



Culture, democracy and democratization: Cultural values and democracy values

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The present study explores the relationship between democracy (measured by the Freedom in the World index (FIW) and cultural values (by employing Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions). The results from the linear regression indicate the presence of a number of cultures with affinity toward the values associated with the popular imagery of what constitutes democratic rule. These analyses resulted in the identification of positive outliers—countries with low affinity to democratic values but higher than expected democracy scores. Some points of interest are suggested in relation to the identified outliers and their comparison with *Cultural Neighbors*—countries with physical or historical bonds. Finally, through simple correlation, some connections are proposed between the measured items in order to identify critical cultural elements for democracy and democratization.

Keywords: cultural neighbors, culture, democracy, democratic values, outliers

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Introduction

Among many forms of governance throughout history, democracy has emerged as the political idea, closest to the understanding of the *should be* structure. A frail structure is difficult to attain, maintain and easy to break. Some countries have kept a democratic organization despite circumstances, but for many, democracy is a far promise and/or a lost past. Despite ongoing discussions on whether democracy is superior to other systems or not, many still strive for it. The purpose of the study is to present a different angle on the possible means for obtaining or progressing toward democracy, and for protecting or recovering diminished democratic principles. This study contributes to discussion relating to democratization in a world where implanting a more or less fixed template on how to achieve democracy is the mainstream focus. But, what is democracy? Is it the rule of the majority, or a direct self-government from the people by the people for the people, or a set of values and institutions ensuring that no one needs be afraid of one another? If we take democracy as a representation of the will of the people, then it should also represent their values. For the purpose of this paper the best approximation to such values is considered to be culture. In the following section, we present: (1) What is democracy and how it is measured and why Freedom in the World index (Freedom House) was chosen for this study; (2) Democratization and the role of democracy conceptualization in its pursue; and (3) The meaning of *culture* and why Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory is used for this research.

Based on these points we try to answer questions, such as does national culture predict the compliance with democratic standards? If so, which countries stand out given their culture? And what can be inferred from the culture-democracy connection? By answering these questions, we hope to show a

different way to approach the study of democracy and democratization, and give some new tools to practitioners pursuing democracy in their regions. Before starting, we recognize that democracy and democratization cannot be reduced to an analysis over culture. Other factors such as economic development (Lipset 1959, Treisman 2020), social equality (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006, Przeworski et al. 2000) and education (Alemán & Yeaji 2015) have considerable influence. Such factors are considered when necessary without straying from the main topic. A more in-depth country-specific analysis on individual circumstances is excluded from the scope of this paper.

Literature Review and Model Development

Democracy

In modern society, democracy seems to be the standard to achieve by most countries. Although there have been instances when non-democratic actions have received wide support (Wike et al. 2017), the term *democracy* evokes notions of freedom, individual and human rights, and liberty (Dalton et al. 2007). Diverse ideas converge in the conception of democracy, but all of them encompass a mode of associated living (Offor 2014)—more than a form of government; it's primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience (Dewey 1922). However, even this, rather general, way of defining democracy has its critics (Talisse 2011). This illustrates how difficult it is to define the meaning of 'democracy'—either in academia or in the public domain—beyond considering it *good* (Kekic 2007, Schwertheim 2017). Moreover, multiple types of systems exist under the umbrella of democracy—direct or representative, religion-based—Islamic, Jewish, ethnic (e.g. Malaysia) and different levels of freedom (e.g. liberal or defensive democracies, among others). Still, all represents a mode of associated living.

But, what can be a defining factor? Dahl (2008) focuses on institutions and procedures. Free and fair elections appear as definitive elements (Dalton et al. 2007). However, the dominant benchmark idea—even if it is not a clear one—is that democracy is based on a group of political rights and civil liberties and on a set of values as hoisted by *Western democracies* (Gastil 1990, Schubert 2015). Without excluding the existence of various types of democracy, this research is based on the current popular conception of democracy and the implied standards for achieving it. Finally, there are multiple measurement approaches but we believe that a more gradual approach is more useful for analysis (Elkins 2000). Amongst the best known are: FIW (Freedom House), The Polity Project (Center for Systemic Peace) and The Democracy Index (The Economist Intelligence Unit). For this study, we use the FIW Index based on its well-detailed methodology and disaggregated data, which makes analysis clearer than compound indexes that rely on different sources.

The Path to Democracy

For decades democracy is being seen as the goal of the system change. Yet, even though the notion of democracy is widely spread, most countries have not crossed the democratic threshold fully or even partially (EIU 2018, Freedom House 2018). Lindberg et al. (2018) define the process of democratization as a series of substantial institutional changes that improve the democratic characteristics of a regime, a liberalization process, which, however, is not equal to the consolidation of democracy (Linz & Stepan 1996). A society which has been living for a considerable amount of time under non-democratic systems could hardly embrace *full democracy* immediately; a gradual transition is needed. This means changes—sometimes drastic—in institutions and procedures, and the possibility of causing some institutional chaos. Moreover, democracy and democratization could introduce new issues and exacerbate weaknesses (Huntington 1993). These weaknesses become more critical in less developed systems, resulting in *democratic backsliding*—a decline in the quality of democracy (Waldner & Lust 2018). Be it populism, economic inequalities or social discontent (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017, Waldner & Lust 2018), democratization is probably at its most vulnerable when it has not reached the consolidation stage.

Democratization, then, is not a simple process. If it were simple, transitioning should be a smooth replicable task. History proves the contrary (Lindberg et al. 2018).

Certainly, democratic ideas have become more prominent over the last centuries. However, looking at the different waves of democratization and the results from movements such as the Arab Spring, and the recent rise of populist leaders surfacing on the international scene, a more complex picture appears. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit (2018), the vast majority of democracies (full or flawed) are concentrated in North America, Western Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. As exposed in the previous section, democracy is measured and based on the values of the Western democracies. What is commonly considered as a concept of modern democracy grew within the Western civilization. These values facilitated the existence of democratic institutions and processes based on popular will, progressive civil rights and freedoms until its current shape. It is not democracy which gave birth to a democratic culture, but culture which gave birth to a democratic system.

Culture as a Factor for Democratization

If defining democracy is a challenging topic, culture is just as evasive. Concepts such as *Political culture*, akin to political studies, are subject to analysis and debate, classification and reclassification based on diverse aspects (Almond & Verba 1989, Lijphart 1968, Stewart 1988). However, we take an approach that is separated from political perspectives on culture. Different cultural determinants have been explored and measured in a number of research areas (e.g. cross-cultural management that focuses on cultural differences) (Hofstede 1984, House et al. 2002, Trompenaars 1993) but for the purposes of our study we have employed Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, which is one of the most used measurement systems in management. According to Hofstede (1984) culture is *the programming of the human mind with which one group distinguishes itself from another group. Such a definition could be logically related to the definition for a nation* given by the political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson, where the nation is understood as an imagined political community (Anderson 1991). Further parallels can be drawn in order to facilitate the acceptance of Hofstede's model in political sciences, as this model has been used in a number of political studies relating to the economic performance of countries (Franke et al. 1991), cultural individualism concerning macro- and micro-economics (Gouveia & Ros 2000) and corruption (Husted 1999, Seleim & Bonti 2009).

The Model

The majority of current measurement systems focus on the *political culture* of communities, trying to evaluate the type and level of political participation, attitudes towards politics, and towards power itself (Almond & Verba, 1989), but some concerns have been raised regarding the comprehensiveness of the results, suggesting that some responses on the affinity to specific political values could be more of a lip service rather than true feelings (Schubert 2015). To address this issue, Hofstede's method provides an approach concentrated on wider social aspects—work and private life—which can help address biases. At the same time, the simplicity of Hofstede's questionnaire—30 items including demographics—makes it easy to apply, analyze and understand as a whole.

Methodology

We use the Freedom in the World Index (2018) and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (2019, 2015) databases as sources for the analysis. Both run on a scale from 0-100. Freedom in the World (2018) data was retrieved from the Freedom House webpage, and Hofstede's Cultural values were retrieved from the dimension data matrix (2015), which were then complemented with data from Hofstede's webpage in order to include as many countries with complete data as possible from hofstede-insights.com and geerthofstede.com. The sample size consisted of 77 countries, corresponding to all countries for which

complete data on cultural values were found. This represents roughly a third of all countries (210) in the FIW index.

For analysis, we created a linear regression equation model to describe the relationship between democracy and culture. The model attempts to predict FIW total scores from the six dimensions of Hofstede. Basic descriptive statistics present the prowess and problems of the model, and plot analysis helps with the result's interpretation. Second, an identification of outliers was performed by taking the most significant scores proportional to the deviation from the prediction and inversely proportional to the prediction in order to identify the countries with less democratic cultures, as they represent the main interest of this analysis. Following an inspection of the outliers and their cultural neighbors, some suggestions and points of interest were generated. Finally, a simple correlation between items from the two frameworks was made, aiming to provide a more detailed analysis of the relations between *cultural values* and *democratic elements*.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Regional group*	#	% of the regional group	Development of the country**	#
Western European & Others	23	82	Developed	35
Eastern European	15	65	Developing	38
Asia & Pacific	19	35	Transition	4
Latin America	6			
Caribbean	11	33		
Africa	9	17		
Total	77			

*Based on UN regional groups

**According to the UN WESP report

Results and Discussion

As observed in Table 1, the group Western European & Others has the highest (82%) of representation. The countries in this group also correspond to *Western democratic* systems and are the most developed economically (35).

Democracy and National Culture - Overall Statistical Analysis

Linear regression model. Dependent Variable: Overall Score (Freedom House, 2018). Independent variables: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Table 2. Model Summary ANOVA & Coefficients

Summary	R ² =	SE=	Sig<
.50	1.89	.00	
Coefficients	B		
Constant	47.68	17.48	
PDI	-.39	.15	.00
IDV	.33	.13	.01
MAS	-.15	.11	.01
UAI	.25	.10	.18
LTO	.27	.10	.01
IND	.28	.11	.01

The model summary (Table 2) shows that predicted democratic score is accurate to a 50 percent, which is considered very high. Significance values give validity to the idea of the whole Hofstede's culture construct is needed instead of only one or two dimensions. However, the standard error (1.89) is quite high. This will make more sense in the residual plot, and is a critical point of this paper.

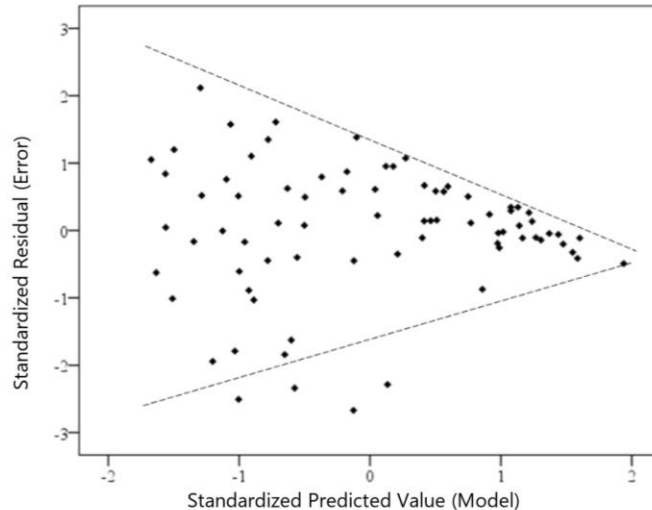


Figure 1. Residual (error) Scatterplot

Source: The author

The residual plot of triangular shape in Figure 1 gives some meaningful insights: First, there is no distinctive tendency—to positive or negative—in the *error* terms. Second, there is heteroscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan Test $p=.02$), which is common in cross-sectional studies. The lower the predicted value, the higher the spread in the *error* terms. Although this situation reduces significantly the accuracy in the model, it is a clue. The lower the predicted value, the more the real-world values differ from it. This could mean that even if a culture is to have a predicted low democracy score, actual values differ the most. Such interpretation gives a positive outlook on what can be made to achieve a more democratic system. There are significant possibilities in transitioning to a more democratic system (liberalization), independently of the national culture. However, a number of issues could stem from such a process as well. Culture does matter, and many cultures are not aligned with the pursued democratic values, making democracy unstable and democratic transformation harder (Park & Shin 2006). These results are in line with the concept of countries with democratic political culture (Dahl 2008). But, how to address the problems from this mismatch with culture?

One option is to change the standards associated with democracy. Democracy standards and perception change with time. In the future, a different standard or range of standards could be accepted. Ethnic, religious, autocratic and other types of systems could become part of a broader way of thinking about democracy in the general imaginary. States could gain more power or a *laissez-faire* approach could become a new standard. Globalization or nationalist ideas could modify the understanding of democracy but predictions are difficult at this stage. Another option is changing the culture. Culture does change, albeit slowly. Moreover, in the inexorable globalization of the world, despite current backlash movements, culture may be starting to converge (Smith 1990).

The future could bring a more homogenous culture or set of values that could shape a new standard in democracy or other political systems. Another option is that the *outliers*, the best democratic representatives from culturally *not-prone-to-democracy* countries, increase their influence and

consequently influence democratic values outside of their borders. Out of the two conjectures, the second seems more plausible.

Table 3 shows the top 20 and low 10 outlier countries according to the FIW and the created model.

Table 3. Top and Low Ranked FIW & Model

Top 20						Low 10		
#	FIW 2018	Model	#	FIW 2018	Model	#	FIW 2018	Model
1	Sweden	Netherlands	11	Portugal	Norway	1	Turkey	China
2	Norway	Sweden	12	Switzerland	Malta	2	Thailand	Singapore
3	Finland	Austria	13	Japan	Iceland	3	Iraq	Hong Kong
4	Netherlands	Belgium	14	Ireland	Finland	4	Venezuela	Bangladesh
5	Canada	Switzerland	15	Belgium	Australia	5	Egypt	Egypt
6	New Zealand	New Zealand	16	Iceland	Canada	6	Russia	Albania
7	Luxembourg	Denmark	17	Austria	Lithuania	7	Vietnam	Iraq
8	Australia	Germany	18	Germany	U.S.A.	8	Iran	Burkina Faso
9	Uruguay	United Kingdom	19	United Kingdom	France	9	China	Philippines
10	Denmark	Luxembourg	20	Estonia	Latvia	10	Saudi Arabia	Malaysia

Bold=both sides

As can be seen, 15 countries are present in both FIW and Model columns under Top 20 in Table 3. The model is quite precise when it comes to the highest-ranking countries, as was also seen from the scatterplot. One important thing to note is the regional clusters. Countries with high democratic-culture are in regional groups, namely Europe, USA and Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Cultural or societal clusters were identified by the GLOBE Project (Grove 2005). Moreover, they are precisely those part of the UN's Western European and Others groups which are considered developed countries. As anticipated, Western democracies fit the model almost to perfection. On the other hand, the Low 10 is far less precise as expected from the residual scatterplot. Only China, Egypt, and Iraq repeat on both sides.

Outliers

This section identifies the outliers from the scatterplot as described in the methodology. There is no in-depth analysis of these countries as in the opinion of the author, more extensive knowledge of the country situation, culture, and language is needed.

Table 4. Outliers

#	Model (Top 10)	Model (Low 10)	#	Model (Top 10)	Model (Low 10)
1	Slovakia	Egypt	6	Albania	China
2	Cape Verde	Jordan	7	India	Turkey
3	Ghana	Thailand	8	Uruguay	Iran
4	Portugal	Vietnam	9	Philippines	Saudi Arabia
5	Romania	Venezuela	10	Slovenia	Russia

(Chile: 11th)

The focus of the discussion will be on the left side of Table 4 (Top 10). However, the countries on the right side (Low 10) present countries which have much room for growth in the area of democracy. Note that some of those countries find themselves in recent or not-so-recent dictatorial regimes, which plunge their values.

Neighbour's Comparison

Culture tends to be more similar between countries with historical connections. They share different bonds and have similarities in culture, which allow for drawing lines of comparison between them.

Table 5. Outliers and Cultural Neighbors

Country	Predicted Value	Real Value (FIW)	Difference
East Europe			
Slovakia	50.36	89	38.64
Slovenia	74.99	93	18.01
Ukraine	59.04	62	2.96
Hungary	92.03	72	-20.03
Romania	58.34	84	25.66
Albania	46.08	68	21.92
West Europe			
Portugal*	70.88	97	26.12
Spain	83.12	94	10.88
Brazil	72.53	78	5.47
Africa			
Ghana*	50.47	83	32.53
Cape Verde*	59.41	90	30.59
Burkina Faso	43.94	60	16.06
Nigeria	56.02	50	-6.02
East Asia			
Philippines*	41.15	62	20.85
Indonesia	51.9	64	12.10
Malaysia	40.93	45	4.07
Taiwan	80.37	93	12.63
Central Asia			
India	56.15	77	20.85
Bangladesh	48.09	45	-3.09
Pakistan	54.47	43	-11.47
Latin America			
Uruguay	77.75	98	20.25
Chile	76.02	94	17.98
Argentina	80.34	83	2.66
Brazil	73.82	78	4.18

*Outliers

Of course, neighboring countries can have different cultures because of inaccessible borders, different languages, or even religions. Similarly, faraway lands can have cultural connections, such as former

colonies and present relations. It could be challenging to ascertain which countries are *cultural neighbors* but in order to present the outliers, we use physical and historical neighbors.

East Europe: Slovakia and Slovakia

Table 5 shows that despite East Europe's difficult path to democracy over the last century, countries from the region showcase above-average democratic scores. Exceptions are Ukraine (diff 2.96), with its difficult political climate, and Hungary (diff -20.03), performing much lower than expected. From the list, only Ukraine is not an EU member candidate. Slovakia, Romania, and Slovenia present a high score in the FIW even when the model indicates they should have a score below Ukraine (59.04). Albania (46.08)—cataloged as partially free, has a real score (68) significantly higher than the predicted values. The point of interest is the role of institutional constraints placed by the EU as part of accession requirements and procedures, as well as the role of local cultural values in upholding democratic values, especially in the cases when the two are not aligned (e.g. why does Hungary underperform substantially despite being part of the EU?).

Western Europe: Portugal

Portugal is an EU member with strong connections to Latin America—e.g. Spain—through its former colony Brazil that has long experienced difficulties in establishing a healthy democracy. The difference between real and predicted value for Portugal (70.88) is not as striking as for Slovakia (50.36). However, Portugal presents the highest real score and the lowest predicted score among its neighbors. Point of interest is the institutional constraints, and the effect of being part of the EU, and the impact of Latin culture on democracy.

Africa: Cape Verde and Ghana

The first African country in the FIW list is Cape Verde (90), which ranks very high followed by Ghana (83). However, in the case of Cape Verde it may be wise to underline that it is an island nation of 540,000 inhabitants, which could make the comparison with its continental, more populous and larger, counterparts less accurate. Next in the FIW are Ghana with Burkina Faso (60), as neighbors which have a comparatively high score than the predicted value (43.94), but still score relatively low on the FIW. Due to lack of cultural (complete) data on other neighbors, the nearest country to compare the model with is Nigeria, which ranks low. Nevertheless, these four countries present a similar cultural profile. Neighbors of Ghana, such as Cote d'Ivoire and Togo also rank quite low on the FIW index. Point of interest is that Ghana and to a certain extent Burkina Faso appear as an exception in the zone—the role of ECOWAS, Commonwealth of nations or the *Organization Internationale de la Francophonie*—in creating and maintaining democratic institutions.

East Asia: Philippines

South-East Asia presents a group of countries that appear as partially free on the FIW index. An exception is Taiwan, which presents a predicted value (80.37) high and a real value (93) even higher. The Philippines qualifies as an outlier according to the model even though the FIW score (62) is low compared to the top scorers. Point of interest is the sharp cultural differences between Taiwan and other SE island nations, and the cultural diversity and heritage from the colonial period in South-East Asia.

Central Asia: India

India is considered *free* by the FIW, as opposed to its neighbors. Point of interest is that democratic values exist in the densely populated, large, and diverse country.

American continent: Uruguay and Chile

Chile ranks 11th on the FIW index, but is a significant outlier both in South America and Latin America. Chile is the wealthiest country in Latin-America followed by Uruguay (Sen Nag, 2018) and Uruguay tops the Prosperity Index for Latin America and the Caribbean followed by Costa Rica and Chile (Brien 2018).

Table 6. FIW & Hofstede Individual Item Parameter Correlations

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	IND
A1	-.37**	.37**	-.14	.21*	.08	.33**
A2	-.41**	.45**	-.13	.16	.09	.28**
A3	-.45**	.49**	-.13	.11	.06	.28**
B1	-.38**	.44**	-.14	.18	.12	.26*
B2	-.39**	.40**	-.13	.16	.10	.31**
B3	-.46**	.48**	-.16	.16	.15	.31**
B4	-.47**	.49**	-.18	.09	.09	.34**
C1	-.43**	.44**	-.17	.10	.17	.27**
C2	-.61**	.58**	-.18	-.11	.16	.33**
C3	-.61**	.55**	-.23*	-.03	.10	.33**
D1	-.59**	.54**	-.18	-.02	.18	.33**
D2	-.35**	.30**	-.11	.06	-.02	.33**
D3	-.37**	.37**	-.16	.08	.02	.36**
D4	-.31**	.35**	-.12	.11	.11	.23*
E1	-.41**	.44**	-.14	.12	.22*	.18
E2	-.40**	.44**	-.16	.06	.13	.25*
E3	-.50**	.61**	-.13	.11	.19	.21*
F1	-.66**	.54**	-.21*	0	.13	.37**
F2	-.61**	.59**	-.20	.03	.23*	.26*
F3	-.53**	.52**	-.23*	.04	.22*	.24*
F4	-.52**	.49**	-.26*	.08	.16	.25*
G1	-.43**	.45**	-.19	.11	.28**	.20
G2	-.59**	.64**	-.17	-.03	.20*	.25*
G3	-.50**	.50**	-.16	.06	.25*	.29**
G4	-.59**	.58**	-.21*	-.10	.27**	.29**
ADD Q	.21*	-.12	.15	-.07	.12	-.12

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Both countries emerged from dictatorships around the time as most of the other Latin-American countries—1980s and 90s—but have been able to maintain democratic values in a region prone to corruption scandals and populist governments. Points of interest are the strong links to Western Europe, effect of vast natural resources on governance, and generally high scores in comparison to Asia and Africa.

Dimensions

Table 6 shows the correlations and its significance between the Cultural Dimensions and the questionnaire grouped items. The correlation is performed for two reasons—for simplifying the analysis and for usefulness, as the regression model represents the model's interactions and not real data. In this section, we discuss only some of the significant correlations reported in Table 6. However, we should take the analysis with a grain of salt because societies with high power distance tend to be rank low in individualism. Question labels are grouped as following: Electoral Process (A), Political Pluralism and Participation (B), Functioning of Government (C), Freedom of Expression and Belief (D), Associational and Organizational Rights (E), Rule of Law (F), Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (G), and Additional Discretionary Political Rights Question (ADD Q). Further explanations on each question can be found at https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Methodology_FIW_2018_for_website.pdf

Power Distance Index (PDI)

The Power Distance Index indicates that the higher the societal tolerance toward hierarchy and differences in power without the need for justification, the more are the negative effects for: any Electoral process (A), Political pluralism and participation (B), Freedom of Expression (D) and Associational and Organizational Rights (E). Even in the case of widespread protests or challenges to the established power, the institutions including the military, which have the capability or legal power to act, could easily choose to cater the desire of their superiors. As a result, Openness, transparency, corruption (C2, C3), Rule of Law (F) and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (G) also correlate negatively to the PDI, as elaborated by Seleim and Bonti (2009).

Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

Individualism correlates positively to electoral processes. Low values relate to collectivist societies where individuals live in tightly-knit groups with close ties between people. Such societies score low in Electoral processes, Political pluralism and participation (B4). The sense of loyalty and belonging to a group—ideological, religious, ethnic—could make these societies less *law-abiding* when it comes to elections and other fundamentals of democracy. Individuals in key positions during electoral processes would tend to favor their group if there is no mechanism in place to prevent this. Thus, in order to serve the group, Corruption (C2, C3) rises, Rule of Law (F) fails and Freedom of expression (D) and Individual rights (G) decline. Associational and Organizational Rights (E) appear to be easier to establish in groups within more collectivist societies. However, the formation of groups, which have the potential to expose figures of dominance to peril, could be significantly hindered.

Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)

Electoral processes and political participation (B1, B3, B4) and the level of Indulgence are positively correlated. A society with a low score in Indulgence, which employs strict social norms, scores low on democracy. Strict societal norms could hinder the possibility of change and the notion of freedom among individuals; for example, refraining from supporting a particular leader because of opposing ideology or ideas which society at large deems as acceptable. One would expect that a more restrictive society would have more capacity to tackle corruption (C2, C3) due to its social norms (e.g. the belief that a popular religious person would not steal) but there is no correlation between strict social norms and decreased levels of corruption. Finally, Freedom of expression (D) and Social freedoms (G3, G4) appear more widely spread in societies with higher levels of Indulgence. Rule of law (F1) possibly benefits from less tacit social norms and expectations and from relying on written formal law.

Conclusion

The current dominant idea of modern democracy is based on individual freedoms and civil rights. Democratic values correspond to the societal values where modern democracy formed, or in other words, Western democracies. However, democracy, as any social system, falls under the influence of culture. This correlation could present certain issues when the concept for the desired democratic system and the values that sustain it are not fully or partially compatible with the local culture (Schubert 2015). Theoretically, changing the values underlying the dominant idea of democracy could be an answer to the issue but even if the modern international standards remain roughly unchanged, there is still room for growth for the less democracy-aligned cultures. This growth can be achieved by looking closer at their cultural neighbors rather than at democracy-aligned cultures whose values may be far from local ones. Culture has an important impact on the functioning of the democratic structure. Democracy relies on the power of individual citizens over the government structure. A society that accepts as natural its lack of influence on the high echelons of power will have difficulties maintaining a democratic system. Therefore, individual political rights and civil liberties are fundamental for the functioning of democracies.

Contribution

This paper identifies various points of interest for academics and practitioners. We hope that the included statistical tests and results will encourage the use of Hofstede's model in academic research in the political sciences as a complementary tool in analysis. It could help avoid biases when looking at political views (Schubert 2015) and provide a different approach for the analysis of political systems and citizens' cultural values. Other points of interest aimed at experts and practitioners, revolve around the idea that democratization should not be assumed as a dichotomy but as a process of liberalization which requires sustained efforts. It might be useful to look at successful democratization policies of "cultural neighbors", instead of drawing comparisons with the most developed democracies. Third, the value of institutional and productive power in democratization processes (Barnett & Duvall 2005) and in maintaining internal democratic institutions. Finally, high *Power Distance* could lead to concentration of power, increasing the possibility of corruption in different areas of the state, and to reducing individual rights, presenting significant risk to democratization. Low individualism values may lead to issues linked to ignoring specific individual or community needs and prioritizing the interest of larger population groups. High indulgence could promote political participation and pluralism, transparency, freedom of expression, independence of the judiciary, and social and economic freedom.

Limitation and Future Research

Hofstede's method does not encompass all possible factors but could serve as a useful complementary tool. It also needs to be mentioned that from the almost 200 countries in the FIW index only 77 countries could be analyzed because of lack of complete data from the cultural survey. Most of missing data comes from African and central Asian countries. Values from these counties could help get a better picture on outliers. In-depth analysis of each outlier case can only be made through specialized knowledge of the mentioned countries and regional cultures and specific political systems, and is, therefore, open to future research. The points of interest presented in the *neighbor comparison* section could be an area for future research from the cultural perspective.

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