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The quality of government determinants of support for democracy*

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This paper argues that in addition to “what democracies do,” “how democracies do it” produces an independent source of support for democracy. We argue that a high procedural quality of bureaucracy may promote support for democracy by diminishing the likelihood of the occurrence of cognitive dissonance between democracy as an ideal and the experienced. Furthermore, we expect the beneficial impact of a higher quality of government (QoG) to be more visible in younger democracies. We subject this claim to a multilevel empirical analysis with large *n* and *N* and across a considerable time span. The analysis reveals that higher QoG is linked with higher levels of diffuse support, and that this effect is stronger in younger democracies. The data are less supportive with respect to the positive impact of QoG on specific support, calling for further research into the matter.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Following a growing literature on regime support, this paper argues that in addition to “what democracies do,” “how democracies do it” produces an independent source of support for democracy. A high procedural quality of bureaucracy may promote support for democracy by facilitating citizens' calculations on the utility of democracy or by generating “the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society” (Lipset, 1959, 86). In addition to this, the extent of impartiality may affect citizens' democratic values and behavior by providing cognitive resonance or consonance between democracy as an ideal and practice.

Furthermore, we expect the beneficial impact of a higher procedural quality of public bureaucracy to be more visible in younger democracies, due to three reasons. First, the expectations of citizens about “how democracy works” upon its advent and after many years, or perhaps centuries, of nondemocratic rule may be excessively high, and therefore more easily affected by “shocks.” Second, the tradition of partiality in the exercise of power is likely to be strong in new democracies (Diamond, Plattner, & Shedler, 1999, p. 1), making the probability of disappointment in democracy as an ideal and practice more likely to happen. Therefore, it stands to reason that if the problem of partiality in the exercise of the public authority is suitably addressed from the very onset of democracy, then the likelihood of

cognitive dissonance occurrence diminishes, and diffuse and specific support for democracy will be higher compared to young democracies with lower quality of government (QoG). In older democracies, where democracy is truly “the only game in town,” regime support could be less dependent on fluctuations in quality of public bureaucracy. Finally, due to low institutional consolidation (e.g. parties, civil society) the saliency of the input side as regards political legitimacy is expected to be less prevalent in younger democracies, compared to older ones.

We subject this claim to a multilevel empirical analysis with large *n* and *N* and across a considerable time span. Data over regime support is obtained from the longitudinal multiple-wave dataset of the World Values Survey (WVS) while data on the procedural quality of public bureaucracy comes from the International Country Risk Group data (ICRG). The analysis reveals that the procedural quality of bureaucracy has a beneficial effect on diffuse support, and that this effect is stronger in younger democracies. When it comes to specific regime support, it is only in the youngest democracies that QoG has a significant positive effect.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Regime support: Principles and performance

Following David Easton's classic work (1965, 1975, 1976), we consider political support—the “way in which a person evaluative orients himself to some object through either his attitudes or his behaviour” (Easton, 1975, p. 436)—as a multidimensional concept and distinguishes

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between specific and diffuse regime support, where the former is the peoples' attitudes and evaluations of "outputs and performance of the political authorities" (Easton, 1975, p. 437) and the latter is more what "an object is" rather than "what it does" (Easton, 1975, p. 444). In the case of a democratic regime, diffuse support implies endorsement of democracy as an abstract ideal and specific support implies peoples' positive perceptions of outcomes and performances of democracy.

The two dimensions of support are often treated as independent from each other (Chu, Bratton, Lagos, Shastri, & Tessler, 2008; Dalton, 2004; Lagos, 2003), stemming from what we call a classical interpretation of Easton's approach that "Outputs and beneficial performance may rise and fall while this support, in the form of a generalized attachment, continues" (Easton, 1975, p. 444). There is however, an emerging view that Easton himself recognized that peoples' experience of what governments do and how well they do it is one of the inputs for their judgements of the worthiness of "these objects for their own sake" (Easton, 1975, p. 446) or, in other words, for diffuse support. As Magalhães notes (Magalhães, 2014, p. 78), this line of reasoning could be also found in the works of Lipset (1959), Dahl (1971), and Linz (1978).

Easton's overall theorization of regime support has not remained unchallenged. In the context of support for democracy, it has been conceptualized as a 5-points continuum running from the most diffuse (feelings about belonging to a political community) to the most specific, as exemplified by trust in specific political actors (Norris, 1999). A fundamental innovation of this literature is the argument that specific support is not only about the overall performance of the regime, but also about citizens' perceptions of the officeholders (Mishler & Rose, 1997; Norris, 1999, 2011; Teixeira, Tsatsanis, & Belchior, 2014). Consequently, specific support has been measured not only through peoples' evaluations of whether authorities' actions meet their needs and demands, but also as confidence in specific political actors and institutions.

The regime support literature provides overwhelming backing to the notion that citizens indeed engage with political regimes from both Eastonian perspectives (Dalton, 2004; Norris, 2011 among others), however it often examines either only one of the support types or employs indicators of support that do not adequately differentiate between the different types (Kumlin & Esaiasson, 2012; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011; Wagner, Schneider, & Halla, 2009 among others). For example, many researchers use the "satisfaction with the way democracy works" item of mass surveys (SWD) as an indicator of support for democracy (Linde, 2012; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014 among others). There is, however, a big question mark as to whether SWD is a valid indicator of support either for the principles of democracy or for the performance of a democratic regime (Canache, Mondak, & Seligson, 2001; Linde & Ekman, 2003; Norris, 2011).

2.2 | Regime support: Determinants

The determinants of regime support have been the subject of an extensive academic debate. The first generation of studies on regime support was based on the argument that a degree of support for political authority hinges on the quality of representation: When citizens perceive that their views are not represented, their support declines

(Lijphart, 1999; Norris, 1999; Rohrschneider, 2002). Consequently, it examined institutions and rules that determine access to power (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005; Klingemann, 1999; Lijphart, 1999). The core message of this literature is that consociational systems produce higher level of political support than majoritarian systems. Although not completely undisputed (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Karp & Bowler, 2001), this argument seems to hold in a large number of studies

Later literature on the input side refines the winner-loser hypothesis (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Campbell, 2015; Singh & Thornton, 2016) and adds additional dimensions, such as the variation in ideological positions in the party system (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011; Singh & Thornton, 2016), or focuses on executive power and coalition composition (Campbell, 2015; Singh & Carlin, 2015).

A more recent literature has turned to the output side of the political process. Unlike the input side that determines access to power, the output side deals with the efficiency and effectiveness of regimes (see among others, Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Dahlberg, Linde, & Holmberg, 2015; Magalhães, 2014; Wagner et al., 2009). This literature distinguishes between outputs that are directly related to material living standards (Bratton & Mattes, 2001; Mattes & Bratton, 2007) and issues such as corruption (Booth & Seligson, 2009; Linde & Erlingsson, 2012; Seligson, 2002), impartiality of public bureaucracies (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Linde, 2012), or quality of public policies and their implementation (Magalhães, 2014), which collectively we label as QoG (Rothstein, 2009).

2.3 | Support for democracy: The quality of government factor

The notion that QoG may be an independent source of support for democracy originates in the idea that governability is a variable among democracies (Fukuyama, 2013; Schmitter & Karl, 1991). Empirically it has been shown that democracies indeed do vary in terms of the quality of their government (Bäck & Hadenius, 2008; Charron & Lapuente, 2010; Montinola & Jackman, 2002). Since democracies vary on the quality of government, it is expected, in accordance with the classical Easton take on specific and diffuse support as having different etiologies, that this variation would be reflected in citizens' valuations of democratic performance and hence specific support for democracy. Indeed, there is a growing literature that examines a link between real or perceived QoG and satisfaction with democracy (Chu et al., 2008; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Linde & Erlingsson, 2012; Wagner et al., 2009). However, a more recent interpretation of a link between experience, specific and diffuse support suggests that it is reasonable to expect that QoG may also affect diffuse support. This notion has however been seldom subjected to empirical investigation, and there is a clearly visible gap when it comes to investigating the link between QoG and diffuse support and also both types of support. A notable exception here are two papers that showed a positive link between both types of support on the one hand and government procedural fairness (Linde, 2012) and government effectiveness (Magalhães, 2014) on another.

Although dealing with the same topic, these papers approach the issue of support rather differently. Magalhães's ultimate goal is to empirically substantiate Easton's idea that diffuse support may derive from

experience. He builds his argument in the traditional political science way by arguing that the ability of the state to formulate and implement its goals (government effectiveness) facilitates citizens' valuations of the authorities as successfully addressing citizens' needs and demands, hence boosting first specific support and then diffuse support.

Unlike Magalhães, Linde (2012) argues that the citizens' perceptions of being treated fairly by authorities in the implementation of democratically agreed policies and decisions generate legitimacy. The willingness of individuals to defer to the decisions and rules of impartial authorities ignites support for democracy in principle (diffuse) and SWD (treated as specific support), simultaneously. Thus, Linde approaches the issue of support not through rational assessments by citizens of the congruence between their needs and demands and the authorities' actions, but through the willingness of citizens to accept authorities based on the impartiality in the policy implementation. In other words, he emphasizes not so much what democracies do, but how do they do it as an independent source of support for democracy.

Although both are important contributions, these papers are not without their limitations. Linde's analysis is cross sectional and with a relatively small geographical coverage, leaving considerable questions over the issue of change in perceptions and support and the generalizability of the findings. He employs SWD as a measure of specific support, despite being himself one of those who cast serious doubt over the appropriateness of such an interpretation of the indicator (Linde & Ekman, 2003). Magalhães's analysis has considerable geographical and time coverage, and is geared to understand the difference between democracies and nondemocracies. He powerfully argues for the exclusion of the SWD questions on explicit support for democracy¹ from the aggregated indicators of diffuse and specific support. At the same time, he employs an indicator of government effectiveness that is conceptually fuzzy: It neither clearly relates to the input (quality of policy formulation), nor output side of the political process (quality of policy implementation), and also has elements of the procedural fairness or how democracies do it (the quality of the civil service).

Following a large literature, we argue that how democracies do it is an independent source of support for democracy. Drawing on Linde's research (Linde, 2012), we argue that procedural fairness may promote support for democracy by providing cognitive consonance between democracy as an ideal and practice.

Importantly, we also argue that the importance of procedural fairness for support for democracy should be greater in younger democracies. We subject the claim to a multilevel empirical analysis with large n and N and over a considerable time span. The focus of our analysis is the interaction between an indicator of the QoG that captures the procedural fairness of the output side of politics and the number of years under democracy.

3 | ARGUMENT AND HYPOTHESES

If how democracies do it is an independent source of support for democracy, then procedural fairness or impartiality in the exercise of

public authority (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008) may affect support by facilitating the citizens' calculations of the utility of democracy or by generating "the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society" (Lipset, 1959, p. 64). In addition to this, the extent of impartiality may affect the citizens' democratic values and behavior by providing cognitive dissonance or consonance between democracy as an ideal and practice.

We start with an observation by two established scholars of democracy and democratic values that "...at this point in history, democracy has an overwhelmingly positive image throughout the world. ... [This represents] a dramatic change from the 1930s and 1940s, when fascist regimes won overwhelming mass approval in many societies; and for many decades, Communist regimes had widespread support. But in the last decade, democracy became virtually the only political model with global appeal, no matter what the culture" (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 70). When this "overwhelmingly positive image" of democracy as an ideal does not fit actual democratic practice, there is a high probability of the emergence of cognitive dissonance between democracy as an ideal and practice, which in turn negatively affects both dimensions of support: diffuse (ideal) and specific (practice).

Social psychologists suggest that the cognitive pattern—"one desires something, finds it unattainable, enters into cognitive dissonance and then reduces the dissonance by criticizing its source"—is very stable (Elster, 1983), given that social cognition is one of heuristics and other shortcuts (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). To illustrate this idea, in the fable "The Fox and the Grapes" by Aesop a fox tries to eat some high-hanging grapes. When she understands that she cannot reach the grapes, she first gets very frustrated and anxious, and then begins rationalizing that the grapes are most likely sour and are not worth eating.

Indeed it is well known that when certain citizens or groups of citizens feel excluded from formulating public decisions support for democracy diminishes. Normally, it is argued that this happens due to instrumental reasoning (since public decisions will affect all citizens, including those who didn't take part in their formulation, those who are underrepresented evaluate the authorities as not meeting their needs and demands), but also because it represents a disturbance to the established reasoning script linking equality in representation and fairness with democracy. Such dissonance between an ideal and practice may lead to disappointment in democracy as an ideal and practice, and deterioration of support at both diffuse and specific levels.

Although empirically a scenario in which a group's interests are underrepresented in a democracy is not unheard of, perhaps, a more common situation is that most public policies are *de jure* universal (for example, access to health care or education for all), but the implementation of these policies is ridden with corruption, cronyism, nepotism, and other forms of partiality. The disappointment with democracy as an ideal and practice is more likely to occur through the peoples' engagement with the output part of the political process than through the input part (Dahlberg et al., 2015; Gjefsen, 2012). The reason for this is that the majority of citizens engage with the implementation of public policies more often than they engage with the input side of the political process, like, for instance, voting in elections. Consider, for instance, the fact that in any given country, public

¹"Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government" for specific support, and "Having a democratic political system" as a desirable way of governing the country.

bureaucracy is the largest public organization; therefore citizens' exposure to public administration is high regardless of their actual involvement in the input side of politics. Due to this naturally high frequency of encounters between citizens and public bureaucracy, individuals are more likely to arrive at overall cognitive dissonance or consonance between democracy as an ideal and practice as a result of their interactions with public bureaucracy.

Furthermore, we argue that the probability of the occurrence of cognitive dissonance between democracy as an ideal and practice as a consequence of the citizens' bad experiences with public bureaucracy is higher in younger democracies due to the following reasons. First, the expectations of citizens about how democracy works upon its advent and after many years, or perhaps centuries, of power abuse and corruption may be excessively high, which makes the issue of QoG particularly sensitive. Second, the tradition of partiality in the exercise of power is likely to be strong in new democracies (Diamond et al., 1999, 1), making it difficult to eradicate partiality and corruption quickly. Therefore, it stands to reason that if the problem of partiality in the exercise of the public authority is not suitably addressed from the very onset of democracy, then the likelihood of the cognitive dissonance occurrence would be high, and support for democracy is lower compared to young democracies with lower quality of government. In older democracies, where democracy is truly the only game in town, regime support could be expected to be less dependent on the quality of government. Third, in young democracies there will be significant groups of people who have benefitted from the old authoritarian regime, and therefore can be seen as losers of democratization. The extent to which these people will be prepared to accept or at least tolerate democracy is likely dependent on the perceived impartiality of institutions: as long as institutions are impartial, supporters of the old regime will be able to get what they are entitled to in terms of, for example, public services. This may not be the case if the work of the public bureaucracy is characterized by partiality, likely benefitting supporters of the new regime. Finally, there is an additional argument that separates old and new democracies vis-a-vis output side considerations. This argument runs mainly through institutional consolidation (see, Dahlberg et al., 2015), namely, that in young democracies the input side of the political system is weaker and therefore less salient than the output side. This is attributed to the lack of crystallized cleavage structures (Kitschelt, 1995; Whitefield, 2002), high electoral volatility and party system instability (Tavits, 2005), diminished consistency of party ideology and less party programmatic appeals (Keefer 2007; Kitschelt, 1995), resulting in low citizen engagement and citizen participation in politics and the representation game (Karp & Banducci, 2007). In other words, evaluations, legitimacy, and therefore support of the system are more likely to be gauged by what the system actually delivers.

To sum up, we argue that due to an overwhelmingly positive image of democracy in the world since the 1990s, democratic practices that do not live up to the democratic ideal may create cognitive dissonance, which in turn affects both types of support for democracy. Cognitive dissonance or consonance is likely to be the outcome of people's engagement with public bureaucracies, because people's exposure to public administration is considerably higher than their engagement with the input side of the political process. Furthermore,

this effect is likely to be stronger in young democracies for reasons related to the psychological and institutional consolidation mechanisms described above.

H1 *On average, the higher the procedural quality of a country's public bureaucracy, the higher diffuse support for democracy.*

H2 *The effect of procedural quality of a country's public bureaucracy on diffuse support for democracy is stronger in young democracies.*

H3 *On average, the higher the procedural quality of a country's public bureaucracy, the higher specific support for democracy.*

H4 *The effect of procedural quality of a country's public bureaucracy on specific support for democracy is stronger in young democracies.*

4 | DATA AND METHOD

To test our hypotheses we employ a multilevel series method that allows us to analyze data at both the individual and national levels. To test our hypotheses we use data from three sources. To measure our dependent variables we employ the longitudinal multiple-wave dataset of the WVS. The WVS data is also used for several individual-level control variables. The procedural quality of public bureaucracy in countries around the globe is captured through the ICGR data. We obtain indicators for several country-level control variables from the QoG Institute's database (Teorell et al., 2015).

4.1 | The dependent variable

We measure regime support in two ways, to capture different aspects of support for democracy. Our choice is based on the Eastonian approach to support for democracy, findings of previous research and the explorative data reduction analysis (mainly factor loadings) performed for this paper.

The use of the rejection of nondemocratic alternatives is a well-established way of capturing diffuse support in the literature, and to measure diffuse democratic support, we rely on the following question the WVSs waves 3–6:

I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?

- Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections
- Having experts, not governments, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country
- Having the army rule

These three items are included in an index ranging from 0 to 9, where higher values indicate more support for democracy. The

employed WVS question also includes a fourth item, "Having a democratic political system." However, a recent methodological literature argues that this item does not belong to the same underlying component as the rest (Ariely & Davidov, 2011; Magalhães, 2014). This was confirmed by principal-component analysis, and we therefore excluded this item from the resulting indicator of diffuse support.

To capture specific regime support, we use a more evaluative question about democracy that is included in the WVSs waves 3–5:

I'm going to read off some things that people sometimes say about a democratic political system. Could you please tell me if you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly, after I read each of them?

- In democracy, the economic system runs badly
- Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling
- Democracies aren't good at maintaining order

These three items are included in an index ranging from 0 to 9, where higher values indicate more support for democracy. Again, the question includes a fourth item—"Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government"—which according to the factor analysis belongs to a different dimension of democratic support, and it was therefore excluded from the resulting measure of specific support.

4.2 | The independent variable

To capture the notion of the procedural quality of public administration we employed the Political Risk Services (PRS) Groups's QoG indicator from their International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) project. The ICRG indicator of QoG is the mean value of the ICRG variables Corruption, Law and Order, and Bureaucracy Quality, scaled 0–1. Higher values indicate higher quality of government. Corruption (originally 6 points) is an assessment of corruption within the political system. Law and Order is assessed separately, with each subcomponent comprising zero to three points. The Law subcomponent is an assessment of the strength and impartiality of the legal system, while the Order subcomponent is an assessment of popular observance of the law. Bureaucracy Quality (originally 4 points) assesses to what extent the bureaucracy has the strength and expertise to govern without drastic changes in policy or interruptions in government services. In low-risk countries, the bureaucracy tends to be somewhat autonomous from political pressure and to have an established mechanism for recruitment and training (Teorell et al., 2015).

Admittedly, our independent variable is only a proxy of the notion of procedural quality in public bureaucracy. However, direct indicators of impartiality are only few (for example, from the QoG Institute Expert Survey (Dahlström et al., 2015)), and none of them are of a time-series character. We, however, are sufficiently confident that it captures the procedural quality of public bureaucracy. For example, the attributes of bureaucracy captured in the Bureaucracy Quality component of the ICRG composite measure tend to go hand in hand with lower corruption. This component is also highly positive and statistically significant correlated with a direct measure of impartiality from the QoG Institute Expert Survey ($r = .83^{***}$, $N = 97$).

For the independent variable as well as the control variables we use the observations from the first year of each wave (but see below on the Gini coefficient).

4.3 | Controls

We control for a variety of factors at both individual- and system-levels that have been found to have an effect on system support. First is the level of economic development, measured with an estimate of the countries' gross domestic product per capita (logged). To capture the more recent dynamics of economic development, we also employ gross domestic product growth. Data comes from the World Bank's World Development Indicators, and are provided by the Quality of Government Institute (Teorell et al., 2015).

Second, we control for economic inequality, using an estimate of the Gini index of inequality in equivalized (square root scale) household disposable income, using Luxembourg Income Study data as the standard (Solt, 2008; Teorell et al., 2013). Where data was missing for a particular year, we have used observations for the available year closest to that wave. In most cases, this meant using an observation from 2005 to 2009 to replace a missing value for 2010.

Since partiality may be a larger issue for more heterogeneous societies, and also following the previous literature on system support, we include the measure of ethnic fractionalization (Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, & Wacziarg, 2003).

To test H2 and H4 about the interaction between the quality of government and the length of democratic experience, we employ an indicator, measuring the number of years the country had been democratic at the time of the survey (Years of democracy [YoD]), using the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset (Cheibub, Gandhi, & Vreeland, 2010). Years of democracy were counted from 1946 or from the first available year in the dataset. The resulting variable is logged (ln) transformed as we expect the marginal utility of the stock of democracy to decrease over time.

We also include a number of individual level controls. Previous research has found that education and income tend to have positive effects on support for democracy (Huang, Chang, & Chu, 2008). We thus include the variables Income (self-placement on a scale where 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 the highest income group), Education level (ranging from 0—no formal education to 8—university-level education with degree) as well as Unemployed, indicating if the respondent was unemployed at the time of the survey. We also control for Female and Age.

Since we study regime support as support for democracy, we only include democratic countries in the analyses. With the aim of identifying the universe of democracies, we use the imputed Freedom house/Polity score (Freedom House, n.d.; Marshall & Jaggers, 2002; Teorell et al., 2015). The Freedom House index measures political rights and civil liberties with a number of items, including the fairness of the electoral process, the right of opposition parties to take part, freedom for media and organizations, the right of assembly, etc. Polity IV focuses on electoral matters—such as elements of competition and the role of popular participation in recruiting the executive—and the distribution of power, including constraints on the executive (for a critical discussion and comparison of the two indicators, see Hadenius & Teorell,

2005). The scale ranges from 0 to 10 where 0 is least democratic and 10 most democratic (Hadenius & Teorell, 2005; Teorell et al., 2015), and only countries with a democracy score higher than 8 are included in the analysis.

As individuals are nested within country-waves (surveys) and the country-waves are nested within countries, we use multilevel analysis where variance components are estimated both for country and country-wave. Standard errors are clustered on country.

5 | ANALYSIS

Tables 1 and 2 report the estimates regarding diffuse and specific support, respectively. In both tables, Model 1 is the baseline model with all control variables, except for the YoD, which is included in Model 2. Model 3 includes our explanatory variable, length of democratic rule, and the interactive term between these two focal variables.

In the diffuse support analysis (Table 1) the QoG indicator enters statistically significant in Models 1 and 2. On average, higher values of the quality of government are associated with a higher legitimization of the core principles of democracy as suggested in the theoretical argument. In both models individual level characteristics, but gender, seem to exert a robust and significant effect on diffuse support. Older

citizens appear to be more supportive of the principles of democracy, as are the more educated. On the other hand, socioeconomic conditions that lead to unemployment may erode individual support, which runs counter to the literature that portrays diffuse support as impervious to regime performance (Torcal & Moncagatta, 2011).

The interaction term between QoG and YoD enters in Model 3. The main effect of this interaction for QoG is still significant and positively signed, suggesting that it is at the lower values of years of democracies that the effect of QoG on diffuse support is substantial. Figure 1 visualizes the interaction effect and provides further insight. One can observe that the QoG effect is present across the sample with a subtle difference in its magnitude between younger and older democracies. This can also be seen from Table 3, which reports estimates of the impact of QoG across two groups: younger (the cut-off point is 33 years) and older democracies. Overall, these results provide some support for H2: Whilst it is clear that QoG is of importance for support for democracy, the difference between younger and older regimes is only subtle.

In the specific support analysis (Table 2), the QoG indicator enters statistically insignificant in Model 1. In Model 2, which includes years of democracy as a control variable, the QoG coefficient is statistically significant, but is signed negatively against expectations. In both models the level of economic development, measured as GDPpc, is

TABLE 1 QoG and diffuse support for democracy

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Quality of government	1.992*** (0.548)	1.933*** (0.639)	4.204* (2.403)
Gini	-0.00603 (0.0102)	-0.00682 (0.0135)	-0.0103 (0.0146)
(ln)GDPpc	0.204 (0.128)	0.178 (0.154)	0.180 (0.154)
GDP growth (annual %)	-0.0107 (0.0199)	-0.00928 (0.0193)	-0.0113 (0.0197)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.325 (0.461)	0.231 (0.486)	0.392 (0.490)
Sex	-0.0200 (0.0242)	-0.0167 (0.0267)	-0.0167 (0.0267)
Age	0.00683*** (0.00174)	0.00738*** (0.00182)	0.00738*** (0.00182)
Educational level	0.109*** (0.0134)	0.115*** (0.0134)	0.115*** (0.0135)
Income	0.0113 (0.0149)	0.0265*** (0.00600)	0.0265*** (0.00600)
Employment status	-0.0614* (0.0325)	-0.0860** (0.0373)	-0.0860** (0.0373)
(ln)Years of democracy		0.0301 (0.141)	0.536 (0.665)
Quality of government # (ln)Years of democracy			-0.678 (0.775)
Constant	1.646 (1.287)	1.749 (1.322)	0.160 (2.245)
lns1_1_1			
Constant	-0.573*** (0.202)	-0.522*** (0.186)	-0.550*** (0.190)
Constant	-1.066*** (0.187)	-1.243*** (0.186)	-1.231*** (0.184)
Insig_e			
Constant	0.628*** (0.0377)	0.591*** (0.0213)	0.591*** (0.0213)
Countries	38	37	37
Country-years	82	78	78
Observations	90793	81451	81451
AIC	372147.2	327743.7	327745.0
BIC	372279.0	327883.3	327893.9
ll	-186059.6	-163856.9	-163856.5

Note. QoG = Quality of government; GDP = gross domestic product. Standard errors in parentheses. AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion

* $p < .10$,

** $p < .05$,

*** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2 QoG and specific support for democracy

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Quality of Government	-0.942 (0.784)	-1.342** (0.661)	2.981** (1.245)
Gini	0.00464 (0.00709)	-0.00176 (0.00718)	-0.00802 (0.00815)
(ln)GDPpc	0.333*** (0.0820)	0.319*** (0.0799)	0.332*** (0.0732)
GDP growth (annual %)	0.00912 (0.0139)	0.00275 (0.0127)	-0.00141 (0.0104)
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.343 (0.268)	-0.322 (0.327)	-0.205 (0.341)
Sex	-0.0915*** (0.0315)	-0.0643*** (0.0239)	-0.0643*** (0.0240)
Age	0.000584 (0.00201)	0.00197 (0.00190)	0.00198 (0.00190)
Educational level	0.121*** (0.0266)	0.144*** (0.0216)	0.144*** (0.0216)
Income	0.0325 (0.0205)	0.0543*** (0.0103)	0.0543*** (0.0104)
Employment status	-0.111 (0.0727)	-0.175** (0.0832)	-0.175** (0.0832)
(ln)Years of democracy		0.0971 (0.0673)	1.110*** (0.380)
Quality of Government # (ln)Years of democracy			-1.260** (0.493)
Constant	2.029*** (0.635)	2.057*** (0.506)	-1.300 (1.342)
Ins1_1_1			
Constant	-2.105 (2.873)	-1.504*** (0.264)	-1.460*** (0.154)
Ins2_1_1			
Constant	-1.371** (0.559)	-1.854*** (0.170)	-2.072*** (0.375)
Insig_e			
Constant	0.610*** (0.0447)	0.565*** (0.0288)	0.565*** (0.0288)
Countries	20	19	19
Country-years	25	23	23
Observations	26734	23109	23109
AIC	108578.9	91815.3	91815.1
BIC	108693.6	91936.0	91943.9
ll	-54275.4	-45892.6	-45891.6

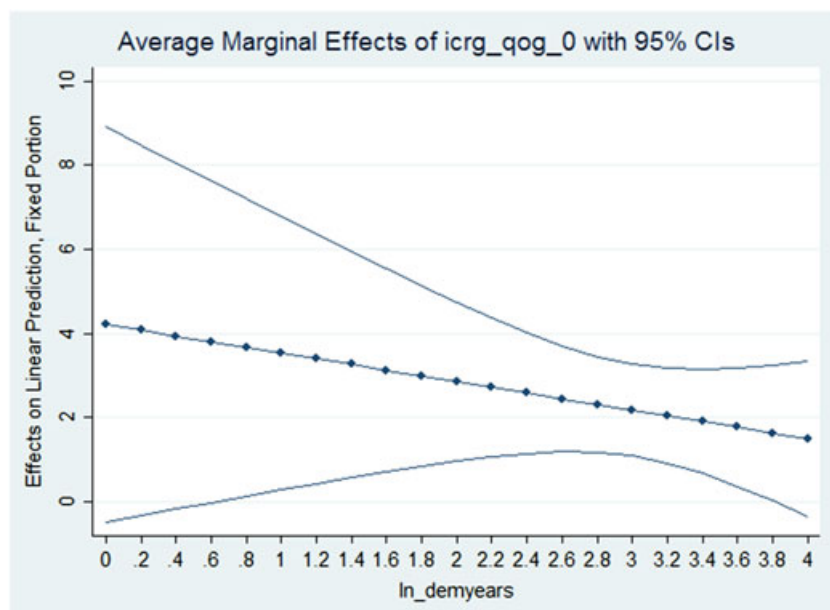
Note. QoG = Quality of government; GDP = gross domestic product. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .10$,

** $p < .05$,

*** $p < .01$.

FIGURE 1 Average marginal effect of quality of government on diffuse support, conditional on the number of years under democratic rule (ln transformed)



associated with higher specific support as predicted by the instrumental utility from democracy literature. In addition to this, gender and education enter as statistically significant predictors for specific

support: where men and better-educated respondents exhibit higher specific support for the democratic system. Overall, the data do not provide support for H3.

TABLE 3 QoG and diffuse support for democracy in younger and older democracies

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All	Young	Old
Quality of Government	1.992*** (0.548)	2.688*** (0.570)	0.775 (0.897)
Gini	-0.00603 (0.0102)	-0.0176 (0.0124)	-0.00173 (0.0124)
(ln) GDPpc	0.204 (0.128)	0.142 (0.192)	0.353*** (0.0979)
GDP growth (annual %)	-0.0107 (0.0199)	0.0743*** (0.0247)	-0.0449* (0.0229)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.325 (0.461)	1.164* (0.653)	-0.0118 (0.466)
Sex	-0.0200 (0.0242)	0.0283 (0.0271)	-0.0577 (0.0358)
Age	0.00683*** (0.00174)	0.00267 (0.00165)	0.00948*** (0.00233)
Educational level	0.109*** (0.0134)	0.0734*** (0.00995)	0.138*** (0.0202)
Income	0.0113 (0.0149)	-0.0229 (0.0244)	0.0331*** (0.00781)
Employment status	-0.0614* (0.0325)	-0.0341 (0.0280)	-0.141*** (0.0478)
Constant	1.646 (1.287)	1.754 (1.864)	1.037 (0.935)
Ins1_1_1			
Constant	-0.573*** (0.202)	-0.730** (0.362)	-1.042*** (0.291)
Ins2_1_1			
Constant	-1.066*** (0.187)	-0.980*** (0.331)	-1.146*** (0.249)
Insig_e			
Constant	0.628*** (0.0377)	0.659*** (0.0673)	0.598*** (0.0255)
Countries	38	19	20
Country-years	82	35	47
Observations	90793	41024	49769
AIC	372147.2	170699.4	200954.1
BIC	372279.0	170820.1	201077.5
ll	-186059.6	-85335.7	-100463.1

Note. QoG = Quality of government; GDP = gross domestic product. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .10$,

** $p < .05$,

*** $p < .01$.

In Model 3, in which we test H4, both the main and the interaction effects are significant. What the signs of the two coefficients in question suggest is that in younger democracies QoG has a significant and

positive effect on specific support. As revealed by the negative sign of the interaction coefficient, the effect of the procedural quality on specific support weakens as democracies mature. Figure 2 plots the

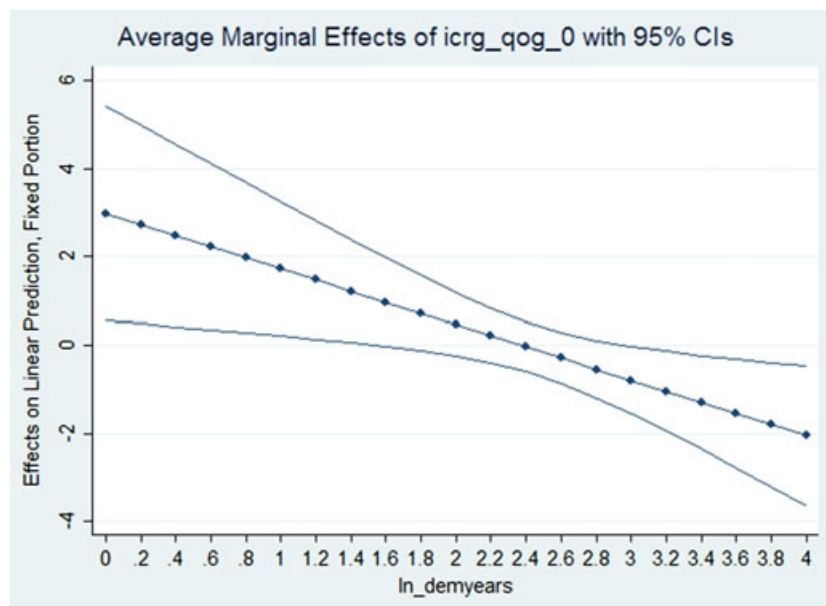
**FIGURE 2** Average marginal effect of quality of government on specific support, conditional on the number of years under democratic rule (ln)

TABLE 4 QoG and specific support for democracy in younger and older democracies

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All	Young	Old
Quality of Government	-0.942 (0.784)	0.541 (0.689)	-0.822 (0.546)
Gini	0.00464 (0.00709)	0.0215* (0.0120)	-0.000978 (0.00941)
(ln)gdppc	0.333*** (0.0820)	0.621*** (0.0809)	0.196*** (0.0431)
GDP growth (annual %)	0.00912 (0.0139)	-0.0488 (0.0429)	0.00381 (0.0177)
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.343 (0.268)	-1.010 (0.720)	-0.520** (0.263)
Sex	-0.0915*** (0.0315)	-0.110* (0.0581)	-0.0768** (0.0316)
Age	0.000584 (0.00201)	-0.00399*** (0.00144)	0.00303 (0.00251)
Educational level	0.121*** (0.0266)	0.0627* (0.0328)	0.160*** (0.0275)
Income	0.0325 (0.0205)	-0.00343 (0.0363)	0.0547*** (0.0103)
Employment status	-0.111 (0.0727)	-0.151** (0.0631)	-0.121 (0.115)
Constant	2.029*** (0.635)	-0.989 (0.714)	3.075*** (0.631)
Ins1_1_1			
Constant	-2.105 (2.873)	-17.67*** (3.716)	-1.499*** (0.195)
Ins2_1_1			
Constant	-1.371** (0.559)	-1.665*** (0.272)	-18.66 (96.40)
Insig_e			
Constant	0.610*** (0.0447)	0.680*** (0.0688)	0.551*** (0.0380)
Countries	20	7	14
Country-years	25	10	15
Observations	26734	10696	16038
AIC	108578.9	44936.3	63269.4
BIC	108693.6	44987.2	63377.0
ll	-54275.4	-22461.1	-31620.7

Note. QoG = Quality of government; GDP = gross domestic product. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$,

** $p < 0.05$,

*** $p < 0.01$.

marginal effect of QoG on specific support over the ascending values of YoD. The plot suggests that in younger democracies the quality of governance is associated with positive effect on specific support for democracy. For the middle of the YoD distribution, as the confidence intervals suggest, this effect becomes largely indistinguishable from zero. Moreover, the effect of QoG turns to be negative for the oldest democracies in the sample. Table 4, which reports estimates of the impact of QoG across two groups—younger (the cut-off point is 33 years) and older democracies—suggests that the quality of government is a predictor for specific support in neither of the groups. Cumulatively, these results suggest that age of democracy QoG is an unlikely moderating factor in the link between QoG and specific support, however further examination of the relationships between QoG and specific support is required.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We argued that in addition to the mechanisms of instrumental evaluation of democracy and legitimacy, high support for democracy may be sustained by diminishing the likelihood of the occurrence of cognitive dissonance between “an overwhelmingly positive image” of democracy as the best mode of governance, which this form of government has

enjoyed around the world since the 1990s, and democracy as practice. This approach stems from the ideas that “how democracies go about the business of governance” matters and that the citizens' experience of interaction with public bureaucracy is the likely input for their images of democracy in practice. These are coupled with the insights from social psychology about social cognition, to suggest that if cognitive dissonance between democracy as an ideal and as practice occurs, the support for democracy as an ideal (diffuse) and support for a specific democracy also diminishes.

We further argued that the occurrence of cognitive dissonance is more likely in younger democracies, unless the issue of partiality in the exercise of the public authority is effectively addressed. Based on this, we developed four testable propositions, which were subjected to empirical analysis. We conducted a series of multilevel analyses with a good geographical coverage and time span.

The interaction effect between the procedural quality of public bureaucracy and support for democracy is the focal point of our analysis. In terms of diffuse support, the data provide support to the formulated hypotheses: Higher quality of government is positively associated with the support of democratic ideal in all democracies (H1), and this effect is stronger in younger democracies (H2), albeit the magnitude of the QoG's impact across two groups of democracies may be minimal. This finding speaks to the literature that examines regime performance

and regime support (Magalhães, 2014; Torcal & Moncagatta, 2011), aligning with a more recent research that holds that diffuse support for democracy is not impervious to regime performance.

The results of our analysis are less supportive with regard to the so-called specific support for democracy, which is narrowly focused on the democratic institutions and procedures of one's own country. First of all, the estimates for QoG are inconsistent across all three specifications, both in terms of the significance levels and the direction of the coefficient. Based on the estimates in Models 1 and 2, we conclude that the data do not provide support to H3. In other words, specific support is not stronger in countries with higher quality of government. In terms of the distinction between younger and older democracies, although the visualization of the impact of the QoG-years of democracy interaction on specific support makes it clear that the effect of QoG is positive in the younger democracies of the sample; it however turns to be negative for the oldest democracies under consideration. Based on this finding, we therefore have to conclude that the data do not provide support for H4.

Although running counter to the postulated hypotheses, these findings are within plausible theoretical explanations. Given the empirical fact that citizens in older democracies generally enjoy relatively higher level of QoG (than in younger democracies), their framework of reference could be different than that of citizens in younger democracies. In other words, citizens in older democracies could from the very beginning be more critically oriented towards the issues of partiality and corruption among their officeholders, than their counterparts in younger democracies. Therefore, if an upward change in QoG would be likely to be appreciated in younger democracies, in older democracies it could be seen as only a marginal improvement, or as an issue that should have never be a problem in the first place, and could therefore trigger a dissatisfaction rather than support.

These findings could also be due to insufficient operationalization and measurement of the notion of specific support. Although on this matter we follow the established literature, we contend that the World Values Survey survey questions employed in this study as a measure of specific support reflect the notion in question poorly. Empirical analysis involving all or at least several alternative measurements of specific support should be the first step in illuminating the character of the relationship between QoG and specific support. Furthermore, dynamic over-time comparison is perhaps the optimal empirical strategy allowing examining the relationship in its temporal complexity.

To conclude, the results of the analysis suggest that it is in the young democracies—where citizens have both recent memories of partial treatment or corruption by officeholders and also high expectations about what democracies do for their citizens—that QoG reveals its importance for regime support. The results provide a great deal of confidence when it comes to diffuse support, however regarding specific support we treat these conclusions as tentative and requiring further examination.

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