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**No. 190**

**How Geography Makes Democracy Work**

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**Singapore**

**10 December 2009**

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## ABSTRACT

Why are some countries more democratic than others? Two dominant approaches characterize how scholars have answered this question: economic development or modernization theory and the vibrancy of civil society. But these explanations often face the critique of endogeneity, and have difficulty accounting for countries that are wealthy yet are nondemocratic (e.g., Brunei and Kuwait), or exhibit strong civil societies without corresponding democratic institutions (e.g., Bangladesh and Morocco). This paper offers a different approach. It argues that a country's geographical attributes underlie and influence both economic development and civil society, and in turn affect democratic outcomes. Statistical evidence from over 100 countries offers evidence consistent with the argument. Case studies on twelfth century Italy, modern Malaysia, Malawi, and Paraguay illustrate the mechanisms at work.

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Acknowledgements: Thanks to Richard Bitzinger for suggesting the Paraguay case.

Thanks also to John Ravenhill, Chris Roberts, and Shiping Tang for their comments on an earlier version of the paper.

## How Geography Makes Democracy Work

Why are some countries more democratic than others? Two dominant approaches characterize how scholars have answered this question. The first emphasizes economic variables, such as economic development and income inequality (Lipset 1959; Dahl 1971; Therborn 1977; Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992; Collier 1999; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). A wide range of mechanisms encompass this approach, including those which see democracy as the inevitable result of economic development to those which focus on economic development as placing more resources in the hands of specific groups who then press, strategically, for democratic reforms. The second approach focuses on sociocultural factors. The best-known example is Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* which highlights the connection between the "mores" of society and its political practices. Almond and Verba (1963) and Putnam (1993) focus on related aspects of the 'vibrancy' of civil society in affecting democratic effectiveness. Others, such as Moore (1966) and Luebbert (1991), combine elements of both economic and sociocultural perspectives.

This paper offers a completely different approach. It argues that geography influences democratic outcomes. Specifically, countries' geographical attributes underlie the economic and sociocultural variables that impact democracy. Where geography leads to high agricultural productivity in staple food crops, combined with proximity to an ocean port, income is likely to be spread more equitably across society, a vibrant civil society with numerous civic groups and high levels of trust is likely to emerge, and the protection of property rights is likely to be more effective and to thereby promote higher economic growth. Thus geography promotes (or discourages) the economic and social factors that foster democratization.

The argument and results presented in this paper are important for two main reasons. First, approaches that focus on economic development or civil society as precursors to democracy often face the criticism of endogeneity. That is, democracy, or rules for governing society that exhibit democratic characteristics, can foster economic development or civic institutions. There is a virtuous circle that often ensues, making it difficult to pinpoint a specific causal origin. Indeed, some authors contend that the primary direction of causation runs from democracy to income (Rigobon and Rodrik 2005; Acemoglu et al 2005). Because it is difficult to think of a variable more exogenous than geography, the argument of this paper does not fall victim to this critique.

Second, the findings demonstrate that geography can account for a wider array of democratic outcomes than economic development or civil society explanations. For example, by focusing on how geography impacts civil society and economic development, the argument can account for the numerous countries around the world which are wealthy yet have relatively nondemocratic institutions (e.g., Qatar, Brunei, Kuwait), or which exhibit vibrant civil societies without correspondingly strong democratic arrangements (e.g., Bangladesh and Morocco)

The next section details the argument. The third section presents quantitative analyses and four cases to illustrate the causal mechanisms at work. The cases include: the emergence of democracy in Northern Italy in the thirteenth century that Putnam (1993) famously pointed to; the political development of modern Malaysia; Malawi; and Paraguay. The last section summarily concludes.

## **ARGUMENT: GEOGRAPHY AFFECTS DEMOCRACY**

The argument of this paper is that geography impacts democratic outcomes via three channels of influence: (1) income distribution; (2) social or civil society attributes such as

the preponderance of civic groups and prevailing levels of trust; and (3) the effectiveness of institutions pertaining to the rule of law which foster economic development. Where income is equitably distributed, civil society is vibrant, and the rule of law is effectively administered, society tends to be organized in a horizontal manner; that is, members of the community engage with each other as equals and democratic outcomes are more likely. The opposite occurs in a society characterized by vertical, or hierarchical, social relations in which patron-client relationships predominate. Whether societies are likely to be organized horizontally or vertically is due to: (1) the impact of tropical or temperate climate on agricultural production; and (2) nearness to ocean ports. I discuss the logic of each mechanism in turn.

### **Temperate vs. Tropical Climates and their Income Effects**

The humid tropics are commonly seen as thriving habitats of biodiversity. But the conditions for biodiversity do not necessarily translate into optimal conditions for the growth of food plants. Stripping the tree cover off the land in order to farm it via conventional methods causes its productivity to decline dramatically. Food plants such as wheat, maize, or cassava comprise only a small subset of plants, and they are not well suited to tropical conditions. According to Pingali (1997, 209-10), “In general, a system of farming that closely mimics the dense natural vegetation of the humid forests will work in the long run .... The humid and subhumid tropics are well suited to perennial crops such as bananas and to tree crops such as rubber, cocoa, and palm oil.” However, none of these crops, with the possible exception of the banana, is a staple food crop.

Humid tropical soils are typically low in nutrients and organic matter and are susceptible to erosion and acidification. These deficiencies are due to the long-term effects of high temperatures and humidity which cause organic matter in the soil to break

down quickly. The rapid decomposition of organic matter denies the soil of nutrients as well as the structure needed to absorb fertilizers and slow erosion. Hence the rates of return to farmer investments in soil are systematically lower for staple food crops.

Humid tropical climates cover only a part of the geographical tropics. Much of the rest is made up of arid climates, with yields typically as low or lower than humid tropical yields. According to Weischet and Caviedes (1993), the arid tropics have few problems with soil fertility, but cannot increase yields substantially without irrigation because of the high variability of rainfall and droughts. Yet irrigation is limited by the general flatness of river valleys in the semi-arid tropics, so that irrigation dams must be impractically wide.

In addition to problematic soils in the humid tropics, as well as rainfall variability and limited irrigation potential in the arid tropics, additional factors explaining lower agricultural potential include pest and disease loads, and net photosynthetic potential differences. The lack of freezing temperatures in the tropics causes a much greater number of agricultural pests in the tropics, including veterinary diseases like trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness). And human tropical diseases such as malaria reduce agricultural labor productivity.

Although the tropics are generally warmer and sunnier throughout the year than temperate zones, the climate has disadvantages for photosynthesis. The humid tropics are often cloudy, blocking sunlight, and the high nighttime temperatures cause high respiration that slows plant growth. During the summer months, temperate zones have longer days than the tropics, giving an advantage to summer-season crops.

As a result of this variety of drawbacks, Gallup and Sachs (1999) have found that countries with tropical and dry climates all have significantly lower agricultural yields for food crops, controlling for input and technology levels. Because the emphasis in this

paper is on initial agricultural endowments, data in table one is provided for the earliest date available from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

**Table 1. Crop Yields, 1961**

Ecozone	Number of Countries	Cereal (Milled Rice Equivalent)	Wheat	Maize	Rice (Paddy)	Pulses	Roots and Tubers	Vegetables and Melons
Dry	82	9.3	10.3	11.4	20.9	7.2	77.2	83.4
Temperate	71	14.5	11.6	21.7	37.8	9.6	130.4	106.5
Tropical	78	9.6	8.9	10.5	14.9	6.2	74.3	62.5
Tropical/ Temperate		66.2%	76.7%	48.4%	39.4%	64.6%	57.0%	58.7%

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Note: Yields are for metric tons per hectare (in 1998). The number of countries includes all countries which contain any agricultural land of the respective ecozones, where each country's contribution to the ecozone average is weighted by its share of the agricultural land in the ecozone and by the country's land area. Thus the total number of countries in the sample, 172, is less than the sum of countries containing each ecozone.

According to Gallup and Sachs, the tropical zones have 27% lower total factor productivity and the dry zones have 42% lower productivity with respect to the temperate regions. As a result, higher returns can be gained from growing cash crops (e.g., palm oil, tea, coffee, rubber) for export and to then buy staple foods for import. But as a result of this emphasis on cash crops for export, economies of scale become highly important to maximizing profit. And even when food crops are grown in tropical climates, they too require larger economies of scale to support an equivalently sized population as in a temperate zone. These pressures for economies of scale that rely on labor- and land-intensive production heighten the income gap between owners of the land used for cash crops, those who work the land, and subsistence farmers, which leads to the following

prediction: *Countries that are closer to the equator will exhibit higher levels of income inequality, with negative implications for democracy.*<sup>1</sup>

### **Transportation Costs and Income Effects**

Adam Smith saw geography as the crucial accompaniment of economic institutions in determining the division of labor. Smith's logic, of course, started with the notion that productivity depends on specialization, and that specialization depends on the extent of the market. The extent of the market in turn depends both on the freedom of markets as well as the costs of transport. And geography is crucial in transport costs:

As by means of water-carriage a more extensive market is opened to every sort of industry than what land-carriage alone can afford it, so it is upon sea-coast, and along the banks of navigable rivers, that industry of every kind naturally begins to subdivide and improve itself, and it is frequently not till a long time after that those improvements extend themselves to the inland part of the country. (1776, 25)

Trade, and specialization of production, tends to flourish in places with access to inexpensive transportation routes. Historically, these places have been located near ocean ports and large navigable rivers that flow to them. The relatively low transportation costs allow profitability to be achieved with a relatively smaller quantity of goods produced.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Engerman and Sokoloff (1994) have linked the contrasting patterns of institutional development in North and South America to the differences in resource endowments: large-scale plantation agriculture is much more conducive, compared to smallholding, to the emergence of inequality and of autocratic institutions that repress non-elites.

These smaller production amounts likewise generate more cooperative production relationships between firms and between the producer and the customer, and enable greater specialization.

In locations which are far removed from ocean ports and large markets, per unit production costs are kept low by increasing scale economies of production. In this situation, workers are more commodified, and their specific skills and knowledge are easily replaced. As a result, workers' wages can be kept low, which leads to higher levels of income inequality. The consequences mirror those arising from agricultural production in a tropical climate, and lead to the following prediction: *Countries in which a large fraction of the population has access to an ocean port will exhibit lower levels of income inequality, with positive implications for democracy.*

### **Implications for Civic Engagement and Trust**

The scale economies of production associated with climate and nearness to ocean ports generates consequences for the distribution of income. However, the ramifications extend beyond the economic realm, and influence social and political relations more broadly. Where the distribution of income is more equitable, citizens are more likely to regard one another as equals which will enhance civic engagement and trust.

As Putnam (1993) has observed with regard to the northern regions of Italy, “social trust [is] a key ingredient in the ethos that [sustains] economic dynamism and government performance. Cooperation is often required – between legislature and executive, between workers and managers, among political parties, between the government and private groups, among small firms, and so on.” Yet explicit contracting and monitoring are often costly or impossible, and third-party enforcement is impractical.

Trust is required for cooperation to ensue; the greater the level of trust within a community, the greater the likelihood of cooperation.

The level of trust that prevails in a society arises from two related sources – norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. Norms of reciprocity are of two types: balanced and generalized.<sup>2</sup> The former refers to simultaneous exchanges of items of equivalent value, as when holiday gifts are exchanged. The latter refers to a continuing relationship of exchange which involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future. Friendship, for example, almost always involved generalized reciprocity. Communities with stronger norms of generalized reciprocity are likely to be associated with dense networks of social exchange and higher levels of trust. Norms of generalized reciprocity and networks of civic engagement encourage social trust and cooperation because: (1) they increase the potential costs to a defector in any individual transaction, as well as the benefits from future transactions (e.g., Sebenius 1983); (2) they foster robust norms of reciprocity through repeated interactions that convey their mutual expectations in many reinforcing encounters, and condition norms about acceptable behavior (Ostrom 1991); (3) they facilitate communication and improve the flow of information about the trustworthiness of individuals (Coleman 1990); and (4) they provide a template of successful past collaboration, which can serve as a culturally-defined template for future collaboration (North 1990). As a result, voluntary cooperation is more likely and collective action problems are more likely to be resolved in societies where citizens regard each other as equals.

By contrast, vertical networks fail to sustain social trust and cooperation, no matter how dense or important to its participants. Because of the fear of exploitation, the

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<sup>2</sup> Sahlins (1972) uses “balanced” and “generalized;” Keohane (1986) draws a closely related distinction between “specific” and “generalized” reciprocity.

subordinate has an incentive to husband information and faces disincentives to sharing it with others. For example, hierarchical patron-client relations not only undermine bonds of solidarity between the patron and client due to the asymmetric obligations and the problems associated with punishing the patron for opportunism, but even more they undermine bonds among the clients. Two clients of the same patron, lacking direct ties, hold nothing hostage to one another. They have nothing to stake against mutual defection and nothing to fear from mutual alienation. They have no reason to develop a norm of generalized reciprocity and no history of mutual collaboration to draw on (Coleman 1990).

Where citizens perceive themselves as equals in status and power, and where society is thus organized along horizontal lines, networks of civic engagement are likely to be denser. Citizens are more likely to regard one another as equals when income is distributed equitably. Thus, the expectation that income will be distributed equitably in temperate zones leads us to the following prediction: *Civic groups will be more plentiful in countries located in temperate zones, with positive implications for democracy.*

And where citizens have more opportunities to engage in mutual exchange, often for commerce and trade, they are more likely to form and be members of civic groups. However, such civic engagement is predicated upon their perceiving each other as equals first and foremost, which is expected to occur more commonly among countries in temperate zones. Thus, the second geographical attribute regarding nearness to ocean ports leads to the following prediction: *In temperate zones, civic groups will be more plentiful in countries located near ocean ports, with positive implications for democracy.*

Stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Virtuous circles result in social equilibria with high levels of cooperation, trust, reciprocity, civic engagement, and collective well-being. Communities

characterized by *horizontal* social relationships commonly exhibit these traits. Conversely, the absence of these traits in *vertically-organized* communities is also self-reinforcing. “Defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another in a suffocating miasma of vicious circles” (Putnam 1993, 177). Once created, formal and informal institutions corresponding to these horizontal and vertical forms of social interaction persist and provide the bedrock upon which democracy is later built.

The insights gained from Axelrod’s (1984) work on cooperation illustrate the logic that sustains these self-reinforcing arrangements of cooperation or defection. In a society characterized by dense horizontal networks of civic engagement, it is easier to spot and punish someone who defects from the community’s norms making it less likely to occur. Where such networks are lacking, as in societies characterized by hierarchical relations, “always defect” is a stable equilibrium.<sup>3</sup> Thus the likelihood for more networks of civic engagement in places where income is equitably distributed generates the following expectation: *Trust will be stronger in countries located in temperate zones, with positive implications for democracy.*

And where the opportunities for civic engagement increase in temperate zones, as near ocean ports, the following prediction can be made: *Trust will be stronger where a larger fraction of a country’s population resides near an ocean port, with positive implications for democracy.*

### **Implications for the Rule of Law and Economic Development**

Recent work in economics has focused on the linkages between geography and economic development (e.g., Gallup, Sachs, and Mellinger, 1999; Acemoglu, Johnson, and

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<sup>3</sup> See Sugden (2005, 162) and Taylor (1976).

Robinson, 2001). But according to Dani Rodrik (2004), consensus has emerged among economists that institutions have a more important direct effect on growth, while geography is important for its impact on the way institutions are structured. This is not to say that geography has no impact on economic development – Sachs (2003) and Hibbs and Olsson (2004) demonstrate such effects – but rather that geography has a more substantial indirect impact *through* institutions. In this regard, Rodrik, Subramanian, and Trebbi (2004) have shown that latitude, as an instrument for climate-related differences in agriculture and disease, has a robust positive relationship to the rule of law across countries. Insofar as economic development corresponds to more democratic outcomes, we arrive at the following prediction: *Rule of law institutions will be stronger in temperate zones, with positive implications for economic development, and in turn, for democracy.*

Because of the importance of effective property rights enforcement to commerce and trade, we can likewise expect the rule of law to exhibit stronger and more effective enforcement near ocean ports. Thus, the following prediction can also be made: *Rule of law institutions will be stronger in countries where a larger fraction of the population resides near an ocean port, with positive implications for economic development, and in turn, for democracy.*

### **Summary of the Argument**

The scale economies of agricultural production, corresponding to tropical or temperate zones, generate income distributions that are equitably or inequitably distributed across society. The distance to an ocean port exacerbates or ameliorates these income effects. A critical consequence of the structure and type of agricultural production and the related income effects regards the informal and formal institutional arrangements of the society.

Civic groups are more likely to flourish in places where people regard each other as equals (due to an equitable distribution of income), trust is likely to be higher, and the rule of law is likely to be fairly and effectively enforced for all citizens. The converse is likely to occur where income is distributed inequitably across society. These income, social, and institutional effects produce societies that fall along a spectrum between horizontal and vertical (hierarchical). And once these effects take hold, they tend to be self-reinforcing. Figure one illustrates the expected outcomes.

**Figure 1. The Argument in Summary**

	Near Ocean Port (low scale economies)	Far from Ocean Port (high scale economies)
Temperate (staple food crops and low scale economies)	<p><i>Horizontal Relations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Income Inequality</li> <li>• Numerous civic groups</li> <li>• High trust</li> <li>• Strong rule of law</li> <li>• Highly Democratic</li> </ul>	<p><i>More Horizontal than Vertical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately low income inequality</li> <li>• Moderately high numbers of civic groups</li> <li>• Moderately high trust</li> <li>• Moderately strong rule of law</li> <li>• Democratic</li> </ul>
Tropical (cash crops and high scale economies)	<p><i>More Vertical than Horizontal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately high income inequality</li> <li>• Few Civic groups</li> <li>• Moderately low trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately weak rule of law</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Limited Democracy or Nondemocracy with concessions</li> </ul>	<p><i>Vertical Relations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Income Inequality</li> <li>• Very few civic groups</li> <li>• Low trust</li> <li>• Weak rule of law (corruption is common)</li> <li>• Nondemocracy without concessions</li> </ul>

## METHODOLOGY

The argument that geography affects the quality of democratic institutions to emerge across nations is assessed through both quantitative analysis and comparative case

studies. In the sections that follow, the paper outlines the measurement and estimation procedures for the quantitative analysis, before reporting the findings. To deepen our understanding of the mechanisms linking geography to democratic outcomes, four cases are examined: Italy, Malaysia, Malawi, and Paraguay.

## **Geography and Democratic Outcomes: OLS Estimates**

### *A. Data and Descriptive Statistics*

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the key variables of interest. Data on all variables are provided for as many countries as data are available. Democracy is measured using The Economist Intelligence Unit's democracy index for 2008 which is generally seen as offering the most comprehensive and accurate scoring of democracy among existing democracy measures. It is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. The index ranges from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most democratic. An advantage of the EIU index compared to others is that it provides for considerable differentiation of scores, including among developed countries.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

	Whole World Sample					Latitude > 23.5 Sample				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Democracy 2008	157	5.6	2.1	1.52	9.88	81	6.45	2.26	1.9	9.88
GINI Index	132	0.4	0.08	0.24	0.64	66	0.36	0.07	0.24	0.61
Log GDP per capita 2008	157	3.8	0.59	2.3	4.93	81	4.15	0.43	2.87	4.9
Putnam Groups	39	0.4	0.3	0.09	1.32	29	0.31	0.17	0.12	0.76
Trust	77	0.26	0.14	0.04	0.612	55	0.3	0.12	0.1	0.61
Rule of Law	157	-0.11	1.02	-2.01	1.96	81	0.42	1	-2.01	1.96
Latitude	157	26.5	17	0	64	81	40.8	9.9	25	64
Population	143	0.44	0.36	0	1	75	0.42	0.37	0	1
Ethnic Fractionalization	154	0.45	0.25	0	0.93	80	0.34	0.22	0.001	0.79
Religious Fractionalization	154	0.43	0.23	0.002	0.86	79	0.4	0.23	0.003	0.86
Language Fractionalization	150	0.4	0.28	0.002	0.92	79	0.31	0.23	0.002	0.86

The following row reports the GINI index of income inequality. The data are from the World Development Indicators, using the latest reported data from the period 1995 to 2008. The next row gives the logarithm of GDP per capita on a PPP basis for 2008 is the measure used for economic development.

The next two rows give measures for Putnam Groups and Trust from the World Values Surveys. These surveys contain data on thousands of respondents across five 'waves' of surveys since 1981.<sup>4</sup> Some groups - for example, city-dwellers and the better-educated - are oversampled in some countries (Inglehart 1994). As a correction, the weight variable provided in the data is used for computing country-level means. Following Knack and Keefer (1997), a measure for groups is created based on those deemed least likely to act as 'distributional coalitions' (which are seen as leading to Olsonian outcomes), but which involve social interactions that can build trust and cooperative habits. Thus, membership in the following groups was used in constructing the Putnam Groups measure: a) religious or church organizations; b) education, arts, music, or cultural activities; c) sports clubs or teams; and d) youth work (e.g., scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.). The question used to assess the level of trust in a society is: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" The trust indicator (Trust) is the percentage of respondents in each nation replying "most people can be trusted".

The Rule of Law measure is a composite indicator of a number of elements that capture the protection afforded to property rights as well as the strength of the rule of law.

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<sup>4</sup> Data on industrialized countries for Putnam Groups and Trust are from Knack and Keefer (1997). The data are supplemented with the data for other countries from the WVS dataset (2009).

This is a standardized measure that varies between -2.5 (weakest institutions) and 2.5 (strongest institutions). It comes from the Governance Matters VI dataset from Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2007). The advantage of the rule of measure, as compared with other measures such as an index of protection against expropriation compiled by Political Risk Services, is that it is available for a larger sample of countries, and in principle captures more elements that go toward determining institutional quality.

The next two rows give measures of geography. The first is a measure for latitude, which reports the latitude of the nation's capital, and is intended to capture important differences in agricultural production that occur at different latitudes. It is the standard measure used for studies examining the effects of latitude on economic development (e.g., Gallup, Sachs, and Mellinger 1999). Because there are not likely to be substantial differences within the tropical zone itself, corresponding to the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn at 23.5 degrees, it is useful to look at latitudes beyond 23.5 degrees separately. The next row gives the proportion of the population in 1994 within 100 kilometers of the coastline. The data come from a world GIS population dataset, described in Tobler et al. (1995).

The next three rows give measures of ethnic, religious, and linguistic fractionalization. The dataset is described in Alesina et al. (2003). The authors find that while ethnic and linguistic fractionalization are associated with negative outcomes in terms of quality of government, religious fractionalization is not; in fact, this measure displays a positive correlation with measures of good governance. This is because measured religious fractionalization tends to be higher in more tolerant and free societies, like the United States, which in fact displays one of the highest levels of religious fractionalization. Ethnic fractionalization is also closely correlated with GDP per capita and geographic variables, like latitude. More ethnic fragmentation is more common in

poorer countries which are closer to the equator. Because of these findings, and the expectation that greater fractionalization leads to fewer civic groups and less trust, these variables are included as controls.

### *B. Ordinary Least-Squares Regressions*

Table 3 reports ordinary least-squares (OLS) regressions of democracy on income inequality, Putnam Groups, and Trust variables as well as OLS regressions of Log GDP per capita on the Rule of Law. The linear regressions of democracy and of Log GDP per capita, respectively, are for the equations

$$(1) D_i = \mu + \alpha G_i + \beta_D I_i + \mathbf{X}'_i \gamma + \varepsilon_i,$$

$$(2) I_i = \mu + \zeta R_i + \mathbf{X}'_i \gamma + \varepsilon_i$$

where  $D_i$  is the level of democracy in country  $i$ ,  $G_i$  is the measure for the GINI index or Putnam Groups or Trust,  $I_i$  is the Log of GDP per capita,  $\mathbf{X}_i$  is a vector of other covariates,  $R_i$  is the measure for the Rule of Law, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is a random error term.

**Table 3. OLS Regressions**

	DV: Democracy 2008					DV: Log GDP per capita 2008		
	1	2 Latitude > 23.5	3	4 Latitude > 23.5	5	6 Latitude > 23.5	7	8 Latitude > 23.5
GINI Index	-1.9 (-1.07)	-8.9*** (-3.25)						
Putnam Groups			1.2** (2.23)	2.03** (2.57)				
Trust					3.15*** (4.68)	3.49*** (4.57)		
Rule of Law							0.37*** (10.88)	0.33*** (9.04)
Log GDP per capita	2.12*** (5.2)	3.2*** (7.16)	3.38*** (7.55)	3.46*** (3.62)	2.59*** (7.33)	3.07*** (5.06)		
Ethnic Fractionalization	-1.15 (-1.32)	-0.83 (-0.87)	-2.04** (-2.57)	-2.23** (-2.66)	-1.1* (-1.75)	-1.16 (-1.23)	0.13 (0.74)	0.11** (0.51)
Religious Fractionalization	1.12** (2.09)	1.4** (2.08)	0.52 (0.73)	0.1 (0.13)	0.44 (0.82)	0.7 (1.13)	0.004 (0.04)	0.04 (0.32)
Language Fractionalization	0.26 (0.32)	0.51 (0.6)	2.07** (2.33)	2.2** (2.4)	1.28** (2.12)	0.93 (1.1)	-0.13 (-0.87)	-0.04 (-0.22)
EU	1.4*** (4.06)	0.76*** (2.85)	0.17 (0.52)	0.07 (0.23)	0.38* (1.81)	0.18 (0.93)	-0.004 (-0.08)	0.01 (0.28)
East Asia	0.04 (0.07)	-1.2** (-1.94)	-1.21 (-1.24)	-0.08 (-0.29)	-0.38 (-0.76)	-0.47** (-1.97)	-0.09 (-1.51)	-0.05 (-0.64)
Subsaharan Africa	0.26 (0.45)	3.66*** (5.1)	0.47 (0.58)	1.2** (2.49)	0.76 (1.24)	1.01*** (3.06)	-0.5*** (-4.85)	-0.35 (-1.6)
Latin America	1.45*** (3.45)	2.79*** (4.63)	0.75 (1.4)	0.55 (0.89)	1.01*** (3.49)	0.87* (1.93)	0.07 (1.02)	-0.006 (-0.05)
South Asia	1.4** (2.29)	2.3** (1.98)	1.4* (1.77)	1.87* (1.82)	0.93 (1.09)	1.2 (0.95)	-0.47*** (-5.06)	-0.56*** (-3.97)
N	127	66	39	29	75	52	149	79
R-squared	0.63	0.75	0.86	0.85	0.8	0.83	0.77	0.74

Note: Ordinary least squares with robust standard errors used for all regressions; t-statistics are in parentheses.

\*\*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level; \*\* at the 5% level; \* at the 10% level.

Column (1) shows that there is a strong correlation between Log GDP per capita and democracy for all countries in the world, though not for the GINI index. However, greater variation is expected outside of the tropical zone, which corresponds to 23.5 degrees latitude. Column (2) shows that the impact of income inequality on democracy exhibits a negative relationship outside of the tropical zone; higher income inequality correlates with lower democracy scores. To get a sense of the magnitude of the effect of income inequality on democracy, consider a comparison of two countries with latitudes greater than 23.5. Pakistan has approximately the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of income inequality in the sample, 0.312, and Israel, which falls at approximately the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, 0.392. The estimate in column (2), -8.9, indicates that there should be on average a 7.12-point difference between the democracy scores of the corresponding countries. Therefore, if the effect estimated in column (2) were causal, it would imply a fairly large effect of income inequality on democracy, and greater than the actual gap between Pakistan and Israel, with democracy scores of 4.46 and 7.48, respectively.

The Log GDP per capita measure exhibits a positive relationship to democracy for the whole world sample as well as the sample of countries outside of the tropical zone. The positive relationship between these two variables is similar for the other columns in table 3, so it is worthwhile considering its effect on democracy here. For countries with latitudes greater than 23.5, consider the following two countries, Albania and Japan. Albania has approximately the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of Log GDP per capita at 3.8, which is equivalent to \$6859, while Japan is approximately at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile at 4.53, which is equivalent to \$34100. The estimate in column (2), 3.2, indicates that there should be on average a 2.24 log-point difference between the Log GDPs per capita (or approximately a 8-fold difference –  $e^{2.24} - 1 \approx 8.3$ ). This would imply a substantial effect of GDP per capita

on democracy if the effect were causal, and is greater than the actual difference between the two countries (approximately a 5-fold difference).

On the fractionalization measures, La Porta et al (1999) and Alesina et al (2003) have argued that linguistic and ethnic fractionalization contribute negatively to the quality of government. However, Alesina et al (2003) find that religious fractionalization displays a positive correlation with the quality of government, likely because religious tolerance tends to be higher in more tolerant and free societies. To control for this, ethnic, religious, and linguistic fractionalization measures are added. The results in columns (1) and (2) are consistent with the findings of Alesina et al (2003) on religious fractionalization, but they are not robust to alternative specifications, as seen in the other columns. Finally, dummies for countries belonging to the EU, East Asia, Subsaharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia are added, with North America as the omitted group. The dummies for the EU, Latin America, and South Asia display statistically and quantitatively significant results in both columns. However, these results fail to remain robust for the regressions in the subsequent columns of table 3.

Columns 3 and 4 display results using Putnam Groups as the regressor. Both columns display statistically significant results, with countries outside the tropical zone exhibiting a larger coefficient between Putnam Groups and democracy: 1.2 for all countries versus 2.03 for only those countries outside the tropics. To get a sense of the effect, among countries outside the tropics, Argentina falls at approximately the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the Putnam Groups measure, at 0.21, and Austria is at approximately the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, 0.37. The estimate in column (4), 2.57, indicates that there should be on average a 0.41-point difference between the levels of democracy of the corresponding countries (in fact, there is a 1.8-point difference). Considering that the Putnam Groups measure varies between 0.12 and 0.76 for countries outside the tropics, the effect is not

large. But more important than the size of the effect is the fact that it exists because of its role in fostering higher levels of trust among citizens (e.g., Putnam 1995).

Columns (5) and (6) display the results for the average level of Trust that citizens within a country have for others. The sample including all countries in column (5) as well as the sample of countries outside the tropics in column (6) display statistically significant results; additionally, the coefficients are similar to those of the Putnam Groups measure in that the coefficient for countries outside the tropics is larger. For example, Romania has a Trust measure of 0.2 which falls at approximately the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile while Japan has a measure of 0.408, and falls at approximately the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. The coefficient, 3.49, indicates that these countries should have, on average, a 0.73-point difference in their levels of democracy (they actually have a 1.19-point difference).

Finally, columns (7) and (8) show that there is a strong correlation between the Rule of Law and Log GDP per capita. This is an important relationship to observe since Log GDP per capita is statistically significant in all the other regressions shown in table 3, thus suggesting an important indirect relationship between the Rule of Law and the level of democracy. Interestingly, the coefficient does not increase when the sample is restricted to those countries outside the tropics: 0.37 for the whole world sample versus 0.33 for those countries beyond 23.5 degrees latitude. To get a sense of the magnitude of the relationship for the sample outside the tropics, consider Armenia, which falls at approximately the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the Rule of Law measure, -0.36, in comparison to Chile which is at approximately the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, 1.25. The coefficient of 0.37 indicates that we should expect a 0.6 log-point increase in Log GDP per capita between the two countries, which would equate to a difference of \$14941 if we add 0.6 to Armenia's Logged GDP per capita. Therefore, if the effect estimated in table 3 were causal, it would

imply a fairly large effect of the Rule of Law on per capita income among middle and high-income countries in particular.

Overall, the results in table 3 show a strong correlation between the variables of interest – GINI index, Putnam Groups, Trust, and Rule of Law via Log GDP per capita – and the level of democracy that countries display. Nevertheless, there are reasons for not interpreting these relationships as causal. One is that more democratic countries may foster more dialogue among citizens, which can enhance the opportunities for community groups to form, and for trust to increase. Additionally, some authors have argued that democracy may contribute to greater wealth and generate less income inequality (Rigobon and Rodrik 2005; Acemoglu et al 2005). This problem could be solved if we had an instrument for the variables regressed on democracy in table 3. Such an instrument would have to be an important factor in accounting for the variation observed among the variables of interest, but have no direct effect on democracy. The discussion in the prior section suggests that latitude would be a plausible instrument.

## **Geography and Democracy: IV Estimates**

### *A. Geography and Democratic Determinants: OLS Regressions*

Equations (1) and (2) describe the relationship between determinants of democracy and democratic outcomes. In addition we have

$$(3) G_i = \lambda_G + \beta_{GL}L_i + \beta_{GP}P_i + \beta_{GI}I_i + \mathbf{X}'_i\gamma_G + v_{Gi},$$

$$(4) R_i = \lambda_R + \beta_{RL}L_i + \beta_{RP}P_i + \mathbf{X}'_i\gamma_R + v_{Ri}$$

where  $G$  is the measure of the GINI index or Putnam groups or Trust,  $L$  is the measure of latitude,  $P$  is the measure of the fraction of a country's total population near the ocean,  $I$

is the Log GDP per capita,  $R$  is the Rule of Law, and  $X$  is a vector of covariates that affect all variables. The results for the OLS regressions of equations (3) and (4) are presented in table 4. The results demonstrate that the relationships work through the channels hypothesized in the second section with regard to latitude while the proportion of a country's population near the ocean exhibits statistically, and substantively, significant results only with regard to the Rule of Law. Column (2) shows that latitude displays a close association to the GINI index among countries located outside the tropics, where a higher latitude corresponds to less income inequality. Column (4) likewise displays a strong positive relationship between Putnam Groups and latitude for countries located outside the tropics. However, the Trust variable exhibits a positive relationship to latitude for the whole world sample, as seen in column (5). When restricting the sample to countries outside the tropics, the coefficient between Trust and latitude is larger, which is consistent with the expectations as well as with the results for the Putnam Groups and GINI index regressions.

The proportion of a country's total population living near the ocean displays statistically significant results for the Trust variable among countries located outside the tropics; however, the lack of a clear relationship for the population variable with regard to the GINI Index and Putnam Groups variable suggests that latitude plays the dominant role with regard to geography's more immediate influence on democracy (i.e., via the GINI Index, Putnam Groups, and Trust variables as opposed to working through economic development). That said, the Rule of Law results, in columns (7) and (8), are particularly interesting because both the latitude variable and the population near the ocean variable exhibit a strong positive relationship for the whole world sample as well as for the sample of countries located outside the tropics. And for both variables, the coefficient is larger

for the sample of countries located outside the tropics. This relationship will be examined more closely in the cases on Italy and Malaysia.

**Table 4. OLS Regressions**

	DV: GINI Index		DV: Putnam Groups		DV: Trust		DV: Rule of Law	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Latitude > 23.5		Latitude > 23.5		Latitude > 23.5		Latitude > 23.5
Latitude	-0.0009 (-1.39)	-0.002*** (-3.58)	0.001 (0.19)	0.016*** (4.4)	0.004*** (2.79)	0.005** (2.21)	0.02*** (4.03)	0.03*** (2.8)
Pop100Km	-0.014 (-0.81)	-0.006 (0.38)	0.012 (0.1)	-0.03 (-0.43)	0.04 (1.02)	0.07* (1.74)	0.77*** (3.83)	1.04*** (3.75)
Log GDP per capita	0.01 (0.66)	-0.015 (-0.77)	-0.21 (-1.53)	0.006 (0.06)	0.12*** (3.1)	0.16*** (2.67)		
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.01 (0.38)	0.04 (1.35)	-0.1 (-0.42)	-0.05 (-0.19)	0.07 (0.61)	0.03 (0.25)	-0.42 (-1.08)	-0.39 (-0.64)
Religious Fractionalization	-0.01 (-0.79)	-0.02 (-0.89)	-0.16 (-0.63)	0.04 (0.34)	0.02 (0.33)	0.17*** (2.68)	0.65** (2.34)	0.76 (1.6)
Language Fractionalization	0.01 (0.39)	0.02 (0.93)	-0.03 (-0.16)	-0.07 (-0.27)	-0.05 (-0.54)	-0.06 (-0.61)	-0.2 (-0.69)	-0.28 (-0.54)
EU	-0.02 (-1.34)	0.001 (0.08)	-0.004 (-0.03)	-0.12 (-1.48)	0.04 (1.18)	0.02 (0.82)	0.68*** (2.95)	0.6** (2.23)
East Asia	0.04 (1.35)	-0.005 (-0.09)	-0.07 (-0.38)	-0.07 (-0.78)	0.17** (2.26)	0.05 (1.36)	0.4 (1.3)	-0.09 (-0.2)
Subsaharan Africa	0.06* (1.7)	0.16*** (6.15)	0.43 (1.12)	0.15 (1.43)	0.19*** (2.99)	0.13** (2.09)	0.13 (0.49)	0.56 (1.24)
South Asia	0.01 (0.39)	-0.03 (-0.91)	0.21 (0.65)	0.43*** (3.43)	0.22*** (4.28)	0.29*** (4.21)	0.05 (0.22)	0.27 (0.7)
Latin America	0.14*** (6.8)	0.12*** (7.35)	-0.13 (-0.59)	-0.04 (-0.6)	0.02 (0.41)	0.05 (1.36)	-0.12 (-0.52)	0.17 (0.49)
N	120	65	39	29	75	52	138	75
R-squared	0.57	0.75	0.52	0.61	0.53	0.58	0.58	0.5

Note: Ordinary least squares with robust standard errors used for all regressions; t-statistics are in parentheses. \*\*\* indicates statistical significance at the 1% level; \*\* at the 5% level; \* at the 10% level.

### *B. Geography and Democracy: IV Tests*

As mentioned above, a common difficulty for democratization arguments focusing on economic development or civil society is endogeneity. The way to solve this problem is to use an instrument that can account for the variation in the variables of interest – GINI index, Putnam Groups, Trust, and Rule of Law – yet which does not have an effect on democracy. Based on the discussion in section two, latitude is a plausible instrument.

Two-stage least-squares estimates of equations (1) and (2) are presented in Table 5. The determinants of Democracy,  $G$  – GINI Index, Putnam Groups, and Trust – are treated as endogenous, and modeled as

$$(5) G_i = \psi + \beta L_i + \zeta I_i + \mathbf{X}'_i \gamma + v_i,$$

$$(6) R_i = \psi + \beta L_i + \mathbf{X}'_i \gamma + v_i$$

The exclusion restriction is that the latitude variable does not appear in (1) or (2). Panel A of Table 5 reports 2SLS estimates of the coefficients of interest,  $\alpha$  and  $\zeta$  from equations (1) and (2), and Panel B gives the corresponding first stages. Columns (1) and (2) display the relationship between the GINI Index and latitude for all countries as well as for those outside the tropics, also shown in Table 3. The corresponding 2SLS estimate of the impact of the GINI Index on Democracy is -18.5 for countries outside the tropics. This estimate is highly significant and larger than the coefficient reported in Table 3. The Putnam Groups measure in column (4) is also statistically significant for countries outside the tropics, and is larger than the coefficient in Table 3. Columns (5) and (6) show the results for the Trust variable, which is significant for the whole world sample as well as the sample of countries outside the tropics, and again the coefficients are larger than those in Table 3. That the coefficients for the GINI Index, Putnam Groups, and Trust variables are larger than those in Table 3 suggests that the latitude measure may be capturing a fuller set of effects related to, but not fully represented by, these variables. Finally,

columns (7) and (8) present the results for the Rule of Law variable. The 2SLS estimate of the impact of the Rule of Law on Log GDP per capita is highly significant but is not substantially different in magnitude from those in Table 3.

**Table 5. IV Regressions**

	DV: Democracy 2008						DV: Log GDP per capita 2008	
	1	2 Latitude > 23.5	3	4 Latitude > 23.5	5	6 Latitude > 23.5	7	8 Latitude > 23.5
Panel A: Two-Stage Least Squares								
GINI Index	-51.3 (-1.22)	-18.5*** (-2.5)						
Putnam Groups			31.7 (0.2)	3.2** (2.11)				
Trust					5.3** (2.22)	9.5** (2.39)		
Rule of Law							0.39*** (4.12)	0.28*** (2.95)
Pop100km	-0.06 (-0.07)	0.98** (2.17)	0.15 (0.05)	0.12 (0.23)	-0.07 (-0.25)	-0.36 (-0.81)	0.04 (0.46)	0.14 (1.21)
Log GDP per capita	2.7* (1.9)	2.6*** (4.67)	9.4 (0.27)	3.2*** (3.23)	2.2*** (4.37)	1.8* (1.91)	--	--
Ethnic	0.14 (0.06)	-0.05 (-0.05)	2.3 (0.11)	-1.9 (-1.5)	-1.1 (-1.49)	-1.55 (-1.19)	0.21 (1.13)	-0.008 (-0.04)
Fractionalization Religious	0.05 (0.04)	1.3 (1.56)	5.9 (0.21)	0.33 (0.33)	0.4 (0.78)	-0.19 (-0.22)	0.09 (0.85)	0.16 (1.32)
Fractionalization Language	0.75 (0.42)	0.84 (0.84)	2.89 (0.29)	2.07* (1.75)	1.3** (1.95)	1.4 (1.36)	-0.11 (-0.77)	-0.05 (-0.3)
Fractionalization EU	-0.005 (-0)	0.6** (1.99)	0.41 (0.1)	0.22 (0.46)	0.27 (1.13)	-0.08 (-0.25)	-0.02 (-0.23)	0.03 (0.4)
East Asia	2.8 (0.91)	-1.25*** (-3.33)	1.7 (0.11)	0.17 (0.4)	-0.47 (-0.81)	-0.59* (-1.77)	-0.1 (-1.5)	-0.11 (-1.37)
Subsaharan Africa	4.9 (1.1)	5.7*** (3.57)	-12.2 (-0.19)	1.3** (2.65)	0.57 (0.85)	0.74 (1.65)	-0.56*** (-5.8)	-0.31 (1.33)
Latin America	9.4 (1.38)	4.3*** (3.48)	5.5 (0.21)	0.83 (1.16)	1.2*** (2.92)	0.89 (1.52)	0.12 (1.17)	0.001 (0.01)
South Asia	2.7 (1.1)	2.1 (1.47)	-4.4 (-0.14)	1.64 (1.5)	0.57 (0.67)	-0.32 (-0.24)	-0.44*** (-4.76)	-0.48*** (-3.56)
Panel B: First Stage for:								
	GINI Index		Putnam Groups		Trust		Rule of Law	
Latitude	-0.0009 (-1.36)	-0.002*** (-3.6)	0.001 (0.21)	0.01*** (3.92)	0.004*** (2.95)	0.005*** (2.63)	0.02*** (3.92)	0.03*** (2.63)
Pop100km	-0.01 (-0.77)	0.006 (0.33)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.03 (-0.33)	0.04 (1.07)	0.07* (1.71)	0.77*** (3.95)	1.04*** (3.79)
Log GDP per capita	0.01 (0.9)	-0.01 (-0.74)	-0.21 (-1.44)	0.006 (0.05)	0.12*** (2.89)	0.16*** (2.94)	--	--
Ethnic	0.01 (0.35)	0.04 (0.95)	-0.1 (-0.28)	-0.05 (-0.19)	0.07 (0.78)	0.03 (0.27)	-0.42 (-1.01)	-0.39 (-0.62)
Fractionalization Religious	0.01 (0.35)	-0.02 (-0.83)	-0.16 (-0.66)	0.04 (0.25)	0.02 (0.37)	0.17** (2.46)	0.65** (2.31)	0.76* (1.78)
Fractionalization Language	0.01 (0.33)	0.02 (0.64)	-0.03 (-0.12)	-0.07 (-0.26)	-0.05 (-0.56)	-0.06 (-0.57)	-0.2 (-0.56)	-0.28 (-0.48)
Fractionalization EU	-0.02 (-1.14)	0.001 (0.07)	-0.004 (-0.04)	-0.12 (-1.57)	0.04 (1.28)	0.02 (0.88)	0.68*** (3.28)	0.6** (2.46)
East Asia	0.04 (1.45)	-0.005 (-0.18)	-0.07 (-0.31)	-0.07 (-0.47)	0.17*** (2.7)	0.05 (0.85)	0.41 (1.43)	-0.09 (-0.16)
Subsaharan Africa	0.06** (2.48)	0.16*** (5.45)	0.43* (1.88)	0.15 (0.91)	0.19*** (2.78)	0.13 (1.18)	0.13 (0.51)	0.56 (1.1)
Latin America	0.14*** (5.81)	0.12*** (5.17)	-0.13 (-0.67)	-0.04 (-0.34)	0.02 (0.35)	0.05 (0.85)	-0.12 (-0.5)	0.17 (0.41)
South Asia	0.01 (0.44)	-0.03 (-1.19)	0.21 (0.82)	0.43** (2.08)	0.22*** (3.02)	0.29*** (3.51)	0.05 (0.15)	0.27 (0.52)
R-Squared	0.71	0.75	0.52	0.84	0.78	0.71	0.8	0.77
N	78	65	39	29	75	52	138	75

In general, the results support the argument that higher latitudes correspond to more democratic forms of government via four mechanisms: (1) decreasing income inequality; (2) higher participation rates in community organizations; (3) higher levels of trust; and (4) stronger rules of law which enhance economic growth. The proportion of the population within 100 kilometers of the ocean was shown to influence democratic outcomes primarily via one mechanism: the rule of law. Table 6 shows regional averages corresponding to the geography variables and levels of democracy, and illustrates that levels of democracy correlate most strongly with latitude.

**Table 6. Regional Patterns**

	N	Average Latitude	Average Proportion of the population within 100km of ocean	Average Democracy Score
EU	22	47	0.6	8.3
North America	3	34	0.26	8
Latin America	23	15	0.63	6.3
Southeast Asia	10	11	0.8	5.8
Subsaharan Africa	41	10	0.2	4

### Cases

The cases illustrate the mechanisms by which agriculture grown at different latitudes – food or cash crops - provides the basis for an inequitable (or equitable) distribution of wealth. Access to an ocean port fosters trade, which exacerbates (or ameliorates) the income distribution effects, and undercuts (or supports) the emergence of a vibrant civil society and democratic governance. Four cases, corresponding to the ideal-types identified in figure one, are examined: the formation of northern Italian communes in the twelfth century to illustrate the horizontal outcome; the development of modern Malaysia

for the ‘more vertical than horizontal’ cell; Malawi for the vertical outcome; and Paraguay for the ‘more horizontal than vertical’ type.

Northern Italy demonstrates that the temperate climate near an ocean port can provide the food for the city’s growth. As a result, farmers and landholders *share* in the city’s economic growth and a middle class develops in the city and surrounding area. Malaysia illustrates that tropical climates are better at producing cash crops than staple food crops as trade expands. As a result, food is imported from abroad and local agriculture is primarily devoted to growing cash crops that entail high scale economies with negative consequences for income inequality. Those who work these crops, as well as subsistence farmers, do not share nearly as much as their Italian counterparts in the gains from trade. In a landlocked tropical country such as Malawi, cash crops are grown for export. But because of the distance to an ocean port, the need for economies of scale is more intense to compensate for the higher transactions costs of shipping through other nations. Staple food crops face challenges in simply meeting the needs of the domestic population. Drastic income inequalities result, with negative implications for civil society and democracy. When the landlocked country is located in a temperate zone, like Paraguay and its productive agricultural region, subsistence farmers can more easily meet their basic needs. While there are strong pressures for large landholdings to achieve economies of scale that will help compensate for the transportation costs to an ocean port, income inequalities are not as intense as in a landlocked tropical nation, and citizens are thus more capable of organizing and expressing dissent. As a result, civil society is likely to be stronger, though effective democracy will still face challenges.

### ***Italy***

Prior to the formation of communes in the twelfth century, feudal estates dominated the economic and political organization of northern Italy. Estates were divided into tenant

land and demesne land. The former were parcels owned by the landowner, but leased out often for a share of the crops and a small rental payment (Luzzatto 1961). The demesne was the landowner's land which was generally worked by slaves as well as free and servile tenants who owed the owner small quantities of food and money as rental payments. Venetian trade with inland towns along the River Po for export to the East eroded this traditional form of economic and political organization. At first, these "towns" were not really towns at all, but densely settled communities engaged in a wide variety of businesses other than agriculture that were generally a means of securing and growing trade with Venice. Landowners would reside in these locations, together with a variety of feudal vassals, and they would have their food rents delivered by their tenants in the countryside. Moneylenders and artisans (e.g., building trades, soapmakers, metal workers, jewelers, skimmers) emerged and thrived in these locations. The emergence of guilds was the effect of this growth in trade and commerce, and the commune was its first and most emphatic expression. The commune combined the character of a private association protecting the interests of a clan or a class with that of a public institution representing the whole urban community (Jones, 1997).

The transformation of urban and commercial life was accompanied by parallel changes in the countryside. To increase food production, previously wooded areas were cleared for farming. The most effective means of carrying this out was to break up the greater properties (demesne) into small landholdings. Given a larger middle class who could afford these properties, and a climate that made cultivation of small landholdings economically viable, this was an efficient mechanism to enhance agricultural production. The same crops were grown as before - wheat, spelt, barley, oats, millet, and rye - and were primarily devoted to supporting the growing population of the new towns, including Florence, Venice, Bologna, Genoa, and Milan. Crops for export to the East, such as grain and salt, were shipped in from elsewhere (Luzzatto 1961, 88).

The new class of wealthy leaseholders who gained control of demesne land and also retained more autonomous control over the manor's tenant land was the first group to exert political unrest. They sought the end to all remaining limitations on the ownership of their land. This led, at the end of the eleventh and in the twelfth century, to their nominating their own representatives and implementing a democratic form of governance over communes in the new towns (Jones 1997).

The emerging communes were not democratic in the modern sense since only a minority of the population qualified for full membership. But, “the success of communal republicanism depended on the readiness of its leaders to share power with others as equals” (Lane 1966, 524). These political changes were part of “the burgeoning of associative life with the rise of communes, guilds, business partnerships, ... new forms of solidarity [that] expressed a more vivid sense of equality” (Becker 1982, 36). A variety of local organizations beyond the guilds were formed to provide security and to exert influence in local affairs; these included *vicinanze* (neighborhood associations), the *populus* (parish organizations that administered the goods of the local church and elected its priest), confraternities (religious societies for mutual assistance), politico-religious parties bounded together by solemn oath-takings, and *consorterie* (“tower societies”) (Larner 1983, 114). Putnam (1993, 162) observes that the effectiveness of northern Italy's contemporary democratic institutions can be traced back to “the flourishing communal republics of the twelfth century”.

Accompanying the expansion of ‘civic republicanism’ was a rapid growth in commerce. As civil order was established, merchants expanded their trading networks; first the regions around each city-state and then gradually to the farthest reaches of the known world. For markets of this complexity to evolve, closely integrated communities of traders were crucial, able to sustain legal or quasi-legal institutions to settle disputes, exchange information, and share risks. To finance trade and the growth of commerce, credit was invented. The efficient provision of credit required mutual trust and confidence

that contracts and the laws governing them would be impartially enforced; in other words, a strong and effective rule of law (Putnam 1993).

In the south, sprawling estates dominated, and the arid conditions contributed to the great development of sheep-rearing (Luzzatto 1961). While some agriculture flourished along certain coastal regions, the large hinterland of southern Italy was dominated by *latifundia*, where slave labor remained in servitude despite the rapid changes occurring in the north. Patron-client politics in the south would remain more personalistic, more exploitative, more transitory, and less “civil”, in contrast to the northern tradition of horizontal associations, joining rough equals in mutual solidarity (Putnam 1993).

### ***Malaysia***

Prior to the arrival of European powers (the Portuguese in 1511), rice was the principal means of subsistence in Malaysia. Its cultivation occurred primarily in the major river valleys, with Kedah as one of the few areas producing a marketable surplus (Drabble 2000, 12). As a result of the lack of staple food grown in the region, the population remained small and sparse; around half a million in 1800 in the peninsula territories and northern Borneo (Drabble 2000, 2).

Few communities in Southeast Asia were wholly self-sufficient. Exchange through trade was an important activity from the earliest times, not just locally or regionally but internationally. By the early centuries of the first millennium AD the trade routes extended to China, India and the Middle East through to the Mediterranean. The principal commodities exported were gold, tin, spices and forest and sea products (e.g., rattans, aromatic woods, camphor, birds’ feathers were foraged from the forest; tortoise shells, coral, and pearls were collected from the sea). The alternating patterns of the northeast and southwest monsoon winds gave the west coast facing the sheltered Straits

of Melaka an advantage as ports. The first included Kedah, Perak and Selangor before the rise of Melaka (around 1400).

In the sixteenth century, Portuguese and Spanish traders came to Malaysia seeking to cut out the mainly Asian middlemen who brought goods to Europe, and establish direct trade contacts. They were displaced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the Dutch and the British. At first, pepper and spices constituted the bulk of exports to Europe; these were supplanted by coffee, tea, and sugar in the late eighteenth century.

Malaysian rulers saw the accumulation of wealth as a means, through the distribution of patronage, to command support from subordinates who in turn gave protection to the general population in return for compulsory services. This economic and social structure among Peninsular Malays has been characterized as feudal, for example by British colonial officials who interpreted it as essentially a version of the feudal order in medieval Western Europe. More recent scholarship, however, has rejected this view largely because the hierarchy of relationships did not center around land tenure, as in Europe. Rather, control over people, and their labor, formed the basis for power; a relationship which demanded ‘total submission and servility to the ruling class’ (Shaharuddin, 1988, 5). Cheah (1994, 269) prefers to categorize the system as ‘semi-feudal’.

In response to the industrialization of the West, and the emergence and rapid growth of the automobile industry, a transition to the exports of bulk raw materials, principally tin and rubber, occurred in the late nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, land became the principal basis upon which the economic and social structure was based as the growing demand for cash crops (rubber) required the clear delineation of property rights (Gullick 1989, 116). A large expansion of mines and estates occurred to achieve greater economies of scale (Drabble 2000, 47).

The bulk of the proceeds from export both prior to and following the advent of rubber went to non-indigenous groups who controlled the mines and estates; mainly

Europeans and some Chinese (Drabble 2000, 115). Estate rubber production remained more labor-intensive than tin mining, and the ready supply of fresh workers from India and China kept a check on upward wage pressures and magnified the unequal distribution of income between workers and owners (Drabble 2000, 281). The growth of palm oil to Malaysia's export sector has perpetuated income inequality in the agricultural regions of Malaysia's economy. Only recently have the manufacturing and services industries begun to contribute meaningfully to the economy with a corresponding decline of the Gini coefficient in those regions.

The multiethnic structure of society in the colonial period created difficulties for civic groups to have meaningful influence (Funston 1980, 29-36; Jesudason 1993, 16). But after World War II, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) emerged as a mass organization protecting the interests of Malays and was able to use and build upon the vast powers and resources of the colonial state to vertically incorporate significant groups in the society. Once the elites of the UMNO consolidated their power, the resources of the bureaucracy aided party consolidation and the development of vertical clientelist networks (Jesudason 1993). Peasant, fisherman, and business associations were often organized directly by the government as conduits for development funds and state largesse (Kamaruddin 1993, 97; Shamsul 1986). Government controls over the working class have taken the form of prerogative powers over union formation and severe limitations over the ability to strike (Crouch 1993, 147).

While trade and commerce in places such as Melaka created incentives for a strong and effective rule of law, the historically hierarchical structure of economic and social relations in the peninsula checked the development of a vibrant civil society. The development of a strong state that preceded political participation, the central role of the state in economic development, and religious and cultural divisions have further contributed to the persistence of a weak civil society (Jesudason 1993).

## *Malawi*

Located in Sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi is landlocked and small with Lake Malawi connecting a large part of the eastern side of the country. Continuous contact with the West began only after 1859, when David Livingstone first visited Lake Malawi. In 1891, the British government declared a preemptive protectorate to counter Portuguese interests, suppressed the slave trade, and set up a colonial government. It has since avoided the kinds of civil conflicts and wars that have ravaged other nations in the region.

At independence, in 1964, Malawi was connected to the Indian Ocean by some rough roads leading to the South African port of Durban, by a railroad to the Mozambique port of Beira, and by the Shire River connecting Lake Malawi with the Zambezi River, which in turn flows into the ocean; but due to rapids, the Shire River is not completely navigable. The climate is hot and humid. Malaria is endemic in most parts of the country and approximately 12 percent of Malawi is infested with the tsetse fly, so trypanosomiasis occurs in these areas. Thus raising cattle is problematic, as was ox- or horse-drawn transportation during the early colonial period before railroads and trucks.

Malawi's economy is critically dependent on agriculture, which accounts for over 90% of exports and 40% of GDP. 85% of the population live in rural areas and of that the majority are subsistence farmers. Tobacco is the principal export (accounting for around 60% of export earnings), and is the main crop grown by large estates. Tea, sugar, coffee and cotton are also important. Maize - the staple diet and domestic crop - is largely produced by small, quasi-subsistence peasant holdings. However, maize production is often inadequate and is frequently supplemented with maize imports.

Before independence all estates were foreign owned; after independence Malawians began to purchase them, especially those producing tobacco. Among the early buyers was President Banda, the country's founding president. During the late 1960s and early 1970s President Banda encouraged all leading politicians to buy an estate in order to aid the country's development efforts. This led to a new class of wealthy Malawians who

would owe the president an important political debt (Pryor 1990). The banks and state-owned enterprises generously provided the new estates with loans and advice. By 1980 the estates occupied roughly 14 percent of all Malawi's agricultural land, and some claim they held a much larger fraction of the highest quality land (Pryor 1990).

Since independence in the mid-1960s, the agricultural production of estates has been the most important source of growth of Malawi's economy, occurring almost five times faster than in the small landholder sector (Pryor 1990). Currently, the Gini coefficient is around 0.62, meaning that Malawi suffers from one of the worst income disparities in the world. Around 60% of the population live below the poverty line.

In 1966, when Malawi became a republic, the Malawi Congress Party, with Dr. Banda at its head, was officially recognized as the only legal political party. Furthermore, only party members could be members of the National Assembly. Important constitutional changes in 1971 designated Dr. Banda as Life President, further centralizing political power. However, political centralization in Malawi was much greater than the formal structure would suggest and is best encapsulated by the "four cornerstones of the government" enshrined in the constitution: unity, loyalty, obedience, and discipline. While Banda portrayed himself as a caring headmaster to his people, his government was rigidly authoritarian even by African standards of the time (Martin 2006, 176). He repressed civil society, tightly controlled the press, crushed opposition, and bullied the public through the military's youth wing (Diamond 2008, 253). In 1963, he said "anything I say is law" and in 1969 following a court verdict he disliked he dismissed the entire judiciary and vested traditional courts with judicial authority (Kadri 2006, 346). While in office, and using his control of the country, Banda constructed a business empire that eventually produced one-third of the country's GDP and employed 10% of the wage-earning workforce (Martin 2006, 380).

But under pressure for increased political freedom, Banda agreed to a referendum in 1993, when the populace voted for a multiparty democracy (Cutter 2006, 143). In 1994

the first multi-party elections were held in Malawi, a new president was elected and a new constitution was adopted, effectively ending the MCP's rule. Multiparty parliamentary and presidential elections were held for the fourth time in May 2009, however the World Bank has described political environment as "challenging" (The World Bank 2008). According to Transparency International, Malawi dropped 28 places from 90 in 2004 to 118 in 2007 in its Corruption Perception Index, a three-year time-frame mirroring Mutharika's assumption of the presidency in 2004 on an electoral ticket that promised to clean up the administration.

With democracy in 1994, the number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) increased dramatically. However, the CSOs were mainly created and administered by foreigners. The relationship with the state has improved in comparison with the previous regime, but is still characterized by mistrust and fear according to the Council for Nongovernmental Organizations in Malawi. Some political leaders perceive the CSOs as a threat to their power, and people are not inclined to get involved in controversial political and economic issues out of fear. As a result, civil society has remained weak.

### ***Paraguay***

Paraguay is a small, landlocked country located in South America. Europeans first arrived in the sixteenth century, and Asuncion, the country's capital city, was founded in 1537 by Spanish settlers. The country has endured considerable political instability and conflict throughout its history. But in 1954, the 35-year dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner began, providing the elusive stability many longed for. In February 1989, he was deposed in a coup led by one of his top generals and democratic reforms were initiated; simultaneously, a mass migration to the temperate eastern region of the country occurred.

The local climate ranges from subtropical to temperate, with substantial rainfall in the eastern portion of the country; the western Chaco region is semi-arid and inhospitable. The Parana River connects Paraguay to the Atlantic Ocean through Argentina.

Paraguay's economy is strongly oriented towards agriculture, which accounted for 23.4% of GDP in 2008, and nearly all of its exports. It employs around 45% of the workforce, though there is large number of subsistence farmers. Historically, the economy has been reliant on the cultivation of both cash and food crops, including cassava, sugar cane, cotton, soy and yerba mate (Paraguayan tea) as well as cattle livestock. In the 1980s, soy replaced cotton as the country's most important crop and constitutes the country's main export. Paraguay produces enough basic food to be largely self-sufficient, with maize, cassava, and wheat comprising the main food crops.

Until recently (beginning with Stroessner's overthrow in 1989), the western Chaco area and vast lands on the eastern and northern frontiers bordering Argentina and Brazil remained largely unpopulated; most people lived in the densely populated central region surrounding the capital. Land distribution in Paraguay has been among the most unequal in Latin America (MAG 1993); a remnant of the land use policies of the nineteenth century, which enabled large landholders and investors, many foreign, to acquire most of the nation's land (Kleinpenning 1987; Pastore 1972, Ugarte Centurion 1983). Stroessner's economic policies in the 1960s and 70s exacerbated the maldistribution of land as they emphasized export-oriented growth and thereby led to land being allocated to a small group of people – mainly Stroessner associates and other high government and military officials.

After the coup in 1989, thousands of rural Paraguayans swept onto unused lands claimed by the state, the Stroessner family and its cronies, and foreign investors, to set up ramshackle huts and clear plots to grow food crops. By the mid-1990s, roughly 19,000 families had claimed lands totaling over 360,000 hectares. According to a study by Nagel (1991) conducted prior to the government's overthrow, small landholders that already lived in the eastern region produced both subsistence and cash crops. For most small producers, sales of cotton and soybeans would provide most of their income. Some would also sell surplus food crops (primarily cassava, maize, beans, and rice) or perennials

(yerba mate or coffee), but these were not major sources of income. The production of livestock and livestock products (milk, cheese, lard, and eggs) was another important agricultural activity.

After the coup, small farmers and rural workers throughout the nation mobilized to demand direct participation in their new government, more favorable agricultural policies, and restitution for past abuses. For Paraguay, then a nation of only 4.1 million persons, 2.06 million of them rural, this mobilization represented a considerable proportion of the population. As a result, Paraguayans have won political liberalization, the expansion of civil and political rights, and regular elections. The August 1993 inauguration of Colorado party candidate Juan Carlos Wasmosy saw a civilian president in Paraguay for the first time in almost 40 years

Today, Paraguay has a vibrant civil society, including student-led demonstrations, haranguing newspaper editors, and militant labor unions. But these have not yet translated into equivalent political influence. Widespread rural poverty and the lack of any substantive agrarian reform to change the highly regressive distribution of land ownership and the lack of governmental response to the “social deficit” in health, public housing, and education reflect the continuing power of conservative economic elites and other vested interests in the government. But the election of Fernando Lugo to the presidency in 2008 offers hope for reforms, and illustrates that real progress has occurred. Lugo, leader of the coalition Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC) – a heterogeneous coalition comprising 20 parties including Christian Democrats, socialists, communists and peasant organizations – ended 61 years of governance by the world's longest ruling party, the Colorados. His election is an example of Paraguay's sustained push towards democracy that began with the end of Stroessner's dictatorship in 1989 and which has been fueled by peasants occupying and farming land in the country's temperate eastern region.

## CONCLUSIONS

A clear conclusion stands out from the evidence: latitude matters more than nearness to an ocean port for democracy to emerge. Where citizens can grow enough for themselves and their family, and where land (and income) is equitably distributed, horizontal social relations characterize the dynamics in the community. Nearness to an ocean port and accompanying trade opportunities create incentives for a strong and effective rule of law which enables faster economic growth and in turn makes democracy more likely. However, the Malaysia case illustrates that a heavy reliance on trade need not translate into effective democratic outcomes; a situation observed among other Southeast Asian nations. Indeed, the argument offers an alternative explanation for the clustering of democratic outcomes in different regions of the world. Instead of economic ties, or shared norms and cultural values, the argument made in this paper suggests that countries with similar geographical features are likely to exhibit similar democratic outcomes. Thus, West European countries are highly democratic mainly because of their temperate climate but also, to a lesser extent, due to their nearness to ocean ports; Southeast Asian countries are partially democratic because of their tropical climate and heavy reliance on trade; democracy has succeeded in Northeast Asia because those countries have more temperate climates; sub-Saharan African countries are largely nondemocratic because of their tropical climate in addition to the long distances often necessary to travel to an ocean port; and Latin American countries tend to be either tropical or subtropical which weakens the chances for durable democratic institutions.

While tropical countries may make superficial democratic reforms, the distribution of wealth, patterns of civic life, and the informal institutions that govern a society's organization tend to persist. As a result, the quality of democracy depends a great deal on pre-existing geographical endowments, and the endowments have impacts that continue for a very long time. Focusing on geography offers a useful way to account

for the quality of democratic institutions, rather than a dichotomous categorization of whether democracy exists or not.

The focus on the geographical determinants of democracy can lead one to think that countries are inevitably locked into adopting specific democratic characteristics; however the mechanism by which this occurs suggests that countries can alter their political ‘fates’. Geography affects democracy via its income effects. Thus, technological advances that allow for changes in the way income is distributed across society could enable democracy to emerge in otherwise unlikely places. Additionally, land redistribution programs that are accompanied by laws that effectively prevent the subsequent concentration of land (and wealth) also generate hope for the spread of democracy.

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