ASIAN BAROMETER

A Comparative Survey of
DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Is Democracy Emerging as a Universal Value?
A Contrarian Perspective

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A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, numerous national and multinational public opinion surveys have indicated that democracy has achieved overwhelming support from citizens around the world. The question remains, however, whether supporters of democracy recognize and endorse fundamental democratic characteristics separate from authoritarian characteristics. Using the latest wave of the World Values Survey, this study examines the authenticity of democratic support in 46 countries, separated into seven distinct regions of the world. Our careful analysis reveals that a majority of citizens who say they support democracy are either unsure or misinformed about essential attributes that constitute a democratic system of government. In all regions except the fully democratized West, genuine democratic supporters make up minorities of the population, ranging from 12 to 38 percent. We conclude that democratic values have failed to take root in most societies even after decades of democratization efforts. These findings run counter to the increasingly popular claim that democracy is emerging as a universal value.

Over the past three decades, democracy has made remarkable progress. The emergence of over 90 new democracies throughout the world has occasioned public opinion surveys, conducted in a wide variety of cultures, to gauge citizen conceptions of democratization.[1] The Gallup-International Voice of the People Project, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, UNDP program on Democracy and Citizenship, the World Values Survey, and many other national and multinational surveys have monitored citizen orientations toward democracy. As the last two waves of the World Values Survey suggest, "a clear majority of the population in virtually every society endorses a democratic political system."[2] The 2007 Voice of the People surveys, conducted in 63 countries by Gallup-International, also reports that more than eight out of ten citizens either strongly or slightly agree that in spite of its limitations, democracy is the best form of government.[3] Even in the Islamic Middle East, Confucian East Asia, and the former Soviet Union, large majorities are favorably oriented to democracy.[4] Undoubtedly, democracy has achieved overwhelming mass approval throughout the world and become "virtually the only political model with global appeal."[5]

When survey respondents proclaim support for democracy, however, it may not necessarily mean that they actually recognize democracy as a system of government or accurately understand all the essential characteristics that distinguish it from its alternatives. Yet, to date, public opinion research on mass support for democracy has not systematically examined how ordinary people understand democracy. Instead, previous research has focused exclusively on monitoring the levels and sources of their support, and comparing them across countries and regions. Consequently, little is known about the authenticity and trustworthiness of such avowed democratic support.[6]

If people pronounce democracy to be the best form of government, is this adequate to demonstrate the universality of democracy's appeal? Or does universality require that a majority of citizens accurately understand democracy and consistently endorse its basic characteristics? In this article, we suggest that the latter approach is more appropriate for determining the universal appeal of democracy. In every region of the world today, we find that approving the idea of democracy does not necessarily equate to being fully informed about what it is. Nor does it necessarily mean embracing the regime characteristics that political scientists have long associated with democratic polities. It is, therefore, premature to accept the increasingly popular claim that democracy is emerging as a universal value.[7]

Our study seeks to assess and compare the authenticity of democratic support across seven major cultural regions in the world.[8] It reveals that the basic attributes of a democratic system as defined by Western political scientists are neither fully recognized nor correctly evaluated by global citizenries.[9] More specifically, many supporters of democratic government are found to favor as either an abstract ideal or a symbol. Our analysis further shows that accurately and fully informed supporters of democracy constitute minorities in most regions of the world to such an extent that authentic democratic support remains a regional phenomenon. Therefore, we argue that it is decidedly inappropriate to suggest that support for democracy has become a universal value.

To make this argument, we analyze the latest, fifth wave of the World Values Survey (WVS), conducted from 2005 to 2007. We first discuss the key variables in our analysis, and thereafter the methods used to acquire our empirical results. We then

analyze five major questions: 1) Do citizens recognize the basic characteristics of democratic and authoritarian rule? 2) Do citizens correctly evaluate democratic regime characteristics? 3) Do citizens who say they favor democracy recognize and correctly evaluate its basic attributes? 4) What proportion of the world's democratic supporters are genuine democrats as opposed to superficial democrats? and 5) What are the sources of authentic democratic support? On the basis of these analyses, this paper concludes that essential democratic values and procedural norms have failed to take root in most societies even after decades of democratization efforts. It also concludes that future research should be cautious in assuming that democracy is emerging as a universal value.

Democratic Values and Norms

Our study is premised on the notion that any viable democracy as government by the people requires a majority of citizens to possess an unconditional acceptance and understanding of its basic characteristics. Although definitions of democracy vary, ranging from narrow (free, fair, and open elections) to broad interpretations (free elections, civil rights, a multi-party system, an independent judiciary, and an independent media), most scholars agree that the consolidation of a democratic system is highly conditional on the political and social orientations of its citizens.[10] Indeed, recent scholarship on why third-wave democracies have reverted to non-democracies, points to the lack of genuine commitment to democratic politics among their citizenries.[11] Democratic support becomes genuine when people accurately understand what distinguishes democracy from its non-democratic alternatives, and embraces it as "the only game in town" by rejecting non-democratic alternatives.[12]

Authentic commitment to democracy requires much more than subscribing to the vacant claim that it is the best form of government. It also requires more than endorsing the claim that it is a lesser evil or a second-best form of government.[13] As government by the people and for the people, democracy is a multi-faceted phenomenon comprising the various patterns of interactions among citizens and the institutions representing their interests. As Schmitter and Karl suggest, therefore, "the various patterns must be habitually known, practiced, and accepted by most, if not all, actors."[14]

How well do contemporary mass publics understand democracy, the political system they favor most? How capable are they of distinguishing it from non-democratic alternatives? To determine the authenticity of global citizenries' understanding of democracy, we analyze their opinions on five essential characteristics of consolidated democratic systems: support for free and fair elections, civil liberties, gender equality, civilian control of the military, and the separation of church and state.

Free and fair elections are an inseparable trait of consolidated democracies.[15] Elections legitimize the government and provide a mechanism for political dialogue between rulers and citizens. Moreover, they allow citizens to choose from alternative political platforms, side with divergent parties, and they facilitate political activism and mobilization. As Elizabeth Spiro Clark notes, "Without regular genuinely competitive elections, essential democratic elements of accountability and equality (one person-one vote) are missing."[16] For this reason, in *Polyarchy*, Robert Dahl identifies participation, especially in the process of electing political leaders, as an underlying dimension in a fully democratic society.[17] Genuine democratic supporters are thus expected to understand and endorse popular elections in a political system.

While elections are an important ingredient of democracy, elections on their own do not make a democracy. The absence of free and fair elections always means that a country is undemocratic. But the holding of such elections does not necessarily mean that the country is democratic.[18] In the world of new democracies, elections are not always accompanied by the protection of individual freedom and self-expression within the political arena. In many countries, democratically elected leaders rule with decrees, impose restrictions on speech and assembly, and tolerate abuse of human rights.[19] Only when citizens are fully protected from such restrictions and abuses can they participate freely in the electoral process and exercise their right to vote in free and fair elections. The protection of civil rights and liberties is, therefore, also essential to democracy.

In addition to the protection of civil liberties, the equal treatment of all citizens constitutes another essential characteristic of democracy. Since all humans in a democratic state are assumed to be intrinsically equal to each other, they should be provided with equal opportunities to voice their opinions and participate in the political process. In addition, their interests and preferences should be weighted equally in the process.[20] Only when men and women are considered societal equals, therefore, can a country be considered truly democratic. For this reason, gender equality is widely recognized as an explicit goal for building democratic institutions and processes. While most citizens around the world espouse support for democracy as a system of government, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris find that countries with the worst democratic rankings are comprised of citizens who have the lowest tolerance toward gender equality.[21] Accordingly, we assess citizen support of civil rights and women's rights. Citizens with

an authentic democratic orientation are expected to support citizens' liberties and women's equality with men.

Finally, a fully democratic system requires that a popularly elected government remain autonomous from other societal groups and organizations. This depends on citizens recognizing the authority of their elected regime. It also requires that representatives be held accountable to the people's preferences. If other groups and individuals, such as the military or religious authorities, undermine the authority of an elected government, then its democratic legitimacy is at risk.[22] Moreover, because many authoritarian regimes are ruled by the military or religious sects, it is an important democratic signal that citizens reject these as potentially legitimate political authorities. If religious institutions are not separated from or are one with the state, this impedes citizen choice and avenues of genuine accountability.[23] Among Robert Dahl's procedural minimal conditions for a modern democracy, for example, is the judgment that "control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials."[24]

Military intervention also undermines democratic processes. Policymakers elected by the people must be able to operate freely from the threat of a coup d'état or other oppositional intimidation external to democratic procedures and principles. As Schmitter and Karl explain, "Democracy is in jeopardy if military officers, entrenched civil servants, or state managers retain the capacity to act independently of elected civilians or even veto decisions made by the people's representatives."[25] To determine whether global citizenries acknowledge the legitimacy of their elected government, we measure their aversion to military intervention and religious involvement in matters of

state. Citizens with a genuine democratic orientation are expected to reject both a military takeover and the interference of religious figures.

While we do not presume that these five values and norms constitute an exhaustive list of democratic regime characteristics, we are confident that they exist as core values in all consolidated democracies. Three of the five values tap contestation and inclusiveness as conceptualized by Dahl and empirically verified by Coppedge et al. and others.[26] – free elections, the protection of liberties, and gender equality. The two other values address the legitimacy and autonomy of democratic governance, which military and/or theocratic intervention can undermine.

Methods

To determine the authenticity of democratic support among global citizenries, we analyze survey data from 46 countries in the fifth wave of the World Values Survey (WVS), conducted between 2005 and 2007. The WVS posed a set of five questions that capture the five democratic regime characteristics discussed above (see Appendix A for a description of these questions). Respondents evaluated each question on a 10-point scale, with 1 signifying "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 signifying "an essential characteristic of democracy." For each test, we pool the country results into seven major cultural regions—the democratic West, Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa (see Appendix B for a list of the countries in each region). Responses are weighted by country to account for variations in the sample sizes.

We are first interested in determining whether citizens are aware of each of the five dimensions selected in our study as an essential characteristic of a democracy or its alternatives. We calculate the percentage of respondents who are unable to recognize free elections, protection of liberties, and gender equality as characteristics of democracy and religious interference and military intervention as uncharacteristic of democracy. We label these respondents as *unsure* about democracy.

Next, we are interested in assessing whether citizens are capable of evaluating each dimension correctly. We calculate the percentage of those who incorrectly identify free elections, protection of liberties, or gender equality as an *unessential* property of democracy (scored below the midpoint of the scale, 5.5), and/or those who incorrectly identify the intervention of religious and military authorities as one of its *essential* properties (scored above the midpoint of the scale). These respondents are labeled as *misinformed* about democracy.

With these two categories, *unsure* and *misinformed*, we establish multiple types of global democratic conceptions and compare them across seven major cultural regions. Then we evaluate respondents' support for democracy by these categories, and examine the extent to which citizens correctly recognize and accurately evaluate democratic attributes. Furthermore, we examine the distribution of poorly and fully informed supporters across the cultural zones and investigate the individual and contextual sources of authentic democratic support. With findings from these cross-cultural analyses, we then evaluate the validity of the increasingly popular claim that democracy is a universal value.

Recognizing Democratic Regime Characteristics

Are global citizens aware of what is essential or unessential in a democracy, a system of government they are widely known to prefer to any of its alternatives? For each cultural zone, Table 1 reports the percentages of those unable to identify each of the five democratic dimensions in our analysis. It also presents the percentages of those unable to evaluate at least one of the five dimensions. We label these respondents as *unsure* about democracy.

(Table 1 here)

Of the five dimensions reported in Table 1, the global public is the most unsure about the role of religious authorities and the military in the political process. Over eight percent of people in all seven cultural regions do not know whether religious or military intervention is essential or unessential in a democracy. The lowest unsure responses occur in regard to support for popular elections and gender equality. Roughly four percent of respondents are unable to identify these two important dimensions of democracy. Nearly seven percent of respondents do not know whether protection of liberty is essential for democracy. When all five dimensions are considered together, almost 14 percent of people in the world today remain unsure about at least one of the five dimensions in our analysis.

Another notable feature of Table 1 is the high level at which East Asians are unsure about democracy's properties compared to their peers in other regions. When presented with the choice to limit the role of religion, a little more than one out of six (18%) do not select it. Nearly as many (14%) do not know if military intervention is an

undemocratic characteristic. Also noteworthy is that more than one out of eight East Asians (13%) fail to recognize the protection of liberty as part of a democracy. The results constitute evidence that East Asians are the most unaware population within the seven regions, with 24 percent unsure of at least one dimension of democracy. The other regions are only marginally better: Eastern Europe (20%), the Middle East (19%), Sub-Saharan Africa (15%), Latin America (13%), South Asia (10%), and the West (7%). Why East Asia, well known for its rapid socioeconomic modernization during the past three decades, stands out from the rest of the world is a question that invites further research.

Evaluating Democratic Regime Characteristics

How accurately is the public informed about democracy? Do they have a correct interpretation of what a successful democracy requires? To address this question, we calculate the percentages of those who *incorrectly* rank each dimension as essential or unessential to a democracy based on our previous discussion of the core characteristics in a consolidated democratic regime. We label these respondents as *misinformed* about democracy.

Table 2 reports the percentage of the misinformed (i.e. those who incorrectly interpret the extent to which each democratic dimension is required). Of the five dimensions, military intervention is the most misunderstood, with just under 28 percent incorrectly believing that a military take-over of government is conducive to democracy. It is followed by misunderstanding the proscribed role of religious authorities (25%), the protection of liberty (15%), gender equality (10%), and popular elections (10%). When

we pool all five dimensions together, a solid majority (54%) are misinformed about at least one of the five dimensions considered. Less than half of the people in the world today hold an informed opinion of all five dimensions.

(Table 2 here)

Our study shows that the people most misinformed about democracy are those in South Asia and the Middle East. Up to half the populations in these Islamic-influenced regions do not associate the principle of separating church and state with a democratic regime. These two regions are also the most mistaken about the role of the military and gender equality. Upwards of 40 percent of the people in these regions incorrectly identify military political intervention as essential to democracy. In addition, more than one-sixth of South Asians and Middle Easterners fail to endorse gender equality as an essential characteristic of democracy.

With regard to popular elections, people in South Asia are the most misinformed. Over 15 percent of people in this region do not deem popular elections to be an essential democratic trait. As far as the protection of liberty goes, people in Africa are the most misinformed (22%), followed by South Asia (20%) and Latin American (19%). Equally notable is that those misinformed are more numerous in the democratized West (14%) than in Eastern Europe (11%) or East Asia (12%). In the West, as many as one in eight people fail to recognize the protection of liberty as essential to democracy.

When all five dimensions—a proscribed role for religion, military intervention, popular elections, protection of liberty, and gender equality—are considered together, those unable to correctly identity all five are most numerous in South Asia (84%), the Middle East (77%), and Africa (74%). The misinformed also constitute a substantial

majority (60%) in Latin America. Thus, the democratic West (37%), Eastern Europe (47%), and East Asia (44%) are the only three cultural zones where those who misunderstand democracy constitute a minority. Even in the democratic West, nearly two in five people misunderstand at least one of the five dimensions, a sizeable percentage given the region's long period of democratic consolidation.

As these figures suggest, the problem of democratic misconceptions is ubiquitous. Yet this problem has not been addressed in previous survey-based studies of popular support for democracy. These studies maintain that democracy has become the world's most preferred political system without considering whether citizens appreciate or understand its basic characteristics.[27]

Types of Democratic Conceptions

All in all, how well do contemporary publics understand democracy as a system of government? To address this question, we construct four types of democratic perceptions based on the respondents' recognition and evaluation of democracy: *the unaware, the uniformed, the misinformed* and *the well informed*. Table 3 illustrates how we conceptualize these four dimensions. *The unaware* are those who are both unsure and misinformed. *The uninformed* are those who cannot identify all five dimensions, but do not have mistaken views of those they can identify. *The misinformed* are those who can identify all five dimensions, but misunderstand at least one as unessential and/or essential to democracy. The *well informed* are those who are neither *unsure* nor *misinformed* about the five dimensions of democracy. For further parsimonious analysis, we combine

the unaware, the uninformed, and *the misinformed* into a broader group labeled the *poorly informed.*

(Table 3 here)

Table 4 reports how global citizenries are distributed across these four types of democratic perceptions. Those in *the misinformed* group are the most numerous, with a near-majority of 48 percent. They are followed by *the well informed* with 39 percent, *the uninformed* with nine percent, and *the unaware* with four percent. When *the unaware, the uninformed,* and *the misinformed* are grouped together as the *poorly informed*, they constitute a substantial majority (61%) of global citizenries. Within the contemporary world, those who are capable of correctly recognizing and evaluating democracy's essential and unessential properties constitute a minority of less than two-fifths.

(Table 4 here)

Is the prevalence of poorly informed citizens a global phenomenon or is it confined to certain regions? Table 4 also separates the four types of democratic conceptions by the seven regions in this study. Only in the democratized West are informed citizens a majority (59%) of the population and the poorly informed a minority (41%). In all other regions informed citizens constitute minorities, ranging from 13 percent in South Asia to 45 percent in East Asia. In Latin America, the region with the second longest period of democratic political experience, only a third (33%) of its citizens is fully and accurately informed about democracy.

In four regions—South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, the *misinformed* constitute a majority of the population and an overwhelming majority of the pooled *poorly informed* population. East Asia stands out from all other

regions with the highest percentage (18%) of citizens *uniformed* about democracy. Yet this region is similar to the others, including the democratized West, in that the problem of being *misinformed* is far more prevalent than that of being either *uninformed* or *unaware*.

How Genuine is Global Support for Democracy?

According to the survey-based studies cited earlier, democracy has become the most favored system of government by large majorities in all regions of the world. Indeed, our analysis of the latest wave of the WVS confirms these findings (see Figure 1). When asked to rate democracy on a 4-point scale ranging from "very good to "very bad", six out of seven (85%) rate it favorably. Such high pro-democratic ratings exist in all regions, ranging from 75 percent in Eastern Europe to 90 percent in the democratic West. Democracy has undoubtedly become the universally favored system of government throughout the entire globe.

(Figure 1 here)

In view of our analysis presented above, however, we question how knowledgeable these supporters are about democratic characteristics as well as the authenticity of their support. What proportion of these democrats correctly understands all of the five essential characteristics in this study? What proportion fails to recognize and/or understand them correctly? To answer these questions, we evaluate those survey respondents who claim to support democracy by the types of democratic conceptions in Table 3. We label these respondents "avowed democrats". Figure 2 shows the

percentages of avowed democrats who are *poorly informed* versus *well informed* about democracy.

(Figure 2 here)

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of avowed democrats are in fact *poorly informed* in all regions except the West. They are most numerous in South Asia (87%), followed by the Middle East (83%); Africa (78%); Latin America (63%); Eastern Europe (53%); and East Asia (52%). Only in the democratized West is a substantial majority (64%) of avowed democrats *well informed* about the essential and unessential characteristics of democracy. When all seven regions are considered together, a solid majority of avowed democrats (57%) are *misinformed*, *uninformed*, or *unaware* about essential democratic characteristics. In other words, most people express support for democracy without an accurate understanding of its meaning. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that, for the most of the world, avowed support for democracy is superficial and incomplete. Being limited in their substantive knowledge about democracy, *poorly informed* democratic supporters cannot be expected to properly participate in democratic politics.

Based on these findings, we now analyze the entire global sample and divide the proportion of each region's avowed democrats into two categories, the *genuine* and the *superficial*. While the former are *fully informed* about the essence of democracy as a system of government, the latter are either *misinformed* and/or *unsure* about essential democratic characteristics. Those in the country that do not support democracy are labeled as non-democrats. For each of the seven regions, Figure 3 reports the percentages of genuine versus superficial democrats. In four of the seven regions, *superficial* supporters constitute a substantial or large majority of their respective adult population.

In South Asia (78%), the Middle East (76%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (71%), for example, over two-thirds to three-quarters of citizens are *superficial* supporters of democracy, i.e., those who support democracy, but do not recognize or accurately understand its characteristics. In Latin America, this group constitutes a majority (56%) of the population. Even in Eastern Europe and East Asia, where superficial democrats constitute minorities of 41 percent, genuine democrats constitute a smaller minority of about two-fifths. Only in the West are *genuine* democratic supporters a solid majority (57%) of the population. When all seven zones are considered together, *superficial* democrats constitute a majority of 50 percent while *genuine* democrats constitute a minority of 35 percent. A smaller minority of 15 percent is non-democrats who remain attached to civilian or military dictatorship.

(Figure 3 here)

These data reveal a significant worldwide gap between citizens who favor democracy with no or little knowledge of how it differs from other systems of government, and those who substantively understand and support it. This gap is an indicator of the further need for an authentic understanding about democracy in the minds of mass citizenries. In South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, a gap of 50 percentage points or more exists between genuine and superficial democratic support. Only in East Asia and Eastern Europe is there a gap of less than 10 percentage points in favor of superficial democrats. Even after more than three decades of extensive efforts to promote democracy throughout the developing world,[28] it is evident that only limited progress has been made in engendering truly democratic cultures.

Sources of Authentic Democratic Support

As the previous sections illustrate, there is a great deal of regional variation in the extent to which people express authentic support for democracy. Why have some regions achieved more success than others in broadening and deepening genuine support for democracy? Are varying levels of progress associated with differences in the cultural values and norms of each region? If so, how do those cultural differences as a whole compare with other forces shaping democratization around the world? Which particular world regions are conducive to inculcating authentic recognition and evaluation of democratic rule?

To address these questions, we analyze individual and contextual factors widely known to influence the development of democratic regime support.[29] Specifically, we test whether certain individual and contextual level factors stimulate authentic democratic support. To estimate and compare the impact of individual and contextual level factors on authentic democratic support, we employ a multiple classification analysis (MCA). Unlike ordinary least-squares and other multivariate statistical techniques, MCA does not require a normal distribution of observational units. Nor does it require that independent and dependent variables be measured on interval scales or that their relationships be linear (Andrews, Morgan, and Sonquist 1973). MCA is, therefore, capable of analyzing relationships between a categorical or dichotomous independent variable and an interval or dichotomous dependent variable.

An important feature of MCA is that it can display the separate impact of each category in a categorical variable, such as occupations or regions, while controlling for other variables in the model. MCA is more pertinent than other multivariate techniques in analyzing the relationship between survey variables with unrelated categories, such as cultural zones, and a

dichotomous dependent variable that taps democratic regime orientations. Unlike other statistical techniques, it produces both the bivariate and multivariate relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

We utilize three separate dichotomous measurements of democratic support for the dependent variable. First, we measure democratic understanding. Respondents who have a fully informed understanding of democracy as defined in Tables 3 and 4 are given a value of '1'. All other respondents are given a value of '0'. Second, we measure democratic affinity. This measurement taps whether respondents favor democracy as reported in Figure 1. Those respondents who favor democracy are given a '1' and all other respondents are given a '0'. Finally, we measure authentic democratic support. This measurement is based on whether respondents have a genuine or superficial understanding of democratic governance. Those with a genuine understanding of democracy are given a '1' while all others are given a '0'.

For our independent variables, we utilize seven individual and contextual level variables. We draw on four individual characteristics from the fifth wave of the World Values Survey: gender, age, educational attainment, and family income. Each of these variables is measured on either a nominal or ordinal scale. Next we analyze three contextual factors: cultural zones, political democratization, and economic development. As was discussed earlier, we divide world regions into seven regional zones. Together, the seven regions form the 'culture' categorical variable and account for variations in values and norms around the world. We also test for the impact of political democratization. This measure reports the extent to which political rights and civil liberties are respected within each respondent's country. We measure political

democratization with the 2006 Freedom House ratings. Finally, economic development is measured by splitting 2006 GDP per capita figures into five categories to form a categorical variable.[1]

In Table 5, we report the results of the MCA analysis on the three dependent variables – democratic understanding, democratic affinity, and authentic support. For each of the seven independent variables, the table reports the *eta* and *beta* statistics. The *eta* statistic is simply the bivariate relationship between each independent and dependent variable. The *beta* statistics are analogous to standardized regression coefficients and indicate the relative power of each predictor in explaining each of the three dependent variables. Each of the seven independent variables in the models reaches statistical significance at the 0.01 level. This is unsurprising given the large sample size of 47,000. By comparing the magnitude of the *beta* coefficients for each of the seven independent variables, we can identify which factors most influence democratic support. Comparing the magnitude of the individual and contextual level coefficients elucidates the relative importance of personal and environmental characteristics.

The four individual level variables reported in Table 5 are not the most powerful predictor in any of the three MCA models. In fact, only education comes close to being a reasonably strong explanatory factor, and this is only for democratic and authentic understanding. For all three dependent variables, three out of the four individual attributes—gender, age, and income—are the least powerful of the seven predictors considered. In sharp contrast, the contextual variables – cultural zones, democracy level, and economic development – are far stronger predictors of democratic understanding and

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[1] GDP per capita figures are drawn from the World Bank, World Development Indicators. The scale was recoded as ($90 to $817=1) ($851 to $2060=2) ($2113 to $4115=3)($4894 to $22777=4) and ($24061 to $41974=5)

affinity, and authentic support. These findings suggest that the emergence of a genuine democratic culture has, by and large, more to do with citizens' environments than individual characteristics and resources.

Of the three contextual variables considered in Table 5, the cultural region variable has the most powerful influence on all three dependent variables. Specifically, the cultural zone impacts each of the dependent variables by at least one-and-a-half times more than any other predictor. We conclude from these findings that democratic support is greatly influenced by citizens' cultural region.

(Table 5 here)

In Figure 4, we report the unadjusted and adjusted percentages of authentic democratic supporters in each cultural region. The unadjusted column shows the percentage of authentic democrats while controlling for the other explanatory variables in the statistical model. The adjusted column removes the statistical effect of the other variables. Each of the adjusted percentages, therefore, can be considered an estimate of each cultural region's net effect on authentic democratic support.

(Figure 4 here)

According to the adjusted percentages in Figure 4, South Asian and African cultures register the lowest levels of authentic democratic support. When the effects of all other variables are removed, less than one-quarter of those who live in South Asia (18%) and sub-Saharan Africa (23%) are authentic democratic supporters. This figure is more than ten percentage points lower than what is found in Latin America (38%), and Eastern Europe (36%). When these two groups of cultures are compared, it is apparent that the former is significantly less conducive to authentic democratic citizenship.

Another notable feature of Figure 4 concerns the adjusted level of authentic democratic support among those who live in the Middle East. When the effects of non-cultural variables are excluded, the average support level increases sharply by 15-percentage points, from 19 to 34 percent. Such a sharp increase in the adjusted support level suggests that Islamic culture may not be the primary culprit of slow progress in democratic cultural development in the Muslim world. Other non-cultural factors such as a lack of political and socioeconomic modernization are more responsible for the current low level of cultural democratization. Together, these findings suggest that perhaps South Asian and Sub-Saharan African culture, not Islamic culture, are the least conducive of all six non-Western cultures to authentic democratic support.

Concluding Remarks

Previous studies confirm that democracy is the system most favored by a large majority of people in every geographic and cultural region in the world. One might therefore conclude that democracy has become the universally favored system of government. However, as this study shows, the essentials of a fully democratic system are not recognized and/or correctly evaluated by a majority of contemporary mass publics. Only in the consolidated democracies of the West do a majority of citizens accurately understand and appreciate democratic values. At present, although democratic government is favored throughout the entire globe, an authentic understanding of what it entails remains a regional phenomenon.

Of the many factors influencing authentic democratic support, our analysis indicates that some cultural environments are more conducive than others in inculcating authentic democratic citizenship. The most discouraging results emerge from South Asia

and Sub-Saharan Africa, where authentic support exists in roughly one-fifth of the populations. Yet our findings suggest that a genuine grasp of democracy is rare in most regions of the world. When controlling for major individual and contextual level factors known to influence democratic citizenship, authentic democratic supporters number below 50 percent in every major region including the West. A true understanding of democratic principles is highly associated with citizens' cultural environments. Although factors such as education and economic development remain important, they are not enough to incite authentic democratic citizenship.

Accordingly, we argue that democracy as a system of government, in which the masses participate freely and equally in the political process and elected officials remain accountable to their preferences, is far from emerging as a universally valued system. Such universality requires a majority of the mass public to unconditionally endorse and comprehend the essential properties of democracy. In this regard, we caution against treating survey respondents who claim to support democracy as genuine democrats, as is often implied in survey-based studies.

For much of the world, democracy represents little more than an appealing political symbol that still retains authoritarian practices. Until a great many superficial democrats are transformed into genuine democrats, it is premature to endorse the increasingly popular claim that democracy is emerging as a universal value. Our analysis indicates the extent to which democracy has failed to take root in the minds of citizens, and reveals that, even after decades of extensive efforts to promote the global expansion of democracy, progress has been very slow in developing authentic democratic political

cultures outside Western nations.[30] Our contrarian perspective on mass political orientations suggests that democratization must be considered, at best, a work in progress.

Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Failing to Indentify Democratic Characteristics

Region	Religious Interpretation	Popular Elections	Military Take-Over	Protecting Liberty	Gender Equality	At Least One Question
All	8.6%	4.2%	8.1%	6.8%	3.6%	13.8%
West	3.5	2.1	3.4	3.6	1.7	6.7
Eastern Europe	12.6	5.7	13.4	8.8	5.6	20.1
South Asia	6.4	2.3	6.5	2.5	1.5	10.2
Middle East	12.1	8.0	12.6	10.8	6.2	18.6
East Asia	17.7	8.0	14.2	12.6	5.8	23.6
Latin America	8.9	3.8	6.7	7.5	3.3	13.3
Africa	7.8	4.0	7.3	7.8	4.1	14.8

Source: World Values Survey V.

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents with Misinformed Conceptions of Democracy

Region	Religious Interpretation	Popular Elections	Military Take-Over	Protecting Liberty	Gender Equality	At Least One Question
All	24.7%	10.4%	27.6%	15.4%	10.4%	54.0%
West	10.7	8.7	18.1	13.6	6.6	37.2
Eastern Europe	19.8	8.6	24.8	11.3	7.9	46.5
South Asia	52.0	15.5	45.0	20.2	16.8	84.1
Middle East	50.5	12.2	41.5	14.6	23.0	77.1
East Asia	14.2	8.7	19.9	11.9	7.7	43.5
Latin America	25.6	11.5	30.2	18.5	9.7	60.4
Africa	39.5	12.7	38.2	22.3	14.7	73.7

Source: World Values Survey V.

Table 3: Types of Democratic Conceptions

Recognition	Evaluation	Type
Unable	Unable	Unaware
Unable	Able	Uninformed
Able	Unable	Misinformed
Able	Able	Well Informed

Table 4: Overview of Global Democratic Conceptions

Region	Informed	Misinformed	Uninformed	Unaware
All	38.8%	47.8%	9.3%	4.1%
West	59.4	34.2	4.7	1.8
Eastern Europe	40.3	40.0	14.9	4.8
South Asia	12.5	77.4	5.6	4.5
Middle East	16.2	65.7	11.2	6.9
East Asia	44.5	35.5	17.6	5.5
Latin America	33.2	53.7	8.7	4.4
Africa	20.8	65.3	8.2	5.8

Source: World Values Survey V.

**Table 5: MCA Analysis of Democratic Orientations**

Predictors	Democratic Knowledge		Democratic Affinity		Authentic Support	
	Eta	*Beta*	*Eta*	*Beta*	*Eta*	*Beta*
Gender	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02
Age	0.09	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.09	0.03
Education	0.20	0.14	0.04	0.06	0.21	0.14
Income	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.09	0.03
Region	0.34	0.20	0.11	0.13	0.34	0.20
Democracy Level	0.28	0.10	0.02	0.06	0.28	0.10
Economic Development	0.32	0.10	0.06	0.10	0.32	0.10
R^2	(0.13)		(0.07)		(0.15)	

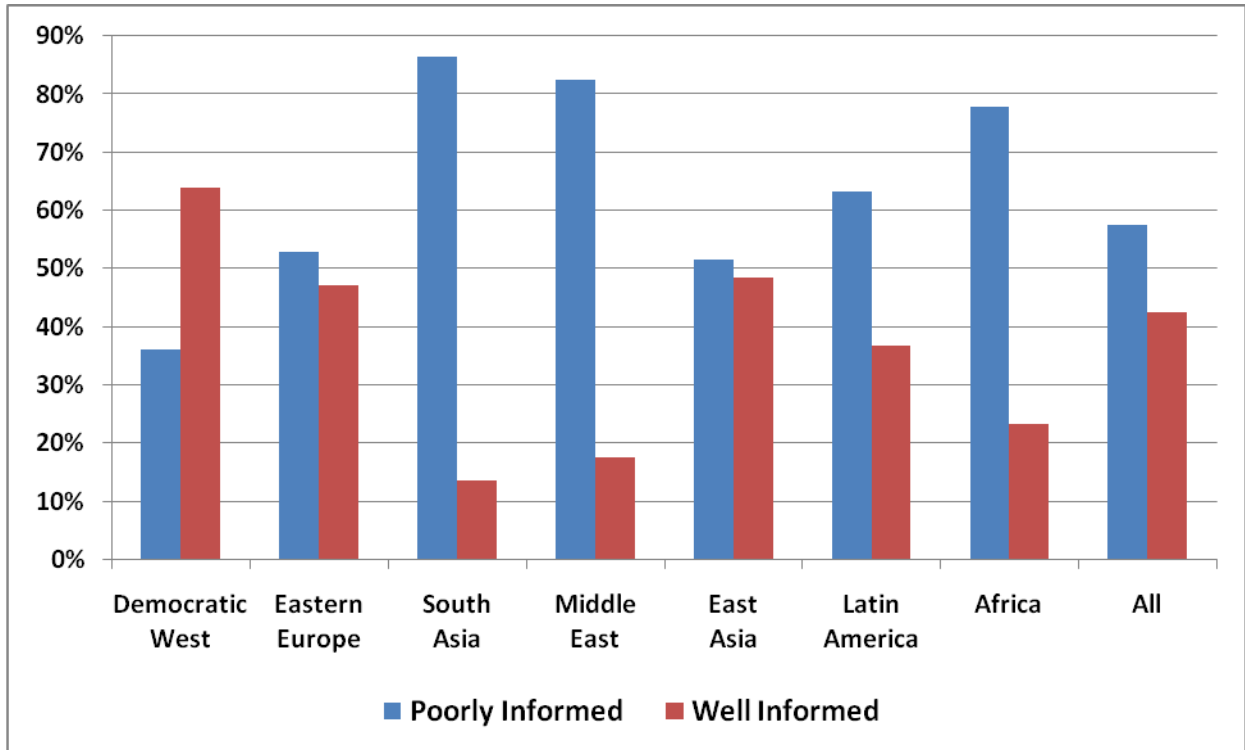Note: All coefficients are significant at $p < .01$
N= 47,000
Source: World Values Survey V.

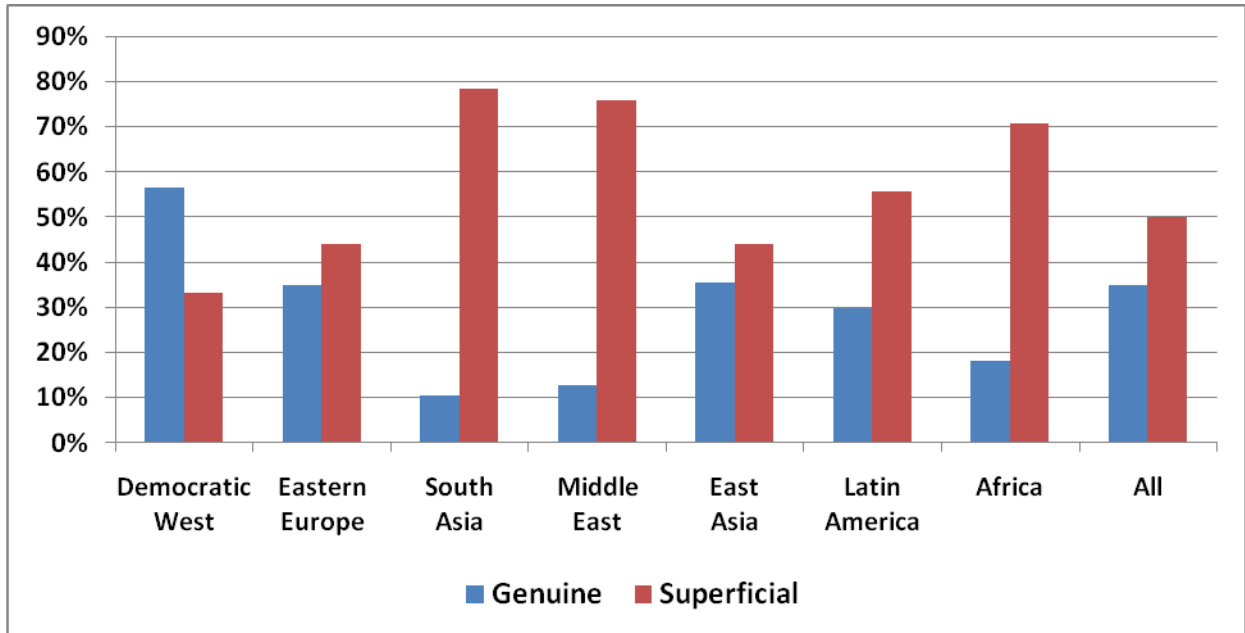**Figure 1: Percentages Expressing Support for Democracy as a Regime**
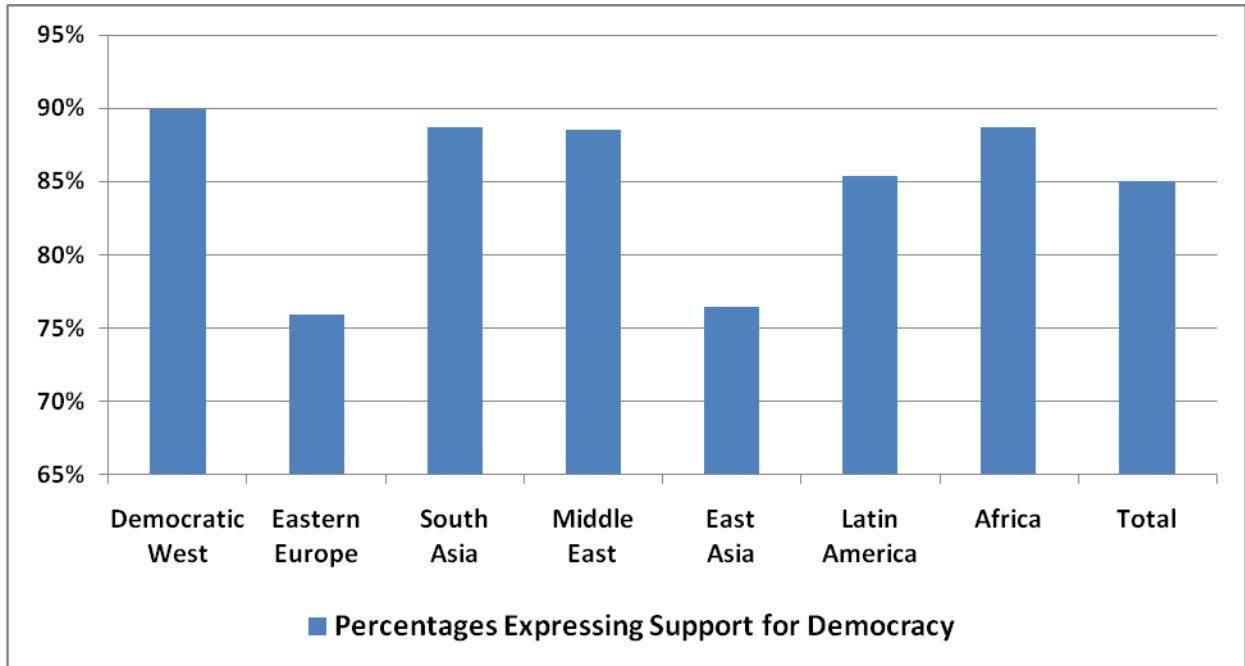
Source: World Values Survey V.

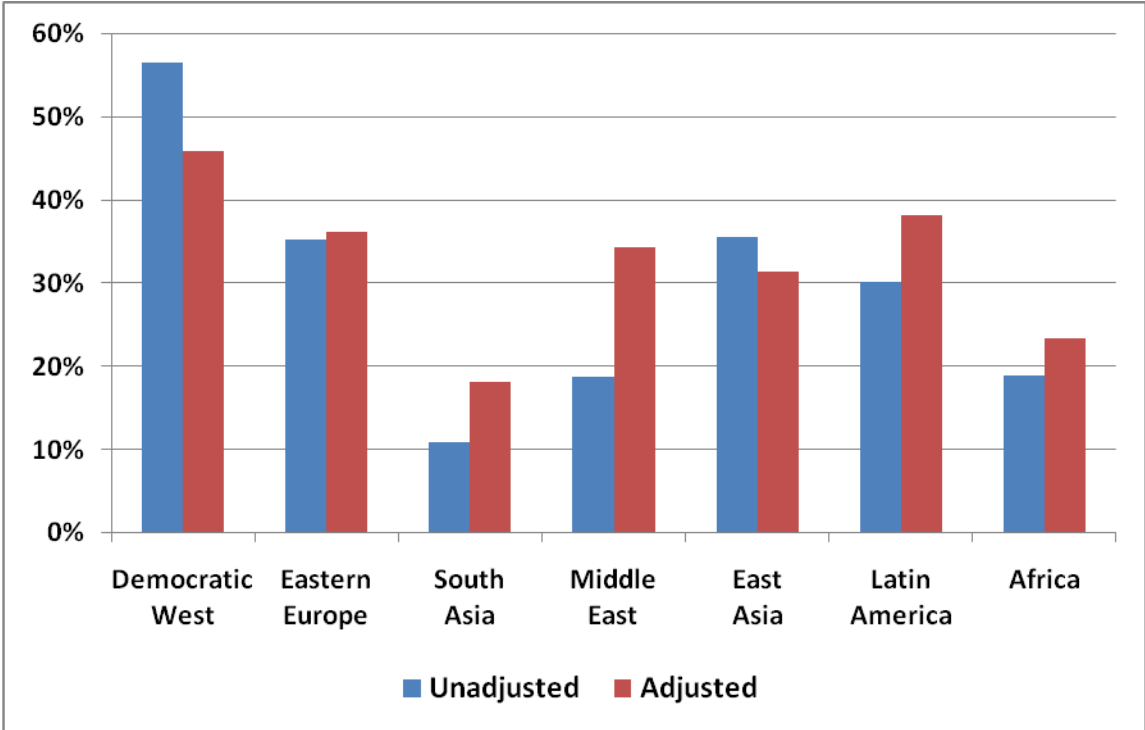**Figure 2: Poorly Informed vs. Well Informed Avowed Democrats**

Source: World Values Survey V.

Figure 3: Genuine vs. Superficial Democrats Worldwide

Source: World Values Survey V.

Figure 4: MCA Analysis of Authentic Supporters of Democracy by Region

Source: World Values Survey V.

Appendix A
World Values Survey Questions

Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 means it definitely is "an essential characteristic of democracy" (*read out and code one answer for each*):

V152. Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor.
V153. Religious authorities interpret the laws.
V154. People choose their leaders in free elections.
V156. The army takes over when government is incompetent.
V157. Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.
V158. The economy is prospering.
V159. Criminals are severely punished.
V160. People can change the laws in referendums.
V161. Women have the same rights as men.

Appendix A
World Values Survey Questions

Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 means it definitely is "an essential characteristic of democracy" (*read out and code one answer for each*):

V153. Religious authorities interpret the laws.
V154. People choose their leaders in free elections.
V156. The army takes over when government is incompetent.
V157. Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression.
V161. Women have the same rights as men.

Appendix B
List of Countries in each Region

Democratic West
Andorra, Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and the United Kingdom,

Eastern Europe
Bulgaria, East Germany, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Ukraine

East Asia
China, Japan, S. Korea, and Taiwan

South Asia
Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam

The Middle East
Iran, Jordan, and Morocco

Latin America
Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Trinidad-Tobago, and Uruguay

Sub-Saharan Africa
Burkina, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, South Africa, and Zambia

Notes

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[2] Ronald Inglehart and Christopher Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 264.

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[5] Ronald Inglehart, 'How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy – and How Can We Measure It?' *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36 (2003): 52.

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[8] These seven cultural regions are derived from the coding scheme devised by the World Values Survey. See Appendix B for a list of countries in each zone.

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[12] John Booth and Mitchell Seligson, *The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Political Support and Democracy in Eight Latin American Countries*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes, and E. Gimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Shin 'Perspectives from Global Citizenry'.

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[15] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

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[29] Bratton et al.,*Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*; Chu et al., *How East Asian View Democracy*; Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*; Rose et al., 'Democracy and its Alternatives'.

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