

## Reassessing *The Civic Culture Model*<sup>1</sup>

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Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) seminal *The Civic Culture* described the characteristics of a political culture that presumably enables nations to develop stable democratic processes. The civic culture was a mix of many traits, but several features were prominent in their discussion of stable democracy in the United States and Britain. A democratic political culture is based on an aware, participatory public, although participation is often a potential rather than a reality. Similarly, a democratic culture required a supportive public that identified with the political community and trusted the institutions of government. They highlighted this pattern with the allegiant citizen described in the following example:

Miss E. is well informed on the uses of tax funds and is on the whole satisfied with the way in which tax money is being used. She has had some routine official contacts, at the local Social Security office for instance, and she found the officials 'in every way as nice as could be.' She remembers her father's writing to the government about a state problem and receiving a pleasant and courteous reply. She feels that she would always be treated with friendliness and consideration by any government officials (Almond and Verba 1963: 443-44).

To many readers this description of the 'good' democratic citizen must seem like an image of a different political era.

In addition, the early political culture studies described the political culture of many Third World nations that supposedly lacked these civic traits (Pye and Verba 1965; Almond and Coleman 1960; Lerner 1958). These scholars maintained that many people in these nations were unaware and uninvolved in politics. The everyday needs of life, and limited social skills and experiences, created parochial citizens. Furthermore, even among the politically aware, social norms and history had socialized acceptance of tradition, hierarchy, and an autocratic form of government. In contrast to the participatory citizens in established democracies, these cultures were often characterized by a mix of parochial and subject political orientations.

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This paper argues that the reality of contemporary political cultures—for established democracies and developing nations—is much different today than in the 1950s and early 1960s. Citizens in established democracies now appear less allegiant and more willing to pursue contentious courses of political action. In addition, democracy has spread across the globe, even in nations where the civic culture theory might not expect democratization. Systematic empirical evidence on political attitudes in developing nations is now quite extensive, which alters our understanding of the political culture in these societies. These changes are reshaping our images of the cultural foundations of democracy, or at least how well contemporary publics fit these theoretical images.

This chapter reviews several of the basic premises of *The Civic Culture* model based on analyses of the World Values Survey. First, we consider the levels of political attentiveness and awareness across nations, testing the contrast between parochial and participatory cultures as a condition for political development. Second, we examine attitudes toward the institutions of government to evaluate the assumption that democracy requires a supportive public. Third, we examine how contemporary publics view alternative regime choices spanning democracy and autocracy—and how support for government and support for democracy are interrelated in contemporary societies. We conclude with a revised view of the role of these attitudes in the democratic politics.

### **Political Culture and Democracy**

Modern political culture research was born from the experience of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. The communist assault on democracy eroded support for the democratic ideal among some Europeans on the Left. Then, the fascist assault eroded support from democracy by extremists on the Right (Bermeo 2003; Linz and Stepan 1978). Limited support for governments in many nations seemed to create a fundamental threat for democratic systems that depend on popular support as a basis of legitimacy. The political turmoil of interwar Europe and the collapse of Weimar democracy were major stimuli for *The Civic Culture* and subsequent research on political culture.

As a first point, *The Civic Culture* framework assumed that citizens in established democracies are broadly aware of the political process and the institutions of government. Although not uniform among democratic publics, they believed that *cognition of government* and

its institutions is an initial step in developing a political culture. They also maintained that *positive affect toward the institutions of representative government* is essential for a well-functioning democracy. In Almond and Verba's words: "In the first place, the civic culture is an allegiant participant culture. Individuals are not only oriented to political inputs, they are oriented *positively* to the input structures and input processes" (1963: 31; italics added). Legitimacy in a democracy seemingly rests upon the public's positive opinions of representative government and its institutions. Theoretical studies similarly stressed the importance of diffuse support for government as a prerequisite for a stable democratic system (Eckstein 1992; Easton 1965).

*The Civic Culture* did not explicitly measure *support for the democratic regime* and its principles, but the expectations were clear. A stable, successful democracy required that the public (and elites) hold democratic values and support democratic processes. Weimar Germany was the oft-cited example, which succumbed to an authoritarian challenge because it supposedly lacked sufficient popular support for the principles of democratic government. Indeed, even postwar public opinion surveys demonstrated substantial support for authoritarian figures and non-democratic government among the West German public (Merritt and Merritt 1970). In contrast, Almond and Verba maintained the United States and Britain persisted as democracies in the face of these same interwar challenges because of the reservoir of popular support among their citizens. Trust in government is vital in democratic systems because legitimacy derives from the social contract between citizens and their representatives.

In contrast, much of the scholarship on political culture and political development maintained that less-developed nations lacked this civic, allegiant, democratic political culture. Almond and Verba (1963) discussed how a limited political cognition created a "parochial culture" in these nations, with many individuals divorced from politics in either physical or psychological terms. This theme of the parochial peasant or rural villager was common in research on less developed nations during this period (Banfield 1958; Lerner 1959; Binder 1965).

People in less-developed nations also supposedly lacked positive affect toward government. For instance, Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba (1965) stated that limited trust in government impeded democratic development in Italy, Mexico, Ethiopia and Egypt. Pye's (1985) description of Asian political cultures stressed the limitations of democracy in societies that stressed hierarchic authority patterns and deference to authority. In short, the political

culture in less developed nations supposedly lacked both support for the institutions of a democratic regime and more generalized support for democratic principles.<sup>1</sup>

The *Civic Culture* framework has shaped our thinking about the role of political culture in the democratization process. Thus, studies of the democratic transitions in postwar Western Europe stressed the need to develop the elements of the civic culture as essential to these political transformations (McDonough et al. 1998; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt 1981). Robert Putnam's (1993) study of Italian regional government emphasized the open, trusting norms of Northern Italy (and its better functioning regional governments), in comparison to the politically alienated culture of the Mezzogiorno. Much of the initial literature on the 1990s democratic transitions in Eastern Europe focused on the development of a supportive political culture among the citizenry (Klingemann, Fuchs and Zielonka 2006; Rose, Haerpfer and Mishler 1998), as did studies of democratization in East Asia and Africa (Dalton and Shin 2006; Chu et al. 2008; Bratton et al. 2004).

However, recent scholarship has challenged the basic premises of the *Civic Culture* framework on at least two fronts. One set of findings involve the decline of political trust in postindustrial democracies. So central was the *Civic Culture*'s framework of the allegiant democratic citizen, that the first signs of decreasing political trust in established democracies during the 1970s generated widespread academic and political concern. Almond and Verba (1980) recognized this trend in *The Civic Culture Revisited*, and remained cautious about its implications. Across the trilateral democracies, Michel Crozier and his colleagues (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975) viewed the public's increasing skepticism of government and the rise of protest politics as a 'crisis of democracy'. If trust in government were essential to an efficient and effective democracy, then the erosion of trust was a cause for serious concern.

The second new development is the expansion of systematic public opinion research to less developed nations. Instead of relying on the insights of national experts, researchers could consult the public directly to assess their opinions and values. Although there is considerable cross-national variation in public opinion, much of this new empirical evidence appears inconsistent with the imagery of the *Civic Culture* model. For instance, few contemporary societies can be characterized as disproportionately comprised of parochials. Recent research repeatedly describes levels of political awareness in less-developed and undemocratic states that **belie** the imagery of a parochial public (Bratton et al. 2004; Chu et al. 2008; Dalton, Shin and

Jou 2007). Many of these publics are less politically engaged than those in established democracies, but it is a matter of degree rather than a qualitative difference.

Even more striking are the cross-national patterns in regime preferences. Inglehart (2003) used data from the World Values Survey to show that expressed support for a democratic regime is widespread around the globe—even in many authoritarian regimes (also see Gallup-International 2005; Pew Global Values 2002). Similarly, the initial surveys of post-communist publics in Eastern Europe found broad support for democracy, which was a marked contrast to the evidence from democratic transitions in Germany, Italy and the Iberian Peninsula decades earlier (Rose, Haerpfer and Mishler 1998; Klingemann, Fuchs and Zielonka 2006). Modern survey research documents widespread democratic aspirations in East Asia (Dalton and Shin 2006; Chu et al. 2008) and in Africa (Bratton et al. 2004). Studies of Muslim states uncovered a surprising endorsement for democracy in these nations (Moaddel 2007; Norris and Inglehart 2002). Even when there is residual support for autocratic forms of government in non-democracies, this typically falls far short of support for a democratic form of government.

Although we can not fully examine the processes that may have produced such changes from *The Civic Culture* model, it seems likely that the twin forces of social modernization and globalization have transformed contemporary political cultures. Ronald Inglehart (1977; 1990) was one of the first to describe how affluence and social modernization has created a new type of democratic citizen in postindustrial democracies: citizens who are less-deferential to political elites and more willing to use elite-challenging forms of political participation (also Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Typically, these individuals are politically engaged, critical of government and the institutions of representative democracy, while strongly endorsing democratic values.

In addition, social modernization and globalization have the potential to transform the political culture of developing nations. The political culture literature argued that the course to a democratic civic culture came through social modernization that produced an expansion of education, access to the mass media, an occupation that integrated workers into a national economy, and a broadening (and more tolerant) world view (Banfield 1958; Lerner 1959; Binder 1965). The process of social modernization would increase political awareness among the citizenry at large, then develop values that are more consistent with a democratic system. Even if this logic is still accepted to some degree, the range of social experiences has changed dramatically since the 1950s. Even poor nations now often have extensive cell phone networks

and satellite television (Inglehart and Norris 2009). While too many people still struggle to develop a modest standard of living, there are now few places that experts can describe as the isolated parochial societies presented in the early political culture and development literature. The development of a globalized economic system has also transformed employment and life conditions in many still developing nations. In addition, globalization has produced a diffusion of information and international norms, which appear to be socializing more cosmopolitan values even in less developed nations (Sandholtz and Stiles 2009). The world today is much smaller than that studied by Almond, Verba and their colleagues.

This paper examines these **questions (?)** of the potential change in political cultures in contemporary societies. Our analyses are possible only because of the unparalleled resources of the World Values Survey.<sup>2</sup> The five waves of the WVS provide for longitudinal comparisons in several nations. Even more valuable, the WVS is exceptional for the diverse range of nations it surveys. Most advanced industrial democracies participated in at least one wave of the WVS. In addition, an exceptional number of democratizing nations and autocratic states are included in the project. This enables us to examine political culture across nearly the full range of social and political conditions existing today.

### **Political Interest and Attentiveness**

Almond and Verba maintained that a democratic political culture requires that a substantial proportion of the public follows national politics. Without being informed about the national political system, people are likely to remain apathetic to the system. The classic *Civic Culture* imagery portrayed many individuals in developing nations as lacking this awareness; most people were supposed to be parochials who were unaware or disinterested in the political process. Even in established democracies, there is a significant core of apathetic and apolitical citizens.

However, the world is much smaller today. Technological change has brought satellite television, radio and cell phones to most of the globe (Norris and Inglehart 2009). The expansion of a globalized economy and social system touches even rural areas that once might have fit *The Civic Culture's* description of a parochial society. For example, one can pass through the urban slums in India and see families with few possessions except a television set. Bruce Gilley cites a similar example from a Ugandan government official (2009: 78):

With a radio deep in a rural village, a person is abreast with a bomb blast in Bombay, and can follow a political crisis in Moscow. . . . People will take sides on issues far beyond their national borders. Whether the wife of dictator Ferdinand Marcos should be prosecuted or should be pardoned; whether the genocide in Rwanda could have been averted are issues which are enlivening beer-drinking discussions on a scale unprecedented in African history. . . . This knowledge revolution is making it difficult for African leaders to keep people ignorant of what they are entitled to or to stop them from demanding change and working for it. Hence there are shivers of change all over the continent.

In such an environment it seems less likely that a nation's political culture could still be predominately composed of people who are unaware of the national government and without views of the government and its activities.

To examine citizen awareness/engagement in politics, we asked whether general interest in politics varies systematically by the economic development of a nation.<sup>3</sup> In other words, are people in less developed nations disengaged from politics? As previous research has shown, public interest in politics is moderate; just less than half of the WVS respondents expressing interest in politics. However, a nation's level of economic development (measured by the UN's Human Development Index) is essentially unrelated to levels of political interest (Figure 1). Among the affluent, developed societies, overall political interest ranges from about a third of the public to well over three-quarters. However, in the half dozen least developed nations, about three-fifths of the public are also interested in politics. Table 1 shows that politics can attract the public's interest regardless of the nation's level of economic development or political development.<sup>4</sup>

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*The Civic Culture* even more strongly argued that many people in less developed nations lacked an awareness of national politics. It is possible, for instance, that expressions of interest are referring to local politics and there is little awareness of national government—this was the core of the parochial hypothesis. To tap such cognitive awareness, we relied on three questions asking about confidence in national political institutions.<sup>5</sup> We assess opinion holding by counting the “don't know” responses in evaluating the national government, parliament and the judiciary.

Only a small minority of the overall World Values Survey sample (approximately 5%) give even one “don’t know” response to any one of these three questions. As we might expect, the percentages lacking an opinion are generally higher in less developed nations. For example, the six nations with the largest percentage of “don’t know” responses on any of the three questions were: India (25%), the Ukraine (23%), Jordan (14%), China (15%), Russia (13%), and Burkino Faso (13%). Yet, if this is an indication of the parochial, unaware sector of the public, the overall pattern suggests more citizen awareness than might be expected. Among less-developed African and Muslim nations, for example, less than a tenth express one or more “don’t know” opinions, which is barely more than the five percent average for established Western democracies. Table 1 shows that this measure of opinion holding is significantly related to a nation’s level of socioeconomic or political development, but the correlations are modest.

In the modern world that includes satellite television, cell phone networks and internet cafes even in developing nations, few individuals are unaware of government—or at least unwilling to share an opinion. Interest in politics similarly seems to transcend the economic or political circumstances of a nation. Other factors seem to predict the actual level of political interest in a nation. Thus, these results speak against the civic culture framework that emphasized the political engagement of established democracies and the parochial and somewhat apolitical nature of people in developing nations.

=== Table 1 goes about here ===

### **Support for Government**

Another important element of the political culture is the public’s evaluation of government and its institutions. The *Civic Culture* model implies that democracy relies on a public that positively supports its government. This is the heart of the allegiant model of citizenship, as seen in the description of Miss E. at the start of this chapter.

Figure 2 displays the cross-national levels of confidence in governing institutions (the government and parliament) for the nations in the WVS. In contrast to expectations derived from the *The Civic Culture* model, several non-democratic states display great support for both governmental institutions: Vietnam, China, Jordan, and Malaysia. Rather than being bastions of allegiant, supportive citizens, most of the established democracies are located in the middle of this cross-national distribution. The greatest public skepticism exists in set of developing nations

that are often struggling with poor performance in political terms, economic, or both, such as Argentina, Serbia, Moldova, and the Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> Although confidence in government is positively related to the socioeconomic and political development of a nation (Table 1 again), this relationship is still modest. Expressed in other terms, an improvement of **xx** ranks on the Human Development Index would produce only an **xx** percent increase in confidence in government. The relationship with the Voice and Accountability index is stronger, although this is still far short of cultural determinism.

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Would early political culture researchers have expected that the Vietnamese to express more confidence in their governmental institutions than Americans? We think not. This presents a puzzle about the nature of trust in government and its relationship to political development.

One explanation for the patterns in this figure is that the basis of legitimacy varies across nations. While citizens in established Western democracies may judge their confidence in government on democratic criteria such as the representation of public preferences and acceptance of the rule of law, other nations may employ more instrumental criteria. For instance, the evolution of political values in advanced industrial democracies has created a new assertive form of citizenship (Inglehart 1990; Dalton 2004, ch. 5). Citizens' expectations for government and their willingness to challenge for political elites have consequently increased, even while they remain committed to democratic values. These new assertive citizens are thus more likely to express criticism of government. In contrast, the dramatic economic progress of the Chinese and Vietnamese economies in recent years might stimulate confidence in government for different reasons (Gilley 2009). Conversely, poor government performance may explain why many other nations display low levels of confidence in governing institutions.

In addition, cultural norms may come into play. People in Muslim states presumably use different criteria than Western publics in judging their governments. The high institutional confidence among people in authoritarian states also may reflect authoritarian norms that encourages them to believe in (or publically say they believe in) the legitimacy of their country's authoritarian institutions. If this were so, confidence ratings can be meaningfully interpreted only in the context of people's basic value orientations and the type of regime in which they take place.

We believe the explanation of these cross-national patterns is even more complex. Established, successful democracies were once characterized by a more trusting public, but the growth of assertive citizens has eroded that trust. The best evidence comes from national survey series that span a longer timeperiod than the World Values Survey and have more indicators of political trust. Russell Dalton (2004, ch. 2), for instance, found that trust in parliament has generally declined in twelve of the fifteen established democracies for which long term timeseries are available (also see Pharr and Putnam 2002).

This same pattern of declining trust can be observed for the established democracies in the World Values Survey. Figure 3 compares trust in parliament for the democracies that were surveyed in the first wave of the WVS and then again in either the fourth or fifth wave. Confidence in parliament has decreased in most nations over this roughly two decade timespan. The notable exceptions are the Scandinavian democracies, but longer timeseries from other sources suggests that trust in parliament and government is trending downward even in Scandinavia (see Dalton 2004). Indeed, given the specific events that might influence the few timepoints used in these WVS comparisons and the shortness of some time trends, the evidence of general decline across a diverse set of nations is even more impressive.<sup>7</sup> This presents us with the contrarian finding that trust in government is decreasing in those nations where democracy is most consolidated.

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In contrast, one might expect political trust to grow in new democracies. After all, the essence of the *Civic Culture* model holds that people need to develop support for political institutions and democratic values if democratic government is to endure. The Third Wave brought democratization to many of the nations in the WVS. However, if we extend the logic of assertive citizenship, it suggests that contemporary democratization may actually stimulate a more critical public because dissent and debate are tolerated and encouraged in a democracy. In contrast, an autocratic state suppresses dissent and controls the flow of information to support the government's positions, regardless of how specious. Ironically, modern democracy may teach citizens to be critical of their government.

One could do a thought experiment to explore this claim. If one had access to a public opinion survey in the German Democratic Republic in the mid-1980s (or other post-communist state), most survey respondents presumably would have expressed confidence in their

government. In part this would be a sign of the government's successful propaganda efforts and extensive socialization campaigns. In part it might reflect an individual's hesitancy to be critical in a system where the Stasi monitored individual behavior and enforced allegiance to the regime. If one surveyed the same individuals today, they might be more critical about how the current democratic government is addressing their needs, how political parties have overlooked the East, and how democratic institutions struggle to fulfill their democratic ideals.<sup>8</sup> This could occur even though their life conditions and political freedoms have dramatically improved because of the democratic transition.

Unfortunately, systematic comparisons of public opinion before and after a democratic transition are quite rare. However, the WVS includes four nations surveyed through a democratic transition: Hungary (surveyed from 1982 until 1999), South Korea (from 1982 until 2005), Poland (from 1989 until 2005), and Mexico (from 1990 until 2005).<sup>9</sup> Hungary and Korea are the two clearest cases of closed autocratic governments giving way to democracies during the span of the surveys (Korea in 1987 and Hungary in 1990). The first Polish surveys were conducted as political change was sweeping through Eastern Europe, and spanned the historic 1989 parliamentary elections to Walesa's election in 1990. Mexico also made a democratic transition in 2000, but its initial situation and its relationship to the United States makes this a less sharp transition.

Figure 4 tracks confidence in parliament for these four nations across the available timepoints. In Hungary, for example, 92 percent of the public expressed confidence in the communist parliament in 1982; this is a level of political support that would make virtually any democracy jealous. However, the 1991 survey after the democratic transition shows a marked decline in confidence that continues over time.<sup>10</sup> The 1989 Polish survey found 89 percent of the public were confident in the parliament, which was perhaps shaped by the euphoria of the 1989-90 transition; by 2005 this was 12 percent. South Korea follows the same pattern: from 68 percent confident in 1982 when an autocratic government was in control to only 25 percent confident about their democratic government in 2005. The trend in Mexico is less marked, but also tracks a downward course.<sup>11</sup>

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We cannot be certain, but we expect this pattern may apply to some of the autocratic governments that now score high on political confidence in Figure 2. Current high levels of

support in some nations may represent the closed nature of a political system that restricts public expressions of dissatisfaction. Such a high level of support might benefit a nation that is struggling with the challenges of economic and social development, at least in the short term. Ironically, success in economic and political development might erode this support by changing to a more open political regime.

The other broad longitudinal trends captured by the World Values Surveys involve the publics of Eastern Europe. The 1989-91 wave of the survey included several of the newly-postcommunist states that were resurveyed in subsequent waves of the WVS. Certainly these nations experienced a difficult transition in social and economic terms; but politically they gained new rights and freedoms. By the end of our timeseries most of these nations—with the exception of Russia and several other post-Soviet states—were members of the European Union with higher living standards and more personal freedoms than in the communist era.

The *Civic Culture* model predicts that support for the democratic institutions should increase over time as these nations have consolidated their democratic gains. However, in most cases confidence in parliament has decreased since the first post-transition survey (Figure 5). In addition to the drop-offs we previously noted for Hungary and Poland, the WVS also tracks declines in Bulgaria (-27%), the Czech Republic (-25), Romania (-4), and Slovenia (-20). Slovenia is a significant case because it probably was the most successful in making the economic and political transitions to a market economy and democracy—and thereby improving the living conditions of its citizens. Yet, Slovenians confidence in parliament notably decreases over time.

The clearest anomaly is Russia, which partially validates the general process we are describing. Russians' confidence in parliament decreased from 1990 until 1999, but the reassertion of strong state authority under Putin coincided with increased confidence in the 2008 survey. From another angle, this seems to confirm the pattern that higher confidence rates are often expressed in more authoritarian settings. Accordingly, high confidence ratings in more authoritarian settings do not mean that people have *internalized* autocratic norms; it may be that government *intimidation* makes them hesitant to express feelings of distrust. [[Compare to Rose New Democracies Barometer findings](#)]

== Figure 5 goes about here ==

Taken alone, these trends might imply that East Europeans are disenchanting by their democratic experience, or that they are retreating from the political enthusiasm that initially greeted the democratic transition. However, this pattern mirrors the pre/post-transition comparisons in Figure 4. Consequently, we think the post-communist trends reflect the irony of modern democracy: dramatic gains in democratic development go hand-in-hand with a more skeptical and assertive public—even when social and economic conditions are improving.

In summary, in contrast to the expectation of growing affective support for the institutions of government as democracy consolidates, our findings suggest that confidence in government is decreasing in contemporary democracies. Citizens in the advanced industrial democracies are becoming less likely to express confidence in parliament. Confidence may also decline after a transition from a functioning authoritarian state to an open democracy. Even in the democratizing nations of Eastern Europe, confidence in parliament has eroded since the formation of these new democracies. However, these findings also raise doubts that confidence rates have the same meaning in different regime contexts. Apparently, high confidence rates in authoritarian regimes do not necessarily indicate high regime legitimacy, and low confidence rates in democracies do not necessarily mean weak legitimacy of the democratic regime. In most highly consolidated democracies, confidence in central democratic institutions has been falling in recent decades. Political criticism is the spirit of the contemporary age.

### **Orientations to Democracy and its Alternatives**

The research and policy literature maintains that democratization is incomplete until a majority of the citizenry embraces democracy as the only legitimate form of government (Linz and Stepan 1996; Diamond 1999). *The Civic Culture* model would suggest that public acceptance of democracy presumably requires that the political culture undergoes a long, slow process of attitudinal adjustment and value change. For this process to succeed, people must both support the principles of the newly installed democratic system, and reject those of the old authoritarian system. In essence, people must shift their value system from a pro-authoritarian political culture to an anti-authoritarian and pro-democratic political culture.

To examine this question, we measure the extent to which its citizens prefer democracy to its alternatives. The WVS asked respondents to rate democracy and its two most-common alternatives—civilian dictatorship and military rule—on a 4-point scale.<sup>12</sup> We compared each

respondent's ratings of civilian dictatorship and military regime, *and chose the higher of these two* as the person's affinity for a non-democratic regime. We used the choice of either of the two autocratic regimes because the likely alternative to democracy can systematically vary across cultural zones and historical experiences. For instance, while many Latin American and African nations have experienced military coups, other states have experienced autocratic civilian regimes.<sup>13</sup>

To summarize the regime preferences of contemporary publics, we constructed an index of relative regime preference by subtracting ratings of democracy from those of the autocratic alternative.<sup>14</sup> On this scale, the entire set of 54 countries averaged +1.0, a pro-democracy score substantially higher than the midpoint of 0. More notably, all 54 countries scored above the midpoint signifying that democracy is generally preferred to authoritarian rule. Yet, the levels of democratic regime preference vary a great deal across nations. For instance, relative support for democracy is ten times higher in Germany than in Bulgaria (+2.00 vs. +0.20), and over four times higher in the non-English speaking protestant West than the former communist Eastern Europe. There is residual support for autocratic regimes even in some Western nations. This indicates that in the eyes of global citizenries, democracy is yet to become the final achievement of history.

To summarize these patterns, we crosstabulated preferences for democracy versus autocracy.<sup>15</sup> Figure 6 displays cross-national variations in percentages of democrats and authoritarians, that is, those expressing preference for democracy and authoritarianism. Of the 54 countries, democrats constitute a majority in 33 countries, and a plurality in 6 countries. Authoritarians form a majority in 9 countries, and a plurality in 6 countries (in defining authoritarians we combined those preferring an authoritarian alternative and those evaluating democracy and authoritarian regimes equally).<sup>16</sup> The countries with the preponderance of democrats include all the established democracies in the West, and several new democracies such as Argentina, Chile, Ghana, Peru, Slovenia, and Zambia. It even includes authoritarian regimes such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Morocco, and Vietnam. The countries with the preponderance of authoritarians include Iran, Malaysia, and Russia, and new democracies like Indonesia, Korea, and Taiwan.

== Figure 6 goes about here ==

In other analyses (not shown), we examined where support for democracy has systematically changed for the 21 countries surveyed by the WVS since 1995. In contrast to declining confidence in government, there is no trend in support for democracy (although this is a short timespan). Six countries—Chile, Finland, Japan, Russia, Slovenia, and Sweden—register a steady increase in democratic regime preference across the three waves. Six countries—Peru, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, the U.S.A., and Ukraine—register steady decreases. In the other countries, the preference level fluctuates without any upward or downward trend.

Finally, Table 1 (above) examines the link between regime preferences and our indicators of socioeconomic and political development. Support for democracy is nearly ubiquitous across different national conditions for social development and regime form, producing statistically insignificant relationships in the table. However, there are significant and predictable cross-national patterns in support for an autocratic regime. In other words, it is not that support for democracy increases with development, but that support for autocratic alternatives decreases.

### **Merging Government and Regime Orientations**

Contrary to what the civic culture model implies, we have found that citizen allegiance is declining in many democracies while support for democracy is widespread in many new and established democracies, and even in autocratic states. Researchers have variously described this new pattern of citizenship as a “dissatisfied democrat” (Klingemann 1999), “critical citizen” (Norris 1999), “emancipative citizen” (Welzel 2007) or “engaged citizen” (Dalton 2009). Contemporary democracies are increasingly characterized by a public that is critical of politicians and political institutions and has higher expectations for government—while embracing democratic norms. This gives rise to a new style of citizenship that has the potential to transform the democratic process. Most of this research has focused on these patterns in advanced industrial democracies; we now extend this research to the global scale of the World Values Survey.

This research leads to a simple two-by-two typology of government and regime orientations—although the interpretation of citizen orientations is more complex (Table 2). One dimension taps relative support for democracy or an autocratic alternative as in Figure 6. The other dimension taps confidence in parliament collapsed into confident and not confident responses.

Across all the nations in the WVS's fourth and fifth waves, the plurality of all respondents are "dissatisfied democrats"—they favor a democratic regime but are critical of their national legislature. By comparison, *allegiant democrats comprise* barely a quarter of the WVS respondents. Only a modest number fit what might be considered the core of a subject political culture—people who favor an autocratic regime and are satisfied with the current government. The final category is dissatisfied autocrats, who comprise about a quarter of the WVS sample.

=== Table 2 about here ===

Of course, the significance of these political orientations partially depends on their congruence with the social and political structure of the nation. Almond and Verba posited that *allegiant democrats* are an essential component of a democratic civic culture, they endorse the values of the regime and are supportive of democratic institutions. *Assertive democrats*, in contrast, lack this confidence in the existing political institutions. They may be supporters of the opposition parties who are displaying their disagreement with government policies, or they may harbor deeper desires to reform the structure of representative democracy. In the United States, for example, this category might include Common Cause reformers, Libertarians, and critics of the imperfections in representative democracy. In short, *assertive democrats* are often agents for political reform and further political development in a democratic setting.

In contrast, in autocratic settings those who endorse democracy are opposing the norms of the current regime. In this setting, *assertive democrats* may be the primary supporters of regime change because they endorse democracy and lack confidence in the current autocratic government. *Allegiant democrats* are a contradiction in autocratic states; they have democratic regime preferences which run counter to the existing political system, yet they express confidence in the present autocratic government. One expects that the advocates for democratization in China, for example, are disproportionately *assertive democrats*.

Conversely, autocratic preferences hold different implications depending on the political regime. In democracies, these individuals are supporting political norms that run counter to those of the democratic state. Fascists in democratic Spain or unreformed communists in democratic Eastern Europe exemplify this group. In autocracies like Vietnam and China, they support the existing regime's principles, even if some lack confidence in the current government.

The congruence between these citizenship norms and regime forms is displayed in Figure 7. We grouped nations according to their rating on the World Bank's Voice and Accountability index.

=== Figure 7 about here ===

The figure graphically shows that the majority of the public prefers democracy to its autocratic alternatives regardless of the nature of the political system in which they live. This alone is striking evidence of how the world has changed. Even in the nations ranked as least democratic by the World Bank index, 53 percent of the public favor democracy (satisfied and dissatisfied democrats combined). Support for a democratic regime systematically increases with democratic development to 78 percent in the nations highest on voice and accountability. Equally important, as the level of democratic development increases, this does not produce more satisfied democrats as suggested by the classic civic culture literature. Instead, the proportion of dissatisfied democrats nearly doubles across the range of the voice-accountability scale, becoming the plurality (42%) among the most democratic nations.

As support for democracy grows in nations with a higher voice-accountability score, public support for an autocratic regime naturally decreases. In the least democratic regimes, nearly half the public favor an autocratic regime form, and third prefer democracy but simultaneously express confidence in their non-democratic government. This latter group is a bit oxymoronic; for example, 68 percent of the Vietnamese claim to prefer democracy to either autocratic alternative, yet they simultaneously express confidence in the autocratic and unrepresentative National Assembly.

By comparison, barely a fifth of the public in the least democratic nations favors democracy and is unsupportive of their current autocratic parliament. To some extent, this group should constitute the real core of support for democracy in autocratic states. These are the individuals who are likely to endorse reforms of the existing political system to move closer to a democratic regime, and take action in pursuit of this goal. In our Vietnamese example, such sentiments are barely a trace element among the Vietnamese public (1%), which suggests a limited base for popular action challenging the current regime. Then, with higher levels of voice and accountability, the proportions of satisfied and dissatisfied autocrats both decrease. However, a significant minority still endorse a non-democratic regime form even in the most

democratic nations. Democracy is preferred, but it is not the only alternative for the citizens of contemporary democracies.

### **Conclusion**

Nearly five decades have passed since Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba proposed the civic culture model of democratic development on the basis of their public opinion surveys in four Western democracies and Mexico. As they aptly characterized it, their research represented the first systematic endeavor to develop “a scientific theory of democracy” (Almond and Verba 1963, 10). Unlike their predecessors, who sought to infer cultural norms and values exclusively from citizen behavior and institutional performance, the two political scientists specified the properties of democratic culture by directly tapping the political attitudes held by individual citizens of democratic states, and by ascertaining a dominant pattern of those attitudes among those citizens. Further, they empirically explored the impact of culture on democratic political stability and effectiveness by examining whether the dominant pattern of citizen attitudes in each country is congruent or incongruent with the structure of its political system. For these reasons alone, their study constitutes a path-breaking investigation of democracy from a cultural perspective.

Since Almond and Verba’s investigation of political cultures, powerful waves of socio-economic and political transformation have swept every corner of the globe. The forces of modernization and globalization have liberated countless numbers of people from poverty and illiteracy, and exposed them to foreign cultures, ideas, and products. The forces of political democratization and economic liberalization have expanded the spectrum of the political rights and civil liberties individual citizens can enjoy. These structural and institutional changes have undoubtedly transformed contemporary cultures by shaping and reshaping not only the way ordinary people live personally and interact with others, but also the way they think about and get involved in politics. Such shifts in mass political attitudes and behavior make it *necessary* to reassess whether the civic culture model proposed five decades ago still “fits” the real world of democratic politics.

The third and fourth waves of global democratization, moreover, have brought about a great deal of expansion in the comparative study of political cultures through public opinion surveys. A new generation of social scientists regularly conduct public opinion surveys in new

non-Western democracies, which were not included in the original five-nation civic culture survey. In these new surveys, researchers have asked old and new questions to monitor the dynamics of citizen reactions to democracy, and explore the impact of those reactions on the process of institutional democratization. The World Values Survey is the exceptional example of this new research, spanning both an exception range of nations and tracking opinions over five waves or survey. The accumulation of new surveys makes it *possible* to reassess the civic culture model that Almond and Verba proposed as a culture that is appropriate for a stable and effective democracy.

We first note that the civic culture model was essentially based on the surveys in the United States and Great Britain, two stable first-wave democracies of the West. In these two nations, stability and effective performance were considered the overriding concerns of their democratic rule. Even the other three nations—Germany, Italy and Mexico—were primarily drawn from modern, Western nations. As a result, the civic culture model was limited in addressing the problems arising in the democratization processes of transforming less-developed authoritarian regimes into democracies or in expanding limited electoral democracies into fully liberal democracies. *Substantively*, therefore, this model is limited in dealing with two of three key phases of democratization, that is, democratic transition and democratic consolidation.

*Conceptually*, the civic culture model was based on the age-old notion that democracy is government by the consent of the people, and thus it cannot endure or thrive for an extended period of time unless they remain, by and large, actively involved in and continually supportive of its process and institutions. Accordingly, the participation of ordinary citizens in the democratic political process and their allegiance to or support for democratic institutions was specified as the two key components of the model of stable democracy. Even in principle, therefore, this model did not allow citizens to do much in the political process besides expressing allegiance to or support for political institutions and their policies. There is, indeed, little room for political competition and opposition among citizens with conflicting interests and preferences. In this respect, it is fair to characterize the model as largely *unrealistic*.

Moreover, the same model is based on the view that citizens of democratic states hold consistently allegiant or positive orientations to the various components of democracy. It is also based on the mistaken view that *positive* orientations to democratic structures and processes contribute only to the various phases of democratization, including those of transforming limited

democracies into fully democracies and ineffectively functioning democracies into effectively functioning democracies (Almond and Verba 1963, 30). Undoubtedly positive orientations can be conducive to maintaining the *stability* of the existing democratic regimes regardless of the level of their democratic development. Such positive orientations, however, should not be considered the only type of political attitude conducive to the democratization of authoritarian politics. As is known in the empirical literature on the role of civic activism, critical or negative orientations often drive citizens to demand the reforming of ineffectively performing structures and processes. (Burnell and Calvert 2004; Karatnycki and Ackerman 2005)

As discussed above, the evidence culled from the recent waves of the WVS makes it clear that people in all regions tend to view democracy as a multi-layered phenomenon, and they do often react more differently than similarly to the different layers of the same phenomenon. Specifically, a majority of contemporary publics remains positively oriented to democracy as a political system and its fundamental values. And yet these democratic regime supporters are more critical of than allegiant to its institutions and processes (Chu et al., 2008; Shin and Wells 2005). Even in the most democratically developed countries, critical democrats, not allegiant democrats, constitute a plurality of their electorates.

More notably, citizen allegiance to governmental institutions is typically greatest at the lowest level of democratic development. This indicates that many countries have authoritarian systems when citizens are less critical of institutions or less willing/able to express criticism. This implies that countries become more democratic or less authoritarian when citizens are most critical of governmental institutions while embracing democratic ideals. This finding runs counter to the civic culture model that holds that democracies become stable and effective with allegiant democrats, not with critical democrats. Obviously, the civic culture model of allegiant democrats no longer “fits” today’s world with respect to democratization.

*Theoretically*, the civic culture model holds that all political systems including democracies becomes stable and effective only when their respective structure and culture are congruent with each other (Almond and Verba 1963, 366; Eckstein 1992). When they are incongruent, the political system becomes unstable and breaks down for regime change (Almond and Verba 1963, 20). As it claims, their incongruence *in kind* may lead to the instability of the polity and its eventual demise. In the real world of contemporary non-democratic countries, socioeconomic modernization and globalization have spawned a growing number of citizens,

who embrace democracy as their preferred regime. As a result of growing citizen preference, the incongruence between democratic culture and authoritarian politics is widening much more than what might be expected from the civic culture.

More notably, the civic culture model failed to take into account that democratic regimes also experience the incongruence between culture and structure. Unlike authoritarian regimes, they experience the incongruence between the level of democracy supplied by institutions and that demanded by the citizenry (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007). This form of incongruence is not likely to cause the break-down of democratic rule. Instead, it is likely to contribute to the further democratization of their limited democratic rule by occasioning institutional reform (Welzel 2007). When democratic demand and supply are in congruence or in equilibrium at their low level, moreover, democracy is known to remain “broken-back” (Rose and Shin 2001). In the world of newly emerging democracies, therefore, democratic progress may be more likely to take place when structure and culture are more incongruent than congruent. The failure of the civic culture model to consider the potentially positive role of such incongruence is one of its major limitations as a cultural theory of democratic development.

The civic culture model as a theory of democratization is predicated on the premise that political culture is exogenous to democracy. Contrary to what is expected from this theoretical premise, a number of newly democratized countries display a significant decline in institutional trust in the wake of democratic regime change. The World Values Survey shows that citizens of South Korea, Mexico and most of the former communist countries became less confident in their parliaments. This finding attests to the existence of an endogenous relationship between culture and democracy. Failing to consider such a reciprocal relationship between the two variables, the civic culture model offers an incomplete account of democratization that is currently taking place around the globe.

Why is it that the civic culture model of allegiant and compliant democrats no longer fits today’s democratic world in which critical and defiant democrats prevails over their allegiant and compliant counterparts? Why is it that this model is not fully capable of accounting for the dynamics of democratization? The first question, which deals with the specific components of the model, has mostly to do with the various changes taking place within the environment in which individual citizens have lived over the past five decades and the liberalizing effects of those changes on their mindsets (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Structural and institutional changes

have enabled many of them to accumulate a variety of socioeconomic and psychological resources, which enable them to become more assertive and critical, rather than acquiescent and allegiant in the political process.

The second question concerning limitations of the civic culture model as a theory of democracy has to do with the authors' overgeneralization of the findings from their small set of nations. In addition, it has a great deal to do with the way they specified the model. Their exclusive concern with the stability of the democratic polity makes it impossible to understand the entire process of democratic political development from a dynamic perspective, and the positive role which the incongruent relationship between democratic culture and infrastructure play in the process. All in all, our reassessments of the civic culture model indicate that the particular type of political culture that is most suitable for democratic political development varies in kind across one political generation to another, and it also varies from one wave of democratization to another.

**Table 1 The Correlates of Cultural Traits**

	<b>Socio-economic Development UN Human Development Index</b>	<b>Political Development WB Voice and Accountability</b>
<i>Interest/Attentiveness</i>		
Political Interest	-.06	.05
Have opinions about government	-.26*	-.35*
<i>Trust in Government</i>		
Confidence in government	.36*	.37*
Confidence in parliament	.32*	.25*
Confidence index	.36*	.34*
<i>Regime Support</i>		
Support democracy	.21	-.07
Support autocracy	-.41*	-.55*
Democracy-autocracy index	.25*	.47*

*Source:* National aggregates from nations included in World Values Survey IV or V.

*Note:* Table entries are the Pearson correlations between economic and political development indicators and various aspects of the political culture. The number of countries for each correlation typically range from 63 to 86. Coefficients significant at the .05 level are denoted by an asterisk.

**Table 2 A Typology of Political Orientations**

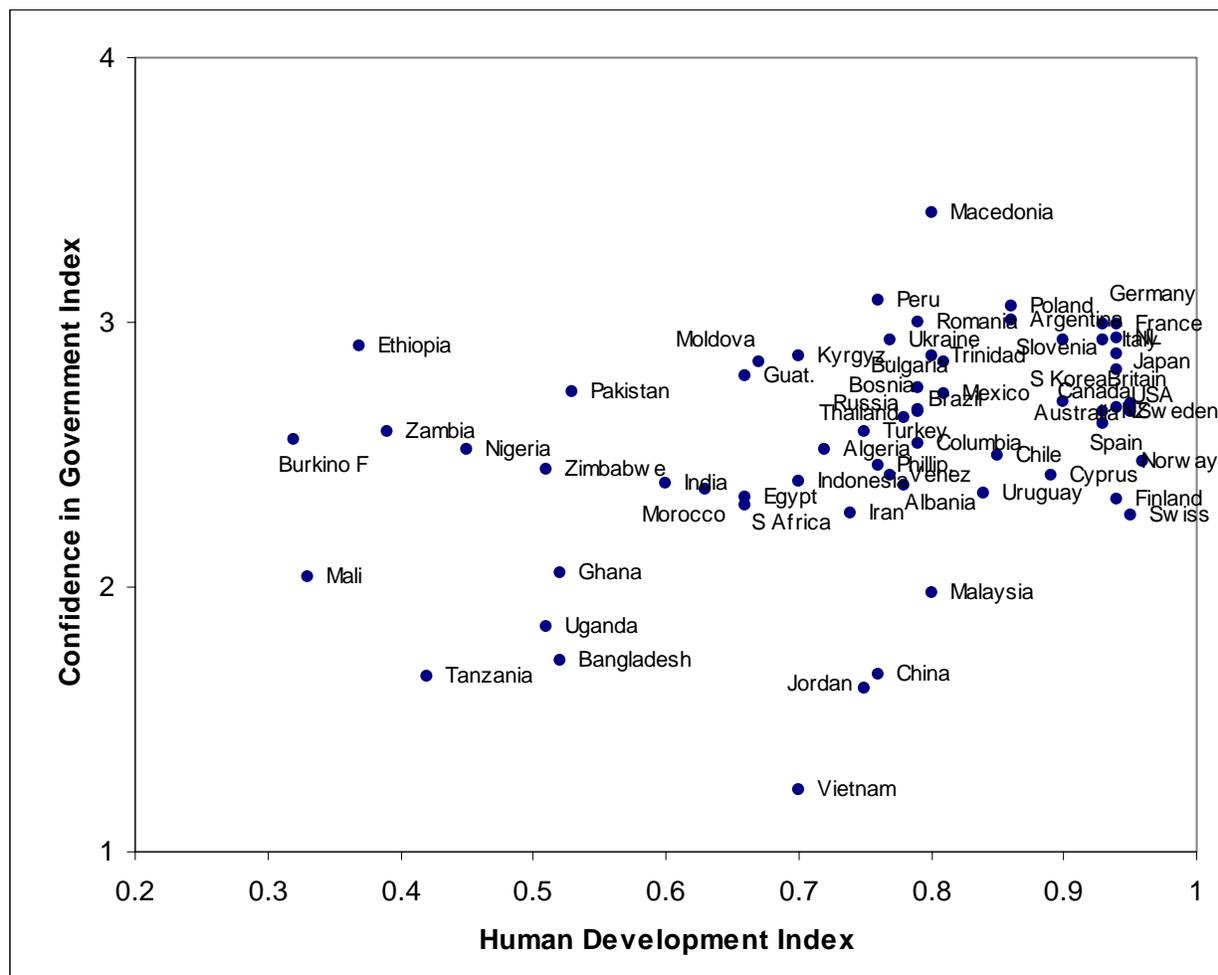
	Favor Democracy	Favor Autocracy	Totals
Confident in Parliament	Allegiant Democrat 24%	Allegiant Autocrat 14%	38%
Not Confident in Parliament	Critical Democratic 37%	Dissatisfied Autocrat 25%	62%
Totals	61%	39%	100%

*Source:* World Values Survey IV & V. N=\_\_\_

*Note:* See the text on the construction of these two dimensions.



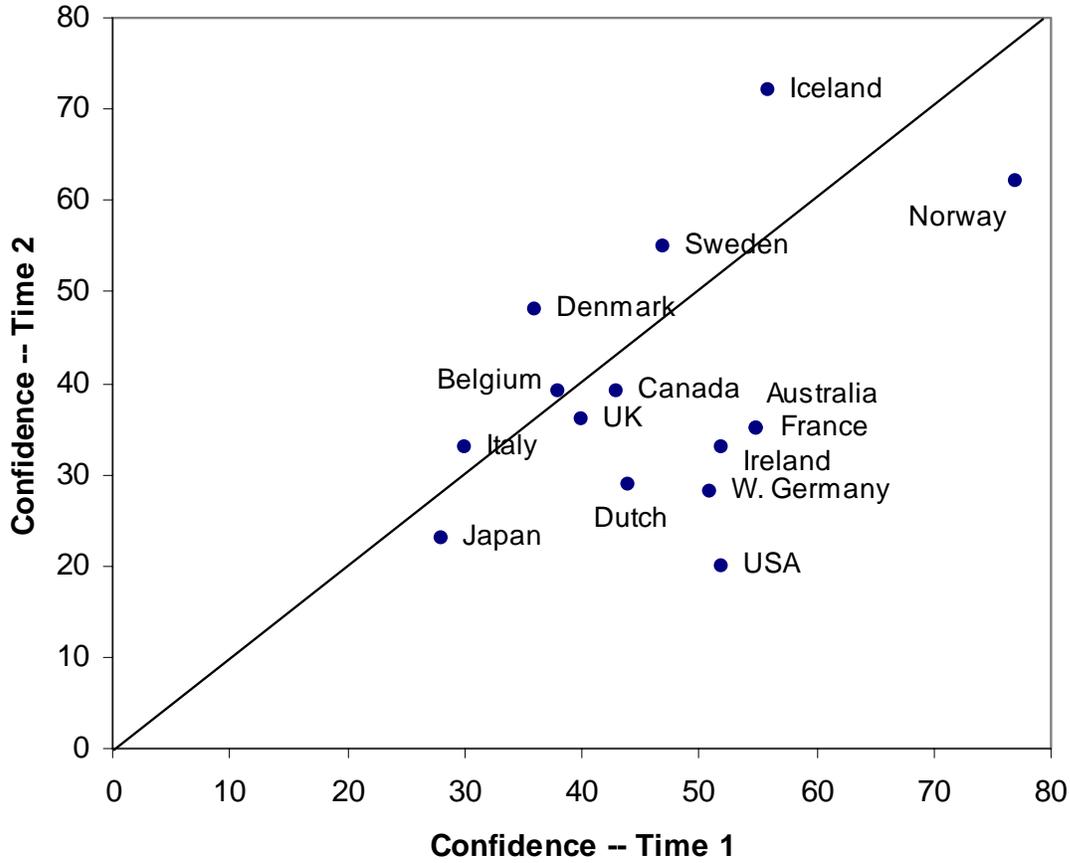
**Figure 2 Human Development and Confidence in Government**



Source: World Values Survey IV-V (N=63).

Note: The figure plots national scores on these two dimensions: UN Human Development Index 2003 and confidence in government and parliament: 1) no confidence to 4) very great confidence.

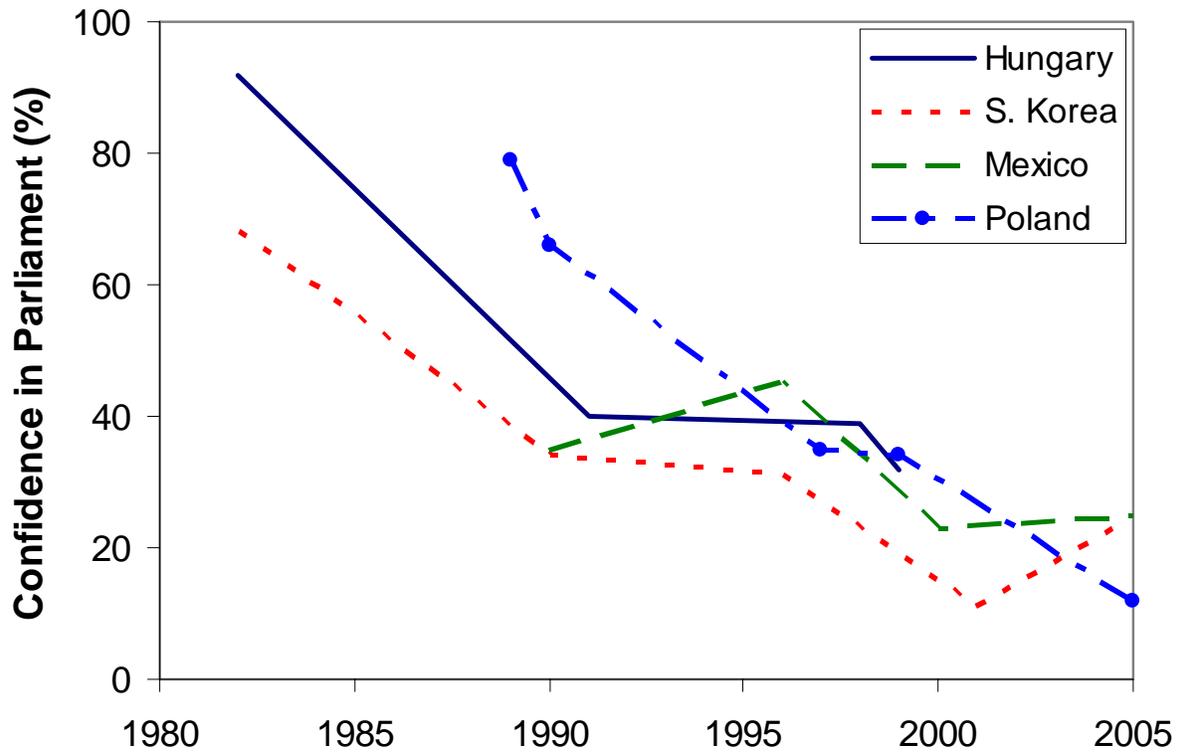
**Figure 3 Confidence in Parliament over Time in Advanced Industrial Democracies**



*Source:* World Values Survey, various years.

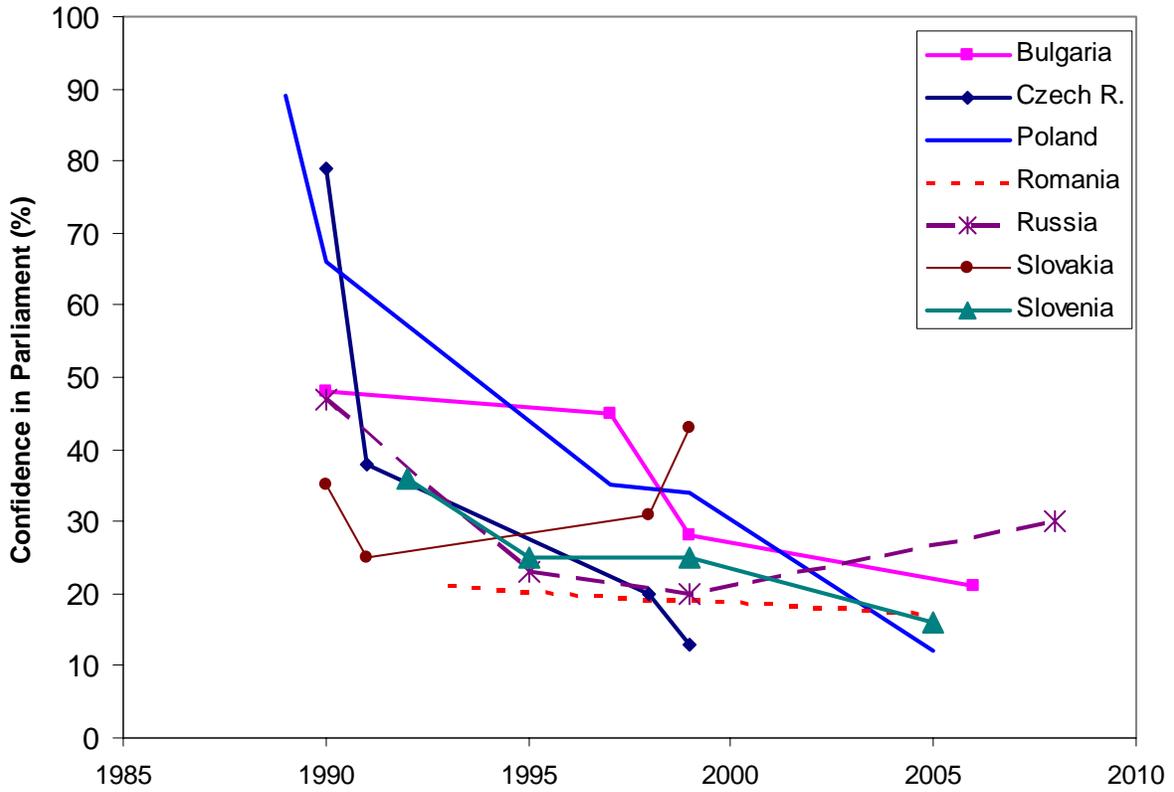
*Note:* Figure presents the percent confident in parliament from the first available WVS timepoint to the last available timepoint.

**Figure 4 Confidence in Parliament Pre/Post Democratic Transition**



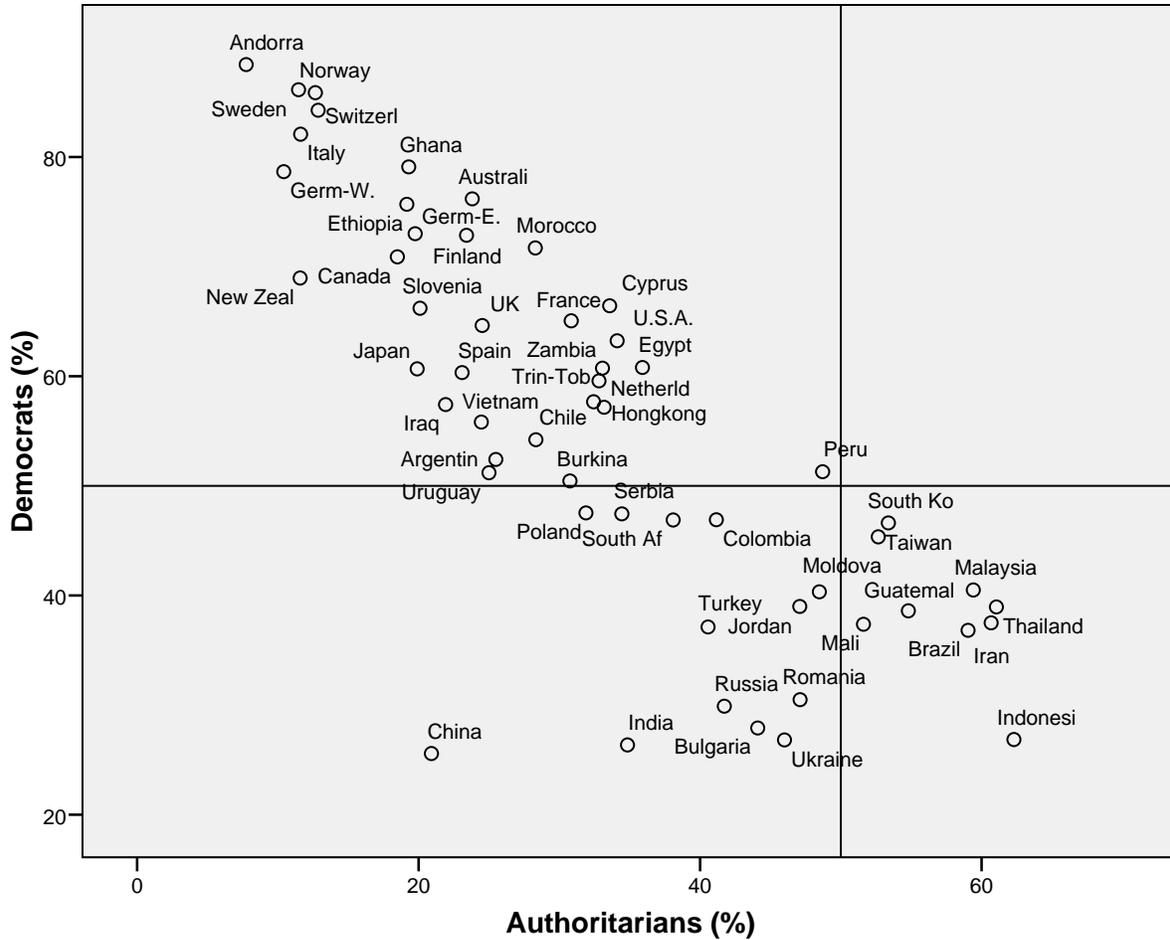
*Source:* World Values Surveys, various years.

**Figure 5 Confidence in Parliament in Post-communist Nations**



Source: World Values Surveys, various years.

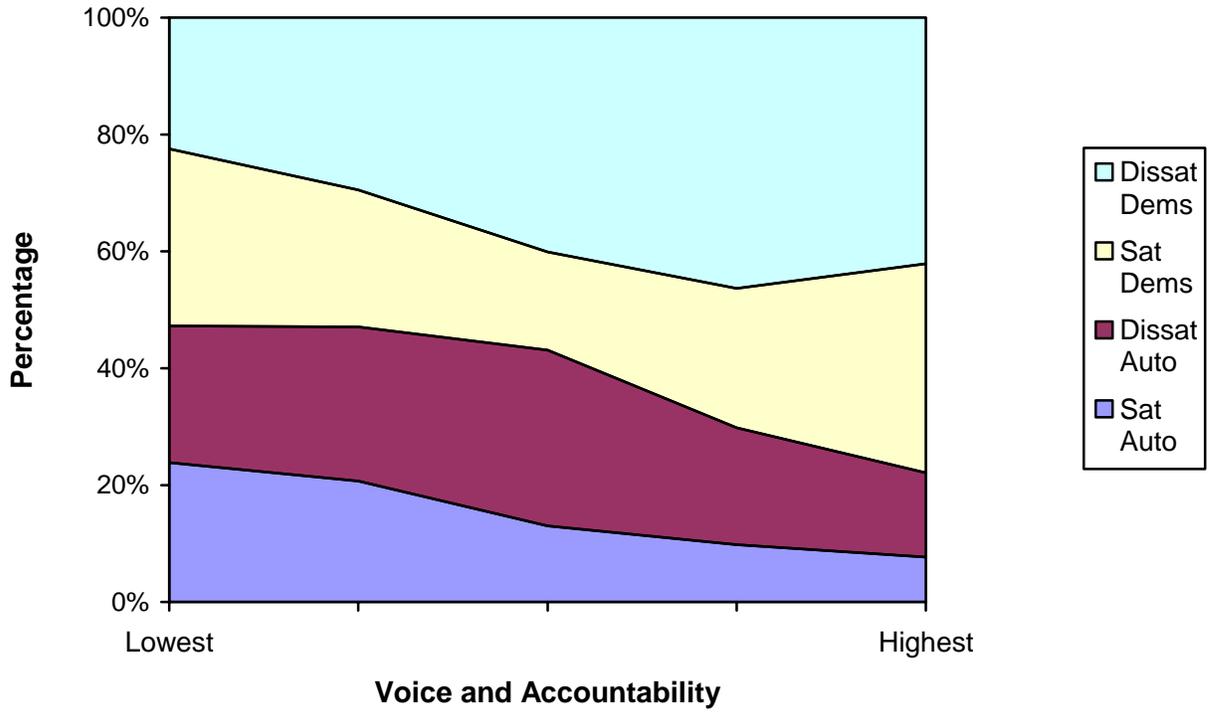
**Figure 6 The Distribution of Authoritarians and Democrats**



Source: World Values Survey V. N=53.

Note: The figure plots the percentage preferring democracy and the percent preferring autocracy in each nation. See note 15 on the construction of these two measures.

**Figure 7 Democratic Development and Citizenship Orientations**



Source: World Values Survey.

Note: The figure plots the percentage of each category by the World Bank’s Voice and Accountability Index. See Table 2 on the construction of these categories.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Even if people trusted government in autocratic societies, legitimacy would be based on non-democratic principles, such as hereditary succession, religious authority, tradition, or mobilized by the agents of an authoritarian state. There was a general presumption that autocratic governments persisted because the public tolerated or even endorsed their autocratic structure.

<sup>2</sup> The data for this paper were downloaded from the World Values Survey website ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)). The website also has the questionnaires for each survey and additional information on survey sampling and methodology.

<sup>3</sup> The question read: “How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you: 1) Very interested, 2) Somewhat interested, 3) Not very interested, or 4) Not at all interested.”

<sup>4</sup> Economic development is measured by the UN’s Human Development Index for 2003; for political development we use the World Bank’s Voice and Accountability Index for 2006 (<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>). This measures the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. When a nation was included in both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> wave of the WVS, we combined the surveys to produce a single data point for each nation.

<sup>5</sup> The question read: “I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?”

<sup>6</sup> People generally express more confidence in a non-political institution—the courts—than they do in government and the parliament. This might suggest that subjective orientations toward the institutions of administration come before support for governing institutions, except that all of the established democracies also follow this pattern.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, some surveys may have coincided with a short-term political crisis (such as the xxx) or a dramatic positive event (e.g., the Polish elections of 1989 and 1990) and thus created short-term perturbations from the longer trends we are trying to observe. This is why more extensive trend data from nation surveys is important in verifying these downward trends. See Dalton (2004, ch. 2).

<sup>8</sup> In fact, the first WVS survey in East Germany was conducted in fall of 1990 and 41 percent expressed confidence in the Bundestag; this dropped to 16 percent in the 2006 survey. Nationally representative surveys before the Berlin Wall fell are not available.

<sup>9</sup> According to Freedom House, Hungary transitioned from a score of 11 (Not Free) in 1982 to a score of 3 (Free) in 1999; Poland went from a score of 7 in 1989 (4 in 1990) to 2 in 2005; South Korea changed from a score of 11 in 1982 to a score of 3 in 2005; Mexico changed from a score of 8 in 1990 to a score of 4 in 2005.

<sup>10</sup> With more frequent and finer measurements, one might expect an increase in political support immediately after a popular democratic transition as individuals embrace the new regime. But as politics normalizes, the skepticism we describe might emerge. A similar pattern appeared for voting turnout, which often surged in the first democratic election and then dropped to a lower level in subsequent elections.

<sup>11</sup> South African is another possible comparison, although the first survey came after Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 but before the end of apartheid in 1992. Trust in parliament drops from 66 percent in 1990 to 60 percent in 2001, before rising to 65 percent in 2006. There are, however, much different trends between whites and minorities because of the overlap of political regimes and apartheid.

<sup>12</sup> The question reads: "I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?"

Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections

Having the army rule

Having a democratic political system."

We inverted the coding to range from 0) "very bad", to 3) "very good".

<sup>13</sup> In other nations, theocracy may be the major rival to democracy. However, this option was not systematically included in the WVS comparisons of regime alternatives. This question was included in the 2006 Iraq survey: 46% were positive toward an Islamic government where religious leaders have absolute power. Only 21% were positive toward a civilian autocracy; 18% were positive toward a military government. A full 88% were positive toward democracy.

<sup>14</sup> The resulting index ranges from a low of -3 to a high of +3. Positive scores on this 7-point index are considered indicative of preference for democracy while neutral and negative scores are considered indicative of an authoritarian regime. The higher the positive and negative scores are, the greater the preference for democratic and authoritarian regimes is, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> We constructed this index as the simple difference between support for democracy versus its primary autocratic alternative on the four-point "good/bad" scale. This variable is heavily skewed with 61% favoring the democratic alternative, 28% equal ranking, and 11% prefer an autocratic regime.

<sup>16</sup> We dichotomized this variable including the latter two categories into support for autocracy on the presumption democracy requires an affirmative public preference and not neutrality. However, in no country does the percentate favoring an autocratic regime (excluding neutrals) exceed those favoring democracy.