

ASIAN  BAROMETER

A Comparative Survey of

DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Working Paper Series: No. 100

Jointly Published by

GLOBALBAROMETER™

Popular Understandings of Democracy
and Regime Legitimacy:
Comparing India and East Asia

Min-Hua Huang
Associate Professor,
Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University.

Yu-Tzung Chang
Professor,
Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University.

Yun-Han Chu
Distinguished Research Fellow, Institute of Political Science at Academia Sinica
Professor, Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University.

Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

Working Paper Series

Jointly Published by

Globalbarometer

The Asian Barometer (ABS) is an applied research program on public opinion on political values, democracy, and governance around the region. The regional network encompasses research teams from thirteen East Asian political systems (Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia), and five South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal). Together, this regional survey network covers virtually all major political systems in the region, systems that have experienced different trajectories of regime evolution and are currently at different stages of political transition.

The ABS Working Paper Series is intended to make research result within the ABS network available to the academic community and other interested readers in preliminary form to encourage discussion and suggestions for revision before final publication. Scholars in the ABS network also devote their work to the Series with the hope that a timely dissemination of the findings of their surveys to the general public as well as the policy makers would help illuminate the public discourse on democratic reform and good governance.

The topics covered in the Series range from country-specific assessment of values change and democratic development, region-wide comparative analysis of citizen participation, popular orientation toward democracy and evaluation of quality of governance, and discussion of survey methodology and data analysis strategies.

The ABS Working Paper Series supercedes the existing East Asia Barometer Working Paper Series as the network is expanding to cover more countries in East and South Asia. Maintaining the same high standard of research methodology, the new series both incorporates the existing papers in the old series and offers newly written papers with a broader scope and more penetrating analyses.

The ABS Working Paper Series is issued by the Asian Barometer Project Office, which is jointly sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences of National Taiwan University and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica.

Contact Information

Asian Barometer Project Office

Department of Political Science

National Taiwan University

*No.1, Sec.4, Roosevelt Road, Taipei,
10617, Taiwan, R.O.C.*

Tel: 886 2-3366 8456

Fax: 886-2-2365 7179

E-mail: asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw

Website: www.asianbarometer.org

Popular Democratic Conception: Comparing India and East Asia

Yun-han Chu

Min-hua Huang

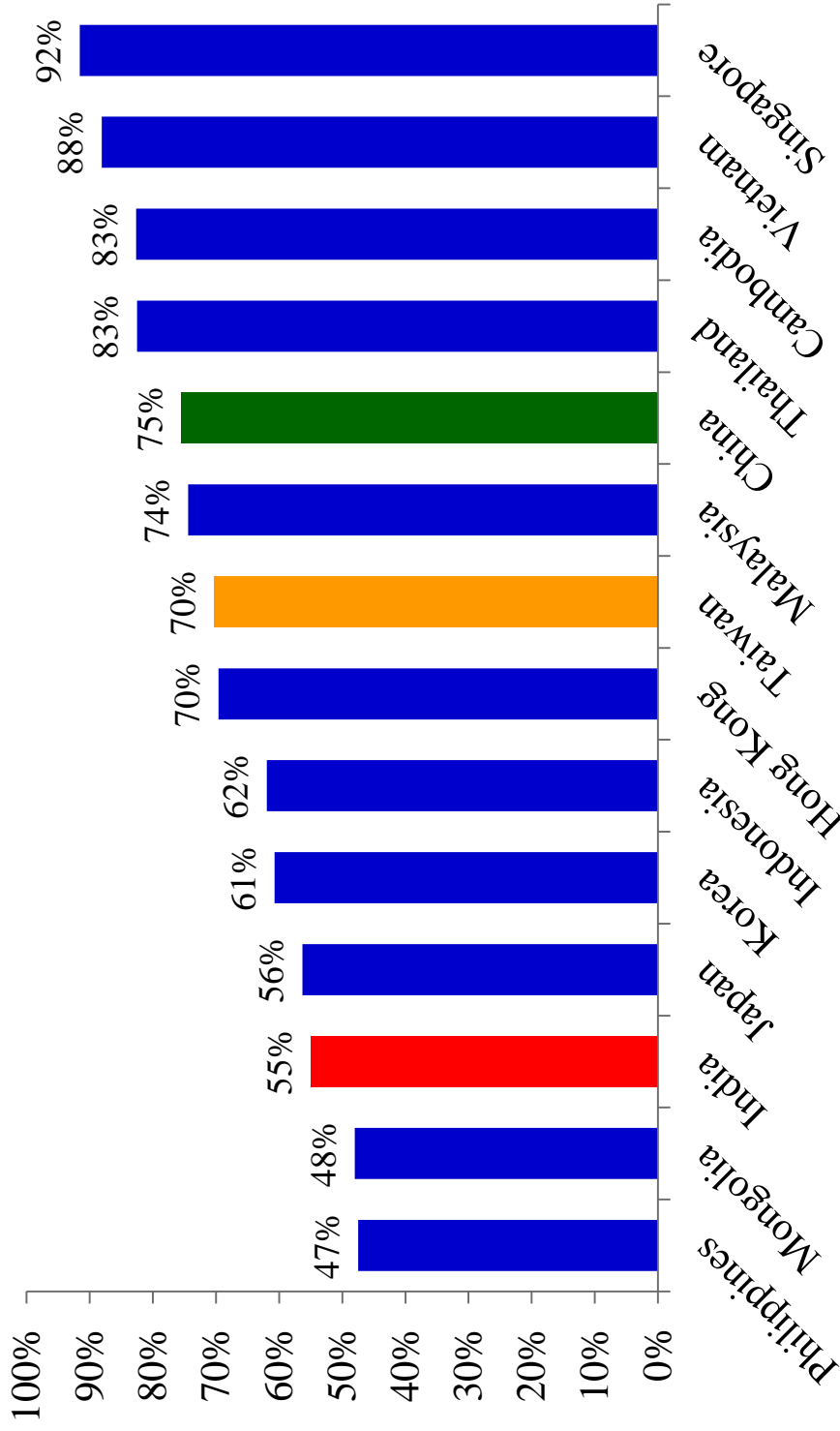
Yu-tzung Chang

November 7, 2013

Democracy: A Universal but Contested Value

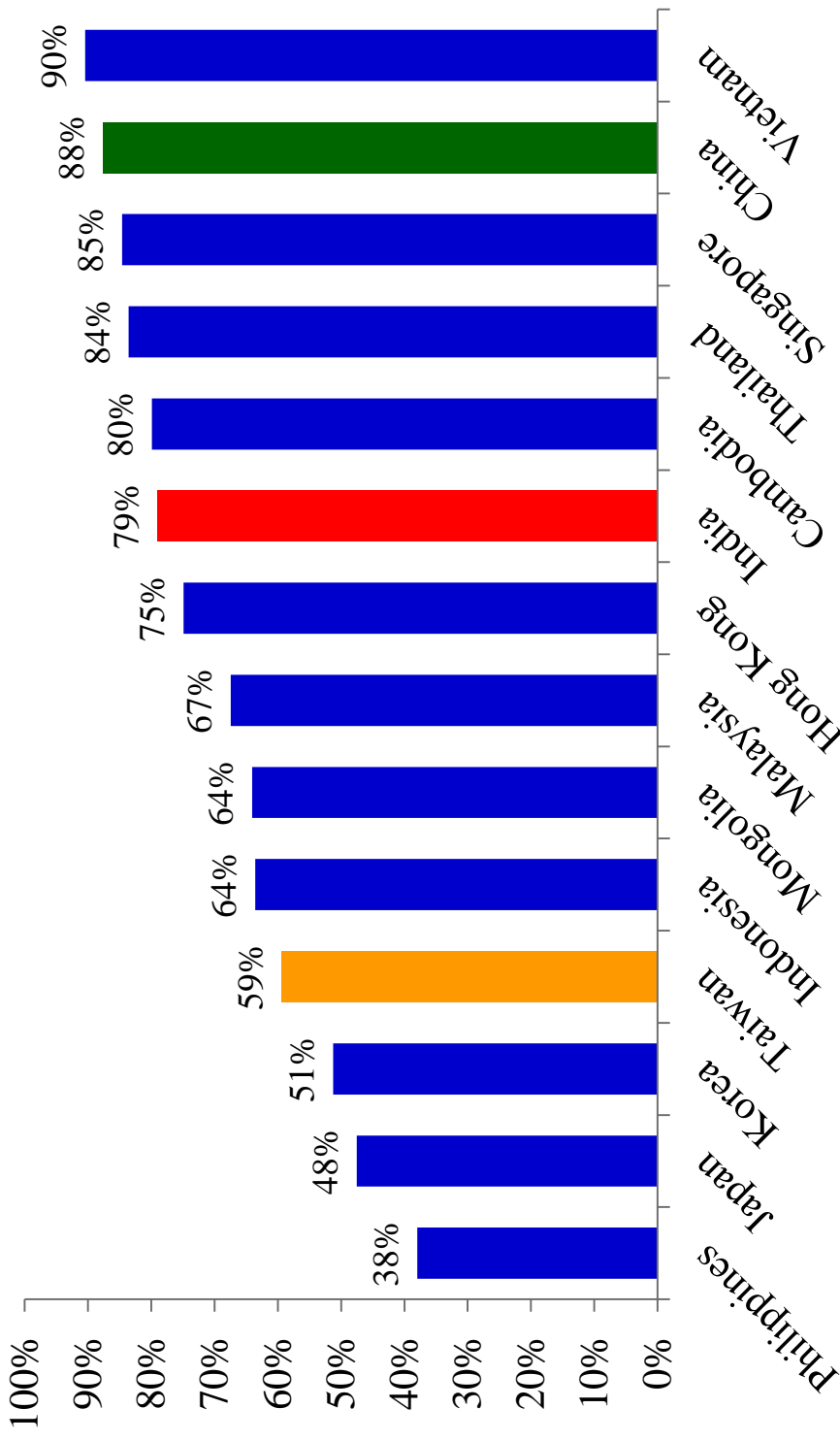
- Democracy has successfully consolidated its status as the only game in contemporary political discourse.
- Democracy is also a contested concept having numerous connotations.
- Some these authoritarian societies outrank mature democracies in support and satisfaction of democracy
- Results like this raise certain doubts that maybe the survey results from non-democracies cannot be trusted,
- Another explanation lies in the varying meanings that people may have associated with the D-word.

Satisfaction with the Practice of Democracy (2010-2012)



Data source: ABS 3 and SDSA 2013 India

Satisfaction with the Practice of Democracy (2005-2008)

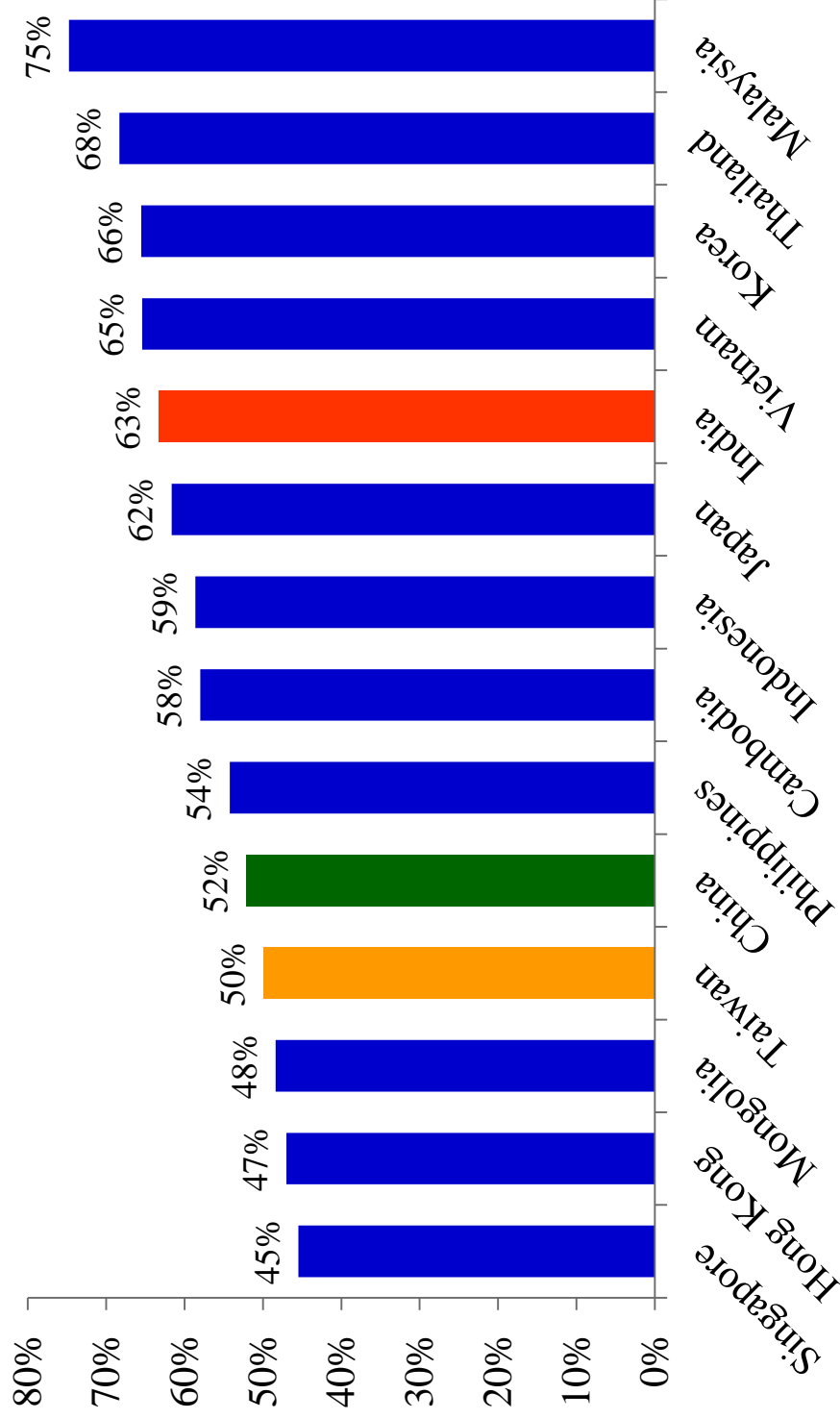


Data source: ABS 2 and SDSA 2005 India

Critical Citizenship in East Asia

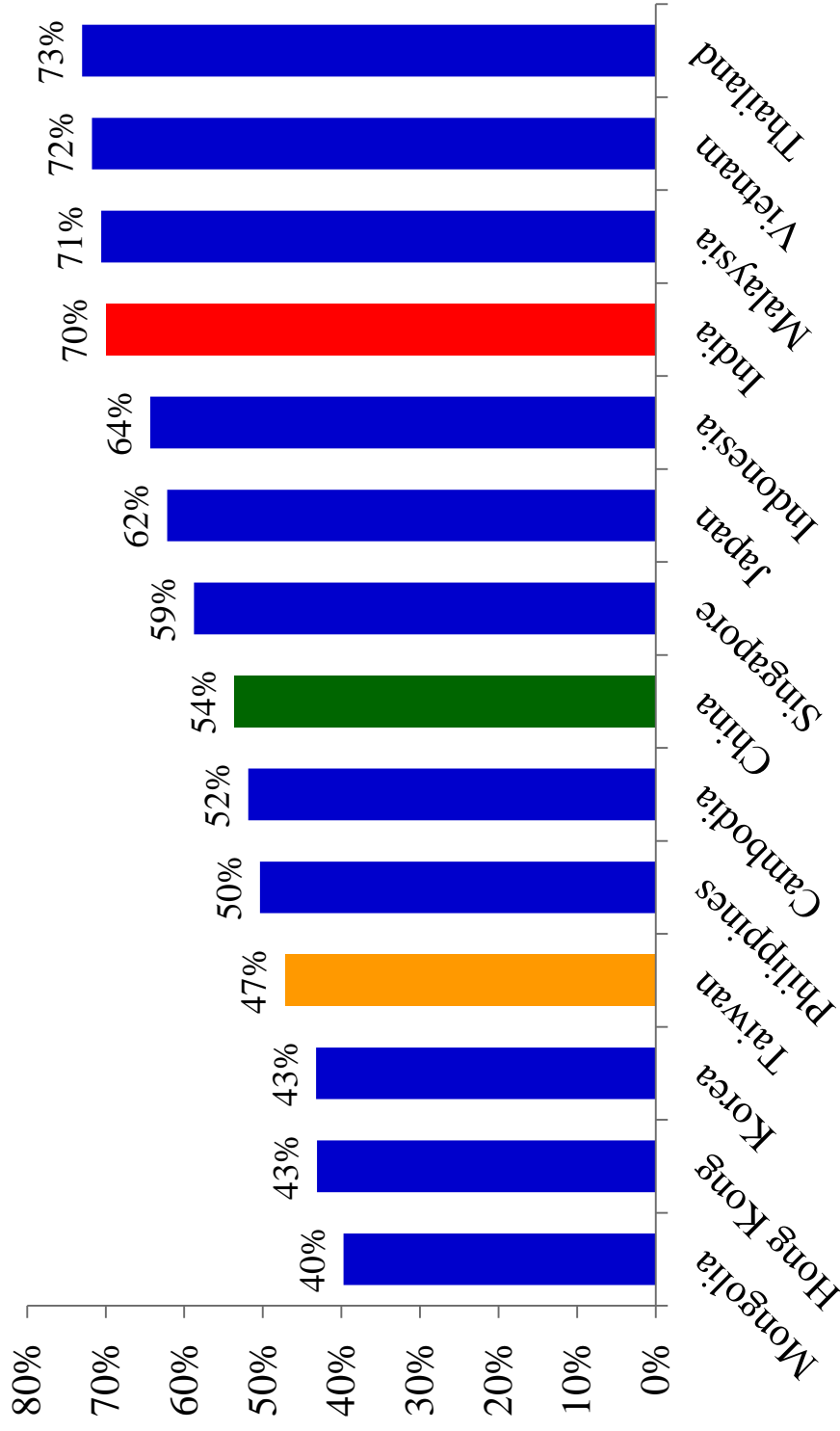
- Political scientists recently found a phenomenon: while democracy has become the most desirable political system around the world, people living in a democratic context tend to question its soundness.
- According to the Asian Barometer Surveys, 69% respondents in Asian liberal democracy (JP, KR, TW) want their democracy to be democratic, and this number is even higher in Asian electoral democracy (MN, PH, TH, ID, MA) and non-democracy (HK, CH, SG, VN, KM), reaching 81% and 84%, respectively.
- However, the number drops significantly to 59%, 61%, and 53% when the respondents are asked whether they prefer democracy than any other kind of government.
- Greater doubts on the democratic system could show up in public opinion polls in liberal democracies, such as Taiwan (47% in 2006 and 50% in 2010).

Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government (2010-2012)



Data source: ABS 3 and SDSA 2013 India

Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government (2005-2008)



Data source: ABS 2 and SDSA 2005 India

How about India?

- Become less satisfied with democracy from 2005 (79%) to 2013 (55%).
- Democratic legitimacy also slightly decreases from 2005 (70%) to 2013 (63%).
- But comparing to other Asian liberal democracy, India has higher rates of democratic support, despite the fact that people seem to become tougher customers as those in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.
- 92% Indian citizens (2005) thought democracy suitable for their country.
- However, only 46% Indian citizens (2013) placed India as democratic under the current government. There were 50% Indian citizens rating India as democratic in ten years ago.
- When it comes to the expectation, 68% Indian citizens expect that India will be democratic ten years from now.
- India also shows some signs of critical citizenship.

Cognition beyond Boundary Restriction

- A serious doubt has been cast on the validity of public opinion polls on democratic attitudes in a country where the political system is not fully democratic.
- This argument dwells on the rationale that people cannot possibly have the cognitive ability to evaluate something they never experienced before.
- However, liberal democracy is a multi-dimensional concept that requires a composite evaluation of many continuous indicators.
- Contemporary telecommunication and internet technology has already made human cognition possibly beyond boundary restriction.
- People could perceive both democratic and non-democratic features in democracies or non-democracies.
- People could also have very different conceptions of democracy in the same society.

Understandings of Democracy in East Asia (open-ended)

| Country | Answers Related to Freedom | Other Answers |
|-------------|---|--|
| Japan | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom of speech | ● Social equality |
| Korea | ● Freedom in general | ● Equality before the law ● Election, popular vote or electoral choice |
| Taiwan | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom of speech | ● Responsive government |
| Philippines | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom of speech ● Freedom of individual choice | |
| Thailand | ● Freedom in general ● Political liberty | ● Political equality |
| Cambodia | ● Freedom of speech ● Freedom and civil liberty ● Power of the people | |
| Indonesia | ● Freedom of speech | ● Equality, justice or fraternity ● Democratic institutions and process |
| Mongolia | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom and civil liberty | ● Equality, justice or fraternity |
| China | ● Freedom of speech ● People as their own master | ● Democratic centralism |
| Singapore | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom of speech | ● Responsive government |
| Vietnam | ● Freedom in general ● People as their own master | ● Social equality |
| Malaysia | ● Freedom in general ● Freedom of speech ● Freedom of individual choice | |

Understandings of Democracy in India (open-ended)

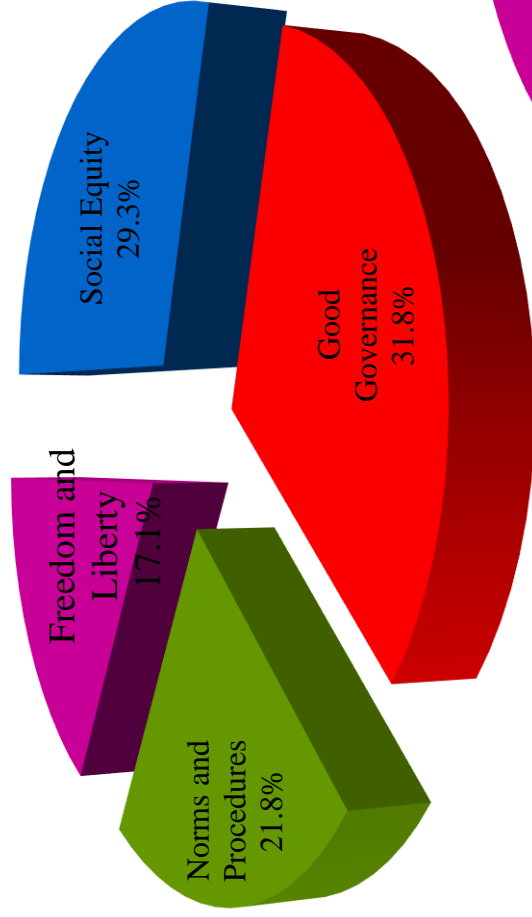
- In 2005 (exact coding term)
- Answer #1: Equality, Justice or Fraternity
- Answer #2: Government of the people
- Answer #3: Taking care of people's economic well-being
- Answer #4: Freedom of speech/press/expression
- Answer #5: Election, popular vote or electoral choice
- Answer #6: Voting
- Answer #7: Freedom and civil liberty
- Answer #8: Solve unemployment
- Answer #9: Power of the people
- Answer #10: World peace

Popular Conception of Democracy

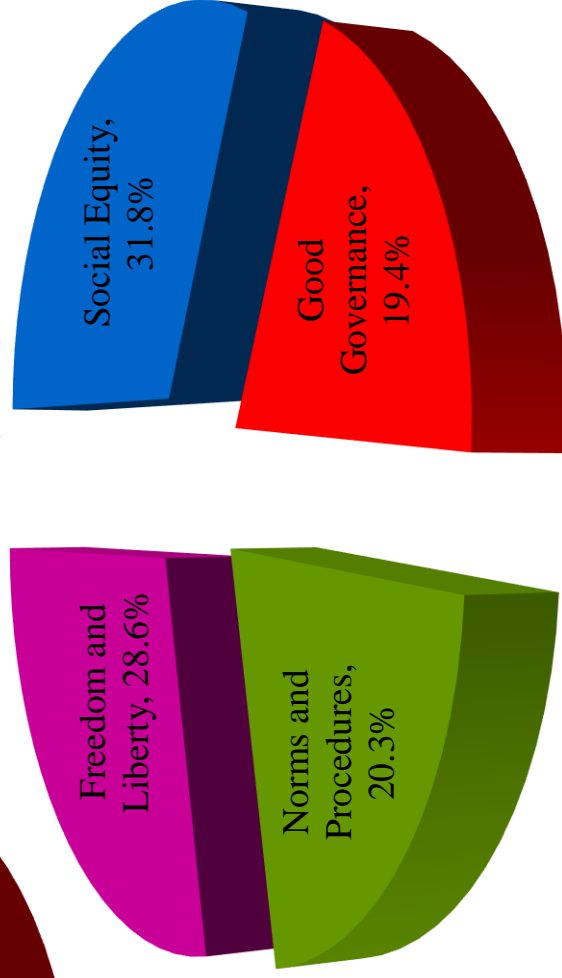
- Popular conception of democracy could vary greatly from country to country.
- When people have different cognitive understanding of what democracy is, their expectation and evaluation of democracy will also be different.
- We assume a plural theory of democracy and acknowledge that people could have different understandings of democracy even if they live in the same society and share the same political experience.
- If we cannot unravel what this malleable part of democracy means, democratic citizenship is then undefined because we do not know what the word "democracy" actually means in a given context.
- Along this line of thoughts, a great debate about the meaning of democracy quickly rises between two different models of democracy: "procedural vs. substantive".

Meanings of Democracy

East Asia (2010-2012)



India (2013)



Understandings of Democracy in East Asia and India

| Country | Social Equity | Good Governance | Norms and Procedures | Freedom and Liberty |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Japan | 27.9% | 42.3% | 16.7% | 13.1% |
| Korea | 21.4% | 38.0% | 22.2% | 18.4% |
| Taiwan | 33.9% | 30.9% | 22.3% | 13.0% |
| Philippines | 28.8% | 21.1% | 22.4% | 27.8% |
| Thailand | 36.4% | 32.8% | 17.3% | 13.4% |
| Cambodia | 27.3% | 24.0% | 26.7% | 22.0% |
| Indonesia | 25.8% | 34.2% | 23.0% | 17.0% |
| Mongolia | 22.5% | 30.5% | 23.0% | 24.0% |
| China | 34.9% | 29.7% | 25.3% | 10.2% |
| Hong Kong | 32.5% | 25.5% | 21.6% | 20.4% |
| Singapore | 29.5% | 36.4% | 18.2% | 16.0% |
| Malaysia | 24.7% | 34.9% | 26.2% | 14.2% |
| Vietnam | 42.4% | 34.9% | 16.6% | 6.1% |
| India | 31.8% | 19.4% | 20.3% | 28.6% |

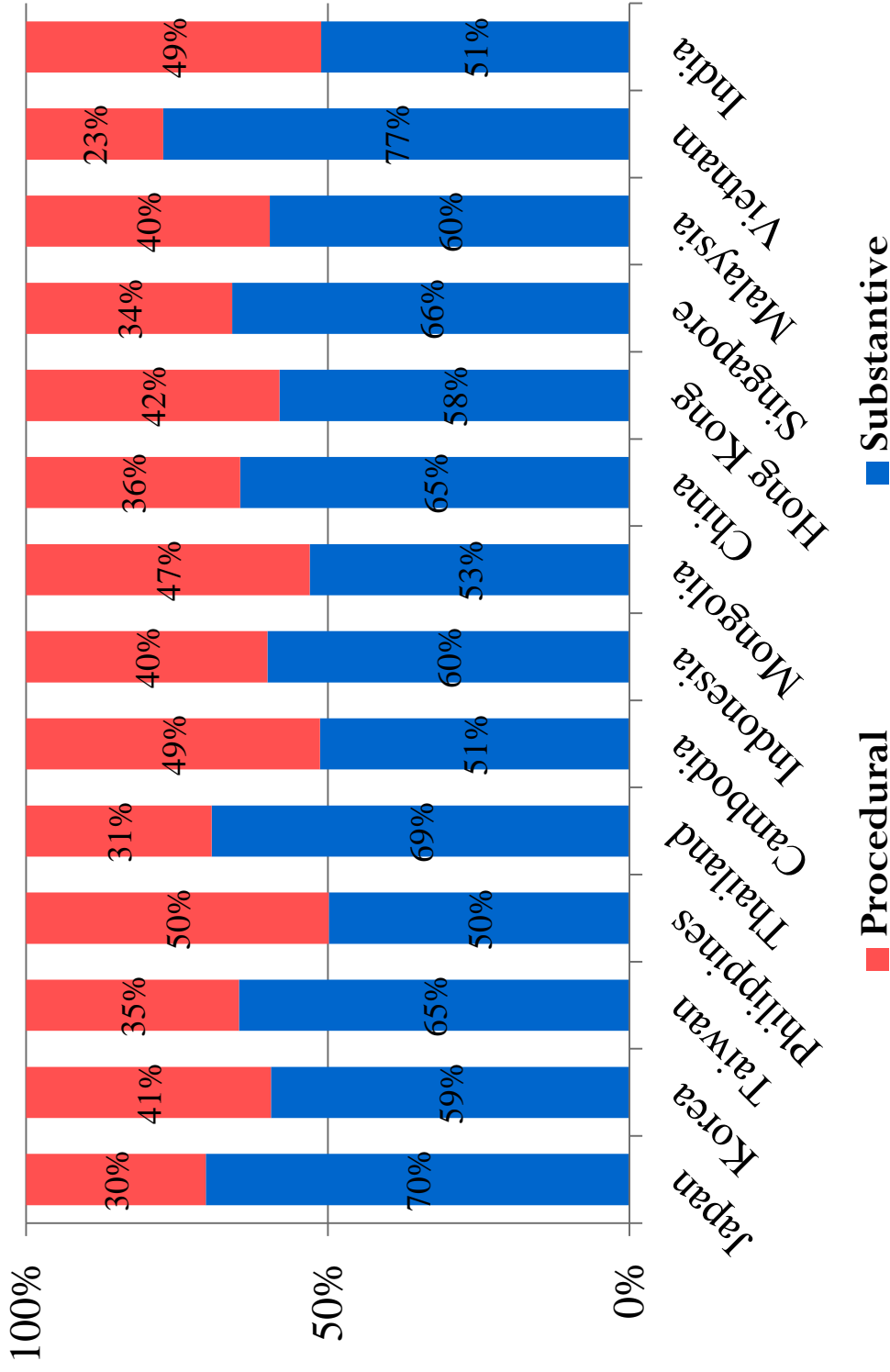
Procedural vs. Substantive Democracy

- Procedural democracy refers to the idea of Western liberal democracy that democracy is about establishing a political system in which the change of government is carried out through free and fair elections and the principle of "rule of law" is deeply rooted.
- Substantive democracy refers to a shared belief that democracy is not just about the procedure but should be about the government outputs that satisfy people's need. This point of view prioritizes the importance of the substance of democracy and believes that each country has the right to apply its own procedural arrangements that could be equally democratic as those being applied in western liberal democracies.
- In the third wave of Asian Barometer Survey, we develop a battery that contains four questions to measure people's conception of democracy corresponding to four dimensions: social equity (SE), good governance (GG), norms and procedures (NP), and freedom and liberty (FL).

Understanding of Democracy Battery

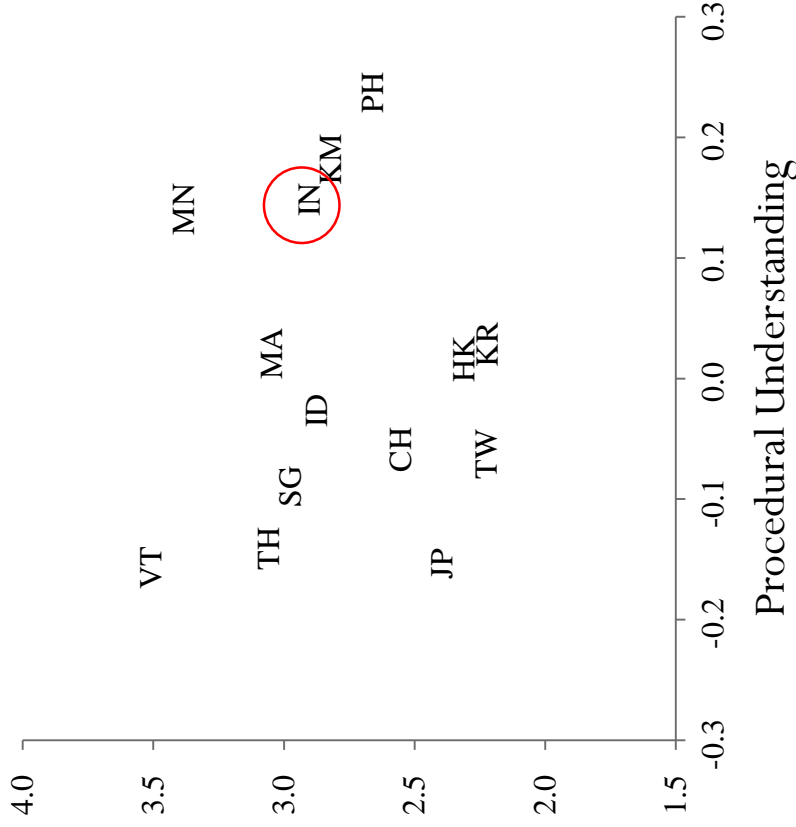
- Q85--1. Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (SE)
2. People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. (NP)
3. Government does not waste any public money. (GG)
4. People are free to express their political views openly. (FL)
- Q86--1. The legislature has oversight over the government. (NP)
2. Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. (SE)
3. People are free to organize political groups. (FL)
4. Government provides people with quality public services. (GG)
- Q87--1. Government ensures law and order. (GG)
2. Media is free to criticize the things government does. (FL)
3. Government ensures job opportunities for all. (SE)
4. Multiple parties compete fairly in the election. (NP)
- Q88--1. People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations. (FL)
2. Politics is clean and free of corruption. (GG)
3. The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power. (NP)
4. People receive state aid if they are unemployed. (SE)

Substantive vs. Procedural Democracy (percentage of answers)



How Procedural Understanding of Democracy Affects Regime Legitimacy?

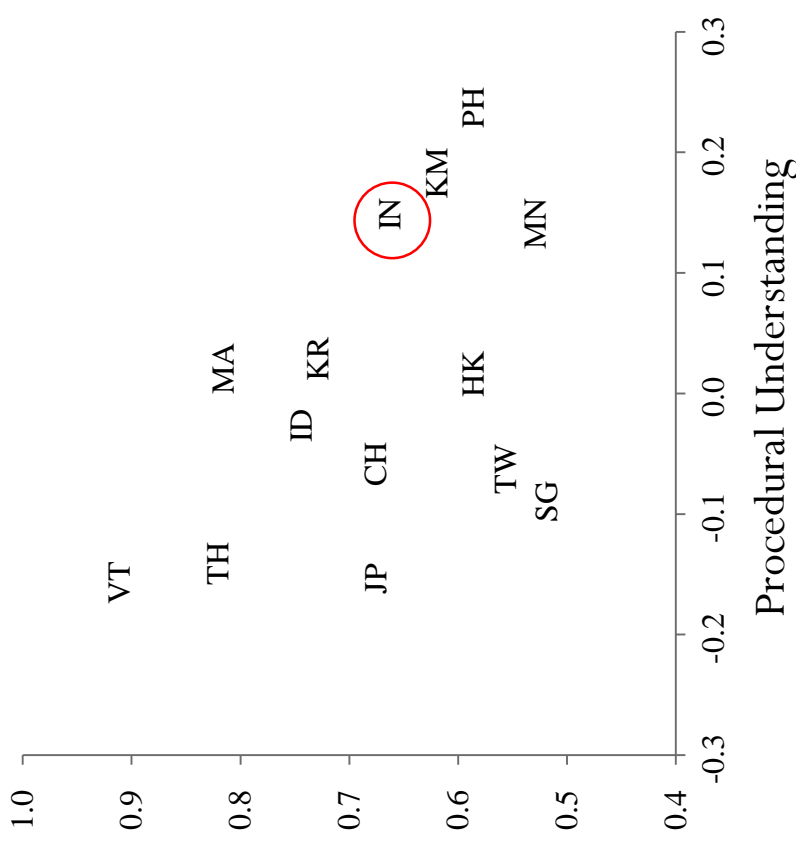
Trust Who Run the Government



Correlation: -.09

P-value: .72

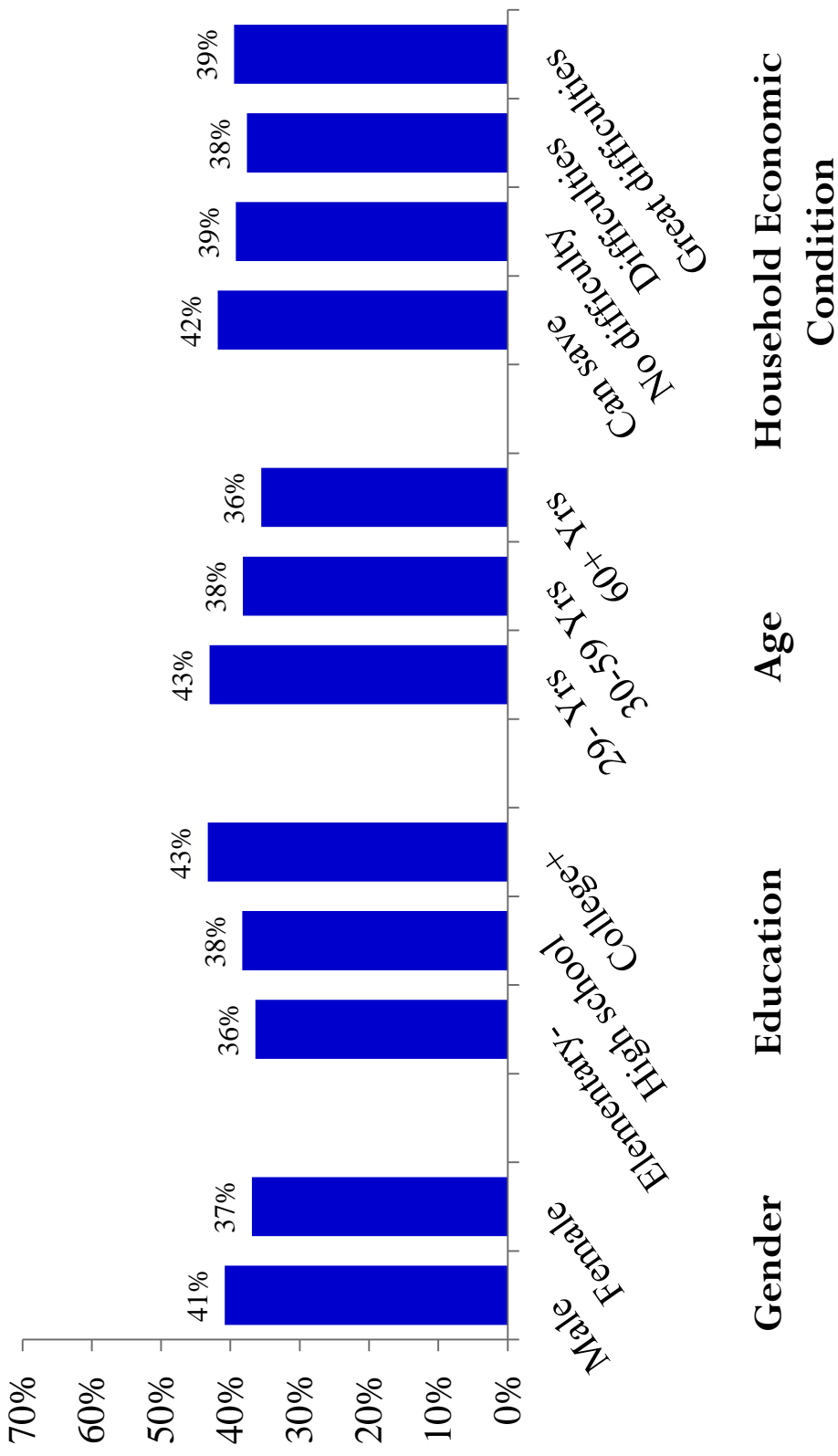
Prefer Democracy than Any Other Systems



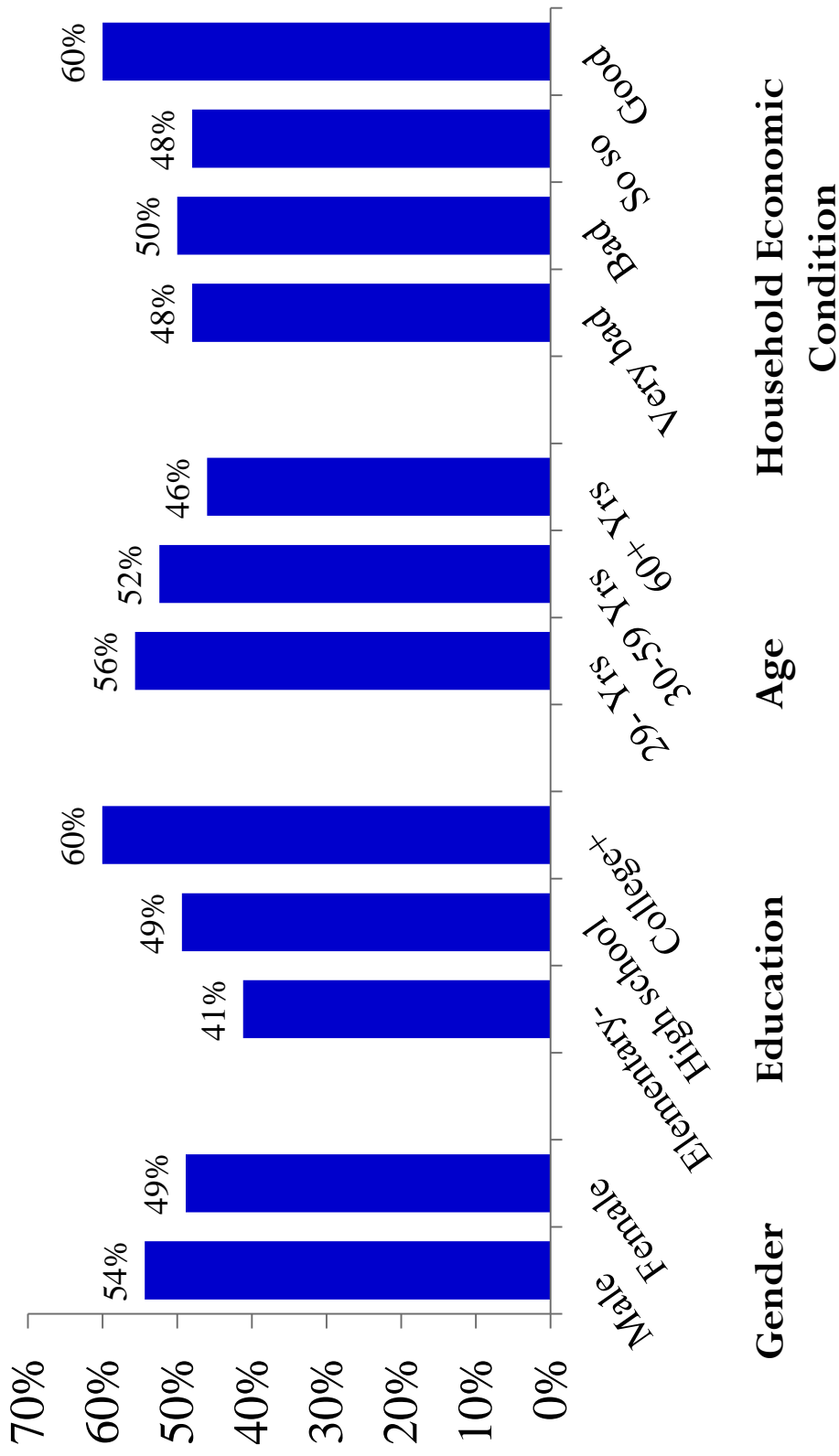
Correlation: -.45

P-value: .06

Explaining Procedural Understanding of Democracy in East Asia



Explaining Procedural Understanding of Democracy in India



A Summary of Findings

- In East Asia, the society level of procedural understanding is around 40%, this number is higher in India, close to 50%.
- In East Asia and India, male respondents are more likely to conceive democracy in procedural sense.
- In East Asia in India, higher educated people tend to think democracy in procedural sense.
- In East Asia, no significant relationship can be concluded between personal economic satisfaction and procedural understanding of democracy, but in India we found a positive relationship. This finding suggest that people tend to think democracy in procedural sense if they are more satisfied with their economic situation.
- Indians' conception fits the general pattern we found in East Asia.

Conclusion

- The substance-based democratic conception has won the hearts and minds of a majority of the East Asians. We need more data to see whether that would happen in India.
- Comparing to other liberal democracies in East Asia, regime legitimacy in India is much higher.
- Closely examining demographic factors, we found that socioeconomic factors works in the same direction in India to the conception of democracy than those in East Asian countries generally.
- We believe that the long term democratic tradition in India might be possibly shifted toward more substance-based understanding once the progress of the modernization level achieves a certain level.