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Many versions of democracy

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Bangalore: It was an intellectually stimulating evening for Bangaloreans: international experts on Tuesday discussed democracy as understood by people living in various corners of the world.

Views were shared by nations fairly new to the concept, like Libya. India figured too, as a country where popular movements are renewing the meaning of democracy.

The speakers were representatives of Global Barometer Survey, an organized effort to voice public opinion on democracy. The understanding and expectations varied. "Within Africa, when a majority from

Botswana consider political freedom to be democracy, 80% South Africans believe economic factors like bridging the gap between the rich and the poor are basic requirements from a democracy," said Robert Matters, a representative of AfroBarometer.

The West Asian version was presented by Mohammed Al-Masri of Arab Barometer, with four assumptions the Arabs have on democracy: that region is not compatible for democracy; it cannot provide security for the region; Arabs are not meant for democracy and change will never emerge from the Arab world. According to Matha Lagos, Latin America is still influenced by the feudal structure.