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The Conundrum of Authoritarian Resiliency: Hybrid
Regimes and Non-Democratic Regimes in East Asia

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Asian Barometer

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The Conundrum of Authoritarian Resiliency: Hybrid Regimes and Non-Democratic Regimes in East Asia

Zhengxu Wang and Ern Ser Tan

Introduction: Transition or Resilience for Hybrid and Non-Democratic

Regimes in East Asia:

The study of democracy in East Asia cannot ignore the several non-democratic regimes in the region. Despite the very reputable developments in democratic transition and consolidation in the region during the last two decades, most notably in the cases of Taiwan, South Korea, Mongolia, and Indonesia, authoritarianism and other types of non-democratic regimes still loom large. North Korea remains one of the most repressive and non-democratic regimes in the world. In Myanmar, despite recent signs of political relaxation, remains under the rule of a military junta. Singapore, Cambodia, and Malaysia have established fairly free and competitive elections, but their political systems can still hardly qualify as genuine democracies. It is, however, in China and Vietnam we find the most challenging cases to democracy. Both countries have combined one-party authoritarianism with successful economic development, which seems to sustain the legitimacy of the political system. In fact, a “China Model” discourse is picking up as developing countries in Africa and Latin America turns to Beijing for lessons of economic development.

This paper will examine a critical question: how much support do these regimes enjoy from their public, and why? We aim at identifying the factors that contributing to regime legitimacy as well as erosion of regime legitimacy in these countries. This way, we can draw conclusion regarding

the future prospects of these hybrid and non-democratic regimes. In other words, empirical analyses will hopefully give us hints regarding the likelihood of regime survival or regime breakdown in these countries, and the prospects of transition toward democracy. We will focus on four of such regimes in the region: China, Singapore, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. We first review the literature regarding regime support, also known as legitimacy. We recognize the various theoretical traditions linked to public support for their political system. Then we provide a brief discussion of the political landscape in these four countries. Based on this, it will be possible to establish a few hypotheses testable with our data from the Asian Barometer. The empirical part of the paper consists of a descriptive part that demonstrates the level of regime support in these countries, and an analytical part that uses regression models to test the various hypothesis or regime support and regime rejection. We close with some discussions and tentative conclusions.

Public Support and Hybrid and Non-Democratic Regimes

Defining, measuring and explaining regime support has proven to be very challenging. Political scientists have generally argue that genuine legitimacy of a polticial system must be based on its institutional characteristics. It is generally believed that democratic institutions such as fair and free elections, protection of individual rights and freedom, are necessary conditions for regime legitimacy. Government performance, quality of institutions, and political culture, however, have also been proposed as possible sources of regime legitimacy. In this section we review this large body of literature as they are relevant to the purpose of this chapter:

explaining the sources of regime support and regime rejection in East Asia's hybrid and non-democratic countries.

Political Culture

A very prominent line of inquiry in this regard focuses on political culture. This works in two ways. One school sees the East Asian cultural tradition as conducive to hierarchical and authoritarian type of political order, a "culturist" kind of view. Another school, a universalist kind of view, sees all types of "undemocratic" cultures as common to pre-industrial societies, and the advances of socioeconomic modernization will erase them and bring in a more liberal and pro-democratic culture, which will surely lead to erosion in the legitimacy of any authoritarian or non-democratic regime. The "culturist" view regarding East Asia's political development can be traced back to some early works of Lucian Pye and others, and saw its incarnation in real political forms when a few prominent leaders in Asia advocated "Asian Values" as distinct from Western values. Our late colleague Tianjian Shi gave a comprehensive conceptual that differentiates Eastern (Confucian) vis-a-vis Western political culture in four dimensions: regarding how interest should be defined, how the relationship with authority should be defined, how conflict should be handled, and how justice should be defined. In particular, two norms play a crucial role in defining citizens' political orientations and behaviours. Orientation Toward Authority (OTA) refers to norms that regulate the proper relationship between individuals and the authority, while Definition of Self Interest (DSI) tells actors what the proper unit of analysis in their interest calculation is. Shi argues that Chinese and Confucian tradition provides a Hierarchical Orientation Toward Authority (HOTA) among citizens, while Western tradition provides a Reciprocal Orientation (ROTA). ROTA sees the authority of

government as given by citizens' consent, and evaluates a regime's legitimacy by how it acquires its power. By contrast, people subscribing to HOTA sees the authority of the government as given by the mandate of heaven, and focus on the substance of a regime's policies when they judge its legitimacy.

In the other dimension, *allocentric definition of self interest* (ADSI) refers to the norm developed from Confucianism, while *idiocentric definition of self interest* (IDSI) drives from the Western, Hobbesian tradition. This pair is different from, although related to, the conventional collectivist-individualist categorization of human psychology. When evaluating government policies, IDSI makes a citizen focus on its impact on Self interest, while ADSI makes an individual focus on how the policy affect the interests of groups he or she belongs to. DSI also shape the standards citizens use to evaluate government performance, as well as determining the sources of affection citizens have "toward fellow citizens and public authorities". In terms of political behaviors, people with ADSI are less likely to develop problems with their government, are less active in engaging in confrontational actions against the government, and so forth.¹

This argument seems to carry substantial amounts of empirical support—Shi himself constructed this inductively from survey data ranging from those collected in the earlier 1990s to the recent waves of Asian Barometer. Social psychologists such as Kuo-shu Yang () also established the features of Chinese values that are different from Inkeles (1971) ideas of "individual modernity". The problem with this approach, however, is the exclusion of the "change" dimension of social and political values. In fact, while emphasizing that the traditional Chinese mentality was a production of the particular economic, geological, and sociopolitical

¹ One dimension of traditional Chinese culture does encourage participation in politics to pursue their goals. If the regime fails to satisfy people, this norm allows people's to use more confrontational means and unconventional political activities to voice their interests and dissatisfaction.

structures of ancient China, Yang does see the advancement of modern economic and social changes will lead to the shifts of Chinese public from those traditional values toward a type of modern values, albeit in his view a modern Chinese outlook will still be different from a modern Western outlook in various ways (). The strongest advocate for a “value change” perspective is found in Inglehart, who from the 1970s has pursued the linkage between socioeconomic modernization and the rise of pro-democratic political and social values. Regardless of cultural traditions and socioeconomic structure, Inglehart and Welzel argued that once socioeconomic modernization enables a society to move out of poverty and subsistence economy, the latent desire for freedom, expression, and rights in every human being will be emancipated. The “development as freedom” argument (Sen, 1999) is best understood in the sense that sufficient material resources made possible by socioeconomic development will turn into economic means with which individuals make demand for and eventually secure civil and political rights (Inglehart, Welzel, and Klingamann, 2003). Human development therefore is an organic integration (a syndrome to use one of Inglehart’s favorite terms) of the three dimensions of socioeconomic modernization, value changes, and (formal) democracy. In the face of this human development theory, Inkeles (1971) and Almond and Verba (1975)’s findings that socioeconomic modernization will lead to the emergence of certain modern or civic types of culture appears modest if not conservative. The implication of this theory for our study of democracy and regime support in East Asia is clear: with China and other nations in this region enjoying rapid socioeconomic modernization, the traditional values such as paternalism, respect for authority, and avoidance of conflict will fade away from the old to younger generations, and liberal democratic values (as measured in the Asian Barometer battery) will rise. Together this means the public support for authoritarian regimes will decline, drastically. Chu (2011) has found that a major source of regime support in China is the traditional Chinese political philosophy of the

benevolent, guardian-type of beliefs of the government, but in the more modernized sections (such as among the urban residents), the perceived government protection of freedom and rights has become more important. And we should look no further from the region to look for more convincing evidences supporting this argument. Taiwan and South Korea offer two textbook examples of socioeconomic modernization leading to erosion of support for authoritarian regimes and demand for democratic openings.

Government Performance

With most of East Asian countries enjoy rapid economic development in the last few decades, it is natural to point to economic performance as a major source of regime support among the public. All four countries we examine in this chapter can claim more than two decades of stable economic development (with the slight exception of Malaysia, which suffered great impacts during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis). While it is common for political scientists to examine the economic variable when understanding electoral victories or defeats in the advanced democracies (It's the Economy, Stupid), we often under estimate the importance of economy as a source of regime legitimacy in developing countries. Here Inglehart's postmaterialist theory is called in again, but to do a job that it was not designed for. Postmaterialism argues that with affluence and economic security resulted from a sustained period of economic development, the public will aspire for non-material goals such as freedom and political rights. While this argument has been greatly appreciated by research on advanced democracies, most notably in analysis the decline in political trust and rise of critical citizens (Norris, 1999) in Western Europe and North America, the other side of the coin should be given sufficient attention when it comes to studying developing countries. And that is, postmaterialist

goals will only emerge when material (socioeconomic) ones are met. In fact, empirical research has tried to establish that individuals and social actors pursue three layers of goals. People need to first secure prematerialist-survival goals such as having food, sheltering, and safety (,, 2002). Then people will be able to pursue materialist, acquisitive, and achievement-focused goals, such as earning a high income, establishing one's social status, and the accumulation of wealth. It is only at the third stage that people give more attention to postmaterial goals, such as demanding for political rights and democratic politics (Wang, 2007).

What we see in the developing societies in East Asia is probably the large majority of the public is still in the materialist stage, concerned mostly with socioeconomic goals. A significant portion of them, in fact, have just recently emerged from the dire effort to achieve their prematerialist goals—having being just elevated out of poverty, that is. If this is true, then there is no surprise that Chinese citizens' understanding of rights has often concerned their socioeconomic conditions (Perry, 2005?). That is, this difference is not cultural (West vis-à-vis East), but rather developmental--- concerns over socioeconomic rights will need to be met before concerns over political rights can emerge. This other side of the postmaterialism coin simply makes the point that economic development in China and other developing countries in East Asia are regime-enhancing, as the large majority of their people see socioeconomic progress as bringing a better life to them each and everyday. These societies are still before the time of "silent" postmaterialist revolution (Wang, 2005)²

Democratic theorists may find this dismaying as economic development is not (yet) having the modernization effects of bringing down the dictators (,,de sequita), but if we take a longer-term view, what we are witnessing is completely normal. That is to say, economic

² For the idea of "silent revolution", see Inglehart (1977).

development needs to continue for a sustained period of time in order to drive in democracy. The success of modernization in Taiwan and South Korea only makes this clearer: Democratic transition in the two societies became possible in late 1980s, when each had enjoyed more than 30 years of rapid economic modernization. In fact, for China, we are arguing in this Chapter, the legitimizing effect of economic development seems to be in decline already, after more than 30 years of being a strong one, a hypothesis we intend to test in this Chapter.

Political Performance-Good Governance and Competence

Economic performance as a source of legitimacy for authoritarian regimes works in the short-to medium term, but modernization theory dictates that it won't for the longer term. Huntington is most insightful when he comments on this, the legitimacy of an authoritarian regime is eroded if it does deliver on its promises (of bringing economic development): by achieving its purposes, it defeats its ... The limitation of economic performance as a source of legitimacy lies in two lines. At the first, economic performance may fumble---if the country's economy is trapped in a long period of recession or a serious crisis, then the regime will lose the favour of the public. Witness Suharto's Indonesia in the 1997-1998 financial crisis. Second, even if the economy continues to do well, the its legitimizing effect may soon suffer a diminishing marginal return. Gradually, the public will take good economy for granted, therefore withdraw their support for the government if it fails to deliver in other fronts, such as in transparency and accountability. This can also be called a "rising expectation" thesis.

Therefore, in understanding the role of government performance in legitimizing the regime, we need to move beyond an economic determinism. This is more easily understood in the case of Singapore: if economic performance is the only sources the regime relies on for its legitimacy, then today's Singapore should look like Taiwan: the similar level of economic

development of the two societies means that Singaporean citizens should share a similar levels of expectation from the government in terms of social and political performance. That Singaporean citizens remain satisfied with their political system must mean that they judge their government to be competent and effective in dealing with not just economic but also social and political issues. That is, we are proposing a “good government” hypothesis instead of an “economic performance” hypothesis to explain the high level of regime support in these non-democratic countries. The citizens support their political system because they feel the government is capable of solving the problems the country is facing. Here the issue is that public expectation of the government is aligned with their perception of the current priority of the nation, and their judgement of their government’s competence is evolutionary. The government’s performance is measured against the moving target of the public’s evolving expectations, and there might be a interactive or dialectic process between the public-directing government and the public in defining what the nation’s current priorities are. For a country like China, in the past such priorities might focused on economic development and China’s rising status in the world, now they might move toward better protection of the environment, more equitable income distribution, more transparency and responsiveness in the government, and others. Between 2002 and 2004, for example, the Chinese Communist Party put out a platform of “Harmonious Society”, which promises “equity and justice, democracy and rule of law, honesty and fraternity, and the harmony between human beings and the nature”. Such goals certainly move beyond the simplistic focus on economic development and wealth accumulation, but instead focus on the social and political spheres of human development. They are certainly embraced by the public as the right direction the country should move toward. As long as the public judge that the Party is doing a decent job in leading the public to pursue these goals, they are likely to give their support to the regime.

This hypothesis is different from economic performance hypothesis in that citizens may judge the government according to a comprehensive idea of good governance, effectiveness, and competence. It is possible that the public will support their regime as long as they judge their government's effectiveness and competent by focusing on the political front, i.e. whether the system allows sufficient channels for voices and accountability (the first dimension of the World Bank's measurement of government effectiveness), but it is still different from judging whether the government meets the procedural definition of a formal democracy. This might be the point of argument Shi and Lu (2010): citizens still outcome- instead of procedure-focused.

Institutional Quality

We delve more into this idea of good governance. One layer of this idea is that citizens judge the competence and effectiveness of the government holistically. Another layer, however, sees the citizens as capable of judging governance at sub-system levels. In contrast to "democratic-oriented legitimacy", which argues legitimacy comes from formal rule such as free and competitive elections (Weatherford, 1972?), Rothstein argues that electoral democracy itself does *not* necessarily secure political legitimacy. Instead, whether the system can deliver quality governance is the key, as legitimacy is determined not at the input "but at the output side of the political system (p.311)." Comparing to the input-focus of the "democratic-oriented legitimacy" argument, Rothstein believes that output matters more because policy fields related to people's daily lives such as education, health care, and social welfare are implemented by lower-level government officials, who are usually not elected. As a result, quality of government may be more important for creating political legitimacy than electoral democracy (p.314).

The quality of government output in this setting must be measured in the impartiality of its policies and their implementation: the Scandinavian governance model and the civil war in the former Yugoslavia give us excellent contexts in which to measure this. In the Scandinavian case, while the political system represents a classical combination of social welfare and liberal democracy, the irony is, however, that citizens have much less confidence in the elected or election-related institutions, such as political parties, the unions, and the Parliament. Instead, they trust institutions whose leaders they have no right to elect, such as the health care system, the police, and social services. Hence, democratic institutions fail to provide the system with legitimacy, but the quality of the output institutions do. In the Yugoslavia case, the Serbian secessionism movement emerged in Croatia not because Serbians believed that they would be a permanent minority in the country, hence would have no chance of winning an election, but because they encountered systematic discrimination and insufficient protection from government departments such as the police. Again democratic institutions did not secure the state's legitimacy among Serbians, while failures in some of the output institutions decisively ruined the state's legitimacy (Rothstein 2009).

While Rothstein (2009) was only able to examine institutional quality measured by their level of impartiality, a great advantage of the Asian Barometer dataset is that it measures public perception of institutional quality in a large number of dimensions. These include the quality of services provided by the government (such as obtaining a birth certificate), the ability of the government to ensure equality, citizens' freedom protected by the government, and prevention of corruption. These we can call the "outputs" or substances of governance and. Furthermore, Asian Barometer provides another set of measurement of institutional quality, which looks into the government procedures as perceived by the public. These include the responsiveness of the government, rule of law, political competition, and the quality of horizontal and vertical

accountability. These two groups of measurements will allow us to see whether they are determinants of regime support by the public in these four societies. If they indeed are, then we need to conclude that institutional building and reform in these countries have resulted in sub-system institutions, such as the judicial system and accountability, that provide governance of decent quality. Gilley and others argue that authoritarian regimes like the Chinese one are renewing their legitimacy through institutional innovations will need to be taken seriously (Gilley, 2007; Schubert, 2010). These hybrid regimes, therefore, are resilient because they are capable of institutional adaptation (Nathan, 2003).

Modernization, Civic Culture, and Democratic Legitimacy

We touched upon several theoretic streams above without giving them separate attention. Here it is useful to briefly mention them. Modernization theory argues that rising income, education, and urbanization will lead to support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian regimes. Modernization theory 2.0 (Inglehart-Welzel's human development theory) inserts public's political values as the intermediate variable, believes that socioeconomic development first lead to the decline of traditional values and the rise of self-expression and self-emancipatory values, which in turn leads to rejection of authoritarian political principles. Civic culture (Almond and Verba, 1963) sees political participation and psychological involvement as regime-enhancing traits, and social capital can "make democracy work" (Putnam, 1993). This line of scholarship has never seriously answered the question: are civic culture and social capital only conducive to regime stability and governance quality in democracies, or are they equally capable of making good governance in a non-democratic setting? Recent examination seems to suggest the latter (Tang). Lastly, the elephant in the room so far has been the democratic-legitimacy theory, which believe only when citizens perceive the effective establishment of democratic institutions such

as competitive free elections will they perceive the system as legitimate. We relax this to hypothesize below that citizens will show regime support if they perceive the “democracy” in their country is of satisfactory working.

Hypotheses

Against these theoretical background, we will test the following hypotheses in these four societies under various type of hybrid and non-democratic regimes.

Modernization Theory Hypothesis 1: More educated and more affluent citizens in these countries are showing lower level of support for

Modernization Hypothesis 2: People with higher level of traditional values show higher level of regime support, while people with higher level of liberal democratic values show lower level of regime support

Civic Culture Hypothesis: More politically engaged citizens show higher level of regime support

Economic Performance Hypothesis: People who feel their country or family’s economy as doing well shows stronger support for the regime.

Institutional Quality Hypothesis: People who perceive a higher level of institutional quality in the country’s political system show a higher level of regime support.

Competence-Good Governance Hypothesis: People who sees the government as capable of solving the country’s most important problems show higher level of regime support.

Democratic Legitimacy Hypothesis: People who feel satisfied with how democracy works in the country shows higher level of regime support.

Country Cases

In reviewing the literature, we have already touched upon the country cases this Chapter intends to examine. Here we give a more focused discussion of the four countries' political landscape, as regarding to the status of regime support.

China: The Party Goes on Amidst Challenges in Governance

Based on evidences from the Asian Barometer Survey of 2002, Shi (2009) characterizes the Chinese case as “democratic public supporting an authoritarian regime”. The explicit support for both democracy and the non-democratic political regime are both very high in China. This apparent puzzle needs to be resolved by untangling the meanings Chinese public gives to democracy and the sources of regime support. The high-level of regime support should be foremost attributed to the exceptional performance of the ruling Party in developing the nation's economy, improving people's living standard, and raising China's international status (). Since the Party embarked on economic reform at the wake of the disastrous Maoist era, the large majority of the nation have seen tremendous betterments in their lives. This change alone can secure a high level of public support for and confidence in the regime. Analysis continues to show the strong relation between the public's perception of the national economic conditions and their satisfaction with how the government is doing and support for the regime. Yet economic performance has its limitations, as economic development will reach a stage of

decreasing marginal increases, and public expectation will also change. Hence if the regime continues to enjoy high-level of support after more than 30 years of rapid economic development, other sources of regime support must also be at work.

Political culture is believed to be another source of regime support in China. A group of “traditional” cultural beliefs that Asian Barometer has attempted to measure are found alive and well among Chinese citizens, especially those living in the countryside. The statements such as “even if parents’ demands are unreasonable, children should still do what they ask”, or “one should not insist on one’s opinions if his or her co-workers disagree with him/her” are often found agreeable by respondents in China. More importantly, “traditional” political beliefs that see the relationship between the state and the individual as that between protective parents and children (paternalism) and the state as benevolent guardian for its subjects are still widely held in China. In addition, a type of collectivism, such as believing individuals should prepare to sacrifice for the larger public, is also prevalent. Chu (2011) has found such a political culture to be the most powerful explanatory factor for the high level of regime support in China, which Shi (2012) argues the two dimensions of political culture that define an individual’s view of his or her relationship with the authority and that of his or her relationship to a larger “self” are what make the Eastern political culture fundamentally different from the Western one.

Then how do we reconcile this with the high level of support for democracy? Using a typology grew out of Asian Barometer, the Chinese public is full of “superficial democrats”—those with an explicit preference of democracy as a regime type but harbor relatively low level of liberal democratic values (). The strong influence of “shadows of Confucianism” (Shi and Lu, 2010) means that the large majority of Chinese still judge democracy by substances instead of procedures, while the state’s strong monopoly of political ideas means that democracy in the

Western forms of electoral competition is easily discredited. Both factors seem to work together to produce a public understanding of democracy that coincides with the Party's definition of democracy and good governance. In fact, a large majority of Chinese (as those in Vietnam and presumably North Korea) believe China is a democracy, and are satisfactory with how democracy works in China. Therefore, supporting the regime is supporting democracy, and vice versa: many Chinese believe promoting democracy needs to take place under the leadership of the Party. Furthermore, with a high level of traditionalism and low level of liberal democracy values, nominal support for democracy can be hardly linked to challenge of their authoritarian political system.

This also raises a very important point that many scholars tend to overlook. That is, the performance the regime has delivered so far is multi-dimensional. It is not simply good economy that won the public's support. It is that in the last three decades, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the public sees a genuine progress in China's social and political freedom as well as improvement in government's quality. In this regard, international observers such as Freedom House seems to have underestimated the amount of progresses made in China---today Freedom House still rates China's political rights as bad as that of North Korea. The improvement in governance quality as measured in responsiveness, transparency, and competence, as well as the public's passive freedom (freedom from government intervention and harassment) is very clearly felt by the public, hence the high level of satisfaction with "how democracy works" found in Asian Barometer and other similar surveys.

But things do seem to be changing now as we enter the second decade of the 21st Century. All the factors work in favor of the Party and the regime seems to be in decline. Traditional social and political beliefs seem to be eroding as a result of socioeconomic modernization (Wang,

2010). The other side of this sees the rise of LDV and postmaterialism, just as Inglehart and Welzel's human development theory would predict (2003, 2005). Government performance faces challenges in many fronts: in its reduced or constrained ability to generate economic growth, and to ensure equitable distribution and social justice, in the rising expectations of the public, in government failures in ensuring food safety, clean government, safe and clean environment, Crisis in governance, judicial integrity, and public security and order. "Crises of governance" (Pei, 2002) are met by the Party's inability to introduced deeper structural reforms (Pei, 2006). And the expansion in media freedom (notably social media in the last few years) and civil society means the Party is quite significantly losing its ability in monopolizing political ideas. We have probably seen a turning point in the trend line of regime support in China: the high level of political support in China measured in 2011 is probably showing decline comparing to earlier waves of Asian Barometer.

Singapore: robust economy, good governance, semi-authoritarian regime

There is a sense that the concept of communitarian democracy is an attractive one by which to understand Singapore's political system, but the fact remains that it is semi-authoritarian or at best a "hybrid" democracy, even if one accepts or justifies it as an example of "Asian democracy" backed up by "Asian values"³. In the public lecture noted above, Diamond argued that Singapore has what it takes to make a quick and easy transition to becoming a liberal

³ The "Asian values" argument is by now very much discredited. It is more of an ideological position supportive of authoritarian capitalism (cf. Stivens, 1998:97), than a valid explanation for a supposedly Asian preference for authoritarianism over democracy. Buruma (2003:56) pointed out that "Chinese in Taiwan and Hong Kong have shown that there is no inherent cultural reason for Chinese to prefer authoritarian to democratic government" and that "Koreans, too, come from the same Confucian tradition, indeed from a particularly authoritarian version of it, and they have fought successfully for a more liberal political system."

democracy the moment it decided to do so because it already has “many of the elements of good governance and the rule of law, the ethic of commitment to transparency and public service” (Conceicao, 2006).

The various social, economic, and political indicators (2006 figures) suggest that the preconditions are indeed present in Singapore. Singapore has a high GDP per capita that is third in East Asia, following Japan and Hong Kong, and first in Southeast Asia. It also scores the highest on the Rule of Law Indicator (1.82), the Government Effectiveness Indicator (2.20), as well as the Control of Corruption Indicator (2.30) in Southeast Asia.

In contrast, it ranks quite low in terms of the Freedom House Political Rights Score and the Civil Liberty score. For instance, among the Asian Dragons, while both Taiwan and South Korea score a “1” on political rights, Singapore receives only a “5”, along with Hong Kong. In regard to civil liberty, it has a score of “4”, compared to “1” for Taiwan, and “2” for both South Korea and Hong Kong. In Southeast Asia, it scores less favorably on these indicators, compared to Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, but more favorably than Cambodia and Vietnam, which is still ruled by a communist regime.

Another indicator of the quality of democracy is “number of effective political parties”. Although Singapore has sometimes been described as a one-party state, it may be more accurately understood as having a “one-party dominance” system. Besides the ruling PAP, there are in existence close to 23 political parties, of which 4 had participated in General Election 2006. One of the 4 active parties was itself an alliance of 4 smaller political parties. It should be noted that in General Election 2006, the PAP received two-thirds of the popular vote and won 82 seats in the 84-seat parliament. The Workers’ Party received 16 per cent of the popular vote and won one parliamentary seat, which it has occupied since 1991, and one “non-constituency” seat. The

Singapore Democratic Alliance received 13 per cent of the popular vote and won one parliamentary seat, which it has occupied since 1984.

As noted earlier, notwithstanding the indicators that point to Singapore as having a semi-authoritarian regime, data from the AB 2006 survey show that it registers the second highest score--after Vietnam, which is still ruled by a communist party--for regime support in Southeast Asia. The same pattern is repeated along the "trust" and the "best government" dimensions of regime support, with 91 per cent expressing a high degree of trust in the regime in Singapore, compared to 98 per cent in Vietnam and 43 per cent in the Philippines; and 80 per cent in Singapore saying that the regime provides the best form of government, compared to 92 per cent in Vietnam and 37 per cent in the Philippines. These high scores on regime support in Singapore serve as empirical evidence that it is indeed a theoretically interesting case worthy of further analysis. More importantly, however, given what we know of the outcome of General Election 2011, the arguments cited above that Singapore has a docile public and a conformist middle class may no longer be sustainable.

Vietnam: Reform Party in its Good Days

In many ways, Vietnam resembles China in its good 1980s-1990s, when economic development was rapid due to recent reform measures that unleashed the energy of the population.

Meanwhile, the Party in Vietnam has been much more innovative in reforming its political structure and processes, to allow more transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness. In this regard the Viet Cong has done much better than the Zhong Gong (Chinese Communist Party, CCP). It has preempted the demand for political reforms from the Vietnamese public by taking up political reform at a much earlier stage of its economic take-off, comparing to the CCP.

Survey data continue to show a high-level of political support among the Vietnamese citizens.

[To expand.]

Malaysia:

[To be written later]

Operationalization and Measurement

To analysis the levels and sources of regime support in these four countries, we use the rich dataset from the fourth wave of Asian Barometer, which was conducted between 2010 and 2011. The **Dependent Variable** is measured with a number of questions in the Survey asking the respondents' perception of their political system. They are numbered 81 through 83 in the survey questionnaire.⁴ We calculated a mean of the respondents' answers to these three questions, which respectively measures how proud the respondent is of the political system, how much she or he thinks the political system deserves people's support, and how much he or she likes to live under her system of government. Exploratory factor analysis shows that the three questions correlate to each other very well, with factor loadings at 0.7-0.8 levels.

Independent variables

⁴ Question 80 was included in the questionnaire as part of the regime-support battery. It is about the respondent's perception of the political system's capability of solving the problems their country faces. One of our hypotheses intends to test the relationship between citizens' judgement of the competence of the political system and regime support. So we excluded this question from our DV measurement. Question 84 was not included either was we treated it as a separate variable and concept, that "regime change" perception.

Given the hypotheses we identified above, we use more than 40 questions and theoretically classify them into the following major sections. Each section contains 2 to 7 concepts and each concept is synthesized from 2 to 7 questions.

1) Socioeconomic Modernization: These variables include years of formal education, income quintile, and urban residency. Age is also included to see whether a generational shift is taking place between the latter and earlier cohorts

2) Value Changes in Human Development (Modernization Theory Version 2.0):

Traditional Values are measured with an Asian Barometer battery that asks the respondent's value about authority relations in family and work place, and whether person adopts a conflict-avoidance outlook.

Collectivism is measured with two questions regarding whether the respondent e prioritize collective interests over individual ones.

Nationalism is measured with two questions asking how proud the respondent is to be a citizen of his or her country, and how willing he or she is to live in another country.

Liberal Democratic Values are measured with an Asian Barometer battery that asks the respondent's view on equal political rights, pluralism, hierarchical relation between the citizens and the leaders, and separation of power

3) Civic Culture include the respondent's interest in politics.⁵

4) Economic Performance is measured by the respondents' evaluation of the current and recent economic conditions of the nation and their households.

⁵ No social capital measurement was available in this wave of the Survey.

- 5) **Institutional Quality—Outputs** is broken into a number of dimensions and each is measured with one or a few survey questions: respondents' evaluation of safety, of access to services, equality, freedom, government responsiveness, and the extent of corruption in the country..
- 6) **Institutional Quality—Procedures** include respondents' evaluation of rule of laws, political competition, horizontal accountability, and vertical accountability.
- 7) **Competence-Good Governance** is measured by one question that asks the respondent whether she or he believes the government is capable of solving the nation's most difficult problem. Those explicitly saying yes is coded as "1", and all else is coded as "0".
- 8) **Satisfaction with Democracy** is measured by one question that asks whether the respondent is satisfied with how democracy works in the country. Those answering "satisfied" or "very satisfied" are coded as "1", and all else are coded as "0".

Regime Support and Non-Support

The newest data show a rather high level of regime support in these four countries. Table 1 shows that with regarding to questions such as whether the citizens are proud of their political system, whether their political system deserves public support (even if it runs into problems), and whether citizens like to live under a different system, the favourable answers account for very large majorities. The support levels are in fact strikingly high, especially in the case of Vietnam and Singapore. China and Malaysia do slightly worse, but still can claim close to 90% for two of the questions for China, and more than 80% for all questions for Malaysia. A significant portion of Chinese citizens, however, are withholding their unconditional support for the

regime—more than 20% failed to be positive regarding the second question. This fact is supplemented by the proportions of Chinese respondents giving negative answers to several other similar questions, showing that among the four countries, China probably is showing the lowest level of public support for the regime. Of course, it is still relatively high comparing to many other countries in the world, but this level of support is already lower comparing to what was reflected in the last three waves of Asian Barometer.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 2 is another piece of data with the same message: all countries enjoy high levels of support, but China and Malaysia are doing much less well. More than 20% in both countries feel their political system either need major changes or must be replaced. These figures will be much higher, in fact, if we exclude the missing cases. If we do that, the figures for both China and Malaysia will be close to 28-30%. That is, in these two countries, for those who do have an opinion (that is, excluding those of DK or N/A), close to 30% either think their political system needs major changes or think it should be replaced. How many of them think it should be replaced? Excluding those of DK or N/A, about 8-9% in each of these two countries. There are, however, very few people in Singapore or Vietnam who think this way.

[Table 2 about here]

Explaining Regime Support and Non-Support

A large amount of multivariate analysis was necessary to test all the hypotheses identified as the explanation of regime support in the four countries. We regressed the variables by individual countries. For China three sets were conducted, one for the all China sample, and another two for rural and urban Chinese, respectively.⁶ Table 3 first reports a very basic regression model for the four countries that includes only the socioeconomic and demographic variables. This is a way to test the **Modernization Theory 1.0 Hypothesis** suggested above. Do more educated and more affluent citizens in these countries show lower level of support for these non-democratic regimes? Younger cohorts in China and Singapore clearly show a declined level of regime support, while more educated also do so in two of the four societies (Vietnam and Malaysia). Richer citizens show less regime support, except in the case of Vietnam. The urban variable, however, for the whole Chinese sample produced no significant results, suggesting that once controlling education and income, as well as age, urban Chinese are no more “modern” than their rural compatriots, if “modern” here means rejection of an authoritarian regime. But we will get to this point more later, as we will show that the sources of regime support for urban Chinese may turn out to be different from those for rural Chinese in many ways.

That male citizens appear to be more pro-regime in China, especially rural China, and Vietnam is interesting. Especially in more traditional societies, males are generally more nationalistic, jingoistic, and anti-foreign, hence they are more pro-regime if the linkage between nationalism and regime support is valid. This is also partially supported by the fact that this gender difference diminished in more urbanized societies such as urban China and Singapore.⁷ The most

⁶ It would have been very useful if this separated operations could be done for the Vietnamese and Malaysia samples, but unfortunately the surveys in these two countries did not collect the urban-rural residency information. For Vietnam it will also be interesting to run separate analyses for its northern and southern samples.

⁷ It may also be because in rural settings (Vietnam and Rural China), our sample resulted in more missing values for women in questions regarding regime support or other related variables, therefore giving the male respondents an advantage. This needs to be examined more carefully.

striking finding in this table seems to be, however, that more educated Chinese in the Chinese sample are more pro-regime. Should we take this as the successful indoctrination of the Chinese Communist Party? It is also surprising that in Singapore, more educated show no difference in regime support comparing to other Singaporeans, negating what well modernization theory would have predicted.

[Table 3 about here]

To have a more direct feeling of the generational shift regarding regime support in these countries, see the lines in Figure 1. These are the level of regime support captured among the different birth cohorts of the sample, noted by the decades in which they were born.

[Figure 1 about here]

The next sets of regression analyses test all the remaining hypotheses except two. **Civic Culture Hypothesis** is tested by including the Political Interest variable. With everything else being equal, being more interested in politics do not affect one's support for the regime. Although this is a very limited test of the civic culture idea, we can tentatively conclude that civic culture (meaning more political interest, participation, and civic engagement) is probably regime-neutral, instead of clearly pro-democratic and anti-authoritarianism.

Modernization Theory 2.0 is tested by including a number of value dimensions: Social Traditionalism, Collectivism, Liberal Democratic Values, and Nationalism. No surprise here. All these four variables generated very consistent effects consistent across the board, and are consistent with what the theory would have predicted: stronger traditionalism, nationalism, and collectivism leads to stronger regime support, while stronger liberal democratic values decisively reduce public support for the authoritarian regimes.

Economic Performance Hypothesis is confirmed in all cases except citizens in rural China.

People who feel their country or family's economy as doing well shows stronger support for their regime.

[Table 4 about here]

Quality of Institutional Outputs, such as safety, service provision, freedom, and containing corruption⁸ show the predicted impacts in some cases, but not all. In Malaysia they are more salient and consistent: access to services and protection of freedom have positive impacts on regime support, while the degree of corruption affects regime support negatively. In Singapore only safety has a significant impact, and in the predicted direction. Freedom has regime-enhancing effect in China, but regime-eroding effects in Vietnam, while access to services has a negative impact on regime support among rural Chinese. Some of these findings, therefore, require further examination.

The **Quality of Institutional Procedures** are assessed by the respondents in the dimension of government responsiveness, rule of law, political competition, and vertical and horizontal accountability.⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, only horizontal accountability turned out to have a consistent impact across the board: positive in every country but excepting rural China (and Vietnam where data is not available). Vertical accountability has a positive and significant effect in urban China and China as a whole, but not in rural China. Rule of law only has a positive and significant impact in Malaysia.

⁸ Equality is another important institutional output. But because one country's data are missing this variable, we could not include it in the analysis. We shall try again to include it in the analysis of the other three countries

⁹ No political competition data for China, and no rule of law and horizontal accountability data for Vietnam.

Government Competence or Democracy?

Before we introduced the testing of the competing hypotheses regarding whether it is “good” and “competent” or “democratic” government that matters for legitimacy more, we review some of the raw data in Tables 5 and 6. They focus on the different percentages of people who believe their country’s political system should be replaced. Our purpose is to show who are more likely to take such a view. Are they those who think their government cannot solve the problems the nation faces, or are they those who feel their country’s democracy is unsatisfactory? Table 5 compare their percentages between those who think their country’s democracy is unsatisfactory and those who think it is satisfactory. Table 6, on the other hand, compares their percentages between those who think their government is incapable of solving their nation’s problems and those who think the government can solve the nation’s problems.

[Tables 5 and 6 about here]

It is obvious, from these two tables, that there are more “regime changers” among those who take a negative judgement of their government or their democracy. Those who are unsatisfied with their democracy and those who have no confidence in the capability of their government are more likely to call for their political system to be replaced. The difference between the first and the second column, however, is bigger in Table 5 than in Table 6. This preliminary piece of evidence seems to argue that the perception of democracy is more important in citizens’ faith in the political system than competence of the government.

Table 7 put this into more rigorous test. Here we included two dichotomous variables, one measuring whether the respondent is confident in the government’s competence and capability,

the other measuring his or her satisfaction of democracy in his or her country. Both variables were coded in a way that unless the respondent explicitly expressed a positive answer, he or she is given a value of zero.

[Table 7 about here]

The results seem to favour the “democracy-legitimacy” hypothesis. Satisfaction with democracy has a positive and significant effect in three of the four countries, and in China it works in both rural and urban setting. Confidence in the government’s competence, however, has a positive and significant impact in only one country, namely China. Even here it works only on the all China sample and rural China, but not urban China. Therefore, even in Singapore, the place where a lot of debate regarding the relative merits between meritocracy and democracy, it appears the public is taking a democratic view: a system should be legitimized by its democratic characteristics, not by its competence in delivering governance.

The difference between Rural China and Urban China offers another perspective. To put it simply, rural Chinese support the government and the political system because they believe the government can solve the nation’s problems, while urban Chinese support the government because they feel democracy is developing or working well. If we believe urban China represented the more modernized society comparing rural China, we are led to argue that modernization change the criteria by which citizens judge the legitimacy of their political system. Modernization means citizens will gradually cast away the focus on substance and outputs, but pick up political procedures as the indicator of system’s quality and desirability. That urban Chinese see horizontal and vertical accountability as important factor of regime legitimacy only reinforced this argument.

Discussion and Conclusions

[To be completed]

Appendix

Compared with other systems in the world, would you say our system of government works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced?

| | | Country Code | | | | Total |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------|----------|--------|
| | | Mainland China | Singapore | Vietnam | Malaysia | |
| q84. Compared with other systems in the world, would you say our system of government works fine as it is, needs minor change, needs major change, or should be replaced? | It works fine, not need to change | 16.5% | 39.2% | 37.7% | 24.0% | 25.5% |
| | Needs minor change | 55.1% | 56.4% | 46.1% | 46.5% | 51.9% |
| | Needs major change | 20.2% | 3.6% | 16.1% | 20.2% | 16.8% |
| | Should be replaced | 8.2% | .8% | .2% | 9.3% | 5.8% |
| Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Table 1 Regime Support in the four countries

| | China | | Singapore | | Vietnam | | Malaysia | |
|--|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative |
| Thinking in general, I am proud of our system of government. | 89% | 11% | 94% | 6% | 97% | 3% | 81% | 19% |
| A system like ours, even if it runs into problems, deserves the people's support. | 78% | 22% | 88% | 12% | 93% | 7% | 83% | 18% |
| I would rather live under our system of government than any other that I can think of. | 88% | 12% | 91% | 9% | 93% | 7% | 87% | 14% |

Table 2 Regime Change Question: Percentages of people who believe their political system needs to be replaced.

| China | | Singapore | | Vietnam | | Malaysia | |
|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative |
| 72% | 28% | 96% | 4% | 84% | 16% | 71% | 30% |

Table 3 Regression Model 1 Socioeconomic Variables

| | China | | | Singapore | Vietnam | Malaysia |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | All China Sample | China Rural | China Urban | | | |
| (Constant) | 0.776*** (0.0259) | 0.775*** (0.0328) | 0.765*** (0.0421) | 1.049*** (0.0516) | 1.267*** (0.101) | 1.463*** (0.0710) |
| age2 | 0.000*** (0.000) | 0.000*** (0.000) | 0.000*** (0.000) | 0.000** (0.000) | 0.000 (0.000) | 0.000 (0.000) |
| Education in years | 0.00573*** (0.00203) | 0.00594** (0.00279) | 0.00604** (0.00294) | 0.00310 (0.00278) | -0.0141** (0.00665) | -0.0198*** (0.00543) |
| Income quintile | -0.0182*** (0.00261) | -0.0170*** (0.00330) | -0.0189*** (0.00424) | -0.0234*** (0.00417) | 0.0126 (0.0113) | -0.0446*** (0.0122) |
| urban | -0.00391 (0.0167) | | | | | |
| male | 0.0791*** (0.0167) | 0.129*** (0.0226) | 0.0220 (0.0246) | 0.0355 (0.0256) | 0.172*** (0.0436) | -0.0473 (0.0346) |
| R-Square | 0.041 | 0.046 | 0.044 | 0.036 | 0.020 | 0.049 |
| N | 3400 | 1859 | 1541 | 1000 | 940 | 1213 |

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4 Regression Model 2 Socioeconomic plus Value and attitudinal variables

| | China | | | Singapore | Vietnam | Malaysia |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | All China Sample | China Rural | China Urban | | | |
| (Constant) | -0.628*** | -0.137 | -1.046*** | -0.792*** | -1.178*** | -1.069*** |
| age2 | 0.000*** | 0.000 | 0.000** | -0.000* | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| male | 0.00724 | 0.0262 | -0.00671 | 0.0381 | 0.0988** | -0.00373 |
| Education in years | -0.00317 | -0.00513 | -0.00132 | -0.00369 | -0.0125 | -0.00997* |
| Income quintile | -0.00438 | -0.00586 | 0.000386 | -0.0204*** | -0.0176 | -0.0273** |
| urban | -0.0104 | | | | | |
| PolInterest | 0.0183 | 0.00505 | 0.0401* | 0.0340 | -0.00225 | -0.0183 |
| SocialTraditional | 0.117*** | 0.136*** | 0.0752** | 0.0564* | 0.188*** | 0.167*** |
| Collectivism | 0.0985*** | 0.0875*** | 0.107*** | 0.0751*** | 0.200*** | 0.0945*** |
| LDV | -0.148*** | -0.184*** | -0.113*** | -0.126*** | -0.120*** | -0.155*** |
| nationalism | 0.106*** | 0.0788*** | 0.128*** | 0.130*** | 0.156*** | 0.0788** |
| ecoEvalu | 0.0568*** | 0.0177 | 0.0772*** | 0.128*** | 0.104** | 0.113*** |
| safety | 0.0222 | 0.0563** | -0.0133 | 0.0984*** | 0.0785* | -0.0233 |
| AccesstoServices | -0.0104 | -0.0354** | 0.0318 | 0.0134 | 0.0495 | 0.0908*** |
| Freedom | 0.0669*** | 0.0419* | 0.0835*** | 0.00787 | -0.0503* | 0.117*** |
| Corruption | -0.0101 | -0.0187 | 0.00185 | 0.0272 | -0.0263 | -0.106*** |
| GovRespsiveness | 0.0932*** | 0.0857*** | 0.102*** | -0.0194 | 0.174*** | 0.138*** |
| RuleofLaw | 0.00173 | 0.0321 | -0.0317 | 0.0682 | | 0.0614* |
| PolCompttion | | | | 0.0164 | 0.0103 | 0.0604*** |
| horiAccountability | 0.0578*** | 0.0340 | 0.0743*** | 0.143*** | | 0.119*** |
| VertAccountability | 0.0311*** | 0.0130 | 0.0536*** | 0.0230 | 0.0175 | 0.00153 |
| R-square | 0.313 | 0.251 | 0.375 | 0.264 | 0.395 | 0.421 |
| N | 1788 | 906 | 882 | 666 | 387 | 847 |

Standard errors not reported due to space constraints.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5 Percentage of People who believe their political system needs to be replaced among those who are unsatisfied with how democracy works in their country and those who are satisfied.

| Country | Unsatisfied with Democracy | Satisfied with Democracy | Total |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| China | 8.00% | 6.00% | 6.70% |
| Singapore | 5.70% | 0.20% | 0.80% |
| Vietnam | 1.10% | 0 | 0.20% |
| Malaysia | 20.60% | 4.80% | 9.10% |

Table 6 Percentages of People who believe their political system needs to be replaced among those who believe the government cannot solve the country's problems and those who believe their government can solve those problems.

| Country | Our government cannot solve the nation's problems | Our government can solve the nation's problems | Total |
|-----------|---|--|-------|
| China | 7.20% | 6.00% | 6.70% |
| Singapore | 1.80% | 0.20% | 0.80% |
| Vietnam | 0.30% | 0.10% | 0.20% |
| Malaysia | 14.80% | 5.60% | 9.10% |

Table 7 Regression Model 3: Model 2 plus Satisfaction with Democracy and Belief in Government Capacity

| | China | | | Singapore | Vietnam | Malaysia |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | All China Sample | China Rural | China Urban | | | |
| (Constant) | -0.552*** | -0.0750 | -0.949*** | -0.823*** | -1.175*** | -1.051*** |
| age2 | 0.000*** | 0.000 | 0.000** | -0.000* | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| male | 0.00650 | 0.0251 | -0.00691 | 0.0422 | 0.0922* | 0.000540 |
| Education in years | -0.00279 | -0.00584* | -0.000362 | -0.00368 | -0.0106 | -0.00978* |
| Income quintile | -0.00315 | -0.00402 | 0.000715 | -0.0203*** | -0.0169 | -0.0271** |
| urban | -0.00684 | | | | | |
| PolInterest | 0.0161 | 0.000709 | 0.0400* | 0.0307 | -0.00866 | -0.0146 |
| SocialTraditional | 0.111*** | 0.131*** | 0.0694* | 0.0537* | 0.202*** | 0.168*** |
| Collectivism | 0.0954*** | 0.0866*** | 0.103*** | 0.0768*** | 0.199*** | 0.0906*** |
| LDV | -0.145*** | -0.182*** | -0.112*** | -0.117*** | -0.108*** | -0.155*** |
| nationalism | 0.0966*** | 0.0701*** | 0.120*** | 0.125*** | 0.150*** | 0.0719** |
| ecoEvalu | 0.0511*** | 0.0131 | 0.0703*** | 0.121*** | 0.0913* | 0.104*** |
| safety | 0.0191 | 0.0546** | -0.0171 | 0.0951*** | 0.0639 | -0.0225 |
| AccesstoServices | -0.0109 | -0.0331** | 0.0289 | 0.0164 | 0.0405 | 0.0893*** |
| Freedom | 0.0636*** | 0.0403* | 0.0795*** | 0.00310 | -0.0543** | 0.115*** |
| Corruption | -0.00631 | -0.0153 | 0.00460 | 0.0283 | -0.0151 | -0.0928*** |
| GovRespsiveness | 0.0858*** | 0.0795*** | 0.0960*** | -0.0259 | 0.142*** | 0.123*** |
| RuleofLaw | 0.00155 | 0.0289 | -0.0315 | 0.0653 | | 0.0606* |
| PolCompttion | | | | 0.0157 | 0.0134 | 0.0595*** |
| HoriAccountability | 0.0431** | 0.0219 | 0.0599** | 0.141*** | | 0.115*** |
| VertAccountability | 0.0247** | 0.00896 | 0.0460*** | 0.0209 | 0.0111 | -0.000411 |
| GovSolveProblem | 0.0374** | 0.0506** | 0.0158 | 0.0352 | 0.0573 | 0.0305 |
| SatifDemocracy | 0.0771*** | 0.0600* | 0.0826*** | 0.0870* | 0.160** | 0.0679 |
| R-square | 0.320 | 0.258 | 0.380 | 0.270 | 0.406 | 0.424 |
| N | 1788 | 906 | 882 | 666 | 387 | 847 |

Standard errors not reported due to space constraints.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1 Generational Shift in the Levels of Regime Support

