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Traditionalism, Political Learning and Conceptions of  
Democracy in East Asia

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# **Traditionalism, Political Learning and Conceptions of Democracy in East Asian**

## **I. Introduction**

The overthrow of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 triggered the third world-wide wave of democratization. Originating in Southern Europe the wave spread to Latin America and Asia in the 1980s reaching Eastern Europe and most of Africa in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Observing that countries in Eastern Europe and the Third World filled the ideological vacuum following the collapse of the old regime with liberal democracy, rather than undemocratic alternatives, liberals concluded, over-optimistically as later events would prove, that liberal democratic regimes are universally recognized as the only legitimate regimes for modern societies.<sup>2</sup> Francis Fukuyama even predicted at one point the “end of history” as the era of ideological bipolarity passes; that in the absence of other ideologies, not only have Western liberal democratic regimes emerged as the dominant form of human organization, but we also cannot envisage any future alternative.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the universality of democratic rules is not to be taken for granted, as the third wave of democratization has yet become region-wide trend in East Asia.<sup>4</sup> The successful promotion of economic development as well as nationalist agenda has

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Marc F. Plattner, “The Democratic Moment,” in *The Global Resurgence of Democracies*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Fukuyama Francis, *The End History and The Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Yun-han Chu, “Lessons from East Asian Struggling Democracies,” Paper delivered at the Plenary Session II: “What Have We Learned from Thirty Years of Transitions from Authoritarian Rule?” the 19<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the IPSA, July 3, 2003, Durban, South Africa.

led some leaders of non-democratic countries in East Asia to challenge the Western notion of basic human rights and question whether further democratization is necessary or desirable. Thus, they advocate traditional “Asian values,” or neo-authoritarianism as an ideological shield against the liberal democratic ideas of Western society. Publicly, East Asian political leaders claim that it is not necessary for developing countries to follow the model of Western development; on the contrary, there is an alternative Asian model of political development.<sup>5</sup> Add to this East-West divide is Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis that post-Cold war conflict will increasingly be the result of different cultures instead of ideologically or economically derived.<sup>6</sup>

However, as L. H. M. Lin and Chih-yu Shih point out, “Confucianism with a liberal face” is a more accurate description of East Asian democratization. These processes conflict with traditional social value systems in East Asia. Therefore, the outcome of East Asian democratization is open-ended; currently it is neither liberal nor Confucian.<sup>7</sup> The most important questions are what effects do traditional elements have on the political transformation in East Asia? How does traditional Confucianism interact with democratization in East Asian societies? Moreover, will traditional values become obstacles to the development of liberal democratic consciousness in citizens?

The purpose of this paper is to understand what elements in East Asian cultural and social setting influence people’s perception of democracy in the context of rapid socio-economic transformation and regime transition. We base our empirical analysis

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Dupont, “Is There an ‘Asian Way’,” *Survival*, vol.38, no. 2 (1996), pp 13-33. Mark R. Thompson, “Whatever Happened to ‘Asian Values’?” *Journal of Democracy*, vol.12, no.4 (2001), pp 154-165.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> L. H. M Ling and Chih-yu Shih, “Confucianism with a Liberal Face: The Meaning of Democratic Politics in Postcolonial Taiwan,” *The Review of Politics*, vol. 60, no.1 (1998), pp. 55-82.

on Asian Barometer survey that was implemented in more than nine East Asian countries a common framework around 2005-2007. In the next section of this paper, we develop indices for measuring people's conception of democracy and report the empirical distribution across East Asia. In the following section, we briefly introduce two theories on factors shaping citizens' conception on democracy. Then we employ bivariate and multivariate analysis to uncover the causal structural relationship between traditional values and democratic understanding. In the fifth section we explore how difference in popular conceptualization of democracy might influence people attitude toward democracy and their evaluation of democratic quality.

## **II. Popular Conception of Democracy**

The starting point of our causal analysis concerns the peoples' conception of "democracy," an intrinsically problematic issue that has so far been taken for granted by most students of democratization. We don't think this is an issue that can be assumed away; otherwise, our analysis about people's attitudes and orientations toward "democracy" could be as fragile as a house of cards. In order to find out what kind of perception that the ordinary people hold about "democracy," we rely on employed the following closed-ended question: "People often differ in their views on the characteristic that is essential to democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things that I am going to read, which one would you choose as the most essential to a democracy?" To this question, respondents were asked to choose one of the following answers.

1. Opportunity to change the government through elections.
2. Freedom to criticize those in power.

3. A small income gap between rich and poor.

4. Basic necessities like food, clothes and shelter etc. for everyone.

Currently most students of democratization advocate defining democracy from the focus on procedural aspects of democracy or election competition.<sup>8</sup> This main stream of thinking began from Schumpeter and continued being stressed by Przeworski and others.<sup>9</sup> Besides empathizing the importance of electoral procedure, some even state that democracy is just a tool, whose purpose is to obtain substantive outcomes or ideals. One of the conceived visions in the West assumes that democracy always means “liberal democracy,” a political system characterized not only by popular accountability and public contestation through free and fair elections but also by rule of law, separation of power, and the protection of basic freedom of speech, assembly and religion, and private property rights.<sup>10</sup> They expect democracy can fulfill the ultimate goals and ideals of liberalism. That is in the process of self-governing, the political system will have effective responsiveness<sup>11</sup>, or to develop autonomy of individuals<sup>12</sup> and ethics and the growth of political knowledge<sup>13</sup>. Another theory on democracy is derived from socialism in that the scholars think unequal distribution of power and resources in economy and social arenas lead to the limitation on citizens’ political participation. As a result, they claim that democracy should be able to

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<sup>8</sup> David Collier and Steven Levitsky. “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics*, vol. 49, no. 3 (1997), pp. 430-451.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harpor & Row, 1950); Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 267-277.

<sup>13</sup> John Stuart Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government,” in *Three Essays*, John Stuart Mill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 274.

achieve political and social equality.<sup>14</sup> When we design the question, the first two answers were intended to correspond to the conventional Dahlian conception of liberal democracy, while the last two correspond to the Substantivist understanding of democracy.

In the past, few political scientists actually took the effort to find out if popular understanding of “democracy” conforms to this classical “procedural democracy”, “liberal democracy” or “social democracy” formulation. Many students of democracy simply assume that most citizens share a common understanding about what liberal democracy is or should be. But this is a heroic assumption. There is little empirical evidence suggest that most citizens in established democracy acquire a textbook-like understanding of what democracy means, and even less so when it comes to countries where living experiences under democratic regime are either very recent ones or virtually non-existent. Table 1 shows a distribution of different types of answers that people gave to this closed-ended question across the East Asian countries examined here.

What elements are essential to a democracy in the eye of East Asians? What we found is quite surprising. Despite of their relatively high education level and advanced status in socio-economic modernization, a procedural or liberal understanding of the conception of democracy has yet become the prevailing popular view according to the results of our close-ended question. For example, 45.2% of Taiwanese think democracy entails essentially meeting the basic needs of people, while in the Philippines, 38.2% of citizens agree with the same view. 35.7% of South Koreans think democracy entails narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, and 29.2%

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<sup>14</sup> Jurgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy,” in *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, eds. C. Cronin and P. D. Greif (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Crawford B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

of Indonesians support the same view. Slightly more people in Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan embrace the procedural notion of democracy, registering 38%, 37.3%, and 34.7% respectively, while only 20-30 percents of citizens in other countries agree with the viewpoint.

In most countries, less than 20% of our respondents embrace the liberal notion of democracy. The highest ration is found in Mongolia with 30.9% embracing the view. This result is quite different from to the findings based on open-ended questions obtained by our survey and other barometer surveys. Dalton and others gathered the answers and concluded that most citizens' answers on what democracy means are freedom, rights, and liberty, and then political process. The last one is social benefits.<sup>15</sup> The disparity is interesting and worth of further discussion on the measurement of the indicators.

[Table 1 about here]

For the sake of statistical analysis, we collapse the four response categories into a dichotomy. Combining electoral competition and freedom of political expression, we yield a category of Liberal Democracy Conception. Combining decreasing gap between the rich and the poor and meeting people's basic needs, we yield Substantivist Conception. We found that except in Taiwan and Thailand where one found a bit more skewed distribution, people in most East Asian countries have roughly equal probability of falling into one of the two conceptions. In Taiwan, there are only 32.8% of Taiwan citizens embracing liberal democracy conception. In Thailand, the percentage is much higher (66.5%). By and large, the liberal democracy

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<sup>15</sup> Russell J. Dalton, Doh C. Shin, and Willy Jou, "Popular Conceptions of the Meaning of Democracy: Democratic Understanding in Unlikely Places," *Center for the Study of Democracy*, working paper 07'03 (Irvine: University of California, 2007).

notion has not yet become the prevailing way of understanding among East Asians.

[Figure 1 about here]

### **III. Theoretical Perspective**

There are two main theoretical perspectives explaining how citizens develop their cognitive notion about democracy. They are discussed separately under the labels of modernization (or postmodernization) and cultural relativists.

#### ***Modernization and Postmodernization***

Modernizationists believe that the bias between eastern and western cultures will eventually disappear through the processes of global modernization and democratization. They also believe that liberal democratic regimes will replace other forms of political regimes and in turn become the best and only option. Francis Fukuyama argues that any changes in political institutions (the upper structure) will not by any means damage the integrated Confucian social order (the lower structure). Confucian-culture can be compatible with authoritarianism or semi-authoritarianism, for example mainland China, Hong Kong, and Singapore; or they can also be compatible with democratic regimes, such as Japan, Taiwan, and south Korea.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Fukuyama argues that although Confucianism does not value individualism, it does value achievement, education, and mutual tolerance, all of which can be readily combined with democratic regimes.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Fukuyama

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<sup>16</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The Primacy of Culture," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 6, no.1 (1995), p.12.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democrac*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1995), pp 25-6.

proposes that the reason some East Asian countries will become democratic and others authoritarian lies in a most important element—the degree of modernization. Increasingly, research on democratization in East Asian countries demonstrates that the development of modernization and industrialization assist the development of democracy.<sup>18</sup> Robert A. Scalapino supports Modernization with similar reasoning. The development of East Asia economies, he argues, accelerated the transformation of social structure and increased social mobilization, all of which are beneficial to democratic development.<sup>19</sup>

The process of modernization in East Asia affects the outcome of democratization. In another approach, Plattner points out that democratic regimes are extensions of liberalism. This means that though the essentials of liberal thought in the East Asian region of the third wave democratization are explicitly weak, as an advocate of democratization, liberalism will continue to strengthen as the third wave expands. In contrast, the anti-liberal cultural tradition will wane.<sup>20</sup> Although, as Gerald L. Curtis argues, civic culture in traditional East Asian society is not solid, but as democratization proceeds in this region, it will rapidly cultivate a civic culture that will benefit democratic stability in East Asia.<sup>21</sup>

The postmodernization theory developed by Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues agree with the modernization theorists on their central claim but differ from most modernization theorists on four essential points: change is not linear; economic determinism is oversimplified; the rise of the West is not the only version of

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<sup>18</sup>Francis Fukuyama, “The Illusion of Asian Exceptionalism,” in *Democracy in East Asia*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp 224-5.

<sup>19</sup>Robert A. Scalapino, “A Tale of Three Systems,” in *Democracy in East Asia*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 230.

<sup>20</sup>Marc F. Plattner, “From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no.3 (1999), pp 130-3.

<sup>21</sup>Gerald L. Curtis, “A Recipe for Democratic Development,” in *Democracy in East Asia* eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 222.

modernization; and democracy is not inherent in the modernization phase but democracy does become increasingly likely as societies move beyond the modernization phase into postmodernization.<sup>22</sup>

Inglehart and his colleagues have accumulated three decades of time-series data with which to demonstrate an intergenerational shift toward postmaterialist values, linked with rising levels of economic development. As economic development brings rising levels of tolerance, trust, political activism, and greater emphasis on freedom of speech (the components of what they defined as ‘self-expression values’), it leads to growing mass demands for liberalization in authoritarian societies, and to rising levels of direct mass participation in societies that are already democratic. In so far as postmaterialists give high priority to protecting freedom of speech and to participation in making important government decisions, this trend should bring growing mass demands for democracy. Following from the modernization/postmodernization perspective, one would predict that an intergenerational shift toward greater appreciation for democracy comes with the rapid expansion in education, vast improvements in economic wellbeing and increasing urbanization. Operationally speaking, at the macro-level we should expect to see a strong linear relationship between a country’s level of socio-economic development and its aggregate level of support for democracy. At the micro-level we would predict that citizens with higher education and from younger generations would have a higher propensity to acquire favorable orientations toward liberal democracy.

For an empirical testing of the modernization/postmodernization theses in our multivariate analyses, we focus on the impact of three socio-economic variables, education, age and gender, and two cognitive mobilization variables, political

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<sup>22</sup> R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 7.

involvement and media exposure. *We hypothesize that through political learning, it will familiarize citizens with a universal understanding of liberal democracy, and thus the higher one achieves on the modernization indicators, the more likely one will acquire a liberal democratic notion of democracy, and vice versa.*

### ***Cultural Relativists***

An alternative explanation of cognitive notion about democracy proceeds from the argument that values and beliefs are culturally embedded and socially received. The touchstone of culturalist theory is the postulate of oriented action: actors do not respond directly to “situations” but respond to them through mediating “orientations.” What divides culturalist and other theoretical perspectives involves the issue of later-in-life learning, or re-socialization. Culturalists argue from a postulate of “cumulative” socialization that privileges early learning, or what psychologists mean by “primacy”. Prior learning is a basis for later learning, and therefore early learning not only conditions later learning but the beliefs learned early also are much more resistant to change. Exceptionally great forces are needed to induce great changes in these basic orientations. Eckstein, for example, describes the most likely cultural changes as pattern maintaining change (1988).<sup>23</sup> So if people were socialized early-on to learn that social equality and collective welfare are fundamental element of a “good society”, then it is more likely that they will associate “democracy” with these substantive elements. The lingering effect of the acquired beliefs and values would also hinder their acquisition of Western notion of democracy anchoring on individual rights and freedom.

For more than a decade, scholars and policymakers have vigorously debated

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<sup>23</sup> Harry Eckstien, “A Culturalist Theory of Political Change,” *American Political Science Review*, vol.82, no.3 (1988), pp. 789-804.

liberal democracy's suitability for and compatibility with the populaces of East Asia. To explain why so many East Asian countries have failed to complete the democratic transformation of their authoritarian or totalitarian communist states, many scholars and policymakers turn to the region's Confucian political culture and traditions.<sup>24</sup> Paradoxically, their view is echoed by defenders of Asian values who have claimed that Western-style liberal democracy is neither suitable for nor compatible with Confucian East Asia, where collective welfare, a sense of duty, and other principles of Confucian moral philosophy run deep in people's consciences (Lee, 1998; Barr, 2000).<sup>25</sup> Even the political system of a given Asian countries might become formally democratized, the new democracy would still carry many illiberal characteristics due to the slow acquisition of liberal democratic values and beliefs among its elite and populace.

People who adhere to cultural relativism argue that the East Asia has vivid paternalistic power and superior-inferior relations, which will never disappear with the modernization of the social economy.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, rapid social economic shifts will result in an individual sense of insecurity, creating a new form of power-dependency.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Huntington argues that traditional Confucianism values group interests greater than individual interests, political authority more than individual freedoms, and social responsibility over individual rights. Meanwhile, Confucian society lacks traditions that guard against the consolidation of national power, and thus the concept of individual rights has never existed. Essentially,

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<sup>24</sup> Donald Emerson, "Singapore and the "Asian Values" Debate," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 6, no.4 (1995), pp.95-105.

<sup>25</sup> Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Belief Behind the Man* (Washington: D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> Lucian W. Pye, "Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society in Asia," in *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 381.

<sup>27</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Culture Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 325.

Confucian thought encourages social harmony and cooperation, avoids conflict, values the attainment of social order and maintains hierarchical social structures. More importantly, Confucian thought regards society and the country as identical, and thus leaves no space for autonomous social groups. These characteristics of traditional East Asian culture will not assist the development of democracy in the region.<sup>28</sup>

Fareed Zakaria, the executive editor of *Foreign Affairs*, proposes that even though East Asian countries can undergo a democratic transformation, democracy still does not seem to lead to constitutional liberalism.<sup>29</sup> Instead, third-wave democracies in this region will maintain their essentially authoritarian illiberal political culture, and not one of Western liberal democracy.

What is the essence of illiberal political culture? Daniel A. Bell proposes that this culture has three characteristics: the non-neutral state, techno-paternalism, and managed public space and dependent civil society. Where traditional Western liberalism values the common right of the people to choose what kind of policy is the best for themselves, in a non-neutral state, the ruler speculates on which policies are necessary for the people; and as a result, attempts to intervene in any aspects of people's lives for the ruler's own reasons. Under techno-paternalism, the illiberal state develops technical bureaucracies for the promotion of rationality and law. Through these instruments the rulers manage the developing country in a similar manner to a firm. When the public space is managed by the state, civil society is dependent upon the state, leaving little space for the development of civil society.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "After Twenty Years: The Future of Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1997), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 6 (1997), p.28.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David M. Jones, *Toward Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 163-7.

*If the perspective of cultural relativism is accurate, then the socializing effect of modernization and the experience of democratization on the formation of the concept of liberal democracy will be attenuated by the influence of traditional values.*

#### **IV. Research Design and Measurement**

We test the competing hypothesis developed above against a nine-country survey carried out under the auspices of Asian Barometer survey.<sup>31</sup> Before we proceed to causal analysis, a few quick notes on the measurement of relevant independent variables and control variables are called for.

How do we measure political learning process? Mattes and Bratton argued that political learning is a process of cognitive awareness. Through education, utilizing media or political participation, it will increase citizens' understanding on politics and in the end, will improve citizens' support for democracy.<sup>32</sup> Improvement of education level, the availability of media and political participation are all the important indicators purposed by Modernizationists. Therefore, we use level of education, political involvement, and media exposure as indicators on political learning.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Asian Barometer survey (ABS) represents the region's first collaborative initiative to develop a regional network of democracy studies based on surveying ordinary citizens. Between June 2001 and February 2003, the ABS implemented its first-round comparative survey in eight East Asian countries and territories, namely Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong and China. The ABS launched its second-round survey in October 2005 and its geographical scope was enlarged to cover five more countries in the region. By July 2007 the fieldwork in South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Japan was completed and the survey in China, Hong Kong, Cambodia and Malaysia are still underway. The ABS survey in Thailand was conducted in April and May of 2006, just four months before the military coup. All ABS data were collected through face-to-face interviews of randomly selected eligible voters in each participating country. Interested readers are welcome to browse the project's website ([www.asianbarometer.org](http://www.asianbarometer.org)) for methodological details.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Mattes and Michael Bratton, "Learning about Democracy in Africa: Awareness, Performance, and Experience," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, No.1 (2007), p. 199.

<sup>33</sup> The two measurements are: How interested would you say you are in politics? (political involvement); How closely do you follow major events in foreign countries/the world? (media exposure).

What are the key elements of Asian values? According to the existing literature, Asian values emphasize the importance of family, moral ethics, superiority of communal interest, social harmony and cohesion, hardworking, thrifty, and education first.<sup>34</sup> Park and Shin stress that there are four core values in Confucianism, that is emphasis of social classes (authoritarianism), emphasis of social harmony (avoiding conflicts), community first (pursuing aggregate interest), and anti-pluralism (preferring social cohesion).<sup>35</sup> Asian Barometer Survey has designed specific items for measuring these four dimensions. More specifically, there are four questions corresponding to most, if not all, of the aspects of core values identified above. Each question was design around a four-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree”, “disagree” “agree” and “strongly agree”.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to traditionalism battery, we also employ detachment from authoritarianism as additional predicative variable. The Asian Barometer Survey measures this concept with a three-item battery addressing popular rejection of three conceivable of authoritarian alternatives, i.e., military rule, strongman rule and one-party rule.<sup>37</sup>

## **V. Predicting Popular Conceptions of Democracy**

Figure 2 to Figure 6 show the impacts of socio-economic variables (gender, age, and education) and two indicators on political cognitive mobilization (political involvement and media exposure) on citizens’ understanding of democracy. Figure 2 shows gender has a clear impact on people’s notion of democracy. Males are more

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<sup>34</sup> Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell, *The East Asian Challenge for Human Right*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin, “Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy? The Case of South Korea,” Paper Presented at the 2004 *Annual Meeting of Association for Asian Studies* in San Diego, March 4-7, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Please refer to Appendix A for measurement and initial analysis.

<sup>37</sup> Please refer to Appendix B for measurement and initial analysis.

likely to acquire liberal democratic notion of democracy than females. Female on the other hand is more prone to accept substantivist notion than males. Age does not have a perfect linear correlation with cognition on democracy. Figure 3 demonstrates by and large younger generations are more likely to acquire liberal democratic nation than older generations. The level of liberal democratic understanding goes down from people below 30 to mid-age generation. It somewhat gets up in the group of 50s, then gets down again in the 60s and above. This is the result of the combined effect of cohort and life-cycle. The non-linear relationship between democratic cognition and age has similar echo from the research done in Latin America.<sup>38</sup>

(Figure 2 and 3 here)

Figure 4 shows education is the most significant factor influencing citizens' cognition on democracy. In East Asian societies, among those who did not go through formal education, merely 25.4% of them have acquired liberal democratic notion. For those completed elementary schooling, the percentage doubles. For those holding college diploma and above, the percentage further increases to over 60%. As a result, people with lower education emphasize more on the substantive dimension or output of democracy, while people with higher education stress the procedural or freedom and rights aspects of the political system.

(Figure 4 here)

Figure 5 and 6 demonstrate the linear correlation between political cognitive mobilization and democratic conception. For the impact political involvement, we

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<sup>38</sup> Siddhartha Baviskar and Mary Fran T. Malone, "What democracy means to citizens - and why it matter," *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 76(2004), pp. 3-23.

found that people who are more interested in politics are more likely to hold liberal democratic notion. Those who are not interested in politics, on the other hand, are prone to substantivist ideas. For those who follow international affairs frequently are more likely to acquire a liberal democratic conception while those not interested in international affairs are more likely be substantivists. These findings largely confirm the theoretical prediction from the Modernization perspective as well as the findings by Mattes and Bratton in the context of African democracies.

(Figure 5 and 6 here)

Next, we move on to cross-national multivariate analysis. For carrying out a more robust construct cross-nation analysis, we have to specify control variables and to take into account some country-specific characteristics, which all have their bearing on people's democratic cognition. Gary King et al point out that when doing cross-nation analysis, two weaknesses exist; they are (1) the target of effective measurement, and (2) how to effectively differentiate the meaning of data under different contexts.<sup>39</sup> Skrondal and Rabe-Hesketh both stress once neglecting the difference between the between-group and within-group, some problem will emerge.<sup>40</sup> In other words, to solve the problem, we must consider the structure of data. As a result, this paper uses mixed effects models.

Mixed effects models is the solution to complicated structure of data and enables us to take the disparities of East Asian countries into consideration in the

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<sup>39</sup> Gary King, Christopher Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 98, No.1 (2004), pp. 191-207.

<sup>40</sup> Anders Skrondal and S. Rabe-Hesketh, . *Generalized Latent Variable Modeling: Multilevel, Longitudinal and Structural Equation Models*, (New York: Chapman & Hall/CRC, 2004).

analysis of different factors' impacts on democratic cognition concurrently. Table 2 uses mixed effects models to test three combinations of different variables. In model 1, we apply the analysis of individual-level variables on the formation of democratic cognition. The result shows that gender and age have significant influence on cognition, but not education. Male with higher education are more likely to hold liberal democratic notion; female with lower education are more prone to be substantivist. In model 2 we estimate the explanatory power of indicators of political cognitive mobilization and political values on the probability of holding liberal democratic notion (vs. substantivist notion). It shows that Political Involvement, Media exposure, and Detachment from Traditionalism all have significant influence on cognition, but not Detachment from Authoritarianism. For those who are more interested in politics, pay more attention on international affairs, and are less attached traditional (Asian) values are more likely to acquire liberal democratic notion. Model 3 puts all the variables in the same model and we found that gender, education, political involvement and detachment from traditionalism remain significant predictors, but not the effect media exposure wanes. Its impact might be overtaken by education.

(Table 2 here)

## **VI. Does notion of democracy make a difference?**

Does it mean anything for young democracies when citizens have different understanding of what is essential to a democracy? Anderson found that it does not make much difference for level of support for democracy when citizens' hold different cognition.<sup>41</sup> However, Fuchs thinks democratic cognition is important. He first

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<sup>41</sup> Christopher Anderson, "Good Questions, Dubious Inferences, and Bad Solutions: Some Further

extinguished ‘minimalist’ and “supplemental” democracy, and then using West and East Germany data for comparison. He found the two conceptions of democracy had significant influence on political support.<sup>42</sup> Bratton et al. also discovered that democratic cognition has significant influence on demand as well as support for democracy in African countries.<sup>43</sup> In Latin America, those holding procedural understanding of democracy is more likely to reject military rule than those with substantivist understanding.<sup>44</sup> Does conception of democracy matter in East Asian context?

We will test this hypothesis against a multiple-indicator measurement of support for democracy. This measurement is an improvement to all the existing battery. For many years, students of democracies have relied heavily on a single item for measuring popular support for democracy as a preferred political system. But a single-item measurement always suffers from a lack of conceptual breadth and depth, not to mention the familiar problem of yielding lower reliability as compared to multiple indicators. Asian Barometer Survey has designed a five-item battery for gauging popular support for democracy.<sup>45</sup>

Much like the aforementioned research on Africa and Germany, our analysis (refer to Figure 7) shows that difference in people understanding of democracy does make a difference on popular support for democracy. Those with liberal democratic cognition are more likely to support democracy than those who are behold to substantivist notion.

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Thoughts on Satisfaction with Democracy,” *Center on Democratic Performance*, Working Paper No. 116 (Binghamton University, Department of Political Science), (<http://cdp.binghamton.edu>).

<sup>42</sup> Dieter Fuchs, “The Democratic Culture of Unified Germany,” in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 31-56.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes and E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy and Market Reform in Africa* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Baviskar and Malone, “What democracy means to citizens - and why it matter,” p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Yu-tzung Chang , Yun-han Chu and Chong-Min Park, “*Authoritarian Nostalgia in Asia*,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007), pp. 66-80. Please refer to Appendix C for measurement and initial analysis.

(Figure 7 here)

Next, we ask, “Will difference in cognition affect citizens’ evaluation of the functioning of democracy?” Asian Barometer Survey made available five succinct indicators for measuring citizens’ assessment of the working of democracy: electoral accountability, rule of law, equality, check and balance and responsiveness.<sup>46</sup> Figure 8 shows that people holding liberal democratic have come up with very similar kind overall assessment of quality of democracy with that of people with substantivist notion. So, in East Asian societies, it does not matter whether people hold liberal democracy or substantivist notion of democracy, their evaluation on quality of democracy is either comparably low or comparably high.

It is worth noting that in more established democracy such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, citizens tend to give a lower score on quality of democracy than citizens in less established democracies or non-democracies, such as Vietnam, Singapore, and Thailand. The possible explanation is, the expectation and demand for democracy is higher in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, therefore, the gap between democracy-in-action and democracy as ideal has made the citizens in those countries to become politically disaffected. The result is similar with the outcome found in Western democracies.<sup>47</sup>

(Figure 8 here)

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<sup>46</sup>Please refer to Appendix D for measurement and initial analysis.

<sup>47</sup> Pippa Norris, “Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens.” In *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 1-30; Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam, *Disaffected Democracies*, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University

## VII. Conclusion

Across East Asian societies, while traditional values are not immutable to the forces of socio-economic modernization and democratization, they, nevertheless, have demonstrated its staying power despite of rapid pace of modernization and divergent experiences of democratization. The living experiences under different political systems do not seem to make much imprint on people's value-orientation in the domain of personal ethnics and social norms. Brian Girvin once pointed out that when established political culture engages with certain pressure that forces it to change, a specific reaction will occur. The micro-level culture changes first, then the meso-level culture; and finally the macro-level culture that is composed of the values and symbols of collective goals. This latter structure is highly resilient as it is built on the beliefs of the entire society.<sup>48</sup>

In this analysis, we find that East Asian citizens think of democracy in difference ways. The liberal democratic notion has not yet taken hold in East Asia soil. We also found that overall speaking education play a key role in shaping citizens' notion of democracy despite of the lingering influence of traditional values. The causal mechanism of this link is related to increase in political involvement and media exposure. Therefore, our multivariate analysis lends some support to the claim of modernization theorists. Education, political involvement, and media exposure does increase the probability of acquiring a more sophisticated understanding of democracy, in particular one anchored on liberal-democratic notions, across different political systems. However, we also found that acquisition of liberal democratic notion also foster stronger commitment to democracy. This means forces of modernization facilitate the strengthening of democratic legitimacy, not just through its

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Press, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> Brian Girvin, "Change and Continuity in Liberal Democratic Political Culture," in John R. Gibbins

transformative power on value but also on cognition.

Our analysis yields the other conclusive results on the constraining effects of traditional values. The claim of the proponents of cultural relativism, i.e., adherence to traditionalism values tend to inhibit the acquisition of Western liberal-democratic conception of democracy among East Asians, was also confirmed. Therefore it is conceivable that this entrenched value system might sustain a substantivist understanding of democracy among some segment of Asian societies for quite some time. Whether those traditional values will survive the demographic changes and generational turnover is something worth of studying in the future.

Finally, our paper also found that people's disenchantment with the gap between the promises and the realities of democracy is growing across East Asian emerging democracies. Many citizens felt that the progress over some key characteristics of a democratic regime such as equal rights, rule of law, accountability and responsiveness, has been too slow and too little. In terms of governing capacity, many citizens felt that the performance of the democratic regime has not lived up to their expectation, especially in the area of social equity, economic growth and law and order. As a result, their confidence in the superiority of democratic regime has waned. Fortunately, the strong presence of substantivist conception of democracy does not seem to have much impact on citizens' evaluation of the functioning of democracy. The perceived quality of democracy is affected a myriad of factors other than conception of democracy.

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(ed), *Contemporary Political Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1989), pp 34-6.

## Appendix A

### Detachment from Traditionalism (disagree %)

	Korea	Mongolia	Philippine	Taiwan	Thailand	Indonesia	Singapore	Vietnam	Japan
1. Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.	59.3%	58.4%	56.3%	72.1%	48.3%	66.1%	51.6%	55.8%	52.8%
2. When one has a conflict with a neighbor, the best way to deal with it is to accommodate the other person.	38.0%	63.2%	40.9%	70.5%	62.7%	13.4%	24.8%	12.8%	21.4%
3. For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.	20.1%	11.7%	14.7%	11.4%	14.9%	13.3%	7.9%	7.2%	17.6%
4. The relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children.	40.8%	22.2%	24.1%	22.3%	24.3%	7.8%	35.9%	25.5%	61.0%
No positive items	19.5%	14.7%	21.0%	10.5%	18.2%	25.0%	23.8%	29.3%	17.8%
one positive item	32.0%	32.0%	38.8%	24.5%	32.1%	53.2%	41.1%	46.6%	31.4%
two positive items	27.5%	37.8%	26.1%	44.4%	34.4%	17.8%	27.6%	19.2%	33.8%
three positive items	14.4%	13.6%	11.4%	17.9%	12.9%	3.4%	6.7%	4.5%	13.5%
Four positive items	6.7%	1.9%	2.6%	2.6%	2.4%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	3.4%
Mean	1.57	1.56	1.36	1.78	1.49	1.02	1.20	1.00	1.53
Standard Deviation	1.15	0.96	1.02	0.95	1.01	0.79	0.90	0.84	1.04
N	1094	1056	1136	1411	1330	1515	924	1085	881

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

*Appendix B*

**Detachment from Authoritarianism (disagree %)**

	<b>Korea</b>	<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>Philippine</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>Japan</b>
1. We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things. (disagree %)	87.3%	35.7%	60.3%	82.0%	75.9%	89.5%	90.1%	86.7%	84.0%
2. No opposition party should be allowed to compete for power. (disagree %)	92.5%	72.7%	66.1%	88.1%	80.5%	91.4%	92.1%	38.7%	89.6%
3. The military should come in to govern the country. (disagree %)	95.1%	87.4%	74.9%	93.4%	78.4%	67.7%	95.7%	72.7%	95.5%
No positive items	2.3%	6.7%	10.1%	2.4%	9.3%	2.6%	2.0%	6.7%	1.3%
one positive item	3.5%	19.7%	19.8%	7.1%	8.1%	7.9%	4.1%	18.3%	5.6%
two positive items	10.8%	42.6%	29.3%	13.8%	20.1%	26.7%	7.4%	42.9%	14.3%
three positive items	83.4%	30.9%	40.8%	76.7%	62.5%	62.8%	86.5%	32.1%	78.8%
Mean	2.75	1.98	2.01	2.65	2.36	2.50	2.78	2.01	2.70
Standard Deviation	0.63	0.88	1.00	0.72	0.97	0.75	0.61	0.88	0.63
N	1116	1114	1132	1430	1353	1412	951	977	965

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

*Appendix C*

**Support for Democracy**

	<b>Korea</b>	<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>Philippine</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>Japan</b>
1. Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government. <sup>1</sup>	47.9%	40.3%	55.3%	50.9%	81.9%	73.5%	63.7%	88.7%	70.4%
2. Democracy is capable of solving the problem of our society. (agree %)	68.6%	80.0%	60.9%	61.5%	84.6%	86.6%	72.3%	92.5%	78.5%
3. Democracy is more important than economic development. (agree %)	32.8%	32.7%	27.5%	24.7%	53.3%	21.1%	32.2%	45.6%	52.0%
4. To what extent would you want our country to be democratic now? <sup>2</sup>	94.8%	97.8%	73.8%	91.9%	95.3%	92.7%	91.4%	99.6%	94.6%
5. To what extent would you think democracy to be suitable for our country? <sup>2</sup>	84.0%	89.2%	59.1%	73.9%	91.6%	88.4%	86.8%	97.8%	83.8%
No positive items	1.4%	0.3%	4.7%	2.8%	0.2%	0.5%	0.8%	0.0%	1.2%
one positive item	7.3%	3.8%	12.1%	10.5%	1.5%	2.3%	4.0%	0.2%	3.2%
two positive items	17.2%	14.7%	21.7%	18.5%	7.7%	9.5%	12.2%	2.0%	9.6%
three positive items	27.0%	34.7%	28.5%	27.8%	11.3%	20.4%	26.0%	8.4%	17.6%
Four positive items	31.3%	29.7%	25.3%	28.7%	40.9%	50.4%	39.4%	50.4%	33.4%
Five positive items	15.9%	16.8%	7.6%	11.7%	38.3%	16.9%	17.6%	39.0%	35.1%
Mean	3.27	3.40	2.81	3.04	4.06	3.68	3.52	4.26	3.84
Standard Deviation	1.21	1.06	1.28	1.27	0.98	0.98	1.09	0.71	1.17
N	886	1073	1007	1271	1060	1277	876	920	824

1. Trichotomous variable recoded into dichotomous variables.

2. Six or above on a 10-point scale.

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

## *Appendix D*

### Quality of Democracy

	<b>Korea</b>	<b>Mongolia</b>	<b>Philippine</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>Japan</b>
1. People have the power to change a government they don't like. (agree %)	47.3%	83.6%	68.2%	63.1%	81.9%	71.4%	53.0%	66.7%	58.9%
2. Our current courts always punish the guilty even if they are high-ranking officials. (agree %)	61.1%	63.9%	58.7%	45.9%	76.8%	83.5%	86.3%	83.8%	53.6%
3. Everyone is treated equally by the government. (agree %)	13.6%	34.6%	38.4%	44.1%	58.8%	74.7%	69.8%	84.0%	20.4%
4. To what extent is the legislature capable of keeping the government in check? (agree %)	58.2%	57.6%	63.0%	55.8%	60.3%	69.3%	85.0%	95.6%	45.6%
5. How well do you think the government responds to what people want? (agree %)	22.1%	25.5%	33.5%	37.6%	53.5%	46.3%	68.6%	85.2%	34.2%
No positive items	12.3%	5.4%	5.5%	10.9%	3.5%	2.5%	1.7%	1.3%	12.5%
one positive item	21.6%	14.6%	17.3%	20.0%	8.8%	5.9%	5.4%	1.2%	26.6%
two positive items	31.5%	26.1%	23.0%	21.2%	16.7%	11.9%	10.1%	4.2%	22.0%
three positive items	24.0%	26.2%	24.1%	20.9%	21.0%	26.8%	18.1%	11.4%	20.1%
Four positive items	9.5%	19.7%	21.0%	17.8%	25.1%	32.5%	35.3%	33.7%	12.6%
Five positive items	1.1%	8.0%	9.0%	9.1%	25.1%	20.5%	29.3%	48.3%	6.2%
Mean	2.00	2.64	2.65	2.42	3.31	3.42	3.68	4.20	2.12
Standard Deviation	1.20	1.31	1.37	1.48	1.41	1.24	1.24	1.02	1.42
N	1017	1100	1055	1352	954	1380	869	866	881

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

**Table 1 Which one would you choose as the most essential to a democracy?**

	Taiwan	Korea	Philippines	Thailand	Mongolia	Indonesia	Singapore	Vietnam	Japan
Item									
1.Opportunity to change the government through elections	26.9%	35.4%	30.8%	38.0%	19.8%	26.8%	27.9%	37.3%	34.7%
2.Freedom to criticize those in power	4.2%	14.5%	19.0%	13.5%	30.9%	21.8%	20.3%	5.8%	11.9%
3.A small income gap between rich and poor	18.5%	35.7%	7.2%	13.8%	20.0%	10.9%	17.7%	24.9%	17.4%
4.Basic necessities like food, clothes and shelter etc. for everyone	45.2%	10.1%	38.2%	12.2%	25.5%	29.2%	28.0%	19.6%	27.3%
5.Others <sup>1</sup>	5.2%	4.3%	4.9%	22.5%	3.8%	11.4%	6.3%	12.5%	8.7%
N	1587	1212	1200	1144	1211	1598	1012	1200	1067

1. Don't understand, can't choose, or no answer.

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

**Table 2 Determinants of Popular Conceptions of Democracy: Mixed Effect Model**

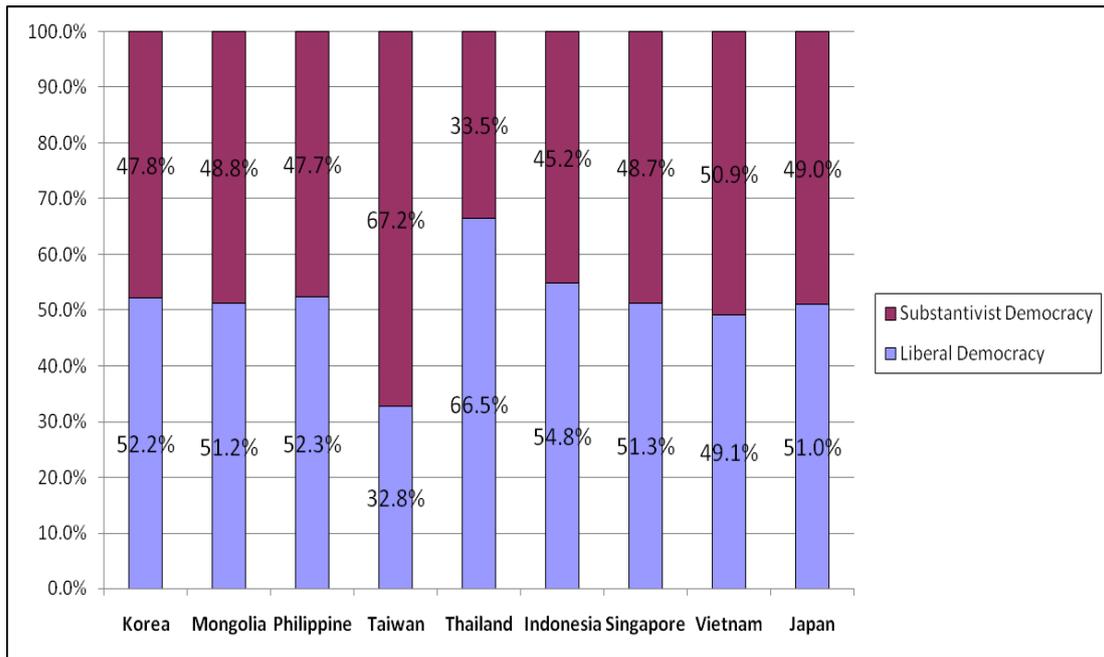
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	.295	-	.237
	7.35***		5.43***
Age	-.002	-	.001
	-1.42		0.07
education	.102	-	.117
	11.35***		10.76***
Political	-	.130	.116
Involvement		5.17***	4.59***
Media exposure	-	.101	.0169
		5.14***	0.82
Detachment from	-	.081	.065
Traditionalism		3.72***	2.92***
Detachment from	-	.048	.0223
Authoritarianism		1.88*	0.86
_cons	-.746	-.610	-1.139
	-7.99	-5.86***	-8.52***
Log Likelihood	-7048.746	-6199.378	-6114.898
N	10556	9189	9174
Num of Groups	9	9	9
$\sigma_{\gamma_i}^2$	.199	.102	.118

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

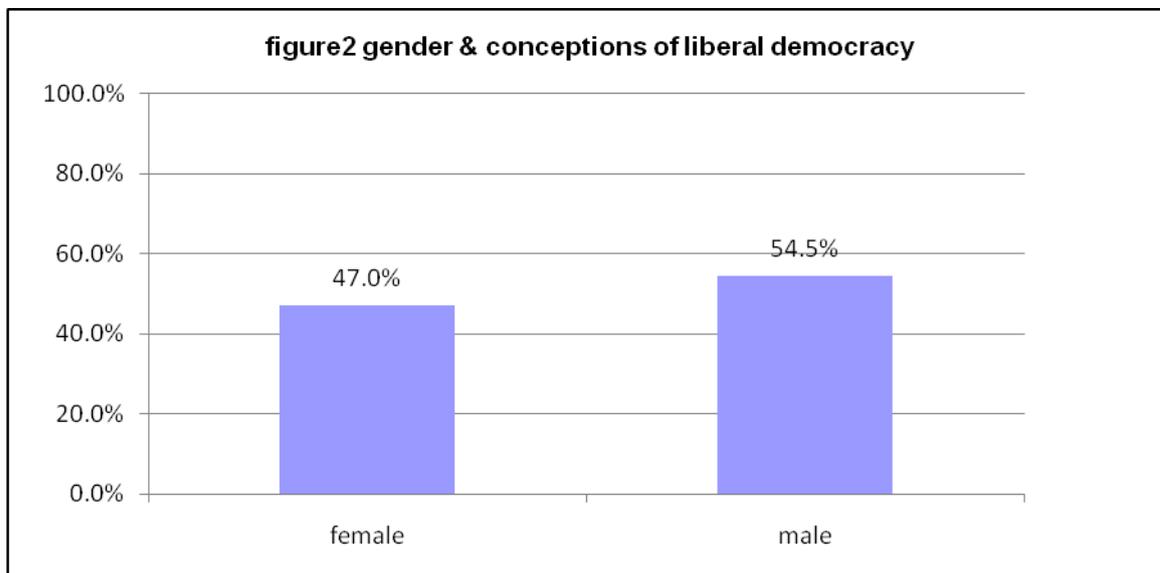
Dependent Variables: Liberal Democracy=1, Substantivist Democracy=0.

Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007.

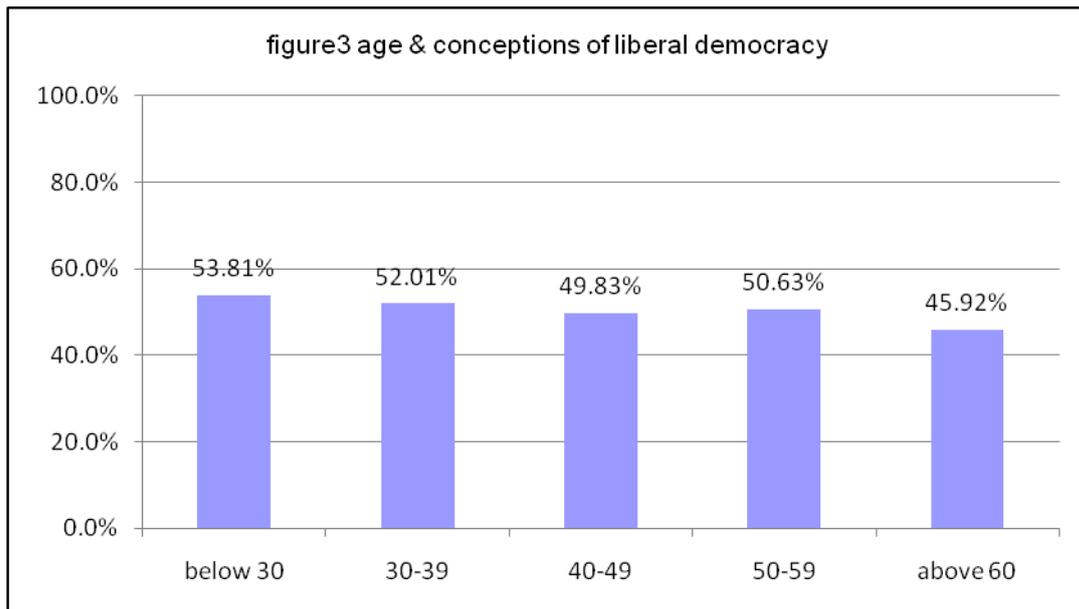
Figure 1 Liberal Democracy vs. Substantivist Democracy



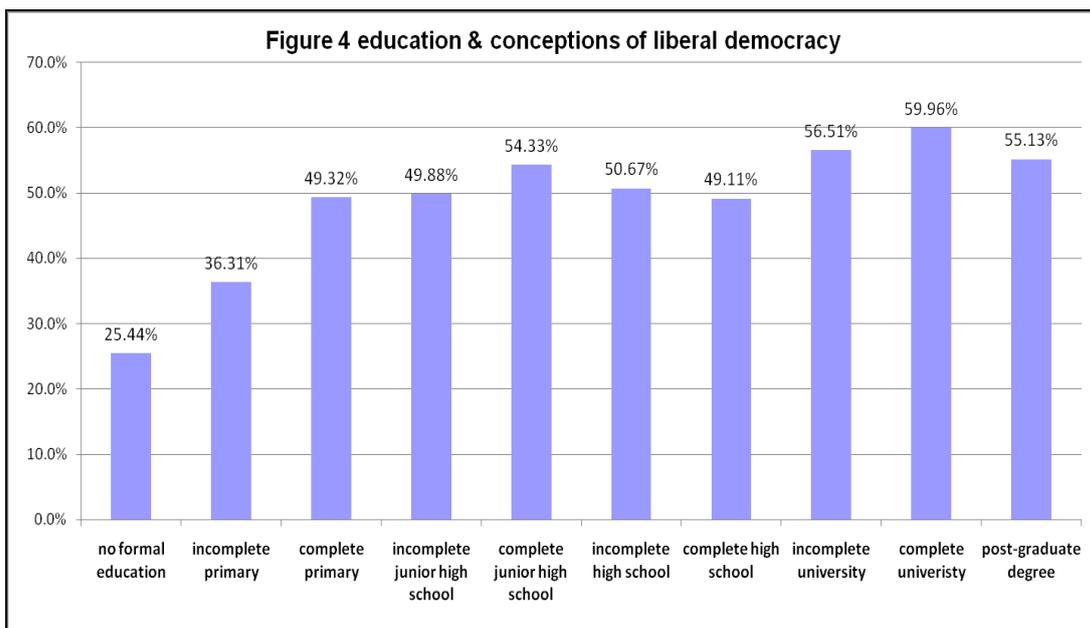
Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007



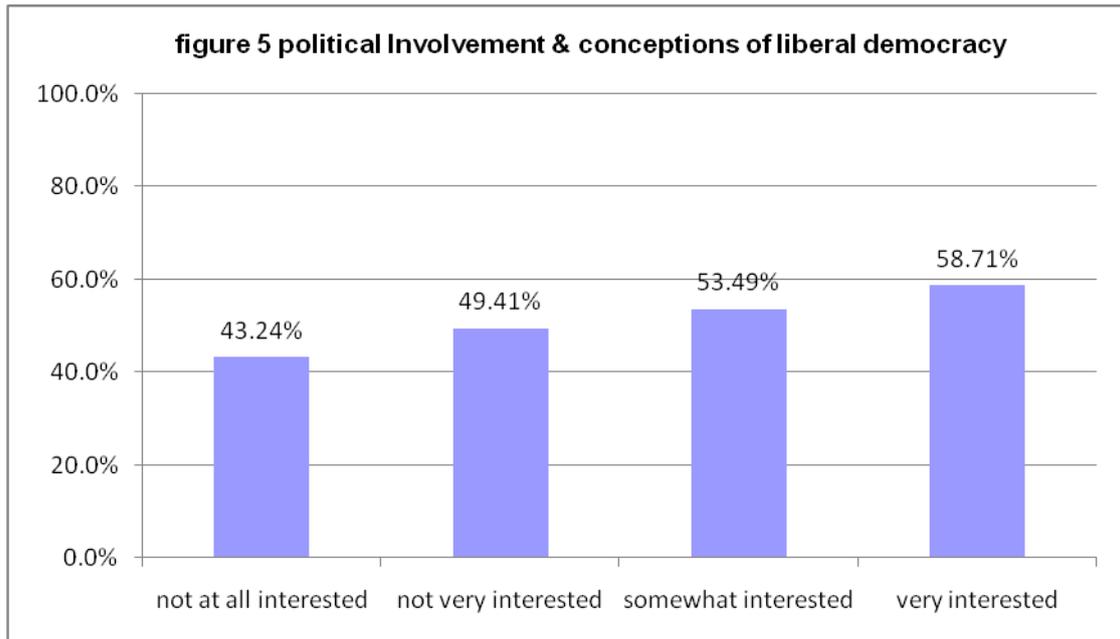
Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007



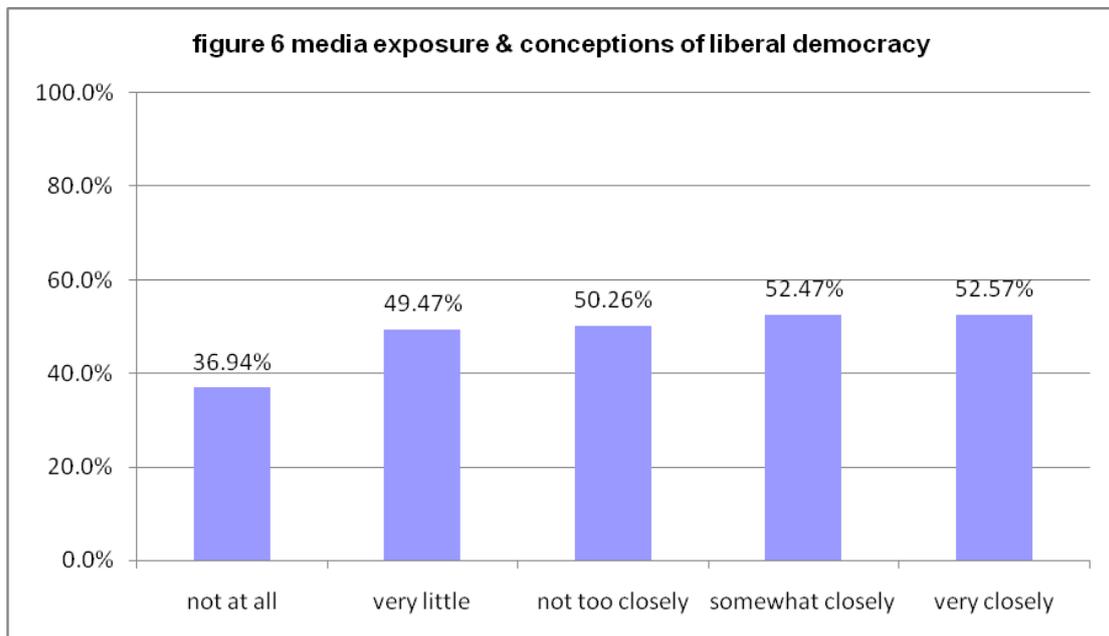
Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007

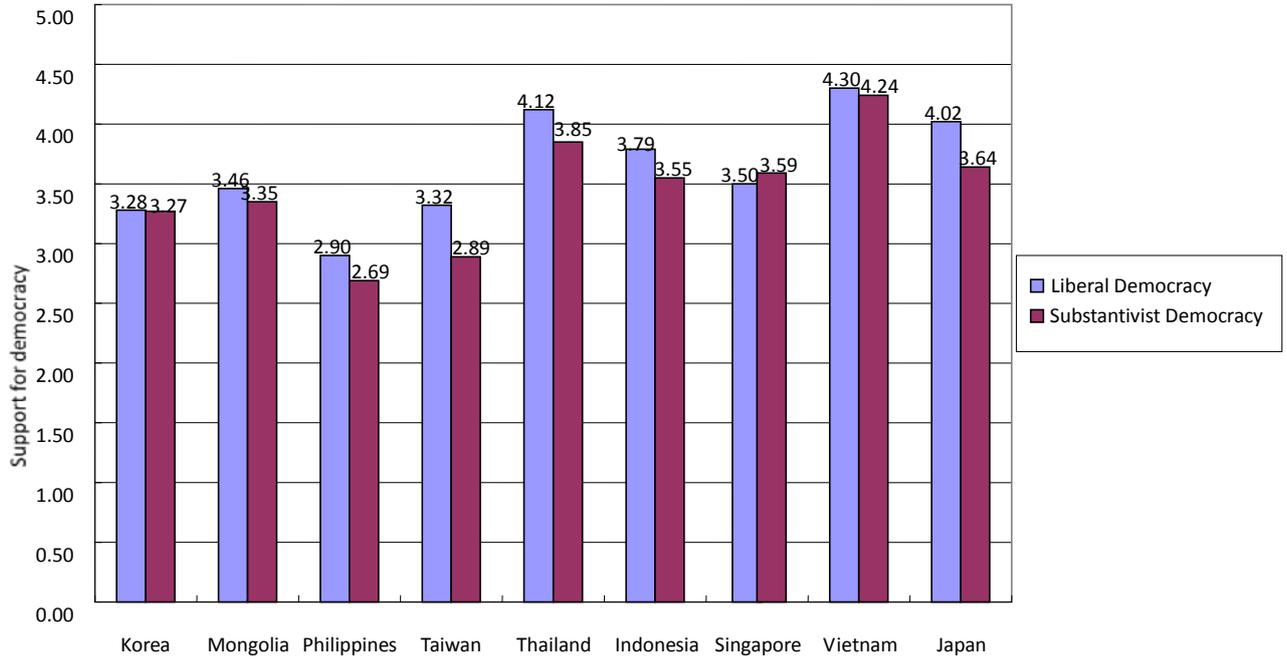


Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007

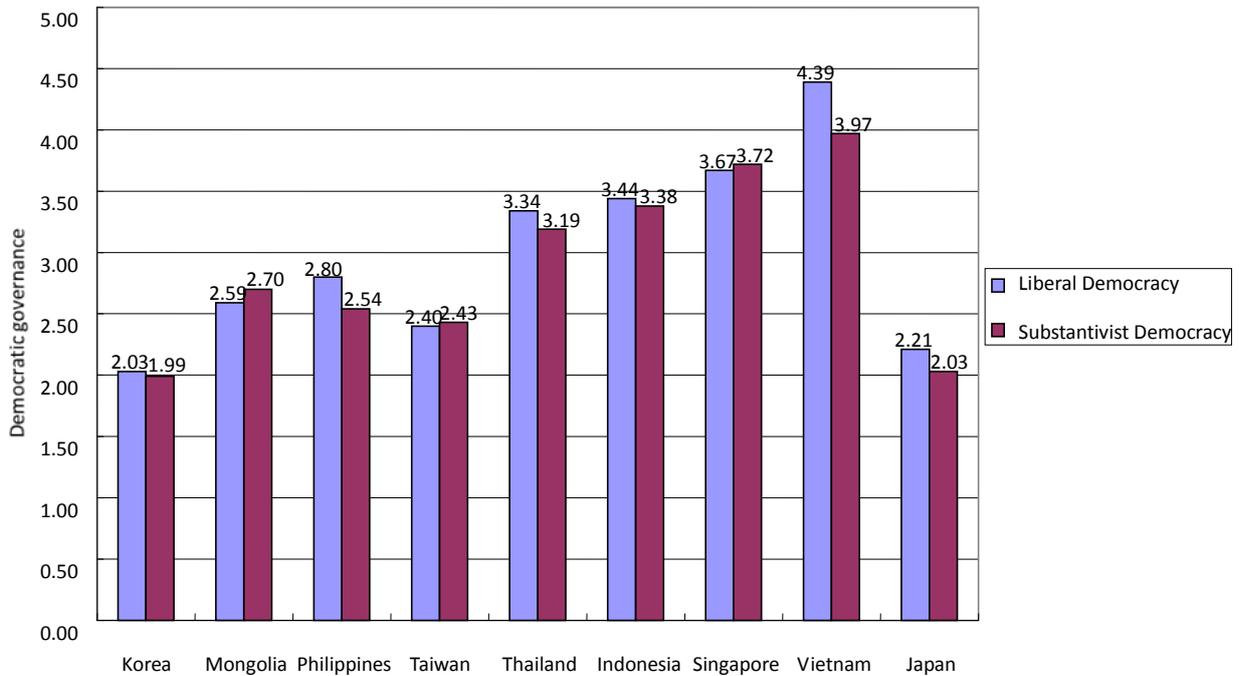


Source: Asian Barometer Survey, 2005-2007

**Figure 7 Conceptions of democracy & support for democracy**



**Figure 8 Conceptions of democracy & democratic governance**



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# Asian Barometer

## A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) grows out of the Comparative Survey of Democratization and Value Change in East Asia Project (also known as East Asia Barometer), which was launched in mid-2000 and funded by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan under the MOE-NSC Program for Promoting Academic Excellence of University. The headquarters of ABS is based in Taipei, and is jointly sponsored by the Department of Political Science at NTU and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. The East Asian component of the project is coordinated by Prof. Yun-han Chu, who also serves as the overall coordinator of the Asian Barometer. In organizing its first-wave survey (2001-2003), the East Asia Barometer (EABS) brought together eight country teams and more than thirty leading scholars from across the region and the United States. Since its founding, the EABS Project has been increasingly recognized as the region's first systematic and most careful comparative survey of attitudes and orientations toward political regime, democracy, governance, and economic reform.

In July 2001, the EABS joined with three partner projects -- New Europe Barometer, Latinobarometro and Afrobarometer -- in a path-breathing effort to launch Global Barometer Survey (GBS), a global consortium of comparative surveys across emerging democracies and transitional societies.

The EABS is now becoming a true pan-Asian survey research initiative. New collaborative teams from Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, and Vietnam are joining the EABS as the project enters its second phase (2004-2008). Also, the State of Democracy in South Asia Project, based at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (in New Delhi) and directed by Yogendra Yadav, is collaborating with the EABS for the creation of a more inclusive regional survey network under the new identity of the Asian Barometer Survey. This path-breaking regional initiative builds upon a substantial base of completed scholarly work in a number of Asian countries. Most of the participating national teams were established more than a decade ago, have acquired abundant experience and methodological know-how in administering nationwide surveys on citizen's political attitudes and behaviors, and have published a substantial number of works both in their native languages and in English.

*For more information, please visit our website: [www.asianbarometer.org](http://www.asianbarometer.org)*