

What drives democratisation in Asia and Africa?

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Abstract. With many developing countries stuck in an uneasy middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship, the question of favourable and unfavourable conditions for democratisation is dramatically brought back into focus. Yet, systematic comparative analysis that analyses a range of favourable and unfavourable political, economic and cultural factors is rare, particularly as far as African and Asian countries are concerned. This article addresses these shortcomings and at the same time introduces two conceptual innovations. Building on a structural and socio-anthropological conception of the term, we measure and test culture cross-nationally in a way that overcomes the conceptual limitations of the ‘political culture’ approach. We further develop an index of power sharing for 62 African and Asian countries, allowing us statistically to test Arend Lijphart’s ‘consociational’ model of democratic emergence and consolidation. In our statistical examination of these countries between 1965 and 1995, power sharing and the cultural element of low familism turn out to be the strongest predictors of democratisation, while economic factors – often viewed as the most important variables shaping democratisation – have only limited effects.

Before the breakdown of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, democratisation seemed a fragile and uncertain process, characterised by numerous authoritarian setbacks in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This changed in the early 1990s, when a wave of democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Africa and Asia stimulated greater optimism. The American democracy-aid community, for instance, rapidly embraced a model of smooth democratic transition. The transition model assumed that a country’s chances of democratising successfully depended primarily on the political intentions and the actions of its political elites (see Carothers 1999, 2002). Since the 1990s, however, the idea of a smooth global passage to a democratic world has withered away. Events in Africa and Asia show more than ever the dependence of democratic progress on social, economic and political factors, and the fragility and non-linearity of democratic progress. Yet, academic research has not got to grips with these factors. Certainly, the literature abounds with case studies, but comparative studies examining regularities of democratisation are rare (Przeworski et al. 1996) – particularly in African and Asian countries.

Most comparative work focuses on the question of whether democracy affects socio-economic development and has not generally offered a convincing answer. The question of what drives democracy remains controversial. Economic explanations, following M. Lipset (1981), compete with social-capital approaches (Putnam 1993) or power resource approaches (Vanhanen 1989), while authors such as Linz and Stepan (1996) stress that the existence of a consolidated nation-state is a pre-condition for democratisation.

Very little comparative work examines the role of culture. The concept of 'political culture' as found in Almond and Verba (1963) with its exclusive focus on subjective citizen values, attitudes and beliefs, is too narrow to be used in the context of traditional and developing societies. Social anthropology, by contrast, can offer an impressive body of analyses of traditional societies and has a wide understanding of collective and structural forms of 'culture'. Yet social anthropology is mostly based on descriptive, qualitative case studies and tends to lack data for systematic and quantitative analysis. This article tries to overcome some of these deficiencies. Our basic hypothesis is that while actors' intentions may certainly matter for democratisation, they are not necessarily sufficient to set a country on a continuous democratic path; rather, successful democratisation depends much on favourable political, cultural and economic factors. Our examination of 62 African and Asian countries¹ in the period from 1965 to 1995 finds that power sharing has a significant positive effect on democratisation, while familism has a significantly negative one. Controlling for cultural and political factors, economic factors are barely significant.

Towards a multidimensional model of democratisation

What drives democratisation? Earlier studies mainly focused on structural factors: above all the level of economic development and rate of economic growth (M. Lipset 1981; Przeworski 1992), favourable geopolitical conditions (e.g., Burkhart & Lewis-Beck 1994), long-term shifts in societal power involving the bourgeoisie or working class (Moore 1967; Rueschemeyer 1992), the distribution of power resources (Vanhanen 1989) or the comparative advantages of parliamentarism over presidentialism (Linz 1990) (see Merkel 1999, for an overview of the literature). Recent research, however, has largely turned away from structural analysis and stresses the role of actor-related factors. Particularly, O'Donnell et al. (1986) have claimed that one should use distinctly political concepts to analyse transitions from authoritarian rule. While they do not deny the importance of structural factors, they argue that they leave a lot of room for political actors to make choices that can increase or decrease regime persistence and stability. O'Donnell et al.'s view is close to the current

orthodoxy in the official thinking of Western governments and organisations; democracy is seen as a component to be inserted into any society at any point in its development and it will work on a sustained basis (Leftwich 1996).

The evolving transition model was based on a few core assumptions: that countries moving away from authoritarianism tend to follow a three-part process of democratisation consisting of opening, breakthrough and consolidation; and that a country's chances for successfully democratising depend primarily on the political intentions and actions of its political elites (see Carothers 2002). In view of the many failed democratic transition processes in the 1990s, however, this seems to be a lofty assumption. Rather, we claim that it is worth going back to the classical literature and analysing democratisation from a multidimensional viewpoint taking into account both favourable and unfavourable political, cultural and economic factors.

Political regimes

Political power sharing

In the classical literature (Dahl 1971; Rustow 1970), the sources of democratic emergence are located in elite behaviour. Democracy begins to emerge when a relatively small circle of elites decides to accept the existence of diversity in unity and wage their conflicts peacefully through democratic rules and procedures. This critical decision may initially not stem from a shift in fundamental values, but from strategic considerations. As Diamond (1993a: 3) states: 'Elites choose democracy instrumentally because they perceive that the costs of attempting to suppress their political opponents exceed the costs of tolerating them (and engaging them in constitutionally regulated competition).' What follows is a gradual and incremental emergence of democratic culture. Higley and Burton (1989) assert that only a consensually unified national elite produces a stable regime that can evolve into a modern democracy – emphasising elite accommodation on the rules of the game and the institutionalisation of behavioural norms that restrain expressions of conflict.

However, it is not easy to achieve and maintain such an elite political culture in African and Asian countries, as a great many of them are pluri-religious, pluri-ethnic and pluri-linguistic, and lack any consensus about basic rules of the political game. This has implications for democracy that are frequently poorly understood. As Linz and Stepan (1996: 26) argue: 'The neglect in the literature on democratic transition and consolidation of the question of the legitimacy of the state is unfortunate because this variable, while not always of great importance for non-democratic polities, is of fundamental

theoretical and political importance for democracy. In fact, agreements about stateness are logically prior to the creation of democratic institutions.' Moreover, conflict resolution in ethnically or culturally divided societies is difficult, as already mentioned in older literature. Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 12) argued that 'plural societies are qualitatively distinct from homogenous ones [and] that plural societies are inherently prone to violent conflict'. Horowitz (1985: 8) describes divided societies in similar terms: 'Issues that elsewhere would be relegated to the category of routine administration assume a central place on the political agenda of ethnically divided societies . . . almost any issue, any phenomenon, can suddenly turn ethnic or turn communal.'

Rather than facilitating peaceful solutions, the adoption of majoritarian forms of democracy often accentuates such problems (Linder 1994). In many developing societies, electoral competition is a bid for ownership of the state. For minority groups, losing an election is a matter of not simply losing office, but of having no access to the resources of the state and thus losing the means for protecting the survival of the group (e.g., Makinda 1996). Such deficiencies of majoritarian democracy are systemic: British-style democracy where 'the winner takes all' bears the risk that structural minorities are permanently excluded from power. In his seminal work, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz (1985: 629) concurs: 'Ethnic parties developed, majorities took power, and minorities took shelter. It was a fearful situation, in which the prospect of minority exclusion from government underpinned by ethnic voting, was potentially permanent. . . . Civil violence, military coups, and the advent of single party regimes can all be traced to this problem of inclusion-exclusion.'

Not all forms of democracy share this mechanism of inclusion-exclusion with its negative implications for structural minorities or divided societies. In his seminal works on consociational democracy and power sharing, Liphart (1977, 1984) argues that in order to achieve and maintain democracy in plural or divided societies, elite accommodation is required. Power sharing involves government in the hands of an elite coalition composed of the leaders of the major religious, ethnic and social groups, proportional representation, a strong separation and diffusion of powers at the national level including mutual veto, and the decentralisation of political powers to sub-national units. Power sharing in the horizontal and vertical dimension decreases the risk that one dominant ethnic or religious group will use its political power to discriminate against or subjugate another. As Linz and Stepan (1996: 34) point out, these mechanisms will not eliminate conflict in multinational states, but they may 'moderate conflict and help make both the state and democracy more viable'. Consociational democracy does not necessarily guarantee peace and democracy in a plural society. Consociational theory only claims that the

probability of successful majoritarianism is always much smaller than that of successful consociationalism. Lijphart (1977: 238) therefore concludes: 'For many plural societies of the non-Western world . . . , the realistic choice is not between the British model of democracy and the consociational model, but between consociational democracy and no democracy at all.'

Furthermore, the implications of power sharing should not only be that it provides favourable conditions for resolving conflict in plural or divided societies, but for any emergent democracy. By including opposition members in the government structure or by giving traditional elites or the military a say in politics, power sharing can facilitate transition processes. Moreover, power sharing can also reduce partisan confrontation or societal division, and thus help to enhance the legitimacy of the democratic order in developing societies. In a more general way, Linder (1999) argues that power sharing, by accepting political actors as mutually dependent, can further the recognition of the other groups as legitimate representatives, improve understanding of their viewpoints and, by creating positive trust spirals, foster cooperative attitudes.

H1: Power-sharing mechanisms have a positive effect on democratisation.

For our research, we had two problems to solve. First, data on power sharing exist for only a few African and Asian countries, so we had to develop our own index for the purpose of this study. The *Power Sharing Index* (PSI) builds on Lijphart's (1968, 1977) concept of 'consociationalism' with its four yardsticks of grand coalition, proportionality, mutual veto and segmental autonomy. For our purpose, we combined it with recent concepts of 'veto points' and 'veto players' in order to take all conceivable institutional restrictions to majoritarian rule into account (Weaver 1992; Tsebelis 1995; Kaiser 1997). Like Lijphart, we distinguish a horizontal dimension (diffusion of powers among actors of the central level of government) and a vertical dimension (diffusion of powers between different levels of government) which form a composed index of power sharing (described in the Appendix; further details are available from the authors on request).

Second, investigating the relationship between power sharing and democratisation would be flawed automatically if mechanisms of political power sharing were restricted to formal democracies: yet, decentralisation or horizontal separation of powers between different political organs can also be found in authoritarian regimes (see also Tsebelis 2002). For instance, the autocratic Ottoman Empire had institutionalised a 'millet' system that guaranteed a large measure of autonomy (self-determination and self-management) to its non-Muslim communities; also in India under British Colonial rule,

power-sharing practices such as communal electoral rolls and reserved legislative seats were instituted (see Sisk 1996: 27–28). Moreover, our reconceptualisation of Lijphart's four yardsticks into a veto points framework helps to identify restrictions to majoritarian rule both in democratic and authoritarian regimes. Thus, fusion or diffusion of political power is a variable that can be conceived independently from democracy and hence be used as a possible explanatory factor. Moreover, power-sharing elements are present both in African and Asian countries, supporting Lijphart's (1977) claim that power sharing or consociationalism can be considered a worldwide phenomenon. This, in turn, allows us to test the effects of power sharing on democratisation for the whole sample.

The role of the state

Neo-liberal theory in Europe and the United States has a normative bias in favour of a minimal state. Criticism of 'oversized', bureaucratic states or cleptocracies in developing societies is in line with this theoretical strand. However, an unconditional preference for a reduced role of the state is inconsistent with theories of modernisation. Liberal theory takes it for granted that the state has a consolidated role in society: it has a monopoly of legitimate coercive power such that government can take a surplus from market economy which allows the delivery of public goods, and that government has a certain autonomy to define and defend its policy against special interest groups. Yet, there is ample empirical evidence showing that, in developing societies, these conditions cannot be taken for granted. Developing countries typically face both the problem of an oversized state, sometimes in the hands of a small ruling elite exploiting the resources of a country, and the problem of consolidation of even minimal standards of modern statehood (Leftwich 1996). Lack of state effectiveness not only hinders economic and social development, but also poses a severe threat to democratisation: democracies that are unable to deliver public goods to large parts of its constituency ultimately face a legitimacy problem. However, thus far, state effectiveness escapes both satisfactory methods of measurement for cross-national research and respective data sets. Particularly lacking are corruption indices for the whole period of 1965 to 1995. *Faute de mieux*, we choose a simple economic indicator: the tax revenue, measured in percentage of the domestic product and as a mean value of three years (1973, 1980 and 1995). We are aware of the fact that this indicator is a relatively crude proxy and does not exclude 'oversized' states.

H2: The higher state performance (measured in the proportions of tax revenue/GDP) the better the conditions for democratisation.

Culture

While many comparative studies have analysed impacts of economic and political factors on democratisation, the cultural factor rests mainly in the dark for a variety of reasons. First, the concept of 'political culture' (see Almond & Verba 1963; Diamond 1993b; Welzel et al. 2003) focuses on subjective values and is too narrow to be used in the context of traditional and developing societies. As the social anthropologist Müller (2002) argues, the concept neither catches the interrelationships between culture and the evolutionary positions of these societies nor does it include a historical perspective that takes account of their 'cultural heritage' (i.e., their pre-colonial and colonial history). Put differently, while the 'political culture' literature is certainly right in claiming that the emergence of 'civic cultural' values in traditional and developing societies may foster democratic development, it overlooks that in the vast majority of these societies, culture still has to be conceived in 'structural', 'collective' and 'historical' terms rather than in purely 'symbolic', 'subjective' and 'modern' terms.

Second, while social anthropology has developed a vast corpus of such analyses, most anthropologists emphasise the qualitative in-depth study of particular societies, which, in turn, does not facilitate systematic and comparative work. Müller therefore proposes a different conception that builds on a *structural* view of culture, with a focus on the *institutional* means by which basic functions of human life are maintained in society. It describes the institutions of production, distribution and reproduction (e.g., traditional subsistence production or dominant kinship organisation), basic functions that are necessary for every society's survival. In the *Atlas of Pre-colonial Societies*, Müller et al. (1999) collected all available data from anthropological research for the hundreds of pre-colonial societies of Africa and Asia, transformed it into indicators of structural culture and then aggregated these indicators at the level of the modern nation-state. Müller's indicators of the structure of culture not only render cultural factors measurable and testable in cross-national analysis, they also open up an unexplored anthropological and historical perspective on democratisation in developing countries. Three of Müller's indicators are of particular importance for democratisation: ethno-linguistic homogeneity/heterogeneity, family and kinship systems, and male dominance.

Ethno-linguistic homogeneity/heterogeneity

There are two schools of thought about the effects of cultural heterogeneity. There are the few optimists (Lian & Oneal 1997) who see no disadvantage in societal heterogeneity for development, or even emphasise that the risk of

polarisation and rigid conflict decreases with the number of conflicting groups. On the other hand, the majority of scholars are pessimists insisting that cultural cleavages operate as catalysts for social mobilisation, increase the potential for manifest conflicts and hence make emergent democracies unstable. Moreover, they argue that the more heterogeneous the population, the smaller the common ground for symbolic and direct communication, the higher the transaction costs and the fewer the shared values among citizens. This not only makes normative integration and political legitimisation more difficult, it also indicates the lack of a coordinating control device when rulers violate the rules of the political game (see Weingast 1997). Ritzén and Woolcock (2000) show that in more segmented societies the rule of law is weaker. Easterly and Levine (1997) identify high levels of ethnic heterogeneity as the most important cause of the African 'growth tragedy'. They conclude that ethnic divisions make it difficult – if not impossible – to develop the social cohesion necessary to build 'good institutions'.

H3: Cultural heterogeneity makes democratisation more difficult.

In this study, the index of homogeneity is composed of two measures: the proportion (percentage) of people who belong to the largest language group and the largest ethnic group. A religious indicator is not taken into account as most Asian and North African countries are homogeneous in this respect.

Family and kinship systems

In many developing societies, family and kinship systems continue to play a very important role (Müller 2002). Family and kinship systems form the basis of networks and corporate groups by regulating social interaction, reproduction and the flow of wealth. The more extensive a family or kinship system, the more a society can be considered 'familistic' (i.e., all basic needs are provided and regulated by the family). It also means that a society has not developed (or resisted) more complex societal organisations like feudalism, the extension of division of labour on the basis of a monetarised economy, or a strong state providing for police, welfare or other public goods on the base of surplus extraction through taxes.

Focusing on the link between familism and democratisation, Fukuyama (1992) has coined the terms 'traditional sociability' – whereby the former refers to the concentration of solidarity, loyalty and identity in family or kinship groups – and 'free sociability' – the capacity to build trans-familistic and civic networks. Fukuyama's argument is that it is difficult to build up reliable cooperation beyond such kinship groups, and therefore civic networks –

crucial for successful democratisation – are difficult to establish. In a similar vein, Putnam (1993) claims that democratic stability depends on a specific form of social organisation and citizen values: ‘social capital’. His argument is that denser networks and norms of reciprocity in a society make it ‘more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit’ (Putnam 1993: 173). Less civic regions, in contrast, reflect a ‘Hobbesian equilibrium’ characterised by ‘mutual distrust and defection, vertical dependence and exploitation, isolation and disorder, criminality and backwardness’ (Putnam 1993: 181). Thus, by producing distrust of others (see also Banfield 1967), kinship solidarity and familism allow rulers to stick or return more easily to authoritarian rule, and effective citizen mobilisation is difficult.

H4: Extensive family and kinship systems are an obstacle for achieving higher levels of democracy.

We use two indexes from Müller’s (2002) work: one measures the modalities for marriage (transfer of wealth and internal segmentation of villages), which represents a valid indicator for the extendedness of the family system in the horizontal dimension. The other, indicating the extendedness in the vertical (trans-generational) dimension, is based on the existence of fixed (linear) or open (cognatic) rules of heritage.

Male dominance

Traditional societies have many forms of gendered divisions of labour. In most societies, men, because of their perceived superior physical strength, were cast as warriors and guardians of women and children. Consequently, men might be expected to do the heavy fieldwork of subsistence production, while women do housework believed to require less physical strength. There are exceptions to this rule, however. Women, despite being viewed as ‘weaker’, do the heavy work of subsistence production in the fields, while men have easier work or none at all. We hypothesise that in societies where men are profiting from such dividends of the cultural heritage, democratisation is difficult: men would not see any advantage in institutionalising a political order that gives men and women equal political (and civil) rights, as this may potentially jeopardise their inherited privileged social status.

H5: Male dominance hinders democratisation.

Male dominance is captured by Müller’s (1999) variable of female dominance in subsistence production.

Economy

In the classical formulation of modernisation theory, S.M. Lipset (1981: 31) argues that economic development leads to a higher level of education and a more democratic culture. Citizens become more tolerant, moderate and rational in their attitudes, values and practices. This in turn favours a more moderate policy style of rulers towards political opposition. The tendency of education to produce political moderation is strengthened by changes in class and social stratification as higher incomes for large parts of the society reduce conflicts over distribution. In general, higher welfare reduces extreme economic inequality, weakens differences in class and status, and moderates political extremism among the lower and upper classes. It strengthens the educated middle class, which vies for political participation. Thus, modernisation, as well as economic growth, processes create the behavioural basis for democratic governance. For Przeworski et al. (1996), economic growth is also a key criterion in sustaining democratic regimes over time. Economic expansion helps to reduce societal conflicts resulting from inequality or other cleavages, and serves to diminish any tendency to political alienation and polarisation. Conversely, economic decline threatens democratic sustainability: a prolonged governmental failure to address effectively challenges of growth and equity will be likely to undermine the depth and stability of societal support and may encourage authoritarian alternatives.

H6: Higher levels of socio-economic development, higher rates of growth and higher levels of literacy have a positive effect on the level of democracy.

For the economic model, we use the following variables: the economic level of 1965 (as measured by GDP per capita; see Maddison 2001) corresponding to the expectation of modernisation theory that democracy needs a minimal economic level for taking-off; GDP growth for the period between 1965 and 1995 (derived from Maddison 2001); and 'human capital' in the form of literacy or higher forms of education (secondary school enrolment in 1965 derived from World Bank 1999).

Data set

Our objective was to assess the independent impact of political, cultural and economic variables on the level of democracy in our sample of 62 countries;

therefore, we put the independent variables blockwise into a multivariate regression model. Some of the political and economic variables have considerable annual fluctuation. In order to eliminate these effects, we have taken average values for the period 1965 to 1995 for most of these variables.

Our dependent variable, democracy, is captured by the index of democracy and autocracy of the Jagers and Gurr POLITY 98 data. Jagers and Gurr (1998) conceive democracy as three essential, interdependent elements. One is the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies and leaders. A second is the existence of institutionalised constraints on the exercise of power by the executive. A third is the guarantee of civil liberties for all citizens in their daily lives and in acts of political participation. As coded data on civil liberties were not available, the operational indicators of democracy and autocracy only include the competitiveness of political participation, the openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the chief executive. Both the democracy and autocracy indicators are additive scales ranging from 0 to 10, using scale weights for the different dimensions. The democracy variable in our model represents the average of democracy minus autocracy values of the two indexes in the period from 1965 to 1995, excluding the years with missing values (where there were events such as regime transitions and breakdowns). Since most countries in our sample start from a very high level of autocracy towards low levels of democracy and do not meet the 'freezing point' of zero on the aggregated scale, the measure of 'democratisation' is more accurately a measure of development towards less autocracy. This does not prevent us from talking about levels of democracy or democratisation, but reminds us that we are analysing problems of democratisation different to those of mature democracies.

Empirical results

As can be seen from Table 1, democratisation is dependent on many factors: all groups of variables have an impact on democratisation. However, the influence of culture and power sharing are overwhelming: both variables are the strongest predictors in our model, considerably weakening the significance and weight of the economic variables. This is the more astonishing as, in mainstream theory, economy and education are considered to be the most important factors fostering democratisation. Models 1 to 5 show the results for the political regime, the cultural and the economic models respectively; model 6 includes all variables for a full multivariate test. Model 7 excludes all

Table 1. OLS-regression on the dependent 'variable average level of democracy (1965–1995)' in 62 African and Asian countries

Independent variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Power sharing	0.42** (3.58)						
Horizontal power sharing		0.56** (4.31)	0.57** (4.43)			0.36** (2.71)	0.34** (3.31)
Vertical power sharing		-0.11 (-0.87)	-0.07 (-0.55)			-0.05 (-0.44)	
Tax rate			0.17 (1.50)			0.13 (1.26)	
Ethno-linguistic homogeneity				-0.23 (-1.62)		-0.20 (-1.24)	
Kinship				-0.61** (-5.48)		-0.36** (-2.92)	-0.35** (-3.02)
Male dominance				-0.13 (-0.92)		-0.14 (-0.99)	
Socioeconomic level, 1965					-0.13 (-0.98)	-0.14 (-1.15)	
Economic growth rate, 1965–1995					0.34** (2.71)	0.16 (1.27)	0.19* (1.73)
Human capital 1965					0.28* (2.10)	0.10 (0.77)	
Adjusted R ²	0.16	0.24	0.25	0.31	0.21	0.41	0.42
N	62	62	62	62	62	62	62

Notes: β -values shown, t-values in brackets. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. For two variables (secondary school enrolment 1965 and tax rate), we had to substitute missing values for certain years with means.

irrelevant variables – those variables that do not increase the adjusted R^2 and thus inflate the variances of the estimated coefficients of the relevant variables. It comprises only three variables – horizontal power sharing, kinship and economic growth – and captures 42 per cent of the total variance. We shall discuss the results in detail below.

A first major result is that *political power sharing* – as expected – matters for democratisation: it is significantly and positively associated with the level of democracy. Put differently, the more political power is shared among different political actors, the higher the achieved level of democracy. However, as the correlation between the two dimensions of vertical and horizontal power sharing is relatively low (Spearman's $r_s = 0.26$), the effects of the two dimensions were assessed separately. Model 2 clearly shows that it is the horizontal dimension of power sharing that drives democratisation – and not the vertical dimension (insignificant both in the ‘political regime’ and the multivariate model). In both multivariate models, the horizontal dimension of power sharing is even one of the strongest single predictors of democratisation. The powerful role of the power sharing variable confirms the findings of other studies (e.g., Haynes 2001) that speculated that cooperation, compromise and gradual, moderate change enhances the likelihood of sustained democracy in developing countries.

We find no empirical evidence that state effectiveness has a positive impact on the level of democracy. The adjusted R^2 of the ‘political regime’ model does not increase when the tax variable is included, suggesting that this variable is not relevant. However, we already drew attention to the fact that state effectiveness is difficult to measure and the tax variable was a choice *faute de mieux*. For future research, therefore, it becomes imperative to find better measures for state effectiveness.

The three variables of structural culture – ethno-linguistic heterogeneity, kinship and male dominance – produce mixed results. First and most strikingly, the data do not provide support for the hypothesis that ethno-linguistic heterogeneity has a negative effect on democratisation. Though insignificant, the negative sign (here, negative means more heterogeneity) even indicates that the relationship may go the other way, with more heterogeneous countries having better prospects of democratisation. This finding also suggests that the interaction effects of cultural heterogeneity and power sharing – as suggested by most scholars – do not have much impact (a respective interaction term introduced in the model (not shown) yielded no significant result) and that it is power sharing on its own which positively affects democratisation. The result is less astonishing, however, than it may seem. Scholars frequently overlook the fact that heterogeneity is not the same as societal segmentation (Lijphart 2002). Heterogeneity can, but does not have to, lead to ethnic or

cultural conflict. Less authoritarianism may even be attractive for rulers in heterogeneous yet non-segmented societies seeking to increase their political legitimacy. Yet this is speculation as long as we cannot clearly distinguish empirically between segmented and heterogeneous societies. Measurement problems persist even though new ways of weighting numbers and sizes of minorities are being developed (Posner 2004).

Male dominance has no significant effect on democratisation either, even though the negative sign points in the expected direction. Here, it may become necessary to go beyond social anthropology and look more closely at the political aspects of male dominance, such as the theory of 'Big Man' focusing on redistributive patron-client networks and related questions of political representation, accountability and socio-political status (Chabal & Daloz 1999; Daloz 2002).

While cultural heterogeneity and male dominance do not seem to be obstacles to democratisation, the cultural element of 'kinship' – describing familial ties – definitely is. The kinship variable turned out to be one of the strongest predictors for democratisation in the multivariate models. It indirectly confirms Putnam's findings that building up trust and solidarity beyond the family and kinship system and respective traditions are indeed crucial prerequisites for making democracy work.

For the economic variables, our results appear to be considerably at odds with the standard findings. First, the 1965 GDP level is significant in neither the 'economic' nor multivariate model (and the sign is even negative). This, however, is hardly surprising: the effect may well have played a role decades ago, when many countries in our sample had just been created and started modernisation, but one can expect this effect to vanish when most countries have passed the critical threshold. Second, economic growth and human capital (measured in percentage of secondary school enrolment in 1965) are significant in the 'economic' model, but in the multivariate models, the effects are much reduced or, in case of human capital, even wiped out. Third, the performance of the 'economic' model of democratisation is not outstanding – it captures only about 21 per cent of the variance in our sample. However, for M. Lipset (1981), these socio-economic modernisation factors were neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for democratisation, and he readily admitted that to understand fully democratisation processes, more complex causal models would be required (see also Przeworski & Limongi 1997). Moreover, one should not overlook the fact that the vast majority of countries in our sample are among the poorest. This may be well below the level at which economic growth or education can have a significant effect.

Conclusions

With many developing countries stuck in an uneasy middle ground between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship, the longstanding question of favourable and unfavourable conditions for democratisation and democratic consolidation is dramatically brought back into focus. Our explorative cross-national analysis of 62 African and Asian countries between 1965 and 1995 shows that democratisation is indeed strongly related to favourable political and cultural factors, while economic factors – frequently held to be the most important factors – have only limited effects.

Lijphart's concept of power sharing turned out to be one of the strongest predictors for democratisation. This finding has important theoretical and practical implications. It shows that the concept can be usefully extended to developing countries (whether democratic or autocratic). Our systematic study confirms the favourable influence of power sharing that Lijphart has illustrated in case studies of third world countries such as Malaysia, Lebanon and India (1977; 1996). From a practical viewpoint of constitutional engineering, our finding also suggests that adopting the Westminster model of democracy may not be the optimal choice for societies in transition. Yet our results leave many questions open: What are the societal factors that engender power sharing? Is power sharing an antecedent of democracy, and of state consolidation as well? We shall try to address these questions in future research.

Our results underline the pivotal role of culture, with the strong negative role of extended family and kinship ties for democratisation processes. Developing trust beyond family systems and social capital may indeed be a crucial predicament for democratisation. Conversely, the absence of negative impacts of ethno-linguistic heterogeneity is a puzzling result that goes against conventional wisdom and requires further investigation. More generally, and with an eye on future research on culture and democratisation, Müller's cultural heritage data proved to be a powerful tool of analysis. By building on a structural concept of culture, Müller's indicators can help to overcome the limitations of the standard 'political culture' research when dealing with traditional and developing societies. A rather unexpected result is the poor performance of economic variables in our sample as soon as one controls for political regime and cultural variables. This is astonishing as mainstream theory since the works of M. Lipset has considered economic conditions to be the most important factor for democratisation, although this may be because our sample of African and Asian countries largely centres on the poorest countries in the world.

In sum, our results are unorthodox in many respects, and some of them also contrast with the standard political science literature on democratisation. Our general message is that despite being a global process, democratisation is not a component that can be inserted successfully into any society at any point in its development. It is not achieved when elites simply decide to introduce elections. This also raises scepticism about dogmatic normative biases (including those of the political science literature) holding that democracy should be introduced under all societal, economic and political circumstances. As our results suggest, experts on development would be wise to reflect on appropriate politico-institutional arrangements, as well as on the cultural heritages of developing countries, before drafting their democratic constitutions.

Appendix. Power sharing index (PSI)

The PSI measures power sharing on two dimensions: vertical power sharing and horizontal power sharing. First, under the label of vertical power sharing, the index looks at delegatory mechanisms that allow each cleavage segment to govern its own affairs with limited interference from the central government. The classification basically matches the centralisation variable in POLITY 98, but is more fine-grained (a four-item indicator instead of a three-item indicator) and, in addition, is less formalistic by including non-territorial federal arrangements as well. Due to the lack of reliable data sources, the vertical power-sharing measure does not count local autonomy arrangements. Second, under the label of horizontal power sharing, we first look at the representation of functional groups (ethnic, linguistic, religious, traditional authorities, military as well as opposition groups), including proportional electoral formula. However, representation does not automatically mean influence; therefore, the higher coding categories focus on institutional veto points that allow groups or actors to veto decisions and policy change. The higher the coding categories, the higher the hurdles groups or actors have to pass to reach a decision; the highest coding category is the 'grand coalition', where all major groups have veto power and participate in decision making. Grand coalitions, especially when made permanent and parties or groups are given the prospect to stay in the government (or even obtain a fixed seat), give actors relative influence security and enable them to be more 'cooperative' (see Bächtiger & Steenbergen 2004). Conversely, when groups or parties have veto power but are not included in the government structure, this leads to more competitive interactions among political players and consequently to less moderation and cooperation (see Scharpf 1997: 192). The coding categories also take up Tsebelis's claim that strong formal veto institutions, according to the context,

can be mute veto institutions. For instance, when the actor composition in systems with separation of power is the same, then Tsebelis applies an absorption rule and counts only one veto player. Yet, strong formal institutional veto points may still create certain hurdles in decision making, particularly when the actors have different representation bases. However, in the context of similar actor composition, these hurdles are much lower than in the context of different actor composition; thus, mere formal institutional veto points are put in a lower coding category.

Vertical Power Sharing

1. none
2. autonomy arrangements in certain areas
3. federalist arrangement, but central state more powerful; also included is non-territorial federalism
4. extensive federalism

Horizontal Power Sharing

1. none
2. representation of functional groups, traditional elites or minorities; proportional electoral formula
3. formally strong separation of powers; different majorities in separation of powers' systems without presidential overweight; supermajorities in constitutional amendment formulas; regular consultation procedures with functional groups
4. multiparty or multi-ethnic/religious coalitions excluding one or several major parties/groups; different partisan majorities in separation of powers' systems without presidential overweight; minority governments; strong functional veto players
5. 'grand coalitions' where all major parties/groups are included in decision making and have veto power

The Spearman's rank correlation between the two dimensions is 0.26. Although this is a low correlation score, the two dimensions theoretically still form a whole. Therefore, we combine the vertical and horizontal dimension of federalism into an additive index by simply adding the indicators. The additive index ranges between a minimum score of 2 and a maximum score of 9. Nonetheless, due to the low correlation score, it seems sensible to run models assessing the effects of the two power-sharing dimensions separately.

Further details, country scores and examples of how countries have been coded are available from the authors on request.

Note

1. The 62 countries of the sample are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Burma/Myanmar, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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