

## **Influences on National Participation in International Institutions: Liberal v Non-liberal States**

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It is a respect for the law that defines liberal democratic societies around the world and it is faith in the legal process and a commitment to open and transparent processes that sets us apart from our enemies.

Australian Attorney-General, Philip Ruddock,  
Canberra, 8 June 2004

### **I Introduction**

Assumptions about international law are made by international lawyers and political scientists alike. One is that international law has a positive effect, not only in providing the essential structure, system of rules and order of the international system, but also in its impact – through a state’s voluntary accession to international treaties – on a state’s municipal legal system. Another is the prevalent assumption, in an era characterised by an obsessive focus on the importance of nation-building and democratisation as a defence against international terrorism, that liberal-democratic states have a number of peculiar virtues distinguishing them from non-liberal states, in particular, a respect for both the rule of law and the rule of international law, which makes them not only sites of good governance but better and more cooperative international citizens.

The topic of this chapter on factors influencing national participation in international institutions both implies a certain commonality in the motivations behind states’ participation and the possibility of difference. It thus lends itself more readily to an examination of the assumption that liberal democracies have a better record as participants in international organisations and as defenders of the international rule of law than non-

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