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## Political Culture, Mass Beliefs, and Value Change

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### Overview

This chapter examines the role of mass beliefs and value change in democratization processes—a factor that is generally underestimated. Building on one of the central assumptions of political culture theory—the congruence thesis—we argue that mass beliefs are of critical importance for a country’s chances to become and remain democratic. For mass beliefs

determine whether a political system is accepted as legitimate or not, which has a major impact on a regime’s likelihood of surviving. As the motivational source of opposition or support for a regime, mass beliefs play a crucial role in deciding whether a regime flourishes or is overthrown.

## Introduction

The idea that a society's political order reflects its people's prevailing beliefs and values—that is, its political culture—has a long tradition. Aristotle (1962 [350 BC]) argued in Book IV of *Politics* that democracy emerges in middle-class communities in which the citizens share an egalitarian participatory orientation. And many subsequent theorists have claimed that the question of which political system emerges and survives in a country depends on the orientations that prevail among its people. Thus, Charles-Louis de Montesquieu (1989 [1748]: 106) argued in *De L'Esprit des Loix* that the laws by which a society is governed reflect its people's dominant mentality: Whether a nation is constituted as a tyranny, monarchy or democracy depends, respectively, on the prevalence of anxious, honest or civic orientations. Likewise, Alexis de Tocqueville (1994 [1835]: 29) postulated in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* that the flourishing of democracy in the USA reflects the liberal and participatory orientations of the American people.

In modern times the most dramatic illustration of the fact that a political order requires compatible orientations among its people was the failure of democracy in Weimar Germany. Although on paper, the democratic constitution adopted by in Germany after World War I seemed an ideally designed set of institutions, it never took root among a people who were accustomed to the authoritarian system they had previously experienced. When the new democracy failed to provide order and prosperity, Hitler came to power through democratic elections. The failure of democracy in Germany had such catastrophic consequences that it troubled social scientists, psychologists, and public opinion researchers for many decades. And the research inspired by this disaster seemed to indicate that democracy is fragile when it is a 'democracy without democrats' (Bracher 1971 [1955]).

In this vein, Harold Lasswell (1951: 473, 484, 502) claimed that whether democratic regimes emerge and survive largely depends on mass beliefs. Similarly, when Seymour Martin Lipset (1959: 85–9) analysed why modernization is conducive to democracy, he concluded that modernization changes mass orientations in ways that make people supportive of democratic principles, such as political pluralism and popular control over power. More recently, Samuel Huntington (1991: 69) argued that rising mass desires for freedom provide the intervening mechanism that explains why modernization has given rise to democratizing movements in scores of countries in recent decades.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963: 498) and Eckstein (1966: 1) introduced the term 'congruence,' claiming that political regimes become stable only in so far as their authority patterns meet people's authority beliefs—'regardless of regime type', as Eckstein (1998: 3) notes. According to this congruence thesis, authoritarian regimes are stable when the people believe in the **legitimacy** of dictatorial powers, just as democratic regimes are stable in so far as people believe that political authority ought to be subject to popular controls.

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005: 187) have extended these propositions to suggest that in order to endure, political regimes must supply democracy at levels that satisfy the people's demand for it. In support of this claim, they provide empirical evidence demonstrating that, during the global wave of democratization, those countries in which mass aspirations for democracy exceeded the extent to which democratic institutions actually existed around 1990, subsequently made the greatest progress in democratization; while those countries in which the supply of democracy exceeded the level of mass aspirations for democracy, actually tended to become *less* democratic during the subsequent decade.

## The Role of Mass Beliefs in the Democratization Literature

Most of the recent democratization literature has paid surprisingly little attention to the role of mass beliefs in democratization. This applies to both of the two dominant types of approaches in the democratization literature: structure-focused approaches and action-focused approaches.

Structure-focused approaches emphasize structural aspects of society, such as modernization, income equality, group divisions, class coalitions, religious composition, colonial heritage, or world system position (Doorenspleet 2005). Advocates of these approaches perform sophisticated statistical analyses to demonstrate how much given structural factors increase or decrease the likelihood that a country will become and remain democratic. But these analyses specify no mechanism by which these structures translate into the political actions, identifying no actors—whether elites or masses—by whom which democratization is initiated, accomplished, consolidated, and further pursued. But structural factors, such as high levels of education or GNP, can not in themselves bring about democratization—this requires action by human beings.

The second type of approach focuses on such actions. It describes democratization processes through the elite actions and mass actions that make democratization happen (Casper and Taylor 1996). But describing, reconstructing, classifying, and simulating these actions, does not explain them. An object, such as democratization, can only be explained by causes that are exogenous to it, or the explanation is tautological. Action-focused approaches enrich our understanding with telling narratives and **thick descriptions**. They clarify how democratization was attained. But fail to explain *why* it came about, which requires identifying the conditions that gave rise to given actions and motivated given people to carry them out. This failure is all the more glaring when it is clear that there are structural configurations under which democratizing actions

are significantly more likely than under others. For example, virtually all of the countries that democratized in the global wave from 1986 to 1995 were middle-income countries; almost none of them were low-income countries.

Structure-focused and action-focused approaches have a common blind spot: How to get ‘from structure to action’. Structure-focused approaches are unable to tell us how the structures they emphasize translate into the actions that accomplish democratization. Action-focused approaches, on the other hand, leave us uninformed about how the actions accomplishing democratization grow out of structural features. The problem is that neither structure-focused approaches nor action-focused approaches take mass beliefs into account—and it is these mass beliefs that constitute the missing link between these two types of approaches. Why is this so?

Mass beliefs are needed to translate ‘structure into action’. All collective actions, including those that bring about democratization, are inspired by shared goals (Tarrow 1998). Hence, if structural aspects of society play a role in making democratizing actions more likely, these structures *must* give rise to orientations that make people believe in democracy as a desirable goal. Mass beliefs are thus the intervening variable between social structure and collective action. Ignoring this, democratization processes cannot be adequately understood.

### Box 9.1 Key points

- The democratization literature is dominated by structure-focused approaches and action-focused approaches.
- Both approaches tend to neglect mass beliefs as a potential source of democratizing pressures, even though these beliefs help translating structures into actions.

## Mass Demands for Democracy

There is a tendency in the political culture literature to equate popular preferences for democracy with actual mass demands for democracy (Seligson 2007). But popular preferences for democracy do not automatically translate into mass pressures to democratize.

Preferences for democracy are often superficial or purely instrumental (Schedler and Sarsfield 2006). At this point in history, most people in most countries say favourable things about democracy simply because it has become socially desirable and has positive connotations. Preferring democracy for these reasons is a *superficial* preference for democracy (Inglehart 2003). Because Western democracies are obviously prosperous, some people believe that if their country becomes democratic, it will become rich. This is an *instrumental* preference for democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001): people seek democracy for other reasons than the political freedoms that are its defining qualities.

Mass preferences for democracy are widespread almost everywhere, but if these preferences are superficial or instrumental, they will not motivate people to struggle or risk their lives to obtain democracy. People are most likely to do so if they give high priority to the freedoms that democracy provides. Only when democracy is valued as a good in itself, are strong mass pressures likely to be brought to bear on elites—whether to attain democratic rights and freedoms when they are absent, or to defend these freedoms when they are endangered.

But how do we know that people support democracy for its defining freedoms? Democracy is an emancipative achievement that frees people from oppression and discrimination and empowering them 'to live the lives they have reason to value' (Sen 1999). Thus, the values motivating democracy emphasize equality, liberty, tolerance and empowering people to choose their leaders and to participate in decision-making. People who value these goals over others, emphasize emancipative values. If they support democracy (as most people do), they are more likely to be motivated by the fact that democracy provides freedoms,

than by the belief that it provides prosperity or other instrumental motivations. The beliefs that motivate people's preference for democracy are as important as the fact that they say they prefer it (Bratton and Gymiah-Boadi 2005).

Mass pressures for democracy do not necessarily emerge simply because a large share of the public says they prefer democracy to its alternatives. People may give lip service to democracy for shallow or instrumental reasons. But if people's preference for democracy reflects the fact that they place a high value on freedom and self-expression, they are relatively likely to pursue democratization actively. Hence, in order to know whether people prefer democracy *intrinsically*—that is, for its defining freedoms—one needs to find out how strongly they emphasize emancipative values. People's responses to the questions shown in Table 9.1 enable us to measure the extent to which they emphasize emancipative values.

Emancipative values give priority to **gender** equality over patriarchy, tolerance over conformity, autonomy over authority, and **participation** over security, as shown in Table 9.1. Emancipative values are closely related to self-expression values as described by Inglehart and Welzel (2005), who demonstrate that their measure of self-expression values has an inherently emancipative impetus and use the terms self-expression values and emancipative values interchangeably. Since these values cover a broad syndrome of interrelated beliefs, representing a coherent worldview, they can be measured in a number of different ways, all of which tap the same underlying dimension. The measure of emancipative values used here is conceptually more coherent and focuses more explicitly on the theme of participation than does self-expression values. Although they use different indicators and are operationalized in different ways, the two measures correlate very strongly (at  $r=.90$ ), an indication of how robust the underlying dimension is. The theoretical explanation of the factors that give rise to self-expression values applies equally to emancipative values.

**Table 9.1** An Index of Emancipative Values

Underlying dimension	Emancipative VALUES (correlation with self-expression values: $r = .90$ )			
	.76	.72	.63	.54
Factor loadings*				
Belief in	Gender equality over Patriarchy	Tolerance over Conformity	Autonomy over Authority	Participation over Security (Postmaterialist values)
Items	Agree that woman can live by herself Disagree that men better political leaders Disagree education is more important for boys Disagree that men have more right to a job	Agree that abortion can be justified Agree that homosexuality is justified Agree that divorce is justified	Autonomy chosen Imagination chosen Obedience not chosen Faith not chosen	Priority to giving people say in gov-ern-ment over order and stable prices Priority to giving people more say in local affairs over strong defense and fighting crime Priority to protecting freedom of speech over order and stable prices

\* Factor analyses of over 340,000 respondents from 90 countries in the 5 waves of the World Values Surveys 1981–2007. Subindices are the arithmetic means of their respective component variables, each normalized to a scale with minimum 0 and maximum 1.0. The Emancipative values Index is the arithmetic mean of the four subindices. If one subindex is missing, the Emancipative values Index is the arithmetic mean of the remaining three components.

Countries of different cultural zones around the world differ surprisingly little in the extent to which the public says they prefer democracy. At this point in history, democracy has become the most widely preferred system around the world, even in countries governed by authoritarian institutions (Klingemann 1999). But countries differ considerably in the

extent to which their people prefer democracy *intrinsically*—and the difference is important: if intrinsic preferences for democracy are weak, the actual level of democracy is low; but if intrinsic preferences for democracy are strong, the actual level of democracy is generally high (Welzel and Inglehart 2006).

## Regime Legitimacy

Some scholars assume that autocracies are always illegitimate, as far as the general public is concerned, and that overwhelming majorities of ordinary people almost always prefer democracy to autocracy (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). In this view, autocracies lack legitimacy and are able to survive only because they are able to repress opposing majorities. Historically, this is inaccurate: in the past, absolute monarchies and more recently, communist dictatorships sometimes had widespread mass support

Unfortunately, people do not always support democracy, and when they do, they do not necessarily support it intrinsically, for the freedoms that define it. Evidence from the World Values Surveys and other cross-national surveys indicate that emancipative mass beliefs vary dramatically cross-nationally, and when these beliefs are weak, people give priority to authority and strong leadership over freedom and mass participation. This does not prevent people from becoming dissatisfied with an incumbent authoritarian regime's policies and representatives when they perform poorly. But disillusionment about policies and authorities does not mean that people view dictatorial powers as inherently illegitimate. Even dissatisfied people can continue to prefer strong leaders and authoritarian rule. They might wish to have one dictator replaced by another without rejecting authoritarian rule. In fact, when emancipative values are weak, people are more likely to accept limitations on democratic freedoms for the sake of national order or other goals. Another important factor is that the absence of emancipative values biases people's understanding of democracy in an authoritarian direction. As evidence from the World Values Surveys demonstrates, when emancipative values are weak or absent, people may con-

sider authoritarian regimes to be democratic: their underlying values emphasize good economic performance and order, rather than political rights and civil liberties.

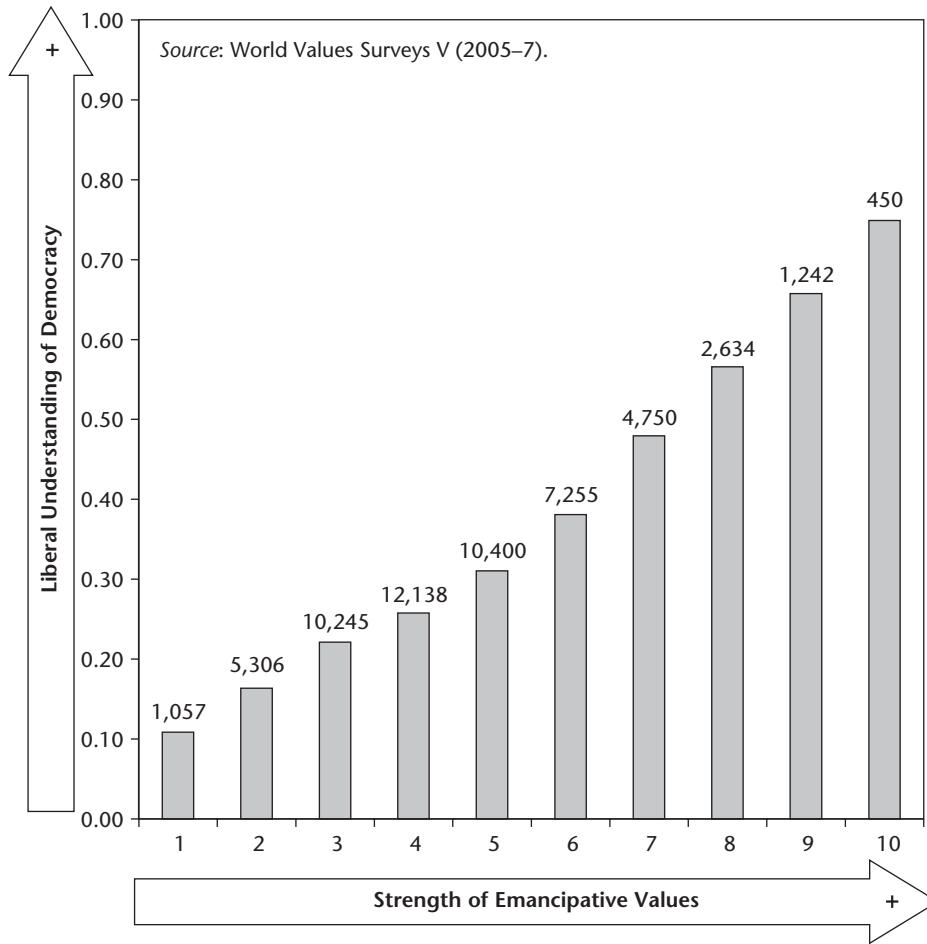
It is not true that the publics of authoritarian regimes always prefer democracy and that authoritarian regimes survive simply because of their repressive capacities. But intrinsic preferences for democracy can and do emerge in authoritarian regimes when they experience a modernization process that changes ordinary people's value priorities and action repertoires.

This theory of intergenerational value change advanced by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) holds that virtually everyone likes freedom, but they do not necessarily give it top priority. People's priorities reflect their socioeconomic conditions, placing the highest subjective value on the most pressing needs. Since material sustenance and physical security are the first requirements for survival, under conditions of scarcity, people give top priority to materialistic goals; while under conditions of prosperity, they become more likely to emphasize self-expression and emancipative values. During the past 50 years, rising economic and physical security have led to a gradual intergenerational shift in many countries placing rising emphasis on emancipative values. At the same time, rising levels of education and changes in the occupational structure have made mass publics increasingly articulate and increasingly accustomed to thinking for themselves. Both processes encourage the spread of emancipative values that give priority to gender equality over patriarchy, tolerance over conformity, autonomy over authority, and participation over security. As these beliefs spread, dictatorial regimes tend to lose their legitimacy.

Implicitly, much of the literature assumes that whether people consider a given regime legitimate or not only matters for democracy but not for autocracy (Easton 1965). It matters for democracy because when a majority rejects democracy, antidemocratic forces can become sufficiently widespread to gain power and abandon democratic institutions. Autocracies, in this view, do not need legitimacy, since they can repress even widespread opposition. Hence, as long as an authoritarian regime stays in control

of the army and secret police, it can survive despite mass opposition.

This is inaccurate. Recent cases of democratization demonstrate that when mass opposition grows strong enough, even rigidly repressive authoritarian regimes can be overthrown (Schock 2005). Repression does not necessarily cause mass opposition to break down as soon as it faces repression—indeed, repression has sometimes increased and intensified mass opposition (Francisco 2005). Moreover,



**Fig 9.1** Emancipative beliefs and a liberal understanding of democracy

Notes: Emancipative values are measured as shown in Table 9.1 but broken down into ten categories of increasing strength. Based on a scale from 0 to 1, category 1 measures emancipative beliefs of strength from 0 to .1, category 2 measures strength from .1 to .2 and so on, until category 10 measures strength .9 to 1. The liberal understanding of democracy measures how much people place their definition of democracy on civil rights, free elections, free referenda votes and equal rights for both sexes. The scale has a minimum of 0 for the least liberal and 1 for the most liberal understanding.

the characteristics of the mass opposition itself are important too. Mass opposition has usually failed when it was driven by relatively small and clearly identifiable groups, making it easy to isolate them. But emancipative values tend to become widespread at high levels of economic development, as people gain higher levels of education, material resources, intellectual skills, and networks of connections. At the same time, rising levels of security help make mass emphasis on emancipative values become increasingly widespread. When this happens, large segments of the public have both the resource and a strong motivation to oppose **authoritarianism** (see Figure 9.2). Expanding action repertoires and emancipative values empower ordinary people to mount effective pressures on elites.

Human empowerment nurtures emancipative mass movements in any regime. In autocracies, emancipative movements are likely to oppose the regime, attempting to replace autocracy with democracy. In democracies, emancipative attempt to make their governments more responsive. In both situations, emancipative values tend to transform political institutions.

Figure 9.1 shows how rising emphasis on emancipative values tends to transform people's under-

standing of what democracy means. With low levels of emancipative values, people tend to view democracy as meaning that the economy prospers, unemployed people receive **state** aid, criminals get punished, and other instrumental views. With rising emphasis on emancipative values, they increasingly come to define democracy as meaning that people choose their leaders in free elections, civil rights protect people's liberties, women have equal rights, and people can change the laws. With each additional step on the ladder of progressing emancipative values, people's understanding of democracy takes on a more liberal character, focusing on the freedoms that empower people.

Neither people's understanding of what democracy means, nor the extent to which people give high priority to obtaining democratic institutions, are constants as is assumed in the models proposed by such writers as Boix or Acemoglu and Robinson. Both the meaning of democracy and the priority it holds, reflect mass values that vary according to a society's level of socioeconomic development. Mass beliefs matter, as the political culture school has long claimed: for mass beliefs help determine whether a given regime is accepted as legitimate.

## Economic Performance and Regime Legitimacy

Many scholars have argued that any regime, whether autocracy or democracy, will have mass support as long as it is economically successful (Haggard and Kaufman 1995). On the contrary, we argue that this depends on people's value priorities. The impact of economic success on regime legitimacy varies according to the society's cultural setting, with its impact being contingent on mass values.

Rising emphasis on emancipative values make people value civic freedoms increasingly highly. This happens regardless of whether a country has democratic or authoritarian institutions: emerging emancipative values lead people to place increasing value on civic freedoms. Accordingly, as Figure 9.1 demonstrates, rising emphasis on emancipative

values is linked with a shift toward an increasingly liberal understanding of democracy—and this takes place among both democratic and authoritarian countries.

Rising emphasis on emancipative values make people judge the legitimacy of a regime less and less on the basis of whether it provides order and prosperity, and more and more on the basis of whether it provides freedom. Thus, as emancipative values grow stronger with rising levels of development, legitimacy increasingly depends on whether a regime provides liberty and democracy; with strong emancipative values, economic performance has little effect on people's acceptance of a regime (Hofferbert and Klingemann 1999).

In the long run, this poses a dilemma for autocracies. If they perform economically well over long periods of time, they move toward higher levels of socioeconomic modernization. By increasing people's material means, intellectual skills, and networking skills, modernization widens people's actions repertoires. At the same time, rising levels of existential security bring increasing emphasis on self-expression and emancipative values, making free choice more highly prized, and it value more

obvious, as people increasingly recognize that they need freedom in order to make use of a wider action repertoire. Sustained economic development thus transforms the criteria by which people evaluate regimes, and leads to increasingly skilled and articulate publics that become increasingly effective at challenging authoritarian elites. While economic success legitimizes authoritarian regimes in the early stages of development, it no longer does so at higher levels of economic development.

## The Congruence Thesis

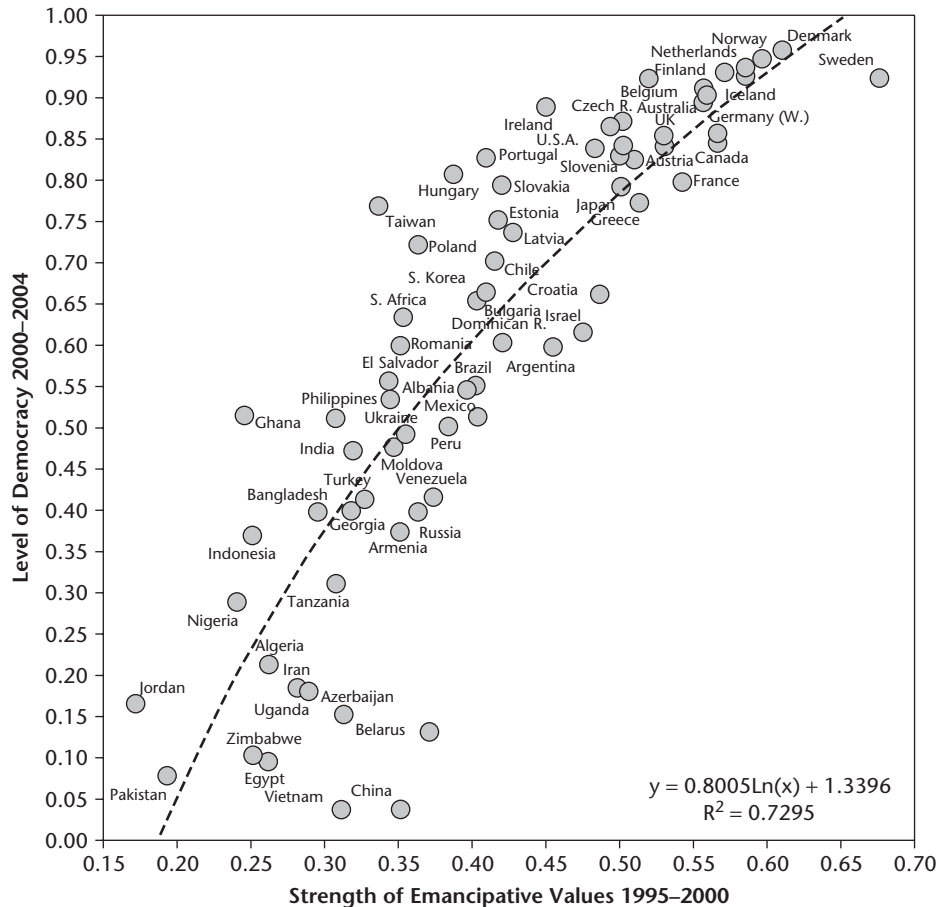
Congruence theory argues that, in order to be stable, the authority patterns characterizing a country's political system must be consistent with the people's prevailing authority beliefs (Eckstein 1966). Thus, authoritarian systems tend to prevail where most people believe in the legitimacy of absolute political power, while democracies should prevail where most people endorse popular control of political power. This claim could not be demonstrated empirically when it first was formulated, since representative survey data measuring people's authority beliefs was only available then for a small number of countries, most of which were rich Western democracies. Congruence theory remained a plausible but unproven theory for many years. Accordingly, there doubts were expressed about the empirical validity of the congruence thesis and its claim that people's legitimacy beliefs are an important determinant of the type of regime that governs them.

One reason for these doubts is the fact that political science has an inherent tendency to emphasise institutional engineering. This viewpoint has many adherents because it implies that one can shape a society by shaping its institutions—which means that political scientists can provide a quick fix for most problems. This encourages a tendency to treat institutions as the explanatory variable *par excellence* and a tendency to reject the idea that culture matters—or that institutions are shaped by cultural factors, since culture reflects deep-seated orientations that are relatively difficult (though not impossible) to reshape (Eckstein 1998). Accordingly, there

is widespread resistance to cultural explanations of political institutions, including the idea that mass beliefs determine what level of democracy is likely to be found in a country (Hadenius and Teorell 2005). The fact that mainstream political science has a deep-rooted tendency to reject the idea that culture matters, does not prove that it doesn't. This question can only be answered by empirical tests.

Doubts that mass beliefs influence a country's level of democracy have taken two main forms. First, it has been questioned that there is any systematic relationship between mass beliefs and levels of democracy. For example, Seligson (2002) argued that the relationship Ronald Inglehart (1997) found between mass beliefs and democracy is an 'ecological fallacy'. Seligson based this claim on his finding that civic attitudes, such as interpersonal trust, have no significant effect on the extent to which people say they prefer democracy. But as Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2003) demonstrate, Seligson's finding simply confirms that mass preferences for democracy are not necessarily inspired by deep-rooted civic orientations: they may say they prefer it for shallow or instrumental reasons or because of social desirability effects. Only when preferences for democracy are motivated by emancipative self-expression values do they lead to the emergence of democracy in a country.

Since this debate, the World Values Survey has gathered sufficient data to demonstrate that there is a strong and systematic relationship between mass beliefs and levels of democracy. Over a global



**Box 9.2 Key points**

- One can differentiate superficial, instrumental, and intrinsic mass preferences for democracy.
- Intrinsic mass preferences for democracy are inspired by emancipative beliefs and these preferences are the most likely to translate into powerful popular pressures to attain, sustain or deepen democratic freedoms.
- Sustained economic development tends to give rise to emancipative beliefs, but when these beliefs have grown strong in a population, a regime's momentary economic performance becomes less important for people to consider it legitimate.

## Are Emancipative Values Caused by Democracy?

Advocates of **institutional learning theory** argue that people learn to value democracy by living under democratic institutions for many years (Rustow 1970). If this theory is correct, these beliefs can only emerge in countries that have been democratic for many years. And this implies that emancipative values cannot cause democracy to emerge—since they would only appear long after democracy has been established. It also implies that if mass preferences for democracy arise in authoritarian regimes, they must be instrumentally motivated, by goals other than democracy itself such as prosperity. Intrinsic mass preferences for democracy would only emerge through long experience under democratic institutions. Proponents of this view claim that emancipative values are 'endogenous' to democratic institutions (Hadenius and Teorell 2005).

But, as Inglehart and Welzel (2005) demonstrate, high levels of intrinsic support for democracy had emerged in many authoritarian societies *before* they made the transition to democracy. High levels of existential security and the emergence of post-industrial economies had contributed to making self-expression values widespread in such countries as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Estonia, South Korea, and Taiwan before they democratized. An intrinsic valuation of freedom can emerge even in the absence of democracy, provided modernization takes place. By providing rising incomes and other resources, modernization raises ordinary people's sense of existential security, modernization leads to growing

emphasis on emancipatory values. At the same time, rising education, information levels, opportunities to connect with people and other resources, broadens people's action repertoires, further increasing the utility of freedom. In this view, self-expression values emerge and diffuse as a function of modernization, rather than as a function of long-term experience under democratic institutions.

Whether emancipative values emerge from growing resources or from experience with democracy can be tested by a statistical technique called multivariate regression analysis. Using an indicator of a society's accumulated experience with democracy and an indicator of the utility of freedom, we can examine which of the two has a stronger effect on emancipative mass beliefs measured subsequently. The first indicator, called 'democracy stock', has been developed by John Gerring *et al.* (2005) and measures a country's accumulated experience with democracy.<sup>1</sup> The indicator of resources is Tatu Vanhanen's (2003) 'index of power resources', which we prefer to call action resources.<sup>2</sup> The result of this regression analysis is graphically depicted in Figure 9.3 below. It shows that, controlling for each country's length of democratic experience, action resources explain 28 per cent of the cross-national variation in emancipative values. By contrast, controlling for each country's level of action resources, the democratic experience explains virtually none of the variation in emancipative values. Another 36 per cent of variation in emancipative values is explained by the

overlap of action resources and the democratic experience, reflecting the fact that people in countries with a longer democratic history tend to have more action resources. Thus, while democratic experience strengthens emancipative mass beliefs only in so far as it goes with action resources, action resources strengthen emancipative mass beliefs on their own, independent of the democratic experience. Clearly, emancipative mass beliefs are not endogenous to democratic institutions. The idea that the rise of emancipative values is driven by growing resources finds far more empirical support than the idea that it is driven by experience under democracy.

It is possible for democracy to survive even in low-income countries—as India demonstrates. India has a long experience with democracy but the average Indian’s level of resources is still limited—and mass emphasis on emancipative values is also relatively weak in India. Moreover, India’s overall level of democracy is lower than some indicators suggest. Figure 9.2 demonstrates this point, using a broad measure of democracy, averaging four different indicators: the Freedom House political and civil liberties ratings, the Polity autocracy-democracy scores, the CIRI (Cingranelli and Richards) ratings of empowerment and integrity rights,<sup>3</sup> and Vanhanen’s electoral

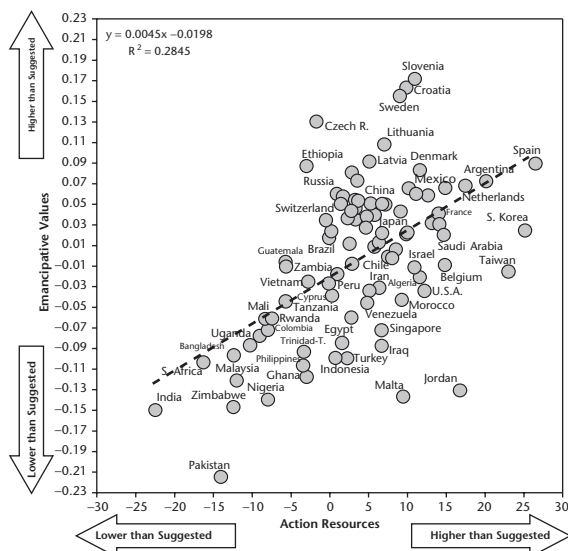


Diagram 9.3a

Vertical axis measures residuals in emancipative values, indicating the extent to which these values exceed (in case of positive numbers) or the extent to which they fall short (in the case of negative numbers) of what a country’s democracy stock suggests. Horizontal axis measures residuals in action resources, indicating the extent to which these resources exceed (in case of positive numbers) or the extent to which they fall short (in case of negative numbers) of what a country’s democracy stock suggests. The residuals in both variables are significantly positively related. This means: a population’s emancipative values exceed (fall short of) its democracy stock to the extent its action resources exceed (fall short of) its democracy stock. In other words, action resources have an effect on emancipative values independent of democracy stock.

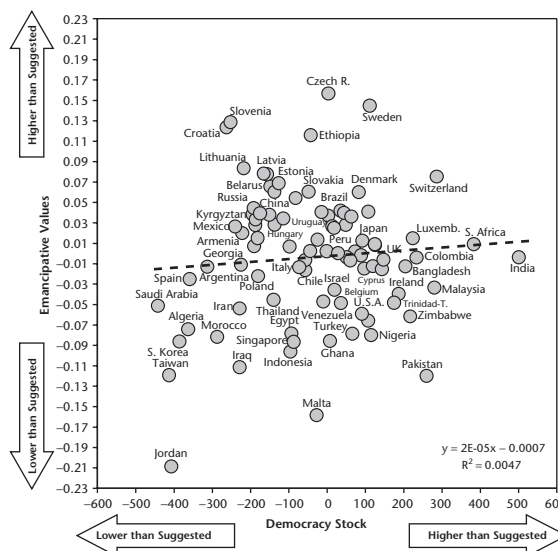


Diagram 9.3b

Vertical axis measures residuals in emancipative values, indicating the extent to which these values exceed (in case of positive numbers) or the extent to which they fall short (in the case of negative numbers) of what a population’s action resources suggest. Horizontal axis measures residuals in democracy stock, indicating the extent to which this stock exceeds (in case of positive numbers) or the extent to which it falls short (in case of negative numbers) of what a population’s action resources suggest. The residuals in both variables are *not* significantly related. This means: a population’s emancipative values do *not* exceed (fall short of) its action resources to the extent its democracy stock exceeds (falls short of) its action resources. In other words, democracy stock has *no* effect on emancipative values independent of action resources.

**Fig 9.3** The effects of action resources and level of democracy on emancipative values, controlling for the other variable

- (a) Impact of resources on values, controlling for each country’s level of democracy.
- (b) Impact of a society’s level of democracy on values, controlling for its level of action resources.

democracy data. Across these four indicators, India's democratic performance is moderate, particularly because of its low scoring on the Vanhanen index (reflecting low voter **turnout**) and its high degree of violations of citizens' rights, as documented in the CIRI data. Taking these indicators of Indian democracy into account provides a more balanced picture of its actual democratic performance than if one focuses solely on the Polity and Freedom House data.

Analysing the direction in the relation between emancipative values and levels of democracy depicted in Figure 9.2, Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 182–3) find that, after controlling for the action resources available to the average person in a society, prior democracy has no significant effect on subsequent mass beliefs; but, controlling for resource levels, mass beliefs prior to the Third Wave of democratization *do* have a strong and statistically significant effect on subsequent levels of democracy. The causal arrow apparently runs from values to institutions, rather than the other way round.

Using this broad measure of democracy, it is also clear that the relation between emancipative mass beliefs and democracy is not a statistical artefact of a third factor, such as modernization, which might cause both emancipative values and democracy to reach high levels. Instead, Christian Welzel (2007) demonstrates that the effect of emancipative values on democracy remains significant when one controls for modernization, even using the very broad measure of modernization used by Hadenius and Teorell (2005). Considered in isolation, modernization explains about two-thirds of the variation in subsequent levels of democracy. This effect drops to

less than half of the explained variation, taking into account modernization's own dependence on prior democracy. And when one controls for the effect of emancipative mass beliefs, the impact of modernization on subsequent democracy drops drastically—explaining only 14 per cent of the variance in subsequent levels of democracy. On the other hand, emancipative values alone account for almost three-quarters of the variation in subsequent levels of democracy, and still account for more than half of the variance when one controls for the extent to which these beliefs are shaped by prior levels of democracy. This effect drops further 24 per cent when one controls for the effects of modernization.

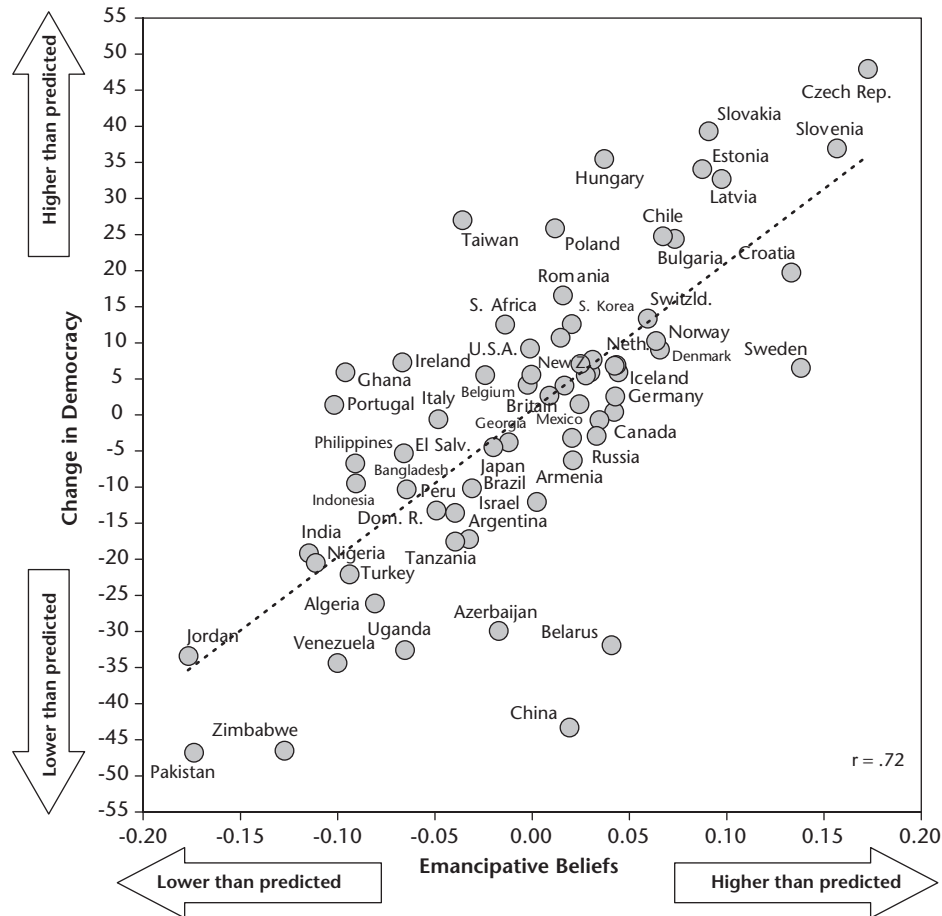
What do these results indicate? The impact of both socioeconomic modernization and emancipative mass beliefs drop considerably when one controls for the effect of the other variable. This is so because these two phenomena overlap considerably, and the overlapping variance has a stronger effect on subsequent democracy than either of its parts. Thus, socioeconomic modernization is conducive to democracy mainly insofar as it is conducive to emancipative values among the public. Conversely, emancipative values are conducive to democracy mainly insofar as they are rooted in socioeconomic modernization. Socioeconomic modernization gives people the action resources that enable them to struggle for democratic freedoms; and emancipative values give them the motivation that makes them willing to do so. And both variables have their greatest impact when they act together, making people both motivated to seek democracy and able to exert effective pressures to obtain it.

## Explaining Democratic Change

The global wave of democratization, and its subsequent reversal in some countries, brought changes to many countries' level of democracy. These changes constitute gains when a country climbs from a lower to a higher level of democracy, and losses when a country falls from a higher to a lower level of democracy. If emancipative mass values have a causal effect on democratization, they should be able to explain

both gains and losses in levels of democracy from *before* the global wave of democratization in 1988–1998, to the period afterward.

Moreover, if congruence theory is correct in its assumption that incongruence between mass demands for democracy and given levels of democracy is a major source of regime instability, changes towards and away from democracy should be a



**Fig 9.4** The effect of emancipative values on changes in democracy, controlling for each country's initial level of democracy

Notes: The horizontal axis measures emancipative values in around 1990 controlling for the level of democracy in 1984–88 (i.e. before the climax of the global democratization wave). Positive numbers show how much emancipative values exceed what the prior level of democracy predicts. Negative numbers indicate how much they fall short of it. The vertical axis measures changes in the level of democracy from 1984–88 (i.e. before the global democratization wave) to 2000–04 (i.e. after the global democratization wave), scaled as the percent change in the initial level of democracy. Interpretation: The more a population's emancipative values exceed the prior level of democracy, the more this level increases.

function of both the direction and the amount of incongruence. If mass demands for democracy are *lower* than is usual at a given country's level of democracy, a country's level of democracy should *fall* subsequently. And it should fall roughly to the extent to which mass demands fall short of the prevailing level, bringing the level of democracy in line with people's demands. Conversely, if mass demands for democracy are *higher* than a country's

level of democracy would predict, a country's level of democracy should *rise*. And it should rise approximately to the extent to which mass demands exceed a given democracy level, making mass preferences congruent with the country's political institutions.

Figure 9.4 confirms these expectations. Comparing the levels of democracy found in given countries during the period 1984–88 (before the peak of the democratization wave) with the levels on which we

find them over the period 2000–04 (after the peak of the global wave), incongruence between mass demands for democracy and the initial democracy level explains about half of the changes in levels of democracy. Levels of democracy fell in most countries where they exceeded mass demands, while they increased in almost every country where they fell short of mass demands. Hence, the global wave of democratization can be seen as a major shift towards greater congruence between mass demands for democracy, as measured by emancipative values, and actual levels of democracy. China is the most prominent outlier in one direction, where the country actually became somewhat less democratic after 1988, despite mass demands for more democracy; and Taiwan is an outlier in the opposite direction, where the shift toward higher levels of democracy was even greater than the amount predicted by mass demands. But on the whole, changes toward or away from democracy tended to reflect unmet mass demands rather closely ( $r=.72$ ), acting to reduce incongruence between mass demands and political institutions.

## Emancipative values and human empowerment

These findings suggest that democracy is based on empowering human conditions in a society. It includes cultural conditions that *motivate* people to demand democracy, and economic conditions that make people *capable* of exerting effective demands. As an institutional means to empower people, democracy is inherently linked to empowering economic and cultural conditions. Democracy empowers people in *allowing* them to practice civic freedoms. Human empowerment as a whole then is a syndrome of empowering economic, cultural, and institutional conditions.

Emancipative values constitute the cultural component in the human empowerment process and as such are the intervening variable between action resources, and democratic institutions, as shown in Figure 6.2 (see Ch. 6). Seeing mass beliefs in a mediating role between economic modernization and political democracy is consistent with Lipset's (1959) classic discussion of modernization. When Lipset asked why modernization is conducive to democracy

he argued that this is true because modernization tends to generate beliefs and values that are favourable to democracy. Lipset thus understood that *objective* social conditions impact on political changes, such as democratization, through their tendency to be conducive to *subjective* orientations that seek these changes. When he proposed this view of modernization, the survey data that would be needed to test it did not exist so, Lipset was unable to explore it any further, but this was his basic causal argument.

More than 30 years later Huntington (1991) followed a similar line of reasoning, arguing that the rise of modern middle classes in developing countries was conducive to beliefs that dictatorial powers were illegitimate, and there was a growing valuation of freedom, concluding that these changes in mass orientations provided a major source of democratizing pressures.

Despite its focus on mass beliefs, the political culture approach has little to say about the role of mass beliefs in the process of democratization. While there is a widespread consensus that mass beliefs are important for the **consolidation** of existing democracies (Rose and Mishler 2001), the role of mass beliefs in transitions to or away from democracy is generally neglected. This reflects the type of mass beliefs that most of the political culture literature assumed were conducive to democracy.

Influenced by David Easton (1965), Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963), and Robert Putnam (1993), most political culture studies focus on overt support for democracy, confidence in political institutions, interpersonal trust, norms of cooperation and other communal orientations. Communal orientations may indeed be helpful in consolidating existing democracies. But when one wants to explore the role of mass beliefs in *transitions* from authoritarian rule to democracy, one must identify orientations that motivate people to oppose authoritarian rule and struggle for democratic institutions. Emancipative self-expression values constitute precisely this type of orientation. Emancipative values give priority to tolerance over conformity, autonomy over authority, gender equality over patriarchy, and participation over security. If these beliefs arise in an authoritarian regime, the very legitimacy of authoritarian rule is undermined and mass regime opposition that topples these regimes becomes more likely.

But emancipative values do not only help to undermine authoritarian regimes. They also help to consolidate and deepen existing democracies. For people who are inspired by emancipative values are motivated to struggle for democratic institutions, whether to attain them when they are absent, or to defend them when they are challenged, or to advance them when they stagnate. Accordingly, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) and Welzel (2007) show that self-expression values motivate peaceful elite-challenging mass actions and that they do so regardless of a country's level of democracy. The absence of democracy is thus no safeguard against the mass mobilizing effects of emancipative values. Emancipation-inspired mass actions, and only emancipation-inspired mass actions, have a democratizing effect, both in making democratic gains where the initial democracy level is low and in preventing democratic losses where the initial democracy level is high.

The kind of communal, supportive, and allegiant orientations emphasized in most of the political culture literature does tend to place elected democratic elites in a stable cultural context where they face little resistance. But these orientations do not motivate people to put pressure on elites to establish, retain,

### Box 9.3 Key points

- Emancipative mass beliefs arise when growing action repertoires among ordinary people increase the perceived utility of democratic freedoms. These beliefs are not the product of enduring democracy.
- Historically, countries moved the farther towards democracy the more people's emancipative beliefs were above the level suggested by the respective country's initial democracy level. Likewise, countries moved the farther away from democracy, the more people's emancipative beliefs were below the level suggested by the country's initial democracy level.
- Emancipative beliefs are a central component in a wider process of human empowerment, mediating the economic component of human empowerment (i.e. action resources) and its institutional component (i.e. democratic freedoms).

or deepen democratic institutions. Emancipative orientations, by contrast, do serve this purpose. These beliefs are an important mass orientation for democracy, operating in favour of its emergence, survival, and deepening.

## The Role of Religion

Besides the beliefs discussed so far, religiosity, religious denomination, and a society's religious demography have all been identified as important cultural factors influencing democracy (Inglehart and Norris 2002). A demographic dominance of Protestants, in particular, has been said to be favourable to democracy, whereas a Muslim dominance has been claimed to be detrimental to democracy (Huntington 1996). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) find that the percentage difference between Protestants and Muslims in a society strongly affects its subsequent level of democracy: the more Protestants outnumber Muslims, the higher the level of democracy. However, when one takes into account a population's overall emphasis on emancipative values, the effect of religious demography becomes weak, accounting for only a minor part

of the variation in levels of democracy. Protestant countries tend to be rich, have high educational levels and a high proportion of people employed in the knowledge sector. And a demographic dominance of Protestants is favourable to democracy largely because it is linked with socioeconomic conditions that strengthen emphasis on emancipative values.

This can be demonstrated by analysing the determinants of the strength of people's emancipative values, using World Values Survey data. As the multi-level model in Table 9.2 shows, if someone has a high level of education, this factor strengthens this person's emancipative values. The same is true for people living in countries where the average person's action resources are large. This contextual factor, too, strengthens people's emancipative values. Living in a

**Table 9.2** Multi-level Model Explaining Emancipative Values

PREDICTORS:	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Emancipative Values	
	Coefficient	T-Ratio
Intercept	.423	71.659***
<i>Individual Level Effects (IL):</i>		
- Education level	.127	25.945***
- Being Muslim	-.053	- 6.296***
- Being Protestant	.004	1.146
- Religiosity	-.031	- 6.543***
<i>Country Level Effects (CL):</i>		
- Action resources	.004	6.166***
- Democracy stock	—	n. s.
- Muslims (%)	-.000	- 1.742*
- Protestants (%)	—	n. s.
<i>Cross Level Interaction Effects (IL*CL):</i>		
- Education * Action resources	.003	4.257***
- Education * Democracy stock	—	n. s.
- Education * Muslim (%)	-.001	- 2.556**
- Being Muslim * Action resources	-.002	- 2.696***
- Being Muslim * Democracy stock	—	n. s.
- Being Muslim * Muslim (%)	—	n. s.
Explained variance (%): IL (% of total)	12% (8%)	
CL (% of total)	80% (24%)	

Source: World Values Surveys 1995–2006.

Notes: Number of individual level units (respondents) is 141,303. Number of country level units (nations) is 80. Significance levels: \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , n. s. (not significant).

country with a rich democratic experience, however, does by itself not strengthen people's emancipative values, as is evident from the insignificant effect of the 'democracy stock' variable shown under country level effects.

Islam tends to depress people's emancipative values in various ways. To begin with, living in a country dominated by Muslims tends to lower one's emancipative values, whether one is a Muslim or not. But being a Muslim depresses emancipative values even more than living in a Muslim society. Moreover, living in a Muslim society diminishes education's generally positive effect on emancipative values, as is indicated by the negative sign of the interaction between education and the percentage of Muslims shown under cross-level interaction effects.

Nevertheless, the anti-emancipative effect of Islam can be alleviated, as is evident from the negative

interaction between being a Muslim and the action resources of the average person in a country shown under cross-level interaction effects. This interaction

#### Box 9.4 Key points

- Islam, independent of religiosity, and religiosity, independent of Islam, have modest but robust negative effects on emancipative beliefs.
- In depressing emancipative beliefs, religiosity in general and Islam specifically weaken the cultural foundation of democracy.
- With action resources growing throughout a society, Islam matters less and less for development of emancipative beliefs.

means that the negative effect of being a Muslim on emancipative values shrinks as the action resources of the average person grows. Hence, Muslims are not immune to the logic of modernization: as a country's

resources increase, being a Muslim becomes less and less of a hindrance to a shift toward emancipative values.

## Conclusion

In the process of democratization, mass beliefs play a central role. Growing resources are conducive to the rise of emancipative values that emphasize self-expression; and these values are conducive to the collective actions that lead to democratization. Emancipative mass beliefs appear to be the single most important cultural factor in helping to attain, consolidate, and deepen democracy. As a system designed to empower people, democracy is an emancipative achievement, driven by emancipative forces in society.

Emancipative values are *not* endogenous to democracy. These beliefs emerge in authoritarian societies as well as democracies, provided they experience socioeconomic modernization. And sheer experience under democratic institutions by itself does not

give rise to these values. Emancipative values are part of the human empowerment process because they motivate people to give high priority to free choice, and make them more articulate and able to organize effectively to demand democratic institutions.

If emancipative values arise in authoritarian regimes, mass pressures to democratize become more likely, increasing the chances of a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. If emancipative values arise in democratic regimes, mass pressures to deepen their democratic qualities and make them more responsive become increasingly likely. Emancipative values constitute a major selective force in the rise and fall of political regimes, conferring a selective advantage on democracy.

### QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of political culture?
2. What does congruence theory say?
3. In what regard do mass beliefs play a mediating role?
4. What are emancipative mass beliefs?
5. Why are emancipative values important for democratization?
6. Are emancipative values endogenous to democracy?

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for additional questions to accompany each chapter, and a range of other resources: <[www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/haerpfer/](http://www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/haerpfer/)>.

### FURTHER READING

Almond, G. A. and Verba, S. (1963), *The Civic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

This book is the classic of the political culture paradigm. It lays the conceptual groundwork and introduces many concepts still used today.

Dalton, R. J. (2004), *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

This book analyses mass attitudes related to democracy throughout postindustrial societies.

Eckstein, H. (1966), *A Theory of Stable Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

This book elaborates congruence theory, the political culture school's most fundamental theoretical assumption.

Inglehart, R. and Welzel, C. (2005), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

This is the most encompassing study on the influence of mass beliefs on democracy and democratization, covering some 70 societies and 25 years.

## IMPORTANT WEBSITES

<[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)> This is the homepage of the World Values Survey Association. It presents and offers for download survey data from some 80 societies covering a period from 1981 to 2001.

## NOTES

1. John Gerring et al.'s (2005) democracy stock measure calculates for each country the democracy rating points it accumulated on the Polity IV democracy scale over time. However, points for particular years are depreciated by one percent for each year this year falls into the past of the respective base year of the measure. We thank John Gerring and his team for giving us access to the data with base year 1995.
2. Vanhanen's index of 'power resources' is a composite measure of the economic, intellectual, and social resources available to the average person in a country. A precise description is available in Vanhanen (1997, 2003).
3. The CIRI data by Richards and Cingranelli are part of the human rights project located at Binghamton University. Based on reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other sources, CIRI measures effective respect of several dimensions of human rights. Two scales, integrity rights and empowerment rights, summarize these ratings. Integrity rights measure several freedom-from-oppression rights (such as freedom from torture), while empowerment rights measure several rights entitling people to participate in and exert control over power (such as the right to a free vote).