



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Differences in Democratic Attitudes Between Thai Generations With Early Political Experiences Under Different Regimes

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ABSTRACT

Democracy is at risk of recession, especially in developing countries, a trend that raises concerns about democracy's resilience. Thailand represents a useful case study: the country has struggled against the return of an authoritarian regime, providing fertile territory for exploring the impacts of political regimes on the democratic attitudes of different generations. The main data set comes from the seventh wave of the World Values Survey (WVS) collected in Thailand. Various statistical methods have been employed to describe the characteristics of variables and test the research hypotheses, including frequency, percentage, and hierarchical logistic regression analysis. Respondents have been categorized into two groups: (1) those born before 1982 who lived under a dictatorship before living in a democratic regime; (2) those born in 1982 and later whose politically formative years began after Thailand adopted democratic rule but subsequently lived under an authoritarian regime. The findings demonstrate that the older Thai generation is generally more supportive of military rule, with younger people more likely to favor democracy. These results have important implications for our understanding of the stability of democracy because they suggest that democratic values are not simply the product of living in a democracy but are also shaped by early exposure to democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, Thai society has experienced polarization between the younger and older generations (Sookpanich, 2020). Younger Thai people, many of whom consider themselves supporters of democratic principles, have demonstrated in Bangkok and other major cities, voted for a party that opposed coups in the 2019 general election, and demanded amendments to the 2017 Constitution (Pankaew, 2019). Particular concerns have been raised about the 250 appointed

senators who share the power to vote for the Prime Minister with the 500 elected members of the House of Representatives (Sudsomboon et al., 2020). In contrast, many members of the older generation, who support the military coups that took place in 2006 and 2014, view the younger generation's pro-democracy movement as incitement, undisciplined, and self-indulgent (Mukdawijitra, 2020). The older group has also defended the current political system--which has balanced populism and technocracy--as an effective means of ensuring a stable democracy in Thailand (Ginsburg, 2009). The intergenerational turmoil

offers an opportunity to examine the role of political socialization in the formation of democratic attitudes. Many scholars have attempted to study how the foundations of a generation are established and contribute to their politics. The scholarly articles examining generational differences in political opinion have considered how people's formative years' economic, political, and social situations can explain why individuals from certain generations often share similar worldviews (e.g., Ahlfeldt et al., 2022; Tsatsanis et al., 2021).

Research in advanced democratic countries has found that individual life experiences and civic skills learned in one's youth combine with social and economic struggles to contribute to generational differences (e.g., McDonald, 2021; Smets, 2021; Ghazarian et al., 2020). Meanwhile, studies in post-communist and post-authoritarian countries have discovered another significant factor: the legacy of a regime (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2011).

Findings concerning the impacts of regime legacy on the democratic attitudes of citizens in post-communist and post-authoritarian countries can be divided into two groups. The first set of findings suggests that early experiences living in authoritarian or communist regimes produce a greater contempt for democracy, especially in countries where citizens have been heavily suppressed (e.g., Auer et al., 2022; Deter and Lange, 2022). Meanwhile, the second set of findings observes support for authoritarian ideas among those with experience living under authoritarian or communist regimes. For example, de Leeuw et al. (2020) demonstrate that citizens who grew up in former authoritarian countries shared democracy-resistant sentiments, and Mierina and Cers (2014) found that members of cohorts that grew up under communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe countries were more likely to be pessimistic about democratic institutions and processes, with those who matured during periods of democratic transition tending to be more optimistic about democracy.

Most studies focusing on the legacy of regimes in different generations have been conducted in countries characterized as a part of third-wave democracy, which generally transitioned from authoritarian or communist regimes to democracy (Huntington, 1991). However, recent trends show

that there is a decline in democracy and a return to authoritarian leadership in many countries around the world (House, 2021). This makes it imperative to ask whether democratic attitudes can be sustained in these conditions. Accordingly, this research compares the effects of living under authoritarian rule before experiencing democracy with the impact of a population experiencing democracy before a return to non-democratic leadership. This approach represents an effort to fill a gap in the existing research in this field.

After the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand was governed by the military rule until the early 1990s. During that time, many rights and freedoms were limited, especially between the 1960s and 1980s, when the junta used communist threats from neighboring countries to legitimize its oppression. By 1992, Thai citizens were weary of military rule and took to the streets in a massive pro-democracy demonstration in what became known as the Black May incident (Ferrara, 2015). It led to several political reforms in the country, which were accelerated by the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which generated disappointment among citizens, who responded by backing the draft of the 1997 constitution. That constitution would give them more power to participate in policymaking processes, and its promulgation established a legal framework promoting a free and fair election at the national and local levels. In addition, it stipulated that the Thai government should establish various organizations—such as the constitution court of Thailand, administrative court of Thailand, office of Ombudsman Thailand, National human rights commission of Thailand, and office of public sector anti-corruption commission—to ensure that all levels of government uphold laws and that its citizens can participate in politics (Dressel, 2009). In 1998, Freedom House began to classify Thailand as a democracy where civil liberties were protected by law (House, 2022). However, Thailand's democratic development was interrupted when a military coup ousted the Thaksin Shinawatra' government in 2006. Although the country returned to civilian rule in 2011, another coup took place in 2014. Consequently, Thailand again became a non-democratic country according to Freedom House's categorization.

Thailand's political context over the past few decades has enabled Thai citizens to be classified into one of two generations: (1) those born before 1982 who lived under a dictatorship before living in a democratic regime; (2) those born in 1982 and later, whose politically formative years began after Thailand introduced the 1997 constitution, some of whom were among the first-time voter in the 2001 election. Although the constitution was revoked in 2006, democratic institutions and practices remained intact to a certain extent (Ginsburg, 2009), enabling those born in 1982 and later to enjoy certain democratic privileges that the older generation had never experienced.

From a theoretical perspective, Lawyer (2017) have explained political attitudes as dependent variables derived from political socialization processes. Notably, political regime, a factor in political socialization, has been shown to influence the development of democratic attitudes, capturing both changes in the political landscape and an individual's own personal experiences of different regimes (e.g., Williamson, 2021; Werner and Marien, 2022). Building on this theoretical framework, this research considers the importance of different regime types by investigating whether the younger generation, whose politically formative years began when Thailand adopted democratic rule but later lived under the non-democratic rule, is less receptive to authoritarianism than the older generation.

The extant literature includes limited studies concerning the impacts of democratic regimes, especially in the context of countries that experienced democracy before reverting back to a non-democratic regime. This case study of Thailand is significant because Thailand represents such a country, allowing for valuable insights into how people react when their trust in democracy is shaken. This can also provide insight into whether people are likely to maintain their faith in democracy even after experiencing a democratic recession.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The correlation between democratic attitudes, political participation, and democracy has been discussed at length in the research on comparative politics and political theory (e.g., Vaughan, 2022;

Görtz and Dahl 2021). Inglehart and Welzel (2010) demonstrated a close link between people's support for democracy and their actual participation in politics, explaining that when people have democratic values, they are more likely to participate in politics. Meanwhile, low levels of democratic values threaten the survival of democracy. Elsewhere, Marien and Hooghe (2011) concluded that citizens with low levels of political trust find it more acceptable to break the law. Consequently, low levels of political trust might undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of legislation. Thus, generally speaking, the literature provides strong evidence that democratic attitudes support political participation and democratic consolidation (Azhar, 2015; Mont'Alverne, 2022).

The next question that requires verification concerns the characterization of democratic attitudes. In Almond and Verba, classic work, democratic attitudes describe the feeling or "attitudes people have toward the executives or administrative agencies that enforce laws and toward regulations effecting them...that part of the political system in relation to which they have a passive role" (1963, p. 63).

This definition establishes the foundation for the first approach to understanding democratic attitudes, namely, institutions and procedures, linking democratic attitudes with trust in the process of obtaining representation or invoking an election system, the function of government, and the accountability of those in power (Chang, 2017).

Based on Almond and Verba (1963) concept, studies connecting institutions with procedures and political trust have emerged. Bélanger and Nadeau (2005) have associated political trust with the multiparty electoral system: the more that people distrust a well-established political party, the more likely they are to support alternative political parties. Another example is the work of Turnbull-Dugarte (2022), which revealed that snap elections increased political trust. Electoral procedures can change people's attitudes via inclusiveness. That is, when the electoral setting allows citizens to engage more in politics—either in terms of frequency or options—the sense of involvement is ignited that leads to trust.

A criticism of this approach is that it does not consider certain important aspects of democracy, such as pluralism and civil liberties. Consequently, a second

approach to understanding democratic attitudes was established with Diamond (1999) proposal of measuring democratic attitudes in terms of citizens' perceptions of political rights and civil liberties, political pluralism and participation, freedom of expression and belief, and rule of law. Proponents of this second approach argued that when considering democracy, people tended to associate with political rights, freedoms, and liberties rather than political institutions or procedures (e.g., Connolly and Miller, 2022; Kakuba, 2022). In addition, by emphasizing the ability to express political opinions, freely engage in politics, and be equally protected under the law, these measurements of democratic attitudes empowered citizens (Alexander and Welzel, 2011).

A third approach defines democratic attitudes based on a perceived oversight of the first and second approaches. Citing the impact of citizens' benefits from a political system on their political formation, McIntosh et al. (1994) advocated including material gain, well-being, and social welfare in the equation. In brief, those who profited from a market-driven economy installed by a democratic system tended to feel good and support the regime, and vice versa. Despite the numerous studies (mostly conducted in post-communist countries) that have confirmed the existence of this effect (e.g., Lueders, 2022; Libman and Obydenkova, 2021), this third approach does not reflect how people truly understand or support democracy because it more plausibly indicates a citizen's psychological tendency to choose immediate economic interests over political rights, which form the core of democracy (Dalton et al., 2007). Accordingly, this study has not incorporated this approach to measuring democratic attitudes.

Using the first and second conceptualizations, this research typifies democratic attitudes as a combination of trust in political institutions and systematic processes and confidence in protecting political rights and freedoms. This description is sufficiently broad to include all attitudes that an individual could possibly have toward democracy. Meanwhile, it excludes those attitudes that may suggest a relationship with democracy but cannot transmit concrete meaning.

Therefore, this approach to understanding democratic attitudes has been employed as the research

framework, enabling investigation into the possible effects on democratic attitudes of growing up in different political settings, namely, authoritarian or democratic. Specifically, this research proposes that beliefs about democracy are influenced by citizens' exposure to particular forms of governance. We argue that an individual's exposure to democratic ideals during their politically formative years prompts the belief that democracy is the best form of government. In contrast, early exposure to authoritarian regimes inclines individuals toward non-democratic rule.

DATA AND METHODS

The main data set derives from the seventh wave of the WVS that was conducted in Thailand (Huang et al., 2008). The WVS is a well-established survey that covers numerous topics, including economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital, and subjective well-being. Unlike typical data sets from Thailand, which are collected from populations in a particular area, the WVS dataset includes populations from all regions. High-confidence random sampling produces a statistically valid result.

The study population was Thai citizens aged 18 years old and older, and the sample size was 1,500 samples. The following variables have been used in this study: (1) Generation: Q26 in the WVS reported the year of birth of respondents. The researcher then divided the sample into two groups. The first group included those born before 1982. The second group included those born in 1982 or later.

(2) Democratic attitudes: Six questions were used to measure attitudes toward democracy. These questions explored respondents' trust in political institutions and confidence in the protection of political rights and freedoms. The following questions were considered:

Q234: How important would you say having honest elections is for you?

Q235: Is having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections a good or bad way of governing this country?

Q236: Is having experts and not the government make decisions according to what they think is best for the country a good way of governing this country?

Q237: Is having the army rule a good way of governing

this country?

Q238: Is having a democratic political system a good way of governing this country?

Q253: How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in this country?

Survey participants could choose from four responses: (i) very much; (ii) fairly much; (iii) fairly bad; (iv) very bad. The answers were re-coded into two groups: yes (i and ii) and no (iii and iv).

(3) The control variables included were gender (Q260; male or female), place of residence (H_URBRURAL; urban or rural), education attainment level (Q275A), and socioeconomic status (Q288R; low-, middle-, or high-income family).

Q275A categorized the educational attainment of each participant into one of eight levels as follows: (i) early-childhood education/no education; (ii) primary education; (iii) lower secondary education; (iv) upper secondary education; (v) post-secondary non-tertiary education; (vi) short-cycle tertiary education; (vii) Bachelor's degree or equivalent; (viii) Master's degree or equivalent. The researcher re-coded this data to assign respondents to one of three educational attainment groups: 0–6 years, 7–12 years, and over 12

years.

The statistical software SPSS was used to analyze the data, with statistical methods including frequency and percentage used to describe the general characteristics of the independent variables, dependent variables, and control variables. Hierarchical logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between democratic attitudes and generation.

This methodology enabled the following hypothesis to be tested: Early experience living under a democratic regime is positively associated with democratic attitudes after controlling for demographic variables, including gender, place of residence, education level, and socioeconomic status.

RESULTS

The findings are divided into the following three components: (1) demographic characteristics of the study sample, (2) attitudes toward democracy, and (3) the relationship between generation and democratic attitudes. Table 1 reveals the sample's demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of the respondents' demographic characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Generation: Born before 1982	1,023	68.25
Born in 1982 or later	476	31.75
Total	1,499	100
Gender: Male	698	46.81
Female	793	53.19
Total	1,491	100
Residence: Urban	596	39.73
Rural	904	60.27
Total	1,500	100
Educational Attainment: 0–6 years	676	45.80
7–12 years	544	36.86
Over 12 years	256	17.34
Total	1,476	100
Family Income: Low	369	24.60
Middle	1,021	68.07
High	110	7.33
Total	1,500	100

The seventh wave of the WVS produced a total of 1,500 samples from Thai citizens aged 18 and over. Of these samples, 68.25 percent were born before 1982 (or 1,023 individuals), and the remaining 31.75 percent were born in 1982 or later (476 individuals).

A total of 1,491 samples included a response to the question concerning their gender: 698 males (46.81 percent) and 793 females (53.19 percent). Meanwhile, the total number of respondents from urban areas was 596 people (39.73 percent), with

respondents from rural areas totaling 904 (60.27 percent).

As mentioned, the educational attainment characteristic divided respondents into three groups. The first group included 676 individuals (45.80 percent) who had been to school for between 0 and 6 years. This was followed by a group comprising 544 individuals (36.86 percent) who had attended school for 7 to 12 years. Finally, 256 individuals (17.34 percent) corresponded to the most highly educated group, those who had received over 12 years of education.

A total of 369 individuals (24.60 percent) reported a low family income, 1,021 respondents (68.07 percent) reported a middle family income, and 110 respondents (7.33 percent) reported a high family income.

Table 2 presents the democratic attitudes of respondents in terms of frequency and percentage. The table shows that 1,474 respondents answered Q234. According to the results, 1,266 respondents

(85.82 percent) responded positively regarding honest elections, with 209 participants (14.18 percent) responding negatively.

According to the survey, 1,462 respondents answered Q235: 1,333 (91.18 percent) responded positively to the inquiry about strong leaders, and 129 (8.82 percent) responded negatively.

Next, of the 1,458 responses to Q236, 1,016 (69.68 percent) took a positive view of having experts make decisions, and 442 (30.32 percent) were negative.

Meanwhile, of the 1,462 responses to Q237, 900 (61.56 percent) were positive, and 562 (38.44 percent) took a negative view of army rule.

Regarding Q238, which concerned having a democratic political system generally, there were 1,467 responses: 1,286 (87.66 percent) were positive, and 181 (12.34 percent) were negative. Finally, of the 1,492 responses to Q253, 1,027 respondents (68.83 percent) believed there was respect for individual human rights in Thailand, and 465 respondents (31.17 percent) did not.

Table 2: Democratic attitudes of respondents

Democratic Attitudes	Frequency	Percentage
Is having honest elections important for you?		
No	209	14.18
Yes	1,266	85.82
Total	1,474	100
Is having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections a good or bad way of governing this country?		
No	129	8.82
Yes	1,333	91.18
Total	1,462	100
Is having experts and not government make decisions according to what they think is best for the country a good way of governing this country?		
No	442	30.32
Yes	1,016	69.68
Total	1,458	100
Is having the army rule a good way of governing this country?		
No	562	38.44
Yes	900	61.56
Total	1,462	100
Is having a democratic political system a good way of governing this country?		
No	181	12.34
Yes	1,286	87.66
Total	1,467	100
Is there respect for individual human rights in this country nowadays?		
No	465	31.17
Yes	1,027	68.83
Total	1,492	100

The last section of the research findings examines the research hypothesis via an analysis that uses a hierarchical logistic regression to check whether democratic attitudes fluctuate according to the

generation to which an individual belongs. Of the six dependent variables tested, only one turned out to be statistically significant: attitude toward military rule.

Table 3: Hierarchical logistic regression to determine generational differences in democratic attitudes after controlling for demographic variables

Control Variables	Coefficient B (S.E.) Q237= Yes (1)	
	Model I	Model II
Gender: Female = 0, Male = 1,	-0.257 (0.109)*	-0.262 (0.109)*
Domicile: Urban = 0, Rural =1	0.134 (0.120)	0.115 (0.121)
Education attainment:	388 (0.164)*	0.189 (0.180)
1-6 years = 0	221 (0.162)	0.198 (0.163)
7-12 years =1		
Over 12 years = 1		
Family income:	0.009 (0.230)	0.057 (0.231)
Low = 0	0.103 (0.208)	0.119 (0.209)
Middle = 1		
High = 1		
Independent Variable		-0.364 (0.135)*
Born before 1982 = 0		
Born in 1982 or later = 1		
Constant	0.192 (0.248)	0.398 (0.260)
% correct prediction	61.4	61.1
Model-chi square (df)	12.201	19.475
-2 Log likelihood	1905.162	1897.888
Nagelkerke R square	0.011	0.018

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, and ***p<0.001

Table 3 presents the correlation between early experiences living under democratic regime and attitudes toward democracy after controlling for demographic variables. This reveals an association between being born in 1982 or later (i.e., living one's politically formative years under democracy) and attitudes toward military rule, an observation that persisted after controlling for gender, domicile (rural or urban), educational attainment, and family income (constant =0.398, $B=-0.364$, $p<0.05$, $R^2=0.018$). Meanwhile, those who grew up under a dictatorial regime tended to be more likely to support military rule. The standard errors for the variables included in the analysis were under 2.0, indicating that there was no evidence of multicollinearity, meaning that it is unlikely that the independent variables are correlated. In addition, the probability of the block chi-square in Model II was below 0.05, meaning that there were no significant differences between Models I and II. This enables the conclusion that there is a hierarchical relationship between generations and democratic

attitudes. The R square value increased from 0.011 in model I to 0.018 in model II after adding the age cohort variable. As hypothesized, adding generations to our model significantly improved the model's predictive power.

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the older generation of Thai citizens was generally more supportive of military rule, with younger people more likely to favor democracy. There are three factors that contribute to the differences in democratic attitudes between Thailand's older and younger generations, namely, (1) perspectives on the benefits of democracy, (2) memories of the political system, and (3) the effects of "democratic enclaves."

(1) Perspectives on the benefits of democracy

Because older Thais have lived through periods of authoritarianism and witnessed the economic development of the 1980s and early-1990s, the period during which Thailand was considered an Asian

tiger economy (Muscat, 2016), they have firsthand experiences enabling them to compare life under authoritarian rule with the inefficiencies of life under democracy. Notably, it is not only the economic stability associated with military rule that appeals to older Thais but also the sense of order and discipline (Satitniramai, 2019). In a society where young people are often considered disrespectful and disobedient, older generations may view military rule as a means of restoring traditional values. Ultimately, it seems that older generations choose support for military rule as the lesser of two evils. Although they may be aware of its drawbacks, they consider it a better option than democracy, which, for them, has failed to deliver on its promises. In contrast, younger people have experienced considerable political freedom under democracy, meaning that they are less able to compare its shortcomings with the benefits of military rule.

The younger generation is more abstract and less invested in specific outcomes, with the older generation more concrete and more focused on tangible results. According to Werner and Marien (2022), citizens who grow up under democracy tend to move away from performance-based support and toward procedural support. This happens because increased experience with democracy allows citizens to understand that the success of democracy depends not on any one individual or party but on the procedures and institutions that underpin it. The shift from performance-based to procedural support is an important part of democratic consolidation that helps to ensure that citizens continue to believe in democracy, even when their particular party or candidate is not in power, which makes it more difficult for authoritarian regimes to take hold. Hence, the younger generation is less concerned with whether or not democracy “works” in a practical sense (Oser et al., 2022), which characterizes the thinking of older citizens, who are still adjusting to the idea of self-rule and are, therefore, more likely to base their approval or disapproval of democracy on its actual outcomes.

(2) Memories of the political system

Aside from different democratic expectations due to growing up in different political regimes, memories of political systems are another factor that can be used to explain this problem (Herf, 1997). In authoritarian

governments, the ruling party or government controls most aspects of society and the economy. They typically restrict freedom of expression and assembly and impose strict controls on the media. They often justify their repression by claiming that it is necessary to maintain order or protect national security. Consequently, under authoritarianism, memories are often weaponized by those in power as a means of control and repression. In such cases, memories are not only partial but also serve to legitimize the dictatorship and its policies (Matveeva, 2009). Living under such political circumstances, Thailand’s older generation has no alternative memories to understand the political system beyond the narratives provided by the military leaders. Consequently, Thailand’s military dictatorship inevitably experienced no challenges provoking this generation to collectively remember it as the most legitimate and proper regime for society. In contrast, the younger generation of Thais was brought up in a democratic environment that allowed them to ask questions and seek alternative explanations. This has empowered them to create new narratives that challenge the official version of events. In recent years, the development of technology has accelerated the speed and convenience of communication, allowing younger Thai people to quickly receive information from many sources via the Internet and social media. These media make communication more rapid and help people to grasp the news more thoroughly. Furthermore, they are effective sources of political movements. The increased access to information and communications technology has made the younger generation better informed about political issues (Chantima, 2021). Consequently, it can be said that the memories of each generation are greatly affected by the political regime in place during their formative years. Furthermore, the difference in political regimes has produced different interpretations of history.

(3) Effects of “democratic enclaves”

The final major reason that younger Thai people are more likely to support democracy than their predecessors is the effect of “democratic enclaves.” In the comparative politics literature, the term “democratic enclave” refers to state institutions or unambiguous regulatory spaces in society where the authoritarian regime’s power is limited and

replaced by a more democratic rule of law (Gilley, 2010). Several factors may contribute to the existence of consolidated democratic enclaves within authoritarian states. For example, they may result from deliberate efforts by reform-minded elites to create islands of democracy within otherwise undemocratic states. Alternatively, they may arise spontaneously as local communities attempt to assert some degree of control over their own affairs in the absence of effective central governance. In either case, they represent an effort to construct democratic enclaves within an authoritarian context.

To create political legitimacy, the military junta in Thailand has made some concessions to democracy (Singkaew, 2022). These concessions have served as the foundation for democratic enclaves within the country. The presence of democratic enclaves in Thailand can be observed in the 2019 general election, which displayed a degree of political competition, despite some concerns about the field being tilted in favor of the military-backed party. The opposition was permitted to campaign and hold rallies without any major incidents of violence, and despite the recent coups, various democratic institutions established under the 1997 constitution survived. These agencies guarantee certain rights and freedoms of expression. Finally, civil society groups, as well as media freedom, were allowed to serve as checks on government power (Yantramethi and Sumedho, 2018). Thus, generally, although Thailand's military-led government may have provoked some democratic backsliding, there remain democratic enclaves within the country that have allowed the younger generation to maintain pressure for reform, and continue working toward a more inclusive and representative political system.

The presence of democratic enclaves has had a different effect on different generations: the older generation did not take advantage of the opportunities provided by democratic enclaves because they were not used to democratic practices and institutions, but the younger generation, having become more familiar with democratic institutions, processes, and practices during their politically formative years (Phromlee, 2021), maintained their commitment to democracy despite the challenges posed by the autocratic elements within Thai society.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study enables four main policy recommendations. First, because the political situation during an individual's politically formative period significantly influences attitudes toward democracy, an early introduction to democracy via schooling and daily life lessons among adolescents is necessary to promote democratic efficacy and trust.

Second, in this study, the older generations were more interested in what they thought they could get rather than in democratic processes that emphasize equality, rights, and freedoms. Consequently, it is necessary to promote the process of political participation by giving people the opportunity to participate in political decision-making processes (Gonzalez and Mayka, 2022). This might begin with community participation before shifting to a focus on national participation.

Third, this research discussed the ways that the monopoly authoritarian governments have on memory-building precludes people from recognizing other forms of government. For people to create alternative memories and compare regimes based on their needs, it is crucial to provide alternative media to communicate political information.

Finally, to preserve democratic practices and instill a sense of democracy in the people, Thailand should promote participation in the institutions remaining as democratic enclaves, such as elections and peaceful assemblies.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Previous research has found that people who grow up in a democracy are more likely to support democracy (e.g., Ferrín and Hernández, 2021; Mujal-León and Langenbacher, 2015). This aligns with this study's findings, which recognize that individuals who grew up in democratic societies are more likely to support democracy, even upon no longer living in a democracy. This means that even if a country experiences an autocratic period, its citizens may eventually return to supporting democracy.

Thus, this study demonstrates the capacity of democratic ideals to survive in unfavorable political environments. The long-term impact of democratic exposure means that Thailand's younger generation

is more resilient against the detrimental effects of authoritarian rule. This finding is important because it provides evidence that democracy can withstand challenges from autocratic regimes and that democracy may be a more resilient form of government than previously thought. These findings have implications for countries struggling to maintain democracy in the face of autocratic threats.

Another implication is that democratic enclaves can represent a crucial form of support for democratic attitudes. In the Thai context, the democratic enclave can be seen as a laboratory for democracy, where citizens of all ages can engage in activities that promote democratic values and skills, with democratic enclaves providing opportunities for networking and building relationships with like-minded individuals who can support and encourage each other in their efforts to promote democracy (Liu, 2011). Although the concept of a democratic enclave is not new, having been studied and written about extensively, there remains much to learn about how these enclaves function and what impact they have on citizens. Hence, more research is needed in this area.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the analysis offers several interesting insights, some limitations must be addressed. First, the results derive from a single country (Thailand), so they might not apply in other contexts.

Second, the two generations studied here are not homogeneous. Each includes individuals with different degrees of exposure to and experience with democracy and authoritarianism. That is, some members of each group have had little contact with either regime type, and others have lived through multiple iterations of both types. For democratic preferences to be studied properly, differences in exposure to democracy between members of the same generation should be tested.

Finally, it is important to know how intense exposure to an established political regime contributes to the development of opinions about democracy. The amount of time an individual spends living under a specific political regime may affect the intensity with which their opinions are formed. Consequently, future research could explore how these experiences affect an individual's attitude toward democracy.

CONCLUSION

Generations are categorized by the events, societal changes, and political regimes they mutually witness or experience. Aspects of their distinct political setting lead members of each generation to develop a certain common way of thinking and experiencing that influences their attitudes and behaviors, as this study demonstrates (Brañas-Garza et al., 2022). We have confirmed the hypothesis that growing up in a democracy fosters a positive attitude toward democracy by comparing Thai generations raised under democratic and non-democratic regimes. The indicator that supported our hypothesis was the attitude towards a military government. The generation that grew up under democracy did not approve of a military government replacing the civilian government, with the sentiment persisting even in an undemocratic political environment.

To conclude, our study aimed to investigate the long-term effects of democracy and revealed that democratic attitudes could be cultivated during childhood and adolescence that shape an individual's view of democracy as an adult. The importance of developing democratic attitudes during this formative period can be applied as a guideline for the promotion of democracy in other countries. In terms of theoretical benefits, this research confirms democracy's ability to survive under unfavorable conditions and reaffirms political socialization theory as useful for explaining political attitudes.

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