

**Higher Education Does Not Always Lead To Greater Support For Democracy:
Evidence From 26 Countries Over 10 Years**

By
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THESIS

Submitted to
KDI School of Public Policy and Management
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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ABSTRACT

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Modernization theory suggests that support for democracy would increase as education levels rise. To empirically examine this claim, this study analyzes the preference for democracy according to the level of education. A sample of 118,618 respondents from the World Values Survey (WVS) is used, covering 26 countries over 10 years. The findings indicate that the importance of democracy, perceptions of political systems, and the state of democracy positively affect support for democracy. Once country and year fixed effects are employed, it found that highly educated individuals are more likely to embrace the concept of democracy, but support for specific democratic policies varied significantly. These results suggest that while education may increase support for democracy as an abstract concept, it does not necessarily translate into support for actual substantive policies to be considered crucial for democratic governance.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between education and democracy is controversial. Some argue that higher schooling has a positive impact on promoting democracy. For example, Dewey (1916) says that a high level of education is a prerequisite for democracy, and Lipset (1959) advocates for a positive relation between education and democracy in the tradition of the modernization theory. Others, like Acemoglu et al. (2005) posit that the role of education in fostering democratic tendencies is inadequate. They cite Freedom House data from 1970 to 1995 that demonstrates nations that experience a rise in education levels show little inclination towards democracy. In short, both the theories and empirics have mixed arguments regarding the correlation between educational attainment and support for democracy.

To further examine this connection empirically, this paper turns to the data from the World Values Survey (WVS) that tracks 118,618 respondents across 26 countries over a decade.¹ Employing a multivariate regression analysis with country and year fixed effects, we find a positive association between education and general support for democracy, once we control variables such as political actions, freedom, post-materialist tendencies, ideologies of respondents, leaders, and leaders' parties, age, sex, and income. However, this relationship turns negative when analyzing the link between education and backing for democratic policies, including those related to checks and balances in political power, technocratic management of governance, and redistributive policies. This reversal is particularly pronounced for redistributive policies such as subsidies for the poor or unemployment benefits. In other words,

¹ These 26 countries are: New Zealand, Australia, Colombia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Romania, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Taiwan, Cyprus, Germany, Iraq, Malaysia, Peru, Russia, Ukraine, the United States, China, Jordan, Morocco, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt.

while greater education may lead people to generally prefer the idea of democracy, it does not necessarily indicate support for democratic policies.

This finding underscores the importance of future research on elites' support for democratic policies. Democracy has brought about numerous positive changes, such as an increase in equality, freedom, and political participation (Sen, 1986; Knight, 2018). Conversely, recent evidence documents incidence of lowering support for democracy, or democracy backsliding (EIU, 2021; Mounk, 2018; Knight, 2018; Freedom House, 2022). Contrary to the expectation that greater education will provide the foundation for a democratic society (Lipset, 1959; Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Dewey, 1916; Barro, 1999; Mounk, 2018), we see that greater education might even hinder equitable social development as those more educated can have the incentive to protect their wealth and social status.

2. Literature Review

Why democracy matters

The potential for good governance is greater in a democratic system since politicians must heed the desires of the electorate who have the power to replace them (Knight, 2018). Furthermore, freedom of choice provided by democracies leverages economic growth and well-being (Sen, 1986) because free and fair elections and the rule of law give entrepreneurs a predictable political environment. A more egalitarian society can lead to more comprehensive development, as exemplified by the Human Development Index². In addition, human rights can truly be respected only in genuine democracy (Knight, 2018), as freedom of speech, press,

² HDI (Human Development Index) designed by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and considers factors such as expectancy, schooling, and GNI (Gross National Income)

religion, and assembly are protected by the rule of law. Democracies can serve as a counterbalance to inequality stemming from development. For example, in the 19th century, the United States, as a representative democratic country, enjoyed a generalized equality of conditions (Tocqueville, 1835). Increased levels of comprehensive development can, in turn, lead to greater political awareness and participation, forming a mutually reinforcing cycle. In this manner, democracy can engender social development characterized by equality, freedom, and political participation.

The importance of functioning democracy cannot be overstated as its absence can approach global issues. The United Nations reports that as of 2022, over one hundred million individuals worldwide have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and in 2021 alone, 5,895 migrants lost their lives (United Nations, 2022). Currently, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has created the largest refugee crisis. If Russia had upheld principles of good governance, allowing citizens to put an end to the dictatorship, they would not have resorted to war. This is why democracy is critical, and world organizations such as the United Nations are dedicated to assisting countries in promoting and strengthening electoral activities that support democracy and good governance. The significance of democracy in mitigating global issues is further highlighted by these efforts.

The global decline of democracy is a phenomenon that is not limited to authoritarian regimes like Russia. According to the United Nations (2022), almost one in six businesses in the world has received bribe requests from public officials. Despite being classified as a “full democracy” until 2016, the United States has since been reclassified as a “flawed democracy” by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), with fewer than one-third of younger Americans considering democracy to be important (Mounk, 2018). The decline of democracy is a global trend, with one-third of democracies being classified as “not free” by Freedom House (Knight,

2018), a 23% decline in free democratic countries in 2020 (Freedom House, 2022), and 67 countries suffering net declines in their civil liberties and political rights (Knight, 2018). Aside from the fact that many countries such as North Korea, Russia, and China are democratic in name only—the pretense of electoral democracy, this trend raises important questions about the future of democracy around the world.

Why highly educated people matter

The relationship between education and democracy has long been a subject of debate among scholars. Many prominent theorists, including Dewey (1916), Lipset (1959), Barro (1999), and Mounk (2018), push their arguments that education is an important prerequisite for durable democracy in the tradition of the modernization theory, one of the most principal and classical approaches to democracy. This is because education plays a vital role in shaping citizens' attitudes, making them more tolerant and participatory in political processes (Lipset, 1959; Inkeles & Smith, 1974). Additionally, human empowerment is a key driver of national success (Welzel, 2013). With higher education moving from an elite system to a mass system (Trow, 1973), highly educated individuals wield significant influence over the democratic process. As such, their impact on democracy can be either constructive or destructive, depending on their attitudes and behavior.

Making democracy work for the people is crucial for its success, given its core principle of rule by the people. Democracy refers to a rule of the people following the Greek origin of the term, its source is the will of the people and the purpose is the common good (Schumpeter, 2003). Supreme authority lies with the people (Knight, 2018). It is therefore essential to increase awareness of democracy. One possible approach to this is the formation of smaller

groups that have a greater chance of collective action, according to Olson (1982). Also, Democracy Policy Network (DPN), an interstate and nonpartisan organization that supports democratic policies in America, fuels this collective action to accelerate democratic experimentalism in the state-level policy. By empowering citizens with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in collective action, democracies can be effectively implemented to achieve the common good and enhance the quality of life for all.

While concerted power has the potential to promote democracy, the media's polarization effect, exacerbated by technological advancements, may hinder its progress by creating divisions among national communities. The media attracted and fed loyal audiences and subscribers with what they wanted to hear and watch and created polarization (Klein, 2020). For instance, as the media weaponized citizens' differences, Americans are locked into their political identities (Klein, 2020) and it divided South Korea into several ethnic groups based on gender, class, and region. And technology developments like social media let the media make common people polarized (Klein, 2020) more and faster because the increase in internet use shifted the power balance between political insiders and political outsiders (Mounk, 2018). As citizens become more entrenched in their political identities, the potential for democracy to thrive is threatened.

Highly educated individuals, while possessing the potential to promote democracy, can also be a threat to democratic governance by becoming a part of the elite who prioritize their wealth over the nation's welfare. The elites' fear of losing their power can cause a lack of motivation to undertake reforms, leading them to focus on defending their wealth instead. According to Winters (2011), oligarchs with power can cause a government's failure. For example, the elites in South Korea held back social development. Although there was a demand for social

development because they experienced two coups, and seven hundred labor strikes from 1979 to 1980 with huge democratic protests (Cumings, 1984), the elites wanted to extract wealth from other subsets of society to defend their power. These elites' opposition to democratic policies, especially redistributive ones, such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for the unemployed, can be attributed to the elite elements in higher education.

Given that the average years of schooling have been rising (Lee & Lee, 2016; Barro & Lee, 2013; UNDP, 2018), more and more people should support democracy. However, recent trends show that democracy is downgrading globally, even in advanced democracies like the US. In the sense that higher education has the power to decide the wax and wane of a nation, it is important to examine highly educated people's perception of democracy to establish proper democracy and democratic policies in the future. Therefore, this study aims to test the hypothesis that higher education always leads to greater support for democracy.

3. Data

The research conducted in this study aims to examine the relationship between higher education and support for democracy, utilizing data from the World Value Survey (WVS). The WVS is a comprehensive social survey conducted globally since 1981, providing researchers with cross-national and time series data for 70 countries. The survey enables a deep analysis of public attitudes and democracy, particularly over a longer period, as levels of democracy can fluctuate from year to year (Inglehart, 2003). This study used data from three waves of the WVS, including the fifth, sixth, and seventh waves, which were conducted from 2005 to 2009, 2010 to 2014, and 2017 to 2021, respectively. In total, 118,618 interviewees in 26 countries were sampled across the three waves, with each country surveyed at different times within each

wave.³

This research measures support for democracy among highly educated individuals using six dependent variables (see Table 1 or Appendix). The first variable measures how important these individuals consider democracy to be. The second and third variables examine their attitudes towards governance, particularly their feelings about having a strong leader and experts in charge. The fourth and fifth variables measure their support for democratic policies, including their thoughts about taxing the rich and providing state aid for unemployment. Finally, the sixth variable assesses their perception of how democratic their country currently is. These questions are designed to provide insight into the preferences of highly educated individuals regarding democratic systems and policies.

According to Norris (2011), the questions related to taxing the rich and state aid for unemployment can be used to assess democratic aspirations, and the question that a country is being governed democratically today shows citizens' satisfaction with democratic performance. Besides, questions concerning having a strong leader and relying on experts to make decisions are indicative of a general democracy–autocracy preference (DAP) (Ariely & Davidov, 2011). The latter two questions may reveal authoritarian tendencies, as democratic norms require the willingness to accept electoral losses and abide by institutional rules (Lipset, 1998). Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) believe that a lack of tolerance and forbearance in response to a political opponent's victory can present an autocratic turn in government.

The independent variable is the level of education using the ISCED 2011, which has been

³ In wave 5 (2005-2009), Argentina, Chile, and the United States were conducted in 2006, Japan, Mexico, and South Korea were surveyed in 2005. In wave 6 (2010-2014), Chile and Mexico finished their survey in 2012, Japan and South Korea were surveyed in 2010, and the U.S. was conducted in 2011. In wave 7 (2017-2019), Argentina and the U.S. were conducted in 2017, Chile, Mexico, and South Korea were conducted in 2018, and Japan was conducted in 2019.

designed by UNESCO as an international indicator organizing education qualifications by levels. Specifically, this project coded by lower (ISCED 0, 1, 2), middle (ISCED 3, 4), and upper (ISCED 5, 6, 7, 8) corresponds with different levels of educational attainment.⁴ There are nine control variables. First, I control a political action of whether a respondent is an active member of a political party or not because it shows the degree of the individuals' involvement in politics. Also, it could have an impact on another control variable of leaders' parties in their nation. In the variable of a political party, 4,392 out of 114,581 answered they are an active member of a political party, 9,115 said that they are inactive members, and 101,074 said that they are not a member.

The second control variable is freedom of choice and control considering the freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize helpful for conducting elections (Huntington, 1991). For example, Huntington (1991) states that, in a democratic society, the most powerful administrators are chosen through open, fair, and regular elections where candidates compete for votes without inhibition, and all the adults are allowed to vote. Geddes (1999) also argues that democracy selects leaders through competitive elections.

The third control variable is postmaterialist values. The values emphasize freedom of speech and political participation (Inglehart, 2003). Inglehart (2003) argues that Postmaterialist values are a stronger predictor of stable democracy and can capture mass demands for democratization. I divide three scales of the post-materialist index (1: Materialist (N = 38,152), 2: Mixed (N = 61,351), 3: Postmaterialist (N = 11,990)) into two (0: Materialist or Mixed (N = 99,503), 1: Postmaterialist (N = 11,990)) by putting "Materialist (1)" and "Mixed (2)" together

⁴ These levels in ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 are: 0 "Early childhood education or no education", 1 "Primary education", 2 "Lower secondary education", 3 "Upper secondary education", 4 "Post-secondary non-tertiary education", 5 "Short-cycle tertiary education", 6 "Bachelor or equivalent", 7 "Master or equivalent", 8 "Doctoral or equivalent"

to distinguish well between those who are the post-materialist and those who are not.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth control variable are related to political scale (or ideology), representing the ideology of the respondents, leaders, and leaders' parties, respectively. This paper classifies not only respondents but also political leaders and leaders' parties as leftist and rightist by using the Global Leader Ideologies dataset (see Appendix for the details). The original respondents' political scale in the WVS was ten; I divided into left (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5) and right (6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10). The rightists (N = 73,559) are more than the leftists (N = 45,059) in this survey. According to Global Leader Ideologies (GLI), there are more rightist leaders (about 65%) and parties (about 72%) that have governed each country among 26 countries.

The other control variables are age, sex, and income. In specific, income level should also be one of the control variables because economic development brings an increase in self-expression values such as political activism and freedom of speech (Inglehart, 2003). Age is evenly distributed, but most people are 25-34 years old (N = 24,250), and 65 and more years old people are the least (N = 15,205). In this data, there are more women (N = 62,984) than men (N = 55,509). In the income scale, middle-income people (N = 66,993) are the highest, and then low-income (N = 34,512), but I combine and make low-middle-income to control high-income (N = 10,733) effectively.

Table 1 provides the summary statistics for the variables discussed above. In the table, N represents the total number of individuals included in the study, and SD represents the standard deviation of each variable. A smaller standard deviation indicates that the responses are more closely clustered around the mean. Before presenting the regression analysis, this study investigates the variations in each of the key dependent and independent variables across different countries. The analysis reveals that the mean age of the respondents ranges from 15 to 99 years, with a mean age of over 40 years and a standard deviation of approximately 16

years. Plus, most respondents answered the political scale, rather than demographic factors such as gender and age.

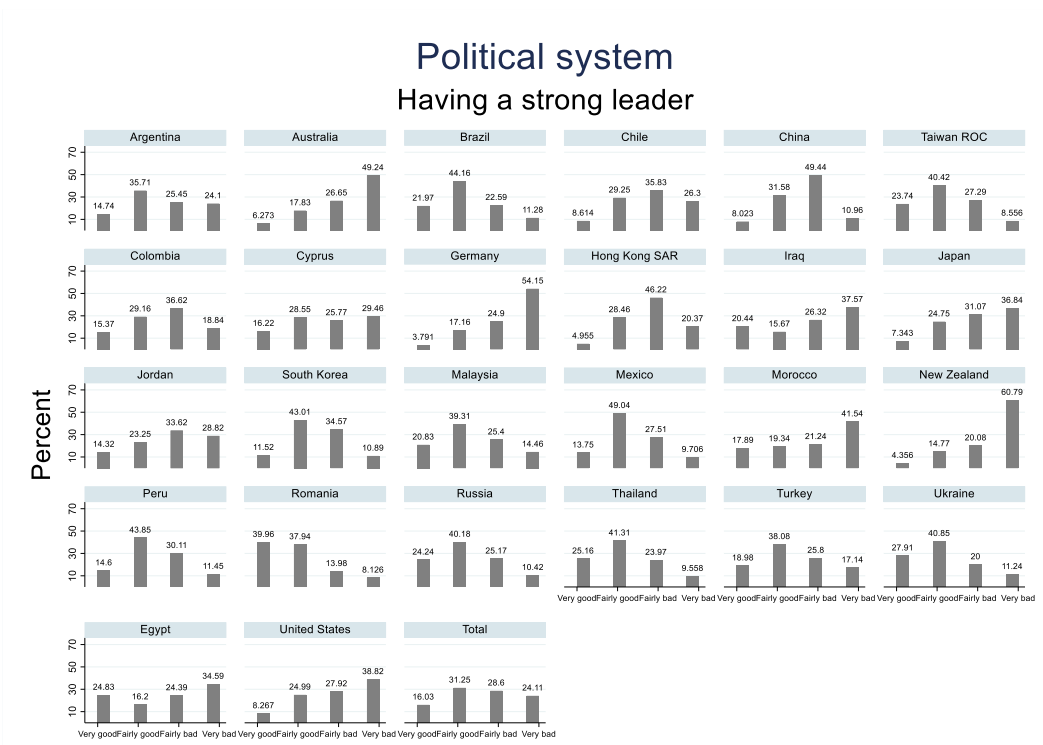
Table 1. *Summary Statistics*

Classification	Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables	Having a strong leader	108625	2.6	1	1	4
	Having experts make decisions	106669	2.3	0.9	1	4
	Tax the rich and subsidize the poor	107813	6.5	3	0	10
	Receive state aid for unemployment	108414	7.1	2.8	0	10
	Importance of democracy	110017	8.5	2	1	10
	State of democracy	105393	6.1	2.5	1	10
Independent variable	Education level	117395	2	0.7	1	3
Control variables	Political action: Member of political party	114581	0	0.2	0	1
	Freedom of choice and control	116535	0.5	0.5	0	1
	Post-materialist	111493	0.1	0.3	0	1
	Political scale (Ideology of respondents)	118618	0.4	0.5	0	1
	Ideology of leader	99712	0.3	0.5	0	1
	Ideology of leader's party	64843	0.3	0.4	0	1
	Age	118411	43.7	16.5	15	99

	Income level of own household	112238	0.1	0.3	0	1
	Sex	118493	0.5	0.5	0	1

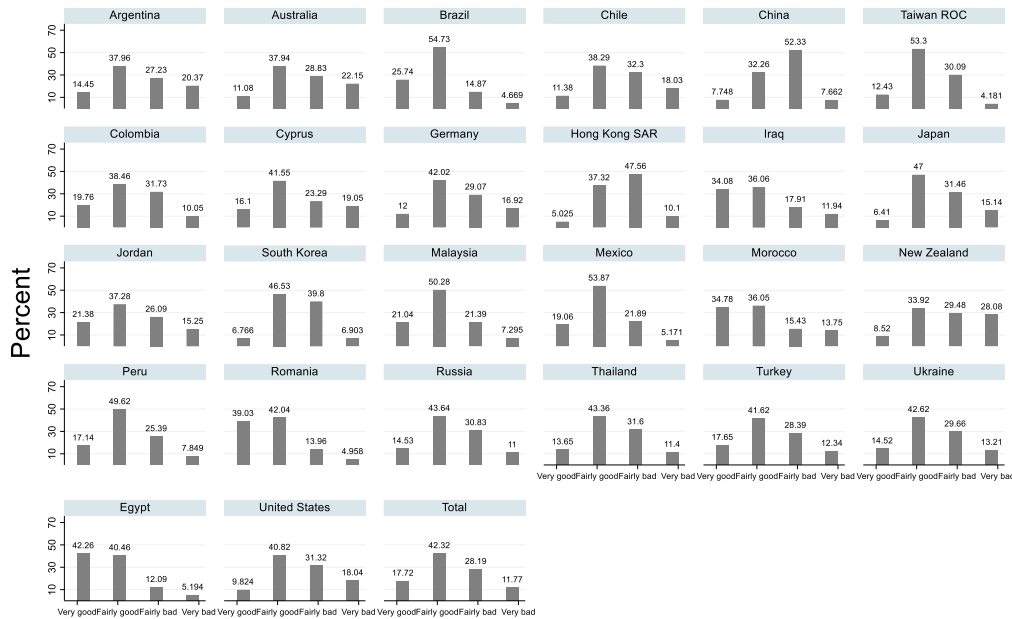
Note. From World Value Survey (WVS), Global Leader Ideologies (GLI)

Figure 1. Proportion of the political systems, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)⁵



⁵ Figure 1 survey questions: “What you think about having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is as a way of governing this country?”, “What you think about having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think as a way of governing this country?”

Political system Having experts make decisions



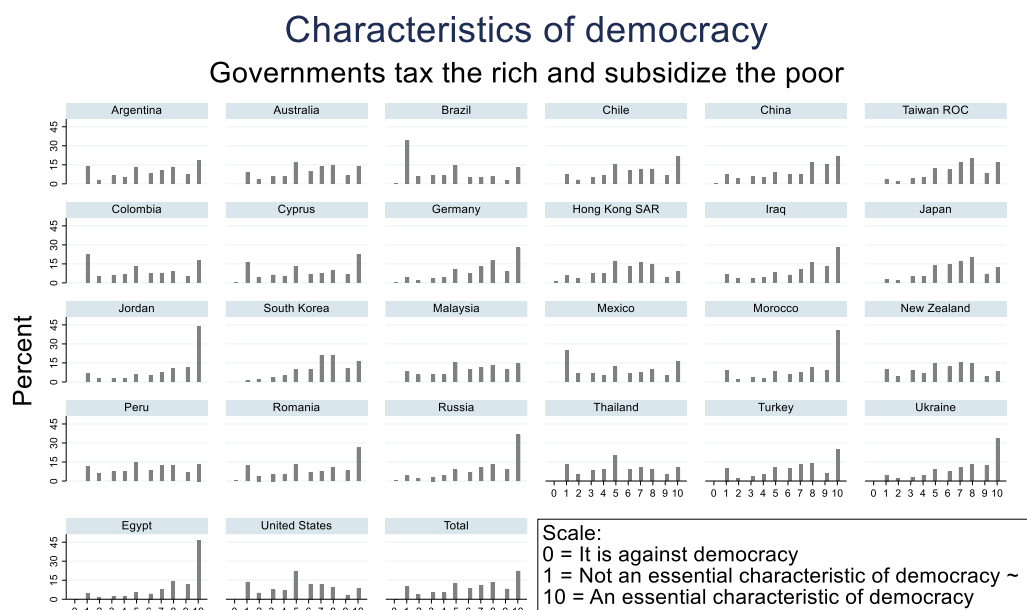
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019.

In the wave 5th (2005–2009), 6th (2010–2014), and 7th (2017–2022) surveys of the WVS, Figure 1 shows how people think about ruling by a strong leader who does not have to care elections or parliament is a good way of governing by a country. 31.25% of countries chose the option of "fairly good" for this mode of governance, with the options of "very bad" and "fairly bad" being selected by fewer countries. Interestingly, the countries with the highest proportion of respondents selecting "very bad" tended to be developed democracies such as Australia, Germany, New Zealand, and the United States, with a relatively small gap between their ratio and the other options. In contrast, countries that selected "fairly good" the most were a mix of advanced democracies and non-democratic regimes, including Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Ukraine.

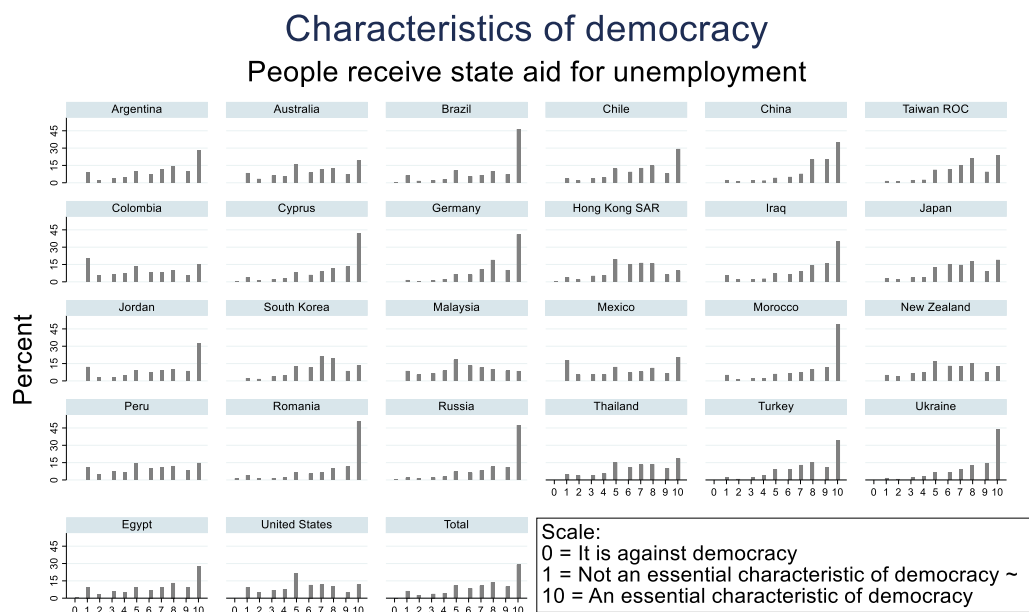
Likewise, a number of respondents across different countries are in favor of having experts

make decisions based on their own thoughts. The option of having such a political system is selected as "fairly good" by the majority of respondents in all countries. Brazil, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Mexico are the countries where the option "fairly good" is chosen by more than 50% of the respondents. In contrast, China and Hong Kong have the highest percentage of respondents choosing the option of "fairly bad" for this system. Egypt is the only country where most respondents chose "very good," but the difference between "good" and "fairly good" is only about 2%. These findings suppose that the population in most countries accept the idea of autocratic ways, where decisions are made by a strong leader or a group of experts who have the power to repress the public.

Figure 2. *Proportion of the characteristics of democracy, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)*⁶



⁶ Figure 2 survey questiones: “How essential you think governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor is as a characteristic of democracy?”, “How essential you think people receive state aid for unemployment is as a characteristic of democracy?”



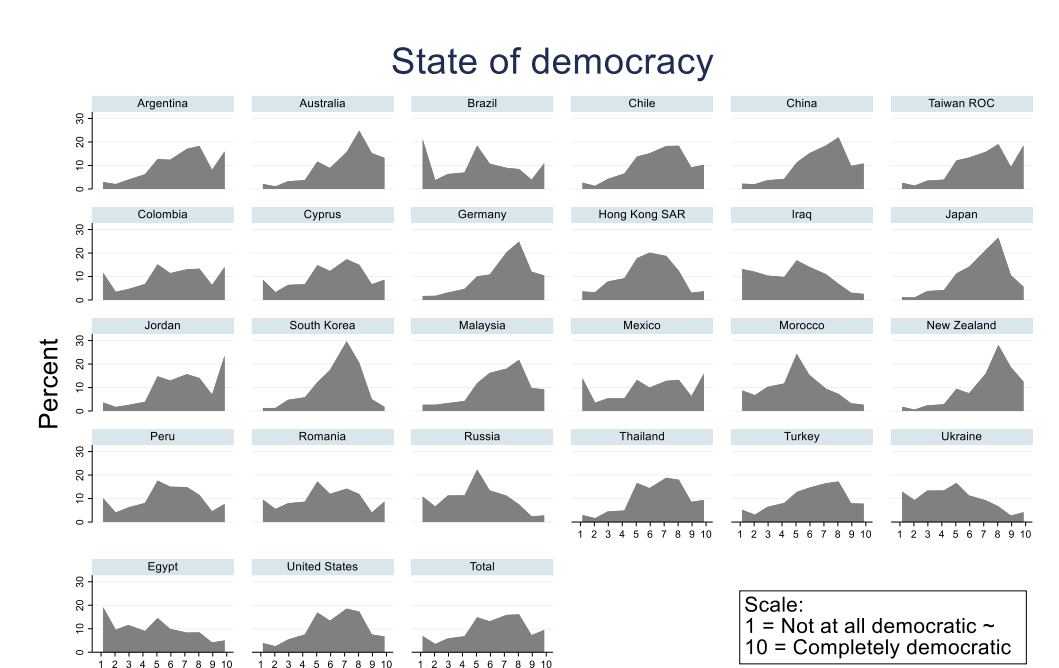
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

The study analyzes the results from the World Values Survey, focusing on respondents' views on the role of the government in taxation and welfare policies. Based on the analysis of Figure 2, it is evident that a significant proportion of the public considers government policies such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for unemployment as essential features of democracy. Notably, there are regional variations in the responses, with most Asian countries showing a moderate level of support for taxing the rich, while Latin American nations such as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico disagree with this viewpoint. Some countries such as Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Thailand and the U.S. show a similar pattern with a spike in the 5th step.

Moreover, the state aid for unemployment is widely viewed as a crucial aspect of democracy across most countries, with South Korea and Colombia showing a bias towards this policy. Overall, the findings suggest that the public considers government policies to be essential for the functioning of democracy, although there are notable regional variations in the

specific policies that are perceived to be crucial. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that many respondents believe that having a strong leader and experts in power is fairly good and that taxing the rich and receiving state aid for unemployment are essential for democracy.

Figure 3. *Proportion of the state of democracy, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)*⁷



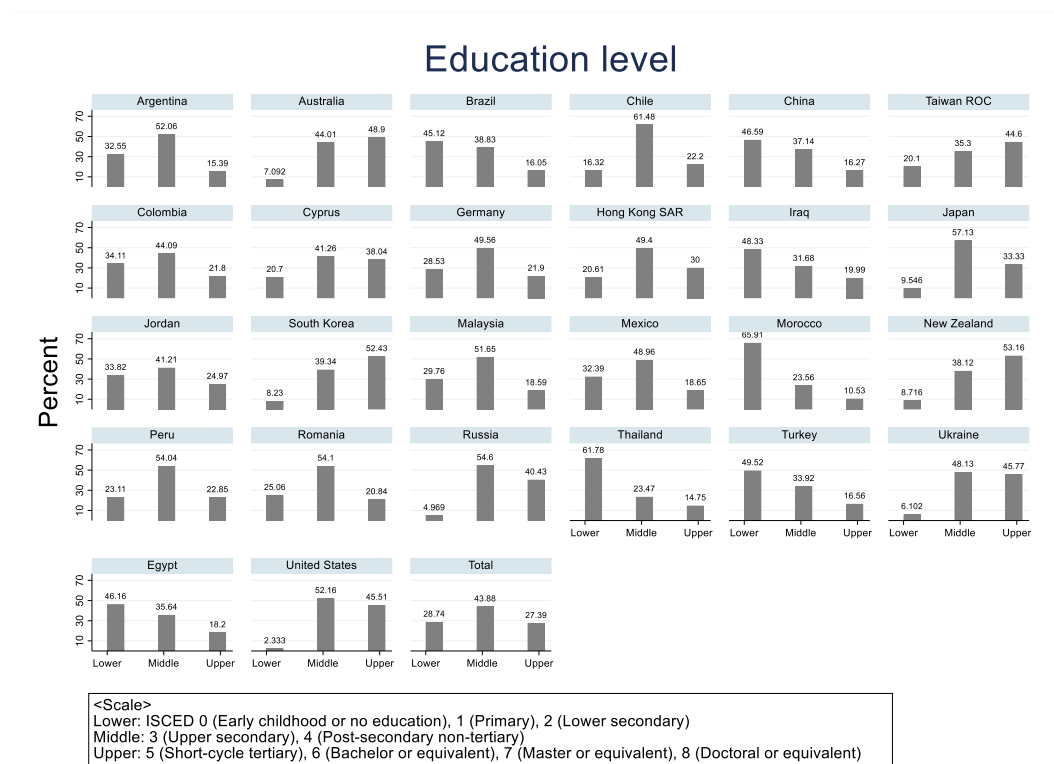
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

The states of democracy vary from country to country. In Figure 3, the histograms of Argentina, Chile, China, and Taiwan have a similar shape with the large middle and the high right end (10: Completely democratic). Jordan has bigger right edge than the middle. many countries, including Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States, see themselves as mostly democratic.

⁷ Figure 3 survey question: “How democratically is this country being governed today?”

However, Brazil and Mexico have a high percentage of respondents who perceive taxing the rich as either not at all democratic or fully democratic. Egypt and Brazil have the highest percentage of respondents who see taxation of the rich as not at all democratic. Overall, most people view democracy positively, but the support for democratic policies varies across countries.

Figure 4. Proportion of the education levels, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)

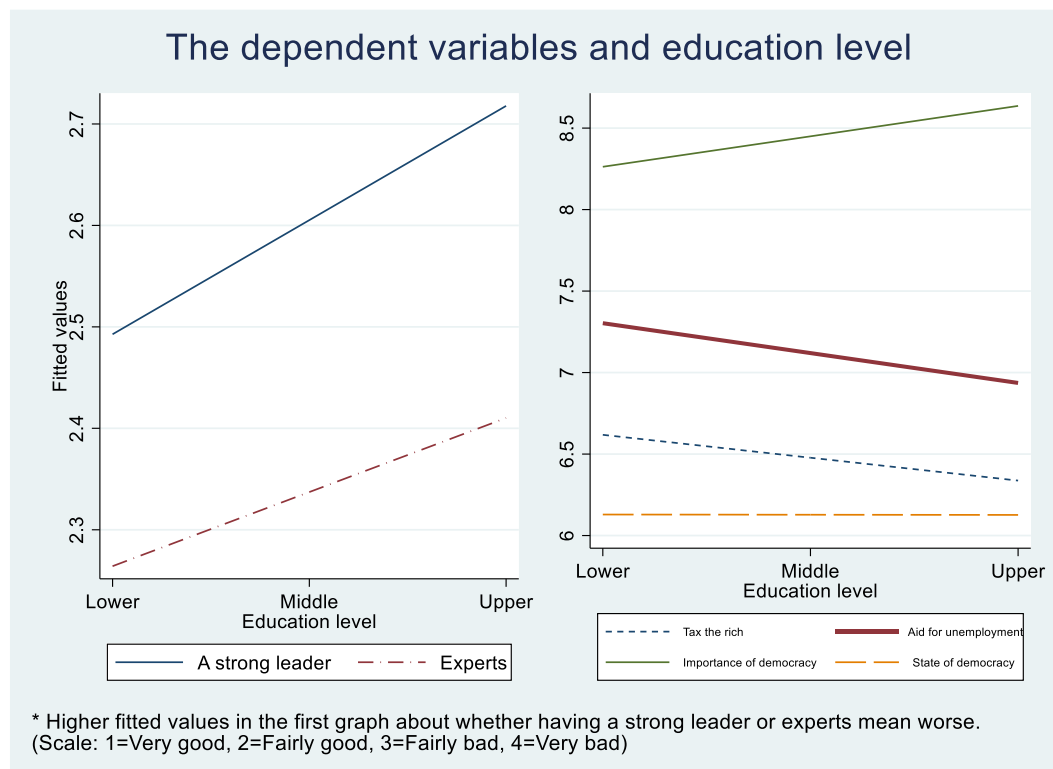


Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

Using three levels of education, i.e., lower, middle, and upper, the study aims to identify whether there is a significant association between a high level of education and support for democracy. Notably, the middle level of education, including upper secondary and post-

secondary non-tertiary education, has the highest proportion of people. Among the high-education countries are Australia, Taiwan, South Korea, and New Zealand, while Brazil, China, Iraq, Morocco, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt are among the low-education countries. Intriguingly, all high-education countries are full democracies, while the low-education countries are either flawed democracies (Brazil, Thailand), hybrid regimes (Morocco, Turkey), or authoritarian regimes (Iraq, Egypt, China) (EIU, 2021). These findings suggest that countries with higher levels of education are more likely to be democratic.

Figure 5. *The relationship between the dependent variables and the education level*



Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

Figure 5 shows the fitted values called predicted values of the factor variables when country and year fixed effects are not employed. In the first graph, the higher the fitted values are, the worse people think of the variables. In other words, highly educated people recognize that having a strong leader or experts constitutes a bad political regime. Also, they are more likely to believe that governing democratically is important than less educated people. On the contrary, they are less supportive of democratic policies such as taxing the rich or providing state aid for unemployment. However, there is no clear difference in the perception of the state of democracy across education levels. As for two questions about democratic policies, there are more than 100 people out of about 100,000 saying that it is against democracy.

4. Methodology

The panel model has the advantage of increasing the sample size compared to the general regression model that analyzes cross-sectional data for a single year by using panel data. By increasing the sample size, multicollinearity can be controlled and more useful information can be provided compared to the general regression model by including dynamic changes in the data. The country and year fixed effects model is used to show the effect of intrinsic individual characteristics. If the data is observed multiple times and the model control for time and country, the model does not estimate the variable values which have no change within groups because they are the same as the mean (no deviation). This model may eliminate a cross-cultural equivalence that can arise because the control variables vary across countries and across time. It can also eliminate the effect of democratic support in non-democratic regimes⁸ in the panel

⁸ According to Freedom House (2022), non-democratic groups include China, Iraq, Jordan, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt.

data set.

$$Y_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Education}_{ijt} + \beta_2 X_{ijt} + \dots + \alpha_j + T_t + \varepsilon$$

i = individual

j = year

k = country

Y = The dependent variables (Political_System, Democracy_Characteristics, Democracy_Importance, Democracy_State)

X = The independent variables (Political_Party, Petition, Boycotts, Demonstrations, Freedom, Age, Income, Postmaterialist, Male, Political_Scale, Ideology_Leader, Ideology_Party)

Using the three-level structure of the data—countries, years, and individuals—can estimate a multilevel model (individual i in year j and country k). The model includes predictors at the three levels of analysis, and various intercepts and error terms for countries and years. The base levels of factor variables are omitted in the results reported (see the note in Table 2). The proportions of the variations in the dependent variables explained by the independent variable (R-squared, SSE/SST) are each 0.0736 (“Importance of democracy”), 0.0978 (“Having experts make decisions”), 0.1908 (“Having a strong leader”), 0.1345 (“Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor”), 0.1291 (“People receive state aid for unemployment”), and 0.1077 (“State of democracy”).

5. Results

Table 2. *Results*

	(1) Importance of democracy	(2) Having experts make decisions	(3) Having a strong leader	(4) Tax the rich and subsidize the poor	(5) State aid for unemployment	(6) State of democracy
Education level: Middle	0.285*** (0.000)	0.0368*** (0.000)	0.0485*** (0.000)	-0.237*** (0.000)	-0.143*** (0.000)	-0.133*** (0.000)
Education level: Upper	0.564*** (0.000)	0.0372** (0.002)	0.203*** (0.000)	-0.260*** (0.000)	-0.218*** (0.000)	-0.0202 (0.540)
Political party: Active member	0.174*** (0.000)	0.0444* (0.017)	0.0109 (0.578)	0.106 (0.081)	0.0885 (0.119)	0.116* (0.022)
Freedom of choice: A lot	0.472*** (0.000)	0.00116 (0.892)	0.0166 (0.066)	0.0798** (0.004)	0.221*** (0.000)	0.538*** (0.000)
Age	0.0131*** (0.000)	0.00277*** (0.000)	0.00270*** (0.000)	0.00116 (0.164)	0.00375*** (0.000)	0.00643*** (0.000)
Income scale: High	0.0948** (0.001)	-0.0401** (0.002)	-0.0164 (0.236)	-0.157*** (0.000)	-0.195*** (0.000)	0.266*** (0.000)
Postmaterialist	0.257*** (0.000)	0.0480*** (0.000)	0.181*** (0.000)	0.123*** (0.001)	0.129*** (0.000)	-0.320*** (0.000)

Sex: Male	0.0290 (0.079)	-0.0175* (0.022)	-0.0218** (0.007)	-0.0515* (0.039)	-0.0820*** (0.000)	-0.00491 (0.816)
Political scale: Left	-0.0452** (0.007)	-0.0121 (0.119)	0.0505*** (0.000)	0.118*** (0.000)	0.173*** (0.000)	-0.580*** (0.000)
Leader's ideology: Left	-0.184* (0.028)	0.234*** (0.000)	0.278*** (0.000)	0.335** (0.007)	0.291* (0.012)	-0.223* (0.032)
Party's ideology: Left	-0.118 (0.157)	-0.155*** (0.000)	-0.266*** (0.000)	-0.980*** (0.000)	-0.804*** (0.000)	0.824*** (0.000)
_cons	7.443*** (0.000)	2.174*** (0.000)	2.421*** (0.000)	6.420*** (0.000)	6.804*** (0.000)	5.820*** (0.000)
<i>N</i>	54320	52402	52871	50955	51179	50964
<i>R</i> ²	0.07359	0.09784	0.19080	0.13453	0.12910	0.10768
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.07289	0.09711	0.19016	0.13383	0.12840	0.10697
F	175.3	18.61	71.59	25.48	32.34	174.2

p-values in parentheses
* *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001

Note: The base levels for categorical variables are omitted (Education level: Lower, Political party: Not a member or inactive member, Freedom of choice: A few or medium, Income scale: Low or medium, Postmaterialist: Materialist, Sex: Female, Political scale: Right, Leader's ideology: Right, Party's ideology: Right. See Appendix for the details.)

This study utilizes multivariate analysis and linear regression models, incorporating country and year fixed effects, to test the hypothesis that higher education leads to greater support for democracy, as measured by various outcome variables such as the importance of democracy, two political systems (having experts and a strong leader), two characteristics of democracy (tax on the rich and state aid for unemployment), and the state of democracy. The primary independent variable, education levels, is categorized as lower, middle, and upper education. Results from this analysis shed light on the extent to which higher education is associated with greater support for democratic values.

When country and year fixed effects are employed in the regression analysis to investigate the impact of education on support for democracy and democratic policies, while controlling for various factors including political actions, freedom, post-materialism, political scales, age, gender, and income. The results indicate a positive relationship between education and general support for democracy, even after accounting for these variables. However, the relationship between education and support for democratic policies is negative, with highly educated individuals expressing more disapproval for policies such as taxing the rich and aiding the unemployed compared to those with lower education levels. This pattern is consistent regardless of whether country and year fixed effects are included in the analysis, as shown in Figure 5.

Analysis of the data reveals that people with higher education prioritize the importance of democracy ($0.564 > 0.285$) over authoritarian traits such as having experts ($0.0372 > 0.0368$) and a strong leader ($0.203 > 0.049$). However, their views diverge from democratic policies, as they express less support for policies such as taxing the rich ($-0.260 < -0.237$) and providing state aid for unemployment ($-0.218 < -0.143$) compared to those with a lower level of education. The findings contradict the modernization theory, which posits that support for democracy

would increase with higher levels of education. These results suggest a more nuanced relationship between education and support for democratic values and policies.

This study presents significant differences between the concept of democracy and support for democratic policies among individuals with varying levels of education. While education is positively associated with support for the abstract idea of democracy, it does not necessarily translate to support for substantive policies that are considered crucial for democratic governance. This investigation suggests that individuals with lower levels of education tend to place greater emphasis on redistribution than those with higher levels of education, highlighting the role of social awareness in shaping policy preferences. Moreover, the results suggest that highly educated individuals may be closer to the elites than to the concerted power, as they prioritize options that maintain or increase profits over policies aimed at promoting redistribution.

These results point to the need for greater attention to the complex relationship between education, support for democracy, and policy preferences in shaping democratic governance. Specifically, the study emphasizes the importance of considering the level of education in understanding support for democracy and policy preferences. The point is to improve highly educated people's perceptions of democracy, especially its policies. As we saw earlier, highly educated people have a great influence on democracy. The failure to take action to address democratic deficits can result in growing inequality, which can undermine the effectiveness of democracy as an antidote to inequality (Knight, 2018). Rising inequality can prevent members of society from choosing a democratic political system as a superior strategy (Boix, 2003) and growing inequality hinders economic growth as well (Persson & Tabellini, 1994).

Michael Sandel (2020), a political philosopher at Harvard University, challenges the commonly held belief that higher education is a solution to inequality. He elaborates that the

meritocratic system, which rewards individuals based on their talents and efforts, makes winners believe that their success is solely a measure of their merit, and losers have no one to blame but themselves. This attitude not only encourages the successful to forget the role of luck in their success but also leads them to abandon a responsibility for those less fortunate. This is why practical policies to support the disadvantaged who are left behind in competition should be implemented to address the issue at hand for a durable democracy.

6. Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the level of support for democracy among highly educated individuals. Through a quantitative analysis that employed country and year fixed effects, the study examined the relationship between educational level and characteristics, importance, and state of democracy. The findings reveal that highly educated individuals value the concept of democracy, but do not necessarily endorse democratic policies, such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for the unemployed. It is possible that this lack of support is due to the potential of highly educated individuals becoming elites who prioritize maintaining their positions.

The “hazard” that highly educated individuals become the elites is no longer just a “potential” risk anymore. In recent times, there has been a rise in income inequality between countries, particularly during the pandemic (UN, 2022). Further, Ivy League universities in the U.S. have more students from the top 1% than those from the bottom 50% of the nation combined (Sandel, 2020). Given these realities, it is crucial to conduct further research on the effects of elite perceptions of democracy. Identifying the reasons why education does not

necessarily lead to support for substantive policies and addressing them will help establish durable democracies that can withstand societal challenges.

Some argue that there is a cyclical nature to political backsliding, and not all democratization processes occur in the same manner (Geddes, 2011). As the politics of backsliding is fluid, the unidirectional implication does not capture reality (Cianetti & Hanley, 2021). It is imperative to find solutions to the current downturn in democracy since policies to support the disadvantaged who are left behind in competition are essential to maintain democracy. A better understanding of the social, economic, cultural, and institutional differences that lead to democratic backsliding is necessary (Cianetti & Hanley, 2021). In addition, external stimuli, such as global initiatives to promote democracy and good governance, may help to broaden the scope of democratic values and, in turn, promote sustainable development. Democracy can be further broadened at the global level if the UN promotes democracy and good governance (Knight, 2018). The spread of democracy provides an enabling environment to help promote and strengthen sustainable development (Knight, 2018). It is essential to eliminate negative influences on democracy and build a better society together.

7. References

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8. Appendix

	Variables	Label	Question	Code
Dependant variables (Perception of democracy)	Political system (Ways of governing)	Having a strong leader	What you think about having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is as a way of governing this country?	1 (Very good), 2 (Fairly good), 3 (Fairly bad), 4 (Very bad)
		Having experts make decisions	What you think about having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think as a way of governing this country?	
	Characteristics of democracy	Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	How essential you think governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor is as a characteristic of democracy	0 (It is against democracy), 1 (Not an essential characteristic of democracy)
		People receive state aid for unemployment	How essential you think people receive state aid for unemployment is as a characteristic of democracy	~10 (An essential characteristic of democracy)
	Importance of democracy	Importance of democracy	How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?	1 (Not at all important)~10 (Absolutely important)
	State of democracy	Democraticness in own country	How democratically is this country being governed today?	1 (Not at all democratic)~10 (Completely democratic)
Independent variable	Education	Education level	.	1 (Lower/ISCED0,1,2), 2 (Middle/ISCED3,4), 3 (Upper/ISCED5,6,7,8)
Control variables	Political action	Active/Inactive membership of political party	Tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of political party?	0 (Not a member or inactive member), 1 (Active member)
		Signing a petition	Tell me whether you have done signing a petition, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	0 (Would never do or might do), 1 (Have done)
		Joining in boycotts	Tell me whether you have done joining in boycotts, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	
		Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations	Tell me whether you have done attending peaceful demonstrations, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	
	Freedom	How much freedom of choice and control	How much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?	0 (A few or medium), 1 (A lot)
	Age	Age	You are ____ years old	Two digits
	Income scale	Scale of incomes	Among the income groups, in what group your household is? Specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in.	0 (Low or medium), 1 (High)
	Postmaterialist	Postmaterialist index	.	0 (Materialist or mixed), 1 (Postmaterialist)
	Sex	Sex	.	0 (Female), 1 (Male)
	Political scale	Self positioning in political scale	In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale?	0 (Right), 1 (Left)
Leader's ideology	Ideology of leader	.	0 (Right), 1 (Left)	
Party's ideology	Ideology of leader's party	.	0 (Right), 1 (Left)	

Year	Country	Leader	Party	Global Leader Ideologies		V-Party	
				Leader_ideology	Party_ideology	Most seat share party	Economic left-right scale (0: Far-left. 1:Left. 2: Center-left. 3: Center. 4: Center-right. 5: Right. 6: Far-right.)
2004	New Zealand (08-11-2004 to 10-02-2005)	Helen Clark (1999-2008)	Labour	leftist	Center-left	Labour (41.3)	-0.807 (Far-left)
2005	Australia	John Howard (1996-2007)	Liberal	rightist	Center-right	Liberal (49.3)	1.408 (Right)
	Colombia	Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010)	Partido Conservador Colombiano	rightist	Right	Colombian Liberal (32.5)	-0.387 (Far-left)
	Hong Kong SAR (01-03-2005 to 31-05-2005)	Tung Chee-hwa (Jul1997-Mar2005) /Donald Tsang (Jun2005-2012)	Nonpartisan	.	.	Democratic (15), Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (15)	-0.214, 0.437 (Left)
	Japan	Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006)	Liberal Democratic	rightist	Right	Liberal Democratic (61.7)	2.876 (Right)
	South Korea	Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)	Our Party	leftist	Center-left	Our Party (50.8)	-1.01 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Vicente Fox (2000-2006)	National Action	rightist	Right	Institutional Revolutionary (44.4)	0.663 (Left)
	Romania	Traian Băsescu (2004-2014)	Democratic	rightist	.	National Union PSD+PUR (39.8)	.
2006	Argentina	Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007)	Justicialist Party	leftist	Center	Front for Victory (53.3)	-1.541 (Far-left)
	Brazil	Lula da Silva (2003-2010)	Workers' Party	leftist	Center-left	Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (17.3)	0.319 (Left)
	Chile (14-06-2006 to 24-07-2006)	Michelle Bachelet (March2006-2010)	Coalition of Parties for Democracy	leftist	.	Independent Democratic Union (27.5)	2.619 (Right)
	Taiwan ROC	Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008)	Democratic Progressive	leftist	Center	Democratic Progressive (42.3)	0.117 (Left)
	Cyprus	Tassos Papadopoulos (2003-2008)	Democratic	rightist	Center-right	Democratic Rally, Progressive Party of Working People (32.1)	1.171(Center), -1.418 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Social Democratic Party of Germany (36.2)	-0.188 (Far-left)
	Iraq	Ibrahim al-Jaafari (2005-2006)	Islamic Dawa	.	.	National Iraqi Alliance / United Iraqi Alliance (46.5)	0.674 (Left)
	Malaysia	Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center	United Malays National Organisation (49.8)	-0.367 (Far-left)
	Peru	García Pérez (28July2006-2011)	Peruvian Aprista Party	leftist	Right	Union for Peru (37.5)	-1.197 (Far-left)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin (2000-2008)	Nonpartisan	rightist	.	United Russia (70)	0.219 (Left)
	Ukraine	Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010)	Our Ukraine	rightist	Center	Party of Regions (41.3)	0.278 (Left)
	United States	George W. Bush (2001-2009)	Republican	rightist	Right	Democratic Party (53.6)	-0.808 (Far-left)

2007	China	Hu Jintao (2003–2008)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	0.122 (Left)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El-Hashimi	.	rightist	.	Independent (89.1)	.
	Morocco	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Independent /Istiqlal Party (12.6)	0.67 (Left)
	Thailand	Surayud Chulanont (2006-Jan2008)	.	.	.	People's Power (48.5)	-1.117 (Far-left)
	Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Center-right	Justice and Development (62)	1.216 (Center)
2008	Egypt	Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011)	National Democratic	leftist	Center-right	National Democratic (72)	1.419 (Center)
2010	Japan (24-11-2010 to 20-12-2010)	Naoto Kan (Jun2010-Sep2011)	Democratic	leftist	Center	Democratic (64.2)	-0.184 (Far-left)
	South Korea	Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)	New World Party / The Grand National Party (Hannara-dang / Saenuri-dang)	rightist	Right	Grand National (51.2)	2.262 (Right)
2011	Cyprus	Demetris Christofias (2008-2013)	Progressive Party of Working People	leftist	Center-left	Democratic Rally (35.7)	2.029 (Right)
	Morocco	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Justice and Development (27.1)	-0.368 (Far-left)
	New Zealand	John Key (2008–2016)	National	rightist	Center-right	National (48.8)	1.141 (Center)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin	United Russia	rightist	Center	United Russia (52.9)	0.219 (Left)
	Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Right	Justice and Development (59.5)	1.764 (Center)
	Ukraine	Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014)	Party of Regions	centrist	Center	Party of Regions (41.1)	0.122 (Left)
	United States	Barack Obama (2009-Jan2017)	Democratic	centrist	Center-left	Republican (55.6)	1.841 (Center)
2012	Australia	Julia Gillard (2010–2013)	Australian Labor	leftist	Center-left	Australian Labor (48)	-0.834 (Far-left)
	Chile (01-12-2012 to 19-12-2012)	Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014)	National Renewal	rightist	Center-right	Independent Democratic Union (30.8)	2.619 (Right)
	Taiwan ROC	Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016)	Nationalist	rightist	Center-right	Nationalist (56.6)	1.404 (Center)
	Colombia	Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018)	Social Party of National Unity	centrist	Center	Social Party of National Unity (28.3)	0.144 (Center)
	Malaysia	Najib Razak (2009-May2018)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center	United Malays National Organisation (39.6)	-0.667 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Felipe Calderon (2006–2012)	National Action	rightist	Right	Institutional Revolutionary (42.4)	1.016 (Center)
	Peru	Ollanta Humala (2011-2016)	Peruvian Nationalist	leftist	Center-left	Peruvian Nationalist (36.2)	-0.953 (Far-left)
	Romania	Traian Băsescu (2004-2014)	Democratic Liberal	rightist	.	Social Democratic (36.4)	-1.043 (Far-left)

2013	Argentina	Fernández de Kirchner (2007 - 2011) (2011 - 2015)	Justicialist Party	leftist	Center	Front for Victory (50.2)	-1.663 (Far-left)
	China	Xi Jinping (2013-2018)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	-0.329 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Christian Democratic Union (40.4)	0.785 (Center)
	Iraq	Nouri al-Maliki	Islamic Dawa	.	.	State of Law Coalition (27.4)	-0.062 (Far-left)
	Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra (2011-2014)	Pheu Thai	leftist	Center-left	Pheu Thai (53)	-1.174 (Far-left)
	Egypt (01-03-2013 to 30-04-2013)	Mohamed Morsi (2012-July2013)	Freedom and Justice	leftist	.	Freedom and Justice (46.3)	-1.267 (Far-left)
2014	Brazil	Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016)	Workers' Party	leftist	Center-left	Workers' Party (13.3)	-1.46 (Far-left)
	Hong Kong SAR	Leung Chun-ying (2012-2017)	New Hong Kong Alliance (Center-right) (Pro-Beijing)			Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress (18.6)	0.448 (Center)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El- Hashimi	.	rightist	.	Independent (82)	.

2017	Argentina	Mauricio Macri (2015-2019)	Republican Proposal	rightist	Center-right	Citizen's Unity (26.8)	-1.662 (Far-left)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin (2012-)	United Russia	rightist	Center	United Russia (76.4)	0.052 (Center)
	United States	Donald Trump (2017-2021)	Republican	rightist	Right	Republican (55.4)	1.841 (Center)
2018	Australia (April2018-Aug2018)	Malcolm Turnbull (2015-Aug2018)	Liberal	rightist	Center-right	Australian Labor (46)	-0.833 (Far-left)
	Brazil	Michel Temer (2016-2018)	Brazilian Democratic Movement	rightist	Center-right	Workers' Party (10.9)	-1.896 (Far-left)
	Chile (Jan2018-Feb2018)	Michelle Bachelet (2014-March2018)	Socialist	leftist	Center-left	National Renewal (23.2)	1.669 (Center)
	China	Xi Jinping (2013-2018)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	-0.329 (Far-left)
	Colombia	Iván Duque (2018-2022)	Democratic Center	rightist	Right	Colombian Liberal (21.7)	-0.279 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Christian Democratic Union (28.2)	0.785 (Center)
	Hong Kong SAR	Carrie Lam (2017-2022)	.	.	.	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress (17.1)	0.448 (Center)
	Iraq	Abdul-Mahdi	.	.	.	Alliance Towards Reforms (16.4)	1.674 (Center)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El-Hashimi	.	rightist	.	.	.
	South Korea	Moon Jae-in (2017-2022)	Democratic	leftist	Center-left	Democratic (41)	-0.631 (Far-left)
	Malaysia (Apr2018-May2018)	Najib Razak (2009-May2018)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center-left	United Malays National Organisation (24.3)	-0.667 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018)	Institutional Revolutionary Party	rightist	Center-right	National Regeneration Movement (37.8)	-1.698 (Far-left)
	Peru (Aug2018-Sep2018)	Martín Vizcarra (March2018-2020)	Peruvians for Change	rightist	Center-right	Popular Force 2011 (56.2)	2.022 (Right)
	Romania (Nov2017-Apr2018)	Klaus Iohannis (2014-)	Independent (2014-) /National Liberal Party (2013-2014)	rightist	Center-left	Social Democratic (46.8)	-1.043 (Far-left)
	Thailand	Prayut Chan-o-cha (2014-)	.	.	.	Pheu Thai (53)	-1.174 (Far-left)
	Turkey (Mar2018-May2018)	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Right	People's Alliance (57.3)	1.797 (Center)
	Egypt	Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (2014-)	.	.	.	Independent (61.8)	.

2019	Taiwan ROC	Tsai Ing-wen (2016-)	Democratic Progressive	leftist	Center	Democratic Progressive (60.2)	-0.226 (Far-left)
	Cyprus	Nicos Anastasiades (2013-)	Democratic Rally	rightist	Right	Democratic Rally (30.5)	2.056 (Right)
	Japan	Shinzo Abe (2012-2020)	Liberal Democratic	rightist	Right	Liberal Democratic (60.4)	1.733 (Center)
2020	New Zealand	Jacinda Ardern (2017-)	Labour	leftist	Center-left	National (46.7)	1.141 (Center)
	Ukraine	Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2019-)	Servant of the People	rightist	Center-right	Servant of the People (56.4)	1.09 (Center)
2021	Morocco (Nov2021-Dec2021)	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Justice and Development (31.7)	-0.368 (Far-left)

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q250. How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? On this scale where 1 means it is “not at all important” and 10 means “absolutely important” what position would you choose? (Code one number):

Not at all important											Absolutely important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

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? (Read out and code one answer for each):

		Very good	Fairly good	Fairly bad	Very bad
Q235	Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections	1	2	3	4
Q236	Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country	1	2	3	4

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

		Not an essential characteristic of democracy						An essential characteristic of democracy			
<i>Interviewer, do not read this and code only if mentioned by the respondent him-herself: 0 - 'It is against democracy'</i>											
Q241	Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q242	Religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q243	People choose their leaders in free elections.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q244	People receive state aid for unemployment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q251. And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is “not at all democratic” and 10 means that it is “completely democratic,” what position would you choose? (Code one number):

Not at all democratic											Completely democratic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

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Democracy: Evidence From 26 Countries Over 10 Years**

By

Oh, Seonju

THESIS

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Committee in charge:

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Approval as of

ABSTRACT

Higher Education Does Not Always Lead To Greater Support For Democracy: Evidence From 26 Countries Over 10 Years

By

Oh, Seonju

Modernization theory suggests that support for democracy would increase as education levels rise. To empirically examine this claim, this study analyzes the preference for democracy according to the level of education. A sample of 118,618 respondents from the World Values Survey (WVS) is used, covering 26 countries over 10 years. The findings indicate that the importance of democracy, perceptions of political systems, and the state of democracy positively affect support for democracy. Once country and year fixed effects are employed, it found that highly educated individuals are more likely to embrace the concept of democracy, but support for specific democratic policies varied significantly. These results suggest that while education may increase support for democracy as an abstract concept, it does not necessarily translate into support for actual substantive policies to be considered crucial for democratic governance.

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1. Introduction

The relationship between education and democracy is controversial. Some argue that higher schooling has a positive impact on promoting democracy. For example, Dewey (1916) says that a high level of education is a prerequisite for democracy, and Lipset (1959) advocates for a positive relation between education and democracy in the tradition of the modernization theory. Others, like Acemoglu et al. (2005) posit that the role of education in fostering democratic tendencies is inadequate. They cite Freedom House data from 1970 to 1995 that demonstrates nations that experience a rise in education levels show little inclination towards democracy. In short, both the theories and empirics have mixed arguments regarding the correlation between educational attainment and support for democracy.

To further examine this connection empirically, this paper turns to the data from the World Values Survey (WVS) that tracks 118,618 respondents across 26 countries over a decade.¹ Employing a multivariate regression analysis with country and year fixed effects, we find a positive association between education and general support for democracy, once we control variables such as political actions, freedom, post-materialist tendencies, ideologies of respondents, leaders, and leaders' parties, age, sex, and income. However, this relationship turns negative when analyzing the link between education and backing for democratic policies, including those related to checks and balances in political power, technocratic management of governance, and redistributive policies. This reversal is particularly pronounced for redistributive policies such as subsidies for the poor or unemployment

¹ These 26 countries are: New Zealand, Australia, Colombia, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Romania, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Taiwan, Cyprus, Germany, Iraq, Malaysia, Peru, Russia, Ukraine, the United States, China, Jordan, Morocco, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt.

benefits. In other words, while greater education may lead people to generally prefer the idea of democracy, it does not necessarily indicate support for democratic policies.

This finding underscores the importance of future research on elites' support for democratic policies. Democracy has brought about numerous positive changes, such as an increase in equality, freedom, and political participation (Sen, 1986; Knight, 2018). Conversely, recent evidence documents incidence of lowering support for democracy, or democracy backsliding (EIU, 2021; Mounk, 2018; Knight, 2018; Freedom House, 2022). Contrary to the expectation that greater education will provide the foundation for a democratic society (Lipset, 1959; Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Dewey, 1916; Barro, 1999; Mounk, 2018), we see that greater education might even hinder equitable social development as those more educated can have the incentive to protect their wealth and social status.

2. Literature Review

Why democracy matters

The potential for good governance is greater in a democratic system since politicians must heed the desires of the electorate who have the power to replace them (Knight, 2018). Furthermore, freedom of choice provided by democracies leverages economic growth and well-being (Sen, 1986) because free and fair elections and the rule of law give entrepreneurs a predictable political environment. A more egalitarian society can lead to more comprehensive development, as exemplified by the Human Development Index². In addition, human rights can truly be respected only in genuine democracy (Knight, 2018), as freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly are protected by the rule of law. Democracies can serve

² HDI (Human Development Index) designed by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and considers factors such as expectancy, schooling, and GNI (Gross National Income)

as a counterbalance to inequality stemming from development. For example, in the 19th century, the United States, as a representative democratic country, enjoyed a generalized equality of conditions (Tocqueville, 1835). Increased levels of comprehensive development can, in turn, lead to greater political awareness and participation, forming a mutually reinforcing cycle. In this manner, democracy can engender social development characterized by equality, freedom, and political participation.

The importance of functioning democracy cannot be overstated as its absence can approach global issues. The United Nations reports that as of 2022, over one hundred million individuals worldwide have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and in 2021 alone, 5,895 migrants lost their lives (United Nations, 2022). Currently, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has created the largest refugee crisis. If Russia had upheld principles of good governance, allowing citizens to put an end to the dictatorship, they would not have resorted to war. This is why democracy is critical, and world organizations such as the United Nations are dedicated to assisting countries in promoting and strengthening electoral activities that support democracy and good governance. The significance of democracy in mitigating global issues is further highlighted by these efforts.

The global decline of democracy is a phenomenon that is not limited to authoritarian regimes like Russia. According to the United Nations (2022), almost one in six businesses in the world has received bribe requests from public officials. Despite being classified as a “full democracy” until 2016, the United States has since been reclassified as a “flawed democracy” by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), with fewer than one-third of younger Americans considering democracy to be important (Mounk, 2018). The decline of democracy is a global trend, with one-third of democracies being classified as “not free” by Freedom House (Knight, 2018), a 23% decline in free democratic countries in 2020 (Freedom House, 2022),

and 67 countries suffering net declines in their civil liberties and political rights (Knight, 2018). Aside from the fact that many countries such as North Korea, Russia, and China are democratic in name only—the pretense of electoral democracy, this trend raises important questions about the future of democracy around the world.

Why highly educated people matter

The relationship between education and democracy has long been a subject of debate among scholars. Many prominent theorists, including Dewey (1916), Lipset (1959), Barro (1999), and Mounk (2018), push their arguments that education is an important prerequisite for durable democracy in the tradition of the modernization theory, one of the most principal and classical approaches to democracy. This is because education plays a vital role in shaping citizens' attitudes, making them more tolerant and participatory in political processes (Lipset, 1959; Inkeles & Smith, 1974). Additionally, human empowerment is a key driver of national success (Welzel, 2013). With higher education moving from an elite system to a mass system (Trow, 1973), highly educated individuals wield significant influence over the democratic process. As such, their impact on democracy can be either constructive or destructive, depending on their attitudes and behavior.

Making democracy work for the people is crucial for its success, given its core principle of rule by the people. Democracy refers to a rule of the people following the Greek origin of the term, its source is the will of the people and the purpose is the common good (Schumpeter, 2003). Supreme authority lies with the people (Knight, 2018). It is therefore essential to increase awareness of democracy. One possible approach to this is the formation of smaller groups that have a greater chance of collective action, according to Olson (1982).

Also, Democracy Policy Network (DPN), an interstate and nonpartisan organization that supports democratic policies in America, fuels this collective action to accelerate democratic experimentalism in the state-level policy. By empowering citizens with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in collective action, democracies can be effectively implemented to achieve the common good and enhance the quality of life for all.

While concerted power has the potential to promote democracy, the media's polarization effect, exacerbated by technological advancements, may hinder its progress by creating divisions among national communities. The media attracted and fed loyal audiences and subscribers with what they wanted to hear and watch and created polarization (Klein, 2020). For instance, as the media weaponized citizens' differences, Americans are locked into their political identities (Klein, 2020) and it divided South Korea into several ethnic groups based on gender, class, and region. And technology developments like social media let the media make common people polarized (Klein, 2020) more and faster because the increase in internet use shifted the power balance between political insiders and political outsiders (Mounk, 2018). As citizens become more entrenched in their political identities, the potential for democracy to thrive is threatened.

Highly educated individuals, while possessing the potential to promote democracy, can also be a threat to democratic governance by becoming a part of the elite who prioritize their wealth over the nation's welfare. The elites' fear of losing their power can cause a lack of motivation to undertake reforms, leading them to focus on defending their wealth instead. According to Winters (2011), oligarchs with power can cause a government's failure. For example, the elites in South Korea held back social development. Although there was a demand for social development because they experienced two coups, and seven hundred

labor strikes from 1979 to 1980 with huge democratic protests (Cumings, 1984), the elites wanted to extract wealth from other subsets of society to defend their power. These elites' opposition to democratic policies, especially redistributive ones, such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for the unemployed, can be attributed to the elite elements in higher education.

Given that the average years of schooling have been rising (Lee & Lee, 2016; Barro & Lee, 2013; UNDP, 2018), more and more people should support democracy. However, recent trends show that democracy is downgrading globally, even in advanced democracies like the US. In the sense that higher education has the power to decide the wax and wane of a nation, it is important to examine highly educated people's perception of democracy to establish proper democracy and democratic policies in the future. Therefore, this study aims to test the hypothesis that higher education always leads to greater support for democracy.

3. Data

The research conducted in this study aims to examine the relationship between higher education and support for democracy, utilizing data from the World Value Survey (WVS). The WVS is a comprehensive social survey conducted globally since 1981, providing researchers with cross-national and time series data for 70 countries. The survey enables a deep analysis of public attitudes and democracy, particularly over a longer period, as levels of democracy can fluctuate from year to year (Inglehart, 2003). This study used data from three waves of the WVS, including the fifth, sixth, and seventh waves, which were conducted from 2005 to 2009, 2010 to 2014, and 2017 to 2021, respectively. In total, 118,618 interviewees in 26 countries were sampled across the three waves, with each country surveyed at different

times within each wave.³

This research measures support for democracy among highly educated individuals using six dependent variables (see Table 1 or Appendix). The first variable measures how important these individuals consider democracy to be. The second and third variables examine their attitudes towards governance, particularly their feelings about having a strong leader and experts in charge. The fourth and fifth variables measure their support for democratic policies, including their thoughts about taxing the rich and providing state aid for unemployment. Finally, the sixth variable assesses their perception of how democratic their country currently is. These questions are designed to provide insight into the preferences of highly educated individuals regarding democratic systems and policies.

According to Norris (2011), the questions related to taxing the rich and state aid for unemployment can be used to assess democratic aspirations, and the question that a country is being governed democratically today shows citizens' satisfaction with democratic performance. Besides, questions concerning having a strong leader and relying on experts to make decisions are indicative of a general democracy–autocracy preference (DAP) (Ariely & Davidov, 2011). The latter two questions may reveal authoritarian tendencies, as democratic norms require the willingness to accept electoral losses and abide by institutional rules (Lipset, 1998). Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) believe that a lack of tolerance and forbearance in response to a political opponent's victory can present an autocratic turn in government.

The independent variable is the level of education using the ISCED 2011, which has been designed by UNESCO as an international indicator organizing education qualifications by

³ In wave 5 (2005-2009), Argentina, Chile, and the United States were conducted in 2006, Japan, Mexico, and South Korea were surveyed in 2005. In wave 6 (2010-2014), Chile and Mexico finished their survey in 2012, Japan and South Korea were surveyed in 2010, and the U.S. was conducted in 2011. In wave 7 (2017-2019), Argentina and the U.S. were conducted in 2017, Chile, Mexico, and South Korea were conducted in 2018, and Japan was conducted in 2019.

levels. Specifically, this project coded by lower (ISCED 0, 1, 2), middle (ISCED 3, 4), and upper (ISCED 5, 6, 7, 8) corresponds with different levels of educational attainment.⁴ There are nine control variables. First, I control a political action of whether a respondent is an active member of a political party or not because it shows the degree of the individuals' involvement in politics. Also, it could have an impact on another control variable of leaders' parties in their nation. In the variable of a political party, 4,392 out of 114,581 answered they are an active member of a political party, 9,115 said that they are inactive members, and 101,074 said that they are not a member.

The second control variable is freedom of choice and control considering the freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize helpful for conducting elections (Huntington, 1991). For example, Huntington (1991) states that, in a democratic society, the most powerful administrators are chosen through open, fair, and regular elections where candidates compete for votes without inhibition, and all the adults are allowed to vote. Geddes (1999) also argues that democracy selects leaders through competitive elections.

The third control variable is postmaterialist values. The values emphasize freedom of speech and political participation (Inglehart, 2003). Inglehart (2003) argues that Postmaterialist values are a stronger predictor of stable democracy and can capture mass demands for democratization. I divide three scales of the post-materialist index (1: Materialist (N = 38,152), 2: Mixed (N = 61,351), 3: Postmaterialist (N = 11,990)) into two (0: Materialist or Mixed (N = 99,503), 1: Postmaterialist (N = 11,990)) by putting "Materialist (1)" and "Mixed (2)" together to distinguish well between those who are the post-materialist and those

⁴ These levels in ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 are: 0 "Early childhood education or no education", 1 "Primary education", 2 "Lower secondary education", 3 "Upper secondary education", 4 "Post-secondary non-tertiary education", 5 "Short-cycle tertiary education", 6 "Bachelor or equivalent", 7 "Master or equivalent", 8 "Doctoral or equivalent"

who are not.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth control variable are related to political scale (or ideology), representing the ideology of the respondents, leaders, and leaders' parties, respectively. This paper classifies not only respondents but also political leaders and leaders' parties as leftist and rightist by using the Global Leader Ideologies dataset (see Appendix for the details). The original respondents' political scale in the WVS was ten; I divided into left (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5) and right (6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10). The rightists (N = 73,559) are more than the leftists (N = 45,059) in this survey. According to Global Leader Ideologies (GLI), there are more rightist leaders (about 65%) and parties (about 72%) that have governed each country among 26 countries.

The other control variables are age, sex, and income. In specific, income level should also be one of the control variables because economic development brings an increase in self-expression values such as political activism and freedom of speech (Inglehart, 2003). Age is evenly distributed, but most people are 25-34 years old (N = 24,250), and 65 and more years old people are the least (N = 15,205). In this data, there are more women (N = 62,984) than men (N = 55,509). In the income scale, middle-income people (N = 66,993) are the highest, and then low-income (N = 34,512), but I combine and make low-middle-income to control high-income (N = 10,733) effectively.

Table 1 provides the summary statistics for the variables discussed above. In the table, N represents the total number of individuals included in the study, and SD represents the standard deviation of each variable. A smaller standard deviation indicates that the responses are more closely clustered around the mean. Before presenting the regression analysis, this study investigates the variations in each of the key dependent and independent variables across different countries. The analysis reveals that the mean age of the respondents ranges

from 15 to 99 years, with a mean age of over 40 years and a standard deviation of approximately 16 years. Plus, most respondents answered the political scale, rather than demographic factors such as gender and age.

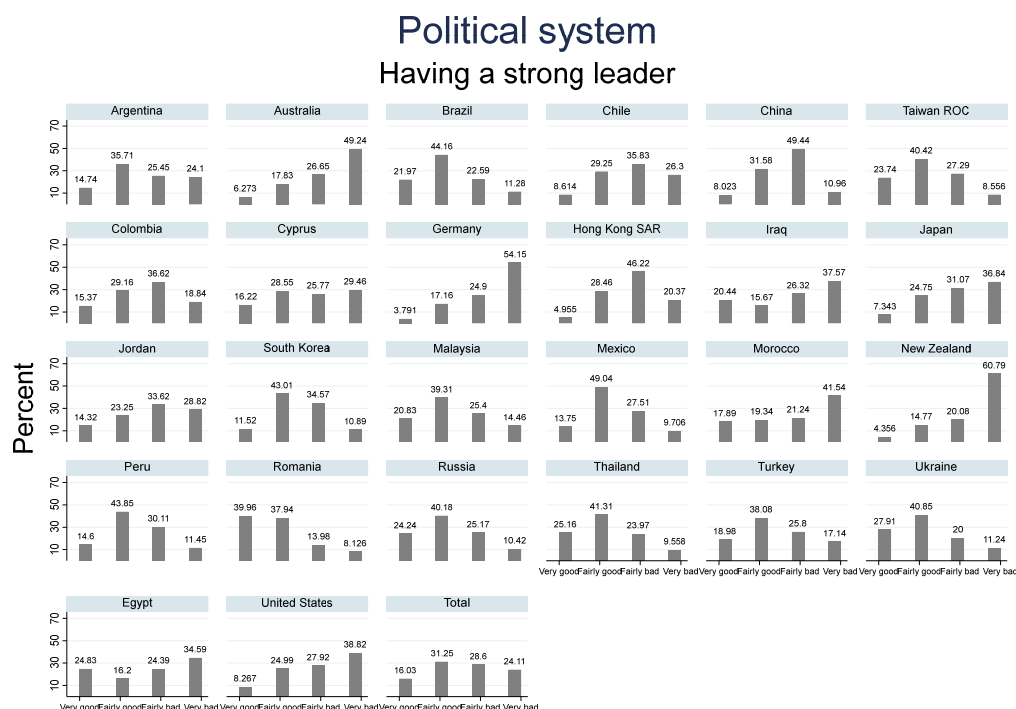
Table 1. Summary Statistics

Classification	Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent variables	Having a strong leader	108625	2.6	1	1	4
	Having experts make decisions	106669	2.3	0.9	1	4
	Tax the rich and subsidize the poor	107813	6.5	3	0	10
	Receive state aid for unemployment	108414	7.1	2.8	0	10
	Importance of democracy	110017	8.5	2	1	10
	State of democracy	105393	6.1	2.5	1	10
Independent variable	Education level	117395	2	0.7	1	3
Control variables	Political action: Member of political party	114581	0	0.2	0	1
	Freedom of choice and control	116535	0.5	0.5	0	1
	Post-materialist	111493	0.1	0.3	0	1
	Political scale (Ideology of respondents)	118618	0.4	0.5	0	1
	Ideology of leader	99712	0.3	0.5	0	1
	Ideology of leader's party	64843	0.3	0.4	0	1

	Age	118411	43.7	16.5	15	99
	Income level of own household	112238	0.1	0.3	0	1
	Sex	118493	0.5	0.5	0	1

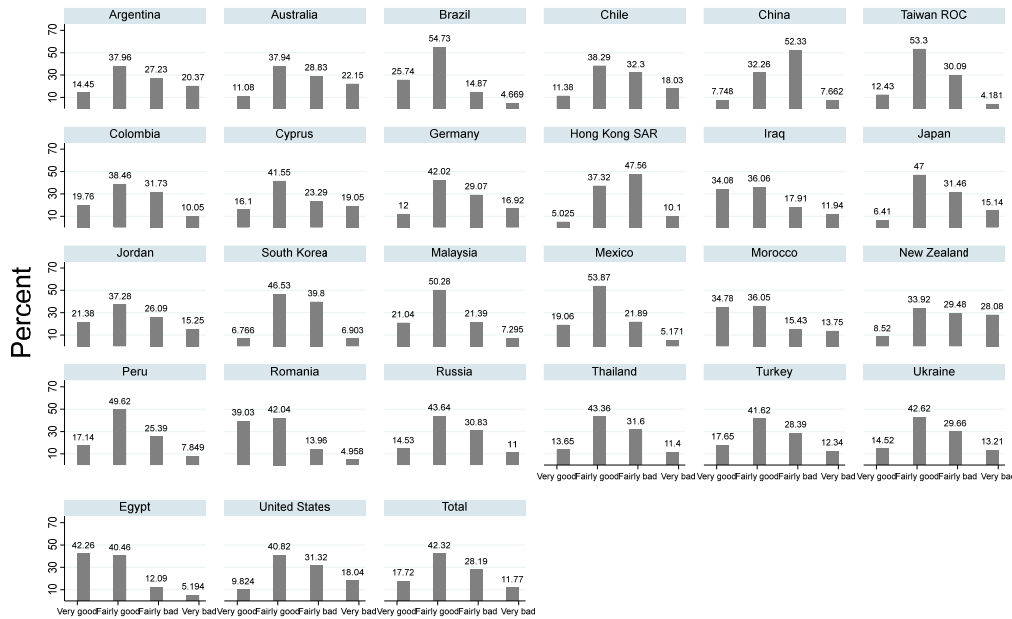
Note. From World Value Survey (WVS), Global Leader Ideologies (GLI)

Figure 1. Proportion of the political systems, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)⁵



⁵ Figure 1 survey questions: “What you think about having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is as a way of governing this country?”, “What you think about having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think as a way of governing this country?”

Political system Having experts make decisions



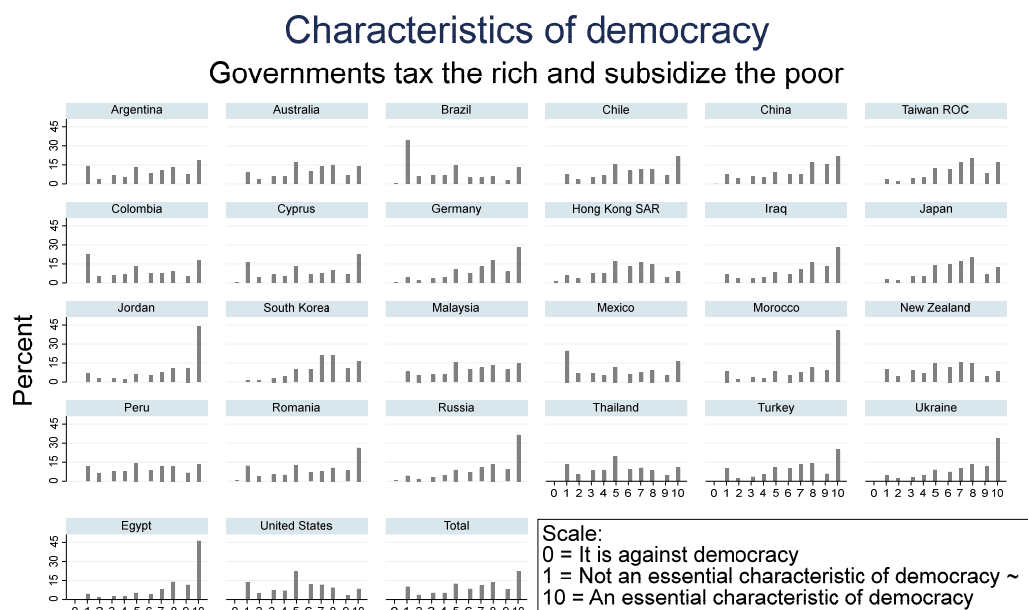
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019.

In the wave 5th (2005–2009), 6th (2010–2014), and 7th (2017–2022) surveys of the WVS, Figure 1 shows how people think about ruling by a strong leader who does not have to care elections or parliament is a good way of governing by a country. 31.25% of countries chose the option of "fairly good" for this mode of governance, with the options of "very bad" and "fairly bad" being selected by fewer countries. Interestingly, the countries with the highest proportion of respondents selecting "very bad" tended to be developed democracies such as Australia, Germany, New Zealand, and the United States, with a relatively small gap between their ratio and the other options. In contrast, countries that selected "fairly good" the most were a mix of advanced democracies and non-democratic regimes, including Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Likewise, a number of respondents across different countries are in favor of having

experts make decisions based on their own thoughts. The option of having such a political system is selected as "fairly good" by the majority of respondents in all countries. Brazil, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Mexico are the countries where the option "fairly good" is chosen by more than 50% of the respondents. In contrast, China and Hong Kong have the highest percentage of respondents choosing the option of "fairly bad" for this system. Egypt is the only country where most respondents chose "very good," but the difference between "good" and "fairly good" is only about 2%. These findings suppose that the population in most countries accept the idea of autocratic ways, where decisions are made by a strong leader or a group of experts who have the power to repress the public.

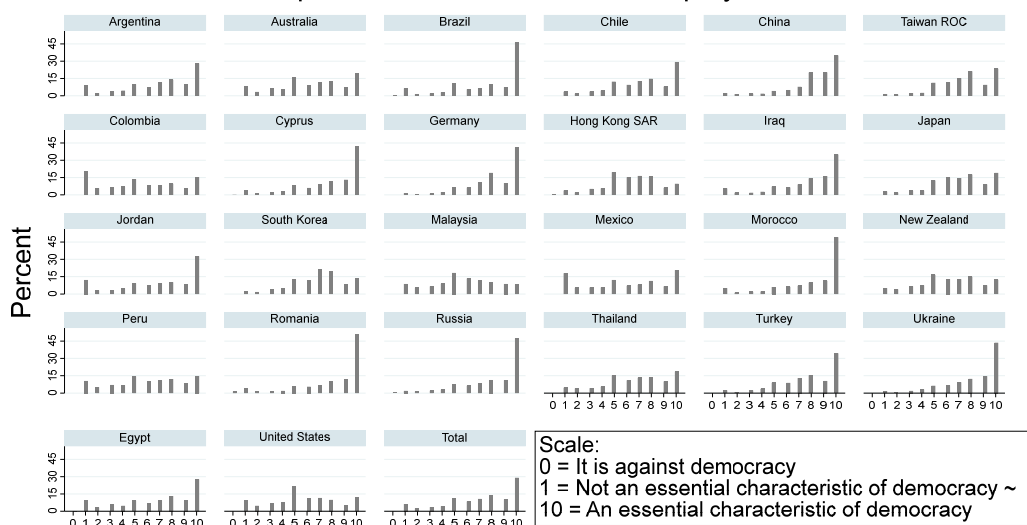
Figure 2. *Proportion of the characteristics of democracy, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)*⁶



⁶ Figure 2 survey questiones: “How essential you think governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor is as a characteristic of democracy?”, “How essential you think people receive state aid for unemployment is as a characteristic of democracy?”

Characteristics of democracy

People receive state aid for unemployment



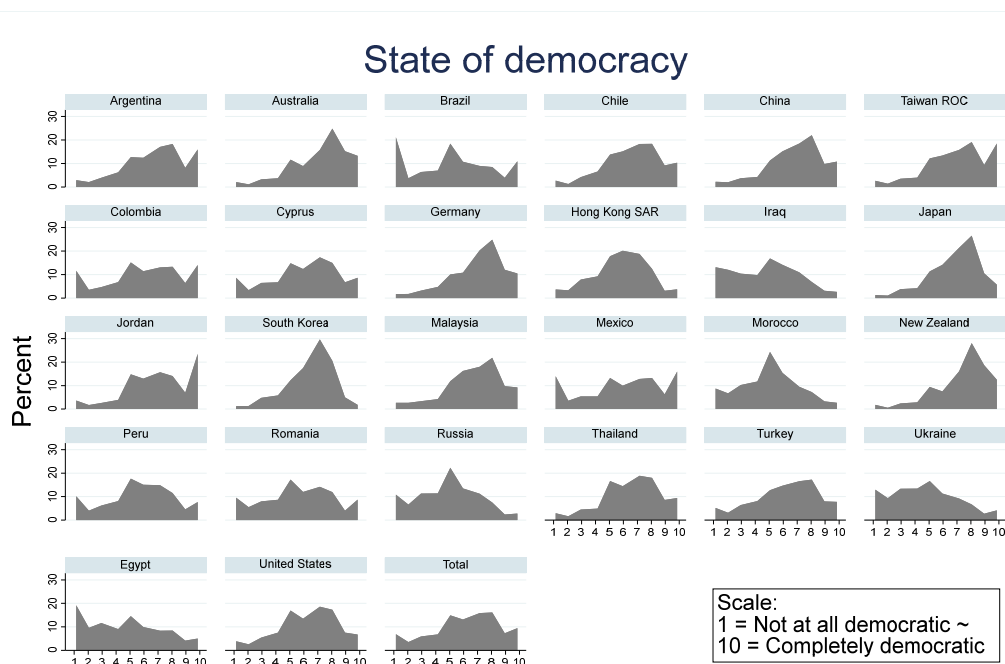
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

The study analyzes the results from the World Values Survey, focusing on respondents' views on the role of the government in taxation and welfare policies. Based on the analysis of Figure 2, it is evident that a significant proportion of the public considers government policies such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for unemployment as essential features of democracy. Notably, there are regional variations in the responses, with most Asian countries showing a moderate level of support for taxing the rich, while Latin American nations such as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico disagree with this viewpoint. Some countries such as Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Thailand and the U.S. show a similar pattern with a spike in the 5th step.

Moreover, the state aid for unemployment is widely viewed as a crucial aspect of democracy across most countries, with South Korea and Colombia showing a bias towards this policy. Overall, the findings suggest that the public considers government policies to be essential for the functioning of democracy, although there are notable regional variations in

the specific policies that are perceived to be crucial. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate that many respondents believe that having a strong leader and experts in power is fairly good and that taxing the rich and receiving state aid for unemployment are essential for democracy.

Figure 3. *Proportion of the state of democracy, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)*⁷



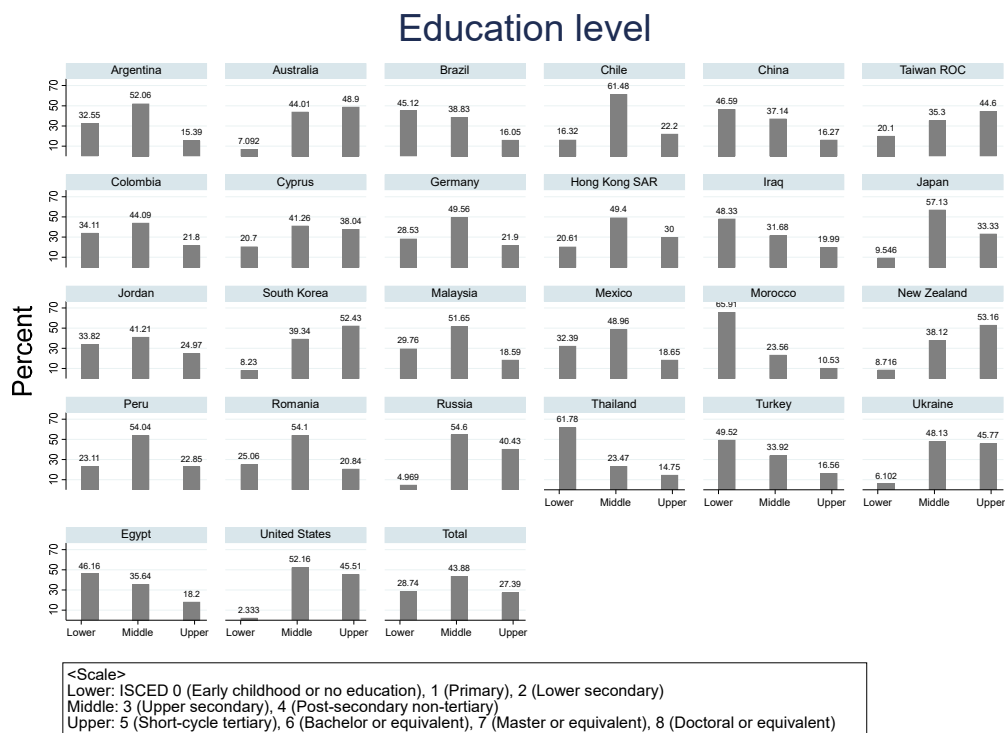
Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

The states of democracy vary from country to country. In Figure 3, the histograms of Argentina, Chile, China, and Taiwan have a similar shape with the large middle and the high right end (10: Completely democratic). Jordan has bigger right edge than the middle. many countries, including Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States, see themselves as mostly democratic. However, Brazil and Mexico have a high percentage of respondents who perceive taxing the

⁷ Figure 3 survey question: “How democratically is this country being governed today?”

rich as either not at all democratic or fully democratic. Egypt and Brazil have the highest percentage of respondents who see taxation of the rich as not at all democratic. Overall, most people view democracy positively, but the support for democratic policies varies across countries.

Figure 4. Proportion of the education levels, by country, 2005-2019 (percentage)

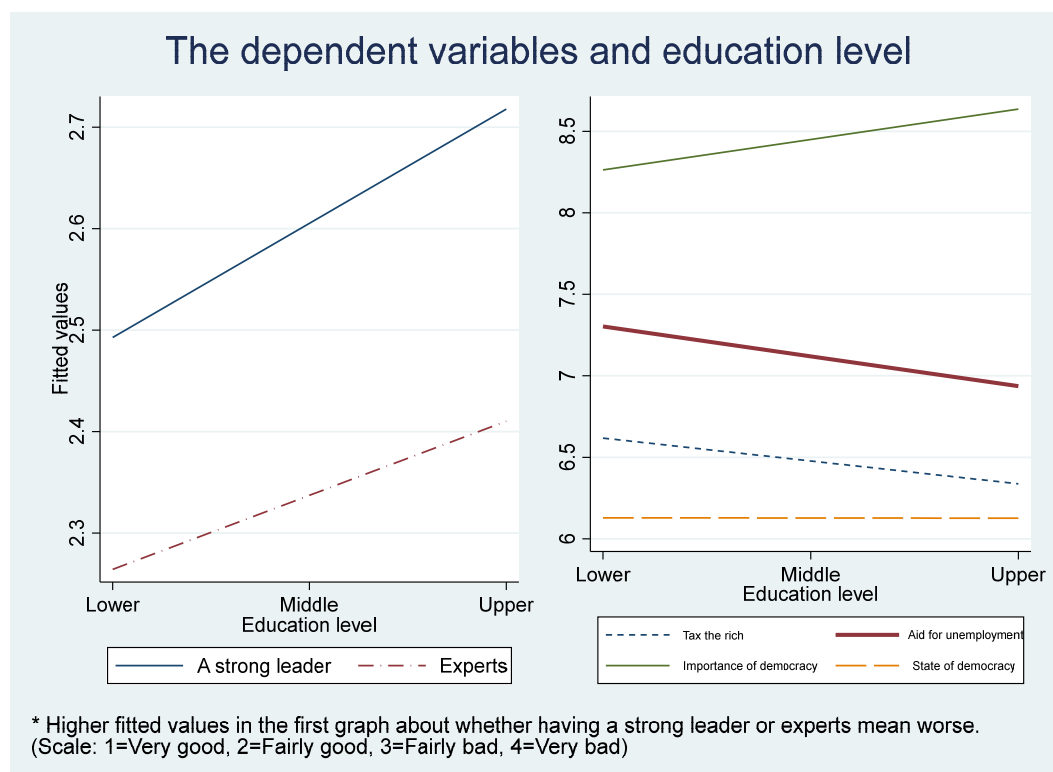


Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

Using three levels of education, i.e., lower, middle, and upper, the study aims to identify whether there is a significant association between a high level of education and support for democracy. Notably, the middle level of education, including upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education, has the highest proportion of people. Among the high-

education countries are Australia, Taiwan, South Korea, and New Zealand, while Brazil, China, Iraq, Morocco, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt are among the low-education countries. Intriguingly, all high-education countries are full democracies, while the low-education countries are either flawed democracies (Brazil, Thailand), hybrid regimes (Morocco, Turkey), or authoritarian regimes (Iraq, Egypt, China) (EIU, 2021). These findings suggest that countries with higher levels of education are more likely to be democratic.

Figure 5. *The relationship between the dependent variables and the education level*



Note. From WVS (World Value Survey) data collected from 2005 to 2019

Figure 5 shows the fitted values called predicted values of the factor variables when country and year fixed effects are not employed. In the first graph, the higher the fitted values

are, the worse people think of the variables. In other words, highly educated people recognize that having a strong leader or experts constitutes a bad political regime. Also, they are more likely to believe that governing democratically is important than less educated people. On the contrary, they are less supportive of democratic policies such as taxing the rich or providing state aid for unemployment. However, there is no clear difference in the perception of the state of democracy across education levels. As for two questions about democratic policies, there are more than 100 people out of about 100,000 saying that it is against democracy.

4. Methodology

The panel model has the advantage of increasing the sample size compared to the general regression model that analyzes cross-sectional data for a single year by using panel data. By increasing the sample size, multicollinearity can be controlled and more useful information can be provided compared to the general regression model by including dynamic changes in the data. The country and year fixed effects model is used to show the effect of intrinsic individual characteristics. If the data is observed multiple times and the model control for time and country, the model does not estimate the variable values which have no change within groups because they are the same as the mean (no deviation). This model may eliminate a cross-cultural equivalence that can arise because the control variables vary across countries and across time. It can also eliminate the effect of democratic support in non-democratic regimes⁸ in the panel data set.

$$Y_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Education}_{ijt} + \beta_2 X_{ijt} + \dots + \alpha_j + T_t + \varepsilon$$

⁸ According to Freedom House (2022), non-democratic groups include China, Iraq, Jordan, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, and Egypt.

i = individual

j = year

k = country

Y = The dependent variables (Political_System, Democracy_Characteristics, Democracy_Importance, Democracy_State)

X = The independent variables (Political_Party, Petition, Boycotts, Demonstrations, Freedom, Age, Income, Postmaterialist, Male, Political_Scale, Ideology_Leader, Ideology_Party)

Using the three-level structure of the data—countries, years, and individuals—can estimate a multilevel model (individual *i* in year *j* and country *k*). The model includes predictors at the three levels of analysis, and various intercepts and error terms for countries and years. The base levels of factor variables are omitted in the results reported (see the note in Table 2). The proportions of the variations in the dependent variables explained by the independent variable (R-squared, SSE/SST) are each 0.0736 (“Importance of democracy”), 0.0978 (“Having experts make decisions”), 0.1908 (“Having a strong leader”), 0.1345 (“Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor”), 0.1291 (“People receive state aid for unemployment”), and 0.1077 (“State of democracy”).

5. Results

Table 2. *Results*

	(1) Importance of democracy	(2) Having experts make decisions	(3) Having a strong leader	(4) Tax the rich and subsidize the poor	(5) State aid for unemployment	(6) State of democracy
Education level: Middle	0.285*** (0.000)	0.0368*** (0.000)	0.0485*** (0.000)	-0.237*** (0.000)	-0.143*** (0.000)	-0.133*** (0.000)
Education level: Upper	0.564*** (0.000)	0.0372** (0.002)	0.203*** (0.000)	-0.260*** (0.000)	-0.218*** (0.000)	-0.0202 (0.540)
Political party: Active member	0.174*** (0.000)	0.0444* (0.017)	0.0109 (0.578)	0.106 (0.081)	0.0885 (0.119)	0.116* (0.022)
Freedom of choice: A lot	0.472*** (0.000)	0.00116 (0.892)	0.0166 (0.066)	0.0798** (0.004)	0.221*** (0.000)	0.538*** (0.000)
Age	0.0131*** (0.000)	0.00277*** (0.000)	0.00270*** (0.000)	0.00116 (0.164)	0.00375*** (0.000)	0.00643*** (0.000)
Income scale: High	0.0948** (0.001)	-0.0401** (0.002)	-0.0164 (0.236)	-0.157*** (0.000)	-0.195*** (0.000)	0.266*** (0.000)
Postmaterialist	0.257*** (0.000)	0.0480*** (0.000)	0.181*** (0.000)	0.123*** (0.001)	0.129*** (0.000)	-0.320*** (0.000)

Sex: Male	0.0290 (0.079)	-0.0175* (0.022)	-0.0218** (0.007)	-0.0515* (0.039)	-0.0820*** (0.000)	-0.00491 (0.816)
Political scale: Left	-0.0452** (0.007)	-0.0121 (0.119)	0.0505*** (0.000)	0.118*** (0.000)	0.173*** (0.000)	-0.580*** (0.000)
Leader's ideology: Left	-0.184* (0.028)	0.234*** (0.000)	0.278*** (0.000)	0.335** (0.007)	0.291* (0.012)	-0.223* (0.032)
Party's ideology: Left	-0.118 (0.157)	-0.155*** (0.000)	-0.266*** (0.000)	-0.980*** (0.000)	-0.804*** (0.000)	0.824*** (0.000)
_cons	7.443*** (0.000)	2.174*** (0.000)	2.421*** (0.000)	6.420*** (0.000)	6.804*** (0.000)	5.820*** (0.000)
<i>N</i>	54320	52402	52871	50955	51179	50964
<i>R</i> ²	0.07359	0.09784	0.19080	0.13453	0.12910	0.10768
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.07289	0.09711	0.19016	0.13383	0.12840	0.10697
F	175.3	18.61	71.59	25.48	32.34	174.2

p-values in parentheses
* *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001

Note: The base levels for categorical variables are omitted (Education level: Lower, Political party: Not a member or inactive member, Freedom of choice: A few or medium, Income scale: Low or medium, Postmaterialist: Materialist, Sex: Female, Political scale: Right, Leader's ideology: Right, Party's ideology: Right. See Appendix for the details.)

This study utilizes multivariate analysis and linear regression models, incorporating country and year fixed effects, to test the hypothesis that higher education leads to greater support for democracy, as measured by various outcome variables such as the importance of democracy, two political systems (having experts and a strong leader), two characteristics of democracy (tax on the rich and state aid for unemployment), and the state of democracy. The primary independent variable, education levels, is categorized as lower, middle, and upper education. Results from this analysis shed light on the extent to which higher education is associated with greater support for democratic values.

When country and year fixed effects are employed in the regression analysis to investigate the impact of education on support for democracy and democratic policies, while controlling for various factors including political actions, freedom, post-materialism, political scales, age, gender, and income. The results indicate a positive relationship between education and general support for democracy, even after accounting for these variables. However, the relationship between education and support for democratic policies is negative, with highly educated individuals expressing more disapproval for policies such as taxing the rich and aiding the unemployed compared to those with lower education levels. This pattern is consistent regardless of whether country and year fixed effects are included in the analysis, as shown in Figure 5.

Analysis of the data reveals that people with higher education prioritize the importance of democracy ($0.564 > 0.285$) over authoritarian traits such as having experts ($0.0372 > 0.0368$) and a strong leader ($0.203 > 0.049$). However, their views diverge from democratic policies, as they express less support for policies such as taxing the rich ($-0.260 < -0.237$) and providing state aid for unemployment ($-0.218 < -0.143$) compared to those with a lower level of education. The findings contradict the modernization theory, which posits that support for

democracy would increase with higher levels of education. These results suggest a more nuanced relationship between education and support for democratic values and policies.

This study presents significant differences between the concept of democracy and support for democratic policies among individuals with varying levels of education. While education is positively associated with support for the abstract idea of democracy, it does not necessarily translate to support for substantive policies that are considered crucial for democratic governance. This investigation suggests that individuals with lower levels of education tend to place greater emphasis on redistribution than those with higher levels of education, highlighting the role of social awareness in shaping policy preferences. Moreover, the results suggest that highly educated individuals may be closer to the elites than to the concerted power, as they prioritize options that maintain or increase profits over policies aimed at promoting redistribution.

These results point to the need for greater attention to the complex relationship between education, support for democracy, and policy preferences in shaping democratic governance. Specifically, the study emphasizes the importance of considering the level of education in understanding support for democracy and policy preferences. The point is to improve highly educated people's perceptions of democracy, especially its policies. As we saw earlier, highly educated people have a great influence on democracy. The failure to take action to address democratic deficits can result in growing inequality, which can undermine the effectiveness of democracy as an antidote to inequality (Knight, 2018). Rising inequality can prevent members of society from choosing a democratic political system as a superior strategy (Boix, 2003) and growing inequality hinders economic growth as well (Persson & Tabellini, 1994).

Michael Sandel (2020), a political philosopher at Harvard University, challenges the commonly held belief that higher education is a solution to inequality. He elaborates that the

meritocratic system, which rewards individuals based on their talents and efforts, makes winners believe that their success is solely a measure of their merit, and losers have no one to blame but themselves. This attitude not only encourages the successful to forget the role of luck in their success but also leads them to abandon a responsibility for those less fortunate. This is why practical policies to support the disadvantaged who are left behind in competition should be implemented to address the issue at hand for a durable democracy.

6. Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the level of support for democracy among highly educated individuals. Through a quantitative analysis that employed country and year fixed effects, the study examined the relationship between educational level and characteristics, importance, and state of democracy. The findings reveal that highly educated individuals value the concept of democracy, but do not necessarily endorse democratic policies, such as taxing the rich and providing state aid for the unemployed. It is possible that this lack of support is due to the potential of highly educated individuals becoming elites who prioritize maintaining their positions.

The “hazard” that highly educated individuals become the elites is no longer just a “potential” risk anymore. In recent times, there has been a rise in income inequality between countries, particularly during the pandemic (UN, 2022). Further, Ivy League universities in the U.S. have more students from the top 1% than those from the bottom 50% of the nation combined (Sandel, 2020). Given these realities, it is crucial to conduct further research on the effects of elite perceptions of democracy. Identifying the reasons why education does not

necessarily lead to support for substantive policies and addressing them will help establish durable democracies that can withstand societal challenges.

Some argue that there is a cyclical nature to political backsliding, and not all democratization processes occur in the same manner (Geddes, 2011). As the politics of backsliding is fluid, the unidirectional implication does not capture reality (Cianetti & Hanley, 2021). It is imperative to find solutions to the current downturn in democracy since policies to support the disadvantaged who are left behind in competition are essential to maintain democracy. A better understanding of the social, economic, cultural, and institutional differences that lead to democratic backsliding is necessary (Cianetti & Hanley, 2021). In addition, external stimuli, such as global initiatives to promote democracy and good governance, may help to broaden the scope of democratic values and, in turn, promote sustainable development. Democracy can be further broadened at the global level if the UN promotes democracy and good governance (Knight, 2018). The spread of democracy provides an enabling environment to help promote and strengthen sustainable development (Knight, 2018). It is essential to eliminate negative influences on democracy and build a better society together.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Variables		Label	Question	Code
Dependant variables (Perception of democracy)	Political system (Ways of governing)	Having a strong leader	What you think about having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is as a way of governing this country?	1 (Very good), 2 (Fairly good), 3 (Fairly bad), 4 (Very bad)
		Having experts make decisions	What you think about having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think as a way of governing this country?	
	Characteristics of democracy	Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor	How essential you think governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor is as a characteristic of democracy	0 (It is against democracy), 1 (Not an essential characteristic of democracy)
		People receive state aid for unemployment	How essential you think people receive state aid for unemployment is as a characteristic of democracy	~10 (An essential characteristic of democracy)
	Importance of democracy	Importance of democracy	How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?	1 (Not at all important)~10 (Absolutely important)
State of democracy	Democraticness in own country	How democratically is this country being governed today?	1 (Not at all democratic)~10 (Completely democratic)	
Independent variable	Education	Education level	.	1 (Lower/ISCED0,1,2), 2 (Middle/ISCED3,4), 3 (Upper/ISCED5,6,7,8)
Control variables	Political action	Active/Inactive membership of political party	Tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of political party?	0 (Not a member or inactive member), 1 (Active member)
		Signing a petition	Tell me whether you have done signing a petition, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	0 (Would never do or might do), 1 (Have done)
		Joining in boycotts	Tell me whether you have done joining in boycotts, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	
		Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations	Tell me whether you have done attending peaceful demonstrations, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it	
	Freedom	How much freedom of choice and control	How much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?	0 (A few or medium), 1 (A lot)
	Age	Age	You are ____ years old	Two digits
	Income scale	Scale of incomes	Among the income groups, in what group your household is? Specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in.	0 (Low or medium), 1 (High)
	Postmaterialist	Postmaterialist index	.	0 (Materialist or mixed), 1 (Postmaterialist)
	Sex	Sex	.	0 (Female), 1 (Male)
	Political scale	Self positioning in political scale	In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale?	0 (Right), 1 (Left)
Leader's ideology	Ideology of leader	.	0 (Right), 1 (Left)	
Party's ideology	Ideology of leader's party	.	0 (Right), 1 (Left)	

Year	Country	Leader	Party	Global Leader Ideologies		V-Party	
				Leader_ideology	Party_ideology	Most seat share party	Economic left-right scale (0: Far-left. 1:Left. 2: Center-left. 3: Center. 4: Center-right. 5: Right. 6: Far-right.)
2004	New Zealand (08-11-2004 to 10-02-2005)	Helen Clark (1999-2008)	Labour	leftist	Center-left	Labour (41.3)	-0.807 (Far-left)
2005	Australia	John Howard (1996-2007)	Liberal	rightist	Center-right	Liberal (49.3)	1.408 (Right)
	Colombia	Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010)	Partido Conservador Colombiano	rightist	Right	Colombian Liberal (32.5)	-0.387 (Far-left)
	Hong Kong SAR (01-03-2005 to 31-05-2005)	Tung Chee-hwa (Jul1997-Mar2005) /Donald Tsang (Jun2005-2012)	Nonpartisan	.	.	Democratic (15), Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (15)	-0.214, 0.437 (Left)
	Japan	Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006)	Liberal Democratic	rightist	Right	Liberal Democratic (61.7)	2.876 (Right)
	South Korea	Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)	Our Party	leftist	Center-left	Our Party (50.8)	-1.01 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Vicente Fox (2000-2006)	National Action	rightist	Right	Institutional Revolutionary (44.4)	0.663 (Left)
	Romania	Traian Băsescu (2004-2014)	Democratic	rightist	.	National Union PSD+PUR (39.8)	.
2006	Argentina	Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007)	Justicialist Party	leftist	Center	Front for Victory (53.3)	-1.541 (Far-left)
	Brazil	Lula da Silva (2003-2010)	Workers' Party	leftist	Center-left	Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (17.3)	0.319 (Left)
	Chile (14-06-2006 to 24-07-2006)	Michelle Bachelet (March2006-2010)	Coalition of Parties for Democracy	leftist	.	Independent Democratic Union (27.5)	2.619 (Right)
	Taiwan ROC	Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008)	Democratic Progressive	leftist	Center	Democratic Progressive (42.3)	0.117 (Left)
	Cyprus	Tassos Papadopoulos (2003-2008)	Democratic	rightist	Center-right	Democratic Rally, Progressive Party of Working People (32.1)	1.171(Center), -1.418 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Social Democratic Party of Germany (36.2)	-0.188 (Far-left)
	Iraq	Ibrahim al-Jaafari (2005-2006)	Islamic Dawa	.	.	National Iraqi Alliance / United Iraqi Alliance (46.5)	0.674 (Left)
	Malaysia	Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center	United Malays National Organisation (49.8)	-0.367 (Far-left)
	Peru	García Pérez (28July2006-2011)	Peruvian Aprista Party	leftist	Right	Union for Peru (37.5)	-1.197 (Far-left)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin (2000-2008)	Nonpartisan	rightist	.	United Russia (70)	0.219 (Left)
	Ukraine	Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010)	Our Ukraine	rightist	Center	Party of Regions (41.3)	0.278 (Left)
	United States	George W. Bush (2001-2009)	Republican	rightist	Right	Democratic Party (53.6)	-0.808 (Far-left)

2007	China	Hu Jintao (2003–2008)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	0.122 (Left)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El-Hashimi	.	rightist	.	Independent (89.1)	.
	Morocco	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Independent /Istiqlal Party (12.6)	0.67 (Left)
	Thailand	Surayud Chulanont (2006-Jan2008)	.	.	.	People's Power (48.5)	-1.117 (Far-left)
	Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Center-right	Justice and Development (62)	1.216 (Center)
2008	Egypt	Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011)	National Democratic	leftist	Center-right	National Democratic (72)	1.419 (Center)
2010	Japan (24-11-2010 to 20-12-2010)	Naoto Kan (Jun2010-Sep2011)	Democratic	leftist	Center	Democratic (64.2)	-0.184 (Far-left)
	South Korea	Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)	New World Party / The Grand National Party (Hannara-dang / Saenuri-dang)	rightist	Right	Grand National (51.2)	2.262 (Right)
2011	Cyprus	Demetris Christofias (2008-2013)	Progressive Party of Working People	leftist	Center-left	Democratic Rally (35.7)	2.029 (Right)
	Morocco	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Justice and Development (27.1)	-0.368 (Far-left)
	New Zealand	John Key (2008–2016)	National	rightist	Center-right	National (48.8)	1.141 (Center)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin	United Russia	rightist	Center	United Russia (52.9)	0.219 (Left)
	Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Right	Justice and Development (59.5)	1.764 (Center)
	Ukraine	Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014)	Party of Regions	centrist	Center	Party of Regions (41.1)	0.122 (Left)
	United States	Barack Obama (2009-Jan2017)	Democratic	centrist	Center-left	Republican (55.6)	1.841 (Center)
2012	Australia	Julia Gillard (2010–2013)	Australian Labor	leftist	Center-left	Australian Labor (48)	-0.834 (Far-left)
	Chile (01-12-2012 to 19-12-2012)	Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014)	National Renewal	rightist	Center-right	Independent Democratic Union (30.8)	2.619 (Right)
	Taiwan ROC	Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016)	Nationalist	rightist	Center-right	Nationalist (56.6)	1.404 (Center)
	Colombia	Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018)	Social Party of National Unity	centrist	Center	Social Party of National Unity (28.3)	0.144 (Center)
	Malaysia	Najib Razak (2009-May2018)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center	United Malays National Organisation (39.6)	-0.667 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Felipe Calderon (2006–2012)	National Action	rightist	Right	Institutional Revolutionary (42.4)	1.016 (Center)
	Peru	Ollanta Humala (2011-2016)	Peruvian Nationalist	leftist	Center-left	Peruvian Nationalist (36.2)	-0.953 (Far-left)
	Romania	Traian Băsescu (2004-2014)	Democratic Liberal	rightist	.	Social Democratic (36.4)	-1.043 (Far-left)

2013	Argentina	Fernández de Kirchner (2007 - 2011) (2011 - 2015)	Justicialist Party	leftist	Center	Front for Victory (50.2)	-1.663 (Far-left)
	China	Xi Jinping (2013-2018)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	-0.329 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Christian Democratic Union (40.4)	0.785 (Center)
	Iraq	Nouri al-Maliki	Islamic Dawa	.	.	State of Law Coalition (27.4)	-0.062 (Far-left)
	Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra (2011-2014)	Pheu Thai	leftist	Center-left	Pheu Thai (53)	-1.174 (Far-left)
	Egypt (01-03-2013 to 30-04-2013)	Mohamed Morsi (2012-July2013)	Freedom and Justice	leftist	.	Freedom and Justice (46.3)	-1.267 (Far-left)
2014	Brazil	Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016)	Workers' Party	leftist	Center-left	Workers' Party (13.3)	-1.46 (Far-left)
	Hong Kong SAR	Leung Chun-ying (2012-2017)	New Hong Kong Alliance (Center-right) (Pro-Beijing)			Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress (18.6)	0.448 (Center)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El- Hashimi	.	rightist	.	Independent (82)	.

2017	Argentina	Mauricio Macri (2015-2019)	Republican Proposal	rightist	Center-right	Citizen's Unity (26.8)	-1.662 (Far-left)
	Russia	Vladimir Putin (2012-)	United Russia	rightist	Center	United Russia (76.4)	0.052 (Center)
	United States	Donald Trump (2017-2021)	Republican	rightist	Right	Republican (55.4)	1.841 (Center)
2018	Australia (April2018-Aug2018)	Malcolm Turnbull (2015-Aug2018)	Liberal	rightist	Center-right	Australian Labor (46)	-0.833 (Far-left)
	Brazil	Michel Temer (2016-2018)	Brazilian Democratic Movement	rightist	Center-right	Workers' Party (10.9)	-1.896 (Far-left)
	Chile (Jan2018-Feb2018)	Michelle Bachelet (2014-March2018)	Socialist	leftist	Center-left	National Renewal (23.2)	1.669 (Center)
	China	Xi Jinping (2013-2018)	Chinese Communist Party	leftist	Center	CCP (100)	-0.329 (Far-left)
	Colombia	Iván Duque (2018-2022)	Democratic Center	rightist	Right	Colombian Liberal (21.7)	-0.279 (Far-left)
	Germany	Angela Merkel (2005-2021)	Christian Democratic Union	rightist	Center-right	Christian Democratic Union (28.2)	0.785 (Center)
	Hong Kong SAR	Carrie Lam (2017-2022)	.	.	.	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress (17.1)	0.448 (Center)
	Iraq	Abdul-Mahdi	.	.	.	Alliance Towards Reforms (16.4)	1.674 (Center)
	Jordan	Abdullah Ibn Hussein El-Hashimi	.	rightist	.	.	.
	South Korea	Moon Jae-in (2017-2022)	Democratic	leftist	Center-left	Democratic (41)	-0.631 (Far-left)
	Malaysia (Apr2018-May2018)	Najib Razak (2009-May2018)	United Malays National Organisation	rightist	Center-left	United Malays National Organisation (24.3)	-0.667 (Far-left)
	Mexico	Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018)	Institutional Revolutionary Party	rightist	Center-right	National Regeneration Movement (37.8)	-1.698 (Far-left)
	Peru (Aug2018-Sep2018)	Martín Vizcarra (March2018-2020)	Peruvians for Change	rightist	Center-right	Popular Force 2011 (56.2)	2.022 (Right)
	Romania (Nov2017-Apr2018)	Klaus Iohannis (2014-)	Independent (2014-) /National Liberal Party (2013-2014)	rightist	Center-left	Social Democratic (46.8)	-1.043 (Far-left)
	Thailand	Prayut Chan-o-cha (2014-)	.	.	.	Pheu Thai (53)	-1.174 (Far-left)
	Turkey (Mar2018-May2018)	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Justice and Development	rightist	Right	People's Alliance (57.3)	1.797 (Center)
	Egypt	Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (2014-)	.	.	.	Independent (61.8)	.

2019	Taiwan ROC	Tsai Ing-wen (2016-)	Democratic Progressive	leftist	Center	Democratic Progressive (60.2)	-0.226 (Far-left)
	Cyprus	Nicos Anastasiades (2013-)	Democratic Rally	rightist	Right	Democratic Rally (30.5)	2.056 (Right)
	Japan	Shinzo Abe (2012-2020)	Liberal Democratic	rightist	Right	Liberal Democratic (60.4)	1.733 (Center)
2020	New Zealand	Jacinda Ardern (2017-)	Labour	leftist	Center-left	National (46.7)	1.141 (Center)
	Ukraine	Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2019-)	Servant of the People	rightist	Center-right	Servant of the People (56.4)	1.09 (Center)
2021	Morocco (Nov2021-Dec2021)	Muhammad VI	.	rightist	.	Justice and Development (31.7)	-0.368 (Far-left)

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q250. How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? On this scale where 1 means it is “not at all important” and 10 means “absolutely important” what position would you choose? (Code one number):

Not at all important										Absolutely important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

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? (Read out and code one answer for each):

		Very good	Fairly good	Fairly bad	Very bad
Q235	Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections	1	2	3	4
Q236	Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country	1	2	3	4

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

		Not an essential characteristic of democracy					An essential characteristic of democracy				
<i>Interviewer, do not read this and code only if mentioned by the respondent him-herself: 0 - 'It is against democracy'</i>											
Q241	Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q242	Religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q243	People choose their leaders in free elections.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q244	People receive state aid for unemployment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Q251. And how democratically is this country being governed today? Again using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that it is “not at all democratic” and 10 means that it is “completely democratic,” what position would you choose? (Code one number):

Not at all democratic										Completely democratic
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	