

Chapter 13

Output Oriented Legitimacy: Individual and System-level Influences on Democracy Satisfaction

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It has long been recognised that popular support for democratic regimes – their legitimacy – responds to the performance of governments. The more that successive incumbents – in Easton’s terms, the ‘political authorities’ – are able to deliver generally desired policy outcomes for their citizens, the greater the reservoir of regime support that is generated. This chapter considers a series of hypotheses about the crossnational sources of satisfaction with democracy and the ways in which institutional structures affect the relationship between support for incumbents and support for the regime more generally. These hypotheses examine the relative importance of three sets of factors: those at the individual level; those relating to the macro-level characteristics of the regime; and those that involve interactions across these two levels. The various theoretical claims that are articulated are evaluated using CSES data from thirty-eight countries. The results show that the individual calculus of democratic satisfaction operates remarkably evenly across a range of different institutional contexts, with assessments of government performance playing a predictably key role. The results also show that, while the ‘unfairness’ of electoral system *outcomes* that is typically associated with plurality rules *reduces* satisfaction levels, this effect is more than offset by the *positive* effects of the greater ‘clarity of responsibility’ that is also typically associated with plurality systems. This finding has potentially important implications for any (re-)design of electoral systems aimed at increasing the overall level of regime satisfaction. The first part of the chapter describes the core measure of democracy satisfaction that is employed here and outlines the way in which it varies both across countries and over time. Part two reviews the various theoretical claims that have been made about the sources of regime and democracy satisfaction among mass publics. Part three specifies a model of democracy satisfaction that enables these claims to be systematically evaluated. Part four reports our empirical results.

1. Aggregate Variations in Democracy Satisfaction

Within established democracies, the public's degree of 'satisfaction with democracy' is generally regarded as a good indicator of its support for the regime – for the system of political rules and practices that underpins the day-to-day cut and thrust of politics (Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson, 1995; Toka, 1995). Levels of democracy satisfaction have been measured in a wide variety of national contexts, most typically using a 4-point scale derived from the survey question 'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?'. The most extensive over-time, crossnational source of measures of satisfaction with democracy derive from the Eurobarometer series, where this question has been asked annually of representative samples in all EU member-states since 1976 (with the exception of 1996). Figure 1(a) shows the year-by-year variations in average democracy satisfaction across the European Union between 1976 and 2006, the most recent year for which comprehensive data are available.¹ The graph clearly indicates that, although satisfaction with democracy varies over time, there is no obvious linear trend either upwards or downwards – satisfaction has been more or less constant across the EU for over three decades. One limitation of Figure 1(a) is that the average level of satisfaction is calculated across different sets of countries over time, reflecting the various waves of EU accession that occurred from the mid 1980s. Figure 1(b) accordingly shows how satisfaction levels have changed since 1976 among the same set of nine countries that were members of the EU from 1973. Again, as the graph indicates, there is little evidence of secular change. Although average satisfaction levels across the nine were slightly higher in the early 21st century than in the mid 1970s, the overall pattern is broadly one of trendless fluctuation.²

Table 1 reports the marginal distribution of satisfaction with democracy across the countries surveyed in the 2002-2006 CSES wave. As the table shows, well over half of respondents were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the democratic process in their respective countries, with only 11 percent declaring themselves 'not at all satisfied'. Figure 2 shows how the distribution of

satisfaction varied across the CSES sample of countries, presenting average scores on the 1-4 point democracy satisfaction scale. As the figure indicates, Denmark (mean=3.27) displays the highest overall satisfaction levels, followed by Australia (2.98) and the United States (2.97). The top ten countries are all either western European or north American. The countries with the lowest satisfaction levels are mostly 'new' democracies like Bulgaria (1.83) and Brazil (2.05), though Italy (2.26), Israel (2.26) and Switzerland (2.33) all score relatively poorly given their relatively long-standing status as democratic systems. Germany also scores relatively modestly (2.45) given its strong democratic record since the late 1940s. However, it is evident from Eurobarometer data that overall German satisfaction levels fell after unification: prior to 1990, (West) German satisfaction levels were close to the west European average (see Annex 1).

2. The Sources of Democracy Satisfaction

It is clear from the evidence reported in Figures 1 and 2 that even within democratic systems, public satisfaction with democracy varies over both time and space. The key question is why these variations occur. As intimated above, we consider these sources of variation under three general headings: individual perceptions and characteristics; institutional features of the regime; and interactions between perceptions and institutions.

Individual Perceptions and Characteristics

A large number of studies have argued that many of the political choices made by 'ordinary' citizens are rooted in some sort of rational calculation (Downs, 1957; Stokes, 1963 and 1992). This is not to suggest that, in order to maximise their expected utility, most citizens must devote large amounts of time to collecting and analysing all of the information that might be relevant to the choices that they make. Rather, rational citizens frequently use heuristics or cognitive shortcuts in order to make decisions where they have relatively limited information (Popkin, 1991; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). Thus, for example, a rational voter might decide between competing parties on the basis of her/his assessment of the likely competence of the rival party leaders. In these

circumstances, rather than making a detailed analysis of the policy positions and delivery capabilities of the rival parties, s/he would be using the heuristic of 'leader images' in order to make a 'limited information' but nonetheless rational choice (Lupia, McCubbins and Popkin, 2000).

Using these sorts of cognitive shortcuts, one obvious way in which citizens might evaluate the quality of the democratic process in their respective countries is through their assessments of the *performance of the incumbent government*. In Easton's terms, the more that the 'political authorities' can deliver desirable policy goals, the more likely it is that citizens will develop support for the regime itself (Easton, 1965). There is certainly evidence from individual country studies to suggest that 'valenced' judgements about incumbent party policy delivery are positively linked to satisfaction with democracy (see, for example, Clarke *et al* 2004, 2009). The simple hypothesis tested here is that, independently of national context, democracy satisfaction will be positively affected both by citizens' assessments of overall government performance and by their perceptions of the incumbent government's ability to deal effectively with the most serious problem facing the country (H_{1.1}). A second set of potential individual-level influences on democracy satisfaction relates to citizens' evaluations of the extent to which domestic political institutions *represent* their views and interests. The sense that citizens are 'represented' by those in political power is a central tenet of all democratic theory (Weale, 2005). If citizens feel that existing political institutions fail to reflect and represent their interests, then the legitimacy of the political system as a whole is likely to be brought into question. In contrast, if citizens believe that these institutions do effectively represent their concerns, then they are more likely to consider that the state wields legitimate authority – they are more likely to be satisfied with the democratic process. The hypothesis here is that the more an individual feels *represented* by existing political institutions, the more likely s/he is to be satisfied with democracy (H_{1.2}). A third set of individual influences focuses on citizens' beliefs about the ability of the state to *deliver desirable democratic goals or values*, such as the protection of human rights and the prevention or avoidance of political and financial corruption

(Bingham Powell, 2000). The more citizens perceive that the existing regime delivers these values, the more likely they are to regard the existing regime as legitimate and accordingly to lend it their democratic support. In short, there should be a positive relationship between democracy satisfaction and the belief that the current regime effectively delivers democratic values (H_{1.3}). A fourth possible individual influence on democracy satisfaction is the individual's *normative sense of commitment to democracy* itself. Other things being equal, the stronger an individual's sense that democracy constitutes the 'best' form of government, the more likely s/he is to register a relatively high level of democracy satisfaction – on the grounds that current democratic processes (however flawed) are preferable to a situation in which non-democratic practices might predominate (H_{1.4}).

Note finally that individual demographic characteristics – age, sex, education, religion and so on – might also affect people's satisfaction with democracy. In general, we make no particular assumptions about the form that any such effects might take, though, as discussed in the next section, our operational model takes full account of the effects of these characteristics as control variables. The only exception relates to unemployment in the labour market. Given the disruption to the individual's economic and social position that unemployment frequently engenders, it seems likely that unemployed individuals will be less inclined to register high levels of democracy satisfaction in comparison with their employed counterparts. We accordingly expect unemployment to exert a negative effect on citizens' satisfaction with democracy (H_{1.5}).

Institutional features of the regime

The potential influences on democracy satisfaction identified in the previous sub-section all involve a degree of limited information rationality. Since we consider that people in general are broadly rational in many aspects of their attitudes and behaviours, we expect these individual-level influences to operate across all of the countries in the CSES sample. This said, it would be decidedly odd, given the known tendency for institutional arrangements to condition individual attitudes and behaviour, if the varying institutional contexts of the CSES countries did not exert some sort of

effect on individual citizens' propensities to be satisfied with democracy (see, for example, Cox and Amorim, 1997; Whiteley *et al*, 2010). Indeed there are good reasons to suppose that democracy satisfaction might well be affected by various regime characteristics. Perhaps the most obvious is the form of the electoral system (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Gallagher and Mitchell, 2008). The Anglo-Saxon first-past-the-post 'plurality' system, in which the winner in each constituency is the individual who receives the most votes, typically produces a 'clear' election-winning party in the national assembly (Lijphart, 1994 and 1999). However, first-past-the-post also tends to produce governments with clear parliamentary majorities that have been elected on far less than fifty percent of the votes – with the implication that a powerful elected government has been elected when more than fifty percent of voters opposed it. Moreover, first-past-the-post also tends to concentrate electoral competition in a relatively small number of 'marginal' constituencies, thereby rendering the voting choices of many citizens in non-marginal seats largely irrelevant in terms of electoral outcomes. In contrast with the plurality system, the various forms of proportional representation (PR) actively seek to ensure that governments will find it difficult to achieve a secure parliamentary majority without receiving at least fifty percent of the popular vote. In addition, most PR systems are also designed to maximise the chances that all individuals' votes will count equally – that a vote for Party X will be of equal importance regardless of the constituency in which it is cast (Belinski and Peyton Young, 2001). It seems likely in these circumstances, given the clear injustices associated with plurality electoral rules, that democracy satisfaction will be lower in countries with plurality rules than it is in countries with PR electoral systems (Norris, 2004). In short, net of other effects, it is expected that plurality rules will exert a negative impact on democracy satisfaction (H_{2.1}).

Note, however, that the potential effects of plurality refer to the possible consequences for public attitudes of *formal electoral rules*. It could be argued that the *practical effects* of official rules on the composition of parliaments and of governments are rather more important than the actual rules

themselves. One possible way of assessing these practical effects involves examining the relationship between the vote shares and the parliamentary seat shares that parties receive. It is obviously the case that the greater the overall disparity between parties' vote shares and their respective seat shares, the more 'unfair' the outcome of the electoral process. A situation where Party X receives 35 percent of the vote and 60 percent of the seats is clearly less fair than one where Party X receives 35 percent of both votes and seats. It in turn seems reasonable to suppose that the more unfair the electoral outcome, the less citizens will be satisfied with the democratic process. In short, we hypothesise that vote/seat share disparities should exert a negative effect on democracy satisfaction (H_{2,2}).

A second way of assessing the practical effects of electoral rules involves considering the extent to which there is 'clarity of responsibility' among the parties in government (Powell and Whitten, 1993). This 'practical effect' clearly relates to one of the possible *positive* features of plurality rules. In a situation where a single party with well under fifty percent of the votes can easily obtain a clear majority of parliamentary seats, there is no need for coalition government. Single party government – in which only one party is represented in terms of cabinet posts – implies absolute 'clarity of responsibility'. Only one party is running the country; that party can clearly be held responsible for whatever policy successes or failures occur during a given parliamentary term; and voters can clearly hold the governing party to account in an election – either re-electing a successful party or 'throwing the rascals out' in the event of policy failure. Multi-party government, in contrast, implies a lack of clarity of responsibility. The more parties that share Cabinet posts, the less clear it is which party is responsible for particular (or even general) failures of policy. It is accordingly much more difficult to reward one particular party for 'good' performance or to punish another for 'bad'. In short, it may be impossible for voters to decide 'who the rascals are', let alone to 'throw them out' in an election. Given the clear advantages of democratic electorates being able to 'throw the rascals out', our expectation is that democracy satisfaction will be higher where there

is greater ‘clarity of (Cabinet) responsibility’ (H_{2.3}). Note that this hypothesis implicitly recognises the potential practical *benefits* of plurality electoral systems and that as such it provides a clear counter-hypothesis to H_{2.1} above.

Our final ‘institutional feature’ relates to the age of the regime itself. The group of countries analysed here includes both ‘new’ and ‘old’ democracies.³ Given that regime legitimacy – regime support – is something that is built progressively over time, it is reasonable to suppose, *ceteris paribus*, that newer democratic systems will display lower levels of satisfaction with democracy than older systems, which have had longer to develop a sense of popular legitimacy. The simple hypothesis here, therefore, is that being a ‘new’ democracy should exert a negative effect on democracy satisfaction (H_{2.4}).

Interactions between individual perceptions and regime characteristics

Thus far we have considered the effects of individual calculation and institutional contexts separately. We have assumed that in arriving at their judgements about the adequacy of the democratic process, individual citizens will use various cognitive shortcuts based on limited information rationality. We have also assumed that their judgements will be influenced by certain institutional features – relating to both rules and outcomes – of the countries in which they live. There is clearly a further set of possibilities, however. It is conceivable that some institutional contexts may produce stronger (or weaker) individual-level effects on democracy satisfaction than others. Here, we consider three such individual/context interactions, all of which relate to the potentially context-varying effects of perceptions of government performance.⁴

As noted above, one of our core individual-level hypotheses is that satisfaction with government performance, other things being equal, is likely to build regime legitimacy and support – to increase people’s satisfaction with democracy. It is possible, however, that the magnitude of this effect varies with institutional context. Consider, first, how the effect of government performance on democracy satisfaction might vary according to the maturity of the democratic system. In ‘old’

democracies, citizens are likely to be able to distinguish fairly clearly between their feelings about the democratic system generally and their evaluations of the government of the day. In contrast, in ‘new’ democracies, citizens are less likely to distinguish between government and regime performance, since the character of the (new) regime is in large measure defined by what the current government does. The implication here is that although individuals’ assessments of government performance will affect democracy satisfaction in both old and new democracies, the magnitude of the effect is likely to be stronger in ‘new’ regimes than it is in ‘old’ (H_{3.1}).

This principle of potentially differential effects can be extended to two of the other institutional features of regimes that were indicated above – plurality and clarity of responsibility. If government performance is poor in a *proportional* system and/or where clarity of responsibility is relatively *low*, citizens are relatively unlikely either to be able to identify the precise ‘rascals’ who are responsible for that poor performance or to use their votes in order to remove those rascals from office. In these circumstances of relative impotence, dissatisfaction with government is *more* likely to translate into dissatisfaction with democracy more generally. In contrast, if government performance is poor in a *plurality* system or in a situation where clarity of responsibility is *high*, if they are so minded voters can remove the governing party from office precisely they know ‘who the rascals are’. In these circumstances, dissatisfaction with government is *less* likely to translate into democracy dissatisfaction because appropriate remedial change can be instituted. In sum, in plurality systems and where clarity of responsibility is relatively high, the effects of assessments of government performance on democracy satisfaction are likely to be *smaller* than the equivalent effects in proportional and in low clarity systems (H_{3.2}).

3. Specifying a Model of Democracy Satisfaction

There are broadly two ways of specifying models using the sort of multi-level data typical of the CSES dataset. Traditional multi-level models involve, in effect, the specification of two statistical

models – one for the effects on the dependent variable of predictors that are measured at the individual level; and one for the effects on the coefficients of the individual-level model of predictors that are measured only at the aggregate, country level. A second, simpler approach – which is adopted here – is to estimate the effects of both individual-level and aggregate-level effects on individual variations in the dependent variable simultaneously, but to take explicit account of the fact that the data are *clustered by country*. This latter approach ensures that the correct (robust) standard errors are used for estimating the significance of aggregate-level effects. It also has the advantage of interpretative simplicity, particular in terms of comparing the relative explanatory power of individual and aggregate effects on the dependent variable.

Taking account of the various hypotheses that were advanced above, our model of democracy satisfaction is:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Democracy Satisfaction}_i = & b_0 + b_1 \text{General Government Performance}_i \\
 & + b_2 \text{Government Performance Most Important Issue}_i \\
 & + b_3 \text{Voters Represented in Elections}_i + b_4 \text{Party Represents Respondent's Views}_i \\
 & + b_5 \text{Government Respects Human Rights}_i \\
 & + b_6 \text{Corruption is Widespread in Respondent's Country}_i \\
 & + b_7 \text{Democracy is Best Form of Government}_i + b_8 \text{Unemployed/not}_i \\
 & + b_9 \text{Age}_i + b_{10} \text{Male/not}_i + b_{11} \text{Education}_i + b_{12} \text{Retired}_i + b_{13} \text{Catholic}_i \\
 & + b_{14} \text{Jewish}_i + b_{15} \text{Muslim}_i + b_{16} \text{Buddhist}_i + b_{17} \text{Protestant}_i \\
 & + b_{18} \text{Plurality/not}_j + b_{19} \text{Disproportionality of Votes/Seats}_j \\
 & + b_{20} \text{Clarity of Responsibility}_j + b_{21} \text{New Democracy/not}_j \\
 & + b_{21} \text{GovernmentPerformance*Plurality/not}_{ij} \\
 & + b_{22} \text{GovernmentPerformance*ClarityResponsibility/not}_{ij} \\
 & + b_{23} \text{GovernmentPerformance*NewDemocracy/not}_{ij} + e_{ij} \quad [1]
 \end{aligned}$$

where i subscripts denote individual-level predictors; j subscripts denote country-level predictors; ij subscripts denote cross-level interactions; e_{ij} is a random error term; there are no expectations for the signs or significance levels for the demographic controls b_9 - b_{17} ; negative signs are expected for b_6 , b_8 , b_{18} , b_{19} , b_{21} and b_{22} ; and all other coefficients are expected to be positive. Note that the

coefficients b_{21} - b_{23} on the interaction terms all indicate the shift away from the 'parent' Government Performance coefficient, b_1 , for the specified macro-level characteristic.⁵

Table 2 indicates how each of these terms relates to the hypotheses that were advanced earlier and reports the marginal distributions of the operational variables across the CSES sample of countries considered together. As the table indicates, $H_{1.1}$, $H_{1.2}$ and $H_{1.3}$ are each operationalised using two indicator measures: $H_{1.1}$ by assessments of government performance in general and in relation to the most important issue facing the country; $H_{1.2}$ by assessments of the consequences of elections for representation and by whether or not the respondent considers her/his own views to be represented by a particular political party; and $H_{1.3}$ by perceptions of the prevailing level of respect for individual freedom and by assessments of political corruption. The remaining hypotheses are tested using a single measure. $H_{1.4}$ is tested using a simple Likert agreement scale based on the proposition that 'democracy is better than any other form of government'. $H_{1.5}$ is tested using the respondent's report as to whether or not s/he is unemployed. $H_{2.1}$ uses the standard CSES coding of plurality electoral rules, where 1 denotes plurality rules and zero otherwise.⁶ The Disproportionality Index used in $H_{2.2}$ reflects the difference between parties' shares of the popular vote and the share of seats that they obtain in the lower national assembly. The index ranges from a minimum 0.3 (for the Netherlands), which indicates a high correspondence between vote and seat shares and a low level of disproportionality, to a maximum of 7.1 (for the UK), which indicates a high level of disproportionality.⁷ The Clarity of Responsibility Index used to test $H_{2.3}$ varies between 0 and 1, where 0 denotes a low level of clarity and 1 a high level. A score of 0 indicates that cabinet seats are distributed evenly among the parties in a coalition government (for example, Iceland's cabinet was composed of 12 ministers, 6 from each of two coalition partners); a score of 1 indicates that only one party is represented in cabinet and holds all the seats.⁸ Finally, $H_{2.4}$ is tested using a simple dummy variable that reflects whether the respondent lives in a new or an old democracy.

Table 2 also shows that the distributions of most of the predictor variables are reasonably well dispersed. For example, in relation to General Government Performance, roughly 53 percent of respondents take a positive view compared with 47 percent who take a positive view. Similarly, some 71 percent consider that Corruption is either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ widespread, compared with 29 percent who think it is not. Only two of the measures produce relatively unbalanced distributions – those for beliefs about the superiority of democracy (only 11 percent disagree with the proposition that ‘democracy is better than any other form of government’) and for unemployment status (only 6.2 percent of respondents report being unemployed). In both of these cases, however, the skew in the distribution is not sufficient to raise serious concerns about the inclusion of these terms in the estimated model. The table also shows (see the figures in brackets) the numerical values assigned to the categories of each of the independent variables. Since the variables are all at quasi-interval level, all measures are scored so that high values reflect agreement with or positive attitudes towards the concept specified. Thus, for example, the belief that “Elections ensure voters views’ are *very well* represented by major parties” is scored as 4, whereas the belief that voters views’ are *not at all well* represented is scored as 1. Similarly, the conviction that “Corruption among politicians...” is *very widespread* is scored as 4, whereas the view that corruption *hardly happens at all* is scored as 1. The remaining, binary variables are scored as 0/1 dummies.⁹

4. Empirical Results

Tables 3 and 4 report the bivariate relationships between democracy satisfaction and, respectively, the individual-level and macro-level predictor variables from equation [1]. Table 3 shows the simple bivariate correlations between the 4-point democracy satisfaction scale and each of the *individual-level* predictors. The correlations are all significant at $p < .0001$, though this is to be expected with such a large number of cases. The observed relationships are consistent with all of the individual-level hypotheses outlined in $H_{1.1}$ - $H_{1.5}$. The two government performance measures

both correlate positively with democracy satisfaction, providing initial support for H_{1.1}. Similarly, the two representation measures both correlate positively with democracy satisfaction, indicating preliminary support for H_{1.2}. This pattern of preliminary support also extends to the regime performance measures. As H_{1.3} anticipates, the ‘respect for freedom and human rights’ scale correlates positively with democracy satisfaction, whereas the ‘corruption is widespread’ scale correlates negatively. As expected in H_{1.4}, the ‘normative commitment to democracy’ measure correlates positively with democracy satisfaction. Finally, as predicted in H_{1.5}, the correlation with unemployment is negative (though weak).

Table 4 yields a similar set of preliminary conclusions with regard to the *macro-level* correlates of democracy satisfaction. Since the macro characteristics are all dummy variables, the table reports simple difference of means t-tests, all of which produce statistically significant differences $p < .000$. The results are clearly consistent with our initial set of macro-level hypotheses. As the table shows, Plurality electoral systems yield an average democracy satisfaction score of 2.49 – some 0.06 lower than the equivalent score of 2.56 in majoritarian or mixed systems. A similar difference is observed in relation to Seat/Vote Disproportionality: in high disproportionality systems, the average democracy satisfaction score is .10 lower than in low disproportionality systems. Clarity of Responsibility, in turn, produces the opposite effect: high clarity countries on average record higher scores (2.59) than those observed in low clarity countries (mean: 2.45). Finally, the ‘new democracies’ exhibit lower average democracy satisfaction scores (mean: 2.27) than ‘old’ (mean: 2.65). In short, the table indicates that democracy satisfaction is, as expected, higher in countries where clarity of responsibility is high and where disproportionality is low; and higher in countries that are either ‘old democracies’ or where majoritarian rather than plurality rules are used for elections.

The key question that follows from these various bivariate relationships, of course, is whether they are robust to multivariate testing. For example, do the reductive macro-level effects of plurality

rules on democracy satisfaction continue to operate when proper account is taken of the individual-level sources of democracy satisfaction? It is precisely to test the robustness of the bivariate results shown in Tables 3 and 4 that we estimate the multivariate model reported in Table 5. Since the democracy satisfaction scale, strictly, is at ordinal level, we estimate equation [1] using ordered logit. As noted above, significance levels are estimated using robust standard errors, with the data clustered by country. The model is reasonably well-determined, producing a pseudo- R^2 of 0.18.

Several conclusions are suggested by the results reported in Table 5. First, all of the individual-level effects hypothesised in $H_{1.1}$ to $H_{1.5}$ are clearly confirmed. As predicted, both of the Government Performance terms ($b=.70$ and $b=.27$) and both of the Sense of Representation terms ($b=.45$ and $b=.25$) provide significant positive coefficients. In relation to Regime Performance, also as predicted, the 'Respect for... Human Rights' terms yields a positive effect ($b=.60$) while the 'Corruption' term produces a negative effect ($b=-.33$). The normative commitment term produces a positive effect ($b=.53$) and unemployment ($b=-.12$) a negative effect. These results indicate that the individual-level calculus of satisfaction with democracy is relatively straightforward. Satisfaction is maximised when citizens perceive that their governments deliver on key policy goals; when they feel they are represented by the major political parties; when they consider that regimes deliver respect for human rights and minimise corruption; and when citizens have a strong normative commitment to democracy. In addition, democracy satisfaction is reduced (albeit slightly) by an individual's exclusion from the labour market.

The second set of conclusions suggested by Table 5 relates to the macro-level sources of individual variations in democracy satisfaction. In contrast to the bivariate results shown in Table 4, it is clear from Table 5 that neither Disproportionality in Vote/Seat Shares nor 'New' *versus* 'Old' Democracy status exerts a significant impact on democracy satisfaction. Crucially, however, the effects of Plurality Rules ($b=-.63$) and of Clarity of Responsibility ($b=.80$) remain significant. In other words, when appropriate statistical controls are applied, the key macro drivers of democracy

satisfaction are a mixture of formal *rules* (Plurality versus Majoritarian electoral system) and *outcomes* in so far as they allow citizens to identify the ‘rascals’ who may need to be ‘thrown out’ in subsequent elections (Clarity of Responsibility). This result has resonance both for those who argue in favour of proportional representation electoral systems and those who oppose them. For PR’s protagonists, the reductive effect on democracy satisfaction of plurality rules clearly supports their claims that the ‘unfairness’ of plurality rules, in terms of ‘wasted votes’, weakens regime support. For PR’s opponents, the positive effect of Clarity clearly supports their claims that democracy works most effectively when electoral rules produce clear winners who can be held properly to account by the electorate at some later date. In any event, the results indicate that $H_{2.1}$ and $H_{2.3}$ should be accepted and $H_{2.2}$ and $H_{2.4}$ rejected.

A third set of conclusions implied by Table 5 concerns the cross-level interaction terms. Recall that these interactions were included in the model specification to incorporate the idea that the effects of government performance vary across different institutional contexts. In particular, it was expected that the effects of government performance on democracy satisfaction would be disproportionately greater in New Democracies ($H_{3.1}$), and disproportionately smaller under plurality rules or under conditions of high Clarity of Responsibility ($H_{3.2}$). These predictions imply: (1) that the interaction term for Government Performance*New Democracy should have a significant *negative* coefficient that is smaller in magnitude than the (positive) ‘parent’ Government Performance coefficient; and (2) that the interaction terms for Government Performance*Clarity of ‘coefficients.’¹⁰ The results shown in the table are clear. First, the ‘new democracy’ interaction term is highly non-significant ($p=.719$), suggesting that $H_{3.1}$ should be rejected. When appropriate controls for individual predispositions and calculations are taken properly into account, the impact of government performance on democracy satisfaction is no different in new democracies from the impact that is evident in old democracies.¹¹ Second, the coefficient for the Government Performance/Plurality interaction is wrongly signed ($b=.21$) and non-significant at conventional

levels. However, the coefficient for the Government Performance*Clarity of Responsibility interaction is both correctly signed ($b=-.20$) and statistically significant ($p=.043$). Taken together, these two results suggest that it is the practical level of clarity of responsibility rather than the existence of plurality rules *per se* that reduces the effect of government performance on democracy satisfaction. The effect of government performance in ‘low clarity’ systems is $b=.70$; the effect for ‘high clarity’ systems is $b=(.70 - .20) = .50$. This implies partial corroboration for $H_{3.2}$. Where clarity of responsibility is high, dissatisfaction with government is *less* likely to transfer into democracy satisfaction because citizens are more able to identify the rascals who are responsible for poor government performance and are therefore better placed to ‘throw them out’.

The final set of conclusions implied by Table 5 relate to the demographic controls. We established earlier that one demographic characteristic – being unemployed – does have an (negative) impact on democracy satisfaction. The results in Table 5 show that most of the ‘standard demographics’ all fail to exert significant effects. Age, gender, education and retirement status all produce clearly non-significant coefficients. This is not the case, however, with several of the religion dummy variables (the base category is ‘no religion’). The Muslim and Buddhist terms are both non-significant. However, those for Catholic and Protestant both produce positive significant coefficients, while the Jewish coefficient is significant and negative. There seems to be no obvious reason why Catholics and Protestants – confessing Christians – should be more satisfied with democracy than their non-religious counterparts. We simply note this as an empirical tendency that needs to be controlled for if the effects of other, theoretically relevant variables are to be properly estimated. The significant negative coefficient for Jewish/not partly reflects the relatively low levels of democracy satisfaction in one of the sampled countries – Israel – where most of the Jewish respondents in the total sample were located. However, dropping the Jewish/not term from the specification makes no difference to the substantive results obtained. We conclude that it therefore makes sense to retain this expression in the model, yet again as a necessary control.

One of the difficulties of using ordered logit as an estimation tool – as with any form of logistic regression – is that the relative magnitudes of the various coefficients are not easy to interpret directly. For this reason, Table 6 reports, for each significant independent variable, the changes in probabilities associated with moving from the predictor variable's minimum to maximum values whilst holding all other predictors constant at their respective means. The results are highly instructive since they enable to assess the relative explanatory power of the different hypotheses that were advanced earlier. The first and most obvious feature of the table is that the individual-level predictors clearly have larger impacts on the changes in probability than the system-level structural features. The four largest effects – for general government performance ($dp = .47$), elections ensure representation ($dp = .32$), respect for human rights ($dp = .41$) and normative beliefs about democracy ($dp = .37$) – are all part of the individual-level calculus of democracy satisfaction. This is not to say that structural features of the regime do not matter. However, it is clear from the much smaller dp values for Plurality rules ($-.15$) and for Clarity of Responsibility ($.18$) that these structural factors have noticeably more limited effects. The second feature of the table is that all of the individual-level hypotheses advanced earlier produce substantial effects on the probability that an individual is satisfied with democracy. For example, as an individual moves from registering 1 to registering 4 on the general government performance scale, s/he increases her/his probability of being either very or fairly satisfied with democracy by $p = .47$. Similar effects (though not quite as large) are also evident with regard to the terms for regime performance, sense of representation and normative commitment to democracy. A third key feature of the table relates to the two regime characteristic dp values. The Plurality term yields a dp value of $-.15$, indicating that a person living in a system with plurality rules would be $p = .15$ less likely to be satisfied with democracy than someone with an identical attitudinal and demographic profile in a majoritarian system. Yet before it is immediately concluded that democracy satisfaction could straightforwardly be increased by abandoning plurality rules in favour of a majoritarian system, it needs to be recognised that a slightly larger effect in the opposite direction is evident with regard to the impact of clarity of

responsibility ($dp=.18$). Here, an increase from 0 to 1 on the clarity scale produces an increase in the probability of an individual being satisfied with democracy. Given that greater clarity of responsibility is typically associated with plurality rules (even though the bivariate correlation between our measures of plurality and clarity is only $r=.02$), it is evident that any consequent loss of clarity associated with the abandonment of plurality would simultaneously serve to cancel out any benefits to democracy satisfaction that might have been expected to derive from that abandonment. The final feature of Table 6 that merits brief attention is the change in probability associated with the Government Performance*Clarity interaction term. The negative value of $dp=-.15$ means that, for high clarity countries, the effect of a change in government performance from a rating of 1 to 4 increases the probability that an individual will be satisfied with democracy by $dp=(.71-.15)=.59$. The effect for low clarity countries remains $dp=.71$.

Summary and Conclusions

Democratic regimes retain their legitimacy over time by securing the continued support of their respective mass publics. By measuring the extent to which citizens feel satisfied with the democratic process in their respective countries, a plausible assessment of the extent to which different regimes enjoy popular support can be made. It is clear from Eurobarometer and CSES data that satisfaction with democracy – regime support – varies both over time within specific countries and across different political systems. The key question is why these variations occur, and in particular how they relate to governmental performance. Using a cross-sectional comparative design, this chapter has explored the individual- and system-level sources of these variations.

The empirical results that we have reported suggest support for a number of hypotheses. At the individual level, it is clear that satisfaction with democracy responds most directly to variations in government performance. Governments build (or lose) support for the regime by providing citizens

with the policy outcomes that they prefer; the more (less) successful that they are in this enterprise, the greater (smaller) the level of democracy satisfaction. In addition to the actions of the government of the day, however, democracy satisfaction is also conditioned by citizens' perceptions of the performance of the regime more generally. The more that people feel parties and elections perform some sort of representation function, the more likely they are to display high levels of democracy satisfaction. Similarly, the more that citizens believe that the regime delivers on two of the key features of contemporary liberal democracy – respect for individual freedom and human rights, and the minimisation of political corruption – the higher their levels of regime support. Finally, there is also a role for citizens' normative beliefs about democracy: the greater their commitment to the idea that, despite all its failings, democracy remains the 'best' form of government available, the greater people's satisfaction with current democratic processes. Crucially, the results presented here show that these relationships hold, controlling for a wide range of standard demographic variables, across all of the CSES countries.

The individual calculus of satisfaction with democracy, however, only tells part of the story. There is also a role for political – and particularly electoral – institutions. Critics of the first-past-the-post electoral system frequently point out that (a) the unfairness to minority parties and (b) the 'wasted votes' of citizens who live in 'safe' constituencies that are engendered by plurality rules mean that satisfaction with democracy is typically lower in plurality systems than it is in systems based on proportional representation. At the purely descriptive level, this observation carries some weight: it is undoubtedly the case that democracy satisfaction is on average significantly lower in plurality systems than it is under PR. However, this simple observation taken in isolation ignores another very important fact: democracy satisfaction is also higher when there is 'clarity of responsibility' among parties for the available ministerial portfolios; where the 'rascals' responsible for government performance can be readily identified and, if necessary, voted out of office. Since clarity of responsibility is often low in countries with PR, where multi-party coalition governments

are common, would-be institutional reformers find themselves in a somewhat paradoxical position. If the objective of reform is to maintain, or even to increase, the overall level of support for the regime, the abandonment of plurality rules is very much a double-edged sword. Though a switch to PR, on the one hand, might serve to increase democracy satisfaction by removing unfairness to minor parties and ‘wasted votes’, on the other hand it is also likely reduce clarity of responsibility and therefore simultaneously to reduce such satisfaction. Indeed, the results of our ordered logit model suggest that these two countervailing effects would in all probability cancel each other out, with the overall effect, if anything, being slightly to reduce satisfaction with democracy. This suggests that advocates of electoral reform need to be very careful in specifying their precise aims and priorities if their putative reform proposals are to avoid producing unintended (and potentially undesirable) consequences.

One other institutional feature that has figured in some accounts of democracy satisfaction is the age of the democratic system itself. Again, it is certainly the case at the simple descriptive level that democracy satisfaction is lower in ‘new’ as opposed to ‘old’ democracies. The results reported here, however, show conclusively that when appropriate individual-level controls are applied, the apparent (reductive) effects of ‘being a new democracy’ disappear. The implications of this finding are both important and straightforward. New democracies exhibit lower levels of democracy satisfaction than their older counterparts not simply because they are new but (a) because their citizens are more critical of current government policy delivery, regime performance and representation; and (b) because citizens in the newer democracies feel less normative commitment to the idea of democracy itself.

Our results show, finally, that there is one important cross-level interaction between institutional characteristics and the individual calculus of democracy satisfaction. Where there is high clarity of responsibility in policymaking, the effects of government performance on democracy satisfaction – though still highly significant – are muted; the effects are much greater where clarity is low. The

reason for this effect, we infer, is that in high clarity systems it is much easier to identify and remove the culprits when policy performance is poor, which reduces the extent to which government dissatisfaction translates into regime dissatisfaction. In contrast, in low clarity systems, because it is more difficult to indentify and remove ‘rascals’, dissatisfaction with government performance converts more directly into dissatisfaction with the regime and with democracy itself. This effect, though limited, offers a further caution to would-be electoral reformers bent on removing the injustices of first-past-the-post.

Table 1: Distribution of Satisfaction with Democracy across CSES Wave 2 Countries

	Percent
Not at all satisfied	11.1
Not very satisfied	32.1
Fairly Satisfied	48.6
Very Satisfied	8.3
N of cases	56653

Question: On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [country]?

Table 2: Descriptive Characteristics of Key Predictors in Democracy Satisfaction Model

		<i>Very Bad Job (1)</i>	<i>Bad Job (2)</i>	<i>Good Job (3)</i>	<i>Very Good job (4)</i>	<i>N</i>
H_{1,1}	General Government Performance	11.9	35.1	48.5	4.4	53183
	Government Performance on Most Important Problem	22.7	43.3	30.4	4.0	53010
		<i>Not at all Well (1)</i>	<i>Not Very Well (2)</i>	<i>Quite (3)</i>	<i>Well (4)</i>	
H_{1,2}	Elections ensure voters' views are represented by major parties	10.2	40.7	44.0	5.1	48951
	Does any party represent respondent's views?	<i>No (0)</i>	<i>Yes (1)</i>			53253
		<i>None (1)</i>	<i>Not Much (2)</i>	<i>Some (3)</i>	<i>A Lot (4)</i>	
H_{1,3}	Respect for individual freedom and human rights in [nation]	8.7	27.2	48.4	15.7	56645
	Corruption among politicians in [nation] is...	<i>Hardly happens at all (1)</i>	<i>Not Very Widespread (2)</i>	<i>Quite Widespread (3)</i>	<i>Very Widespread (4)</i>	56143
	Democracy better than any other form of government	<i>Disagree Strongly (1)</i>	<i>Disagree (2)</i>	<i>Agree (3)</i>	<i>Agree Strongly (4)</i>	55311
H_{1,5}	Unemployed	<i>No (0)</i>	<i>Yes (1)</i>			57905
H_{2,1}	Live in Plurality System	27.4	72.6			60651
		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. Deviation</i>	
H_{2,2}	Disproportionality of Votes to Seats	0	7.1	2.31	1.60	60651
H_{2,3}	Clarity of Responsibility in Cabinet	0	1	0.51	0.35	60651
		<i>No (0)</i>	<i>Yes (1)</i>			
H_{2,4}	New Democracy	70.5	29.5			60651

Cell entries except where indicated are row percentages. Numbers in (brackets) indicate numerical codes assigned to each category in constructing independent variable measures. Country scores on Plurality, Disproportionality, Clarity of Cabinet Responsibility and New/old democracy are provided in Annex 2.

Table 3: Bivariate correlations between Democracy Satisfaction and individual level predictors

	<i>Democracy Satisfaction</i>
H _{1.1} : General Government Performance	.40
H _{1.1} : Government Performance on most important issue	.34
H _{1.2} : Elections ensure voters are represented by parties	.29
H _{1.2} : A party represents respondent's views	.20
H _{1.3} : Respect for freedom and human rights in [nation]	.38
H _{1.3} : Corruption among politicians in [nation]	-.32
H _{1.4} : Democracy is the best form of government	.28
H _{1.5} : Unemployed/not	-.07

All correlations significant at $p=.0000$.

Table 4: Difference of Means tests on Democracy Satisfaction (1-4) Scale

	Mean Score	N of cases
'Old' democracies	2.65	40055
'New' democracies	2.27	16598
<i>Difference</i>	.38	
Majoritarian systems	2.55	45487
Plurality systems	2.49	11116
<i>Difference</i>	.06	
Low disproportionality of seats to votes	2.58	33835
High disproportionality of seats to votes	2.48	22818
<i>Difference</i>	.10	
Low clarity of responsibility in Cabinet	2.59	36883
High clarity of responsibility in Cabinet	2.45	19770
<i>Difference</i>	.13	

All differences significant at $p=.0000$.

Table 5: Ordered Logit Model of Democracy Satisfaction

	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Robust Standard Error</i>	<i>Significance</i>
H_{1,1}: Government Performance			
General Government Performance	.70	.09	.000
Government Performance on Most Important Problem	.27	.04	.000
H_{1,2}: Sense of Representation			
Elections ensure voters are represented	.45	.04	.000
A party represents respondent's views/not	.25	.04	.000
H_{1,3}: Regime Performance			
Respect for freedom and human rights in [nation]	.60	.04	.000
Corruption among politicians in [nation]	-.33	.04	.000
H_{1,4}: Normative Commitment to Democracy			
Democracy best form of government	.53	.05	.000
H_{1,5}: Economic position			
Unemployed/not	-.12	.06	.044
H_{2,1} – H_{2,4}: Regime Characteristics			
Plurality electoral rules/not	-.63	.28	.025
Disproportionality of seat share/vote share	.01	.04	.715
Cabinet Clarity of Responsibility	.80	.32	.013
New Democracy/not	-.40	.44	.365
H_{3,1} – H_{3,2}: Cross-level interaction terms			
Government Performance*New Democracy	.06	.17	.719
Government Performance*Plurality	.21	.12	.082
Government Performance*Clarity of Responsibility	-.20	.10	.043
Demographic Controls			
Age	-.00	.00	.849
Male	-.00	.03	.969
Education	-.00	.01	.785
Retired/not	-.04	.04	.315
Catholic/not	.18	.08	.025
Jewish/not	-.48	.11	.000
Muslim/not	.05	.16	.753
Buddhist/not	.12	.17	.467
Protestant/not	.18	.08	.024
Cut 2	5.89	.32	
Cut 3	9.34	.43	
Pseudo R ²	.18		
N	36019		

Standard Errors adjusted for 36 clusters of countries

Table 6: Changes in Predicted Probabilities derived from the Model Reported in Table 5

	<i>Range</i>	<i>dp value: Change in probability of being Satisfied with Democracy</i>
H_{1.1}: Government Performance		
General Government Performance	1-4	.47
Government Performance on Most Important Problem	1-4	.19
H_{1.2}: Sense of Representation		
Elections ensure voters are represented	1-4	.32
A party represents respondent's views/not	0-1	.06
H_{1.3}: Regime Performance		
Respect for freedom and human rights in [nation]	1-4	.41
Corruption among politicians in [nation]	1-4	-.23
H_{1.4}: Normative Commitment to Democracy		
Democracy best form of government	1-4	.37
H_{1.5}: Economic position		
Unemployed/not	0-1	-.03
H_{2.1} – H_{2.4}: Regime Characteristics		
Plurality electoral rules/not	0-1	-.15
Disproportionality of seat share/vote share		Effect non-significant
Cabinet Clarity of Responsibility	0-1	.18
New Democracy/not		Effect non-significant
H_{3.1} – H_{3.2}: Cross-level interactions		
Government Performance*New Democracies		Effect non-significant
Government Performance*Plurality rules		Effect non-significant
Government Performance*Clarity of Responsibility	1-4	-.15
Significant Demographic Controls		
Catholic	0-1	.04
Protestant	0-1	.04
Jewish	0-1	-.12

Change in probability figures record the change in the probability that an individual will be satisfied with democracy (either fairly or very satisfied) given a change in the independent variable from its minimum to its maximum possible value, holding all other variables constant at their respective means. Estimation using CLARIFY for STATA (Tomz *et al*, 1999).

Figure 1a: Average Democracy Satisfaction in All EU countries, 1976-2006

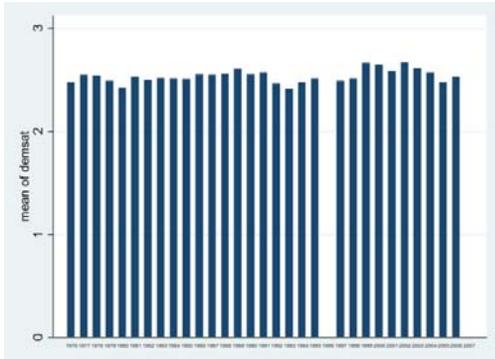
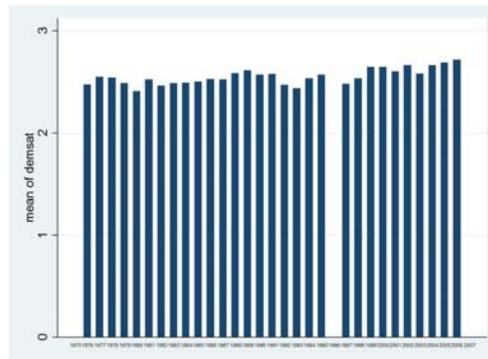
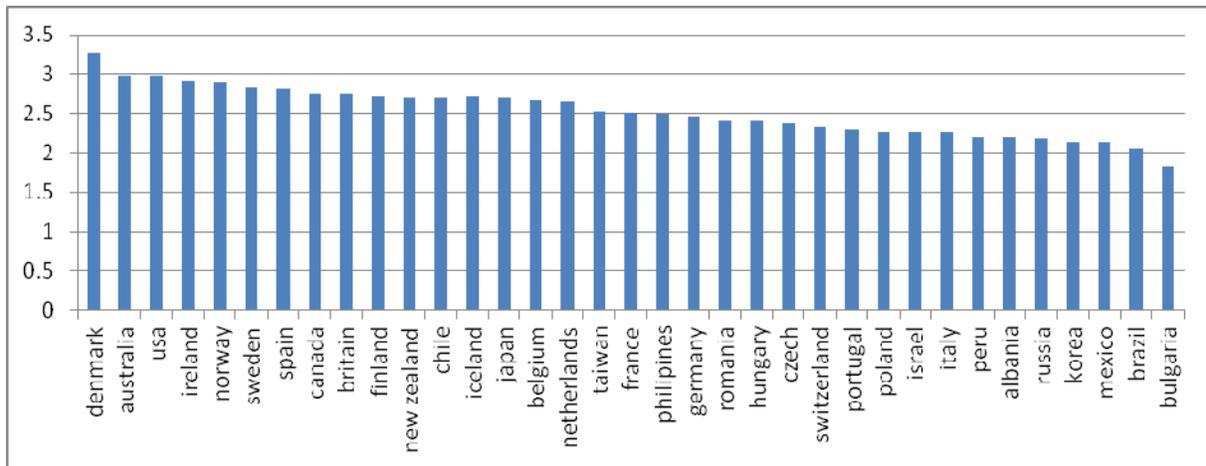


Figure 1b: Average Democracy Satisfaction in (six) Founder EU Member States and (three) 1970s joiners, 1976-2006



Scores are annual averages on the 1-4 Democratic Satisfaction scale.

Figure 2: Average Satisfaction with Democracy on 1-4 Scale, CSES Wave Two Countries



Scores are Country Averages on the 1-4 Democratic Satisfaction scale.

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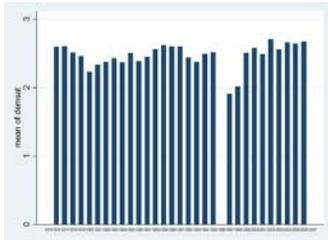
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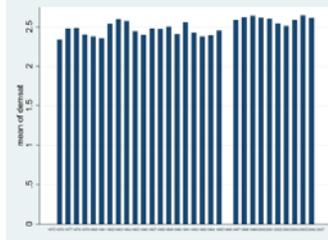
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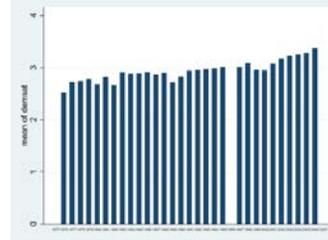
Annex 1: Variations in Democracy Satisfaction in Western European Countries, 1976-2006



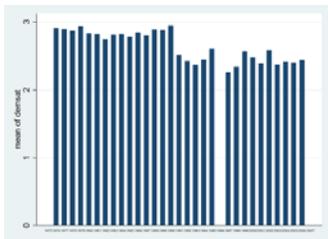
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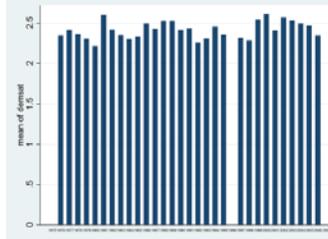
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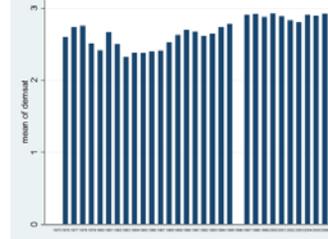
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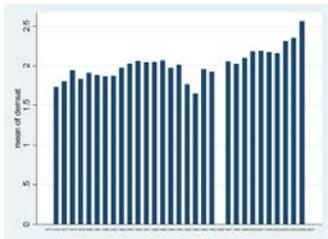
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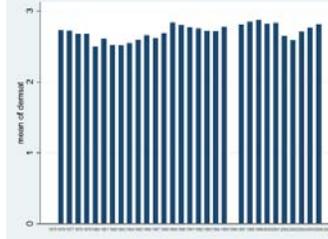
France



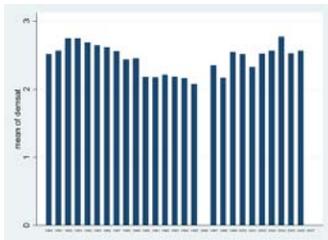
Ireland



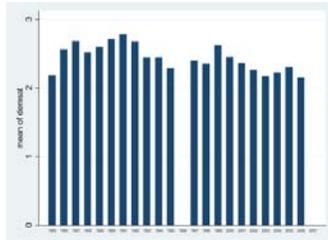
Italy



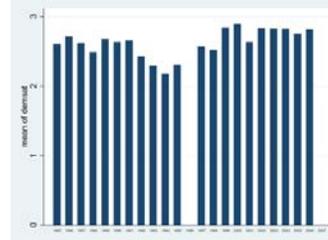
Netherlands



Greece



Portugal



Spain

Scores are annual averages on the 1-4 Democratic Satisfaction scale. Data for Greece are for 1980-2006; for Portugal and Spain, 1985-2006; for other countries, 1976-2006. No data available for 1996.

Annex 2: Country Scores on Regime Characteristics used in the Chapter

	Disproportionality	Clarity of Responsibility	Plurality(1) / not(0)	New Democracy (1) / not (0)
Albania	4.2	0.53	0	1
Australia	3.9	0.32	0	0
Belgium	1.6	0.04	0	0
Brazil	1.1	0.49	0	1
Bulgaria	3.6	0.70	0	1
Canada	5.7	1.00	0	0
Chile	3.3	0.15	0	1
Czech Republic	2.7	0.32	0	1
Denmark	0.3	0.09	0	0
Finland	1.4	0.22	0	0
Germany	1.7	0.27	0	0
Hong Kong	0.9	0.00	0	1
Iceland	1.2	0.00	0	0
Ireland	2.4	0.37	0	0
Israel	0.9	0.39	0	0
Hungary	4.1	0.23	0	1
Italy	1.5	0.31	0	0
Japan	2.3	0.44	1	0
Korea	6.5	1.00	1	0
Kyrgistan	2.3	1.00	0	1
Mexico	1.0	0.30	1	0
Netherlands	0.3	0.20	0	0
New Zealand	0.8	0.45	1	0
Norway	1.4	0.25	0	0
Peru	5.3	1.00	0	1
Phillipines	2.3	0.27	1	1
Poland	2.3	0.45	0	1
Portugal	1.8	0.36	0	0
Romania	4.5	0.25	1	1
Russia	2.3	1.00	0	1
Slovenia	1.3	0.23	0	1
Spain	1.8	1.00	0	0
Sweden	0.4	1.00	0	0
Switzerland	1.1	0.11	0	0
Taiwan	2.2	1.00	0	0
UK	7.1	1.00	1	0
USA	1.5	1.00	1	0

Footnotes

¹ The index is the mean, constructed by scoring the response categories as very satisfied=4, fairly satisfied=3, a little dissatisfied=2, and very dissatisfied=1.

² Annex 1 reports country-by country variations in democracy satisfaction for these nine countries. Three broad patterns are evident: trendless fluctuation (Belgium, France, Netherlands, Luxembourg); slight over time increase (Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Britain); and step-decline (Germany, where, after unification, the lower levels of satisfaction in the east produced an overall national decline).

³ List new (and old?) democracies in this fn

⁴ In the language of multi-level modelling, these are ‘cross level interactions’. We eschew the use of this precise description here as we do not use a conventional multi-level model form of estimation in our later analysis.

⁵ Note that the interaction between Government Performance and Clarity of Responsibility is constructed by first splitting the Clarity term into a dummy variable where 1 denotes a clarity score equal to or greater than the mean and 0 denotes a Clarity score below the mean. This form of construction renders the interaction coefficient much more interpretable and makes it directly comparable with the other interaction terms in the model, which are constructed from Government Performance and a dummy variable.

⁶ Plural systems in the CSES dataset are Japan, South Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Phillipines, Romania, USA, UK. Including the two ‘mixed’ systems (Germany and Slovenia) in either the plurality or the non-plurality category makes no difference to the statistical results reported here.

⁷ The disproportionality index is constructed as $\Sigma(\text{abs}(\% \text{Vote Share}_i - \% \text{Seat Share}_i))/N$ of Parties where i denotes the i th party.

⁸ The clarity of responsibility index is constructed as $\Sigma(\text{abs}(\% \text{Share of Cabinet Seats}_i - \% \text{Share of Cabinet Seats}_j))/N$ of Parties; where any pair of parties are subscripted i, j , and where i is not equal to j .

⁹ Annex two reports the actual country by country scores for our regime characteristic predictor variables.

¹⁰ A negative interaction coefficient indicates a weaker effect in the subset of cases interacted than for the ‘parent’ term; a positive interaction coefficient indicates a stronger effect.

¹¹ The reason for the non-significance of the ‘new democracy’ term in this context is simple: citizens in new democracies score lower than citizens in older democracies on all the key individual-level predictors included in the model (with the exception of perceptions of corruption, where a higher score is recorded in new democracies). The table below reports these differences; all are significant at $p=.0000$.

	Mean New Democracies	Mean Old Democracies
General Government Performance	2.06	2.21
Government Performance on most important issue	2.37	2.49
Elections ensure parties represent voters	3.08	3.32
Respondent is represented by one of the parties	2.33	2.49
Individual Freedom and Human Rights are respected	0.45	0.63
Corruption is widespread	2.34	2.87
Democracy is the best form of government	3.40	2.80