

Book Review: Ursula van Beek, ed., *Democracy under Scrutiny: Elites, Citizens, Cultures* (Opladen, Germany: Budrich, 2010), 334 pages.

Interfacing Elite and Mass Democratic Experiences

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This book is a product of the Transformation Research Initiative (TRI), an international research team based at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. It is a sequel to an earlier volume from the same project team: Ursula van Beek, ed., *Democracy under Construction* (2005). This project innovatively combines general population opinion data from the fifth wave of the World Values Survey (WVS), with additional elite surveys asking parallel questions. This creative data collection strategy provides important analytic opportunities to study issues of representation and the different values of both groups. The book is based on a comparison of seven “far-flung” nations with a diversity of historical, economic, cultural, and political experience: Chile, Germany, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey. Five of these nations (not including Turkey and Sweden) were also in the first TRI volume. This subset of nations enables the project to look at the diversity of the democratic experience in more detail than is possible in large public opinion projects with dozens of nations.

The book begins with van Beek’s introduction to the literature on political representation as the theme of the book. Indeed, this whets one’s appetite because the topic of citizen and elite congruence is underresearched in the comparative politics literature. We now have rich data sources on citizen attitudes, such as the WVS, but limited comparative elite data specially for developing democracies. And through the process of democratic transition and consolidation, elites play the dominant role in reshaping the new political order. The challenge of this book and the TRI is to deliver on this potential.

The analytic chapters of the book are divided into two sections. The first section provides a theoretical and historical introduction to the volume in three chapters. Van Beek opens the discussion by providing a broad historical account of the religious traditions of these seven nations. On the one hand, this discussion clearly demonstrates the religious diversity and political histories of these seven nations, which is a major factor in their selection for the TRI. The

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chapter also argues that religious traditions have clear and direct effects on the patterns of political development. On the other hand, while this is useful material for those unfamiliar with the religious histories of these nations, the empirical bases of these generalizations needs to be presented here or in a later chapter. For instance, the chapter provocatively stresses the importance of Christianity as a basis for the concept of equality that contributes to democratization—but the historical and empirical evidence, including data from the WVS, is ambivalent. And when religiosity is examined in several later chapters, there is not a distinction among denominations and these analyses yield mixed results on the attitudinal effects of religious orientations. In addition, the linkage between religions and representation or citizen-elite congruence is not fully explained.

Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski's chapter continues by introducing some of the social and economic differences among these seven nations. Then he discusses the literature on the cultural basis of democratic governance, again with an emphasis on religion. He claims, "Much more significant is the spiritual message that religion sends to its followers, because the message shapes their attitudes in general and toward public issues in particular" (p. 84). He further maintains that secularization in these seven nations is not disrupting this relationship because religion had formed national cultural traditions that persist. This is a significant issue in the current debates about culture wars and Huntingtonian views of international politics, but the reader does not see empirical evidence supporting these claims.

Bernard Lategan addresses an intriguing question of the role of constitutions in developing new democracies. The chapter offers three perspectives on viewing constitutions: as memorials to the past that reflect a specific historical consciousness, as compasses for future politics, and as instruments of political change. These are important processes that are intermixed in any constitution, but one wishes that there were a clear link to the main themes of the book and the empirical chapters that follow.

The second section of the book comprises seven empirical chapters based on the TRI data collection. Thorleif Pettersson first examines citizen-elite differences in support for democratic values. He demonstrates stronger support for democratic values among elites as the literature predicts, but also a broad congruence between national rankings of citizen and elite values. While these comparisons are intriguing, they raise some questions about the representativeness of the elite data. For instance, is it likely that Turkish elites are almost as supportive of democracy as German elites, and Turkish elites are more democratic than Polish and South Korean elites? The second part of the chapter briefly replicates these citizen-elite comparisons for religious involvement, redistributive welfare democracy, and support for a market economy.

The chapters by Simon Moritz, Ursula Hoffmann-Lange, and Dirk Berg-Schlosser extend these citizen-elite analyses. Moritz compares a wide variety

of political support measures for citizens and elites. Hoffmann-Lange presents similar evidence on support for alternative political regimes and conceptions of democracy for elites and citizens. Berg-Schlosser focuses on elite perceptions of the performance of democracy. As Pettersson also shows, elites are more supportive of democratic values and the legitimacy of democratic rule than are citizens at large. Moreover, there are modest predictable differences between established and new democracies. Hoffmann-Lange and Berg-Schlosser also begin to look at the correlates of elite opinions, which is a fruitful approach that should be developed even more in the book. Although the elite evidence might be suspect for reasons stated below, these chapters yield generally positive impressions of the democratic values of elites in this range of nations, which is especially significant for new democracies.

The next two chapters examine various aspects of religiosity. Yilmaz Esmer measures the religiosity and secularism of parliamentarians in the TRI study. He finds surprising variability in the correlations among various religiosity measures (table 2). Furthermore, by correlating religiosity measures with other attitudes and values in each nation, Esmer shows where religiosity provides a reference structure for elite beliefs (such as Germany, Chile, Poland, and Turkey) and where religiosity is less politicized (e.g., South Africa, South Korea, and Sweden). Hennie Kotze and Pierre du Toit then investigate the relationship between religiosity and civic tolerance. The analyses are overly complex, but they generally find that religiosity has a varied but generally negative relationship with various dimensions of tolerance.

San-Jin Han's chapter describes how parliamentary and media elites perceive the communication processes among various political actors. Theoretically, there is rich potential here. But this reader worries that the empirical evidence from the two elite samples is not sufficient to warrant the detailed analyses and conclusions presented in the chapter. Du Toit then concludes the volume with a short essay on the potential implications of this research program. There are many large concluding observations and further research questions that call out for more discussion.

There are many positive features of this book, and those interested in citizen-elite comparisons in developing nations should be especially interested. The role of elites in democratic transitions is widely recognized, but seldom is systematic empirical evidence available. Even though many of the comparisons are partial, or uncertain because of limitations on the elite sample, the TRI plots a research course that should be followed. And while the patterns of mass-elite comparisons often fulfill theoretical expectations, these expectations now have empirical evidence to support prior theorizing.

Still, one challenge facing an edited book is to focus its intellectual resources on a coherent and cumulative research question. A greater coherence in the selection of chapters and the focus on a common research question would have strengthened this book and its research impact. At times, this is a book on political representation, or the impact of religion on political values, or broad

analyses of democratization. Several authors offer theoretical frameworks that begin to link these elements together, but there is not a unifying framework for the book as a whole. Presentations overlap among chapters, but not necessarily in a cumulative manner. The diffuse organization means the potential of the project to address any one of these topics in convincing depth and detail is underdeveloped. Instead of a criticism, this is an encouragement that more can be done with the TRI if future books emphasize a clearer focus and more depth.

The book could also grow empirically. It would additionally benefit by making greater use of the full range of nations available from the WVS. The WVS would allow the project to place these seven nations in a broader international context to see how representative or unrepresentative they are; for instance, in relationships linking culture and democratization indices, or in other aggregate analyses based on the WVS data. Similarly, comparisons to the results of the first TRI volume would be exceptionally valuable in understanding democratization as a process in these nations. Additional within-nation correlational analyses, such as in Esmer's chapter, would yield valuable evidence on the sources of mass and elites orientations.

A smaller methodological issue involves the data from TRI. The book should provide more information on the nature and quality of the elite samples, since these are the real innovation of the project. There is very limited information in appendix C, and some points—such as the sampling design or low response rate in some nations—will raise questions with the readers. For instance, are the German MP data representative with only a 16 percent response rate, or are twenty-five Chilean media elites (fifty in three other nations) sufficient for analysis? Also, one hopes and expects that the TRI will make these multiple waves of elite data available to the larger research community for secondary analysis.

I make the above suggestions to offer input for future TRI analyses. The TRI is a significant research project that extends beyond the seven nations in this project. Its innovative use of the World Values Survey and paired surveys of political elites has great potential to expand our understanding of the democratic process and its variation, especially in developing nations.