regulations.

Collectively, civic associations form a 'third sector' (i.e. next to public institutions and commercial organisations). They include advocacy groups that lobby for particular causes, operational bodies that provide certain social services, and various agencies that pursue a mixture of advocacy and operational activities. In size, civic associations range from small community-based organisations at the grassroots to large transborder networks like Greenpeace with several million members. In some countries (e.g. Kenya, Romania and Uganda), civil society organisations meet in a national forum of some kind. In the 1990s civic groups have also convened global meetings with fair regularity, for example, alongside the Group of Seven summits, the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings, and *ad hoc* United Nations conferences. For instance, nearly 10,000 civic associations participated in a Global Forum at the Earth Summit of 1992, and over 30,000 women attended the NGO Forum and Fourth UN Conference on Women in 1995.¹⁶

¹⁴ Author's interviews with IMF staff.

¹⁵ Interview with the author, November 1996.

¹⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 87; A. Mawle, 'Women, Environment and the United Nations', in F. Dodds (ed.), *The Way Forward: Beyond Agenda 21* (London, Earthscan, 1997), p. 155.

Data concerning the growth of civil society activism are much harder to specify than those related to a single institution like the IMF. However, the expansion has been such that one leading researcher of the phenomenon has spoken of 'a global "associational revolution" that may prove to be as significant to the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state was to the latter nineteenth'.¹⁷ By the count of the Union of International Associations, the number of active transborder NGOs has increased more than tenfold since 1960, to a total of 16,000 in 1997.¹⁸ Hundreds of thousands of additional civic groups work in local and national contexts. For example, by the early 1990s Kenya counted some 23,000 women's associations, and 25,000 grassroots organisations were registered in Tamil Nadu State, India.¹⁹ Even in Romania, where civil society organising was completely suppressed under the Ceausescu dictatorship, nearly 12,000 civic groups registered in the first seven years after the Revolution of December 1989.²⁰

Civil Society Engagement of the IMF

Of course, most of this burgeoning civic activity has not been directed specifically at the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the IMF campaigns that have developed have pursued diverse objectives. Three general types of approach might be distinguished: 'conformist', 'reformist' and 'radical'.²¹ Needless to say, individuals and associations who have lobbied the Fund have in practice not always fallen neatly into one of these three categories. Many organisations have housed a variety of opinions, and individual activists have frequently altered their views over time or between different audiences. Indeed, some IMF staff have complained about inconsistencies in the positions of some civic activists. Nevertheless, a loose three-way distinction between conformers, reformers and radicals serves in a broad way to map the diversity of perspectives on the IMF in contemporary civil society.

For their part, conformers have broadly supported the Fund's aims and activities. For example, most business associations and economic research institutes have – at a maximum – challenged certain details of IMF policy: e.g. the target growth rate; the level of a particular tax; etc. However, conformers have had no significant quarrel with

¹⁷L.M. Salamon, 'The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector', *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 1994), p. 109.

¹⁸*Yearbook of International Organizations 1997/98. Volume 1* (Munich, Saur, 1997), pp. 1762–3.

¹⁹UNDP, *Human Development Report 1993* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 85–6.

²⁰C. Merkel, 'The Development of Civil Society', in *Democracy in Romania: Assessment Mission Report* (Stockholm, International IDEA, 1997), p. 88.

²¹For an alternative characterisation, see L. Jordan, 'The Bretton Woods Challengers', in J.M. Grieshaber and B.G. Gunter (eds), *Development: New Paradigms and Principles for the Twenty-First Century* (London, Pluto, 1996), pp. 75–88.

the general principles that have informed Fund surveillance, conditionality and financial rescues.

In contrast, reformers have aimed to redirect policies and/or to alter institutional procedures in the International Monetary Fund. Broadly, these campaigners have sought to shift the Fund from neoliberal orthodoxies in the direction of a global Keynesianism. The various proposals for reform have mainly centred on:

- (a) changes in Fund conditionalities (e.g. so as to advance poverty alleviation, sustainable development, labour protection, the status of women, reduction in military expenditures, etc.);
- (b) reduction of external debt burdens for poor countries;
- (c) democratisation of the Fund (e.g. through greater representativeness, transparency and accountability); and, to a lesser extent,
- (d) better integration of IMF activities with those of other global governance agencies in order to achieve a more coordinated and holistic approach to world development.

Whereas reformers have sought amendments of existing policies and institutions, radical opponents of the Fund have pursued more thoroughgoing changes. These campaigners have advocated, for example: an end to IMF structural adjustment programmes in the East and South; a termination of IMF surveillance; even the wholesale abolition of the Fund.²² Radical critiques of the Fund have been articulated from a variety of traditionalist, nationalist, Marxist, feminist and environmentalist positions.

As the next sections of this paper will indicate, the IMF has not developed relations with all categories of civil society associations, nor with all groups in the same ways and to the same extents. Nor has the Fund engaged in operational collaboration with civic partners, contracting out some of its work to civil society organisations, as many relief and development agencies have done. IMF exchanges with advocacy groups have also been less formally institutionalised than is the case with most agencies of the United Nations system. For example, on the other side of 19th Street in Washington, the World Bank has maintained considerably wider and deeper relationships with NGOs.²³

²²Cf. J. Cavanagh *et al.* (eds), *Beyond Bretton Woods: Alternatives to the Global Economic Order* (London, Pluto, 1994); K. Danaher (ed.), *50 Years Is Enough: The Case against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund* (Boston, South End, 1994).

²³Cf. P.J. Nelson, 'Internationalising Economic and Environmental Policy: Transnational NGO Networks and the World Bank's Expanding Influence', *Millennium*, 25 (Winter 1996), pp. 605-33.

All of this said, however, the IMF has acquired far more contacts with civil society than most observers appreciate. Moreover, these connections mark the first – and to date only – instance of substantial direct relations between civic groups and an institution of global monetary and financial regulation. Thus, for example, the Bank for International Settlements, the International Organization of Securities Commissions, the International Securities Market Association, and global credit-rating agencies like Moody's Investors Service have developed nothing of the kind.

GROWTH OF AN IMF-CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

The following pages review historically the emergence, proliferation and growth of relations between the IMF and civic associations. Such contacts were pretty well nonexistent until the late 1970s and remained incidental through most of the 1980s. Towards the late 1980s both the Fund and various civil society organisations began to give each other more focussed attention. Multiple networks of contacts have formed over the decade since 1988. In a word, then, the present section emphasises the positive, namely, the considerable growth in IMF-civil society contacts. Subsequent sections then analyse the limitations to those relationships.

Early Developments

In contrast to the central United Nations agencies in New York, the International Monetary Fund attracted little limelight during its first decades; nor did its management see any need for the institution to maintain direct exchanges with citizens groups. The idea probably never even crossed their minds. With but a very occasional exception, all of the Fund's communications between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s were with states: their finance ministries and central banks in particular. The closest approximation to public relations came in the form of a limited range of IMF publications, including a Pamphlet Series started in 1965 and the biweekly *IMF Survey* launched in 1972. During this time, too, no advocacy groups specifically targeted the Fund in a systematic and sustained manner.

This situation began to change in the 1970s. The collapse of the fixed-exchange rate regime and the uneasy transition to floating rates gave the Fund a higher profile in the public eye. The 1970s also saw the beginnings of SDR allocations, extended IMF policy surveillance, early initiatives in the direction of structural adjustment programmes, and discussions of reform of the Bretton Woods institutions in the context of the New International Economic Order debates. Three quota increases,

proposed in 1970, 1975–6, and 1978, nearly tripled the IMF's subscribed capital. After 1982 the Fund played a prominent role in managing the Third World debt crisis. Concurrently the institution intensified its promotion of structural changes in the economies of client countries.

Such developments prompted increased concern about the Fund in civil society. As early as the 1970s, some business groups in programme countries began to request meetings with visiting IMF missions. Increasing numbers of financiers began to attend the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings as special guests and visitors. Around 1982–3, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) started to invite IMF representatives to its regional meetings. In the academic world, meanwhile, researchers at bodies like the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London and the newly created Institute for International Economics in Washington engaged with Fund economists to assess the implications of the rapid expansion of IMF activities.²⁴ The Group of Thirty, formed in 1979, also established some contacts with the Fund.

Several influential lobbying groups established at this time were actively supportive of the IMF. For instance, the Institute of International Finance (IIF), formed in 1983 by three dozen commercial banks, established a close working relationship with the Fund in addressing debt crises in various countries of the South and East during the 1980s. The Japan Center for International Finance (JCIF), co-owned by government and commercial financial institutions in Tokyo, was created in March 1983 *inter alia* to pursue dialogue with the Fund. The Bretton Woods Committee, also established in 1983, brought together prominent American industrialists, financiers, academics, and former government officials to defend the Fund and the World Bank in the face of considerable negative congressional and public opinion in the USA.

Indeed, other civic opinion of the Fund in the 1980s was distinctly hostile. Many activists were suspicious that an organisation about which they knew so little could so quickly accumulate so many apparently far-reaching competences. Anti-colonialist opinion in particular depicted the Fund as a new imperial authority that quashed national sovereignty and deepened poverty in the South. More generally, the IMF attracted the ire of critics who linked programmes of stabilisation, liberalisation and privatisation to increased inequalities, poorer working conditions, reductions in basic social services, greater environmental degradation, and so on.

²⁴Cf. T. Killick (ed.), *Adjustment and Financing in the Developing World: The Role of the International Monetary Fund* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, 1982); J. Williamson (ed.), *IMF Conditionality* (Washington, Institute for International Economics, 1983). The first of these books published proceedings of a seminar jointly sponsored by the Fund and ODI in October 1981. The second published papers from an IIE conference in March 1982 that was attended by nine IMF staffpersons.

That said, through most of the 1980s no advocacy group conducted carefully researched, clearly targeted and energetically sustained opposition vis-à-vis the Fund. In 1980 a Maryknoll missionary with long experience in Peru, Father Tom Burns, stood alone in giving congressional testimony in the USA against an increased IMF quota. Three years later a handful of Washington-based environmentalists lobbied to block congressional approval of US contributions to a further quota increase.²⁵ For the rest the Fund was implicated along with other financial institutions in several loosely orchestrated civic campaigns of the 1980s for debt relief in the South: e.g. by the (now defunct) US Debt Crisis Network, by the Netherlands-based Forum on Debt and Development (FONDAD), and by various religious organisations scattered around the world.

In the South itself, no noteworthy civic mobilisation directed specifically at the IMF transpired at this time, apart from sporadic street protests, mainly in Latin America. As of the mid-1980s, advocacy groups in the South (where they existed at all) usually had only the most limited information about the Fund. Apart from the incidental business and labour links mentioned above, civic organisations in programme countries lacked any channels of contact either with the IMF itself or with relevant civil society associations based in the North.

The IMF made little response to the early civic opposition just described. In a small move towards better coordination of public relations activities, the Managing Director of the day, Jacques de Larosière, in 1980 merged previously scattered press and publications activities into one organisational unit. A year later this bureau was merged into a newly created External Relations Department (EXR). However, during most of the 1980s 'external relations' was restricted almost exclusively to publications, press releases, and the organisation of academic seminars. The little outreach activity that transpired at this time was mostly directed at 'safe' audiences such as bankers and professional economists. A Visitors Center was opened at IMF headquarters in 1986, but only after the municipal government of Washington, DC – determined to reduce the Fund's secrecy – threatened otherwise to deny permission for building extension work.

The Fund's first and rather hesitant entry into public political controversy occurred in 1983, when EXR hired an additional official for the specific purpose of lobbying the US Congress for approval of the IMF quota increase. However, the new position was not at this juncture expanded into a full-time job of liaison with legislatures and civic

²⁵Cf. 'Statement of Dr. Brent Blackwelder for the Hearing Record of the House Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, Concerning the Proposed Quota Increase for the International Monetary Fund (IMF)', 3 May 1983.

associations. In short, as the late 1980s neared, the IMF had but minimal links with civil society bodies, save certain research institutes and a few organisations representing business interests.

On the Agenda

Several developments in the late 1980s combined to make contacts with civil society a matter of greater concern for the Fund. Inside the organisation, the arrival of Michel Camdessus in 1987 for the first time gave the IMF a Managing Director who accorded substantial priority to public relations. Two years later the Fund received the highly critical conclusions of a commissioned independent study of its external relations performance. This report called amongst other things for an enlargement of EXR and 'a radical change in the way [the Fund] views and relates to the outside world'.²⁶ Certainly officials recognised that a further 50 billion SDR increase in IMF quotas, as proposed in 1990, would require a concerted lobbying effort, particularly in the USA. Moreover, monies for the new IMF lending arrangements created in 1986–7, SAF and ESAF,²⁷ also required congressional approval, thereby giving Washington lobbyists an additional lever on the Fund. In 1989 these advocates booked their first success in attaching demands for IMF reforms to US legislation.²⁸

Other external civic pressure on the IMF came from further afield. For instance, the organisation faced thousands of strident protesters in the streets at the 1988 Annual Meetings in Berlin. Witnesses recall that the scale and tone of the rallies 'surprised everyone' and were 'quite an eyeopener for people at the Fund'.²⁹ A few months later, Save the Rainforest presented the Managing Director with a petition critical of IMF policies holding nearly 28,000 signatures from five major member states.³⁰ In several programme countries, meanwhile, demonstrations against the Fund turned violent: e.g. in Zambia in December 1986 (15 killed); and in Venezuela in February 1989 (with over 300 deaths). The publication in the late 1980s of several authoritative studies regarding negative consequences of structural adjustment programmes also put the Fund on the defensive.³¹ Following up such findings, representatives of 46 NGOs from two dozen

²⁶'The IMF's Image in the United States and Ramifications for External Relations Activities' (April 1989), pp. ix, xvii–xviii.

²⁷The Structural Adjustment Facility and the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility.

²⁸Namely, with PL 101–167, the Fiscal Year 1990 Foreign Operations Appropriation Bill; and PL 101–240, the International Development and Finance Act 1989.

²⁹Interviews with IMF staff and civic organisers, Washington, November 1996.

³⁰Letter from Bruce Calhoun (President, Save the Rainforest) to Michel Camdessus, 3 January 1989.

³¹E.g., G.A. Cornia *et al.*, *Adjustment with a Human Face* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1987–8), 2 vols; R. Broad, *Unequal Alliance: The World Bank, the IMF and the Philippines* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Trade and Development Report 1989* (New York, United Nations, 1989), pp. 153–209. In addition, the World

countries met at Oxford in September 1987 to discuss alternative approaches and strategies to debt management and macroeconomic adjustment.³² Many more such seminars followed in the ensuing years.

The IMF's proactive approach to civil society can in several respects be dated from 1988. For example, with unprecedented phraseology, its *Annual Report* of that year affirmed a 'priority on correcting the negative perceptions of the Fund held in some member countries'.³³ IMF staff were mobilised in a concerted public relations effort for the Berlin Annual Meetings. Speakers were despatched and, for the first time in its forty-year existence, the Fund produced some basic popular information booklets, including several translations out of English.³⁴ In another unprecedented move, a few Executive Directors of the Fund agreed to meet in Berlin with groups of civil society lobbyists. The following year, in 1989, the IMF established a Public Affairs Division within EXR, assigning it the specific task of liaison with civil society groups and other outside persons.

The late 1980s also witnessed the development of greater focus on the IMF in some quarters of civil society. In Washington, for example, Friends of the Earth-US (FOE-US) launched its IMF Reform Campaign, which continues to this day.³⁵ After grabbing some headlines on the streets of Berlin, civic activists in 1989 organised the first of the NGO Forums that have been held in parallel with each set of Annual Meetings since then. For the 1989 Forum, participants from 32 countries, including 60 people from the South, came to Washington for six days of meetings and workshops. The late 1980s also saw the formation of several South-based advocacy groups that would be concerned with the IMF in the 1990s: e.g. the Freedom from Debt Coalition, founded in the Philippines in 1988; and the intercontinental Third World Network, launched in 1989. At this stage, however, the IMF still did not actively pursue contacts with civil society groups in programme countries.

Bank conducted a confidential analysis in 1988 which concluded that its structural adjustment programmes in Africa had significant problems.

³²Nelson, p. 613.

³³IMF, *Annual Report 1988*, p. 85.

³⁴D.D. Driscoll, *What Is the International Monetary Fund?*; idem, *The IMF and the World Bank: How Do They Differ?*; J. Landell-Mills, *Helping the Poor: The IMF's New Facilities for Structural Adjustment*; and *Ten Common Misconceptions about the IMF*. All four booklets were issued in 1988.

³⁵See, e.g., J. Barnes and M. Torfs, 'An NGO Perspective on the IMF: The Need for Reform' (Washington, Environmental Policy Institute/Friends of the Earth/Oceanic Society, August 1989).

The 1990s: Increasing IMF Contacts

After hesitant beginnings in the 1980s, the main growth in IMF exchanges with civil society organisations has come during the 1990s, and at a generally accelerating rate. Not only external relations staff, but also management, executive directors, operational departments and field officials have become directly involved in these contacts. The Fund has hugely expanded its publication activities, visitors programme, press conferences, and other public relations efforts. At the same time the IMF has significantly increased its substantive policy discussions with civic groups both in Washington and in member countries.

At executive level, the Managing Director (MD) has in the 1990s vastly expanded his contacts with civic associations: both face to face and indirectly through press interviews. Michel Camdessus has given an average of over twenty public speeches per year since 1994. As one IMF official has described it, 'Camdessus has his pulpit and he uses it'.³⁶ In private audiences, too, the MD has received or called on various lobbying groups in Washington, particularly business, church and labour deputations. Camdessus has travelled far more than his predecessors and on many of his country visits has specifically requested to meet representatives of locally active civic associations. He has also personally replied to some of the hundreds of letters that civic groups and private citizens annually send to the MD. Camdessus' 'feel' for public relations is quite exceptional among global financiers and was largely absent in earlier Managing Directors of the IMF. Governments have endorsed this proactive approach – at least implicitly – by in 1996 electing Camdessus to an unprecedented third term of office.

The Deputy Managing Directors of the IMF have also raised their public profile in the 1990s. Like Camdessus, the current First Deputy MD, Stanley Fischer, has shown himself adept in the limelight. Several times the Fund has despatched him abroad to meet with civic groups: e.g. to Ireland in October 1996. For his part, Deputy MD Alassane Outtara has addressed a meeting of African labour leaders at Harare in 1996 and an NGO-sponsored seminar on sustainable development at Berne in 1997.³⁷

The other members of the IMF Executive Board, the twenty-four Executive Directors (EDs), have in recent years also substantially increased their contacts with civil society organisations. In contrast to the 1980s, most EDs today no longer need to be convinced of the importance of public relations activities. Moreover, since these officials are directly appointed by governments, they have in general been more ready

³⁶ Interview with the author.

³⁷ 'Putting Africa on a Sustainable, High-Quality Growth Path', *IMF Survey*, 26 (20 October 1997), pp. 324–6.

than IMF departmental staff to recognise civic groups as constituents. Each year, more and more EDs have agreed to meet with delegations of NGO representatives during the Annual Meetings; in 1996 more than half did so, several of them even scheduling the interview in advance. Some Executive Directors also maintain exchanges with civic associations throughout the year. The ED for the USA has had particularly regular interchanges with civic groups, owing *inter alia* to the well-established routines of lobbying in American political culture, the aforementioned need to obtain congressional approval for various IMF monies, and the large weight (nearly 18 per cent) of the US vote in IMF policy decisions. That said, certain EDs still refuse any meetings with civil society representatives and tell would-be callers to make their petitions through national capitals.

In order to bring Executive Directors, particularly those from the North, in closer touch with local experiences of IMF-promoted structural reform, the Fund in 1996 followed a World Bank example and launched a programme of so-called 'group travel by EDs'. On these trips – for example, to the Middle East and to Eastern Europe – Executive Directors or their Alternates have met not only with government officials, but also with businesspeople, legislators, labour unions, the news media, and other associations.³⁸ In a similar initiative, the Executive Director for Switzerland has accepted invitations from the Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations to undertake joint fact-finding missions to Ghana in 1993 and Bangladesh in 1996.

Many more outreach activities have come from the Fund's External Relations Department. For example, to handle an ever-expanding flow of enquiries from citizens, the Public Affairs Division (PAD) has grown from its initial staff of six in 1989 to a current contingent of eleven persons. PAD has accumulated a worldwide mailing list with some 700 addresses and distributes materials to these individuals and groups in three languages. Thanks to EXR's greatly expanded publications programme in the 1990s, the IMF now has available for public distribution a substantial range of books, reports and staff papers. For lay audiences the Editorial Division has in addition prepared a host of pamphlets, brochures, and regularly updated 'fact sheets'. Since 1990 EXR has organized a number of external relations missions abroad, where IMF staff have met with representatives of business, labour, press, political parties and/or other groups in selected target countries. EXR has also ensured that the Fund has been represented at each UN-sponsored global issue conference held since 1992. Beginning in 1993, the EXR Front Office has, in collaboration with the Information Division, conducted media training courses for IMF staff, including mission chiefs and Resident Representatives.³⁹ By 1996 over 325 employees had received such briefings.⁴⁰ EXR

³⁸Cf. *IMF Survey*, 15 July 1996, p. 241.

³⁹IMF, *Annual Report 1994*, p. 186; IMF correspondence to the author.

⁴⁰*Annual Report 1996*, p. 193.

has also exploited other communications technologies in its intensified public relations efforts. Several more internally prepared films about the Fund have appeared in addition to the one audio-visual production released in the 1980s. The IMF has also been publicly accessible on the Internet since 1995.⁴¹ The recent Phase III expansion of the Washington headquarters building has given the Fund a considerably enlarged Visitors Center. The proliferation of external relations activities just described is suitably reflected in the *Annual Report*: whereas EXR attracted only one paragraph on first mention in the 1984 *Report*, it had a six-page appendix of its own in the 1996 edition.⁴²

Civil society groups have in the past few years also acquired more contacts with operational departments of the IMF. Academic institutes and business associations have had such relationships for up to twenty years, but since around 1992 representatives of organised labour, development NGOs, environmental lobbies, and church groups have also had occasional interviews, briefings and correspondence with desk officials in the functional and area departments. For example, the IMF sent a representative to an International Round Table on 'Structural Adjustment and Environment' in Berlin in 1992. Subsequently the Fund invited several eco-advocates and development NGO campaigners to its own seminars on macroeconomics and the environment in 1993 and 1995.⁴³ The latter set of proceedings were subsequently published.⁴⁴ Two officials from operational departments of the Fund met with two dozen civic activists in an 'IMF-NGO Dialogue' at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. Several delegations of trade unionists (e.g. from Zambia in May 1993, from Niger and Mali in January 1994, and from Francophone Africa in December 1995) have visited Washington and met with some of the IMF officials responsible for their countries. Since 1995 senior officials from the Policy Development and Review Department (PDR) have had quite a number of exchanges with development NGOs in relation to the IMF/World Bank Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative for debt relief.

For the rest, contact between IMF officials and civil society organisations has occurred in the field, through missions and Resident Representatives. With regard to the former, IMF management has in recent years encouraged its staff on mission to seek out local associations in the country visited: chambers of commerce, bankers associations, labour unions, development NGOs, religious groups, and so on. Fund missions have

⁴¹ See <http://www.imf.org>.

⁴² IMF, *Annual Report 1984*, p. 95; *Annual Report 1996*, pp. 193-8.

⁴³ 'Seminar Explores Links between Macro Policy and the Environment', *IMF Survey* (14 June 1993), pp. 177 and 187.

⁴⁴ V.P. Gandhi (ed.), *Macroeconomics and the Environment* (Washington, International Monetary Fund, 1996).

used such contacts both to assess the political viability of proposed macroeconomic recommendations and to build understanding and backing of the IMF in civic circles. The call for such initiatives has applied especially to teams that are designing and monitoring stabilisation and reform programmes; however, it has also extended to IMF technical assistance missions and to visits for Article IV consultations in non-programme countries.

Mission teams have differed in the extent to which they have undertaken these outreach activities. A few have pursued the task with enthusiasm, while some have made only perfunctory gestures, and others have completely ignored the issue. In one exceptional case, Fund missions collaborated closely with the government of Venezuela in 1996 in a concerted effort to 'sell' an adjustment programme to business groups, political parties, labour unions and church leaders. In another instance of particularly close contacts with a visiting IMF delegation, civic groups in Switzerland have since 1993 participated in the country's annual Article IV consultations. This unique access was obtained as a result of civil society pressure when Switzerland joined the Fund in 1992.⁴⁵

Whereas IMF missions spend at most six weeks per annum in a country, Resident Representatives are in principle available year round for contacts with civic groups. The 'Res Rep' is meant thereby to collect market information, to gauge local opinions, and generally to build support for IMF prescriptions. The Fund has not thus far copied the practice of the World Bank and UNDP (started in the mid-1990s) of including in many of their resident missions an official specifically designated to pursue contacts with civic bodies. Nevertheless, IMF Res Reps have during the past three or four years been urged to keep in touch with the press, legislators, and civic groups in their respective host countries.

In practice, Resident Representatives have differed considerably in the degree to which they have taken these urgings on board. While some have enthusiastically integrated public affairs work into their assignment, others have remained largely indifferent, and certain Res Reps have been distinctly hostile to the proposition. With the aim of avoiding problem cases, EXR has recently begun to advise IMF management on the selection of Res Reps and to give the appointees advance briefings on the public relations aspects of their work.

⁴⁵B. Gurtner, 'Monitoring Swiss Participation in the Bretton Woods Institutions', *Swiss Coalition News*, No. 2 (September 1994), pp. 2-5; R. Gerster, 'Monitoring Swiss Participation in the Bretton Woods Institutions', *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik*, 12, 2 (1995), pp. 243-51; S. Chauhan and B. Gurtner, 'NGO Participation in Article IV Consultations of the IMF', *Swiss Coalition News*, No. 9 (September 1996), pp. 2-6.

From the preceding paragraphs it can be seen that the IMF has – in line with a general trend in contemporary global governance – substantially increased its contacts with civic associations. The exchanges have occurred both in Washington and in member countries. They have taken multiple forms and have involved most parts of the organisation. Later discussion in this paper will emphasise a number of limitations to the Fund's relationships with civil society. On the positive side, however, the IMF of the late 1990s clearly accords much more importance to these contacts than previously and has taken public relations initiatives in considerable quantity and variety. On current trends there is every likelihood that these activities will multiply further in the years to come.

The 1990s: Increasing Civil Society Mobilisation

As the IMF has broadened its contacts in civil society and acquired greater sensitivity towards the politics of these relationships, so civic groups, too, have in the 1990s increased both the range and the sophistication of their activities vis-à-vis the Fund. The number of associations taking a special interest in the IMF has proliferated. Many of their aims have become more specific. Communications and collaboration between civic organisations regarding the Fund have increased, both within and between countries. Overall the lobbying strategies of civic bodies have matured, and their understanding of the IMF has in general deepened. True, many limitations can (and in the next section will) be discerned in respect of this civil society activity, but recent advances in advocacy work on the Fund are notable all the same.

For one thing, the 1990s have brought many further analyses of IMF activities by research institutes. ODI and the Institute for International Economics have continued their widely respected work on Fund operations.⁴⁶ Numerous additional academic commentaries – some of them sharply critical of the IMF – have flowed from development thinktanks like the Institute of Development Studies in Britain, the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE), the Harvard Institute for International Development, the Economic Policy Research Centre in Uganda, the North-South Institute in Canada, the Austrian Foundation for Development Research (ÖFSE), and so on. In addition, dozens of individual university academics have in the 1990s published research both complimentary and critical of IMF policies. Consultancy

⁴⁶E.g. J. Williamson (ed.), *The Political Economy of Policy Reform* (Washington, Institute for International Economics, 1994); G. Bird, *IMF Lending to Developing Countries: Issues and Evidence* (London, Routledge/ODI, 1995).

firms such as Oxford International Associates and the External Finance for Africa Project have also added to the stream of publicly circulating studies on the Fund.⁴⁷

Business lobbies have remained a major group seeking contact with the Fund in the 1990s. True, certain global corporate associations like the World Economic Forum and the International Organisation of Employers have cultivated only minimal links with the IMF. However, the Institute of International Finance has regularly hosted luncheons for IMF Executive Directors, has organised conferences and seminars involving Fund staff, has held its annual meeting in parallel with that of the IMF, and has submitted reports and recommendations for the Fund's consideration.⁴⁸ Now self-styled as 'the Global Association of Financial Institutions', the IIF has grown to encompass more than 275 financial services providers based in over 50 countries.⁴⁹ For its part, the Bretton Woods Committee has expanded from its initial 50 to some 600 members. From time to time it has arranged for US-based foreign investors to meet with Fund personnel regarding their desires and/or difficulties in respect of a particular programme country. On a broader front, the Committee in 1992-4 convened a Bretton Woods Commission of 46 prominent figures from business, government and academe to produce a major report concerning the future of the IMF and World Bank.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the JCIF has opened an office in Washington in addition to its Tokyo headquarters and has held elaborate biannual meetings with IMF officials. The substantial scale of exchanges between the IMF and global business circles is furthermore apparent from participation in the Annual Meetings. In 1993 this event was attended by over 3500 special guests and visitors, most of whom represented commercial financial concerns. This group thereby outnumbered the government officials present.⁵¹

In programme countries, too, local business circles have become more alert to the importance of contacting the Fund. Deputations from commercial organisations now regularly call at the door of the Resident Representative where one exists and/or seek meetings with a visiting IMF mission. A few of these lobbies – e.g., the Uganda Manufacturers Association – have even sent delegations to call at the Fund's head office in Washington.

⁴⁷P.S. Mistry, *Multilateral Debt: An Emerging Crisis?* (The Hague, FONDAD, 1994); Mistry, *Resolving Africa's Multilateral Debt Problem: A Response to the IMF* (The Hague, FONDAD, 1996); M. Martin, 'Catalyst or Debt Collector: The IMF's Role in Aid and Debt Talks: Time for Change' (London, External Finance for Africa, 1993).

⁴⁸E.g. IIF Working Group on Crisis Resolution, *Resolving Sovereign Financial Crises* (Washington, Institute of International Finance, 1996).

⁴⁹<http://www.iif.com/PressRel/1997pr14.html>

⁵⁰Bretton Woods Commission, *Bretton Woods: Looking to the Future* (Washington, Bretton Woods Committee, 1994).

⁵¹'IMF: 50 Facts (46. IMF Accountability)' (Washington, IMF External Relations Department, 1994).

Compared with business lobbies – and perhaps reflecting its general decline as a political force – organised labour has done far less to expand its contacts with IMF in the 1990s. Indeed, the initiative has often come from the Fund itself, for example, in seeking out trade union representatives in programme countries. In 1995 Fund management issued special instructions that Res Reps should, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation, nurture contacts with trade unions in particular. Three times the IMF has co-sponsored major seminars for labour leaders: at Washington in 1992 for the ICFTU, World Confederation of Labour and international union secretariats; at Vienna in 1995 for Central and Eastern European labour organisers; and at Harare in 1996 for union officials in Southern Africa. Also in 1996, the Managing Director for the first time addressed a World Congress of the ICFTU, followed by an address to the World Confederation of Labor in 1997.⁵²

Indeed, the ICFTU has presented an exception to organised labour's general passivity towards the Fund, though it, too, has on the whole ranked lobbying of the IMF as a fairly secondary priority.⁵³ Every year since 1988, the Confederation has prepared a lengthy policy statement for the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings. More substantially, the ICFTU has since 1992 organized 28 national conferences on structural adjustment, usually including an active participation from the relevant IMF Res Rep. In 1994 the ICFTU opened an office in Washington, largely in order to establish closer liaison with the Bretton Woods institutions. Trade unions in several countries (e.g. Congo and Fiji) have used this office as a channel of communication with the IMF.

Among environmental groups and development NGOs, the International Department (recently renamed Global Action Team) of Friends of the Earth-US is no longer alone in having a campaign to reform the IMF. Also in Washington, for example, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have since the early 1990s joined FOE-US in critiquing the allegedly negative environmental consequences of Fund-sponsored structural adjustment programmes.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, work by US development NGOs like Bread for the World, the Development GAP and Oxfam America has concentrated more on the repercussions of IMF prescriptions for

⁵²See *The Global Market – Trade Unionism's Greatest Challenge* (Brussels, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 1996); 'Camdessus Calls for Actions to Make Globalization Work for Workers', *IMF Survey*, 26 (15 December 1997), pp. 391–2.

⁵³See *Report of the Fourteenth World Congress* (Brussels, ICFTU, 1988), pp. 50–1; *Report on Activities/Financial Reports 1987–1990* (Brussels, ICFTU, 1992), pp. 43–8; *Report on Activities/Financial Reports 1991–94* (Brussels, ICFTU, 1996), pp. 66–8.

⁵⁴Cf. W. Cruz and R. Repetto, *The Environmental Effects of Stabilization and Structural Adjustment Programs: The Philippines Case* (Washington, World Resources Institute, 1992); D. Reed (ed.), *Structural Adjustment and the Environment* (Boulder, Westview, 1992); Reed (ed.), *Structural Adjustment, the Environment and Sustainable Development* (London, Earthscan, 1996).

poverty.⁵⁵ Elsewhere in North America, the Halifax Initiative has since 1995 grouped eleven advocacy groups in 'A Canadian Coalition for Global Economic Democracy' that has concerned itself *inter alia* with the IMF.

In Europe, as already noted, the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations has since 1992 intensified efforts to engage the Fund. In Germany, the Bonn-based organisation World Economy, Ecology and Development (WEED), founded in 1990, has in recent years given increased attention to the Fund. A Debt and Development Coalition Ireland was formed in 1993 and two years later launched a campaign (to date successful) to block Irish contributions to ESAF.⁵⁶ In Britain, two dozen development and environment NGOs set up a Bretton Woods Project in 1995 to further work on reform of the IMF and World Bank. Several senior policy advisers in the global Oxfam network have in the mid-1990s also become prominent critics of the Fund.⁵⁷ In the Netherlands, the NGO service organisation BothENDS started a specifically targeted Multilateral Financial Institutions Project in 1994.

In the South, too, certain development NGOs have pursued a specific interest in the IMF (as distinct from the more commonly targeted World Bank). Their number include the Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines, the Forum of African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO) in Senegal, *Equipo PUEBLO* in Mexico, the *Platfòm Ayisyen Pledwaye pou yon Developman Altènatif* (PAPDA) in Haiti, and Focus on the Global South in Bangkok. However, few development NGOs in the South have sustained a substantial IMF campaign for any length of time.

Compared with environmental and development associations, other categories of NGOs have shown fairly limited interest in the IMF. It should be noted, however, that a few groups promoting human rights and demilitarisation (mainly located in Geneva and Washington) have lobbied the Fund on governance issues. In addition, several women's organisations have produced studies of the gendered impact of

⁵⁵ *Structural Adjustment and the Spreading Crisis in Latin America* (Washington, The Development GAP, 1995); L. Renshaw, *The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Community Development: Undoing Development* (Boston, Oxfam America, 1995); *Democratic Alternatives to Structural Adjustment in the Americas* (Washington, The Development GAP, 1996).

⁵⁶ J. Hanlon, 'Dublin and Maputo Challenges to the IMF', and J. Somers, 'Breaking the Consensus: Ireland and the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility: A Case Study' – both in *Common Cause: Challenging Development Strategies: The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank* (Dublin, Irish Mozambique Solidarity/Debt and Development Coalition, 1997), pp. 24–5 and 34–7.

⁵⁷ Cf. K. Watkins *et al.*, *The Oxfam Poverty Report* (Oxford, Oxfam UK & Ireland, 1995), ch. 3; Oxfam Policy Department, *A Case for Reform: Fifty Years of the IMF and World Bank* (Oxford, Oxfam Insight, 1995).

structural adjustment programmes, although any related lobbying has tended to concentrate on the World Bank and the European Union rather than on the Fund.⁵⁸

The fiftieth anniversary of the Bretton Woods Conference gave a particular spur to efforts by civic groups to reform the IMF. As at Berlin six years earlier, the 1994 Annual Meetings in Madrid witnessed street protests on a substantial scale. In the USA, a group of 33 associations launched the 50 Years Is Enough Network in May 1994. This coalition, which has advocated far-reaching change in both the Fund and the World Bank, now has a membership of over 200 associations and a coordinating office in Washington. Also in the spring of 1994, a US coalition of Catholic and Protestant organizations formed a Religious Working Group on the World Bank and the IMF. Over the next two years this Washington-based committee communicated with some 500 churchgoers across the USA. The fiftieth anniversary furthermore saw the Center of Concern in Washington start its Rethinking Bretton Woods Project, with the aim of 'effecting genuine institutional reform over the next 10 to 15 years'.⁵⁹ In 1997-8 the Center has furthermore conducted a project on 'Transparency and Accountability and the International Monetary Fund'. This exercise, which has included full participation by the Fund itself, has focussed in particular on establishing a mechanism for independent outside evaluation of IMF policies.

Interest in the IMF amongst development NGOs and church groups heightened further with the announcement in 1995 of the previously mentioned HIPC Initiative. Until the early 1990s, debt relief campaigns concentrated mainly on commercial and bilateral borrowings rather than on loans to multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund. This tide began to turn in 1993-4 when the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) launched a campaign with its affiliates in sixteen countries to reduce the burdens of multilateral debt in the South.⁶⁰ With the HIPC proposal, the World Bank and the Fund have acknowledged that the multilateral debt levels of some poor countries are unsustainable. In the North, associations like EURODAD, Oxfam, the Debt and Development Coalition Ireland, the *Initiativkreis*

⁵⁸See P. Antrobus, *The Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Women: The Experience of Caribbean Countries* (Santo Domingo, INSTRAW, 1988); P. Sparr (ed.), *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment* (London, Zed, 1994); L. Woestman, *Male Chauvinist SAPs: Structural Adjustment and Gender Policies* (Brussels, EURODAD/WIDE, 1994); G. Ssemogerere et al., *Women and Structural Adjustment: A Case Study of Arua District, Uganda* (Kampala, Uganda Women's Network, 1995); *Women Standing Up to Adjustment in Africa: A Report of the African Women's Economic Policy Network* (Washington, The Development GAP, 1996).

⁵⁹Cf. J.M. Griesgraber and B.G. Gunter (eds), *Promoting Development: Effective Global Institutions for the Twenty-First Century* (London, Pluto, 1995); idem, *Development: New Paradigms and Principles for the Twenty-First Century*; idem, *The World's Monetary System: Toward Stability and Sustainability in the Twenty-First Century* (London, Pluto, 1996); idem, *World Trade: Toward Fair and Free Trade in the Twenty-First Century* (London, Pluto, 1996).

⁶⁰See 'EURODAD 1993 Annual Report' (mimeo, 1994), p. 9; and 'EURODAD 1994 Annual Report' (mimeo, 1995), pp. 5-7.

'Entwicklung braucht Entschuldung' in Germany, UK-based Christian Aid, the Nordic Network on Debt and Development, the Swiss Coalition and the transborder Jubilee 2000 Campaign for debt forgiveness have stepped up their pressure on the IMF to give maximal relief.⁶¹ In the countries of the South earmarked for HIPC packages, NGOs have rallied round coalitions such as the *Iniciativa Nicaragua* and the Uganda Debt Network in efforts to extend and accelerate the relief programme. Behind closed doors, church leaders meeting with Michel Camdessus in London and Washington in early 1996 appealed to the MD's acute religious sensibilities while arguing for extensive debt reduction.⁶² Already the Pope had in 1995 publicly rebuked the IMF on the debt issue.⁶³ Two years later the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace convened a meeting at the Vatican with Camdessus and the Presidents of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to discuss debt issues in Latin America.⁶⁴

As the preceding discussion has intimated, reform campaigns have in the 1990s considerably increased the sophistication of their lobbying of the IMF. Indeed, a few organisations have hired professional lobbyists and consultants. Letter-writing campaigns, petitions, marches and prayer services have continued, to be sure. However, various groups have in addition developed direct contacts with Fund staff, have learned to acquire and interpret IMF documentation, and have produced detailed studies of Fund operations. Not only the ICFTU and Fifty Years Is Enough, but also Oxfam and FAVDO have in the 1990s opened offices in Washington *inter alia* to monitor the IMF. The Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations maintained a representative in Washington between 1992 and 1998.

Greater political sophistication has also developed as civic groups have increasingly employed tactics of indirect pressure on the IMF via national governments (legislatures, ministries of finance, central banks, and so on). For instance, some civil society groups have turned to government ministries in the hope of obtaining confidential Fund documents that IMF staff resolutely refuse to leak. Following the US example, several UK-based development NGOs have in recent years made submissions

⁶¹The multilateral debt campaign is well summarised in 'EURODAD 1996 Annual Report' (mimeo, 1997), ch. 1. See also *World Credit Tables: Creditor-Donor Relations from Another Perspective* (Brussels, EURODAD, 1995); *World Credit Tables: Creditors' Claims on Debtors Exposed* (Brussels, EURODAD, 1996); 'Oxfam International Assessment of IMF-World Bank Debt Reduction Initiative' (Oxfam UK & Ireland Policy Department, 1996); *Schuldenreport* (Bonn, WEED, annual since 1995); A. Simms, 'Not Waiving but Drowning: Why the IMF Should Sell Gold Stocks to Help Debt-Ridden Countries' (London, Christian Aid, 1996); *The Debt Cutter's Handbook* (London, Jubilee 2000, 1996).

⁶²P. Vallely, 'How to Make the Poor Poorer', *The Tablet*, 24 February 1996, pp. 248-50.

⁶³John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, September 1995.

⁶⁴'Meeting with Church Leaders Highlights Strategy beyond Debt Reduction', *IMF Survey*, 26 (7 July 1997), p. 208.

concerning the IMF to ministries and parliamentary select committees in London.⁶⁵ Development NGOs in Ireland have halted their government's contribution to ESAF mainly through lobbying of the Dáil and the Ministry of Finance in Dublin. Some lobbying of representative institutions has also transpired in those programme countries like Haiti where a Letter of Intent or a Policy Framework Paper negotiated with the Fund requires the approval of the legislature. (Indeed, civic activists have sometimes performed an educative function in respect of the many politicians who have been scarcely aware of what they are endorsing.) In Switzerland NGOs, business associations and political parties have since 1992 used a special extra-parliamentary Committee on the Bretton Woods Institutions to press the Federal Government *inter alia* on matters concerning the IMF.⁶⁶ In an unparalleled initiative, several NGOs in Germany met in early 1996 with the International Department of the Bundesbank to discuss reform of the IMF. Since 1994 various groups have lobbied the annual Group of Seven Summits (at Tokyo, Halifax, Lyon, Denver, Birmingham) on issues concerning multilateral financial institutions.

In addition, certain civil society groups have formed loose coalitions for change at the IMF with reformist officials in other global governance agencies. For example, the ICFTU has joined forces with the ILO to press for a larger social dimension in Fund programmes. EURODAD has engaged with the European Commission (especially the Structural Adjustment Unit of DG VIII) in the hope that 'progressive elements in EU policy ... could have some leverage on BWI policies designed in Washington'.⁶⁷ Development NGOs have also found sympathy for IMF reform in UNCTAD, UNDP, UNICEF, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. NGO Forums running parallel to UN-sponsored global issue conferences in the 1990s have often given prominent attention to questions of debt relief and reform of structural adjustment. At the same time, many civic activists have hoped that campaigns for change targeted at the World Bank will reverberate on the Fund.

In respect of the general public, a number of advocacy groups have in the 1990s given increased attention to civic education about the IMF: i.e. to make questions of debt, surveillance, adjustment and the overall political economy of globalisation more accessible to a general audience. For example, Friends of the Earth-US has used its longer experience of campaigning on the Fund to produce fact sheets and handbooks

⁶⁵See, e.g., 'Joint NGO Statement on the International Monetary Fund' submitted to a committee at Westminster in April 1996 by three dozen organisations.

⁶⁶See K. Raffer and H.W. Singer, *The Foreign Aid Business: Economic Assistance and Development Co-operation* (Cheltenham, Elgar, 1996), pp. 146-9.

⁶⁷'EURODAD 1994 Annual Report', p. 9. See also 'EURODAD 1995 Annual Report' (mimeo, 1996), p. 11.

for use by other groups.⁶⁸ The Debt and Development Coalition Ireland and the Berne Declaration in Switzerland have each prepared popular information packs concerning the Bretton Woods institutions. Christian Aid and the US-based Maryknoll order have both produced short films on the need for debt relief in the South.⁶⁹ These and other associations have in addition devised posters, cartoons, simulation games and more in their efforts to inform and mobilise grassroots opinion. Meanwhile WEED, Fifty Years Is Enough, and other NGOs have organised public symposia and workshops in order to advance civic education about the Fund.

At the same time, campaigners for IMF reform have in recent years given more attention to cultivating the press in the hope thereby to obtain wider circulation of their messages through the mass media. Several associations (e.g. DGAP, EURODAD) have hired information officers for this purpose. Oxfam has put concerted effort into influencing editorial pages of several leading newspapers. Certain groups have furthermore placed advertisements in influential newspapers and magazines to call public attention, for example, to debt problems of the South.

More sophisticated lobbying by civic groups has also been greatly promoted by developments in communications technologies. Telephone calls at much reduced charges, faxes, e-mail, and the World Wide Web have enabled civic associations across the globe to develop much closer contacts with one another. The Center of Concern, EURODAD and other organisations have since the mid-1990s each maintained a listserv on the Internet with continually updated information on the IMF.

Aided by new telecommunications, 50 Years Is Enough has acquired 170 partners in over fifty countries. FOE-US is connected with over fifty other national affiliates of Friends of the Earth International. EURODAD has collaborated with debt lobbying coalitions in other regions. Among these ASIADAD, formed in 1993, has become rather moribund; however, AFRODAD has shown steady if slow growth since its launch in 1994, and LATINDAD was revived in 1997.

Through these and other networks, current IMF reform campaigns involve an unprecedented level of North-South interchange. In the 1990s it has become an explicit priority among many important North-based associations to 'empower' civil society organisations in the South. For example, WEED and BothENDS have as one of their main purposes to assist Southern NGOs with information provision and capacity building. The Development GAP declares as its central objective 'to ensure that the knowledge, priorities and efforts of the women and men of the South inform

⁶⁸E.g., M. Torfs, *The IMF Handbook: Arming NGOs with Knowledge* (Brussels, Friends of the Earth Europe, 1996).

⁶⁹'Banking on Life and Debt', Maryknoll World Productions.

decisions made in the North about their economies and the environments in which they live.⁷⁰ Together with FOE-US, DGAP has started a project for local reviews of IMF performance in half a dozen countries: for example, by the Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines. Several North-based NGOs now have persons from the South on their staff, either permanently or as interns. In a similar spirit a number of leading North-based associations have in recent years hosted delegations from the South for discussions of debt problems and alternatives to neoliberal structural adjustment. For instance, the London-based Debt Crisis Network in February 1996 brought five prominent Africans to Britain for a seminar, also attended by several IMF officials, entitled 'Africa Needs a Fresh Start'. More elaborately, the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), started in 1996, now encompasses over 1000 associations from South and North in a 'global citizens network'.⁷¹

In sum, then, in the 1990s the IMF has encountered many more civic groups, many of whom have had more specific objectives, a tighter organisation, and greater political skill than their predecessors of the 1980s. The following section of this paper will highlight various shortcomings in civil society lobbying of the IMF. However, the prior point to emphasise – as has now been done – is that substantial circuits of direct and indirect contacts have developed, principally over the past decade, between the International Monetary Fund and civil society. Any analysis of IMF policy content and impacts must now take these relationships into account.

LIMITATIONS TO DIALOGUE

Although, as preceding sections have shown, contacts between the International Monetary Fund and civic associations are greater than most persons concerned with global economic governance appreciate, nevertheless the relationships remain in important respects underdeveloped. Three main limitations to the dialogue are distinguished and elaborated below. First, many parts of civil society remain marginalised in or altogether excluded from conversations with the IMF. Second, both the Fund and civic groups have tended in most cases to leave their reciprocal contacts at a superficial level. Third, the parties to IMF-civil society exchanges have often neglected to nurture a genuine 'dialogue': that is, the contacts have to date generally fallen short of the kind of open, two-way, critical mutual engagement that would be most constructive for policy formulation, implementation and review. As the final section of the paper will indicate, these shortcomings have for the most part not been

⁷⁰<http://www.ipc.apc.org/dgap/>

⁷¹'Global Citizens' Network Built around SAP Review', *BankCheck Quarterly*, No. 16 (December 1996/January 1997); <http://www.igc.org/dgap/saprin>.

the fault of the individuals concerned, but have resulted chiefly from the resource and structural constraints under which they have worked.

Biased Participation

Earlier sections of this paper have emphasised the positive: namely, the many contacts that have grown between the IMF and civic groups. However, it is as important to note the differential access that various types of associations have enjoyed and also the many potential exchanges between the Fund and civil society that have *not* developed. Moreover, IMF contacts with civic organisations have disproportionately involved groups in the North and persons from middle-class professional circles. As a result of these various biases, the IMF's dialogue with civil society has generally been limited to but a small portion of its client populations.

In terms of types of organisations, business associations and economic research institutes have on the whole had easiest entry to the IMF. Belonging to the category of 'conformers' distinguished earlier, these bodies have fairly readily obtained audiences with operational departments in Washington, with Fund staff on mission and/or with Resident Representatives. Rarely have businesspeople been referred to the public relations staff in EXR. Commercial lobbies and professional economists generally 'speak the Fund's language' and have thus been more likely (from the perspective of the IMF) to provide 'helpful' information and ideas. In the words of several IMF officials, business circles 'know what we're doing' and 'have a similar view to us'.⁷² Most of the Managing Director's speeches to nonofficial audiences have been made to academic gatherings and business conferences. At the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings, representatives of commercial concerns carry badges as 'visitors' or 'special guests' and are included in the published list of participants. In contrast, representatives of other advocacy organisations are labelled 'NGOs' and do not appear in the published list of participants. True, certain business lobbies have sometimes complained that the IMF does not adequately consult with them; however, within civil society their general position remains one of relatively privileged contacts.

Second in this rough ranking of access by civic groups to the IMF come trade unions. As noted earlier, the Fund has taken numerous initiatives in the 1990s to – in the words of one official – 'groom' labour.⁷³ From various previous experiences, the IMF has learned that opposition from organised labour can substantially frustrate the implementation of a stabilisation or structural adjustment programme. In addition,

⁷²Interviews with the author.

⁷³Interview with the author.

Michel Camdessus has brought from France a corporatist recognition of labour as a leading social partner with government and business. Fund officials more generally, too, have tended to perceive trade unions as 'representative' bodies in a way that they have presumed NGOs not to be.

Third in line, in terms of civic access to the IMF, have been various other advocacy groups who demand the Fund's attention: mainly church agencies, development NGOs, environmental NGOs, and to a lesser extent certain human rights lobbies. In contrast to business, academe and labour, these organisations have tended to be 'uninvited guests' at the Fund. The institution has usually responded to such groups and their reformist and radical agendas with reluctance – sometimes scarcely hidden irritation. IMF officials have tried as much as possible to channel contacts with these campaigners through the External Relations Department, in order that operational staff can 'get on with the real work'. Occasionally – and with increased frequency in recent years – more experienced NGO lobbyists have obtained interviews with officials in the functional and area departments of the IMF; nevertheless, on the whole NGOs have remained 'second-class citizens' in civil society contacts with the Fund.

Fourth in this admittedly crude but broadly valid categorisation are the many completely excluded civic groups: i.e. associations that have neither actively sought contact with the IMF nor been actively sought out by the institution. For example, no women's associations have engaged the Fund in any sustained manner, and the Fund has taken little initiative to reach them. When the 1995 Beijing Conference offered a major opportunity to develop such links, the IMF despatched a smaller and a more junior representation than it had sent to previous UN-sponsored global gatherings of the 1990s. Other sectors of civil society that have been excluded and excluded themselves from contacts with the Fund include non-Christian religious organisations, peace movements, consumer rights advocates, youth associations, grassroots community improvement agencies, indigenous peoples groups, and ethnic lobbies. (In an exception to the rule, the King of the Gypsies in Romania petitioned the local Res Rep to be allowed to issue a separate currency for his people – the proposal was not taken seriously.) Perhaps most surprising has been the omission of peasant associations from the IMF's contacts with civil society. Large-scale commercial farmers have lobbied the Fund (e.g. in Zimbabwe), but organisations of smallholders – who represent a substantial proportion of the population in many programme countries – have stayed outside the dialogue.

So far this discussion of biased participation has focussed on types of organisations, but dialogue between civil society and the IMF has also been skewed in other ways. For example, as already intimated on several occasions, the Fund generally has

developed more numerous and more substantive contacts with civic groups in the North relative to those in the South and the East. Of course distinctions between 'North', 'South' and 'East' are to some extent artificial and simplistic. After all, within the North itself the density of links between civil society and the IMF has been uneven. The Fund has sustained the most intense relations with associations based in Britain, Ireland, Switzerland and the USA, but it has developed next to no connections with civic groups from France, Japan and Italy. The situation has varied between countries of the South and East as well. For example, the IMF has maintained more contacts with civil society in the Philippines and South Africa than in Algeria or Romania.

That said, an overall bias towards the North is undeniable. Even today, Fund information pamphlets appear in at most five languages – all European – and have minimal circulation in the East and South. Given the expense of both equipment and operating costs, most activists in the South have also had limited if any access to fax and Internet connections. A huge majority of 'visitors', 'special guests' and 'NGOs' at the Annual Meetings have come from the North. Indeed, lobbyists who have travelled from the South have often lacked accreditation and have as a result been locked out of the conference hall. At other times of the year, too, civic organisers from South and East have rarely had the opportunity to visit Fund headquarters in Washington. Even on the ground in programme countries, the IMF Resident Representative has often met more with staff from North-based organisations (e.g. development aid agencies or associations of foreign investors) than with indigenous NGOs. Indeed, in certain countries local civic groups have complained that they can only access the Res Rep through the mediation of North-based organisations.

As noted earlier, some civic groups have in the 1990s begun to address these inequalities between North and South/East by emphasising the need for dialogue across these divides within civil society. Nevertheless, these consultations are rare in business circles and remain as yet substantially underdeveloped among labour associations and NGOs. Between East and North such collaboration is – with the exception of a notable initiative by Friends of the Earth – almost nonexistent. Many North-based activists themselves concede that they have not worked out timely and effective ways to communicate with South-based organisations. Indeed, one leading campaigner in Washington for IMF reform has declared dismissively that 'there is so much lipservice about consulting the South – it's a figleaf'.⁷⁴ Most civic associations in the North have made at best a perfunctory effort to understand and accommodate Southern political cultures. Moreover, most South-based civic groups who communicate with North-based associations have done so in circumstances of

⁷⁴Interview with the author.

substantial dependency (financial and otherwise). The representatives of the South have thereby easily been inhibited from speaking fully and frankly to their own agenda.

In addition to – and intersecting with – unequal access by type of organisation and country of origin, a further significant bias in the dialogue between civil society and the IMF has related to class. The great majority of contacts have involved middle-class professionals, whether they herald from North, South or East. Thus the South-North collaboration in civil society described above has almost invariably involved urban-based, university-educated, computer-literate, (relatively) high-earning English speakers *on both sides*. No civic mobilisation concerning the IMF has developed between grassroot groups in the South and underclasses in the North. For its part the Fund has rarely sought direct contacts with rural groups, the urban poor, and so on. In the words of one leading official, 'We do not meet the people themselves, but we ask [aid organisations] what they want the IMF to do.'⁷⁵ Nor have most elite-based civic associations (whether from North, South or East) used their connections with the Fund to put carefully gathered views of marginalised groups on the table. Almost no civil society materials regarding the Fund have been prepared in the local languages of programme countries. A few church groups and development NGOs have stood out as exceptions with their efforts to incorporate 'voices from the base' into their advocacy work, but for the rest marginalised groups have been locked out of indirect as well as direct dialogue with the IMF.

A gender bias has also limited the scope of relations between the Fund and civil society. IMF officials are overwhelmingly men. The top management of the organisation has never included a woman, no more than three women have served concurrently among the twenty-four EDs, and only two women have become head of an IMF department. On the whole women have had notably greater access to NGOs. Indeed, a fair gender balance has developed amongst campaigners for IMF reform. However, women have remained severely underrepresented in the sectors of civil society with relatively greater access to the IMF: namely, business lobbies, research institutes and organised labour. Moreover, as noted above, women's associations have taken no significant steps to engage the Fund, for example, on the gendered consequences of structural reform.⁷⁶ Even the business-oriented organisation, Women's World Banking, has not knocked on 19th Street.

In sum, then, one major restriction of the contacts that have developed over the past fifteen years between the IMF and civil society has been their narrow base. The exchanges have shown strong biases towards certain kinds of organisations, certain

⁷⁵ Minutes of a meeting in Washington between civic activists and Fund officials, June 1996.

⁷⁶ Cf. D. Elson, 'Gender Awareness in Modeling Structural Adjustment', *World Development*, 23 (November 1995), pp. 1851–68; and the sources cited in note 57 above.

countries, and certain social circles. The resultant exclusion of large parts of the citizenry has of course hardly been unique to civic contacts with the International Monetary Fund; arguably such limited representation has marked the larger dialogue between global civil society and global governance agencies. Recognition of this major shortcoming is not a reason to abandon such contacts between the IMF and civic groups as have developed. However, it is important to emphasise that the Fund has thus far missed a great deal of potential input from civil society.

Shallowness of Relationships

A second major limitation in the links that have developed between civic groups and the International Monetary Fund concerns the general superficiality of the dialogue. Some exceptions were noted earlier, but most parties to the encounters – on the side of both the Fund and civil society – have accorded a fairly low priority to developing these relationships. As a result, the exchanges have on the whole been only weakly institutionalised and in most cases only haphazardly sustained. On both sides of the dialogue, leading participants have expressed unhappiness about the overall shallowness of their connections. To be sure, there are some grounds for optimism that more substantive relationships have been emerging in recent years. However, a greater commitment from all parties would be required before the full potential of their dialogue can be realised.

Although the IMF has given relations with civil society a certain prominence, on the whole they have remained a low priority. For example, whereas the President of the World Bank has repeatedly and specifically affirmed a need for his organisation to develop partnerships with civil society, Camdessus has referred only loosely to a need to build national consensus behind stabilisation and structural reform programmes. Also unlike the World Bank, the IMF has not contributed to – and has only once used – the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), an agency that provides sixteen other global governance agencies with information and advice about NGOs. As one IMF department director has readily conceded, 'I would lie if I said that [contacts with civic groups] were a daily, foremost activity.'⁷⁷ Most staff have taken the view that 'I came to the Fund to be a macroeconomist'; they have regarded the 'political' aspects of the job as uninteresting, if not superfluous. Most IMF missions and Resident Representatives, too, have generally attended to public affairs matters only when residual time has permitted it or when immediate pressures (e.g. a strike, an inflammatory press editorial, etc.) have demanded a response.

⁷⁷Interview with the author.

Beyond the creation in 1989 of a Public Affairs Division in EXR, the Fund has done very little to institutionalise its relationships with civic associations. The Articles of Agreement have not been amended to accommodate these links, nor has the Executive Board issued any guiding directives. Almost all IMF contacts with civil society have occurred on an *ad hoc* basis: the participation of civic organisations in the Annual Meetings; interviews of lobbyists with EDs and desk officials; Fund briefings for NGOs; etc. Head office in Washington has established no 'civil society' or 'NGO' liaison committee as has been created in the World Bank and other UN agencies. No consultation of civic groups has been formally built into the preparation, implementation and assessment of IMF stabilisation and structural reform packages. Only in Switzerland have civic associations taken formal part in Article IV consultations. In contrast to the World Bank, the Fund has not included public information facilities in its Res Rep posts in programme countries; nor has it contributed documentation to local World Bank information offices where these exist. No job description for staff in the operational departments of the IMF has mentioned contacts with civic groups. Apart from the 1995 circular concerning outreach to organised labour, no formal directives from Fund management have explicitly instructed missions and Resident Representatives to meet with specified civic groups at specified intervals. Not surprisingly, therefore, consultation of civil society by these officials has in most cases not been routine or systematic. Nor has the format for reports of these field activities included a heading for public affairs; hence when meetings with civic groups have taken place, the results have rarely been officially recorded. Neither EXR nor Res Reps have kept systematic or comprehensive records concerning civic groups with interests in the Fund.

In short, the overall picture of IMF policy regarding civil society has been one of improvisation. From the start of contacts in the early 1980s, the Fund has developed relations with civic associations in an incremental and mostly reactive manner. The Board and the Management have not formally articulated what purposes these contacts should serve, nor have they carefully considered what institutional mechanisms would best advance the agreed objectives. To be sure, improvisation has its place in politics; however, in the case of IMF approaches to civil society, improvisation has been a defining feature of policy.

Approaches in civil society towards the IMF have generally been equally *ad hoc*. Most civic organisations have accorded only relatively low (if any) priority to dialogue with the Fund. Only a few associations have – like Friends of the Earth-US or the Institute of International Finance – pursued sustained, focused, carefully researched campaigns to influence Fund policies. Even fewer agencies have – like the Bretton Woods Committee – been created specifically to engage the IMF. Meanwhile the majority of

advocacy groups have treated the Fund with only passing curiosity, if they have given the institution any attention at all. Many reformers and radicals have talked vaguely of 'alternatives to current international financial institutions', but relatively few have made the move 'from protest to proposal'.⁷⁸ Most activists with an interest in changing global economic governance have preferred to concentrate their energies on more 'tangible' issues related to multilateral trade agreements or World Bank projects. Thanks in good part to the obscurantism of economic jargon – much of it arguably unnecessary – questions of IMF conditionality and surveillance have caused many a civic organiser's eyes to glaze over. Few civil society associations have shown interest in obtaining – on the Swiss model – direct participation in Article IV consultations. Nor have civic organisations (other than a few economic research institutes and the IIF) given much attention to the Fund's now prominent role in preventing and containing crises in global financial markets. Not until October 1997 did development NGOs from Europe and North America undertake a focussed discussion of these matters, namely, with a two-day seminar in Paris. Various notable exceptions aside, then, much understanding in civil society of the IMF has been poorly informed and unnuanced.

In the wider political arena, most lobbyists have had particular difficulties with public mobilisation in their efforts to develop a more substantive dialogue with the Fund. Business associations have been able to energise their constituents by pointing to the commercial interests that various IMF policies can serve or harm. However, reform campaigners have usually faced uphill struggles to secure the support of subscribers and the attention of the general public. As one experienced lobbyist has succinctly put it, 'It takes a lot of pushing to get people mobilised on the IMF'.⁷⁹ In spite of increased NGO efforts at civic education on the International Monetary Fund, questions of structural adjustment, debt relief, foreign exchange crises and so on have not grabbed the popular imagination in the way of famines, environmental issues, wars, and the like.

In the same vein, advocacy NGOs have also had limited success in drawing press attention to campaigns for IMF reform. The South-centric Inter Press Service and local journalists in many programme countries have been fairly receptive to covering the issues, but the principal world press agencies, major newspapers and global broadcasters have given little space to a debate of IMF policies. Campaigners have considered it cause for celebration on those comparatively rare occasions when their lobbying has prompted an article in the *Financial Times* or an editorial in the *Washington Post*.

⁷⁸ *Democratic Alternatives to Structural Adjustment*, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Interview with the author.

All in all, then, most relations between the IMF and civil society have remained pretty haphazard and shallow. The Managing Director would seem to know but a handful of civic leaders by name. Only a few operational staff at the Fund have developed more sustained relations with outside fora: e.g. Jack Boorman and Tony Boote of PDR, in respect of the HIPC Initiative; and Ved Gandhi of the Fiscal Affairs Department, in respect of environmental issues. Resident Representatives usually spend only two years in a country, and many have not established contacts with civic groups outside of the capital. Conversely, too, only a small number of civil society organisers have maintained long-term regular contacts with IMF headquarters: e.g. Stephen Pursey of the ICFTU; Marijke Torfs of FOE-US; Nancy Alexander of Bread for the World; Ted van Hees of EURODAD; Bruno Gurtner of the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations; and Jo Marie Griesgraber of the Center of Concern. Likewise, only a few lobbyists in each programme country have sustained substantive relationships with the Fund over a longer period.

Many participants on both sides of IMF-civil society exchanges have expressed unhappiness about the general shallowness of these relationships. In civic groups, for example, many campaigners have doubted whether the Fund has been taking them seriously. Voicing a typical concern, one seasoned activist has declared that, 'if the Fund are serious about the rhetoric concerning "ownership of the programme", then they have to go further.'⁸⁰ Reformers have tended to regard meetings with the Managing Director as important for symbolic purposes, but they suspect that the conversations make little policy impact. Likewise, lobbyists have largely concluded that outreach activities by IMF missions are token gestures and that contacts with EXR are a cul-de-sac unless they lead to direct exchanges with the 'real' IMF of functional and area departments. Various NGO staff have objected that the information which they desire from the IMF is not readily available, whether in off-the-record conversations or in public documentation. (Here the complaints concern the content rather than the – now very large – quantity of IMF publications.) More frustrated civic activists have decided that there is 'not much point' in pursuing relations with the Fund and have instead diverted most of their energies to the seemingly 'more receptive' World Bank.

For their part, IMF staff have often become frustrated with what they regard as unproductive discussions with many civil society representatives. Officials have regularly described these exchanges with 'simple hearts and simple minds' as 'fruitless' and 'a waste of time'.⁸¹ Fund staff have commonly objected that, aside from business lobbies, many civic organisations come with only general criticisms and no practicable

⁸⁰Interview with the author.

⁸¹Interviews with the author.

suggestions for alternatives. Officials have complained, too, that most campaigners in civil society have not done their homework: either in terms of acquiring general literacy in Economics or in terms of studying specific IMF policies and programmes. Thus one ED has argued that '[NGOs] criticize without being really aware what the Fund does.'⁸² Privately some leading NGO activists have conceded that they need to do a better job in convincing the Fund of the usefulness of civil society inputs.⁸³

More positively, it should be noted that the disenchantment just described has by no means reigned continuously or universally in relations between the IMF and civil society. Even some of the most critical opponents of the Fund acknowledge that the institution has taken steps to open up in the 1990s, and optimistic civic organisers believe that many recent outreach initiatives by the IMF have entailed more than public relations exercises. On the side of the Fund, few officials today remain completely dismissive of contacts with civil society, and many acknowledge that some of these exchanges have influenced their thinking on various policy issues. All of this said, however, when compared with most other interchanges between global governance agencies and civic associations, and when measured against what could be possible, the overall relationship between the IMF and civil society has lacked depth.

Limited 'Dialogue'

One key obstacle that has kept this greater depth from emerging is at the same time a third major shortcoming in relations to date between civil society and the IMF: namely, the underdevelopment of a veritable 'dialogue'. This problem has arisen especially in contacts between the Fund on the one hand and its reformist and radical critics on the other. In general these exchanges have not been exercises in two-way listening and learning. Dialogues of the deaf have resulted partly because the parties have frequently lacked interest in what the other side has to say. In addition, discussions have often suffered from the inability and unwillingness of many participants to consider criticisms of their position or to explore other points of view.

To a large extent reformists and radicals have clashed with the IMF because the lobbyists' aims have had limited overlap with those of the Fund. Hardly anyone in the IMF has pursued an agenda of reform, apart from, to a limited degree, several EDs and incidental officials. Staff have therefore rarely pursued contacts with critics in civil

⁸²A. Bichsel, 'The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund from the Perspective of the Executive Directors from Developing Countries', *Journal of World Trade*, 28 (December 1994), p. 162.

⁸³Interviews with the author.

society out of an interest in reform as such. Instead, the Fund has engaged with civic groups principally because:

- (a) in post-sovereignty times it cannot ignore these organisations;
- (b) civic associations can sometimes hamper the Fund's efforts to secure increased resources from member governments, especially from the United States Congress; and
- (c) civil society bodies can make a major contribution to the construction (or obstruction) of a social consensus around Fund policies.

Nor has the Fund shown much concern to develop civil society networks as an objective in its own right. Not surprisingly, IMF officials have shown no sympathy whatsoever with radical proposals to shrink or dissolve their institution. In any case, many radicals have refused to seek dialogue with Fund personnel, regarding any engagement as a recipe for cooptation. On the whole, then, it has been difficult for the IMF and many civic groups to find common ground on which to talk, with the result that quite a few of their exchanges have become deadlocked and confrontational.

Some degree of conflict has no doubt been unavoidable, given that the parties have entered their conversations with such divergent perspectives; however, the tensions have heightened and become less productive insofar as the participants have not been willing to engage with positions other than their own. On the part of the IMF, many officials have simply dismissed alternative views expressed in civil society as 'wrong'. Typically, Fund staff have seen meetings with civic organisers as occasions to 'correct' and 'educate' the misguided; officials have rarely pursued contacts with these advocates out of interest to hear and respond to alternative perspectives on IMF programmes. Thus, for example, the Fund declined invitations in 1992-3 to participate in a WWF project to explore environmentally sensitive alternatives to prevailing approaches to structural adjustment. Likewise, the IMF has taken a lukewarm approach to the Structural Adjustment Policy Review Initiative (SAPRI). In this exercise, prepared since 1995 and launched in 1997, the World Bank and a global network of NGOs have *inter alia* been using participatory methods to gather qualitative evidence concerning local experiences of adjustment in programme countries. The Fund has observed SAPRI from the sidelines and provided some assistance, but declined to become a formal participant. When the IMF in 1997 launched its own external review of structural adjustment programmes, it engaged only four persons, all professional macroeconomists.

Many lobbyists have become unhappy with this general IMF reluctance seriously to consider fundamental challenges to prevailing policy frameworks. Commenting on one encounter with Fund officials, an experienced campaigner said with a certain resignation, 'they talked about what they wanted to talk about and talked about it in the way they always do'.⁸⁴ Other lobbyists have objected against 'a one-way street' and 'textbook answers'.⁸⁵ In the IMF's seminars for academics, labour organisers, environmentalists, etc. the Fund has for the most part set the agenda and selected the speakers. Meanwhile, in interviews and other encounters with civic campaigners, IMF officials have rarely been seen to take notes. In short, on the whole achieving 'consensus' has, for the Fund, not meant building new understandings out of different points of view, but bringing civil society round to an unchanged IMF position.

In a similar general spirit, IMF staff have in most encounters with civil society been reluctant to consider deeper criticisms of their activities. For example, officials in the functional and area departments have normally read few if any critical studies of Fund policies by NGOs. On the rare occasion when staff have prepared a detailed response to such publications the tone has been mostly defensive, with an emphasis on seeking to undermine the other's argument. In one illustrative case, the deputy head of a functional department charged that an NGO critique of an IMF policy consisted of 'rhetorical excesses' that 'cast doubt on [your organisation] as a responsible partner in a dialogue'.⁸⁶ In the light of such reactions, many reformist and radical campaigners have felt that 'the IMF won't have a frank discussion about the problems of its policies', that 'you cannot critique in a dialogue with the Fund', and that 'if you're too insistent in expressing a different point of view, IMF people tell you to keep quiet'.⁸⁷ From the side of the Fund, one official has privately quipped that every lobbyist is allowed into the organisation once, but those who abuse the privilege are not welcomed again.⁸⁸ With gentler phraseology, a published IMF account of its relations with NGOs has stated that 'the Fund's strategy ... has been selective, and continued efforts at engagement have depended on whether the ensuing dialogue was constructive'.⁸⁹

That said, in adopting so defensive an approach Fund personnel have often been responding to similar intransigence on the part of many reformers and radicals in civil society. The lobbyists' arguments, too, have been well populated with unquestioned preconceptions, entrenched positions, easy slogans, and self-righteous posturing. Civic campaigners have frequently been no more prepared to read IMF publications than

⁸⁴Interview with the author.

⁸⁵Interview with the author.

⁸⁶Letter from the IMF to an NGO, April 1996.

⁸⁷Interviews with the author.

⁸⁸Interview with the author.

⁸⁹G. Windsperger, 'NGOs and IMF: Shared Goals – Different Approaches', *IMF Staff News* (March 1997), p. 9.

Fund officials have been inclined to read materials from civic groups. In meetings with IMF staff, NGO and labour activists have tended to give the organisation little credit for good intentions or at least some policy successes. A number of radical opponents in particular have inclined towards a manichaean conception in which the Fund can only do harm and its officials become embodiments of evil. In response, IMF officials have frequently complained that '[NGOs] spend the whole time telling us we're wrong', that 'it's hard to get a dialogue going [with such people]', and that 'some NGOs are just rabid'.⁹⁰

To be sure, the intensity of the confrontations just described has varied between individuals and between situations. The hostility has tended to be greatest in Washington and in certain African and Latin American programme countries. Dialogues have often been more cordial in Europe and in other programme countries. Some of the polarisation has been unnecessary, insofar as many IMF officials have conceded in private that the organisation has made mistakes. Likewise, most reformers and even several self-proclaimed radicals have conceded in private that many Fund interventions may be necessary and can have positive effects.

Hence some potential exists for greater mutual trust – and a consequently more open, two-way, critical, creative dialogue. Optimistic assessments might suggest that some first, rather hesitant steps in this direction have already taken place during the past several years. Perhaps the dialogue of the deaf has transformed into an exchange between the hard of hearing; however, a conversation with open ears has so far remained elusive.

CONSTRAINTS ON DIALOGUE

The first sections of this paper have examined the growth since the early 1980s of contacts between the International Monetary Fund and civil society groups, while the preceding section has highlighted certain significant limitations to these exchanges. In particular, dialogue between the IMF and civic associations has been found to be skewed towards particular constituencies, relatively shallow, and – especially when it comes to the Fund's engagement with reformers and radicals – lacking in mutual receptiveness. The present, fourth section of the analysis attempts to account for these shortcomings.

As suggested earlier, underdevelopment of this dialogue has usually not resulted in the first place from the personalities and attitudes of individuals, although such factors

⁹⁰Interviews with the author.

have no doubt played a secondary role in particular situations. If 'blame' is to be allocated, then it lies principally with: (a) the limited resources that the parties have had to hand; and (b) certain deeper structures (e.g. related to institutional culture and norms of the world system) that the partners in dialogue have inherited.

Resource Constraints

In order to conduct a dialogue that involves all interested parties in an open, searching discussion of policy, both the IMF and civil society groups would need to devote substantially more resources to their mutual contacts than have to date been allocated. Neither the Fund nor civic associations have had sufficient staff, budgets, information and coordination capacities to exploit the full potential of their relationships with each other. These four major resource constraints are elaborated in turn below.

Shortages of Personnel

With regard to inadequate staffing, even in today's Fund only the eleven officials of the Public Affairs Division have a specific responsibility for relations with civic groups. This number accounts for less than half of one per cent of IMF staff. So small a contingent can hardly be expected adequately to accumulate information from and intelligence about civil society bodies worldwide. Nor have PAD officials received very much help from colleagues, since other Fund employees have usually been overstretched with other responsibilities. Often sheer workload has frustrated the good intentions of those operational personnel who might otherwise have liked to develop public outreach initiatives. For example, a typical mission – where four officials spend two weeks in a country – has little opportunity to contribute substantively towards the construction of a social consensus behind a programme. Nor can an IMF Res Rep office be expected to achieve much in this regard so long as 66 of the 68 posts have only one professional staffer. (The exceptions are Russia with four and Ukraine with two.) EDs, too, have found that the burden of paperwork and meetings causes them sometimes to neglect interfacing with their constituencies.⁹¹ Understandably, then, the IMF has pleaded that 'because of its limited staff resources, the Fund focuses attention on so-called "umbrella" NGOs' in the expectation that they will 'funnel information to, and receive input from, their partners'.⁹²

Yet, as indicated earlier, these 'umbrella' organisations have frequently not maintained such links very well; indeed, their own staff shortages have largely inhibited them from

⁹¹Bichsel, p. 164.

⁹²Windsperger, p. 9.

doing so. Most civil society organisations that engage with the IMF have lacked staff with expertise regarding the institution and its policies, and the several dozen exceptions worldwide have usually had only one or two specialists each. To this day, a number of programme countries lack any local civic campaigner with extensive experience of dealing with the IMF. Most civil society activists have been overextended with other responsibilities that have kept them from becoming adequately educated about the Fund.

Shortcomings in regard to personnel have been qualitative as well as quantitative. For example, the operational departments of the Fund have been almost completely staffed with macroeconomists. Such professionals are normally unidisciplinary technocrats with little if any capacity for the political, cultural, sociological and spiritual understandings that would be required to address the various shortcomings in IMF outreach policies identified above. Moreover, Resident Representatives have often had no prior experience in their country of appointment, whether as an economist or otherwise. After two or three years, when Res Reps might have acquired greater understanding of the particularities of local circumstances, the Fund transfers them to another post.

Staff in civil society organisations have generally had greater sensitivity to the multidimensional character of social relations than their counterparts in the IMF (though, as noted before, their economic literacy has often been wanting). In addition, turnover problems have inhibited the development of a larger, more experienced civil society cadre. Too many of the would-be professional activists have been young graduates on short-term contracts with relatively poor remuneration. Most such campaigners have not focused on the IMF long enough to acquire detailed knowledge of the organisation.

Insufficient Funds

Intertwined with and exacerbating personnel problems, financial constraints have also contributed significantly to the underdevelopment of contacts between civil society and the IMF. Camdessus has continually extolled the virtues of his 'lean' institution and has been known to quip that 'we don't waste money on our image'.⁹³ At the Fund, external relations activities have in the mid-1990s commanded only around \$20 million annually, or just 4.3 per cent of the IMF's modest operating budget.⁹⁴ When staff have wanted to undertake outreach initiatives, the monies have not always been readily available. For example, in 1994 the Res Rep in Uganda experienced considerable

⁹³Minutes of a June 1996 meeting between the Managing Director and an NGO delegation.

⁹⁴*Annual Report 1996*, p. 217.

difficulty to secure a modest sum to finance a public information programme in Kampala on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Bretton Woods Conference. The IMF has been run under very tight budgetary controls, with both member states and management keeping a very sharp eye on the administrative budget. Borrowing governments in particular are loathe to endorse any additional expenditure (such as increased attention to civil society would require) insofar as this could increase the charges that they have to pay the Fund. In these circumstances IMF officials declare that 'any thought of specifically designating one official in each Resident Representative office to pursue contacts with civic bodies would be quite unrealistic'.⁹⁵

Financial constraints in civil society organisations have on the whole been even more severe. Indeed, many NGOs have collapsed for want of funds, especially in the South and East. Business lobbies have generally not suffered unduly from lack of monies, but most labour organisations and churches with an interest in the IMF have struggled on small budgets. The 1990s growth of work on the IMF by development and environmental NGOs has largely depended on grants from a few bilateral aid agencies and a handful of private donors: e.g. the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Moriah Fund, and the MacArthur Foundation. Other major corporate foundations have not supported the development of civic activity on the IMF. Moreover, it has been difficult for NGOs to develop connections with the Fund when their grants have usually been small (in the tens of thousands of dollars) and short term (lasting at most two or three years). Many campaigners in NGOs have complained about the amount of time 'lost' on fundraising and about the need often to adjust their grant proposals in order to fit a donor's agenda. Worst of all, competition for scarce monies has sometimes discouraged NGOs from collaborating together in their IMF work as generously as they ideally would do.

Inadequate Information

Lack of adequate staff time and training and lack of adequate funds have contributed significantly to a third resource constraint on the development of relations between the IMF and civil society: namely, shortages of information. The Fund has accumulated but a meagre store of data concerning civic organisations. IMF officials thus have little information with which to distinguish those civil society groups that represent substantial constituencies from the many 'briefcase NGOs' that consist of one person and a bundle of grant proposals. Indeed, IMF staff – including Resident Representatives – are usually unaware of the existence of many civic groups. On hearing of Camdessus' wish to meet during a visit with a delegation of local civic leaders, one Res Rep was driven in some desperation to the local UNDP mission to

⁹⁵Correspondence with the author, December 1997.

obtain names of potential invitees. It does seem paradoxical that, whereas the IMF has set such great store by data collection and analysis in its macroeconomic work, it has given so little attention to information gathering and assessment in its public affairs activities.

Concurrently, civic lobbying of the IMF has suffered from major shortages of information in regard to the Fund. For example, many groups with concerns to put to the IMF have not known where to call. Even a bare outline of the Fund's departmental structure was not readily available to the public until the 1996 *Annual Report* included a basic organigram,⁹⁶ and the institution has never made a staff list public. As one experienced civic organiser from Africa has objected, 'how can we ever influence the IMF if we barely know it?'⁹⁷ The Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs has exclaimed before US congressional hearings that the IMF is even more secretive than the CIA.

Sachs exaggerates insofar as the Fund has in recent years published increasing numbers of policy documents. Civil society activists can now access far more information than many of them realise, including many background papers by staff that the IMF uses in its discussions with governments. That said, however, the Fund has not released most Article IV Staff Reports,⁹⁸ Letters of Intent, Policy Framework Papers, and many other programme documents, including its retrospective evaluations of policy impacts.⁹⁹ Again and again, the IMF cites the prerogative of states to keep these analyses and recommendations confidential if they wish. Thus, in spite of recent improvements, lack of access to information has remained a substantial constraint on civil society monitoring and assessment of IMF activities.

Poor Coordination

A fourth resource constraint on IMF-civil society dialogue concerns poor capacities for coordination. For example, the Fund could compensate for some of its

⁹⁶ *Annual Report 1996*, p. 220.

⁹⁷ Remark of an NGO activist at an interview with an Executive Director during the 1996 Annual Meetings.

⁹⁸ The Executive Board decided in April 1997 that, with the consent of the government concerned, it would henceforth release 'Press Information Notes' (PINs) that summarise its deliberations of a country's economic policies in the context of Article IV consultations: see *IMF Survey*, 26 (12 May 1997), p. 148.

⁹⁹ In September 1993 the IMF did publish a general evaluation of ESAF performance: S. Schadler *et al.*, 'Economic Adjustment in Low-Income Countries: Experiences under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility', *IMF Occasional Papers*, No. 106. At least one influential external expert found this document heavily flawed: see T. Killick, 'Can the IMF Help Low-Income Countries? Experiences with Its Structural Adjustment Facilities', *The World Economy*, 18 (July 1995), pp. 603-18. The Fund will publish the full text of its 1997 internal review of experiences of ESAF programmes in 36 countries up to end 1994: see 'IMF Completes Internal Review of ESAF', *IMF Survey*, 26 (5 August 1997), pp. 233, 248-9.

shortcomings in staff and data for civic contacts by drawing much more than it has done on the greater expertise and information in this area of the World Bank and various UN specialised agencies. Some greater interagency collaboration has occurred in certain programme countries in recent years, but the IMF has rarely used these opportunities substantially to advance its relationships with civic groups.

In civil society, meanwhile, the various associations doing advocacy work on the Fund have on the whole not communicated terribly well with one another. Indeed, especially in the South and East, many agencies have been unaware even of each other's existence. Even the previously mentioned networks of civic groups have often suffered from irregular and incomplete exchange of information and experiences. Many civil society associations, particularly in the East and South, have until now been in early stages of organisational development. In this regard BothENDS has noted, for example, that 'consistent and elaborate communication with and between African NGOs can be difficult to maintain'.¹⁰⁰ For their part, civic advocates in the South have complained that North-based partners flood them with far more requests for information and comment than their usually poorly staffed and funded operations can handle.

True, it is perhaps not surprising that associations with conformist aims have rarely collaborated in lobbying the IMF with groups that pursue a reformist or radical programme. In addition, disagreements regarding aims, strategy and tactics have sometimes bitterly divided reformists and radicals: e.g. over the HIPC Initiative in 1996–7.¹⁰¹ Several significant policy differences have existed along South-North lines: *inter alia* regarding labour issues, environmental questions and ESAF. Some campaigners in the South have also rejected what they have seen as an excessively confrontational approach to the Fund on the part of many organisations in the North.

In spite of such divisions within civil society, however, more interorganisational coordination is possible and would presumably raise the general level of debate about and with the IMF. For example, it is curious that labour organisations and development NGOs have – with a few (mostly recent) exceptions – cooperated so little in the pursuit of debt relief and reforms of structural adjustment. All groups would benefit from a central data base concerning civic activism vis-à-vis the IMF: i.e. a comprehensive and regularly updated catalogue of resource people, documents, publications, popular education materials, existing collaborative relationships between organisations, and so on.

¹⁰⁰Both ENDS, *Annual Report 1994* (Amsterdam, Both ENDS, 1995), p. 13.

¹⁰¹Cf. 'Eurodad Multilateral Debt Update', 15 October 1996.

In sum, then, dialogue between civil society and the IMF could with better resourcing develop much further than it has to date. Of course, more staff, more funds, more information and more coordination would not by themselves allow these exchanges to realise their full potential as constructive policy inputs and forces for general democratisation. However, it is hard to see how such advances could be achieved in the absence of increased resources of these kinds.

Structural Constraints

The principal reason why greater resources would not by themselves suffice to deepen IMF-civil society contacts is that various embedded structural conditions have also limited the development of these relationships. Some of these constraints have related to institutional organisation. In particular, the relatively monolithic character of the International Monetary Fund has often discouraged open dialogue with civil society. Other structural forces inhibiting fuller contacts have lain in wider social relations: e.g. the culture of secrecy that has enveloped modern finance; the powerful hold of neoliberal discourse in contemporary governance; a number of entrenched social hierarchies; the continuing strength of the norm of state sovereignty; and the inadequacy of legitimisation mechanisms in civil society.

Institutional Solidarity of the IMF

As an organisation, the Fund has been considerably more monolithic than most global governance agencies – or indeed most formal institutions in general – and this characteristic has arguably militated against staff engagement with alternative policy perspectives in civil society. Contrasts with the World Bank are instructive in this respect. For one thing, the IMF's Bretton Woods twin has housed a greater diversity of approaches amongst its personnel, including some pockets of substantial internal dissent. Certain Bank officials have even tried to use connections with civil society to promote their viewpoints within the organisation. The World Bank has also had considerable staff turnover – *inter alia* through frequent use of contract personnel who periodically move in and out of the organisation. In this way, too, the Bank has gained exposure to a variety of perspectives. Indeed, there has been some two-way flow of personnel between the World Bank and civil society organisations.

The Fund has had little of such division on the inside and porosity towards the outside. The institution has sooner resembled a 'family business'. Most officials have joined the IMF relatively early in their careers and then usually stay with the organisation until retirement. The agency has tended as a result to be rather insular. Fund officials have

pursued many frank discussions with one another, but always within the walls of the building and always within pretty narrow boundaries of 'acceptable' debate. Only once or twice has an official resigned from the IMF out of disagreement on policy. Staff movement between the Fund and civil society organisations has transpired very rarely and in these isolated cases (e.g. Morris Goldstein's move to the IIE or Charles Dallara's move to the IIF) has involved broadly 'conformist' associations. In management style, the Fund has maintained tight central direction and rigorous internal discipline. Before leaving the door, any IMF programme proposal must have the approval of PDR, jokingly – but also evocatively – described within the organisation as 'the thought police' and 'the keepers of the theology'.¹⁰² In these various ways, then, the fairly monolithic character of the institution has discouraged IMF officials from developing a more open dialogue with outside parties, including civic groups.

Culture of Secrecy in Modern Finance

Difficulties of access to the IMF for civil society organisations have also resulted from the culture of secrecy that has traditionally enveloped monetary and financial regulation. Central banks, state treasuries and global financial agencies like the Fund have not in the past been attitudinally geared for 'public' relations. Older generations of IMF staff in particular have tended to resist each step towards greater information disclosure and to doubt the wisdom of meeting civic groups. One such official has declared bluntly, 'it is not in the members' interest for the Fund to be open.'¹⁰³

To be sure, there are good arguments for some discretion in Fund activities – arguments which most campaigners for IMF reform in fact endorse. For instance, advance notice of proposed currency devaluations, interest rate changes, tax alterations and the like could compromise the success of such measures. Likewise, publication of certain macroeconomic figures and targets might in some cases have undesirable destabilising effects on financial markets and domestic politics. A certain degree of confidentiality has probably often enhanced the efficacy of the Fund's consultations with its members. For example, governments might not be as willing to supply the IMF with important data if they knew that this information would be published.

However, institutions of monetary and financial regulation like the Fund have tended to drape the cloak of secrecy not only over sensitive matters, but across nearly the whole of their work. In the process they have also shielded themselves from the degree of public accountability that is usually demanded of other governance agencies in a

¹⁰²Interviews with the author.

¹⁰³Interview with the author.

democracy. To be fair, IMF has in the 1990s shifted its views on the balance between the need to know and the need for confidentiality in favour of the former. The Executive Board in particular has become convinced of the benefits of greater transparency in macroeconomic policymaking. At the same time the Fund has responded to rising public expectations for openness and transparency. Indeed, in 1994 the US Congress linked the appropriation of ESAF monies to greater disclosure by the IMF. However, an embedded culture of secrecy does not dissolve quickly. Moves toward greater openness have yet to reach all corners of the Fund and fully to change the style of its contacts with civic associations.

Predominance of Neoliberalism

A third structural circumstance of the late twentieth century – namely, the power of neoliberalism – has complicated efforts to reverse the IMF's tendencies towards insularity and secrecy. Neoliberalism refers, somewhat loosely, to the predominant contemporary worldview (and the policies that flow from it), according to which globalised market relations will in time create maximal liberty, democracy, prosperity and peace for humankind as a whole. In a word, neoliberalism has taken the classical liberal formula for the good society and given it a global twist. Broadly speaking, neoliberalism has prescribed:

- (a) the abolition of state-imposed restrictions on almost all cross-border movements of resources (money, consumables, durables, financial instruments, information, communications, etc.);
- (b) the removal of state controls on indicators of economic value (prices, wages, foreign exchange rates, interest rates, etc.);
- (c) the end to state ownership of productive assets (i.e. thoroughgoing privatisation);
- (d) the restriction of state provision of welfare needs to certain safety nets, with voluntary agencies, corporate charity, and market arrangements for insurances, pensions, etc. supplying the rest; and
- (e) the universal practice of liberal democracy, in particular the conduct of periodic multiparty elections to representative law-making bodies.

Following the stagnation of post-colonial socialism in the South, the collapse of central planning in the East, and the general abandonment of corporatist welfarism in the North, neoliberal visions have reigned supreme across the world. In the 1980s and 1990s, most governments, global governance agencies, major companies, mass media and thinktanks have all embraced neoliberalism to some substantial degree.

Thoroughly imbued with neoliberalism, IMF policies have largely paralleled the predominant world ideology of the late twentieth century. Indeed, the Fund has ranked among the world's chief proponents of neoliberal globalisation, often employing religious metaphor in its evangelism. Thus, for example, Camdessus has exhorted members to heed 'eleven commandments' for 'sustainable global growth' on a broadly neoliberal model.¹⁰⁴ Needless to say, conviction politics of this kind are not particularly conducive to two-way dialogue with reformers and radicals who call the neoliberal 'truth' into question. As one long-serving official has observed, 'the Fund cannot easily absorb iconoclastic thinking'.¹⁰⁵

Nor has the IMF had much pressure or incentive to engage in more deeply critical policy explorations with civil society groups. After all, neoliberalism has been the favoured knowledge – the 'commonsense' – of most centres of power in the 1980s and 1990s, including in particular the global financial markets and the major states with whom the IMF has its closest ties. By 'speaking the right language', most business associations and economic research institutes have had relatively easier entry into the Fund. However, prevailing knowledge/power structures of the day have encouraged the IMF of the 1990s largely to close its ears to Keynesianism, not to mention socialism, feminism, environmentalism, religious revivalism, and other unorthodox talk. Indeed, some campaigners for IMF reform have – deliberately or unconsciously – shifted their rhetoric in the direction of neoliberalism in order to get at least some hearing from the Fund.

Social Hierarchies

Next to factors of institutional culture and discourse, a further structural circumstance that has limited contacts between the Fund and civic associations relates to social hierarchies: for example, of North over South and East; of propertied and professional classes over poorer and less literate circles; and of men over women. These inequalities were mentioned earlier in the discussion of biases in the IMF-civil society dialogue. The point to stress at the present juncture is that this unequal access has not been accidental. Rather, relations between the Fund and civic groups have reflected structural power hierarchies of countries, classes and gender. These inequalities are easily (indeed, usually unconsciously and inadvertently) reproduced; they are but rarely (usually only with deliberate and persistent effort) counteracted.

¹⁰⁴'Building a New Global Partnership', *IMF Survey*, 14 October 1996, p. 317. See also 'Partnership for Sustainable Global Growth', Interim Committee Declaration, Washington, D.C., 29 September 1996.

¹⁰⁵Interview with the author.

Thus voices of the South and East have tended to play second fiddle in the IMF-civil society dialogue largely because they hold a weaker position generally in the world political economy. Although the deepest impacts of Fund recommendations have been felt in the South and East, a large majority of the votes, money, staff and ideas in the institution have come from the North. Dominance of the North has been so embedded that it has become 'natural' and unquestioned, and these assumptions have implicitly framed the IMF's approach to civil society.

Likewise, civic associations who maintain contacts with the Fund have mostly had their base in the North: in terms of their staffs, offices, memberships, funds and activities. Even in South-North meetings of civil society groups, activists from the North have tended to dominate the proceedings unless delegates from the South have explicitly insisted on having equal say. Although colonial times have passed, Northern solidarity with Southern civil society partners can sometimes still be delivered with patronising tone and paternalistic gesture. Indeed, North-based NGOs have tended to make contacts in the South and East with people who 'speak their language', for example, owing to university studies in the North.

The relative exclusion of other social groups in contacts between the IMF and civil society has similarly had largely structural causes. For example, English fluency, tertiary education and other socialisation have stood as major class-related prerequisites for participation in the dialogue. Meanwhile gender relations have – one presumes – figured significantly in sustaining the overwhelming predominance of men among IMF officials, as in global finance as a whole.¹⁰⁶ The general marginalisation of feminist economics has made it still more unlikely that Fund staff and many civic activists (e.g. in male-dominated business and labour organisations) would acquire significant sensitivity to gender aspects of macroeconomic policy. The IMF has in several small steps recently shown greater gender awareness: e.g. in its staff development policy and with the publication of a discussion paper on gender biases in taxation systems.¹⁰⁷ However, the openings have not yet been great enough to attract a response from women's NGOs.

State 'Sovereignty'

A fourth structural inhibition to greater development of relations between the IMF and civil society has been the persistent hold on political thinking of the sovereignty norm.

¹⁰⁶ Very little research exists on gender aspects of contemporary finance. For a rare example of such analysis, see L. McDowell and G. Court, 'Gender Divisions of Labour in the Post-Fordist Economy: The Maintenance of Occupational Sex Segregation in the Financial Services Sector', *Environment and Planning A*, 26 (September 1994), pp. 1397–1418.

¹⁰⁷ J.G. Stotsky, *Gender Biases in Tax Systems* (Washington, IMF Discussion Paper 96/99, 1996).

Although states have, through contemporary globalisation, lost their effective capacity to exercise absolute and unilateral control over their territorial jurisdiction, governments have continued to cling jealously to the claim that they always have the final say in politics. Most civic activists and Fund officials, too, continue to work under the spell of the sovereignty myth. Even if these nonstate actors recognise that sovereign statehood is defunct, they still appreciate that the state remains the institution of governance which enjoys greatest legitimacy in today's world. Hence both the IMF and civil society organisations have usually limited their direct contacts to a level that governments will tolerate.

Officials of the Fund have been highly conscious that their organisation is at the highest levels – the Board of Governors and the Executive Board – run by the collective decisions of its shareholders, the member states. Both by the letter of international law and in the predominant mindset of Fund staff, the IMF is only responsible to governments and not – at least directly – to citizens organised into civic associations. Fund officials have always been supremely concerned to preserve their relationships with governments and have rarely pursued contacts with civic groups that might disturb those relationships. Ever since EXR first hired a public liaison officer in 1983 – in order to lobby the US Congress – the Fund has taken great care not to appear to be interfering in the domestic politics of its member states. Again and again, IMF staff have maintained that 'it is hard to bring nonofficial groups into dialogue, as it could disrupt our delicate relationship with government.'¹⁰⁸

Indeed, Fund officials have frequently argued that civic representatives should take issues regarding IMF activities to governments rather than to the Fund itself. Staff have said, 'We prefer that NGOs contact their governments and that governments take the initiative in contacting NGOs' and '[civic associations] should be actively involved with their governments, not with the Fund.'¹⁰⁹ A vocal critic of the IMF has concurred, saying that 'civil society must put pressure on governments, for only they can make the changes.'¹¹⁰ In a similar vein, many Fund staff have felt that 'contact with civil society is really government's job' and that 'it is the responsibility of governments to establish a [participatory] process.'¹¹¹ An official in EXR has declared simply: 'Let national policy open up and we'll follow.'¹¹²

Thus the extent of IMF outreach to civic associations has often been conditioned by the attitude of the member state whose jurisdiction is involved. When a government

¹⁰⁸Interview with the author.

¹⁰⁹Interview with the author; Bichsel, p. 162.

¹¹⁰Interview with the author.

¹¹¹Interview with the author; Bichsel, p. 151.

¹¹²Interview with the author.

has encouraged the Fund to engage in a major public relations effort – as occurred in Venezuela in 1996 – the IMF has been more inclined to undertake it. If a government has wanted to involve civil society in the design and evaluation of Fund programmes – as in the case of Uganda – then such consultation has been more likely to transpire. In contrast, if a government were to want missions and the Res Rep to keep a low profile, then they would generally feel constrained to do so. As one IMF official has rhetorically asked, 'What do you do if the government does not want civil society to be heard?'¹¹³

To some extent, then, the Fund has, like other global governance agencies, stuck its neck out in pursuing contacts with civil society organisations. After all, by strict interpretation of international law, initiatives by the IMF and civic groups to contact one another can be seen as an infringement of state sovereignty, and thus as illegitimate. Moreover, if these exchanges provoked objections from the government, they could compromise the success of a Fund programme. Furthermore, by taking a higher public profile the IMF has increased the risk that government might exploit this greater visibility to place all responsibility for programme hardships and failures onto 'the foreign intruder' from Washington. In addition, the IMF can through its exchanges with civic groups become unwittingly embroiled in domestic political struggles of which it has little understanding. Some Fund officials have also worried that certain civic groups could suffer punishments from a hostile government for their collaboration with global institutions. Weak and unpopular governments in particular might regard such relationships as a threat to their already fragile position.

Clearly, then, IMF relations with civil society involve delicate issues concerning the location of initiative, power and legitimacy in contemporary governance. That said, Fund officials have perhaps sometimes cited these worries as a way to evade challenges from civic groups. After all, staff have tended to invoke arguments about the state's primacy only in relation to NGOs, and not with respect to business lobbies or academic institutes. Moreover, in practice no government has ever complained about the IMF's contacts with civil society. To this extent the Fund has possibly exaggerated the constraint that states pose and invoked the sovereignty principle to its convenience.

Insufficient Legitimation of Civil Society

If the IMF has sometimes hidden behind the sovereignty card, civic groups have often advanced unsustainable claims of their own legitimacy. On the whole these associations have attended insufficiently to questions concerning their

¹¹³Interview with the author.

representativeness, consultation processes, transparency and accountability. Ironically, the organisations which have pressed hardest for a democratisation of the Fund have often done little to secure democracy in their own operations. These shortcomings have dented the credibility of many advocacy groups – especially NGOs – and have allowed the IMF and states to take them less seriously than they might otherwise have done.¹¹⁴

On questions of representativeness and consultation, for example, the disproportionate weight in civil society of Northerners and middle-class professionals has been stressed earlier. Many activists have had experience neither in the South and East nor at the grassroots. Southerners, Easterners and underclasses usually have had no direct representation in the more powerful North-based associations; nor have they had formal channels through which to intervene. Even members in the North have frequently had no input in policymaking beyond the payment of their annual subscription. Donors have generally exerted the primary external influence in this regard. NGO campaigners have therefore usually appeared in the eyes of the IMF to represent only themselves. For example, NGO attendance of the Annual Meetings has been almost entirely by self-selection.

In contrast, the Fund has tended more readily to recognise labour organisations as legitimate partners in dialogue. Most trade unions have a large dues-paying membership and hold regular elections of officers. Indeed, labour leaders have often insisted on their more representative character, compared to NGOs, as a way to command greater attention from global governance agencies. The emphasis of this difference has arguably contributed to the previously noted underdevelopment of collaboration between labour and NGOs.¹¹⁵

Most civil society groups have also attended insufficiently to issues of transparency in their operations. Many of these organisations have not published annual reports of their activities regarding the IMF. Some have not even prepared a general project description for public distribution. Often these associations – again, especially NGOs – have not made clear who they are, where their funds originate, how they reach their policy positions, and so on.

The picture has generally been little better with regard to accountability issues in civil society organisations. Many countries have lacked adequate mechanisms to ensure the public-interest credentials of NGOs in particular. Too often these associations have

¹¹⁴On these issues see further A. Bichsel, 'NGOs as Agents of Public Accountability and Democratization in Intergovernmental Forums', in W.M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft (eds), *Democracy and the Environment: Problems and Prospects* (Cheltenham, Elgar, 1996), pp. 234–55.

¹¹⁵Cf. R. O'Brien, 'Labor and the WTO', unpublished typescript, p. 5.

been accountable only to a largely self-selected board of trustees, to private funders (some of them anonymous) and/or to foreign official donors. In some cases civic activists have abused NGO status for tax evasion and other personal gain, thereby heightening worries about all such organisations.

Needless to say, these frequent shortfalls in the legitimacy of civil society groups have hampered their access to the IMF. Many Fund officials – especially those who have been reluctant in any case to engage in dialogue with reformers and radicals – have seized on the lack of democratic credentials as a reason to limit contacts, in terms of both frequency and depth. NGOs in particular are likely to find their influence on the IMF limited so long as they cannot better demonstrate features of consultation, transparency and accountability in their relations with their constituents.

In sum, then, a host of resource limitations and structural constraints have together created substantial inhibitions against the development of wider and deeper dialogue between the International Monetary Fund and civic organisations. Given the alignment of social forces described above, it is not surprising that the contacts have had the partial, generally shallow and frequently troublesome character described in part three of this paper. On the other hand, as indicated in parts one and two, contemporary globalisation has created other powerful impulses towards the growth of IMF-civil society links. Tensions between these contradictory tendencies seem likely to mark the future development of these relationships.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

This study has described a host of relationships that have developed, with only indirect if any involvement by states, between the International Monetary Fund and organisations of civil society. This development conforms to a wider trend in contemporary governance whereby accelerated globalisation has broken the state's effective monopoly on regulation. In a world where increasing areas of social life are largely suprateritorial – i.e. transcending the geography of territorial distance and borders – governance by absolute, comprehensive, unilateral rule of the territorial state is no longer tenable. Not surprisingly, various alternative sites of norm construction, standards monitoring and rule enforcement have emerged in areas where state sovereignty has become impracticable.

The IMF has tried to fill a number of such gaps. With surveillance activities the Fund has attempted to further the adjustment of state macroeconomic policies worldwide in order to meet a situation of globalising production and finance. In many countries the

Fund has intervened more intensely towards this end with its own structural adjustment programmes. Meanwhile IMF training and technical assistance activities have aimed to provide poorly equipped states with staff and tools that can better handle the policy challenges of globalisation. With its rescue operations in threatened debt defaults of the 1980s and emerging market crises in the 1990s, the Fund has sought to restore stability to global finance.

In all of these Fund activities, state sovereignty has become effectively inoperative. By the letter of international law, governments have the right to accept or reject these IMF services. In practice, however, the forces of a globalising world political economy have thoroughly compromised a state's supposed 'free will' in these matters. Weaker states in particular have often been substantially dependent on the Fund's money and expertise. Hence, like various other global governance agencies, the IMF has become more than the sum of its state members: i.e. it has power over states (especially in South and East) at the same time that states have power over it. A key challenge in contemporary world history is to manage this shift from state-centric politics to governance by an interplay of local, national and global regimes.

Given the Fund's importance – which is set in all likelihood to grow further – it is not surprising that increasing numbers of citizens should wish to engage directly with it. Many of these constituents belong to transborder groups, for example, of managers, financiers, academics, workers, environmentalists, religious believers, women, etc. Arguably their interests are not always adequately – or indeed appropriately – represented through territorial states. At a local level, meanwhile, other parties interested in the IMF lie in grassroots communities that feel considerably alienated from, if not abused by, their state. These groups, too, seek redress through global networking. They might in fact lobby the Fund as part of a campaign for democratisation of their state.

On these counts it is understandable – and in terms of democracy right – that various civic associations have pursued direct contacts with the International Monetary Fund. In a globalising world, where governance is not reducible to the state, democracy cannot be fully realised through the state either. To the extent that important parts of contemporary social relations have obtained a substantially suprateritorial character, it is necessary – in order to achieve effective democracy – to devise suitable suprateritorial mechanisms for participation, representation, transparency and accountability. Such global democracy would stand alongside, and in a complementary relationship with, territorially based democratic processes.

How well have the relationships that have developed thus far between civil society and the IMF fulfilled this need? Certainly civic groups have offered the Fund many policy inputs, and certainly the organisation has taken steps – inconceivable twenty years ago – to accommodate relations with civil society. New channels of participation have become available. There is potential – some of it already realised – in the IMF's claim that it 'encourages governments to work at consensus-building and two-way communication, including with national NGOs.'¹¹⁶ Even with its fragility to date, the IMF-civil society dialogue has had significant impacts: the aforementioned Agenda Venezuela exercise; refinement of the HIPC terms; greater transparency in Fund operations; increased public awareness of macroeconomic issues in a number of countries; etc. Hence the exchanges have arguably contributed to some democratisation of both the Fund itself and of economic policymaking in many member countries.

Yet, as has been stressed in the second half of this paper, interchanges between the IMF and civil society have fallen well short of a fully democratic dialogue. Many parties have been marginalised or excluded, many contacts have lacked substance, and many exchanges have not been open and reciprocal. Major resource constraints and large structural barriers have greatly hampered this democratisation process. The IMF and its constituents have lacked not only sufficient staff, money and data to conduct a democratic dialogue, but also (for the most part) a political imagination that has caught up with the material conditions of globalisation.

How can the full potential of an IMF-civil society dialogue be realised? Given the scale of the challenge, it could be tempting to want to terminate relationships between civic associations and the Fund and to return to a 'simpler' situation where the organisation dealt only with states. However, with recent accelerated globalisation that past has become for the foreseeable future irretrievable. The IMF will not return to its original Bretton Woods shape. Nor will civic groups pretend that the Fund is not important and that states are the only actors in the making of contemporary macroeconomic policy. Direct connections between civil society and the IMF are unavoidable in the decades to come.

Hence the challenge is to organise and conduct these relations so that they maximally advance the complexly intertwined goals of efficacy and democracy in global governance. Various steps in this direction have been implicitly suggested at various points in the paper and might be summarised as follows:

¹¹⁶Windsperger, p. 8.

A. General Suggestions for Both Civil Society and the IMF

- to accord higher priority to the development of their mutual relationships
- to commit more resources to this end
- to develop more systematic approaches to these relationships
- to make greater efforts to include marginalised sectors in the dialogue
- to cultivate attitudinal shifts in the direction of greater mutual recognition, respect and reciprocity

B. Specific Suggestions Regarding the IMF

- to give relations with civil society a more formal footing, through steps such as
 - formulation of general guidelines concerning these matters by the Executive Board
 - issuance of specific instructions regarding contacts with civil society to missions and Res Reps
 - creation of a (rigorous but flexible) accreditation system for civic associations dealing with the Fund
 - formalisation of a framework for consultation of civic groups in the preparation, implementation and review of IMF recommendations
 - amendment of the Articles of Agreement to 'legalise' contacts with civic associations
- to incorporate political-scientific and sociological expertise on civil society into outreach work
 - with the addition to certain functional departments like FAD and PDR of several officials with such training
 - with regular use of consultants for advice concerning the circumstances of civil society in particular countries

- to develop a data base concerning actual and potential civil society contacts, drawing both on the Fund's own experience and on the information already accumulated by governments and various agencies of the United Nations
- to adopt a more professional approach to civil society consultation by missions and Resident Representatives
 - preferably through the inclusion of IMF staff with relevant expertise (an admittedly costly option)
 - alternatively through better exploitation of the resources of NGLS and resident missions of UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank
 - in any case through the incorporation into official reports of notes concerning meetings with civic groups
- to increase efforts to enhance the representativeness of IMF links with civil society, for example, by urging
 - greater contact with groups based in the South and East, especially on the ground in programme countries
 - greater contact with groups representing stakeholders like women and smallholders whom the Fund has in the past tended to overlook
 - Res Reps to make contacts outside as well as inside the capital and with indigenous as well as transborder associations

C. Specific Suggestions Regarding Civil Society

- to intensify efforts to build general civil society capacities, especially in the South and East
- to increase focus on the International Monetary Fund, *inter alia* through
 - designation of more staff to work specifically on the Fund
 - preparation of more in-depth studies of Fund activities (Article IV consultations, stabilisation and adjustment programmes, financial rescues, etc.), incorporating in particular local perspectives from the countries involved

- to redouble work on civic education concerning the IMF (and on global governance issues more generally)
- to exploit much more the possibilities of interorganisational cooperation and coordination within civil society
- to develop a shared data base that comprehensively lists resource people, documents, publications, popular education materials and so on that are available in civil society concerning the IMF
- to acquire longer-term funding (e.g. ten-year programmes with biennial reviews)
- to attend urgently to issues of legitimation, *inter alia* through
 - more systematic and intensive consultation by North-based groups of colleagues in the South and East for whom they purport to speak
 - more systematic and intensive consultation by middle-class professional activists of grassroots voices for whom they purport to speak
 - publication of an annual report where this is currently not done
 - the creation of transparent accountability mechanisms
 - a critical examination of the role of funders as 'hidden' agenda-setters

These thoughts are offered as but broad and tentative suggestions. Their desirability and feasibility require further debate: one hopes a discussion that is more inclusive, probing and open than exchanges between the Fund and civil groups have often to date been. To be sure, implementation of any significant changes in relations between the IMF and civil society would require substantial commitments of resources and would probably face major resistance from persons and institutions who stand to lose some power by such changes. Democratisation of global governance will likely be as long and difficult a project as democratisation of the state has been. It is good that the process has started, but it still has a very long way to go.

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