Democratic Legitimacy in South Asia and Beyond

Does Culture Matter?

Akram Hossain

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

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Akram Hossain

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ABSTRACT

Democracy has received worldwide public acceptance as an ideal system of governance. Scholars on democracy conduct a lot of research, including surveys, to identify the sources of legitimacy for democracy. This dissertation aims to contribute to this literature by providing some additional dimensions of democratic legitimacy from the perspective of culture and values. I apply the explanatory sequential mixed method. First, I analyze quantitative results and to understand and explain the findings in more detail, I use qualitative case studies as follow-up explanations. At first, I demonstrate that democratic values have different implications for democratic legitimacy across regime structures by conducting a global-level analysis with the World Value Survey data. Although the implications are favourable in all regimes, the magnitude of effects is higher in democratic regimes than in other regimes. This means people living in authoritarian countries who are oriented toward democratic values will be less supportive of democracy than are their counterparts in democratic countries. Among several possible reasons for this, I emphasize the cultural differences between the regimes as the dominant reason for such variation in the implications. I argue that authoritarian culture and values in autocratic countries lead to a lower commitment to democracy among the people.

To explore the findings further, I consider democratic legitimacy in three flawed democracies in South Asia: Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. I use the Governance and Trust Survey data with representative samples for the three countries. The results show that people in these countries are satisfied with their democracy when they are well served, even though political freedom and clean elections (i.e., quality of democracy) are absent due to a low level of integrity in governance (e.g., high corruption). The performance variables appear to be the most important source of legitimacy. People who are happy with their government's outputs overlook the deficits that may exist in a democracy. Most importantly, the quality of

democracy and services are less important to people with a higher authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) than to people with a more liberal orientation. The ACO is measured with different cultural norms that indicate people's unquestioning obedience or loyalty to authority at the socio-political level. The liberal principle of democracy is based on the rule of law and not obedience to ruling elites. The results thus reveal that people with high ACO legitimize authoritarian or flawed democracies. Similarly, in another article, I find that people in South Asia, when assessing the performance of public institutions in Covid-19 management, are less concerned about democracy and corruption.

I carry out two qualitative case studies to investigate the dynamics of authoritarian culture and democratic legitimacy in Bangladesh. In the first case, I explore why democracy in Bangladesh is backsliding even after having the potential for democratic consolidation. A successful non-violent resistance (NVR) movement in 1990 transformed Bangladesh into a democracy. NVR campaigns have inherent contributing factors for democratization, so the country was a likely case for democratic institutionalization. However, the country now has a hybrid regime or a new form of an authoritarian system. I draw on the theory of culture and values to explain this puzzle. After analyzing historical evidence and conducting interviews with experts from civil society and political parties, I find authoritarian culture to be one of the determining factors for dysfunctional democracy in the country. The prevailing authoritarian culture has components that reduce or even eliminate a civil resistance movement's potential to increase the likelihood of democracy; consequentially, democratic backsliding occurs. Since the authoritarian culture also extends support to the authoritarian regime, political elites of the ruling party enjoy unconstrained power and widespread control.

In the second case study, I show how the opposition forces of the regime are either silent or suppressed by the law-enforcing agencies or ruling-party activists. The case of a religion-based opposition party vividly reveals the political oppression and marginalization of

political opponents in the country. The case also reflects an authoritarian attitude and a tendency for total control by the ruling political elites. I explain how the opposition party struggles and what strategies it follows to survive in a critical political condition.

Overall, the dissertation finds that authoritarian culture and values significantly affect democratic legitimacy. Socio-political relationships in non-democratic societies are rooted in authoritarian norms such as rigid hierarchy, blind loyalty, and extreme inequality. However, modernization and access to education gradually initiate a transformation in values; citizens then seek more autonomy and freedom, values which increase the legitimation of democracy worldwide. Nevertheless, authoritarian culture and values pose a challenge to democratization in autocracies and a threat to the survival of democracy in weak democracies.

LIST OF ARTICLES

Article I: Akram Hossain. The Effect of Value Orientations on Support for Democracy Worldwide: Does Regime Structure Matter? *(Manuscript submitted to a journal)*

Article II: Akram Hossain and Ishtiaq Jamil. Satisfaction with democracy is flawed democracies: What matters—Performance or Culture? *(Manuscript submitted to a journal)*

Article III: Ishtiaq Jamil and Akram Hossain. Do Governance Capacity and Legitimacy Affect Citizens' Satisfaction with COVID-19 Management? Some Evidence from South Asia. *(Manuscript Revised and Resubmitted to a journal)*

Article IV: Akram Hossain. Can Authoritarian Culture Explain Democratic Backsliding? A critical case of Bangladesh. *(Manuscript submitted to a journal)*

Article V: Akram Hossain and Mahmudul Haque. Survival Strategies of Jamaat as a Religion-Based Political Opponent in Bangladesh. *(Book chapter published by Palgrave MacMillan 2021)*

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INTRODUCTION

This research project investigates the implications of cultural contexts and value orientations on democratic legitimacy. As will be explained in detail shortly (in the Conceptual Framework section), by "democratic legitimacy," I mean the extent to which people support democracy as a political system and how content they are with democracy in their country. I also include a cultural dimension to democratic legitimacy, namely, whether there is a congruence between democracy and a given group's culture and values. The focus is on how value orientation interacts with the prevailing cultural realities. Such interactions have a fundamental consequence on public attitudes and political choices. Democracy as a dominant political system greatly influences public preferences in values worldwide, regardless of regime structures. While people increasingly prefer democratic values, cultural realities in non-democratic regimes contradict those value orientations and prevent citizens living under such regimes from being committed democrats. Various articles in this dissertation reflect upon democratic legitimacy in relation to value orientations and cultural contexts. I assume that although democratic values increase the legitimacy of democracy worldwide, the implications will be less pronounced in non-democratic societies compared with democratic societies. Similarly, people living in an authoritarian culture and who have authoritarian values are more likely to support authoritarian regimes. Thus, authoritarian culture and value orientations are potential threats to democratic legitimacy because they may prevent democratic institutionalization and lead to democratic backsliding.

Democracy as an ideal form of governance has momentum, with an increasing number of countries adopting it as the most preferred political system. Several developing countries became democratized in the Third Wave of Democratization (1974 to 1990). They have nevertheless demonstrated poor democratic performance and a low level of democratic institutionalization (Sanborn, 2019). Despite this situation, during the 1990s, scholars were

highly optimistic about the democratic triumph and its continued dominance in political systems worldwide (Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington, 1991). In accordance with this expectation, democratic governance, at the end of the Twentieth Century, gained momentum and became the global norm with the greatest legitimacy. However, as scholars have observed, the struggle for democracy that started in the Twenty-first Century has not led to a significant increase in the number of democratic countries. Furthermore, the quality of democracy has persistently declined. Several studies and reports highlight the breakdown of democracy and an erosion of democratic norms and values that would indicate a global recession in democracy (GBS, 2018; IDEA, 2019; Lührmann et al., 2019, 2020; Puddington et al., 2019). In contrast, a substantial number of countries have reverted to autocracy, indicating the start of the Third Wave of Autocratization (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019).

The higher levels of reported public support for democracy across the globe trigger suspicion, particularly in non-democratic societies. Perhaps survey respondents are merely paying lip service; maybe their support is superficial and not strongly linked with democratic values in a real sense (Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2003). Democracy gets enormous attention due to its positive image. Due to being a positive signifier (Gorman et al., 2018) with strong normative power (Mechkova et al., 2017), democracy generates a mass fascination that leads to extensive public support. However, scholars such as Wang (2007) argue that support for democracy is not just rhetoric or lip service; instead, people in non-democratic countries are in a complicated and ambivalent situation. They want democracy but do not want to sacrifice socio-economic development and political stability. As Norris (2011) finds, many citizens in authoritarian countries are concerned about the uncertainties of transitioning to liberal democracy. People are unsure about the consequence of democracy for good governance. Therefore, to understand and measure the level of actual support for democracy from a public perspective, we must consider value orientations and cultural

contexts. Democracy requires proper soil to take deep root and to thrive and be sustained. The appropriate soil is cultural compatibility. Public support for democracy is more reliable and stable when it is compatible with the values and culture in which people live.

Scholars of democracy explain the sources of extensive public legitimacy for democracy and the possible causes of democratic backsliding. Many of them emphasize a mass-level orientation towards democratic values for sustainability and the safety of democracy (Bratton et al., 2005). The earlier scholars of political culture (Almond & Verba, 1963; Easton, 1957, 1965; Eckstein, 1961) argue that democratic culture and values increase the chances of democratization and its consolidation. In recent decades, Inglehart, Welzel and their colleagues have published several works focusing on the importance of values for democracy (Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2001; Welzel, 2013, 2021; Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). Due to economic improvement and modernization, many societies have experienced massive cultural change but still cling to traditional values (Inglehart, 2006). Similarly, citizens living in non-democracies with an authoritarian culture are infused with authoritarian values. They therefore develop a culturally specific concept of democracy that has more to do with good governance than freedom and actual democratic elections (Pietsch, 2015). As a result, they may not prefer a thoroughly liberal democracy but want democratization only to the extent that political order, economic development, and wellbeing in the long term can be ensured. People with such political attitudes support mixed governance that combines both democratic and authoritarian practices–a hybrid political attitude (Shin, 2015b).

Authoritarian culture and values can be potential causes of democratic backsliding. Welzel (2021) theorizes the phenomenon of "regime-culture misfit," in which the norms and values of a regime do not harmonize with the prevailing culture in a society. The consequences of this misfit are twofold. First, when a regime falls short of the level of the

public's democratic values, this creates pressure for further democratization. Second, when a regime becomes overly democratized compared with public values, it slides back to form a new equilibrium (Welzel, 2021).

In this context, this research explains the legitimacy of democratic governance by showing how it relates to culture and values. Figure 1 graphically presents the research plan, including theory, methods, and thematic areas. More precisely, this research investigates how the underlying value orientations allied with cultural contexts affect democratic legitimacy in different countries and regimes. In addition to the theory of culture and values, I choose performance-related theoretical constructs that also extend legitimacy for democratic governance. I apply an explanatory sequential mixed method (Creswell, 2014) that includes quantitative analysis followed by in-depth qualitative studies. I follow a sequence in which I identify research puzzles in one article, and in subsequent articles, I explore them further to gain a deeper understanding. I begin with public opinion survey data from the global level to do a regional-level analysis. I explain the potential for democratic legitimacy along two dimensions: diffused and specific support for democracy (Easton, 1975). I measure specific support by examining the satisfaction with democracy and diffused support by examining the public preference for democracy as an abstract idea for the political system.

Having the large N analysis, I move on to in-depth case studies involving theoretical and expert analysis of democratic backsliding and the malfunction of democracy in Bangladesh. Here, I uncover how the authoritarian culture and values act as threats to the legitimacy and functioning of democracy in Bangladesh. In short, while democratic values increase the legitimacy of democracy, the authoritarian culture and values challenge democracy in many non-democratic societies.

Figure 1. Theory, Method and Thematic Mapping of the Research Project
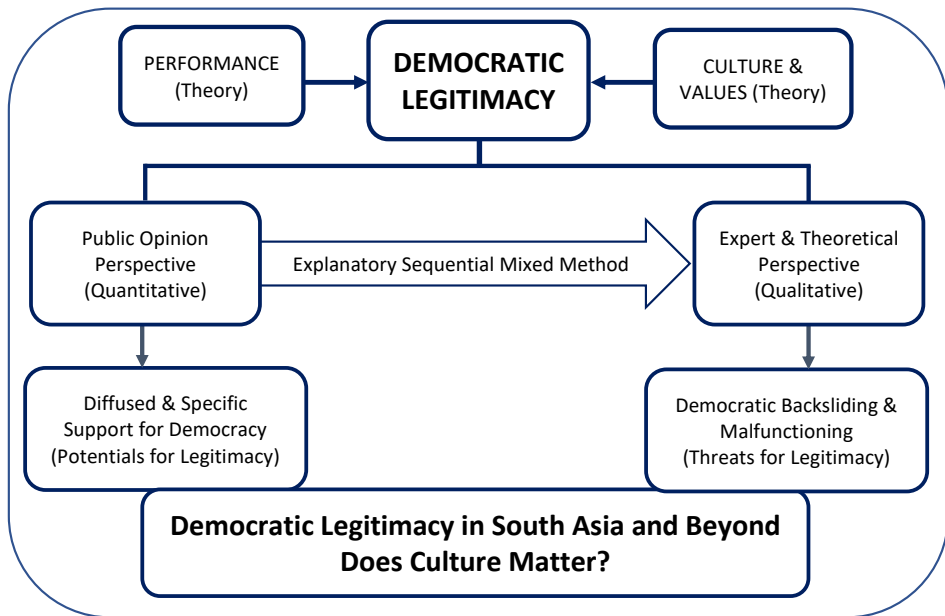
Source: Author

Overarching Research Questions

I consider democratic legitimacy both an independent and a dependent variable in different articles of my research project. I explain democratic legitimacy as an outcome affected by different orientations in culture and values. I also consider it a predictor variable for effective governance in crisis management, for instance, in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The main research question is this: *How does authoritarian culture affect democratic legitimacy?* I divide it into the following sub-questions:

1. How does value orientation affect public support for democracy across different regimes worldwide?

2. How does authoritarian culture affect public satisfaction with democracy as it comes to expression in the flawed democracies of South Asia?

3. How does the non-congruence between democracy and authoritarian culture and values threaten democracy and cause democratic backsliding in Bangladesh?

4. What are the possible implications of authoritarian culture on political opponents in Bangladesh?

5. Does the level of democratic legitimacy (as measured with indicators such as the level of democracy, citizens' trust in political institutions, etc.) matter in crisis management (Covid-19) in South Asia?

I have developed five research articles that use empirical data and theoretical analysis to answer the above research questions. Starting with a global level analysis, I focus on South Asia, diagnosing the contextual reality of the socio-political relationships that do not favor liberal democracy. I emphasize both performance and culture-based legitimacy for the democratic political system as an ideal, or at least as a better governance system than the available alternatives. To understand democratic legitimacy better, I investigate the prevailing cultural dynamics in the South Asian region. The very nature of a polity depends on its legitimacy as inferred by the citizens. Both democratic legitimacy and cultural reality shape the political dynamics of South Asian countries. Overall, I emphasize that the cultural context matters in politics and in the inferred legitimacy of a political system.

Culture and Values

In this research project, I emphasize regime specific cultural context and individual value orientations. My central thesis is that the interaction of values and culture determines the strength of democratic legitimacy. Culture is an accumulated form of values in a society where people are socialized (Easton, 1957). It reflects the typical characteristics of a society that contains some fundamental and shared beliefs. Hofstede et al. (2010) consider culture as the "software of the mind" that distinguishes one group of people from another in terms of thinking, feeling, behaving, and acting patterns. Individuals learn these patterns throughout

their life in a social environment. Culture manifests itself through internal forms of behavior, mental orientations, deep-seated attitudes or predispositions, and readiness to act (Easton, 1957, p. 390). According to Hofstede et al. (2010), the concept of culture covers four components– symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. Among them, values represent the deepest manifestation of culture (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 7). Values and culture are thus strongly interrelated and overlapping. I consider here political culture which is the set of commonly shared political beliefs and values such as democracy, autocracy, freedom, and control. Political culture also includes socio-political structure, patterns of relationships, and institutional settings. The cultural orientations hardly change and remain in the back of people's minds throughout their life. They take root in society and transfer from generation to generation through socialization. Therefore, people in autocracies may be oriented towards democratic values on the surface, while the deep-seated authoritarian culture prevents them from becoming committed democrats.

Culture and values have long-lasting effects on individuals' attitudes, political choices, and actions. They substantially influence human behavior, not least because behavior varies depending on the cultural environments in which individuals are born and raised (Drenth, 2004; Easton, 1957, 1975). Given that the national, geographical, or political boundaries of a territory constitute cultural borders (Hofstede et al., 2010), it stands to reason that socialization within a political system can develop a distinct cultural orientation. Unlike the earlier works (Huntington, 2007; Inglehart, 2006) that consider culture as relatively fixated on specific regions or religious realms, I assume here political regime-specific culture. A political regime (e.g., democracy) has specific cultures and values that distinguish one regime type from another. Individuals' value preferences interact with their cultural orientation in the given political system.

Table 1. Interaction of Values with Culture

		Individual Values	
		Democratic	Authoritarian
Political System (Culture)	Democracy	*Committed Democrats*	Ambivalent Autocrats
	Autocracy	*Ambivalent Democrats*	Committed Autocrats

Source: Author

Scholars emphasize that modernization gives rise to emancipative values creating a support base for democracy worldwide (Inglehart, 2006; Welzel, 2011, 2021). The emergence of these prodemocratic values arises a situation of "congruence vs misfit" between the values and culture, as presented in table 1. My main focus in this research is on democratic values and how they interact with political culture pertaining to the political regime. As the left column of Table 1 shows that a committed democrat is orientated with democratic values and belongs to a democratic society (congruence). On the other hand, when an individual is oriented with democratic values but belongs to an autocratic society (misfit), it creates an ambivalent political attitude leading to less commitment to democracy. These interactions determine the legitimacy of a regime and also its performance. Many scholars develop similar theoretical arguments, such as congruence theory (Eckstein, 1961, 1966) and regime-culture misfits (Welzel, 2021).

Authoritarian Culture in South Asia

The authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) is a potential threat to democratic legitimacy worldwide, particularly in the South Asian context. People in South Asia have a distinctly authoritarian socio-political culture that must be taken into account when evaluating public opinions about the political system. Baniamin et al. (2020) were early to coin ACO, defining it as unquestioning loyalty to socio-political authorities such as elders in one's family, political elites, and government. Other scholars have used a similar measure of authoritarian culture (Bomhoff & Gu, 2012; Ma & Yang, 2014). In this authoritarian culture and values,

ordinary citizens are expected to show respect and unquestioning obedience to ruling elites and authority figures in the family, society, and the state. Individuals' socio-economic status, education, and gender define the pattern of relationships in society (Jamil, 2002). People in South Asia generally accept hierarchy; the lower strata are expected to be loyal to the higher strata. Authoritarian culture and values can, however, have dire consequences. Blind loyalty creates divisions and fiercely opposing groups; there is high in-group trust, but the enmity between the groups is high and hostile and often leads to violent conflict. Under such circumstances, the social capital required for a self-governing democratic society fails to develop. People prefer a relatively strong government that can maintain political order and ensure the smooth functioning of economic activities.

There is a significant cultural difference between the East and the West. Several studies demonstrate that the Western world is more inclined toward liberal principles and democratic values (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019). On the other hand, the Eastern part of the world (East Asia and South Asia) is characterized by authoritarian culture and values (Baniamin, 2019a; Baniamin et al., 2020; Bomhoff & Gu, 2012; Ma & Yang, 2014). Such differences shape the political dynamics and lead to distinctly different political outcomes and ways in which the political systems in both worlds function. While the Western world moves toward liberal democracy, the political system in South Asia performs poorly in many indicators of democratic performance and governance. I attempt to explain the authoritarian culture as the possible reason for democratic backsliding or the development of an illiberal democratic system in many South Asian countries. Overall, in this research project, I emphasize the importance of authoritarian culture and values in explaining democratic legitimacy and political functioning.

Political Dynamics in South Asia

This study mainly focuses on democratic governance with particular reference to South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Some of these South Asian states have been characterized by violent civil war, as observed in Afghanistan since the 1970s, in the dissolution of Pakistan and the secession of Bangladesh, and in severe ethnoreligious conflicts and tensions in Sri Lanka and India (Shastri, 2001). Nepal also witnessed public demonstrations against the monarch. By the end of the Twentieth Century, most South Asian states—the exceptions are Afghanistan and Pakistan (which had a military coup in 1999) —emerged as democracies. Several elections were held in the countries, with frequent alternations of state power among different political parties and coalitions or blocs (Kantha, 2000; Shastri, 2001; Vajpeyi, 2013). But as Shastri (2001) further explains, South Asia, in general, is characterized by persistent violence, corruption, and money and muscle power at all levels of society. Immediately after independence, all countries except Nepal tried to establish stable political systems through institutionalizing democratic processes. However, these countries have achieved uneven political development and democratization processes (Vajpeyi, 2013). Only India among the South Asian nations has been a long-standing democracy, although recently (2019) the country has slid back to an electoral autocracy.

Historically, most Asian countries have experienced monarchy, military rule, one-party rule, and many other forms of government ranging from authoritarian to quasi-democratic. Many South Asian countries have now adopted a democratic form of governance in principle, but the quality of the democracy is unsatisfactory. The current status of democracy indeed demonstrates mostly non-democratic features justifying a distinctive regime type: competitive authoritarianism (Mostofa & Subedi, 2020; Riaz, 2019). Democratic norms and values are not institutionalized in society, politics, and state

governments. Since the political institutions and society as a whole are patrimonial, patron-client relationships determine almost everything. The rule of law is under serious threat, and often violated, and families and friends of the party in power influence state administration through informal networks (Jamil et al., 2013). Society is hierarchical, with a high level of power distance that causes people to accept inequality (Hofstede et at., 2010).

Democracy does not mean only that the people elect a government. Instead, it includes different aspects of governance beyond mere clichés and the façade of regular elections. The election is the minimum condition for democracy (Przeworski, 1991), and electoral democracy is considered incomplete democracy (Mishler & Rose, 2001). A country may have a government elected through free and fair elections. However, the governance processes and policy outputs may not be responsive and as expected by people. At the outset, most of the countries in South Asia (except Afghanistan and Pakistan) fulfil the minimum requirement for electoral democracy at some point. They have regular elections and sometimes alteration of power. Nevertheless, the quality of democratic governance is one of the most critical issues for all these countries. Organizations and international indexes that measure democracy and governance, for instance, Freedom House, Polity Project, V-Dem, Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Human Development Index (HDI), and Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), indicate that South Asian countries perform poorly; they are therefore characterized as incomplete or flawed democracies, and in many cases (electoral) autocracies (see figure 5, page 28). The state of democracy in South Asia is similar to that of many other authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries such as Turkey.[1]

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[1] In describing the illiberal democracy in Turkey, Karaveli (2018) states the following: "Democratically elected leaders have trampled on freedoms and resorted to oppression. Erdoğan is the latest example of such a ruler. His regime has been described as an example of 'illiberal democracy.' But, clearly, Turkey's political regime has overall been characterized by one form or another of authoritarianism, running from the most unrestrained, with no tolerance for any free expression of the people's will, to more 'tempered' versions with a semblance of democracy" (Karaveli, 2018, pp. 21–22).

Authoritarian Culture and Democracy in South Asia

As mentioned, the main focus of this study is the Authoritarian Cultural Orientation (ACO) which is considered one of potential threats to democracy and democratic ethos. Now, the question is, if the ACO is a determining factor, how did democracy survive longer in one country (India) than the other (Bangladesh) in South Asia?

The dynamics of such political instrumentality by the political elites in South Asia vary across countries and time. In the 1990s, political elites of all major political parties of Bangladesh were united against their common enemy, the military junta General Ershad. Later, their authoritarian tendencies and actions reflect ill-motivated rhetoric of democratization in the country. Therefore, the democracy in Bangladesh has been struggling since the beginning of its journey in 1991 as electoral democracy. The country finally turned to an electoral autocracy in 2005 (see Figure 5). What implies in the case of Bangladesh is that authoritarian attitudes remain dormant among the political elites, and they use authoritarian cultural arguments when necessary to legitimize the oppressive regime. None of the political parties that ascended to power since 1991 (both AL and BNP are democratic, and most of the leaders are chosen from among family members. A similar pattern of political dynamics can also be identified in the case of India. However, since my study does not cover India in detail, I cannot infer any concrete conclusion regarding the implications of ACO on Indian democracy. I present here some explanations based on my observation and available reports about democracy in India.

The recent democratic backsliding in India (2019 onward, see Figure 5) may be the case in this regard. Indian culture is collective, while traditional authority relationships and religious extremism, coupled with widespread superstitions, are observable, which are incompatible with democratic principles. There is a sharp distinction between castes in India. The higher caste usually discriminates against people from the lower caste and ethnic groups,

especially Dalits and indigenous people called Adivasis. On the contrary, Indian democracy has the most extended history among all South Asian countries. The political leaderships are strong, and some well-functioning democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and Election Commission of India (ECI), the constitutional bodies, make it possible for democracy to survive so long. The growth and existence of a strong middle class with Western education acquired within and outside India nurture democratic values. The middle class in the leading position of bureaucracy and academia contributes to the development of democracy in the country.

From the recent reports by V-Dem (Alizada et al., 2021; Boese et al., 2022; Lührmann et al., 2019, 2020), it is evident that Indian democracy has been backsliding since 2019, and the country now belongs to electoral autocracy. The reports identify several factors driving the autocratization in India, among many other countries. The factors include anti-pluralist parties, rising polarization, especially on religious grounds, harassment of journalists, attacks on academic and cultural freedom, and, most notably, the severely shrinking of space for the opposition.

India is well-known for its election management body that enjoys a higher level of autonomy than any other South Asian country. However, a severe depreciation of that autonomy since 2013 resulting compromising free and fair elections, especially in the 2019 elections under Prime Minister Modi's regime. Moreover, the use of the law on defamation to silence journalists, media and other critics, including civil society. The Citizenship Amendment ACT (CAA) set an example against the secular principle of the Indian constitution. The act denies citizenship rights to Muslim immigrants (Alizada et al., 2021, p. 20).

According to the V-Dem reports, the backsliding of Indian democracy mainly occurred following the government under the premiership of Narendra Modi and his party

BJP, promoting a Hindu-nationalism. Jaffrelot (2021) explains how the hegemony of Hindu nationalism coupled with national populism leads a once-vibrant democracy to a new form of democracy, an ethnic democracy with authoritarian features. Hindutva of Modi's government extremely polarizes people along ethnoreligious lines prioritizing the Hindu majoritarian community while relegating Muslims and Christians as second-class citizens. The author also discusses the dire consequences of Hindu nationalism, which resulted in intolerance toward ethnic and religious minorities, and attacks against secularists, intellectuals, universities, and NGOs to suppress the dissents and centralize the power.

Several actions and practices of the Modi government undermine democratic institutions, including the supreme court, the election commission and other facets of democracy. These characterize authoritarian tendencies among the Indian political elites, similar to Bangladesh, as I describe in article 4. The recent evidence indicates an authoritarian cultural dynamic in India that may cause backsliding in the long-standing democracy. However, further studies are warranted to conclude about India.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this research, I focus on the legitimacy of the democratic political system from different perspectives. First, from the people's perspective, I measure public support for and satisfaction with democracy. Second, I analyze it from a performance perspective, looking at how people consider different performance indicators of economic growth and political development as legitimation for democracy. Finally, from a cultural perspective, I evaluate how authoritarian culture and values influence the legitimation of democracy. Before getting into the main discussion, it is essential to introduce the core concepts that form the basis for this research. Democratic legitimacy is the central theme with which this research deals. I emphasize the culture-based legitimation of democracy as a political system and focus particularly on the South Asian context. I therefore start with the concepts of legitimacy and democratic legitimacy and follow up with the cultural dimension of legitimacy. In the end, I reflect upon the socio-political contexts of South Asia.

The Concept of Legitimacy

Legitimacy indicates that "the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). In general, legitimacy is a crucial component of the broader concept of political support that also includes identification, trust, satisfaction, and engagement (Easton, 1975; Klingemann, 1999). The legitimacy of a regime is the extent of support by its members (Eckstein, 1961). This support for a political system is drawn from the constituents of a specified territory with sovereign authority. The authority can exist with or without legitimacy. When people justify the authority, it is considered a legitimate authority.

Gilley (2009, p. 3) defines state legitimacy: "a state is legitimate if it rightfully holds and exercises political power." He then specifies the rightfulness in three ways by extending the definition: "a state is legitimate if it holds and exercises political power with legality,

justification and consent" (Gilley, 2009, p. 8). Gilley further specifies the related elements–

the state, citizens, and legitimacy. Finally, he offers a fully elaborated definition of

legitimacy: "A state, meaning the institutions and ideologies of a political system, is more

legitimate the more that it holds and exercises political power with legality, justification, and

consent from the standpoint of all of its citizens" (Gilley, 2009, p. 11). The above definitions

highlight two core elements of legitimacy—public consent and the cultural context—which

are relevant for my research project. I also explain the legitimacy of the political system from

a public perspective in different cultural contexts.

Democratic Legitimacy

Individuals hold political authority (Peter, 2017), and in a democratic system, they willingly

transfer that authority to an elected political body or government. The degree of legitimacy for

a political system depends on the quality of popular support. Political legitimacy is "the

permissible exercise of coercive power by the state" (Beckman, 2019, p. 413). Public support

is absent when authority is coercive (e.g., a dictator). As such, the power would not be

democratically legitimate. Political legitimacy is also questionable in flawed democracies and

hybrid regimes where elections are not free and fair, freedom of expression and the press and

mass media are restricted, and people cannot freely transfer their authority to their favourite

candidates.

Democratic legitimacy refers to the acceptability and justification of political

authority that contains a moral obligation for people to obey the powers that be. Among the

varieties of democratic legitimacy, one of the main concerns is procedural legitimacy which

concerns whether the procedure for collective decision making is fair, deliberative, or public

(Hershovitz, 2003, p. 212). A decision can be legitimate or illegitimate by democratic

standards depending on whether it is made as per democratic procedures. But the democratic

procedure is not a sufficient condition for legitimacy. Beckman (2019) provides an account

of democratic legitimacy using three different conceptual arguments: procedures, outcomes, and democratic inclusion. He argues that a decision can be legitimate when it follows democratic procedures, produces the correct results, and ensures the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. However, there are many debates about democratic procedures and principles of democratic inclusions (Beckman, 2019). The debates expose the tension between democracy as a method and democracy as a value (Applbaum, 1992, p. 257). I do not delve into such debates; instead, by democratic legitimacy, I mean *the extent to which people accept democracy as an abstract idea for the political system and how satisfied they are with democracy in their country. I extend the definition of democratic legitimacy in a way that the democratic political system requires in order to conform with the prevailing cultural context and value orientation of people. I call this culture-based legitimacy.*

One of the primary inputs for a political system is the public support that furnishes it with the energy to keep it running (Easton, 1957). Public support is fundamental for democratic legitimacy. The support can be manifested through overt actions like voting for a candidate. On the other hand, it can also be a non-observable act, that is, an internal form of behavior, orientation, and state of mind. Easton (1975) divides popular support for democracy into two categories: specific support and diffused support. Specific support depends on specific issues, such as short-term success in economic growth, satisfaction with democracy, or government performance. Diffused support relates to stable belief and attachment to the system of government. Specific support fluctuates quickly, but diffuse support is relatively stable. Specific support is based on instrumental logic, that is, people support a political system when they are satisfied with the outputs. In contrast, diffused support is more a matter of people's attitudinal consensus on the rules of the game (Mattes, 2018). It is commonly argued that economic and political performance affect people's

specific support or satisfaction with the government or the current regime. Such aspects are not related to diffused support (Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014; Yap, 2013).

The legitimacy of a political system requires the majority population in a country to consent to the political game's rules. Lindgren and Persson (2010) see legitimacy from a normative point of view in which standard procedures are followed and require public acceptance and support. A political system is considered legitimate when political power is acquired through a popular election and when political elites exercise that power to produce the common good for all citizens (Gilley, 2009). It is a social contract between society and the political elites. The absence of this social contract—that is, when the rules of the political game are not in agreement with the majority of the population—makes the political system illegitimate (Persson & Sjöstedt, 2012).

It is generally assumed that the level of legitimacy has profound implications for how a political system or state behaves toward its citizens. If there is a legitimacy crisis, the political system has a weak or insecure power base (Persson & Sjöstedt, 2012). Political elites therefore tend to devote a fair amount of resources to the selected constituents (clientelism or favouritism) in order to maintain their state power. As a result, most resources are in the hand of a few privileged groups who are cronies of the political elites. This political behavior leads to an ineffective form of governance that ultimately reduces public support for the political system and makes it even more vulnerable to overthrowing or collapsing (Gilley, 2006). The political system thus falls into a vicious circle (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, the implications of the vulnerability of the political system would vary depending on the cultural context. For example, a political system lacking democratic legitimacy may survive longer in an authoritarian society than in a democratic one.

Figure 2. Culture and the Circular Effects of Legitimacy Crisis for a Political System
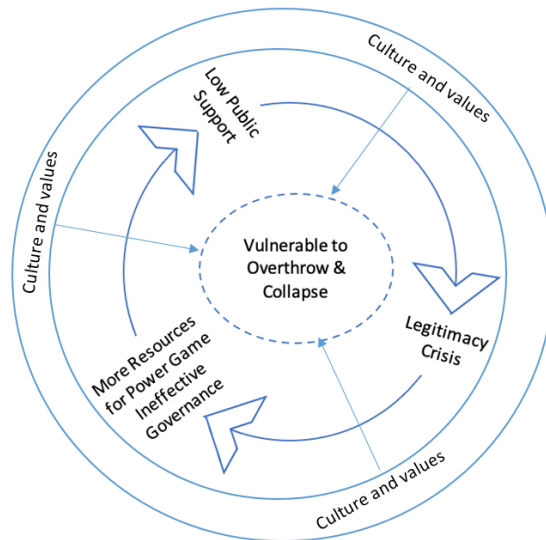
Source: Author

How does democracy earn legitimacy, and what is the basis for democratic legitimacy? As mentioned before, in this research, I include two broad dimensions—performance and cultural factors—to assess the popular legitimacy of the democratic system.

Performance-Based Legitimacy

Performance-based legitimacy is an instrumental account of democratic legitimacy. Here, the democratically elected government acquires legitimacy by producing better outputs for people than do other forms of governance (Arneson, 2003). By performance, I include here both economic and political factors. Democracy can earn its legitimacy by improving the material welfare of people and by providing necessary goods and services. On the other hand, when such material needs are satisfied, people tend to focus on other issues, for instance, how they experience political freedom, whether civil and political rights are secured, whether the government pays attention to the rule of law and human rights-related concerns, and so forth. Popular legitimation of democracy therefore depends on both economic and political performance.

Regarding performance-based legitimacy, the system theory explains democratic legitimacy in three dimensions: input, throughput, and output. David Easton first discusses democratic legitimacy from a system perspective and focuses on input and output dimensions. According to him, a political system or process converts public demands and support (input) into decisions or policies (output) (Easton, 1957, 1965). Other works also explain democratic legitimacy from the input-output perspective (Scharpf, 1997, 1999). However, scholars have subsequently identified the third dimension, throughput, as a distinct dimension of a political system (Lieberherr, 2016; Scharpf, 1999; Schmidt, 2013). In defining the three normative criteria of democratic legitimacy, Schmidt (2013, p. 3) follows the famous quote of Abraham Lincoln: "'output' for the people, 'input' by (and of) the people and 'throughput' with the people." More explicitly, she explains input as political participation and citizen representation, output as governing effectiveness, and throughput as governance process (Schmidt, 2006, 2013).

Culture-Based Legitimacy

Culture is an accumulated form of values in a society where people are socialized (Easton, 1957). It has a substantial influence on human behavior, not least because behavior varies depending on the cultural environments in which individuals are born and raised (Drenth, 2004; Easton, 1957, 1975). Culture manifests itself through internal forms of behavior, mental orientations, deep-seated attitudes or predispositions, and readiness to act (Easton, 1957, p. 390). Culture is like the software of the mind, distinguishing one group of people from another in terms of thinking, feeling, behaving, and acting patterns. Individuals learn these patterns throughout their life in a social environment (Hofstede et al., 2010). Given that the national, geographical, or political boundaries of a territory constitute cultural borders (Hofstede et al., 2010), it stands to reason that socialization within political systems with diverse cultures can play a role in explaining people's legitimation of democracy.

Democratic legitimacy depends on the cultural contexts and circumstances of a society. The members of the society feel obliged to follow the set of procedures and value preferences that are allowed in the prevailing culture. Every culture has its own unique qualities that shape individuals' goals and objectives. The culture thus demands a specific type of behavior. This strategic preference differentiates one culture from another (Easton, 1957). We can therefore not understand the legitimacy of a political system from a people's perspective unless we investigate the connection between the people and their culture. The Western model of liberal democracy may not be perfectly suitable for other parts of the world like South Asia. Cultural differences produce different value systems that cause democracy to take different forms. Similarly, citizens' commitment to the democratic government varies across countries and regions.

The notions and sources of legitimacy are different in liberal and advanced democracies than in non-liberal and weak democracies. There is no universal source of legitimacy. Instead, it varies across time and space (Gilley, 2009, p. 32). Liberal notions of legitimacy in European countries contradict Asian values, African values, Islamicism and many other alternatives. A kind of father-child relationship between the state and citizens is typical in Africa (Hyden, 2013). In Asia, people tend to show unquestioning obedience and loyalty to the state authority and powerful elites (Gilley, 2009; Baniamin et al., 2020). This particular norm of social deference engenders undue legitimacy, as seen in the third paper (satisfaction with democracy in flawed democracies). The affinity between social and political realms also indicates a regime-culture congruence. A democratic regime is more legitimate in democratic societies, and an authoritarian regime is more accepted in authoritarian societies.

Individuals will pursue a course of action consistent with the attitudes and cultural context to which they belong. When we see contradictions in an individual's actions, it

indicates that we merely skim off his surface attitude, not the true feelings (Easton, 1957). For example, in an authoritarian culture, due to the utopia of democracy, we often observe pro-democratic attitudes among people. But their pro-democratic attitudes are not deep-seated; instead, people change their minds when the democratic system does not work as well as they expected. Supportive states of mind are vital inputs for legitimacy and the survival of a political system. This means people must be deeply attached to the political system or its ideal even if it performs poorly at a certain time. This kind of committed attitude and support comes from the person's cultural orientation.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This section explores the puzzles that I address in this research project through different articles. Democratic legitimacy is a topic that receives wide scholarly attention in numerous published works. I introduce some new insights that may threaten the global democratization thesis. Authoritarian culture and value orientations pose a potential threat to democracy. In this research, I show how this type of orientation affects democratic legitimacy globally and in South Asia in particular. We observe widespread public support for democracy as a political system in all countries, irrespective of the existing regime structure. I argue that without understanding the contextual reality and political dynamics, one can reach a very wrong conclusion about democratic legitimacy.

Democratic Legitimacy at the Global Level

Empirical evidence from surveys demonstrates a very high level of public support for democracy as a political system both in democracies as well as in autocracies. There may be many variations in conceptualizations of democracy, with different parts of the world associating it with quite diverse values, norms, and practices. However, in general, democracy is a more acceptable political system compared with its alternatives. Figure 3 shows support for the democratic political system across different regimes from 1994 to 2020. The survey includes four questions about the different political systems (democracy, strong leader, experts, and army rule). In Figure 3, I consider only support for democracy.[2] The support rate ranges from 68 to 99 percent, with an average of 89 percent. The countries covered in WVS have varying regime structures, from autocracies to democracies, and varying economic status and political conditions. Figure 3 shows clear evidence of high public support for a democratic political system in almost all countries, irrespective of their

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[2] "Having a democratic political system" as a way of governing the country.

regime structure and level of economic and political development. The trend line shows a

slightly lower pattern of support for democracy in democratic countries when compared with

support for democracy in autocratic countries.

Figure 3. Public Support for Democracy Worldwide
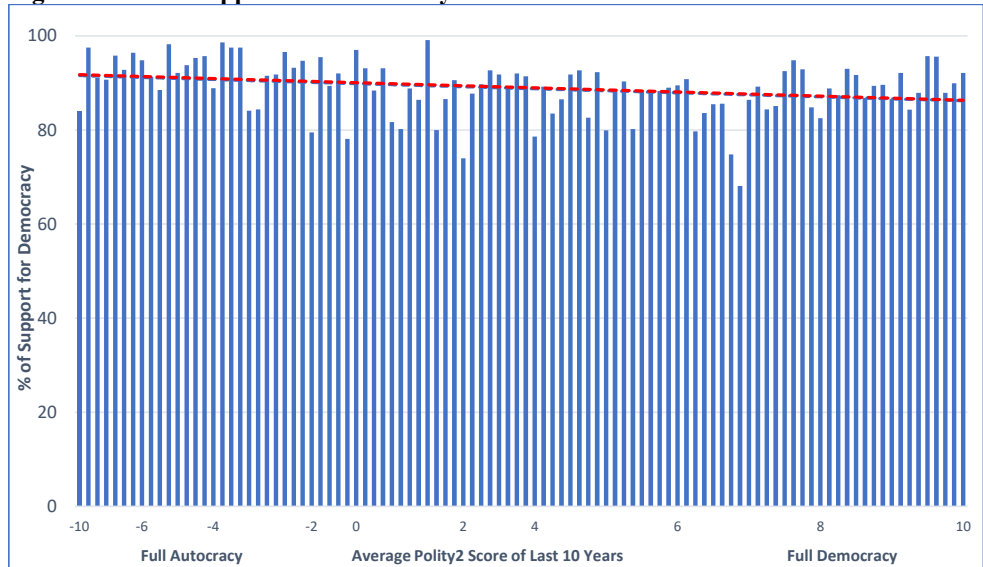
Notes: The World Values Survey (1994–2020). Percentage of respondents who say the democratic political system is 'very good' or 'fairly good' for their country. Regimes' scores are the average polity2 score of the last ten years.

Such high public support for democracy across the globe can create suspicion that the

support is exaggerated, merely a result of "lip service" and not strongly linked to democratic

values in a real sense (Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2003). Lack of knowledge about

democracy and its value system could be one reason for such inflated public support for

democracy. People may be supporting democracy consciously or just following others'

opinions unawares. Democracy gets enormous attention due to its positive image. Being a

positive signifier (Gorman et al., 2018) and due to the strong normative power (Mechkova et

al., 2017), democracy creates a mass fascination that leads to extensive public support.

However, scholars like Wang (2007) argue that democracy is not just rhetoric or lip service;

instead, people consciously subscribe to it and expect a gradual shift towards democratization to avoid uncertainties or adverse consequences.

Figure 3 shows that public support for democracy is exceptionally high in almost all countries worldwide. It is also evident that people simultaneously support both democratic and autocratic political systems. Public support for democracy is therefore meaningful only when it is measured in conjunction with the rejection of an authoritarian political system (Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016; Welzel, 2007). This is why I consider the real support for democracy that precludes support for any other forms of government. I deduce the actual level of support for democracy by deducting the autocratic support from the democratic support. In this way, I extract the exaggeration in support of democracy.

Figure 4 presents the patterns of political support (democratic, autocratic, and real support) in all the WVS countries. The countries are categorized into different regimes depending on the average score given by Freedom House from 1972 to the survey year of each country. The support for democracy is consistently high (around 90%) across the different regimes, which is similar to what is found in figure 3. In contrast, on average, the support for autocracy is 46 percent and the real support is 43 percent. The support for autocracy is, as expected, lower in free countries (it is at less than 40%, with an average of only 33%) compared with the support for autocracy in partly-free and not-free countries (average 52% in both). Accordingly, the real support for democracy is highest in free countries, with an average of 58 percent, and it is at 37 percent and 39 percent respectively in partly-free and not-free countries. In sum, the support for democracy is considerably inflated, while the real support is remarkably low in all kinds of regimes. It also indicates that the real support is higher in democratic countries.

Figure 4. Political Support in Different Regimes
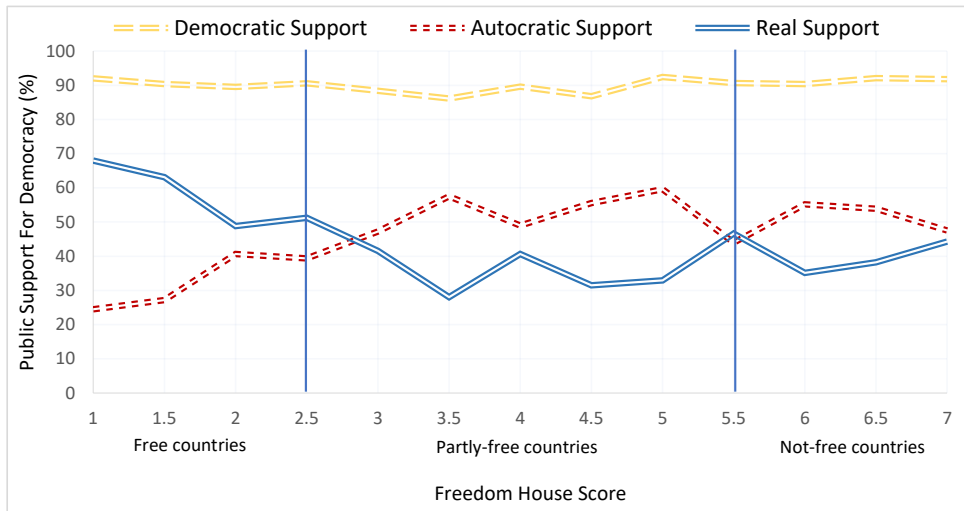
Notes: The World Values Survey (1994-2020) and Freedom House (1972-2020). Here democratic support is calculated as the percentage of respondents who say the democratic political system is 'very good' or 'fairly good' for their country. Autocratic support is the percentage of respondents who say that army rule or strong man rule is 'very good' or 'fairly good' for their country. Real support is the difference between the two.

Observing the widespread support for democracy, many scholars of democracy are highly optimistic about the prospect of democratization worldwide, popularly known as the "global democratization thesis." Nevertheless, I argue here that if the source of support is not grounded in a supportive culture and value orientation, it will not create enough pressure for democratization. In short, a higher level of ostensible support is not enough because real commitment is needed to undergird that support. It is therefore essential to know why people all over the world consider democracy as an ideal political system. Where does support for democracy come from? Is that support real or merely lip service?

There are several works on the potential sources of support for democracy, and each potential source is attended by many theoretical arguments (I discuss them in the following sections). Scholars like Inglehart and Welzel highlight self-expression and emancipative values that boost public support for democracy and democratization. In this research, I emphasize regime structures (ranging from democracy to autocracy) as moderators for public

support. I argue that the implications of democratic value orientations on support for democracy will vary across the regime types due to the cultural differences.

In democracies, people follow democratic rules, norms, and practices, while in non-democratic societies, socio-political relationships are more hierarchical and authoritarian. People in non-democratic countries are therefore oriented toward the authoritarian values that are deeply rooted in their minds. Such a cultural orientation is relatively stable and significantly impacts the people's political attitudes. On the other hand, the contemporary world encourages freedom, equality, and many other democratic values that affect individuals' value orientation. As a result of contradictory value orientations, people in autocracies give ostensible support to democracy but still are not committed democrats. I therefore assume that although democratic values have a positive effect on support for democracy worldwide, the implications will be lower in autocratic regimes. After analyzing the global level data, I find evidence supporting my hypothesis.

Democratic Legitimacy in South Asia

After observing the importance of regime structures and cultural contexts at the global level, I move on to analyse the regional level in South Asia. The quality of democracy in South Asia is highly questionable due to election fraud, the marginalization of opposition, lack of service delivery, and extensive corruption. Regular elections are held with a real but unfair competition that favors incumbents. Scholars on democracy characterize such regimes as competitive authoritarianism or as hybrid regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Levitsky & Way, 2002; Mostofa & Subedi, 2020; Riaz, 2019). Figure 5 visualizes how democracy in South Asian countries has been functioning from 1990 to 2021. It shows that countries belong to either electoral democracy or electoral autocracy[3].

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[3] The V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index explicitly measures Dahl's institutional de-facto guarantees, based on 41 indicators. Electoral autocracy is defined as when the chief executive is elected at least through *de -jure* multiparty competition (Lührmann et al., 2018).

Figure 5. Democratic Development in South Asian Countries
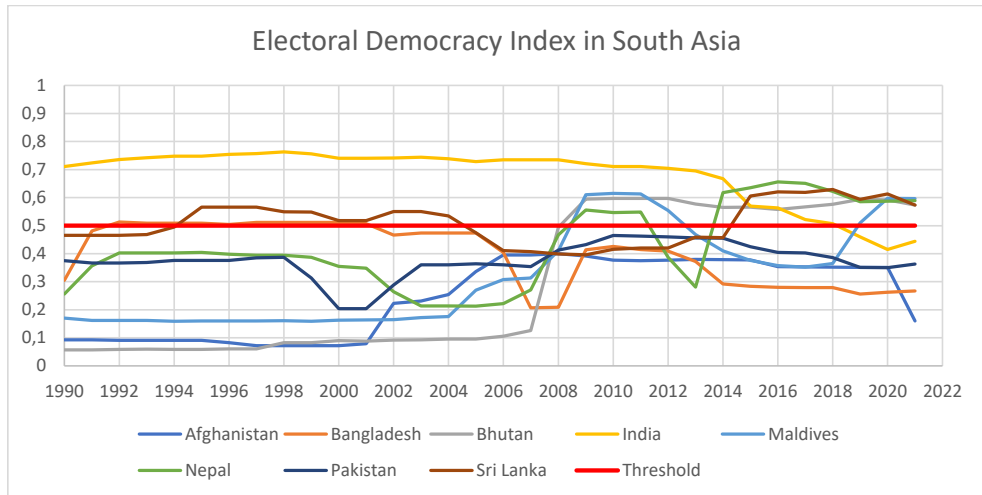
Source: V-Dem data version 12 (Coppedge et al., 2022). The threshold (red horizontal line) for a country to be considered an (electoral) democracy is larger than 0.5 (Lührmann et al., 2018).

According to the Electoral Democracy Index of V-Dem, Sri Lanka (1947) and India (1950) are the oldest democracies, and they were the only (electoral) democratic countries till 1980 in South Asia. After 1981, Sri Lankan democracy started to decline, and till 1990, India remained the only democratic country in the region. Bangladesh achieved the (electoral) democratic status after the 1990 anti-Ershad movement, and from 1995 to 2005, three countries (Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka) remained democratic. However, the democracy worsened in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka after 2005; while Sri Lanka was able to come back ten years later in 2015, Bangladesh failed and remained an electoral autocracy till now. Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives joined the list of democracies in 2009. However, the Maldives remained democratic for a while (2009-2012), fell apart from 2013 to 2018, and came back again in 2019. Nepal has been a democracy from 2009 to 2021, except for 2012-13. Afghanistan and Pakistan have never achieved the status of democracy.

After a landslide victory in the 2014 elections by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Narendra Modi, democratic erosion started in India. The county lost its democratic status in 2019 due to a severe decline in the quality of critical formal

institutions-freedom and the fairness of elections (Alizada et al., 2021). Thus, India, the long-standing electoral democracy in South Asia, was downgraded to an electoral autocracy. At present, out of eight South Asian countries, four (Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) are considered electoral democracies.

In addition to the weak performance of democracy, South Asian countries are, as stated, characterized by authoritarian socio-political culture. One crucial indicator of this is the level of power distance in society. Hofstede et al. (2010) measure power distance as the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally. In my data, the high level of power distance shows a positive association with SwD. High power distance is commonly found in connection with ACO.

In South Asia, citizens, having flawed democracy along with a hierarchical and high-power distance society, are mostly oriented towards authoritarian culture and values. I call this an "Authoritarian Cultural Orientation" (ACO), which is defined here based on three survey items: unquestioning obedience to a) parents; b) top officials in the public or private sector; and c) people with power, money, and who belong to aristocratic families. The survey includes three South Asian countries—Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, where socio-political culture is shown to be authoritarian (Baniamin et al., 2020). Figure 6 displays a high level of power distance in five countries, while Figure 7 displays the prevalence of ACO in the three countries of South Asia. The boxplot demonstrates that ACO is higher in Bangladesh than in other countries.

ACO shapes public attitudes and evaluations of the political system. With a higher level of ACO, citizens in authoritarian societies accept the authoritarian political system or flawed democracy for their country. Consequently, the quality of democracy (e.g., freedom or equality) is not a big concern for them. I have developed two articles using data from two surveys of South Asian countries with this context in mind.

Figure 6. Power Distance in South Asian countries

Figure 7. Prevalence of ACO
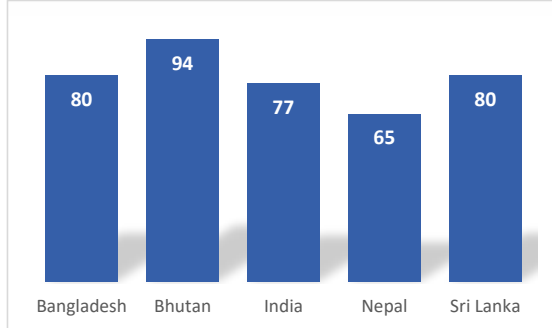
Source: Hofstede Insights (www.hofstede-insights.com). The scale ranges from 0 to 100, where a higher score indicates a higher power distance. Data for Afghanistan and Maldives are not available.
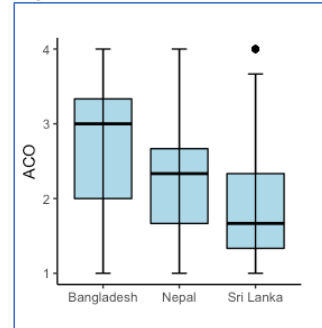
Source: GTS survey (2014/20), the Figure is used in article 2

In the second article, I measure democratic legitimacy in terms of satisfaction with democracy (SwD) in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. I use data from the Governance and Trust Survey (GTS), which shows that the level of citizens' satisfaction with democracy is pretty high. People in all three countries have high SwD (average 65%) despite the poor performance of democracy and the marring of public services by a high level of corruption. We already know that democracy in South Asian countries is not up to the mark.

Why, then, do people have high SwD when the democracy they live in is so excessively flawed? I assume it is possible to answer this question by examining the political and cultural contexts. The findings from a rigorous analysis of the survey data show that ACO has a significant positive influence on SwD in all three countries, even after controlling the performance dimensions. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of the cultural context and values orientation in evaluating democratic legitimacy from a public perspective.

I have analyzed the potential determinants and moderating factors of democratic legitimacy globally and in South Asia. The results demonstrate that authoritarian culture prevents democratization in autocratic countries and democratic institutionalization in flawed democracies. Based on the findings, I consider that people in South Asia follow a different logic in evaluating the performance of their regime and government. They are happy with

their government when they get benefits and their interests are served. The democratic legitimacy of the government is therefore not the primary concern.

With this assumption in mind, I analyze data from eight South Asian countries regarding the Covid-19 crisis management by different public institutions. I want to explore whether citizens take into consideration governance capacity or democratic legitimacy when assessing the success of crisis management. Theoretically, it is argued that both the legitimacy and capacity of a government are necessary for successful crisis management (Christensen et al., 2016; Christensen & Lægreid, 2020). The findings for South Asian countries also demonstrate that people consider both legitimacy and capacity of government in Covid-19 management. However, some of the indicators for democratic legitimacy appear non-significant, indicating the people put a low level of importance on democracy in crisis management. Although democracy in South Asia does not perform well, and the governments excessively restrict public freedom with the excuse of Covid-19 control, people still are not worried about the quality of democracy.

Democratic Legitimacy in Specific Case Studies

The quantitative analysis of survey data provides a generalized view of the impact of the cultural context and value orientation for democratic legitimacy. For a deeper understanding of the cultural context and its implication for democratic legitimacy, I also conduct two case studies in Bangladesh. First, I investigate why democracy in Bangladesh is backsliding even after having the potential for consolidating democracy. Scholars unanimously agree that non-violent resistance (NVR) campaigns have inherent contributing factors to democratization. A successful NVR movement in 1990 transformed Bangladesh into a democracy, and the country is thus a likely case for democratic institutionalization. However, the country is yet to achieve a standard level of democracy. Instead, it now has a hybrid regime or a new authoritarian system. I draw on the theory of culture and values to explain this puzzle. I

demonstrate how the prevailing ACO has components that reduce or even eliminate a civil resistance movement's potential to increase the likelihood of democracy; consequentially, democratic backsliding occurs.

Second, I explore the dire consequences for public life, especially for political opponents, when there is a crisis for democratic legitimacy in Bangladesh. The findings demonstrate that when a regime or a government lacks democratic legitimacy, it uses oppressive means to remain in power. I present the political struggle of a religion-based opposition party, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islam (Jamaat). The current Awami League (AL) government has successfully undermined and suppressed all opposition parties and thus silenced its critics. Jamaat is one of the most victimized parties because several of its top leaders have been executed for war crimes, and the party is banned from participating in elections. This study explains that since the AL government suffers from a severe crisis of democratic legitimacy, it applies all possible authoritarian tools and techniques, including the misuse of legal and institutional frameworks, to suppress the opposition. The authoritarian tendencies of political elites and the prevailing authoritarian culture in socio-political relationships make the political situation even worse and more critical for the opposition parties.

Article Plan: Addressing the Puzzles

So how to address the research puzzles and problems mentioned above? In this research project, I develop theoretical constructs to explain the puzzles with the help of empirical data and evidence. I explain democratic legitimacy by focusing mainly on the theory of culture and values. Several alternative arguments, such as those based on performance indicators, are also included in the analysis. I develop five articles that underline an individual's values and cultural orientation as significant predictors of democratic legitimacy and its functioning.

While democratic value orientation increases the support for democracy, authoritarian culture and values act as the fundamental threats to democratic legitimacy.

As Figure 8 shows, the first article finds that the implications of democratic values on support for democracy are moderated by the regime structure and the attendant cultural context. The second article shows that people living in authoritarian societies in South Asia are more likely to be happy with flawed democracy. Similarly, the third article finds that democratic legitimacy is not the prime concern for people when they evaluate the performance of public institutions in crisis management. The fourth article explains how authoritarian culture and values cause democratic backsliding in Bangladesh. Finally, the fifth article demonstrates that the authoritarian attitude of ruling elites is one of the most critical challenges to the survival of opposition parties and thereby also a challenge to establishing a functional democracy.

Figure 8. Thematic and Sequential Plan of Articles
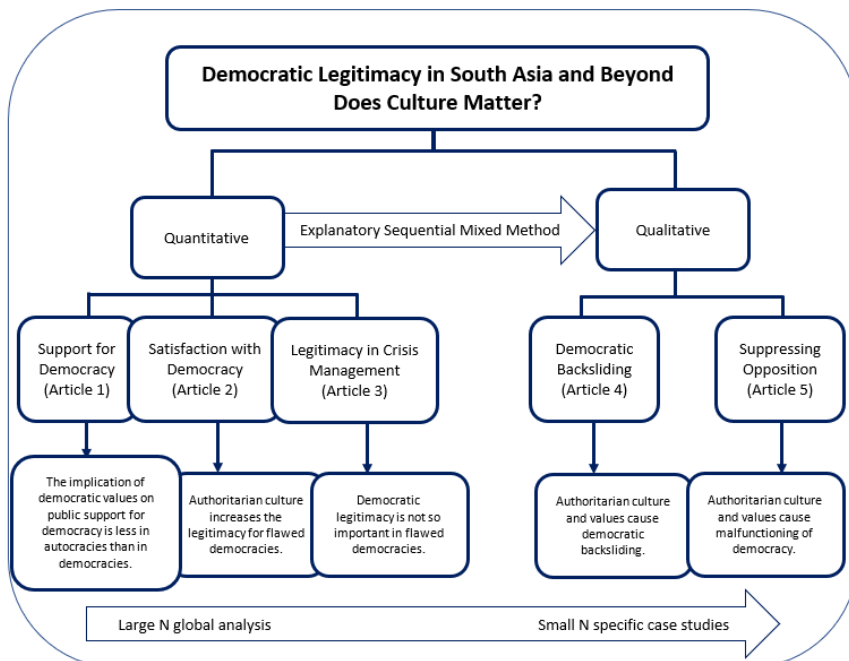
Source: Author

LITERATURE REVIEW: ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Several previously published works offer diverse theoretical explanations for the legitimacy that people around the world award to democracy as an ideal system of governance. The current study builds on the essence of some of these works. In this section, I review some of the literature and theoretical arguments that reflect democratic legitimacy worldwide. Specifically, I attempt to identify the potential sources of that legitimacy. In the end, I identify some research gaps and puzzles in order to set the stage for the contributions of this dissertation.

Economic and Political Performance

There is a long debate about the public legitimacy of democracy—whether it stems from a democratically elected government's delivery of goods and services (economic performance) or from the quality of democracy (political performance). A seminal work by Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) emphasizes economic and social development as the preconditions for pro-democratic attitudes. Studies in the 1990s suggest a strong correlation between economic performance and public support for democracy (Dalton, 1994; Kitschelt, 1992; Przeworski, 1991). Similarly, the modernization theory argues a positive correlation between economic success and support for democracy (Evans & Whitefield, 1995; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Magalhães, 2014).

But there is also contradictory empirical evidence regarding the relationship between economic factors and support for democracy as a form of governance. Huntington (1968, p. 37) suggests that socio-economic development does not necessarily lead to pro-democratic attitudes; instead, it leads to individualism that can produce anti-democratic attitudes such as "distrust and hostility" or "alienation and anomie." Chu et al. (2008) find economic factors relatively less important than political aspects as predictors of support for democracy.

Evidence from some works demonstrates that support for democracy remains unaffected in many democracies with relatively poor economic performance and during times of financial crisis (Cordero & Simón, 2016; Graham & Sukhtankar, 2004). Some scholars find mixed relationships between economic development and support for democracy—positive in some countries and negative in others (Dalton & Ong, 2005). Recently, the Global Barometer Survey (GBS) (2018) showed that economic performance does not affect public support for democracy in any regime as long as some extent of political liberalization is maintained.

The empirical works that include both economic and political factors in their analysis observe that political development matters more than economic growth in promoting support for democracy (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Evans & Whitefield, 1995; GBS, 2018; Gibson, 1996; Mattes & Bratton, 2007; Rose et al., 1998; Shin, 1999; Sing, 2010). If there is more freedom than coercion from the regime, it is more likely that people will support democracy. Hence, neither the theoretical argument nor the empirical evidence can provide a straightforward answer about the effect of economic or political performance on support for democracy.

Quality of Democracy and Quality of Government

Quality of Democracy (QoD) and Quality of Government (QoG) are essential indicators for measuring the performance of a political system. These two dimensions of quality are complementary to the political and economic performance of a polity. Many scholars (Boräng et al., 2017; Dahlberg et al., 2015; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Rothstein, 2009; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008) consider QoD and QoG as the determinants for democratic legitimacy. A parallel view of performance originates from the system theory that explains democratic performance based on input, throughput, and output. Easton (1957) was the first to discuss democratic legitimacy from a system perspective, dividing it into input and output. He includes social demand and support as inputs, whereas outputs are decisions or policies

(p. 384). Scholars later identified throughput as a distinct dimension of a political system (Schmidt, 2013).

Quality of democracy (input legitimacy) is the mechanism or procedure that reflects citizens' preferences and the responsiveness of their elected representatives to their concerns; the representatives are accountable to the citizenry for the political decisions they make on behalf of the citizens (Powell, 2000; Scharpf, 1997). Input legitimacy signifies all the democratic procedures that ensure public representation in the decision-making process (Dahlberg et al., 2015; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014), where the enfranchisement of all stakeholders is guaranteed following the criteria of fairness (Boedeltje & Cornips, 2004). Munck (2016) provides an extensive account of the (re)conceptualization of QoD by including three components of the political system: access to a government office (who), government decision-making (how), and the social environment of politics (what). Democratic legitimacy depends on the quality of many aspects of democracy, such as free and fair elections, opportunities for public participation, and political freedom. However, the QoD is not enough to create legitimacy for democracy in some cultural contexts.

Quality of government implies that democracy is an "empty ritual" if it fails to produce effective outcomes and cannot meet the public's demands (Scharpf, 1997). Citizens usually judge QoG from two perspectives—the quality of governance (e.g., impartiality) and quality of outcomes (economic growth) —that are theoretically related to the output legitimacy of a political system (Dahlberg et al., 2015). The quality of governance (also called throughput legitimacy) depends on procedural fairness. Schmidt (2013, p. 4) calls it the "black box" of governance practices. Most scholars see good QoG as indicating trustworthy, reliable, impartial, non-corrupt, and competent government institutions (Boräng et al., 2017; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Holmberg & Rothstein, 2012). From the perspective of the Estonian model, QoG pertains to a political system's output legitimacy and

extends to its political decisions and policies (Easton, 1957). Output legitimacy concerns a government's effectiveness in ensuring the welfare of citizens. It is judged based on the efficacy of policy outcomes when delivering services to the people (Schmidt, 2013). Output is measured in terms of the level of outcomes or the consequences (Fukuyama, 2016) that are the ultimate goal of public policy.

From the performance perspective described above, a well-functioning economy with good government and relatively good political conditions (i.e., a better level of democracy) are assumed to lead citizens to have an increased level of satisfaction in the existing regime and the political system under which they live. In such a case, people in both democracies and autocracies would tend to support the prevailing political system in their country. Democratic legitimacy would therefore be higher in democracies and lower in autocracies. Quite the opposite trend in public support should then be observed in cases where performance (both economic and political) is bad: support for democracy should decrease in democracies and increase in autocracies (Sing, 2012). Due to the absence of political rights and freedom in autocracies, it can be expected that citizens would be more likely to support a democratic political system. Nevertheless, the theoretical prediction is that public support for democracy should be low in autocracies where the economic growth rate is high and the political system has enjoyed prolonged stability (e.g., China and Vietnam). In short, perceived economic and political performance cannot determine the public legitimacy for democracy across different regimes and cultures.

Nevertheless, explaining democratic legitimacy through perceived performance indicators would be simplistic because society consists of very complicated human relationships that function in and are influenced by various cultural and value-based constructs. Moreover, multiple surveys and empirical studies cited above show that democratic legitimacy in many countries is not consistent with economic and political

performance. Instead, the democratic political system gets almost equally high support in all countries irrespective of their political and economic performance. Economic and political factors are therefore insufficient to explain such inflated public support. Consequently, different cultural insights may be helpful to account for the global trends in public legitimacy for democracy.

Political Socialization: Regime Experience

People develop a particular cultural orientation through real-life experiences of the culture or cultures in which they live. Similarly, people acquire their political orientation under the existing regime structure in their country. Socialization within a democratic culture and political system can nurture a democratic orientation. When experiencing a democratic society and political system, people acquire democratic norms and values, while people who experience an autocratic society will acquire a more authoritarian orientation (Easton, 1957). The habituation theory (Rustow, 1970) claims that individuals can acquire pro-democratic values only by living in democracies. If this were the case, autocracies would teach only autocratic values. Children are not born liberal and democratic; instead, they learn various beliefs, values, and attitudes in different stages of their life (Bøyum, 2006), or they acquire the political myths, doctrines, and philosophies that are transmitted from one generation to the next (Easton, 1957). This learning process starts at an early age, crystallizes, and reaches a peak during the teenage years, then usually remains relatively stable throughout adulthood (Easton, 1957, 1975; Sears & Valentino, 1997; Voicu & Peral, 2014). According to Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 5), "it starts within the family; it continues within the neighbourhood at school, in youth groups, at the workplace, and in the living community."

Individuals develop particular political attitudes and behaviors while living within a specific social system with rules, norms, and practices that guide them in all life spheres. Easton (1957, 1975) calls it "a process of politicization" that builds attachment to a political

system. Through this process, individuals realize the expectations for their political life and the political roles they should play, and they develop a desire to act accordingly. This politicization process, Easton further argues, creates a solid and diffused support base in a stable political system. As this support is transmitted through the cultural process of politicization, it becomes deeply rooted and tends to be "independent of the vagaries of day-to-day outputs" (Easton 1957, p. 399). As such, the political and economic outputs or performance of a governance system would not greatly affect such diffused support.

Moreover, these cultural orientations hardly change and remain in the back of people's minds throughout their life. Therefore, people in autocracies may be oriented towards democratic values on the surface, while the deep-seated authoritarian culture prevents them from becoming committed democrats. According to this theoretical point of view, individuals would most likely support the political system that they have experienced most of their life. Public legitimacy for democracy would thus be lower in autocracies than in democracies (Voicu & Peral, 2014). In fact, individuals' experiences of democratic or autocratic regimes do not necessarily translate into political support in an expected pattern.

The existing research and theoretical arguments outlined above (the performance and socialization approaches) have some limitations in explaining the inflated pattern of public support for democracy across different regimes. They offer contrasting expectations about public attitudes to democracy. The economic and political performance sometimes positively affects public support for democracy, while in other cases, it does not. What seems most certain is that the effects of economic achievement, political performance, and political socialization on the legitimacy of democracy will vary across democracies and autocracies. I therefore introduce the theory of value and culture to explain the global pattern of public support for democracy.

Public support for democracy is rooted in democratic values, the aspiration of increased freedom of choice, and control in personal life. According to Inglehart and Oyserman (2004), individuals with higher autonomy values would be more likely to accept the political system that offers the greatest opportunity for freedom and personal choice, and democracy is indeed that system. An orientation towards democratic values encourages support for democracy, while authoritarian values decrease such support in all regime structures.

It is also important to note that supporting a democratic political system in autocratic countries has meanings and implications that differ from those in democratic countries. It implies a political stance that opposes the given regime and demands regime change. To support democracy in democratic countries does not imply political positioning for regime change. Democracy facilitates the emergence of democratic values, whereas autocracy restricts the transformation of values. At the same time, the influential elite in a military-backed autocracy can suppress mass aspirations for democracy (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). Mass media can also play a dominant role in promoting or restricting any values (Comstock, 1993; Lustyik, 2007) and in spreading the propaganda or narratives of ruling elites. Moreover, media freedom is limited in authoritarian regimes (Galais, 2013).

Considering these contrasting effects of different factors and regime structures on public support for democracy, I extrapolate some hypothetical relations in Table 2. I also hypothesize that the implications of individuals' democratic value orientation would vary depending on the regime in which they live.

Table 2. Determinants for Democratic Legitimacy in Different Regimes

Determinants	Democratic Legitimacy in	
	Democracies	**Non-Democracies**
Better economy & QoG (Growth, services)	⬆	⬇
Adverse economy & QoG (Poverty, corruption)	⬇	⬆
Better political conditions & QoD (Fair election, participation)	⬆	⬇
Adverse political conditions & QoD (Coercion, suppression)	⬇	⬆
Political socialization (Live in democracy/autocracy)	⬆	⬇
Authoritarian culture & values (Control, obedience)	⬇	⬇
Democratic culture & values (Equality, freedom)	⬆	⬆

Source: Author. Notes: Upward arrow indicates a positive relationship, and the downward arrow indicates a negative relationship. The thicker arrow (the last row) indicates a stronger implication.

According to table 2, what seems most certain is that the effects of economic achievement, political performance, and political socialization on the support for democracy will vary across democracies and autocracies. Better economy, stable or democratic political conditions, and positive experiences of existing regimes will increase support for democracy in democracies, while people in autocracies tend to support their current regime (autocracy). On the contrary, the effects of the adverse economy, political conditions, and regime experience will likely be the inverse, i.e., decreasing support for democracy in democracies and increasing support for democracy in autocracies.

Also, culture and values have a similar direction of influence on democratic legitimacy across the regimes. While authoritarian culture and value orientation decrease the support for democracy, democratic culture and values will, in contrast, facilitate support for democracy both in democracies and autocracies. However, the extent of the effect of democratic culture and values on public support for democracy would still vary depending on

the political system. In other words, the effect of democratic values on public support for democracy will be stronger in democratic countries than in other types of regimes. I use a thicker arrow in table 2 to indicate this difference in the effects of democratic culture and value on support for democracy. More details on this are available in article I. The following section presents a detailed theoretical argument on value orientation and its interactions with cultural context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research project, I use theoretical constructs focusing on culture and individual value orientations to understand the underlying reality of support for democracy in flawed democracies. In addition, I use some variables drawn from the theoretical arguments discussed in the foregoing sections. As mentioned before, there is overwhelming support for democracy across the world, irrespective of regime structures. Moreover, people in South Asia report being satisfied with their form of democracy even though it is not working as expected and even though the political institutions are not performing their due roles. These are political dilemmas that cannot be explained merely by pointing to theoretical insights about performance. Instead, culture and value orientation play a vital role here.

I therefore draw on some normative theories that take values and culture into account to understand the legitimacy awarded to South Asian democracies and investigate political dynamics. Whereas democratic value orientation enhances the acceptance of democracy as a political system all over the world, authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) poses a challenge to democracy in many parts of the world, including in South Asia. At the same time, I also argue that the implications of people's orientation towards democratic values will differ across the regime structures. With the prevalence of ACO, democracy cannot be "the only game in town" in South Asian society and politics. Contextual realities and existing political dynamics are essential to understanding democratic legitimacy. South Asia has a distinct socio-political culture, contentious politics, weak governance, and, most evidently, corruption. Cultural insight is thus important for gaining a better understanding of democratic legitimacy and political dynamics in South Asia.

Individual Value Orientations

The prominent scholars Huntington and Lipset revisited their earlier arguments on economic performance and, by the late 1990s, embraced cultural factors and values as even stronger

determinants than economic growth for pro-democratic attitudes (Gorman et al., 2018). In recent decades, Inglehart, Welzel, and their colleagues in the World Values Survey have made noteworthy contributions to understanding the importance of values for democracy. Their work is significant for the current study because it underlines the effect of individual-level value orientation on the legitimacy that the public gives to democracy.

The theoretical insights mainly draw on values-based preferences, particularly the individual-level value orientation. Some hypotheses are derived from the theories of value change pioneered by Schwartz, Inglehart, and Welzel, among others (Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2001; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). Values significantly impact individual attitudes and behavior (Schwartz et al., 2001). Scholars identify a pattern of change in people's fundamental value-based priorities: a shift from materialist to post-materialist attitudes (Inglehart, 1990, 1997), from survival to self-expression (Inglehart & Baker, 2000), from embeddedness to autonomy (Schwartz, 2004), and from traditional to secular and emancipative values (Welzel, 2013). With such shifts in values, people seek more autonomy and freedom.

Schwartz (1992) lists human values under different categories and subcategories: some values restrict human behavior while others allow autonomy and freedom. For example, the values of nationalism, racism, tradition, tribe, and religion encourage people to perceive the world in a particularistic way that could be described as a conservative worldview. By contrast, the values of equality, independence, self-determination, perseverance, and tolerance promote autonomy and universalism.

The modernization theory claims there is a transition from religious and traditional values to secular-rational values when a society experiences a threshold of economic development and industrialization (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). According to this theory, economic development generates democracy (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997;

Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). Nevertheless, many modernization theorists do not believe economic development by itself can bring about democratization. Instead, it produces pro-democratic value preferences that are incompatible with unquestioning obedience to authority (Welzel & Inglehart, 2005). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) therefore revisit the modernization theory and argue for a revised version that includes culture and value dimensions. Cultural traditions and the prevailing value orientations of society interact with the driving force of modernization (i.e., socio-economic development) to shape people's worldviews (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Modernization promotes individualism and autonomy, diminishing the importance of religion while increasing the importance of individual freedom and greater control of one's own life (Minkov et al., 2020). There is thus a tripartite relationship: modernization produces pro-democratic values that increase aspirations for democracy, which ultimately contribute to democratization.

The shift toward post-materialistic values is another dimension for measuring individuals' orientation towards the values of autonomy and freedom (Rudnev & Savelkaeva, 2018). The argument of post-materialism stems from the idea of human needs being hierarchically ordered. After people's most urgent need is met, they start prioritizing the next upper-level need, and so on. According to the post-materialism theory, a country's advancement in economic modernization fulfils material needs and thus increases people's level of existential security. It gives them assurance of survival and can result in them taking their material needs for granted. As a result, people tend to shift their focus to non-material needs, demanding more individual freedom and the right to participate in political decision making in combination with rejecting authoritarian rule (Inglehart, 1971, 1990, 1997; Norris, 2011; Wang, 2007; Wang & You, 2016). Economic development is one of the root causes for such a shift toward autonomy values (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). In short, when people

feel confident that they have existential security, the order of their prioritized values changes, and they begin focusing on non-material needs (Delhey, 2010).

However, it is not a leap of faith that when material needs are satisfied, people want more political freedom, such as freedom of expression and speech. There are some contradictions to this theoretical argument. Economic improvement has brought about massive cultural change in many societies, but traditional values still persist (Inglehart, 2006). For example, in transitional and less democratic societies, citizens may have democratic values but still support authoritarian regimes that ensure better economic growth, socio-political stability, and security (Pietsch, 2015).

Modernization leads to postmaterialist values and influences political attitudes of freedom and independent personalities. At the same time, in an authoritarian context, when economic modernization takes place, that encourages the party in power to grab more power and authority, leading to more authoritarianism. This is even more true in the context of authoritarian cultures like South Asia. When people achieve economic well-being, they try to get involved in politics, not to promote and participate in democratic discourse mainly but rather to get more attention and be in the limelight and wield more power and control over others. Engagement in politics and getting political affiliation give protection of self and family. For example, in a one-party hegemonic state such as Bangladesh, political affiliation and loyalty to the party in power provide access to favors and influence the decision-making process. Also, political affiliation in Nepal provides access to lucrative positions. There are several major political parties in Nepal. Depending on which party or its allies win the election, many positions in the government, such as leadership positions in academic institutions (Universities) and constitutional bodies (anti-corruption agency, Public Service Commission, University Grants Commission,) are shared by the ruling party and its allies.

When individuals orient with democratic values, they develop a sense of personal autonomy: "the value of living and thinking independently of tradition, religion, and other authorities" (Bøyum, 2006, p. 11). Such values offer individuals a perfect orientation for a universalistic framework that increases autonomy in action (Habermas, 1987). Individuals with democratic values think and act in ways that reflect "freedom from conventions and from given laws" (Habermas, 1987, p. 97). On the other hand, authoritarian values have an inverse effect, suppressing aspirations for increased autonomy and freedom. They also promote "taken for granted," a notion that prevails in religion, communal values, sacred or ritual practices, and unquestioned obedience to authority (Habermas, 1984). Democracy promotes critical minds that challenge rigid and sacred principles. A proper orientation towards democratic values is only possible when an individual is committed to democracy and exposed to democratic values and practices, along with rejecting authoritarian values. Nevertheless, people in authoritarian countries have a mixed or hybrid value orientation.

Hybridization of Value Orientations

People in democracies are exposed to democratic values and practices in their daily life. They internalize the values that are institutionalized over time and have become part of the culture. As a result, they want democracy, a political system that conforms to their value orientation. As Welzel (2021, p. 998) argues, "emancipation-minded people support democracy for the proper reasons because their values imply a deeply internalized appreciation of democracy's liberal-egalitarian inspiration." In non-democratic and authoritarian societies, by contrast, people have contradicting value orientations—a mix of democratic and non-democratic values. If they have a relatively distanced orientation towards democratic values, they may back off, thinking that democracy will disrupt the existing social and cultural order. They have a weaker internalization of democratic values and less commitment to democracy because they live under the influence of the authoritarian culture. In the context of East Asian

countries, Shin (2015b) describes a hybrid political attitude that is very instrumental in its approach to governance; it is an imperfect adherence to liberal democracy that ultimately leads to legitimizing authoritarianism (Pietsch, 2015; Pietsch et al., 2015). In non-democracies, citizens are thus in an ambiguous position; while they express support for democracy—a form of government they have never experienced—their inherent cultural values mean their level of commitment to democracy remains weak and wanes when authoritarian temptations emerge.

The hybridization of value orientations is one of my main arguments in explaining public support for democracy. The contradictory value orientations stem from the socio-political culture. Due to the authoritarian culture in autocracies, people consider many authoritarian values ideal or acceptable. For example, obedience to rulers is regarded as a desirable virtue, and it is also a potential indicator of authoritarianism. More than 50 percent of people around the world misunderstand democracy as meaning obedience to rulers (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019; Welzel, 2021). In autocracies, the cultural dynamics puzzle ordinary people; they accept all socially desirable virtues, be they democratic or autocratic. Asian countries in general and specifically those in Southeast Asia are the best examples in this regard. The "Asian values thesis" (Bomhoff & Gu, 2012) and ACO (Baniamin, 2019a; Baniamin et al., 2020) are more prevalent in these parts of the world, where people prefer a strongman's rule. Support for the "big man" ruler is also common in African countries (Hyden, 2013). Authoritarian culture and values make democracy unsuitable and serve well to justify the strongman rule in many countries (Diamond, 2013; Zakaria & Yew, 1994). Such cultural traditions preclude the acquisition of democratic values (Chang et al., 2007).

Theory of Authoritarian Culture and Values

Democratic legitimacy also has a cultural dimension. History and cultural traditions create a long-lasting imprint on the worldview of individuals and society (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

The culture also interacts with individual values and political preferences. Scholars label distinctive authoritarian cultural features in Asian countries as "Asian values" (Bomhoff and Gu, 2012) and as "Authoritarian Cultural Orientation" (ACO) (Baniamin et al., 2020). Such culture and values mean that ordinary citizens are expected to show respect and unquestioning obedience to the ruling elites or individuals who hold authoritative positions in the family, society, and state. Baniamin and his colleagues (2020, 2019) show that citizens with high ACO have inflated institutional trust in civil service in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Ma and Yang (2014) use similar measuring instruments to see the effect of authoritarian orientations on political trust in East Asian countries.

The authoritarian dimension of Asian values is claimed to be the main reason for the lack of democratic development in the region (Chu et al., 2008; Welzel & Dalton, 2017; Zakaria & Yew, 1994). Informally exercised authority breeds clientelism, compromises neutrality and fairness in decision-making, and generates loyalty to the power center. However, with the expansion of education and flow of communication, people all over the world, including in Asia, develop "self-expression" values which are the predeterminants of democracy (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2011).

In this context, the Asian values thesis has triggered scholarly debate. Bomhoff and Gu (2012) claim that Asian values are not incompatible with the emergence and consolidation of democracy; instead, they argue, that Asian democracies are exceptional, and there is no single best way, such as the Western path of democratization. For example, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have conservative societies where self-expression values are absent or much weaker than in the West. Still, they are well-functioning democracies in Asia. As Hofstede et al. (2010) note, power distance is prominent in Japan (score is 54). It would therefore seem that self-expression values do not make sense in East Asia. Welzel (2012), meanwhile, counterargues

that the Asian democracies are not exceptional. He statistically proves that people in Asia have become more liberal and pro-democratic due to the rise of self-expression values.

Authoritarian culture and practices have some positive sides in a political system. Loyalty and obedience to authority are useful for maintaining political order and the smooth functioning of a system that may contribute to economic development. Nevertheless, it is problematic when loyalty and obedience reach such an extreme level that people blindly support their favourite elites even though the actions of the elites are unethical and unacceptable. Furthermore, a conflicting situation can arise when the regime of a country democratizes, but the country's culture remains authoritarian.

Congruence Theory and Regime-Culture Misfit

An alignment between the nature of public attitudes and the nature of the prevailing political system is a necessary condition for a stable and well-performing democracy. According to the "congruence theory" explained by Eckstein (Eckstein, 1961, 1966), there should be similarities between the authority patterns of all social units, including the government, for better performance. The theory has two core hypotheses: 1) "governments perform well to the extent that their authority patterns are congruent with the authority patterns of other units of society"; 2) "democratic governments perform well only if their authority patterns exhibit 'balanced disparities'—that is, combinations of democratic and non-democratic traits" (Eckstein, 1997, p. 1). The author explains the Norwegian case in which an extraordinary degree of congruence is found among all socio-political units such as families, schools, political parties, government, and so on (Eckstein, 1966). Such congruence makes Norway one of the most stable democracies in the world. What happens if there is an incongruent authority pattern?

Several scholars support the idea that a mixed democracy (i.e., a mixed authority pattern consisting of democratic and non-democratic traits) is the best-performing type of

democracy (Eckstein, 1997). However, when there is a high level of incongruence, the authority patterns change to congruence. This means either the authority pattern of government (the political system) or the society (culture) must change to create a balance between the two. This change does not necessarily happen at the governmental level; other social units may also adapt to conform to the authority patterns. Eckstein (1997), however, argues that it is less likely that the adaptation for congruence occurs in the less labile social units, for example, family, school, workplace, and the like, since these units are institutionalized, or the norms of behavior are internalized. The changes at the political system level are therefore more likely to happen.

In the case of South Asia, authoritarian culture is deeply institutionalized in all social units and socio-political relationships. Such a situation contradicts democratic norms and values and leads to incongruent social units. As a result, democracy in the region is not performing well. A democracy cannot be stable and effective if the relationship between authorities and the people is despotic or non-democratic. A supportive social environment is therefore vital for democracy. The congruence theory implies that it is imperative to democratize social life to achieve a stable democracy. It also implies that particular regimes demand particular political cultures (Mattes, 2018). If there is a disjuncture between a regime, its institutions, norms, and public attitudes, that regime will not last for long.

Welzel (2021, p. 994) explains this incongruence as a "regime-culture misfit." He argues that when the level of democracy does not fit with the existing cultural context and the value orientations of the population, the regime often backslides. For example, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the euphoria had such momentum that it resulted in over-democratization in many countries, including Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Turkey. Welzel (2021) also argues that such misfits are the reasons why these regimes are now experiencing democratic backsliding or "regression to the mean" (Welzel, 2021, p. 994).

There are several manifestations of the authoritarian culture and value orientation, especially among political elites. Therefore, in order to explain the authoritarian behavior of political elites in Bangladesh, I also draw on some other theoretical constructs: maximalism and mobilization (Pinckney, 2020) and the theory of authoritarianism (Svolik, 2012).

The Theory of Authoritarianism

Political oppression and co-optation by ruling elites (Svolik, 2012) are also key markers of authoritarian behavior. In his book *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (2012), Svolik argues that although an authoritarian ruler does not need to worry about elections, he suffers from the uncertainty of whether he will survive due to lacking legitimacy. Authoritarian governments try to overcome this crisis of legitimacy by applying two measures: repression and co-optation. Unfortunately, the two measures are interdependent, and both have some dire consequences for autocrats. If the regime represses its opponents with the help of agents such as the police and other law enforcement agencies, it will ultimately empower those agents and become too dependent on them. At the same time, when it represses those who oppose it, regular political demonstrations turn violent. Things deteriorate when the government lacks political legitimacy, and the threat of a mass protest movement arises.

Authoritarian governments also try to co-opt both political and non-political elites, providing either excessive or undue benefits of power and resources. However, it is hard to satisfy all the agents and elites (Svolik, 2012). The co-opted people who are involved in corruption and criminal offences now have more opportunities and power than ever before. The autocratic regime therefore often struggles to control its people through power-sharing and the lavishing of benefits. At the same time, such practices create an imbalance among the support pillars—the organizations that provide stability and longevity, such as the police, army, bureaucrats, and political elites (Gerschewski, 2013). The case of Bangladesh is an excellent example in this regard.

Mobilization and Maximalism

Political actors can significantly increase the likelihood of a democratic transition and its institutionalization. Pinckney (2020) finds that mobilization and maximalism have consistent and robust institutionalization effects for new democracies. With the help of ordinary citizens, political actors continue the mobilization process to maintain constant pressure on the new regime through protests and demonstrations. The level of mobilization ensures a check and balance of power, reduces the possibilities of exercising too much power, and encourages reforms that promote democratic norms and practices. Pinckney (2020) measures mobilization using two primary types of indicators: institutional and non-institutional. While institutional indicators are electoral turnout and public interest in policy consultation, non-institutional indicators include public protests, demonstrations, and civil society activism.

Maximalist political goals (Pinckney, 2020) are vital indicators of authoritarian behavior. Authoritarian political elites may (mis)use public mobilization to achieve their narrow private interests. Pinckney (2020) identifies this behavior as a kind of "maximalism" that may lead to radical politics. Maximalism reflects the pattern of behavior by the political groups who follow an absolutist discourse and assume that they are the groups who serve national interests and that their opponents are enemies of the people (Pinckney, 2020). The author mentions several indicators of maximalist political behavior. For example, to see winning an election as the primary goal, refusing to accept unfavorable electoral results, boycotting an election before it happens, and rhetorically mobilizing people to overturn the newly formed government through extra-institutional actions that result in political violence. Although maximalists mostly carry out non-violent actions such as demonstrations, strikes, and roadblocks, they ultimately undermine democratic politics in ways that lead to severe economic costs for the country. Political actors initiate all these actions, and although they are primarily non-violent, the goals are profoundly anti-democratic and destructive. They

simply pursue a particularistic political goal in combination with maximizing their private interests.

Another dimension of maximalism is to exercise all possible strategies and tools to ensure favourable election results. When one political group gets into power, it modifies and manipulates the rules of the political game, including elections, to make its power permanent. The best case in point is the all-out strategies of the incumbent in Bangladesh to rig the 2018 election (Riaz & Parvez, 2021). On the other hand, the opponents justify continuing their violent resistance, claiming that the regime has again turned towards authoritarianism (Pinckney, 2020). Table 3 shows that the constellation of the two factors determines the future of regime structure in a polity.

Table 3. Effect of Mobilization and Maximalism on Democratization

	Low mobilization	**High mobilization**
Low maximalism	Elite semi-democracy	Democracy
High maximalism	Autocracy	Fractious semi-democracy

Source: Pinckney, 2020 (Regime Types after Civil Resistance Transitions, P. 33)

As table 3 shows, when a country experiences constant political mobilization (high mobilization), but mainly in street violence, anarchic demonstrations, and parliament boycotts by the opposition (high maximalism), it creates a fractious semi-democracy that Bangladesh had from 1991 to 2005. On the other hand, when the space for opposition shrinks, it leads to a very low mobilization. Furthermore, when the low mobilization interacts with high maximalism, it results in autocratization, which has been the status of Bangladesh since 2015. (More on this in article 4).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Researchers make several critical decisions regarding their research design and methods. The research design contains the scientific plan of the study and a list of actions to execute that plan. Creswell (2014) defines it as the combination of three elements: philosophical ideas, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Yin (2009, p. 26), a research design is a logic of sequence or a logical plan connecting the initial research questions with the best possible answers. This plan includes five components: research questions, propositions, units of analysis, data linked to the propositions, and data analysis. The first three components indicate what data to collect, whereas the latter two components tell us what to do after collecting data (Yin, 2009). The research methodology includes research strategies and actions (Creswell, 2014). The actions are the methodological decisions that include selecting a worldview, data collection, and data analysis process. In short, the research design is a comprehensive planning process; the researcher decides the steps to follow from the start to the end of the study. This section presents the different methodological approaches that I used to collect and analyse data to address the research questions of this study.

Selection of Areas and Data Sources

I start my analysis from the global level to gain a generalized view of the relationship between public value orientation and democratic legitimacy. I use the World Values Survey data, which covers more than 100 countries. The findings show that public support for democracy is overwhelmingly high in all countries across the world, irrespective of the regime structure. At the same time, the results also indicate that the implications of democratic values on public support for democracy are less in authoritarian countries than in democratic countries. I posit that the difference in implications is due to the cultural context. In an authoritarian country, people are oriented toward the authoritarian culture that

contradicts democratic values, and this may be why they remain weakly committed to democracy. Based on this assumption, I delve deeper into exploring the implications of authoritarian values and culture on democratic legitimacy. From the literature, I find that countries in Asia and South Asia are known for having high levels of ACO and low levels of democratic values (Baniamin et al., 2020; Bomhoff & Gu, 2012; Inglehart, 2006; Ma & Yang, 2014).

I therefore choose South Asia as a region in which to investigate how authoritarian culture affects democratic legitimacy. There is also a practical advantage to making this choice, namely, that we have our own survey database[4] for the required analysis. However, in the future, similar analyses can also be made with the African region, which is also known for its authoritarian culture. In one article, I analyze the data from all eight South Asian countries, while in another article, I focus solely on Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Based on the findings from quantitative analyses, I selected Bangladesh for in-depth qualitative studies. The survey data findings show that the democracy in Bangladesh is not performing well compared with democracy in Nepal and Sri Lanka. At the same time, the authoritarian culture and values are also more dominant in Bangladesh.

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method

As stated, I use both quantitative and qualitative methods, more specifically, an "explanatory sequential mixed method" (Creswell, 2014).[5] I first conduct quantitative analyses of different survey data and then build on that with qualitative research to explain my main research idea at a deeper level. This study explains the legitimacy of democratic governance in five research articles focusing on culture and values. The first three articles use public opinion

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[4] I use two survey databases that are created by the University of Bergen along with South Asian partners, namely, North South University, Bangladesh; Tribhuvan University, Nepal; and University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. I was actively involved in the data collection process.
[5] For explanatory sequential mixed methods, the researcher "first conducts quantitative research, analyzes the results and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research" (Creswell 2014, p. 42).

survey data to identify a generalized pattern of relationships between legitimacy for democracy and culture and values. The last two articles present case studies to understand the implications of the cultural context and value orientations on democratic legitimacy in Bangladesh. I also follow a sequence in developing the different articles. The first article analyzes global-level data to identify the pattern of implications of democratic values on democratic legitimacy. I then develop the other articles in sequence to further understand and substantiate the findings of the earlier article. I use different surveys and qualitative interviews to explore democratic legitimacy in detail in different cultural contexts. Table 4 presents a summary of data sources for all five articles of this dissertation.

Quantitative Approach

In order to gain a general understanding of citizens' views on democracy, a study needs large N samples. A quantitative approach is appropriate for examining the relationships between variables of interest (Creswell, 2014) and thus for testing theories. This dissertation explains democratic legitimacy from the global level to South Asia. Therefore, it is inevitable to base the research project on the surveys conducted on a global scale and in South Asian countries. For the global database, I use the World Values Survey (WVS) (Haerpfer et al., 2021), while we have our own database for South Asia, Governance and Trust Survey (GTS), and Governance and Covid-19 Management Survey (GCMS). Brief details on the data are given below.

The World Values Survey (WVS)

I use cross-sectional time-series data from the World Values Survey (WVS), which is convenient for investigating the pattern of support for democracy worldwide. I consider five waves (3–7) of the survey conducted during 1994–2020. The WVS, from wave three and onwards, includes questions related to public support for different political systems. My analysis covers 104 countries (263 country-years) with 380,981 respondents. Each wave of

the survey includes a different number of countries,[6] with some countries being repeated from the previous wave and some new countries being added each time. The data are freely available online, making it more convenient to use them for research purposes. The methodological details, including questionnaire, coding, and indices, are also available on the WVS website (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). I have used the WVS data in the first article.

Table 4. Methods and Data Sources for Articles

	Articles	Methods	Sources of Data
1.	Public support for democracy worldwide	Survey	WVS 3-7 waves (N=380,981)
2.	Satisfaction with democracy in South Asia	Survey	GTS 2-3 rounds (N=12,790)
3.	Democratic legitimacy and Covid-19 management in South Asia	Online Survey (Facebook)	GCMS 2020/21 (N=3,423)
4.	Democratic backsliding in Bangladesh	Interviews	17 interviews
5.	Survival strategies of a political opponent in Bangladesh	Interviews Webinar	15 interviews 14 participants

Notes: World Values Survey (WVS); Governance and Trust Survey (GTS); Governance and Covid-19 Management Survey (GCMS).

Governance and Trust Survey (GTS)

Governance and Trust Survey (GTS) is our own database that we have created with financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and as a part of the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED). The survey started in 2008 in two South Asian countries: Bangladesh and Nepal. Later, starting with the second round, Sri Lanka was added. The survey has thus far been through three rounds (2008/09, 2014/15, and 2020). A team of researchers comprised of representatives from the University of Bergen, Norway (UiB), North South University, Bangladesh (NSU), Tribhuvan University, Nepal (TU), and the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka (UoP) conducted the survey. The survey has representative samples at the country level with a total sample size of 12,093 (Bangladesh

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[6] The number of countries in different waves were as follows: wave 3: 57, wave 4: 43, wave 5: 60, wave 6: 62, wave 7: 50.

5,149; Nepal 4,327; Sri Lanka 2,617). I use GTS data from the last two rounds (2014/15 and 2020) for the second article because the first round did not include Sri Lanka.

Governance and Covid-19 Management Survey (GCMS)

A group of researchers from Norway, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka conducted an online survey on governance and Covid-19 management in all the South Asian countries. The data was collected from November 2020 to February 2021—a period in which the pandemic raged all over the world. The sample size was based on a random selection of Facebook users in South Asia. However, although the sample is random, it is not representative of the socio-demographic features of South Asia. One reason for this is the digital divide-citizens' unequal access to the internet. To collect neutral and good-quality data, we avoided sharing questionnaires with our own friend groups on Facebook and their friends' groups. We also screened out many possibly fake responses. We used KoBo Toolbox and discarded questionnaires filled out in less than six minutes. The third article is written based on this database.

Other Data Sources

I also use some other sources of quantitative data in the articles. For example, I draw on the GDP per capita data from the World Bank database and regime classification data from Polity Project (Marshall et al., 2018), Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) (Coppedge et al., 2020), Freedom House (Freedom House, 2020), and the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) (EIU, 2021) databases.

Qualitative Approach

From a qualitative perspective, I attempt to develop and establish the arguments on legitimacy for democracy and political dynamics based on existing theories and literature and the empirical evidence collected through interviews with experts and political actors. I follow the case study research design and methods for the qualitative articles. According to Yin

(2009), a case study should be based on a specific, real-life phenomenon or contemporary events, and there should be no distinguishable boundaries between the phenomenon and its context. I explain the causal mechanisms of the democracy in Bangladesh, which is constantly backsliding, even though the country installed the democratic system after a civil resistance movement in 1990. Ragin and Becker (1992) mention that instead of selecting a country as a case, which is a traditional way of doing research, it is better to consider sequences of events and socio-political processes as cases. Accordingly, I investigate the political events of the civil resistance movement and political development afterwards (1990–2020) to understand possible causes of democratic backsliding. In another paper, I investigate the dire consequences of the authoritarian attitudes of ruling elites on a religion-based political opponent in the country. I conduct interviews and a webinar as data sources for the last two articles.

Interview Data

For the fourth article, I conducted 17 in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews mostly lasted from 50 minutes to around 1.5 hours (one interview lasted 5 hours). The interviewees include civil society leaders, researchers, academics, and political leaders from both the ruling party and opposition groups directly involved in the democratic movement in Bangladesh. The researchers and academics are primarily from the field of political science and have made scholarly contributions to political dynamics in the country. The interviews were conducted during July and August 2021 on Zoom and were recorded. I went to Bangladesh for data collection but was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews due to the corona pandemic and the lockdown.

For the fifth and final paper, I, along with a co-author, conducted 15 interviews with political leaders and activists from a religion-based opposition party, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat). The in-depth interviews were thus conducted both face-to-face and online.

Since Jamaat struggles under the current climate of fear in Bangladeshi politics, it was difficult to get in touch with the party stalwarts. Most interviews for both articles were in Bangla, which was helpful for an in-depth discussion (a few were in English). The recorded interviews are transcribed, translated into English, coded, and categorized into different overarching themes for a systemic analysis. Accordingly, findings are presented in the papers under various themes, some of which were determined before the interviews, others emerging during the interviews themselves.

Webinar as Data Source

For the fifth paper, I also arranged an online webinar in November 2020 with 14 participants, including university teachers, government employees, business people, and researchers. While some participants were well-wishers of Jamaat, only a few were activists. I chose a diverse group of critics and sympathizers of Jamaat in order to cross-examine the collected information. I considered the webinar a research instrument, like a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Although the participants were cautious about discussing sensitive political issues, it was a lively event that provided useful information for the research. Because of the topic's sensitivity, my colleague and I were careful and committed to maintaining research ethics and the anonymity of the respondents.

Methodological Concerns

There can be several possible challenges for the survey responses in cross-cultures and cross-regimes analysis. One of the main concerns is whether the public responses in the survey can be reliable across democracies and autocracies. The extant literature presents contradictory arguments with varied evidence in different contexts. Autocratic bias in responding to survey questions raises the concern about the comparability across regimes. Tannenberg (2021) provides evidence through empirical analysis of how autocratic bias influences survey responses on politically sensitive questions in an authoritarian regime where the possibility of

repression is higher than in a democratic setting. The author argues that respondents fear the dire consequences in more autocratic countries if their responses are disclosed. Therefore, respondents censor themselves, and more likely, their responses favour autocrats, for instance, exaggerating trust in government or being reticent to report corruption in state institutions. The author also referred to many other studies (Frye et al., 2017; Jiang & Yang, 2016; Kalinin, 2016; Omar & Benjamin, 2015; Robinson & Tannenberg, 2019; Shockley et al., 2018) that reported respondents' inflated support for autocrats.

There are counterarguments and evidence as well. Baniamin (2019b) argues that the fear factor (or self-censorship) is not always so pronounced in South Asia. The author shows evidence from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka-three South Asian flawed democracies. Most of the respondents (around 90%) express their opinions regarding the corruption of political leaders and civil servants. At the same time, they have a higher level of trust in those institutions. He referred to some other studies (Shi, 2001; Wang, 2005) that also show a similar pattern of responses in African countries. With this note, Baniamin (2019) introduces authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) to explain such inflated trust in public institutions in South Asia.

In my analysis, I also consider ACO the potential source of authoritarian support or satisfaction with flawed democracies in repressive regimes such as in South Asia. The ACO produces a haze of nostalgia for authoritarianism. Citizens of young democracies suffer from authoritarian nostalgia. They compare the situation under democracy with the growth-oriented authoritarian regimes in their own country of the recent past or their neighbors in the present (Chang et al., 2007). The respondents with such authoritarian fascination may ignore the authoritarian behavior of political elites and exaggerate their satisfaction with economic development. At the same time, in emerging democracies, citizens often are disappointed with the gap between democratic promises and democratic realities when they experience

rampant corruption and political instability (Chang et al., 2007). The respondents in such a context may be reluctant to offer support for democracy. Authoritarian nostalgia can thus have different implications on democratic legitimacy: reducing support for democracy but enhancing satisfaction with flawed democracy.

Like authoritarian nostalgia and autocratic bias, a similar challenge for quality public opinions in the survey is motivated reasoning and partisan bias. Partisan motivated reasoning significantly affects opinion strength and the overall quality of survey responses (Bolsen et al., 2014). Another challenge for comparative studies is the variation in public understanding of democracy across the regimes. It is very unlikely that in non-democracies, citizens, who have not experienced democracy in reality, will understand democracy and how it is actually practiced in the same meaning as the citizens in established Western democracies understand (Dalton & Ong, 2005).

The challenges discussed here are more likely to prevail in developing countries and relatively less in democratic regions like Asia and Africa. Baniamin (2020) finds that most people in Africa consider their countries as democracies, although most of the African countries are actually struggling with a lower level of democracy or, in some cases, autocracy. The author divides respondents into 'rights seekers' and 'privilege seekers' depending on their orientation toward the state (i.e., the state is like parents or employees). His data analysis shows that the privilege seekers tend to overrate the extent of democracy as well as the performance of government than the rights seekers. Using a similar measure, Baniamin (2021) explores the role of people's orientation towards the state in determining trust in government and other public institutions in African countries. Here, the author divides respondents into low vs high degrees of assertiveness and finds that the less assertive people have inflated trust in public institutions despite their underperformance. In short, the orientation with traditional and authoritarian values (e.g., ACO) creates a layer of the belief

that affects humans' cognitive capacity to evaluate rationally a political system and its actual performance.

What does the discussion imply for the above challenges? Does it mean that we cannot trust survey responses, especially on the politically sensitive questions? The answer is that the challenges mentioned above warrant caution regarding the reliability of survey responses and the interpretation of findings. It also urges that the large-scale public opinion surveys include some control questions to measure biases in the responses so that researchers can use them to increase the robustness of their findings. For example, the surveys should include questions to measure censorship among respondents (Tannenberg, 2021), attention check questions, asking key questions with different wording, and placing these randomly in the questionnaire to check the reliability of responses.

I have discussed some other concerns about methodology and data in the articles. I mostly use bivariate and multivariate analysis in the articles that are based on quantitative data. They are mainly correlation and regression-based studies. This correlation tells us little about the direction of causality, but it is essential to establish basic correlations and continue further studies. However, I follow sequential mixed methods, and the two in-depth studies on Bangladesh strengthen my arguments and findings. Further studies with different designs and methods (e.g., experimental design or panel data) would be helpful to confirm the puzzles and hypotheses identified in this dissertation. Moreover, a few more in-depth country-specific (e.g., India) studies would be practical to see how the dynamics of authoritarian culture affect democratic legitimacy in South Asia.

FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Presenting the Articles and Findings

This dissertation contains four articles and one book chapter, each of them highlighting different dimensions of democratic legitimacy in relation to socio-political culture and values orientation. As already stated, the findings of one article are followed up by the next one to explain further using a different data source and context. The findings of the various articles demonstrate that culture and value orientation can significantly contribute to determining democratic legitimacy worldwide and in South Asia. The main focus of this research is to explain the dynamics of democratic legitimacy in flawed democracies in South Asia. I show how authoritarian culture and value orientations along with non-democratic practices by authoritarian elites affect South Asian democracies. In this section, I present the significant findings of different articles, followed by a discussion of the existing debates on the implications of traditional authority relationships or the ACO on democratic legitimacy and regime changes. In the end, I highlight some of my contributions.

Article I: Values and Support for Democracy Worldwide

The first article, "The Effect of Democratic Values on Public Support for Democracy Worldwide: Does Regime Matter?" is based on WVS data. In general, the overt support is exaggerated all over the world, while exclusive support for democracy, in combination with a rejection of autocracy, is considerably low. Scholars explain such widespread public support from different perspectives. Cultural and value-based theoretical arguments are among the most dominant ones, and I also consider individual value preferences as significant predictors of support for democracy. In this article, I emphasize that the value preferences of individuals play a dominant role in shaping political attitudes and promoting support for the democratic political system. However, *the effect of values varies depending on the regime type.* In other words, the magnitude of the effect of democratic values on support for democracy is stronger

in democratic countries than in autocracies. This article argues that regime structure matters because of the pertaining cultural differences.

In my statistical analysis, I select the dependent variable as "exclusive support for democracy," which is a measure of support for democracy in combination with rejection of authoritarian alternatives. Following the theoretical arguments of Welzel (2013), I have selected emancipative values as independent variables to test the variation in the implications of democratic values on support for democracy.

It is expected—and a well-established argument in the literature—that democratic values influence public support for democracy. The higher the level of such a value orientation among the people, the higher the level of support for democracy. This is true worldwide and across the different regime structures, and my analysis also supports this hypothesis. However, after conducting multilevel models with the WVS data, I observe substantial variation in the effect of values on support for democracy in different regimes. The magnitude of the effect also varies, as the influence of democratic values on support for democracy is more substantial in democratic countries. The findings demonstrate that democratic values do not translate into a higher level of support for democracy in authoritarian countries and flawed democracies such as those in South Asia as they do in democratic countries.

The article explains possible reasons for such variation in the magnitudes of democratic values. The forces of modernization give rise to emancipative and liberal values worldwide irrespective of the political system. At the same time, the individuals' value preferences interact with the political system's cultural context. This interaction between the democratic values orientation and the existing regime's culture determines the level of commitment to democracy. This is because democratic values are deeply internalized through real-life experiences of a democratic regime. Although people in non-democratic countries

consider democratic values ideal, they are also deeply oriented toward the values of the prevailing authoritarian culture and values. Such a contradictory hybridization of values keeps the level of commitment to democracy low among the people in authoritarian countries. They most like become ambivalent democrats who have democratic values but, due to belonging to an autocratic society, develop a conflicting political attitude.

People in autocracies may, therefore, in a superficial sense, be oriented towards democratic values, but their deep-seated authoritarian culture and related values prevent them from becoming committed democrats. The prospects of democracy worldwide will, therefore not be as promising as the advocates of the global democratization thesis expect. The democratization process in autocratic regimes will remain relatively bleak and slow even after the prevalence of democratic values and extensive support for democracy. The triumph of democracy over the autocratic world requires a cultural transformation to democratic socio-political relationships, and this will take a long time.

Article II: Satisfaction with Flawed Democracy in South Asia

The second article is titled "Satisfaction with Democracy in Flawed Democracies: What Matters—Performance or Culture?" As I find in the first article, authoritarian culture precludes people in non-democracies from being committed democrats and thus threatens democratic legitimacy, especially in authoritarian world. Here I explore further what the authoritarian culture implies for democratic legitimacy in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka—the three flawed democracies in South Asia. According to different indices such as those published by V-Dem, Polity Project, and Freedom House, the three countries have a low level of democracy. The Economic Intelligence Unit considers these countries as hybrid regimes and flawed democracies (measured during the period 2006–2020). Regarding principles of democracy, including elections, freedom, equality, and human rights, the countries perform pretty badly. The political systems are characterized as patrimonial, with

patron-client relationships, extensive corruption, political confrontations, and the marginalization of opposition parties.

According to the rational actor theory, citizens are supposed to evaluate democracy based on its performance and the logic of expected consequences, that is, whether the democracy performs as expected. Yet according to the survey findings, people of those three countries are quite satisfied (average is 65%) with the way democracy develops in their country. Why, then, are people satisfied with excessively flawed democracy? This is a puzzle because it shows that "Satisfaction with Democracy" (SwD) is not contingent on the logic of rationality or consequences; instead, it is mediated by other forms of logic. I draw insights from the socio-political culture to explain this contradictory human behavior. I apply the already-mentioned authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO), measured as the unquestioning obedience and loyalty to the ruling elites or any other authoritative positions in family and society. I argue that the prevalence of ACO in socio-political relationships inflates the citizens' satisfaction with the authoritarian nature of democracy in their country.

In the regression analysis, using indicators for both performance and culture, I find that SwD depends on the qualities of both democracy and government. The results indicate that the quality of government has more impact on satisfaction with democracy (SwD) than does the quality of democracy. At the same time, authoritarian culture also has a statistically significant effect. The ACO impacts SwD positively—higher ACO leads to higher satisfaction with flawed democracies. People with higher ACO tend to be more satisfied with democracy even though the democracy in their country is not performing well. The authoritarian culture thus ultimately extends the legitimacy of an authoritarian regime, and such an authoritarian orientation acts as a potential threat to democratization in South Asia.

Article III: Democratic Legitimacy in Covid-19 Management

The third article, "Do Governance Capacity and Legitimacy Affect Citizens' Satisfaction with Covid-19 Management? Some Evidence from South Asia," analyses public evaluation of the response measures taken by different public institutions in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. While the first two articles are about the determinants of democratic legitimacy, this article emphasizes the significance of such legitimacy in public management. Since the second article shows the dominance of authoritarian culture in South Asian countries, I assume that people will be less concerned about the legitimacy of governance when evaluating the performance of public institutions in handling the pandemic.

The existing theories argue that draconian laws and measures are insufficient for handling pandemics like Covid-19. Instead, necessary restrictive measures must be justified and accepted by the people. Citizens' cooperation and compliance with the government actions are critical requirements for successful crisis management. But for this to happen, it is vital that citizens see the legitimacy of the laws and measures initiated to manage the crisis. Bollyky et al. (2022) find that a higher level of trust in government and relevant authorities of Covid-19 management leads to lower infections; furthermore, that health security capacity is not correlated with infection rates. In short, governance legitimacy is more important than governance capacity in crisis management. In this article, I argue that performance capacity and legitimacy are important variables for crisis management in the developed and democratic world, but these need to be tested in the context of the developing world and South Asia, where both democracy and capacity are in deficit.

The findings suggest that people in South Asia are more or less content with the Covid-19 management by their government institutions. In regression analysis, some indicators of governance capacity and legitimacy appear to be statistically significant predictors for satisfaction with crisis management. The most significant factors are a

government's containment measures, relief support (capacity), institutional trust, and trustworthy information (legitimacy). However, surprisingly, many indicators of democratic legitimacy, such as level of democracy, corruption, and government commitment, do not appear significant.

In many South Asian countries, we observe the governments forcefully implementing harsh measures, even batoning by police and imprisonment. We also notice extensive corruption and mismanagement in government response measures, including relief distribution. However, people are still happy with the Covid-19 crisis management. I argue that the contradictory findings may be due to the public orientation towards authoritarian culture and people's preference for strongman rule in crisis management. South Asians follow a different logic in evaluating the performance of their government. They are happy with their government when they get material benefits and when their interests get served, for instance, through relief measures and financial incentives during the crisis period. Although democracy in South Asia does not perform well, and the governments excessively restrict public freedom with harsh measures for COVID-19 control, people still are not worried about the quality of democracy in crisis management.

The result substantiates the finding in article II, namely, that citizens in South Asia are not all that concerned about the quality of the democracy in which they live. Similarly, they are also less concerned about the democratic dimensions of crisis management. The findings in articles II and III thereby encourage me to do a deeper analysis of political dynamics concerning socio-political culture and value orientations. Therefore, in the last two articles (IV and V), I use the qualitative method to explore how authoritarian culture leads to dysfunctional democracy and challenges democratic legitimacy in Bangladesh.

Article IV: Authoritarian Culture and Democratic Backsliding

The fourth article, "Can Authoritarian Culture Explain Democratic Backsliding: A Critical Case of Bangladesh," focuses on how ACO causes democratic backsliding and acts as a potential threat to the legitimacy of the democratic system. A successful non-violent resistance (NVR) movement in 1990 introduced democracy in Bangladesh, and several subsequent elections were held in a free, fair, neutral, and open atmosphere. According to the theoretical arguments, NVR campaigns generally contribute to democratization and its consolidation. Theoretical literature also demonstrates several democratic potentials of NVR movements. Among the South Asian countries, India can boast of having had a successful NVR movement. In the 1930s, Gandhi launched a civil disobedience movement against British colonial rule, which offers a good lesson for the NVR campaign for democracy (Bhavnani & Jha, 2014).

Bangladesh was thus a likely case for democratic institutionalization after its successful NVR movement in the 1990s. However, democracy in Bangladesh has not followed the expected transitional path towards consolidation. The country has experienced increased manipulation and election engineering in the last decade. After a short period of democracy, the country has once again become authoritarian with one-party dominance. This political development is surprising given that the party now in power was one of the leading parties in the movement to oust the military dictator. It has now shifted far away from its original democratic ideals.

Why did this happen? Considering Bangladesh as a deviant case for NVR theory, this article underlines possible reasons for democratic backsliding in the country. I draw on the theory of culture and values neglected in earlier studies. I show how the prevailing authoritarian culture and value orientations have components that reduce or even eliminate a civil resistance movement's potential to increase the likelihood of democracy;

consequentially, democratic backsliding occurs. I consider ACO in the socio-political relationship as a dominant explanation for the democratic backsliding in Bangladesh. Historical evidence and interview data demonstrate the ACO as the prime factor. Together with ACO, the "us versus them"[7] mentality plays an important role in what is called "democratic backsliding," meaning backsliding on principles of democracy. This attitude polarizes elites into two main political camps, each one accusing and blaming the other and claiming to be better than the other. The narrow worldview in each camp makes them interpret and understand reality differently.

The evidence indicates that political elites embrace authoritarian cultural values and norms, try to outmaneuver each other, and crave power and total control of the political system. They distribute and share state power and privileges only among their cronies. As a result of authoritarian culture and dictatorial leadership, democratic political institutions have turned into authoritarian entities that mainly serve those in power. The authoritarian political elites and their antagonism towards each other are significant challenges for democracy in Bangladesh, even though the population in general nurtures democratic aspirations.

However, due to their high level of ACO, people in general let the political elites become more authoritarian instead of holding them accountable for their actions. Ruling party men are thus often seen as aggressive and power greedy elites who use all possible strategies to ensure total control over the political system. Over the years, it has become a conventional pattern of political behavior that "the winner takes all" while the opposition loses everything. Political oppression of opposition has also become a regular phenomenon. The article, therefore, concludes that the elites—not the citizens per se—threaten democracy in Bangladesh.

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[7] The "us versus them» mentality, or homophily, is a common tendency. People tend to associate with others who have a similar socio-political identity. This creates an extreme level of polarization in the society (Hettiachchi et al., 2021; McPherson et al., 2001; Mummolo & Nall, 2017).

Article V: The Survival Strategies of an Opposition Party under a Hybrid Regime

The fifth and final article, "Survival Strategies of Jamaat as a Religion-Based Political Opponent in Bangladesh," highlights some dire consequences of being in opposition to an authoritarian regime. The article presents empirical evidence of how a religion-based opposition party has been suppressed. Currently, Bangladesh is a hybrid or electoral autocracy with multiple political parties and contentious politics. In a democratic political system, opposition parties must have space to exercise their role, namely, to constrain excess use of executive power. In Bangladesh, however, opposition parties are cornered and marginalized. This article explores the political strategies adopted by the religion-based political party, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat), after being severely suppressed by the government both on legal and political grounds.

A hybrid or authoritarian regime survives on the fabricated legitimacy created by ruling elites through several undemocratic measures, including suppressing the opponents. In Bangladesh, the current regime under the Awami League (AL) leadership capitalizes on its own narratives about the war of liberation. The party claims full credit for Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and, at the same time, discredits its political opponents and attempts to remove them from mainstream politics. During that war, Jamaat collaborated with the Pakistani rulers and fought for a united Pakistan. As a result, members of Jamaat came to symbolize *razakars* (collaborators), today a ruinous designation that has considerably slowed the party's potential political progress. The current AL government uses the war of liberation to undermine the opposition. The most effective instrument is to highlight the dubious position and role of Jamaat during the liberation war and to charge its leaders with war crimes. The government established an international crime tribunal to put war criminals on trial. Through this tribunal, several top leaders of Jamaat have been executed for war crimes, and the party is banned from participating in elections. Although the tribunal proceedings are

questionable, they offer legitimate reasons for the government to squeeze out Jamaat. It is also evident that the opponents or critics of the government are labelled as "pro-Jamaat" or as "anti-liberation forces" to legitimize political oppression against them.

Due to the extreme level of authoritarian control, oppression, and marginalization of opposition, the country lacks political mobilization, thus allowing further deterioration of democratic principles in the country. The opposition parties must adopt different strategies merely to survive. By contrast, the ruling party enjoys unrestrained power and authority in the absence of strong opposition. Ruling elites are empowered to do whatever they want, both inside the parliament and outside.

Under the authoritarian AL government's onslaught, Jamaat has taken several steps to survive. The more significant of these are organizational reform, supporting independent candidates in elections, hiding political identity by its supporters, continuing online work, focusing more on *dawah* (outreach), and developing personal relationships with people. However, most of the strategic steps have an old-style focus on organizational reforms, electoral participation, and *dawah* than on anything innovative. The findings indicate that Jamaat's political future is not bleak but not very promising either. It will depend on the political opportunities created by and with the major political parties and any collaboration with other religious groups. Like many other opposition parties, Jamaat's political struggles demonstrate a clear threat to the legitimacy of the country's democracy and a possibility of transition to closed autocracy. The marginalization of opposition is also an indication of authoritarian culture and total control by ruling elites.

Debates on the Asian Values Thesis

The findings and supporting arguments in this dissertation can be viewed as an affirmation of the Asian Values thesis. However, my study does not fully confirm the Asian Values thesis. Instead, my focus is on Authoritarian Cultural Orientation (ACO), which significantly affects

democratization and its consolidation. As Welzel (2011) and Dalton & Ong (2005) present, the Asian values thesis has triggered scholarly debate. In different articles under this dissertation, I also present the contradictory arguments regarding the effect of values on democratic legitimacy (especially in articles I, II, and IV).

One group of scholars claim that collectivistic traditions, Confucianism, and other authoritarian Asian values are not compatible with the Western emancipative values and notion of liberal democracy. This is a strong version of the Asian Values thesis (Welzel, 2011, p. 7). Therefore, the Asian democracies are exceptional, and there is no single best way, such as the Western path of democratization. However, a moderate formulation of the Asian Values thesis argues that the effects of emancipative values are weaker in Asia than in the Western world. I agree with this second view. With empirical analysis, I demonstrate in article 1 that due to authoritarian culture in autocracies, the effects of emancipative values on the support for democracy are weaker than in democracies. Nathan (2007) finds that traditional social values (or Confucian values) weaken support for democracy. Similarly, Change and Chu (2002) find a negative relationship between traditional social values and democratic values.

The effect of authoritarian values on support for democracy declines with the experience of democracy because democratic support is bolstered by the experience (Finkel et al., 2001; Fuchs-Schündeln & Schündeln, 2015). If this is true, it will happen only in democracies, and they will move toward consolidation due to the pressure from public support. However, the implications of authoritarian culture and values endure in autocracies where citizens do not get opportunities to be socialized with liberal democratic values and structures. The potentiality of democratization, therefore, remains low in autocracies.

On the other hand, another group of scholars counterargues that the Asian democracies are not exceptional; people in Asia are becoming more liberal and pro-

democratic due to the forces of modernization. Welzel (2011) and Dalton and Ong (2005) contradict the extreme views of Asian exceptionalism. They see prospects of emancipative values and erosion of traditional authority relations in Asian countries. According to Welzel (2011), the current forces of modernization give rise to emancipative values both in the West and in the East that indicates a universal model of human development. Therefore, Asian countries are not immune to the effects of emancipative values. I also agree with the argument of developmental universalism or universal human emancipation. Nevertheless, as I demonstrate in article 1, the effectiveness of those emancipative values varies across cultures. Dalton and Ong (2005) find no systematic difference regarding the traditional authority relationships, the core of the Asian Values thesis, between East Asian and Western countries. Therefore, they argue that the recent empirical evidence does not reflect the past descriptive characterizations of authority relationships in East Asian countries. The traditional authority pattern in family and workplace are the indicators of authoritarian values that negatively influence support for democracy in democracies. However, such values have either no relationship or a modest influence on support for democracy in authoritarian East Asian countries. As a result, Dalton and Ong (2005, p. 228) argue that Asian values are far short of cultural determinism. So, it contradicts the core argument of the Asian Values thesis that democracy cannot take root in Asia.

The authoritarian cultural dimension of Asian values is often identified as one of the leading causes of the lack of democratic development in the region (Welzel & Dalton, 2017; Zakaria & Yew, 1994). This is because Asian values are based on respect and loyalty to the elites in society and politics. This traditional authority relationship breeds clientelism and compromises neutrality and fairness in decision making. At the same time, the authoritarian elites use those traditional values in a more instrumental and very selective way with a narrative for economic growth while avoiding the emancipative consequences of the

modernization process (Welzel, 2011, p. 30). However, with the expansion of education and communication technologies, people worldwide, including in Asia, develop 'self–expression' or emancipative values (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2011, 2012).

One notable scholarly debate in this context of Asian values is between Welzel (2012) and Bomhoff and Gu (2012). Bomhoff and Gu (2012) claim that Asian values are not compatible with the emergence and consolidation of democracy. Instead, Asian democracies are exceptional, and there is no one best way, such as the Western path of democratization. So, the individualistic self–expression values of Inglehart and Welzel do not make sense in East Asia, and those values do not produce as much support for democracy in East Asia as in the West (Bomhoff & Gu, 2012). For example, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are democratic even after being highly conservative and with a low level of self–expression values. On the other hand, Welzel (2012) counterargues that the Asian democracies are not exceptional; instead, he statistically proves that people in Asia have become more liberal and pro-democratic due to the rise of self–expression values. Furthermore, Chang et al. (2007) find that the three East Asian countries, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan - the most influenced by Confucianism, are emerging with a liberal-democratic culture that challenges the Asian values thesis.

According to Hofstede (2010), power distance is large in Japan (score 54) and South Asian countries (see figure 6, p. 30). Further, Hofstede's individualism/collectivism dimension also contributes to the differences in democratic development between the West and Asia. In Western democracy, individualism is strong with self-emancipative values. This generates individual rights, privileges, and neutrality that should be protected and enshrined in the constitution. People think of "I" and are impartial in decisions. In contrast, Asian culture is characterized by collectivism, where group loyalty and obedience to seniors are

common. In such a culture, democratic rights and principles as understood in the West develop differently where community and group harmony are more important than protecting individual rights. Neutral behavior is compromised for particularistic behavior leading to partiality and biases. People think in terms of "we".

It is hard to settle this debate as most studies are non-conclusive (Welzel, 2012). Keeping this debate in mind, I emphasize cultural differences and explain in this dissertation how ACO extends legitimacy towards flawed democracy in South Asian countries. Similarly, I explain how the effects of emancipative values on democratic legitimacy are moderated and become weaker in autocracies all over the world. Dalton and Ong (2005, pp. 230–231) offer two possible conclusions. First, support for democracy is not necessarily combined with denial of traditional authority relations. Second, if political and nonpolitical value spheres are kept separate, there will be no incongruence between authority patterns. Thereby, democratization in Asia, more specifically in East Asia, will not be incompatible with the Asian values, and the democratic development will not necessarily require a cultural shift. Similarly, Welzel (2011, p. 30) concludes that the forces of modernization accelerate the human development process in both the West and the East. This development is culture-invariant and emancipative, challenging the Asian Values thesis.

Presenting the debates on the Asian Values thesis, scholars (Dalton & Ong, 2005; Welzel, 2011) express their high expectation that liberal democracy will be the only game in town due to the emergence of emancipative values even in the East Asian region. However, I argue that the democratization process will be slower due to the prevalence of authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) that challenges the emergence of individualistic assertiveness and emancipative values. At the same time, the ACO among political elites can also be a driver for democratic backsliding.

How Can the ACO Explain Regime Change?

Culture is relatively stable, and therefore, Waldner and Lust (2018) see little potential for theories of political culture to explain first a democratic transition and later a democratic backsliding. It takes an extended period, sometimes generations, for cultural reforms and related values transformation. Now the question is: if a country has an authoritarian culture that hardly changes, how can that constant explain regime change? In other words, why does democracy in South Asia fluctuate, improve sometimes, and worsen at some point? In response to this challenge, I include, in article 4, a historical analysis that tells us how political parties consolidate power through policy and institutional changes. Nevertheless, I argue that those manipulations by political parties are manifestations of authoritarian cultural orientation. For example, the exercise of maximalism—that is, using direct, excessive, or revolutionary action to achieve political goals—is a vital indicator of authoritarian behaviour (Pinckney, 2020). Moreover, new political elites may modify and manipulate the rules of the political game, including elections, and use all possible strategies and tools to make their power permanent.

As explained in article 4, I see ACO from an elite perspective. The authoritarian culture offers political elites an authoritative symbolic status with unconstraint authority and power that seriously affects their political behaviour. As a result, political elites act in non-democratic ways, debilitating or "capturing" political institutions, boycotting elections and parliaments, making instrumental use of religion, and perpetrating violence. They also demonstrate deep-rooted authoritarian tendencies and non-compromising attitudes. Such antidemocratic elites can make young democracies vulnerable through well-orchestrated hostile interventions (Chang et al., 2007, p. 77).

The prevailing authoritarian culture is the dominant factor for the non-functional democratic system in South Asian countries, including Bangladesh. However, other factors

also play a decisive role. In article 4, I argue that most of the factors, in one way or other, are manifestations of authoritarian culture. Authoritarian culture is an unseen hand creating fascination among political elites towards a total control or winner-takes-all political system coupled with an authoritarian attitude. In South Asia, it is primarily an elite-driven democratic backsliding, and the authoritarian political elites are a threat to democracy.

In Bangladesh, we also notice from the historical evidence that the cultural orientation and derived behaviour are inconsistent among the political elites. Depending on their narrowly defined political interests, the elites sometimes prefer democratization (e.g., in the 1990s anti-Ershad movement), a convenient strategy for gaining popular support. However, they usually revert to authoritarianism. As a result, there is a lack of "consistent democrats", that is, strong supporters of democracy who have a high level of liberal democratic values (Chu & Huang, 2010). Moreover, as mentioned before, authoritarian elites quite often use the Asian Values thesis as a political instrument to maintain their authoritarian rule (Welzel, 2011). Therefore, the future of democracy in South Asia depends mainly on the will of political elites. When political elites act for democracy, a country is more likely to be democratized, while the same elites revert to authoritarianism, which leads to democratic backsliding. In addition, it is also because leadership in key institutions (the executive, legislature, and the judiciary) and their subsidiary institutions are personalized, making these function according to the preferences of leaders and not on legal formal institutional rules. In such instances, democratic consolidation or backsliding depends on the leaders' preferences and interests.

Political culture plays a vital role in maintaining stability and transitions within a political regime (Wu & Wu, 2022). In article 1, I distinguish between culture-specific values and modernization-driven values, although it is difficult to draw an exact boundary between these two types of values. The culture-specific values and practices are relatively hard to

change. On the contrary, the forces of modernization coupled with modern Western-inspired education give rise to individualistic, emancipative, and liberal values that inspire universal human development (Inglehart, 2006; Welzel, 2011, 2012). As a result, individuals' value preferences interact with the political system's cultural context. In South Asia, individuals' emancipative values contradict the prevailing authoritarian culture. This interaction produces ambivalent democrats who are neither strong supporters of democracy nor strong resistors of democratic backsliding. For example, Chang et al. (2007) find from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) that East Asian citizens feel ambivalent about democracy, and therefore, popular legitimacy for democracy sometimes stays flat or drops at other times. On the contrary, when emancipative values interact with democratic culture in a democratic country, it produces committed democrats. Rohrschneider (1999) explains that the commitment to democracy develops primarily through democratic experience. The contradiction of modern values with authoritarian culture in South Asia can be one of the reasons for the variation over time occurring in the political system in most of the countries.

Religion and caste are the two dominant elements of South Asian culture, especially in India, that have always played a big role in the politics of South Asia. When they ascended to power, the parties with religious flavor discriminated against minorities, as the case is in Pakistan, India under Modi, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh under BNP-Jamaat rule, and Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, prohibiting women's education and discriminating against women and other ethnic groups. In a caste-based society such as India, this is serious as lower castes are often discriminated against and sidelined. Also, in Nepal, the Maoist movement was against the hegemony of the higher caste in government and politics. However, like other elements of authoritarian culture, political elites have often used the issues of religion and caste to gain narrow political interests. Such uses depend on the political party and the country's context at different times. Therefore, the political behavior of elites is not consistent

in South Asian countries, which are characterized by both democratic and authoritarian behavior.

Authoritarian culture and values are reckoned to be the leading causes of lacking democratic development in the Asian region (Chu et al., 2008; Welzel & Dalton, 2017; Zakaria & Yew, 1994), and when embedded in a regime, they may cause democratic backsliding. A different argument is that pro-democratic citizens exist alongside antidemocratic elites. Dalton and Ong (2005) explain this as a contradiction between citizens and political elites. The acts of authoritarian elites and traditional authority relations in societies of East Asia may mislead to generalizing the same patterns of political attitudes among the citizens. Instead, while some elites instrumentally use the authoritarian cultural arguments to sustain their oppressive rule, people generally support liberal social norms and criticize autocratic principles (Dalton & Ong, 2005, p. 229). Waldner and Lust (2018) divide this into the demand-side (citizens' cultural orientation) and supply-side (political elites' cultural orientation). In South Asian countries, there is a delicate balance: "culture is not too traditional to prohibit democracy, but not so modern as to deter a moderate reversal" (Waldner & Lust, 2018, p. 99). Similarly, Chang et al. (2007, p. 77) argue that the Confucian legacy of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan "might not have been conducive to the acquisition of liberal-democratic values, but it appears to have done nothing to hinder the process either".

Political history also shows that people in South Asia have strong democratic aspirations reflected through many democratic movements in the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless, their flawed democracy creates disillusionment with democracy, leading to a preference for technocratic government or military dictatorship (Sanborn, 2019; Schaffer, 2002). Therefore, public demand and movement for democracy sometimes lead to democratization in South Asian countries (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Nepal), but later democracy failed to set a strong footing due to the authoritarian tendencies of political elites.

There can be many other reasons for this variation in the regimes over time in different South Asian countries. However, I emphasize authoritarian culture as the dominant factor in this dissertation.

Empirical and Theoretical Contributions

The articles in this dissertation contribute to understanding the implications of value orientations and cultural contexts on democratic legitimacy. The existing literature and theoretical arguments show that democratic value orientations have a positive role in increasing legitimacy for a democratic system of governance. In this research project, I argue that the prevailing culture interacts with people's democratic value orientation and thereby determines democratic legitimacy in a country or regime structure. Accordingly, the first article in this dissertation demonstrates that the positive implication of democratic values will vary across the regimes. The finding contributes to both the literature and theories on value orientations, democratic legitimacy, and democratization. Scholars like Inglehart and Welzel argue that democratic values (e.g., self-expression, emancipative values, and postmaterialism) increase the prospects of democratization. In this study, I argue that a higher level of democratic values will not necessarily lead to democratization in autocracies. The cultural context also matters here. The prospect of democracy will remain bleak until there is a transformation toward democratic culture in socio-political relationships. The imposition of a democratic system of governance will not work in many cultural contexts, as we see in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example. This falls in line with the arguments of congruence theory (Eckstein, 1961, 1966) and regime-culture misfit (Welzel, 2021).

Another main contribution of this dissertation is that it identifies and demonstrates a significant implication of the authoritarian cultural orientation (ACO) on democratic legitimacy. ACO does not provide legitimacy for democracy in the true sense. In fact, it strengthens authoritarian rule and ultimately threatens democratization or democratic

institutionalization, as shown in articles IV and V. ACO is a unique indicator for measuring citizens' orientation to authoritarian culture. By conceptual definition, ACO is similar to the "power distance" theorized by Hofstede et al. (2010) and the "hierarchical cultural value" theorized by Schwartz (1999). All these cultural attributes can characterize South Asian countries that are hierarchical and have a large gap between powerful elites and powerless citizens. At the same time, ordinary people accept such inequality and power distance in society. Earlier works on ACO (Baniamin et al., 2020; Ma & Yang, 2014) focus mainly on the perspective of ordinary citizens. I emphasize here the political elites: it is their authoritarian orientation that is a potential threat to democratic legitimacy.

The fourth article of this dissertation contributes to explaining democratic backsliding, which is an emerging issue in the literature on democracy. Waldner and Lust (2018) argue that there is still a lack of readily available theories to explain democratic backsliding. They examine six theories, including political culture, noting that the theory of political culture has little potential to explain backsliding. On the contrary, I emphasize cultural and values theory to explain the case of democratic backsliding in Bangladesh. I show how the authoritarian culture creates authoritarian socio-political elites who play an instrumental role in democratic backsliding in the country. The article makes a theoretical contribution to the field of research on democratic backsliding. The potentiality of a theory may vary depending on the cultural context of a society. In the context of Bangladesh, the authoritarian political culture has mainly led to democratic backsliding in recent decades. The fifth article substantiates this theoretical argument by presenting the case of a political opponent that has been severely suppressed by the authoritarian ruling elites. Bangladesh introduced the democratic system in 1990, it has democratic institutions, and people generally prefer democracy. Nevertheless, democracy does not function well; authoritarian

political elites manipulate democratic institutions to serve their vested interests instead of strengthening them.

The analysis of survey data also confirms that the performance dimension, measured by different indicators, affects the public's support for and satisfaction with democracy. For example, in article II, many performance indicators of quality of democracy (QoD) and quality of government (QoG) appear statistically significant for satisfaction with democracy in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The puzzle is that different democracy and governance indices demonstrate that the QoD and QoG are unsatisfactory in the three countries. This may be due to the variations in how people view democracy and what they expect from the government. When people have relatively low expectations about the standards of democracy and services from the government, they will be satisfied with a low quality of democracy and a minimal level of public services.

Citizens' understanding of democracy also matters here. Authoritarian notions of democracy include obedience to rulers, which is also an indicator for measuring ACO. People with higher ACO may misunderstand obedience as a democratic value because they equate it with abiding by the laws. It is abiding by the laws, not 'obeying rulers', a principle of liberal democracy (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019, p. 6). It is therefore expected that people with higher ACO will have more authoritarian notions of democracy and will be happy with authoritarian and flawed democracy in their country. People, in general, are also highly influenced by the narratives propagated by the political elites. Authoritarian rulers characterize their regimes as democratic (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019) regardless of whether they are or not. Similarly, development narratives have a preference over democracy narratives in flawed democracies like Bangladesh (Riaz, 2021). The country has been experiencing 6 to 8 percent economic growth for more than a decade, and even during the pandemic, the growth rate has been positive (3.5 %).

All the variations in the public's understanding of democracy are also culturally constructed. In a country with democratic institutions, people get first-hand experience of democracy and its norms (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019) which helps them develop liberal notions of democracy. On the other hand, in a country where democratic institutions are absent, or the institutional set-ups are mixed, people experience both democratic and authoritarian norms. As a result, in several less democratic countries, people endorse both liberal and authoritarian notions of democracy (Shin, 2015a). Several research findings show that the authoritarian notions of democracy are more prevalent in the Middle East and South Asia (Shin, 2015a) and in the less democratic and developing world (Norris, 2011). When citizens misunderstand the actual level of democracy, they consider their country a democracy, but it is not. They confuse "the absence of democracy with its presence" (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019, p. 24). Their expression of a high level of satisfaction with democracy is, in fact, satisfaction with the performance achieved under autocracy. As Kirsch and Welzel (2019) argue, people with authoritarian notions of democracy are more likely to support the authoritarian rule, and therefore authoritarian rule persists. In South Asia, people with higher ACO ultimately extend the legitimacy of authoritarianism in the name of democracy (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019).

As a methodological contribution, I emphasize the advantages of the explanatory sequential mixed method. It is a useful mixed-method strategy. A researcher can identify some useful research questions and puzzles by analyzing quantitative data and then moving on to qualitative studies to address those questions and puzzles. This process can help develop innovative research ideas grounded in empirical data. A researcher can contribute to the given areas of research through a theoretical explanation and further exploration with in-depth qualitative studies. Sometimes, a statistical analysis of survey data produces anti-hypothetical and surprising results that demand scholarly attention to investigate details for

better understanding. This sequential mixed method is not new in academic research. Many researchers are following this approach.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The studies in this dissertation started with a few overarching research questions about democratic legitimacy. In this final section, I will revisit those research questions along with possible lines for further research. The five articles in this research focus on the cultural context and value orientation. I emphasize that authoritarian culture and values have a significant implication for democratic legitimacy all over the world, especially in authoritarian or flawed democracies like those in South Asia. Existing literature finds a widespread value transformation towards postmaterialism, self-expression, autonomy, and secular and emancipative values. Because of such shifts in values, people are expected to seek more civil and political rights and individual freedom. The change in value orientations has been observed in all countries regardless of the regime structure. Several scholars demonstrate a significant and positive impact of democratic value orientations on legitimacy for democracy as a political system. At the same time, changes in individuals' values can lead to an existing democracy becoming more effective and consolidated (Inglehart, 2006), while in a non-democracy, such changes can prompt a democratization process (Galais, 2013; Inglehart, 2006).

Being in complete agreement with these scholarly arguments, I point out in the first article that the implication of democratic value orientation is not the same across the different regimes. The extent of the effect is subject to the existing political system, socio-political culture, and behavior of political elites. Nevertheless, the positive implication of democratic values on democratic legitimacy is higher in democratic countries than in autocratic countries. The article also explains why democratic values have a different effect on democratic legitimacy, which is one of my main research questions (sub-question 1).

One of the main arguments is that authoritarian cultures and elites curtail the positive implications of democratic values in autocracies. The prevalence of contradictory value orientations (democratic vs. non-democratic values) in non-democratic societies provides a possible explanation for why the effect of democratic values varies across the regimes. I therefore, in the other articles, go deeper into exploring what the implications of authoritarian culture are for democratic legitimacy in flawed democracies in South Asia. The findings show that people living in authoritarian cultures extend legitimacy to a flawed democratic system. In other words, authoritarian culture and values provide legitimacy for an autocratic political system, thus enabling authoritarian rule to become stable and to persist. The authoritarian culture is thus legitimating autocracy at the same time as it is a threat to democratic legitimacy.

Through an in-depth analysis of the authoritarian culture in Bangladesh, I show how political elites are pulling democracy backward and transforming Bangladesh into an authoritarian country. The empirical evidence of powerful ruling elites attempting to establish total control by marginalizing the opposition reveals that authoritarian culture is the main reason for democratic backsliding in the country. An authoritarian ruler always attempts to establish total control over all political institutions. The two case studies on Bangladesh explain how authoritarian practices by the incumbent regime monopolize or exert substantial control over all types of institutions ranging from the parliament and political parties to many non-political organizations, constitutional bodies, social institutions, the election commission, the human rights council, the anti-corruption commission, educational institutions, trade unions, interest organizations, the bar council, and even crisis help and help packages. All these monopolizations marginalize the oppositions and create a critical political situation where the winner takes all. The implications of authoritarian culture on democratic

legitimacy and its dire consequences for the opposition in South Asian countries are explained in detail and address research questions 2, 3, and 4.

Finally, regarding the last research question about the significance of democratic legitimacy for public management in South Asia during the Covid-19 pandemic: all over the world, people have been concerned about the restrictive policies and measures during Covid-19 and how they curtail people's civil and political rights. The problem will be more severe in autocratic countries where authoritarian rulers exploit the opportunity of a pandemic to strengthen their power and control even more than before. However, the evidence from South Asia does not reflect this concern. People do not pay adequate attention to democratic legitimacy while evaluating the performance of public institutions in Covid-19 management. This also indicates that people with high ACO are less concerned about democracy and put more emphasis on material well-being, for instance, through relief measures and financial incentives during the crisis period, such as we have experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Socio-demographic factors have a significant influence on ACO and values orientation. The findings from article II demonstrate that education and media exposure negatively correlate with ACO. This means citizens with a higher level of education and more exposure to mass media are less oriented towards authoritarian culture and values. This goes with Norris's (2011) finding that higher-educated individuals are more "critical citizens" who have less tendency to accept authoritarian notions of democracy. Educated people are less likely to show unquestioning obedience; instead, they will question authorities about their decisions and actions. Similarly, in the regression model of article II, education and media exposure appear negative and statistically significant with SwD, indicating that educated and politically aware people are less satisfied with flawed democracy. Education and media exposure increase political awareness and enhance the cognitive capacity to

understand democracy in its true form. Kirsch and Welzel (2019) argue that political, economic, and cultural interaction increases people's awareness and cognitive resources, making them able to understand and not succumb to authoritarian indoctrination. It is therefore expected that educated citizens are more critical and display lower satisfaction with the flawed democracy in their country.

Political awareness increases with education, and media exposure can significantly affect people's value orientations and how they view democracy. With the expansion of socio-economic modernization and education, people in authoritarian countries acquire liberal and democratic values. Wang and You (2016) argue that due to China's rapid economic development and subsequent modernization process, even though it is the most authoritarian country in Asia, its citizens are increasingly oriented toward democratic values. Kirsch and Welzel (2019) find that the appeal of authoritarian notions of democracy decreases with higher emancipative values and exposure to global information and communication flows. Authoritarian culture is based on hierarchy, inequality, and obedience, all of which are incompatible with modern values that promote equality and freedom. Modernization creates a demand for human empowerment and self-dependent attitudes.

However, the extent of any change in this direction varies depending on the sociopolitical environment and political system prevailing in a country (Ma & Yang, 2014). In an authoritarian society, the dynamics of the relationship between value orientation and democratic legitimacy are quite different from such dynamics in a democratic society (this is demonstrated in article I in this dissertation). Authoritarian repression and censorship increase authoritarian notions of democracy and have negative consequences on the enlightening effects of education and political awareness (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019). This supports my findings in the first article, namely, that the implications of democratic value orientations on democratic legitimacy vary across regime structures. The magnitude is

stronger in a democratic regime than in its alternatives. Due to the fear of repression by autocrats, people with democratic values may be reluctant to prefer democracy as a better alternative to the existing regime.

Literature shows that less democratic regimes have lower self-expression values (Inglehart, 2006) and emancipative values (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019). Therefore, it is expected that autocratic countries have a lower level of democratic values. I argue, however, that it is not the prevalence of democratic values but a contradictory culture that generates the differences in democratic legitimacy between the regimes. An autocracy's authoritarian culture interacts with citizens' democratic values and leads them to low commitment to democracy. As a result, the positive implications of a democratic value orientation on support for democracy are lower in autocracies than in democracies. I therefore conclude that culture matters in determining legitimacy for democracy as an ideal political system.

Scope for Future Research

Legitimacy is one of the most critical pillars of survival for a political system, be it democracy or autocracy. The findings from this dissertation demand further research on the sources of democratic legitimacy for flawed democracies and authoritarian countries. Is the Western form of liberal democracy ineffective in a particular context like South Asia or Africa, where authoritarian culture is dominant in socio-political relationships? Countries in Southeast and East Asia such as Singapore, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam attract the world's attention due to their rapid economic growth. Still, at the same time, these countries have some of the least liberal political systems. Do the governments of these countries acquire legitimacy merely from policy outputs such as economic growth, or does culture also matter? Authoritarian culture and non-liberal political systems can also successfully deliver essential services to citizens. The ACO creates more loyalty and less resistance that can benefit a country and help it prosper in

combination with benevolent leadership. This is a critical political dilemma that needs further exploration.

Finally, I consider legitimacy mainly from a public perspective, but other dimensions can also be explored, such as procedural legitimacy, the legitimacy of particular policy decisions, ethical and moral legitimacy, and legitimacy for populist/charismatic leaders. A public's understanding of democracy depends on the cultural context the people live in and the level of their cognitive capacity. Understanding democracy in different cultural contexts and its relationship to democratic legitimacy therefore needs to be explored further.

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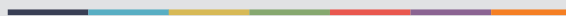
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