



SEVEN REVOLUTIONS FYI

"An initiative to promote strategic thinking on the key issues of tomorrow."

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WHAT INSTITUTIONS DOES THE PUBLIC TRUST?

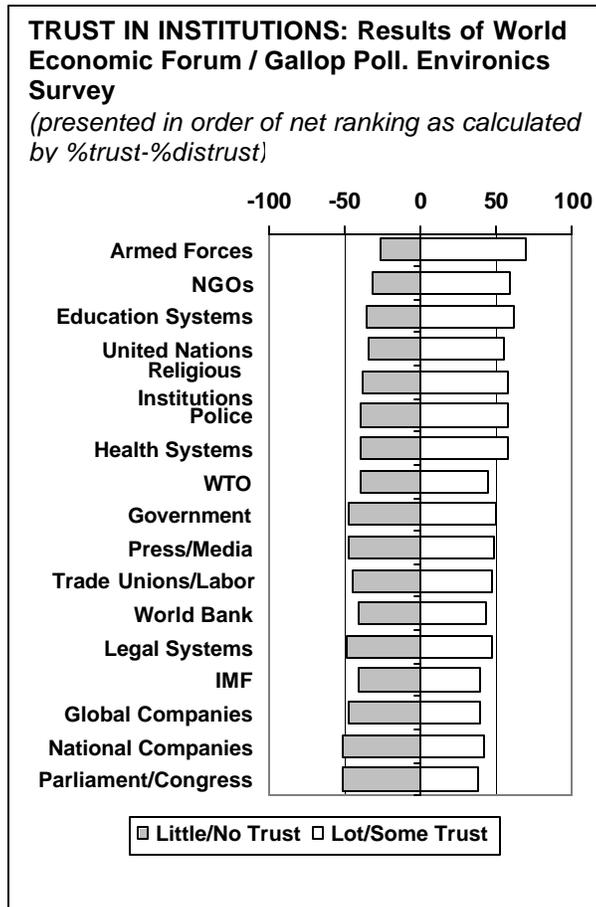
If asked what kind of public institution you most trust, how would you reply? Which organizations would you put at the top of your list—international organizations, government, congress/parliament, armed forces, police, private-sector corporations, or NGOs? And which do you trust the least?

There is little doubt that organizations across the board are encountering profound challenges relating to the ways in which they define their operations—their way of governance. Whether it is the spate of breakdowns in governance systems in various countries, the spate of recent corporate meltdowns, the painful difficulties now facing parts of the religious community, or the demonstrators who gather at G8 or IMF/World Bank meetings, organizations at all levels are encountering a number of new and unfamiliar challenges to their legitimacy and modes of operation.

These institutional structures are at the core of the SEVEN REVOLUTIONS Initiative's focus on the "Governance Revolution." The challenge, we maintain, is adapting the gamut of social organizations to the new challenges we face.

An international opinion survey released recently for the World Economic Forum by Gallup International and

Environics, entitled the "Voice of the People," reflects the views of 36,000 citizens in 47 countries across six continents. According to the survey groups, their sample is statistically representative of 1.4 billion citizens—or some 22% of the world's population.



The key question put to respondents: How much do you trust 17 kinds of broad-based institutions—from educational system to NGO, from government to United Nations—to "operate in the best interest of society?" The results, as set out in the accompanying chart, were extremely informative.

On the top of the trust list are the armed forces—a result that may be somewhat skewed owing to the fact that four of the countries surveyed were in a state of heightened alert. But there can be little doubt that security concerns arising in the post-911 environment also contributed to this outcome.

In distant second, third, and fourth places are NGOs, "education systems," and the United Nations respectively. This, of course, is less surprising. Part of it stems from

the fact that NGOs and educational systems, by definition, seek "to operate in the best interests of society"—as opposed to corporations, for example,

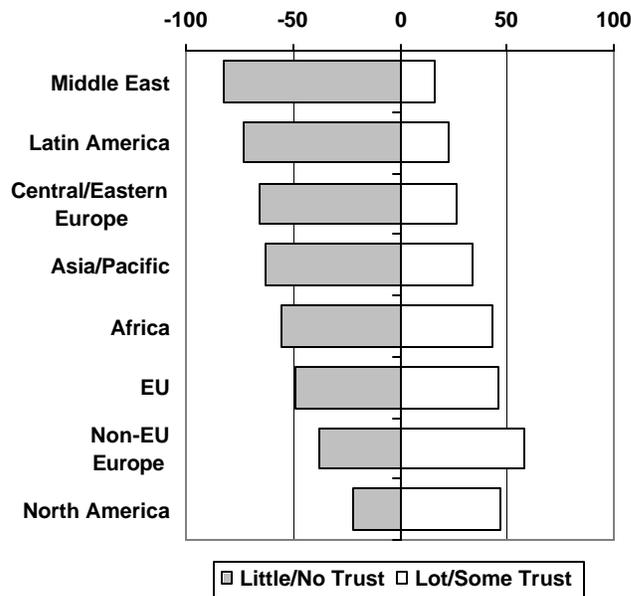
whose traditional goal has been wealth maximization for shareholders. Furthermore, the monitoring and vigilance functions that many NGOs have assigned to themselves have put them in a favorable position with respect to public attitudes—especially in the Europe and the United States. For many of the same reasons, it is not surprising that “educational institutions” and the United Nations also received a high level of “trust.” Noteworthy is the relatively high level that the United Nations received among American respondents.

The real surprise, however, is on the “distrust” side of the equation. Specifically, the rating for the “parliament/congress” institutions—the key “democratic” political institutions across the world—is the very smallest. That attitude was most pronounced in the Middle East, Latin America and Eastern and Central Europe, as the accompanying chart reflects. Africa reflects views perhaps more optimistic than expected in light of the titanic governance challenges faced there.

But it is equally instructive that even in the European Union, the “little/no” trust category exceeded the “a lot/some.” That leaves the net-plus universe of trust in legislatures to only the “non-EU Europe” and “North America.”

TRUST IN PARLIAMENT/CONGRESS TO “OPERATE IN SOCIETY’S BEST INTERESTS”

(%, by geographical region)



The full dimensions of the political challenge in governance were revealed in the responses to the question to respondents: Is your country “governed by the will of the people?” An astonishing 42 of 46 countries said “no.” The outliers were the Dominican Republic, Israel, Luxembourg and Malaysia. The “no” carried by 61-39% in the EU and by 52-43% in North America.

Like all polls, these survey results present a mere snapshot of broader public attitudes on the various layers of institutional governance around us. Nevertheless, this survey is an eye-opener for three reasons. First, it shows considerable unease with layers of governance across the board. The net ratings of the trust scores (% trust minus % distrust) were relatively weak, with the exception of the “armed forces” score. Even the most trusted institutions—“NGOs,” “educational systems,” and the “United Nations”—have net ratings lower than 30. Second, the results show us just how far the private sector has to go to gain public trust. That the two institutions representing the private sector—“global companies” and “large national companies”—were the second and third most distrusted should send a strong signal to business leaders. Finally, the broad alienation with parliaments and legislatures reflected in the survey suggests the extent to which national systems of governance need to expand their respective circles of democracy.

For more information on this revealing survey, consult: http://www.environicsinternational.com/sp-gim.asp?article=Trust_Survey.pdf.