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The Global Verdict on Democracy: Admiration for the Norm, Disillusionment with the Practice

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At the outset of the 21st century democracy enjoys an unparalleled admiration as a norm. This admiration is shared worldwide among peoples of all geographic regions, faiths, and social classes. However, there are serious doubts about whether democracy delivers what it promises – that is, rule by the will of the people. The attitude of doubt is particularly prominent among those who have long experienced democracy as a political system of governance. The Voice of the People, a global survey carried out by Gallup International Association in 68 countries, covering all continents across the globe, finds that nearly 80% of the world holds democracy to be the best available political system; however, barely 30% of the world's polled population say they are actually ruled by the will of the people. On the positive side, large majorities of people of all faiths, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus, still hold democracy to be the best available political system.

In order to track global perceptions about democracy, we are proposing two tracking indicators. The first indicator, the Gallup International Association Perception of Democracy Index (GIAPDI), will track views on democracy as a norm from year to year and register its rise and fall globally, as well as for various specific groups of countries, faiths, and classes. The second variable, the Disillusionment with Democracy Index (DDI), will track the rise and fall

in disillusionment with democracy. The methodology for measuring these two trends is outlined in the text of this chapter. It is hoped that GIAPDI and DDI will make important additions to the global discourse on and understanding of democracy.

Background

Democracy is one of the most widely shared norms in contemporary times and the system that more people believe in than in any other. In a global survey carried out by Gallup International Association across all continents in 2005, around 80% of the men and women surveyed considered democracy to be the best available form of governance. The admiration for democracy was shared by majorities across different cultures and faiths, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists, as well as across gender, age, education, and income divides. But democracy can be interpreted and defined by different groups in different ways: liberal democracy, popular democracy, socialist democracy, Asian democracy, and so on; these are some of its political variants.

Academics differ on what aspect of democracy is critical to democratic functioning: its basis for authority, the purpose it serves, or the procedures that it observes to form a government. In other words, should a political community be defined as democratic if the source of its authority rests in the people; or should it be defined as democratic if its purpose is to serve the people; or can a polity qualify to be called a democracy if the formation of government and its functioning is in accordance with procedures that are widely known to be democratic?

The majority view among academics is to regard the observance of democratic procedures as being central to defining a political community as democratic. This is commonly referred to as the *empirical* version of democracy – contrasted with the *normative* version, which emphasizes either the source of authority or the purpose of government. One of the reasons for greater acceptability of focusing on procedures rather than the source of authority or the purpose is that observance of procedures is much more clearly and precisely measurable.

The interesting aspect of these debates about democracy is that not many address the feelings and perceptions of the people who are so central to the debate – since they are the source of authority, the beneficiaries of democracy, and the ultimate judges of whether the democratic procedures of forming a government are being observed. It may be valid to reason that one should let the people judge whether or not they are being ruled by a democratic government. A government, one can argue, would be defined as more or less democratic depending on whether its central character, the people, perceive their government to be run by the will of the people. This may, however, be an oversimplified point of view.

A balanced approach would lead us to the following path of reasoning: It may be questionable to put the entire burden of defining democracy on the perceptions of the people. However a definition that *ignores* the perceptions of the “central character” of democracy and its end users would be incomplete as well. Thus, a rating on democracy or political liberties, such as the one produced annually by Freedom House of USA, is a good but incomplete indicator, since it depends on judgment by the observers – the experts – to an extent that the perceptions of the actors themselves (the people) are largely ignored or marginalized.

The subject of this exercise is to address the missing piece in the existing indicators of democracy/political liberties. We are proposing a method for measuring the perceptions of democracy among citizens of a political community and doing a comparative analysis of how democracy is perceived across democratic governments. One might call it the Perceived Democracy Index, or, for ease of reference to the source of the data, it may be referred to as the Gallup International Association Perceived Democracy Index (GIAPDI). The GIAPDI is not meant to replace the political liberties rating by Freedom House, but to supplement it by adding a new dimension to understanding the complex phenomenon of democracy. While the Freedom House indicator relies on judgment by experts, the Gallup International Association indicator relies on the perceptions of the people. It should, in effect, complete the picture by painting the missing part.

Our preliminary analysis suggested that we should expect a wide gap between countries' ratings on the judged democracy index (i.e., Freedom House) and the perceived democracy index (GIAPDI). The gap between the two should provide interesting territory for creative and constructive debate.

It is conceivable that some countries with a long track record of democratic government, through holding elections and observing other procedures of democratic rule, would score low on the perceived democracy index and vice versa. This could happen because citizens of countries with a long track record of democracy may have high expectations, which are not matched by practice, while nascent democracies (or even completely undemocratic governments) may exist in a context of very low expectations, which are outperformed by rudimentary or even partial democratic advancement.

In summary, the perceived democracy index of Gallup International Association could be a very interesting addition to the measures that help us judge the performance of a political community on the very complex field of democratic government. In the next section we present the findings of a global survey in 2005 on three key questions regarding democracy, namely:

- views on democracy as a norm or system of government
- views on the observance of the procedures of democracy, specifically “free and fair elections”
- views on the desirable outcome of democracy, specifically “rule by the will of the people”

In each case we present the global data, regional variations for various continents, and statistical tables providing information on countries included in the global sample.

In the final part of the chapter we proceed to construct an index for measuring what we call the Perceived Democracy Index and the Disillusionment with Democracy Index.

Global Views on Democracy in 2005

- Views on democracy as a norm
- Views on the procedures of democracy
- Views on the outcome of democracy

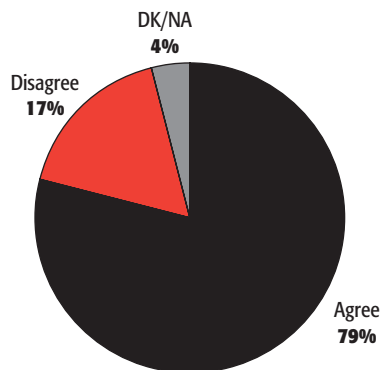
■ **Admiration for the Norm of Democracy**

When asked: “Tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘Democracy may have problems but it is the best system of government,’” a resounding 79% across the globe expressed their agreement. Thus democracy can rightly claim to be the world’s most shared and common political norm at the outset of the 21st century (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Global Perceptions of Democracy as a System of Government

Q. Democracy may have problems but it is the best system of government?



Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

The agreement on democracy as the best available form of government is shared by majorities in societies, cultures, and countries that are vastly different from each other on other issues. For example, 89% of Protestants, 86% of Buddhists, 80% of Catholics, 79% of Jews, 75% of Muslims, and 69% of Hindus share an admiration for democracy. The figure is the lowest among Eastern Orthodox Christians, but even among them, a clear majority of 67% is supportive of democracy as the best available political system. In fact, it would be interesting to look more deeply into the issue of why some 20% of people across the globe and as much as one-third of certain groups (for example, Eastern Orthodox Christianity) do *not* share the global admiration for democracy. But let us first analyze people's views towards the norm of democracy across various geographic regions.

Regional Variations

In all but one region of the world at least 7 out of 10 of those surveyed agree with the statement that democracy is the best available system of government (Table 1). The only exception is in Eastern and Central Europe where the figure drops slightly to just over two-thirds (68%). The most positive regions were North America (87%), Africa (87%), and Western Europe (82%).

It is not surprising to find the highest agreement with the statement in the Nordic democratic strongholds of Denmark (93%), Norway (93%), and Iceland (93%). But it is more of a surprise that there is a very high level of agreement in the African countries of Ghana (93%) and Ethiopia (93%) – until one realizes that both countries held important elections recently: Ghana in December 2004 and Ethiopia in May 2005, just before interviewing for the survey started.

But in Eastern and Central Europe as a whole, there is far less agreement that democracy is the best system of government, with only two-thirds agreeing (68%), compared to the global level of 79%. Endorsement for democracy reflected in agreement with this statement is at its lowest in Bulgaria (60%), Lithuania (60%), Serbia (61%), and Russia (62%).

Table 1

Global Perceptions of Democracy as a System of Government

Q. Democracy may have problems but it is the best system of government?

	Agree	Disagree	DK/NA
WORLD	79%	17%	4%
Western Europe	82%	14%	4%
Austria	79%	10%	12%
Denmark	93%	6%	1%
Spain	85%	12%	3%
Finland	84%	7%	10%
France	79%	13%	8%
Germany	79%	20%	1%
Greece	92%	8%	0%
Iceland	93%	3%	5%
Italy	82%	14%	4%
The Netherlands	82%	8%	10%
Norway	93%	5%	2%
Portugal	84%	9%	6%
Republic of Ireland	84%	14%	2%
Switzerland	89%	9%	2%
UK	81%	15%	4%
Eastern and Central Europe	68%	23%	9%
Bulgaria	60%	23%	17%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	74%	23%	3%
Croatia	68%	26%	5%
Czech Republic	80%	13%	7%
Kosovo	85%	5%	10%
Lithuania	60%	25%	15%
Macedonia	69%	21%	10%
Moldova	75%	16%	9%
Poland	84%	10%	6%
Romania	80%	7%	13%
Russia	62%	31%	7%
Serbia	61%	28%	11%
Ukraine	65%	19%	16%
Middle East	78%	13%	9%
Israel	84%	15%	2%
Turkey	77%	13%	10%
North America	87%	11%	1%
Canada	85%	12%	3%
USA	87%	11%	1%
Latin America	74%	23%	3%
Argentina	83%	14%	3%
Bolivia	72%	27%	1%
Colombia	80%	18%	2%
Costa Rica	84%	13%	2%
Dominican Republic	76%	21%	2%
Ecuador	76%	21%	4%
Guatemala	64%	35%	2%
Mexico	68%	29%	3%
Nicaragua	73%	25%	2%
Panama	77%	21%	2%
Paraguay	82%	16%	2%
Peru	60%	35%	5%
Uruguay	92%	6%	1%
Venezuela	87%	12%	1%
Asia-Pacific	77%	19%	4%
Hong Kong	73%	25%	2%
India	69%	30%	1%
Indonesia	90%	8%	2%
Japan	86%	11%	3%
Korea	69%	27%	4%
Malaysia	80%	12%	8%
Pakistan	67%	16%	17%
Philippines	70%	29%	0%
Taiwan	72%	23%	5%
Thailand	87%	10%	2%
Africa	87%	10%	3%
Cameroon	85%	11%	4%
Ethiopia	93%	5%	2%
Ghana	93%	5%	1%
Kenya	82%	9%	9%
Nigeria	88%	11%	0%
South Africa	85%	12%	3%
Senegal	77%	10%	12%
Togo	86%	9%	5%

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

* Middle East includes only Israel and Turkey

There is more disagreement about democracy in Latin America, but still nearly three-quarters (75%) agree that democracy is the best system of government – although in Peru only 6 out of 10 citizens questioned (60%) endorsed the statement.

In the USA, the level of agreement is high (87%) and has increased in comparison with the 2004 figure (81%). The UK at 81% is in line with Western Europe’s average (82%) – which is above the percentage for the world (75%) – and, interestingly, has increased 3 points since 2004 (from 78%).

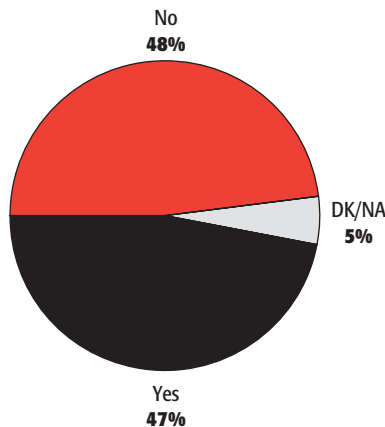
■ Skepticism About the Process of Democracy

Globally views are sharply divided on whether the process of democracy in any given country or region meets its necessary requirements and elections are held freely and fairly. Only 47% of the surveyed population in the 68 countries covered by the survey believe that in their country elections are held freely and fairly (Figure 2). An equal number (48%) disagrees and expresses strong skepticism about free and fair elections.

Figure 2

Perceptions on Free and Fair Elections

Q. Do you feel that elections in your country are free and fair?



Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

Regional Variations

So while there is overwhelming admiration for the norm of democracy, there is considerable skepticism about whether the required practices of democracy are being appropriately observed.

Interestingly, skepticism about free and fair elections is not restricted to new democracies and developing countries alone. For example, nearly half (44%) of the electorate in the USA believe elections are *not* held freely and fairly. But the USA seems to be an exception,¹ because on the whole skepticism figures are generally high in developing countries and new democracies but low in Western Europe and other older democracies. For example, skepticism about free and fair elections is only at 10% in Denmark, 13% in France, and 12% in Portugal, while the comparable figures are 89% for Nigeria, 67% for India, and 74% for Russia. Table 2 is very revealing of the trends in different regions of the world and their constituent countries included in the survey.

Let's take a closer look now at the differing views of the success of democracy – in terms of free and fair elections – in various regions of the world.

Countries in Western Europe are the least skeptical about free and fair elections: 67% of their population believes elections in their country are generally free and fair. The figure for North America – the USA and Canada together – is, however, notably lower than Western Europe, standing at 55%.² The only two countries from the Middle East included in the survey (Turkey and Israel) show a similar result at 55%. Perhaps not surprisingly, confidence in free and fair elections is even lower (33–40%) in the other major regions of the world (Eastern and Central Europe, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and Africa), as is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceptions on Free and Fair Elections, by Region and Country

Q. Do you feel that elections in your country are free and fair?

	Yes	No	DK/NA
WORLD	47%	48%	5%
Western Europe	67%	30%	4%
Austria	66%	14%	20%
Denmark	90%	10%	1%
Spain	64%	31%	5%
Finland	79%	13%	8%
France	69%	25%	6%
Germany	73%	25%	2%
Greece	63%	37%	1%
Iceland	73%	23%	4%
Italy	46%	52%	2%
The Netherlands	75%	17%	7%
Norway	76%	18%	6%
Portugal	81%	12%	6%
Republic of Ireland	73%	23%	3%
Switzerland	79%	17%	4%
UK	70%	28%	2%
Eastern and Central Europe	33%	58%	9%
Bulgaria	31%	43%	26%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28%	68%	4%
Croatia	41%	55%	5%
Czech Republic	63%	26%	10%
Kosovo	74%	16%	10%
Lithuania	33%	58%	9%
Macedonia	26%	67%	7%
Moldova	43%	49%	8%
Poland	44%	39%	16%
Romania	63%	18%	19%
Russia	22%	74%	4%
Serbia	31%	50%	19%
Ukraine	34%	54%	12%
Middle East*	55%	35%	9%
Israel	65%	35%	-
Turkey	54%	35%	10%
North America	55%	43%	2%
Canada	66%	31%	3%
USA	54%	44%	2%
Latin America	34%	61%	4%
Argentina	47%	44%	9%
Bolivia	16%	80%	4%
Colombia	36%	61%	4%
Costa Rica	52%	43%	5%
Dominican Republic	58%	40%	2%
Ecuador	37%	56%	7%
Guatemala	53%	44%	3%
Mexico	23%	74%	2%
Nicaragua	31%	68%	1%
Panama	63%	34%	2%
Paraguay	24%	71%	5%
Peru	28%	68%	4%
Uruguay	83%	12%	5%
Venezuela	54%	42%	4%
Asia-Pacific	40%	55%	5%
Hong Kong	49%	46%	5%
India	32%	67%	1%
Indonesia	73%	25%	2%
Japan	46%	53%	1%
Korea	49%	43%	8%
Malaysia	76%	16%	8%
Pakistan	21%	50%	29%
Philippines	19%	80%	1%
Singapore	69%	18%	13%
Taiwan	45%	51%	4%
Thailand	49%	47%	4%
Africa	34%	59%	7%
Cameroon	31%	61%	8%
Ethiopia	22%	64%	14%
Ghana	67%	27%	6%
Kenya	63%	27%	10%
Nigeria	9%	89%	3%
South Africa	57%	11%	33%
Senegal	76%	19%	5%
Togo	21%	63%	16%

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

* Middle East includes only Israel and Turkey

Our findings show certain notable differences in views on free and fair elections varying by age, income, and religion. However, closer scrutiny shows that these differences are mainly explained by regional differences. For example, the older population (above 50) has a higher percentage of those saying elections in their country are free and fair (Table 3). However, the correlation with age per se is misleading, since both Western Europe and North America have a markedly higher proportion of older people in their population as well as a higher than average score on free and fair elections. The same logic explains a higher figure for saying they experienced free and fair elections both among upper income people and among those believing in Protestant Christianity.

Table 3

Perceptions on Free and Fair Elections, by Age, Worldwide

Q. Do you feel that elections in your country are free and fair?

	Under 30	30–50	51–65	65 +
Yes	43%	45%	50%	56%
No	51%	49%	45%	39%
DK/NA	6%	6%	4%	5%

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

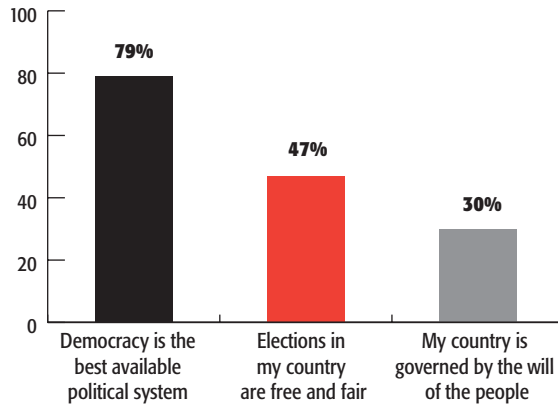
■ Disillusionment with the Outcome of Democracy

The third survey question we are examining in this chapter gives some surprising results: It should be a matter of great alarm for those concerned with the future of democracy that while 79% of the global population polled in the Gallup International Association survey held the democratic political system in admiration and 47% assessed elections in their countries to be free and fair, only 30% believed that they were successful in tasting the desirable outcome or the fruit of democracy – that is, rule by the will of the people (Figure 3).

This enormous gap between the norm and practice of democracy is perhaps its greatest challenge today.

Figure 3

Responses to All Three Questions on Democracy: A Comparison



Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

In response to the question: “Would you say your country is governed by the will of the people?” only 30% across the world answered “yes” while 60% answered “no.” There were certain regional variations but, interestingly, skepticism about rule by the will of the people was not restricted to new or recent democracies.

Regional Variations

There is no region in the world where more than 40% claim they experience rule by the will of the people. The highest score is in North America (the USA and Canada) at 37%, and the lowest is in Eastern and Central Europe at 22% (Table 4).

Table 4

Global Perceptions About Rule by the Will of the People

Q. Would you say that your country is governed by the will of the people?

	Yes	No	DK/NA
WORLD	30%	65%	5%
Western Europe	31%	65%	3%
Austria	38%	41%	21%
Denmark	57%	40%	3%
Spain	62%	35%	3%
Finland	42%	43%	15%
France	26%	71%	3%
Germany	18%	81%	1%
Greece	35%	64%	1%
Iceland	43%	47%	10%
Italy	28%	72%	1%
The Netherlands	15%	75%	10%
Norway	54%	40%	6%
Portugal	40%	53%	6%
Republic of Ireland	42%	55%	3%
Switzerland	55%	41%	4%
UK	30%	66%	4%
Eastern and Central Europe	22%	71%	7%
Bulgaria	15%	71%	14%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	13%	85%	2%
Croatia	15%	83%	2%
Czech Republic	34%	54%	12%
Kosovo	46%	44%	10%
Lithuania	23%	67%	10%
Macedonia	11%	86%	4%
Moldova	31%	58%	10%
Poland	17%	71%	12%
Romania	45%	37%	18%
Russia	18%	80%	2%
Serbia	20%	69%	11%
Ukraine	26%	61%	12%
Middle East*	36%	55%	9%
Israel	49%	50%	1%
Turkey	35%	56%	9%
North America	37%	60%	3%
Canada	36%	60%	4%
USA	37%	60%	3%
Latin America	28%	69%	3%
Argentina	33%	59%	8%
Bolivia	25%	72%	4%
Colombia	30%	67%	3%
Costa Rica	25%	72%	3%
Dominican Republic	50%	48%	2%
Ecuador	44%	52%	4%
Guatemala	43%	55%	2%
Mexico	20%	79%	1%
Nicaragua	18%	81%	1%
Panama	24%	75%	2%
Paraguay	23%	74%	3%
Peru	25%	73%	2%
Uruguay	54%	39%	7%
Venezuela	50%	48%	2%
Asia-Pacific	29%	65%	6%
Hong Kong	46%	48%	5%
India	22%	77%	1%
Indonesia	38%	59%	3%
Japan	29%	69%	2%
Korea	13%	79%	7%
Malaysia	71%	19%	10%
Pakistan	25%	42%	33%
Philippines	29%	71%	1%
Singapore	47%	38%	14%
Taiwan	43%	49%	8%
Thailand	37%	56%	7%
Africa	34%	61%	5%
Cameroon	33%	60%	6%
Ethiopia	19%	70%	11%
Ghana	69%	28%	3%
Kenya	38%	51%	10%
Nigeria	18%	82%	0%
South Africa	53%	19%	27%
Senegal	59%	34%	7%
Togo	23%	66%	12%

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

* Middle East includes only Israel and Turkey

In the case of Western Europe the total score is close to the global average at 31%, but there is wide variation of sentiments on this issue within the region. For example, the Scandinavian countries score rather high, with Denmark at 57% and Norway at 54%. Spain (62%), Portugal (40%), and Ireland (42%) also score high. But the figures for France (25%) and the UK (30%) are surprisingly low. The most alarming figures of all are for Germany, where only 18% believe they experience rule by the will of the people, and the Netherlands, where the figure is the lowest in all of Western Europe, standing at only 15%.

A particularly interesting finding is that most of the same countries score very high when it comes to perceptions about free and fair elections in their political systems. The gap between these two perceptions – that is, high on free and fair elections and low on rule by the will of the people – leads us to the hypothesis that many mature democracies in the world are undergoing a deep disillusionment about the ability of democracy to deliver rule by the will of the people.

Nevertheless, they still consider it the best available political system. We return to this theme at other places in this chapter. As was the case for Western Europe, there are significant intra-region variations in other regions as well. However, disillusionment with democracy is quite pronounced overall in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Latin America. There are, nevertheless, exceptions within each region which provide an optimistic response. The pattern seems to be that many countries in the early days of their experience with democracy or democratic struggle feel positive and hopeful about “rule by the will of people” but become pessimistic when ongoing realities fail to match their expectations.

Index for Cross-National and Time Series Measurement of Perceptions About Democracy

In the previous section we presented the results of our 2005 survey results on key indicators of democracy. In this section we shall build two indices that might capture current perceptions about the state of democracy across nations as well as provide a measure for tracking each nation's perceptions on democracy in their own country from year to year – that is, a time series data on felt or perceived democracy. In other words we shall propose indices for *cross-national* and *time series measurement*, and then assign to each country values for the year 2005.

■ Perceived Democracy Index

Methodology

We have designed a simple but meaningful index of democracy by taking an average of perceptions about the procedure of democracy – that is, perceptions about whether elections in the respondent's country were held freely and fairly – and perceptions about the desirable outcome of democracy, that is rule by the will of the people. This index provides a fairly robust measure of how a society judges the performance of its own polity on these two indicators – that is, the observance of the electoral procedure of democracy (free and fair elections) and performance on the outcome of democracy (rule by the will of people). A mean of the two is taken as the Perceived Democracy Index.

For standardizing the rating on a scale, we have designed a seven-point scale with equal intervals. Using a seven-point scale for our index allows us to compare our results with the Freedom House Political Liberties scale, which rates political liberties on a seven-point scale, on which 1 indicates the highest level of liberties and 7 indicates the lowest level. Thus in our case we give a rating of 1 to countries falling in the top seventh of the scores achieved in the given year and 7 to those falling in the bottom seventh. Others fall accordingly in between them.

Rating for 2005

As the ratings in Table 5 show, the average for the world currently stands at 4 on a scale of 1 to 7 (high to low). The highest performance score is in Europe at a rating of 3; North America and Middle East (represented by Turkey and Israel only) stand at 4; while other regions fare relatively poorly, with Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa at 5, and Eastern and Central Europe at an index rating close to the bottom at 6. As for individual countries, Denmark and Switzerland stand on top at a score of 1 among the mature democracies. Aside from them, there are notably high ratings in every continent, the reasons for whose high performance should provide an interesting subject for deliberation and discussion. These include Malaysia in Asia, Uruguay in Latin America, and Ghana and Senegal in Africa, all of which have a rating of 1.

Only two European countries obtain the score of 1. They are Denmark and Switzerland. No Eastern European or North American country obtains the score of 1. In Table 5 we have also provided a comparative table of Freedom House ratings on political liberties. The comparison, we hope, will be instructive and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of democracy and political freedoms.

Though any comparison between two different indexes should be done with caution, it is interesting to observe that the overall trends are similar – that is, public perception seems to agree with the expert assessment of Freedom House. Citizens seem to be more critical of democracy than is Freedom House only in one country: the USA. And Switzerland, Guatemala, Malaysia, Singapore, Cameroon, Ghana, and Senegal are the only countries where Freedom House is *more* critical than the population.

Table 5

Gallup International Association Perceived Democracy Index (GIAPDI), Rating for 2005

	Percentage of population saying		Perceived democracy score (mean of 1 and 2)	Rating of Gallup International Association Perceived Democracy Index	(For comparison) Rating of Freedom House political liberties index
	Elections in my country are held freely and fairly ⁽¹⁾	The rule in my country is by the will of the people ⁽²⁾			
WORLD	47%	30%	39	4	
Western Europe	67%	31%	49	3	
Austria	66%	38%	52	3	1
Denmark	90%	57%	74	1	1
Finland	79%	42%	60	2	1
France	69%	26%	47	4	1
Germany	73%	18%	45	4	1
Greece	63%	35%	49	3	1
Iceland	73%	43%	58	2	1
Italy	46%	28%	37	5	1
The Netherlands	75%	15%	45	4	1
Norway	76%	54%	65	2	1
Portugal	81%	40%	61	2	1
Republic of Ireland	73%	42%	58	2	1
Spain	64%	62%	63	2	1
Switzerland	79%	55%	67	1	7
UK	70%	30%	50	3	1
Eastern and Central Europe	33%	22%	28	6	
Bulgaria	31%	15%	23	6	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28%	13%	21	7	4
Croatia	41%	15%	28	6	2
Czech Republic	63%	34%	49	3	1
Kosovo	74%	46%	60	2	-
Lithuania	33%	23%	28	6	2
Macedonia	26%	11%	18	7	3
Moldova	43%	31%	37	5	3
Poland	44%	17%	31	5	1
Romania	63%	45%	54	3	3
Russia	22%	18%	20	7	6
Serbia	31%	20%	25	6	3
Ukraine	34%	26%	30	6	4
Middle East*	55%	36%	46	4	
Israel	65%	49%	57	3	1
Turkey	54%	35%	45	4	3
North America	55%	37%	46	4	
Canada	66%	36%	51	3	1
USA	54%	37%	45	4	1

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

	Percentage of population saying		Perceived democracy score (mean of 1 and 2)	Rating of Gallup International Association Perceived Democracy Index	(For comparison) Rating of Freedom House political liberties index
	Elections in my country are held freely and fairly ⁽¹⁾	The rule in my country is by the will of the people ⁽²⁾			
Latin America	34%	28%	31	5	
Argentina	47%	33%	40	4	2
Bolivia	16%	25%	20	7	3
Colombia	36%	30%	33	5	4
Costa Rica	52%	25%	39	4	1
Dominican Republic	58%	50%	54	3	2
Ecuador	37%	44%	41	4	3
Guatemala	53%	43%	48	3	4
Mexico	23%	20%	22	6	2
Nicaragua	31%	18%	25	6	3
Panama	63%	24%	43	4	1
Paraguay	24%	23%	24	6	3
Peru	28%	25%	27	6	2
Uruguay	83%	54%	69	1	1
Venezuela	54%	50%	52	3	3
Asia-Pacific	40%	29%	35	5	
Hong Kong	49%	46%	48	3	-
India	32%	22%	27	6	2
Indonesia	73%	38%	55	3	3
Japan	46%	29%	37	5	1
Korea	49%	13%	31	5	-
Malaysia	76%	71%	73	1	4
Pakistan	21%	25%	23	6	6
Philippines	19%	29%	24	6	2
Singapore	69%	47%	58	2	5
Taiwan	45%	43%	44	4	2
Thailand	49%	37%	43	4	2
Africa	34%	34%	34	5	
Cameroon	31%	33%	32	5	6
Ethiopia	22%	19%	20	7	5
Ghana	67%	69%	68	1	2
Kenya	63%	38%	51	3	3
Nigeria	9%	18%	13	7	3
Senegal	76%	59%	67	1	6
South Africa	57%	53%	55	3	2
Togo	21%	23%	22	6	6

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

* Middle East includes only Israel and Turkey

■ Index of Disillusionment with Democracy

Methodology

We measure disillusionment with democracy by taking the difference between perceptions about the procedure of democracy (free and fair elections) and perceptions about the outcome of democracy (rule by the will of the people). As before, we use a seven-point scale, with a rating of 1 for countries falling among the top seventh in terms of the disillusionment score in a given year and 7 for those falling into the bottom seventh, with most other countries, of course, falling somewhere in between.

On this particular scale, however, it is possible for some countries to have a negative score, showing that the number of people who say they are ruled by the will of the people is *greater* than the number of those who believe they experience free and fair elections. For the purpose of this exercise, these countries will be excluded from the rating and mentioned separately.

Rating for 2005

The 2005 ratings produce the interesting finding that globally disillusionment with democracy is rather low, at a rating of 6 on a scale of one to seven (from high to low disillusionment) (Table 6). And surprisingly, it is in Western Europe that people are most disillusioned. In fact, the index sits at between 6 and 7 in all regions of the world, but it is only 3 in Western Europe, where the disparity between the perception that elections are held freely and fairly (67%) and the perception that their country is ruled by the will of the people (31%) is highest. This is particularly true in the Netherlands (a difference of 60%), in Germany (a difference of 54%), in France (a difference of 43%), and in Portugal (a difference of 41%).

Inversely, this difference is negative in several African countries, where the perception that the country is governed by the will of the people is higher than the perception that the elections are held freely and fairly. This is true for Nigeria (-9%), Cameroon (-2%), Ghana (-2%), and Togo (-2%), as well as the Philippines (-10%), Bolivia (-9%), and Ecuador (-7%). Moreover, more Africans (34%) than Western Europeans (31%) believe that their country is governed by the will of the people. Who can give a lesson in democracy?

Table 6

Disillusionment with Democracy Index (DDI), Rating for 2005

	Percentage of population saying		Score on Disillusionment with Democracy	Gallup International Association rating on Disillusionment with Democracy Index
	Elections in my country are held freely and fairly ⁽¹⁾	The rule in my country is by the will of the people ⁽²⁾		
WORLD	47%	30%	17	6
Western Europe	67%	31%	36	3
Austria	66%	38%	28	4
Denmark	90%	57%	32	4
Finland	79%	42%	37	3
France	69%	26%	43	3
Germany	73%	18%	54	1
Greece	63%	35%	28	4
Iceland	73%	43%	30	4
Italy	46%	28%	18	6
The Netherlands	75%	15%	60	1
Norway	76%	54%	22	5
Portugal	81%	40%	41	3
Republic of Ireland	73%	42%	31	4
Spain	64%	62%	2	7
Switzerland	79%	55%	24	5
UK	70%	30%	39	3
Eastern and Central Europe	33%	22%	11	6
Bulgaria	31%	15%	16	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28%	13%	15	6
Croatia	41%	15%	26	5
Czech Republic	63%	34%	29	4
Kosovo	74%	46%	28	4
Lithuania	33%	23%	10	6
Macedonia	26%	11%	15	6
Moldova	43%	31%	11	6
Poland	44%	17%	27	4
Romania	63%	45%	18	6
Russia	22%	18%	4	7
Serbia	31%	20%	11	6
Ukraine	34%	26%	8	7
Middle East*	55%	36%	19	6
Israel	65%	49%	16	6
Turkey	54%	35%	20	5
North America	55%	37%	18	6
Canada	66%	36%	30	4
USA	54%	37%	16	6

	Percentage of population saying		Score on Disillusionment with Democracy	Gallup International Association rating on Disillusionment with Democracy Index
	Elections in my country are held freely and fairly ⁽¹⁾	The rule in my country is by the will of the people ⁽²⁾		
Latin America	34%	28%	5	7
Argentina	47%	33%	14	6
Bolivia	16%	25%	-9	-
Colombia	36%	30%	5	7
Costa Rica	52%	25%	27	4
Dominican Republic	58%	50%	8	7
Ecuador	37%	44%	-7	-
Guatemala	53%	43%	10	6
Mexico	23%	20%	3	7
Nicaragua	31%	18%	12	6
Panama	63%	24%	40	3
Paraguay	24%	23%	1	7
Peru	28%	25%	3	7
Uruguay	83%	54%	29	4
Venezuela	54%	50%	4	7
Asia-Pacific	40%	29%	11	6
Hong Kong	49%	46%	2	7
India	32%	22%	10	6
Indonesia	73%	38%	35	4
Japan	46%	29%	17	6
Korea	49%	13%	36	3
Malaysia	76%	71%	5	7
Pakistan	21%	25%	-4	-
Philippines	19%	29%	-10	-
Singapore	69%	47%	22	5
Taiwan	45%	43%	3	7
Thailand	49%	37%	12	6
Africa	34%	34%	0	7
Cameroon	31%	33%	-2	-
Ethiopia	22%	19%	3	7
Ghana	67%	69%	-2	-
Kenya	63%	38%	25	5
Nigeria	9%	18%	-9	-
Senegal	76%	59%	17	6
South Africa	57%	53%	3	7
Togo	21%	23%	-2	-

Source: Gallup International Association, Voice of the People survey 2005

* Middle East includes only Israel and Turkey

Note: The following countries have a negative score: Bolivia (-9), Ecuador (-7), Pakistan (-4), Philippines (-10), Cameroon (-2), Ghana (-2), Nigeria (-9), and Togo (-2). Numbers have been rounded.

Conclusion

The gap in perceptions about the inability to achieve the desirable outcome of democracy (rule by the will of the people) despite going through its rites and procedure (free and fair elections) reflects the degree of disillusionment with democracy. Countries with a wide gap are sharply divided between the two perceptions that elections are free and fair and that they are not experiencing rule by the will of the people.

Our data show that disillusionment with democracy is particularly characteristic of societies that have experienced democracy for a long time and where government structures have increasingly become complex, leading them to turn to technocratic rather than politically negotiated methods of decision making.

In recent years, decisions on some very important aspects of citizens' lives have migrated to institutions managed globally rather than nationally. And since democracy is, so far, restricted to within national boundaries, globalization and the role of new international institutions, including global business, seems to have eroded the sense of participation of the citizens of mature democracies, who had prior exposure to playing a greater role in deciding their own fate. Thus their sense of disillusionment is greater than that of the citizens of countries where participation in decision making was restricted due to local and foreign encroachment even prior to the increased globalization of economic and social interactions.

The subject of the "crisis of democracy" has been taken up by a large number of academic writers, including the critical school represented most prominently on this issue by Jurgen Habermas. However, no data are so far available on a global scale. The Gallup International Association Perception of Democracy Index (GIAPDI) and Disillusionment with Democracy Index (DDI) can therefore make a valuable contribution to this debate.

Notes

1. Just as public opinion about democracy itself may have been influenced in Ghana and Ethiopia by recent elections in those countries, American public opinion about free and fair elections may have been influenced by the allegations of voting irregularities in the 2000 and (to a lesser extent) 2004 elections in the US.
2. Although, interestingly, the figure in Canada alone is much higher, at 66% (comparable, in fact, to that in Western Europe); however, when Canada and the US are combined, the higher population in the United States pulls the average down.

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Ijaz Shafi Gilani is currently Chairman of Gallup Pakistan, the Pakistani affiliate of Gallup International Association. He is also the Pakistan representative of the world research organization ESOMAR. He holds a PhD in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and has taught and lectured at various universities in Pakistan and abroad. Among his other positions he is a Senior Fellow at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics and a past President of the Marketing Research Society of Pakistan.