



A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

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Psychological Involvement and Political  
Sophistication in East Asia

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## **Asian Barometer**

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

# **Working Paper Series**

Jointly Published by

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# **Psychological Involvement and Political Sophistication in East Asia**

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Abstract: Using two waves of Asian Barometer Survey (ABS II and III), this paper (1) examines citizens' psychological involvement and political sophistication in East Asia and (2) explores how socioeconomic and political environments, as well as individual demographic features, could have shaped their psychological involvement and political sophistication. Longitudinal comparison based on aggregated information shows that East Asians' psychological involvement in politics is relatively stable. Meanwhile, in most surveyed East Asian societies, a majority of their citizens show at least somewhat interest in politics, follow political news closely, and discuss politics with their family members and friends. Comparatively speaking, the East Asians' political sophistication, as evaluated on the basis of their self-reported information, is less encouraging: in most surveyed East Asian societies, a majority of their citizens do not have sufficient confidence in their ability to participate in politics or to understand complicated political issues. They also do not believe, as citizens, that they could have any influence over their government. Regression analysis, integrating both societal and individual level information via multilevel modeling, reveals that political environments, as well as individual demographic features, matter with respect to the East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication.

Citizens' psychological involvement and political sophistication play a critical role in understanding any society's political dynamics. They also provide the cognitive foundation for any research on public opinion and political behavior (Jerit et al. 2006; Luskin and Bullock 2011; Zaller 1992). In practice, it is hard to image a healthy democracy with a large number of citizens who care little about politics or hold pessimistic views of their capability of participating in and influencing the political process (Agger et al. 1961; Dancey 2012). For non-democracies, it should not be a challenge to vision the distinct ruling strategies that authoritarian leaders may adopt, when confronted with citizens showing varying levels of interest in politics and capability of participation (Bunce and Wolchik 2010; Fukuyama 2011).

Theoretically, without some systematic understanding of citizens' psychological involvement and political sophistication, any study on critical political attitudes like political trust, regime support, and policy preferences lacks a critical cognitive foundation that enables reliable inferences. Similarly, without such knowledge, any research on political behavior like electoral participation, protests, and revolts misses a critical attitude-behavior linkage that is indispensable for effectively examining mass politics. Thus, before we examine different aspects of citizen politics and how they are related to the practice of democracy in East Asia, we need to address the following questions: Are East Asians generally interested in politics? Do they follow political news regularly? Do they talk about politics in their daily lives? What is their general assessment of their capability of participating in and influencing their respective domestic politics? Moreover, what are the possible socioeconomic and political environmental features (i.e., societal-

level factors) and demographic features (i.e., individual-level factors) that could have shaped East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication?

In this paper, we use two waves of Asian Barometer Survey (ABS II & III) to address the aforementioned questions. The first section presents both cross-sectional and longitudinal comparable data on East Asians' psychological involvement in politics from thirteen East Asian societies. To make a comprehensive evaluation, we adopt both attitude- and behavior-based measures, i.e., general interest in politics, frequency of following political news, and habit of discussing politics. Next section focuses on similar comparable information on the East Asians' political sophistication with self-assessment measures, i.e., internal and external political efficacy. After such extensive descriptive analysis, we further explore the possible influence of socioeconomic and political environments, as well as individual demographic features, on the East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication with the help of multilevel modeling. The last section concludes and draws some implications for related research.

### **Psychological Involvement in East Asia**

Whether to form consistent political views or initiate effective political activities, citizens have to show at least somewhat interest in politics. Even for the citizens who claim little interest in politics, it is unlikely that their political apathy is naturally born. Arguably, such "exit" strategies are likely to be the results of their previously frustrating or discouraging engagement with politics, which, in turn, could have been driven by their then-interest in politics.<sup>1</sup> Thus, citizens' psychological involvement in politics provides

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the existence of a large number of politically apathetic citizens also has consequential implications for any society. For related information, see Hirschman (1970).

the cognitive foundation for any research on political attitudes and behavior, including even political non-attitudes. To effectively gauge East Asians' interest in politics, the ABS adopts both attitude- and behavior-based measures: self-reported general interest in politics (ABS II Q056/ ABS III Q43), habit of following political news (ABS II Q057/ ABS III Q44), and frequency of discussing politics with family members or friends (ABS II QII52/ ABS III Q46).<sup>2</sup> Given that both waves of ABS surveys have used national representative probability samples and adopted survey instruments of the same wording for the aforementioned measures of political interest, we can legitimately compare the aggregated level of political interest across societies covered by the two waves of ABS surveys.

Figure 1 presents East Asians' self-reported interest in politics, i.e., the percentages of respondents saying they were "Somewhat interested" or "Very interested" in politics. Grey columns stands for the weighted percentages regarding each of the twelve societies covered in the ABS III; while, black dots stand for corresponding information regarding the thirteen societies covered in the ABS II. All thirteen societies have been ranked in an ascending order on the basis of their ABS III results.

[Figure 1 about here]

Generally speaking, a large number of the East Asians are interested in politics. In ABS III, the percentage of citizens who were at least somewhat interested in politics ranged from around 30 percent in Taiwan to about 74 percent in Philippines. Eight out of

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<sup>2</sup> Question wording: "How interested would you say you are in politics?" (ABS II Q056/ ABS III Q43). "How often do you follow news about politics and government?" (ABS II Q057/ ABS III Q44). "When you get together with your family members or friends, how often do you discuss political matters?" (ABS II QII52/ ABS III Q46). For detailed information on the answer categories, see the appendix.

the twelve surveyed East Asian societies had close to or more than 50 percent of their citizens reporting at least somewhat interest in politics. Moreover, the percentages were quite stable between the two waves of ABS surveys. Changes of more than 5 percent were only observed in five societies: Singapore (9%), mainland China (11%), Malaysia (8%), and Philippines (21%) witnessed varying increase in the size of their citizens who reported at least somewhat interest in politics; while, Mongolia (-7%) was the only society experienced some substantial decrease in the size of such psychologically involved citizens.

In addition to the self-reported attitude-based measure of psychological involvement in politics, the ABS has also included two widely used behavior-based measures: frequency of following political news and habit of discussing politics. Following the same empirical strategy used in Figure 1, Figure 2 illustrates the percentages of East Asians following political news several times a week or every day (Figure 2a), as well as those occasionally or frequently discussing politics with family members or friends (Figure 2b), from the two waves of ABS surveys.

[Figure 2 about here]

Compared to the information revealed by the self-reported attitude-based measure (illustrated in Figure 1), the two behavior-based measures suggest an even higher level of political interest among the East Asians. As displayed in Figure 2a, in ABS III, the percentage of citizens who followed political news several times a week or every day ranged from around 32 percent in Cambodia to about 88 percent in Japan. Ten out of the twelve surveyed East Asian societies had close to or more than 50 percent of their citizens following political news closely. Similar to the pattern in Figure 1, the

percentages were quite stable between the two waves of ABS surveys. Changes of more than 5 percent were only observed in four societies: mainland China (9%) and Mongolia (8%) witnessed some increase in the size of their citizens who closely followed political news; while, Indonesia (-5%) and Vietnam (-7%) experienced some decrease in this regard.

The second behavior-based measure of political interest, i.e., habit of discussing politics, as shown in Figure 2b, suggests a similarly high level of political interest among the East Asians. In ABS III, the percentage of citizens who occasionally or frequently discussed politics with their family members or friends ranged from about 34 percent in Indonesia to around 81 percent in Philippines. Nine out of the twelve surveyed East Asian societies had close to or more than 50 percent of their citizens discussing politics occasionally or frequently. Compared to the previous two measures of political interest, this behavior-based measure shows more fluctuations between the two waves of ABS surveys: changes of more than 5 percent were observed in eight societies. Mainland China (11%), Malaysia (10%), and Japan (9%) witnessed varying increase in the size of their citizens who occasionally or frequently discussed politics with their family members or friends; while, Indonesia (-12%), Cambodia (-14%), Taiwan (-5%), Thailand (-12%), and Mongolia (-10%) experienced some different levels of decrease in this regard.

Overall, given the survey data using both attitude- and behavior-based measures, as well as the longitudinal information from different waves of surveys, it is reasonably to argue that the East Asians show some significant psychological involvement in politics: a large number of them not only report at least somewhat interest in politics, but also follow political news closely and discuss politics with their family members or friends.



Moreover, except for the political discussion measure, the East Asians' self-reported interest in politics and habit of following political news demonstrate considerable stability across the two waves of ABS surveys. In other words, the East Asians' significant interest in politics does provide a solid cognitive foundation for our further research on their political attitudes and behavior.

### **Political Sophistication in East Asia**

In addition to psychological involvement in politics, people's political sophistication is another critical aspect for understanding mass politics. To what extent the public can effectively understand, participate in, and exert their influence over politics is of great significance for interpreting their political views as well as forecasting their possible political behavior (Verba et al. 1971, 1978). Political scientists are always concerned that politics might be too complicated and time-consuming for most people, who are inclined to be information misers and, thus, willing to consult heuristics under various conditions to make political decisions (Boudreau 2009; Bullock 2011; Kam 2005; Kuklinski and Quirk 2001; Sniderman et al. 2001). Although political scientists hold distinct views on the consequences of such information misers for mass politics, the significance of citizens' cognitive capability of understanding politics is widely acknowledged. Moreover, the public's beliefs in their capability of participating in and influencing politics have been widely documented as critical predictors of their political participation through a variety of channels (Beaumont 2011; Chamberlain 2012; Finkel 1985; Kenski and Jomini 2006). To effectively capture the East Asians' political sophistication, the ABS has included a battery of self-reported efficacy measures: capability of

understanding politics (ABS II Q127/ ABS III Q134), ability of participating in politics (ABS II Q126/ ABS III Q133), and influence over their government (ABS III Q135).<sup>3</sup>

Adopting the same empirical strategy used in previous sections, Figure 3 presents the comparable aggregated information regarding the citizens' self-reported capability of understanding politics in twelve East Asian societies from the two waves of ABS surveys.

[Figure 3 about here]

Compared to the information presented in previous sections on the East Asians' significant interest in politics, their beliefs in their capability of understanding politics are, on average, not that encouraging. In ABS III, the percentage of citizens who reported somewhat confidence in their capability of understanding politics ranged from around 9% in Thailand to about 41% in Japan. In other words, in all surveyed East Asian societies, a majority of citizens did not think that they could really understand what is going on in politics. Moreover, the East Asians' pessimistic views of their capability of understanding politics were quite stable between the two waves of ABS surveys: changes of more than 5 percent were only observed in four societies. Vietnam (-8%) witnessed some significant drop in the size of its citizens reporting sufficient capability of understanding politics; while, Malaysia (6%), Singapore (8%), and Japan (7%) experienced varying increase in the size of such cognitively capable citizens.

In addition to the cognitive capability of understanding politics, people's beliefs in their ability of participating in (internal efficacy) and influencing politics (external

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<sup>3</sup> Respondents were asked whether they "Completely agree," "Agree," "Disagree," or "Completely disagree" with the following statements: "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on" (ABS II Q127/ ABS III Q134). "I think I have the ability to participate in politics" (ABS II Q126/ ABS III Q133). "People like me don't have any influence over what the government does" (ABS III Q135).

efficacy) are also critical components of their political sophistication. Figure 4 presents related information from the surveyed East Asian societies.<sup>4</sup>

[Figure 4 about here]

Compared to the assessment of their cognitive capability of understanding politics, the East Asians, on average, hold more optimistic views of their ability of participating in or influencing politics. In ABS III, as illustrated in Figure 4a, the percentage of citizens holding sufficient confidence in their ability of participating in politics ranged from about 20 percent in Japan to around 69 percent in Cambodia. Meanwhile, as displayed in Figure 4b, the percentage of citizens reporting high beliefs in their influencer of their respective government ranged from around 24 percent in Thailand to about 52 percent in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the general picture here is still less encouraging than the East Asians' interest in politics (shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2). Only three out of the twelve surveyed East Asian societies had close to or more than 50 percent of their citizens reporting sufficient confidence in their ability of participating politics, i.e., Mongolia, Thailand, and Cambodia. Meanwhile, only two out of the eleven surveyed East Asian societies had close to 50 percent of their citizens holding strong beliefs in their influence over the government, i.e., Philippines and Indonesia.

In most of the surveyed East Asian societies, the size of citizens reporting sufficient confidence in their ability of participating in politics was quite stable between the two waves of ABS surveys. Changes of more than 5 percent were only observed in four societies: Thailand (-11%) witnessed a significant drop in the number of citizens with

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<sup>4</sup> Since the external efficacy instrument was only included in the ABS III, related longitudinal information is not available for Figure 4b.

high internal efficacy; while, mainland China (12%), Singapore (14%), and Philippines (16%) experienced double digit growth in the size of such citizens.

Overall, given the survey data presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4, it is fair to argue that citizens of the surveyed East Asian societies have a low to moderate level of political sophistication: the majority of them find politics and government issues too complicated for them to understand. Though a larger number of them hold sufficient confidence in their ability to participate in politics or influence their government, the corresponding percentage in most of the surveyed societies falls below 50 percent. Similar to their interest in politics, the East Asians' political sophistication also demonstrates considerable stability between the two waves of ABS surveys.

### **Correlates of Psychological Involvement and Political Sophistication**

It is widely acknowledged that, as some critical features of mass politics, people's psychological involvement in politics and their political sophistication are closely associated with some of their personal characteristics (Bizer et al. 2004; Dalton 2013). Beyond such individual-level features, a society's socioeconomic conditions and political institutions may also shape how its citizens engage politics psychologically and cognitively (Huckfeldt et al. 1995; Kuklinski and Quirk 2001; Powell 2004). In this section, we adopt an appropriate statistical modeling technique (i.e., multilevel regression models) that allows us to integrate both individual characteristics and societal features into a coherent framework to examine possible correlates of the East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication.

As previously discussed, engaging politics demands sufficient cognitive capability and some necessary material resources. Contemporary research on public opinion and

political behavior almost unanimously agrees that individuals' cognitive capability plays a key role for understanding mass politics (Tourangeau et al. 2000; Zaller 1992). To capture its influence at the individual level, we use people's education attainment that was measured in the ABS III with a 10-point ordinal scale (SE5), ranging from "No formal education" to "Post-graduate degree."<sup>5</sup>

Engaging politics also demands necessary resources. For instance, some spare time is indispensable for either following political news or discussing politics. Moreover, in most cases, political news is not free to the public, particularly those delivered via the mass media. Following similar arguments of the prominent resource model in the literature on political participation (Nie et al. 1976; Verba et al. 1971, 1978), we expect the East Asians' economic status to be significantly correlated with their psychological involvement and political sophistication. And we use the East Asians' self-reported assessment of their families' financial status (SE13a, a 4-point scale)<sup>6</sup> in the ABS III to capture the possible influence of material resources. Following the convention in related literature, we also include people's age (SE3) and its quadratic item to capture the resource-implications of life cycle.

In addition to the aforementioned measures of the East Asians' cognitive capability and accessible resources, we also control for the possible influence of distinct

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<sup>5</sup> Question wording: "What is your highest level of education?"

<sup>6</sup> Question wording: "Does the total income of your household allow you to satisfactorily cover your needs?" For detailed information on the answer categories, see the appendix

socialization experiences at the individual level: respondents' gender (SE2) and location of residency (Level3).<sup>7</sup>

The ABS covers a group of East Asian societies with varying socioeconomic and political environments. In ABS III, the POLITY IV score of the twelve surveyed societies almost covered the whole spectrum, ranging from autocracies (i.e., mainland China and Vietnam at -7) to full democracies (i.e., Japan, Taiwan, and Mongolia at 10). These societies' socioeconomic development also shows significant variance. For instance, the associated Human Development Index (HDI) ranged from 0.538 in Cambodia to 0.91 in Japan in ABS III. This provides a great opportunity to examine how such varying socioeconomic and political environments could have shaped the East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication. Accordingly, in subsequent regression analysis, we include these two indicators to capture the possible influence of varying socioeconomic and political environments among the surveyed East Asian societies.

Multilevel level regression models are quite similar to conventional regression models, in terms of making statistical inferences. This modeling technique offers two key advantages for our analysis here. First, it allows us to integrate factors from different levels (e.g., individual and societal level variables) into one statistical model for analysis; and takes the nested data structure into consideration for more effective statistical estimation. For instance, all citizens of Japan share the same POLITY IV value and HDI score but differ in terms of their demographic features. If we were to use conventional

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<sup>7</sup> Both gender and location of residency are dichotomous variables. "Male" is coded as 1 for the former; and "Urban residency" is coded as 1 for the latter.

regression models by pooling such information from different levels together, we would violate the basic I.I.D assumption (i.e., independent and identical distribution) and may draw biased inferences. Second, this technique also allows the correlations under examination to vary across the surveyed East Asian societies. For instance, the relationship between educational attainment and interest in politics may not necessary be the same (in terms of its size or even sign of effect) for all the East Asian societies. In other words, the relationship under examination might be stronger or weaker in different societies for unobserved reasons. If we were to use conventional regression models, we would simply force the relationship to be the same for all societies without appropriate statistical justification and, thus, may draw biased inferences. Therefore, given the nested structure of our data and the possibility of varying relationships across societies, we use multilevel logit models (MLM) to examine the correlates of the East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication. Table 1 presents the results of our multilevel regression analysis.<sup>8</sup>

[Table 1 about here]

As we examine what individual and societal level features are associated with the East Asians' psychological involvement in politics, as shown in the left section of Table 1, interesting stories are exclusively observed at the individual level. On average, there is a curvilinear relationship between the East Asians' age and their psychological involvement in politics. More specifically, compared to their younger and older cohorts, middle-aged East Asians are more likely to show at least somewhat interest in politics,

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<sup>8</sup> All dependent variable are dichotomized following the same empirical strategy used for the aforementioned descriptive analysis.

closely follow political news, or discuss politics with their family members and friends. This finding seems to confirm the life-cycle effect that has been documented in the literature on political participation and public opinion (Mishler and Rose 2007).<sup>9</sup> The East Asians' educational attainment and economic situation also are significantly associated with their political interest, frequency of following political news, or habit of discussing politics. Thanks to their more sophisticated cognitive capability, better educated East Asians outperform their less educated counterparts on all three aspects of psychological involvement in politics. Meanwhile, the East Asians whose family income can sufficiently cover their expenses show more interest in politics and follow political news more closely. All these findings confirm that psychological involvement in politics demands both cognitive capability and material resources. Moreover, a significant gender gap is found in this regard among the East Asians: due to certain socialization processes (Burns 2002; Dolan 2011; Jennings 1998; Paxton et al. 2007), males are psychologically more involved in politics than females in the surveyed East Asian societies.

The dynamics change when we examine what individual and societal features are associated with the East Asians' political sophistication, as shown in the right section of Table 1. Interesting patterns are observed at both individual and societal level. The East Asians' age is only significantly associated with their confidence in their ability of understanding politics, in a curvilinear way. Middle-aged East Asians, on average, hold the strongest confidence in their ability of understanding complicated politics. Better educated East Asians still consistently outperform their less educated counterparts on all

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<sup>9</sup> Given the cross-sectional nature of our data, we cannot effectively tell whether this curvilinear relationship is driven by life-cycle or generational effects.



three aspects of political sophistication: they hold stronger confidence in their ability of participating in politics and understanding politics; and they also give higher assessment of their influence over the government. A better family economic situation is only significant in improving the East Asians' external political efficacy, i.e., self-reported influence over the government. Again, in the surveyed East Asian societies, males report a higher level of political efficacy (both internal and external ones) than females.

In addition to these individual-level patterns, the East Asian societies' political environment also matters in shaping their citizens' beliefs in their influence over the government. In the societies with a higher POLITY IV score – that is, a more democratic political environment – on average, their citizens show a higher level of external efficacy. This is compatible with the institutional settings in democracies, which provide more institutionalized channels for citizens to voice their concerns and push for political changes that favor their preferences. Such institutional advantages are not observed the East Asians' internal efficacy, i.e., their confidence in their ability of participating in politics and understanding politics. In other words, citizens of non-democracies may feel equally competent of understanding and participating in politics like their counterparts in democracies, of course, via distinct channels (Burns 1988; Shi 1997), although the effectiveness of their participation might be significantly more constrained.

Overall, cognitive capability plays a key and consistent role in shaping the East Asians' psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication. A significant gender gap is also widely observed in East Asia, with males outperforming females on various aspects of psychological involvement and political sophistication. Middle-aged East Asians outperform their younger and older cohorts in terms of psychological

involvement in politics and internal efficacy; and the East Asians' family economic situation also shows some positive influence over their psychological involvement. In addition to these individual level features, the East Asians' beliefs in their influence over the government are also shaped by their surrounding political environment. Compared to their counterparts living in authoritarian societies, the East Asians living in democracies hold a more positive assessment of their influence over the government.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Before we systematically examine citizen politics in East Asia, as well as its implications for democracy in the region, we have to assess East Asians' psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication. The extent to which East Asians are interested in politics and their capability of understanding and participating in politics provide the indispensable cognitive basis for examining and interpreting their political attitudes and behavior, as well as foreseeing their future engagement with politics. In this paper, we use two waves of ABS surveys to examine East Asians' psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication.

Both cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data show that East Asians are generally interested in politics. In most of the surveyed East Asian societies, a majority of their citizens report at least somewhat interest in politics; and an even larger percentage of the surveyed East Asians closely follow political news or have the habit of discussing politics with their family members or friends. Between the two waves of ABS surveys, the East Asians' self-reported interest in politics (regardless of whether attitude- or behavior-based measures are used) demonstrates considerable stability.

Compared to their significant interest in politics, East Asians' confidence in their capability of understanding and participating in politics, as well as influencing their government, is relatively lower. In most of the surveyed East Asian societies, the majority of their citizens show a low to moderate level of political sophistication. Most of the East Asians regard politics as too complicated to understand. Although a larger number of them hold more optimistic views of their capability of participating in and influencing politics, the corresponding percentage in most of the societies is less than 50 percent. Related longitudinal information suggests some stability in the East Asians' political sophistication between the two waves of ABS surveys.

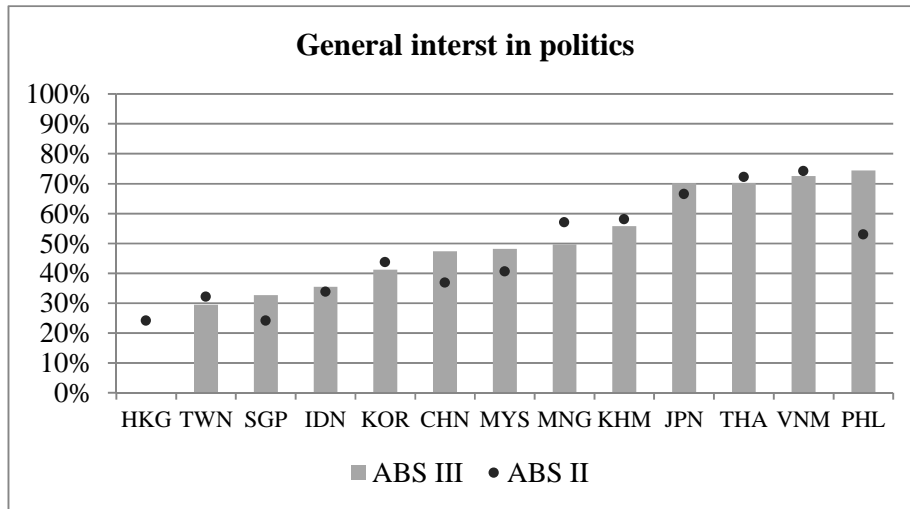
Regression analysis that integrates both individual and societal level features shows that cognitive capacity plays a significant and consistent role in shaping East Asians' psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication. Better educated East Asians, *ceteris paribus*, show more interest in politics and report a higher level of political efficacy. A gender gap is also observed across the board in East Asia: males outperform females in all examined aspects of psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication. East Asians' age and family economic situation are also correlated with their political interest and political efficacy; but the relationships are much less consistent when different measures are examined. In addition to such individual demographic features, East Asian societies' varying political environments also leave their imprint on their citizens' political efficacy, particularly their external efficacy. The East Asians living in democracies do not differ significantly from their counterparts living in non-democracies in terms of their interest in politics, cognitive capacity of understanding politics, and confidence in their capability of participating in

politics. Nevertheless, these East Asians living in a more democratic society report a significantly higher level of confidence in their capability of influencing their government, which clearly confirms the superior performance of democracies (as compared to non-democracies) in representing people's voices and concerns in government policies.

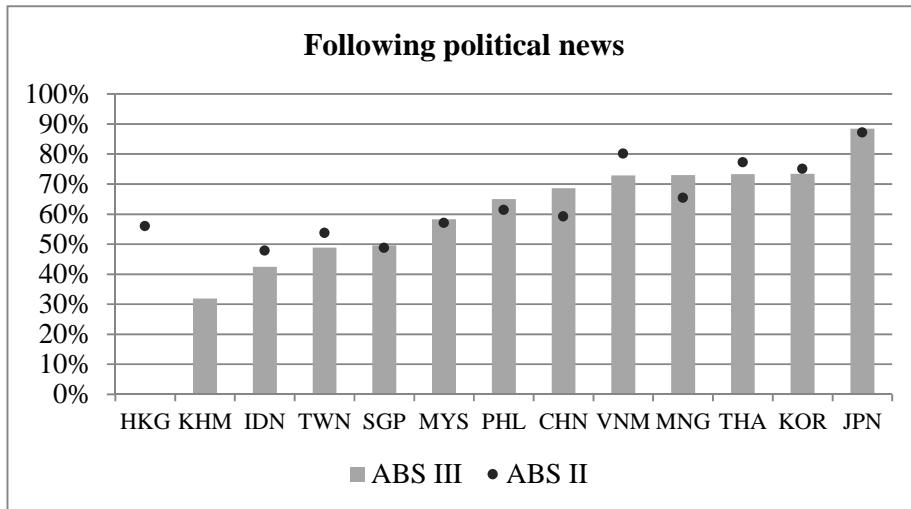
Given all these findings, it is reasonable to argue that the citizens of East Asian societies are not only cognitively capable of understanding politics, forming meaningful political attitudes, and engaging political activities, but also quite active in accessing related information. Their active psychological involvement in politics and sufficient confidence in their capability of understanding, participating in, and influencing politics provide a solid cognitive foundation for examining citizen politics in East Asia, as well as its implications for democracy in this region.

Similar to the findings from other regions, East Asians' cognitive capacity plays a salient and critical role in shaping their psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication. And the male advantage, which has been observed in many industrial democracies (Dalton 2013), is also prevalent in East Asia. Many East Asian societies' recent stunning performance in promoting socioeconomic development, including people's educational attainment and accessible resources, may further enhance their citizens' psychological involvement and political sophistication (Inglehart and Welzel 2010). This continuing modernization process might also narrow or even eliminate the gender gap (Paxton et al. 2007), thus mobilizing more females to actively engage politics in East Asia.

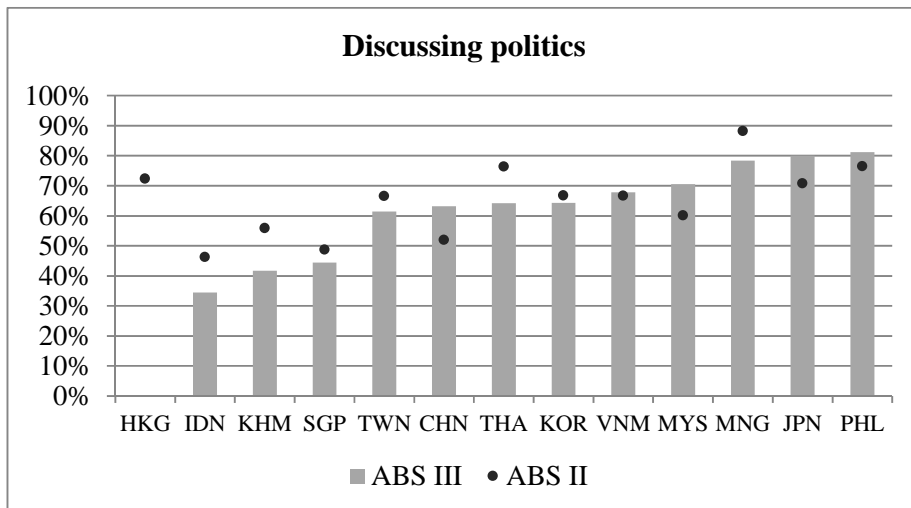
Of course, the related issues are much more complicated and nuanced than what has been presented here. For instance, in our multilevel regression analysis, the random components associated with the coefficients of education, gender, and urban residency are statistically significant. Such significant random components strongly indicate considerable variance in the influence of cognitive capacity and socialization processes on people's psychological involvement in politics and political sophistication across East Asian societies. To better and more effectively understand East Asians' psychological involvement and political sophistication, we need not only more comparable survey data from the region, but also in-depth case studies on each of the societies. A fruitful dialogue between comparative quantitative analysis and informative country-specific examination can offer invaluable information in this regard.



**Figure 1: An Attitude-Based Measure of Psychological Involvement in Politics**

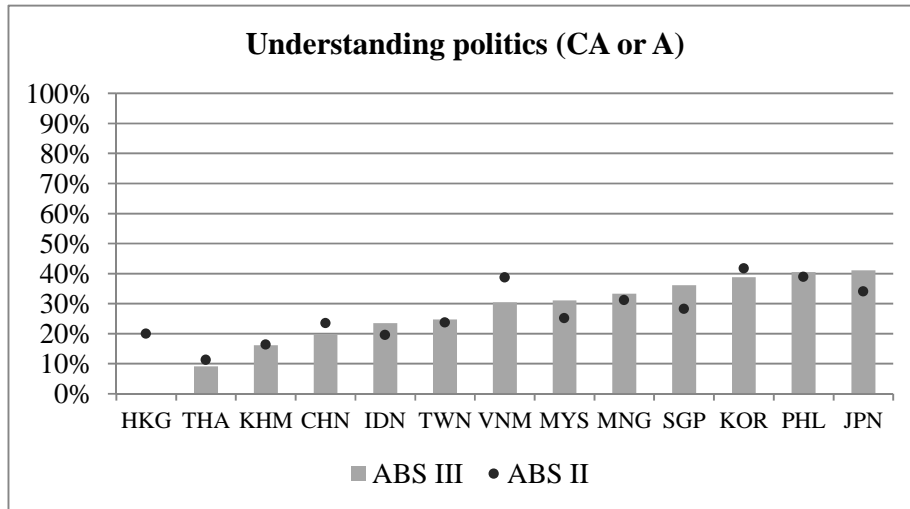


(A) Following political news several times a week or every day



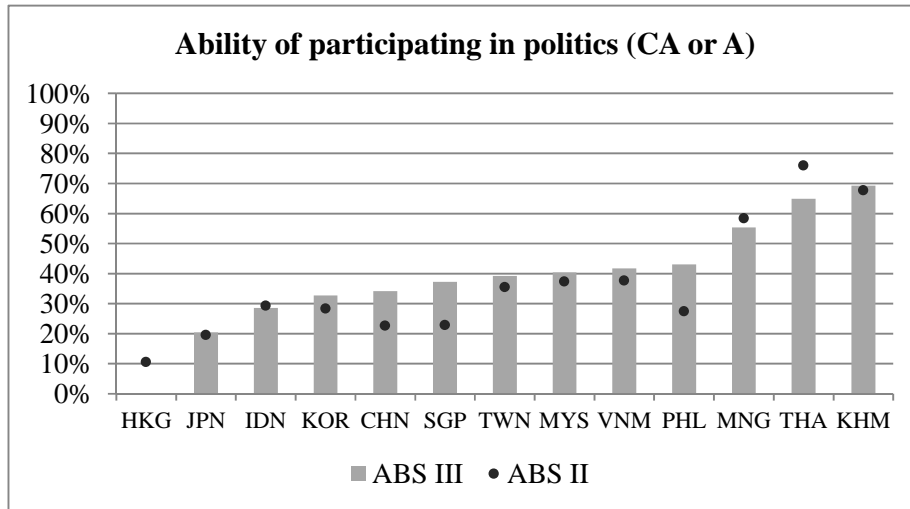
(B) Discussing politics with family members or friends occasionally or frequently

**Figure 2: Behavior-Based Measures of Psychological Involvement in Politics**

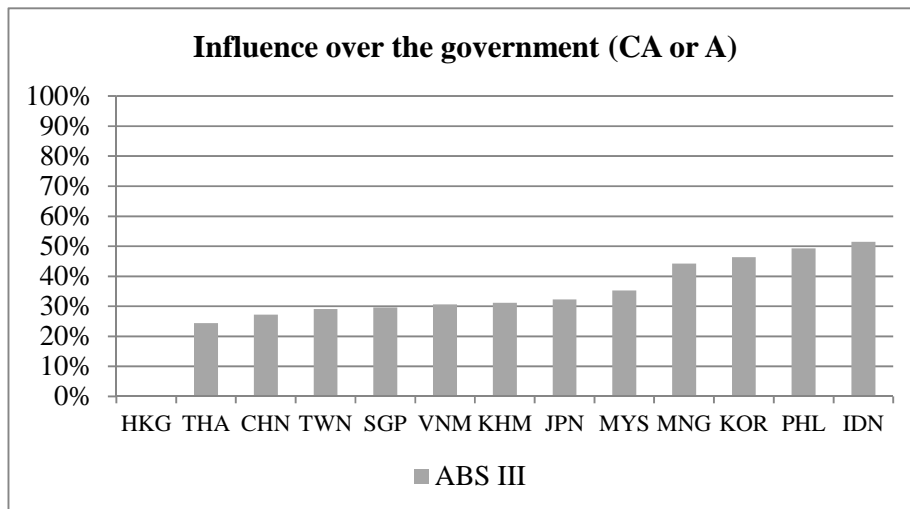


**Figure 3: Cognitive Capability of Understanding Politics**





(A) Internal Political Efficacy



(B) External Political Efficacy

**Figure 4: Measures of Political Efficacy**

**Table 1: Results of Multilevel Logit Models**

<i>Fixed effects</i> (Logit coefficients)	<u>Psychological Involvement</u>			<u>Political Sophistication</u>		
	Interest in politics	Following political news	Discussing politics	Ability of political participation	Understanding politics	Influence over the government
Intercept	0.190 (0.179)	0.597 (0.203)*	0.667 (0.215)*	-0.209 (0.166)	-0.860 (0.168)***	-0.484 (0.105)***
Polity IV	-0.040 (0.032)	0.029 (0.034)	0.010 (0.033)	0.011 (0.013)	-0.030 (0.029)	0.043 (0.011)**
HDI	-2.553 (1.281)	0.822 (1.666)	1.501 (1.682)	-0.883 (0.535)	0.955 (0.599)	-1.300 (0.817)
Age	0.030 (0.010)**	0.069 (0.012)***	0.045 (0.011)***	0.002 (0.009)	0.020 (0.009)*	0.0007 (0.012)
Age squared	-0.0002 (0.0001)*	-0.0005 (0.0001)***	-0.0004 (0.0001)***	-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)*	-0.00001 (0.0001)
Education	0.107 (0.021)***	0.112 (0.012)***	0.152 (0.023)***	0.073 (0.028)*	0.058 (0.027)*	0.084 (0.019)***
Male	0.472 (0.073)***	0.421 (0.048)***	0.409 (0.066)***	0.308 (0.060)***	0.316 (0.055)***	0.145 (0.043)***
Urban residency	-0.215 (0.107)	-0.087 (0.084)	0.137 (0.188)	-0.122 (0.131)	0.027 (0.081)	0.107 (0.137)
Subjective income	0.112 (0.030)**	0.109 (0.029)***	0.079 (0.043)	0.071 (0.038)	-0.003 (0.043)	0.068 (0.030)*
<i>Random effects</i> (Variance components)						
Intercept	0.379***	0.488***	0.495***	0.332***	0.330***	0.126***
Education	0.003***	0.004***	0.005***	0.007***	0.006***	0.003***
Male	0.046***	0.013**	0.037***	0.031***	0.023***	
Urban residency	0.100***	0.052***	0.355***	0.165***	0.042**	0.188***
Subjective income	0.006*		0.015***	0.013***	0.014**	0.007**

Source: ABS III ( $N = 18229$ ).

Notes: Full PQL estimation with HLM 7.01.

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

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