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Cultural Origins of Diffuse Regime Support among
East Asians: Exploring an Alternative to the Theory
of Critical Citizens

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Asian Barometer

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**Cultural Origins of Diffuse Regime Support among East Asians:
Exploring an Alternative to the Theory of Critical Citizens**

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Cultural Origins of Diffuse Regime Support among East Asians: Exploring an Alternative to the Theory of Critical Citizens

Over the past decade, the Asian Barometer program has conducted three successive rounds of public opinion surveys to explore East Asia's democratization. These surveys have examined both the institutional and the cultural dynamics of democratization in East Asia and have revealed that most people in the region have yet to become unqualified supporters of democracy (Chu et al. 2008; Shin 2008; Shin and Wells 2005). While scholars agree there is a lack of enthusiasm for democracy among East Asia citizens, there has been little consensus concerning the reason. No theory has been able to explain fully why so many East Asians are reluctant to unconditionally embrace this system of government that is preferred in other regions of the world (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Norris 1999, 2011).

To address this question regarding the sources of democratic cultural underdevelopment in East Asia, an increasing number of social scientists have looked to the region's Confucian cultural legacies (for a review of this literature, see He 2010; Spina, Shin and Cha 2011). However, much of the resulting research on these legacies have suffered from conceptual and theoretical limitations (for a detailed discussion of these limitations, see Shin 2012, chap. 2). This study seeks to overcome these limitations with multidimensional conceptions of both culture and diffuse regime support. With the benefit of these nuanced concepts, this study then explores the direct and indirect links between culture and democratic politics with the latest third wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys. Evaluated is the theory of critical citizens, which attributes democracies having a lower level of regime support than non-democracies exclusively to the contentious nature of democratic citizen politics (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999, 2011; Wang, Dalton, and Shin 2006). After showing how this theory falls short, this study explores a viable

alternative by linking cultural preferences and regime support among East Asians to the various ways in which they perceive their own political regime.

This paper is organized into six sections. The first, which follows immediately, introduces anthropologist Mary Douglas's four-fold typology of culture and thereby distinguishes Confucian culture from three other types of culture for comparative analysis. The second section introduces the two distinct dimensions of diffuse regime support—institutional and systemic—and thereby ascertains four different types of regime support. The third section analyzes the latest wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys and identifies the most and least prevalent types of culture among East Asians. The fourth section compares the levels and patterns of regime support across East Asian countries and their regime types. The fifth section analyzes and compares Confucian hierarchical culture with other cultures as an influence on diffuse regime support. It also compares the overall influence of culture on such support with those of demographic, socioeconomic, and other variables. The final section takes up the puzzle of why non-democracies enjoy greater diffuse regime support than do democracies. By establishing the powerful links between regime perceptions and support, and between culture and regime perceptions, this study challenges the popular theory of critical citizens and calls for an alternative theory of regime support based on the prevalent types of culture.

Four Types of Culture

What constitutes culture? What distinguishes Confucian culture from other types of culture? More than 30 years ago, anthropologist Mary Douglas (1978) proposed the grid-group analysis as a heuristic tool for identifying cultural diversity and comparing cultures. Since then, political scientist Aaron Wildavsky (1987) and other scholars have developed the grid-group analysis into a theory explaining how individual citizens and institutions formulate their political

preferences and act to realize those preferences in the political process (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990). As a unique way of “combining functionalism and rationality,” this cultural theory, also named grid-group analysis, is known to “take [the] theory of ‘bounded rationality’ a long step forward” (Selle 1991, 122).

Central to the theory is the notion that viable ways of life are limited and determined primarily by the patterns of sociality or social relations for which people opt. The patterns of social relations, in turn, depend exclusively on the group with which people associate and the norms or rules that direct their interactions with other people in the group. As Wildavsky (1987) notes, the first dimension of social life called “group” deals with the question of identification, i.e. Who am I? The second dimension called “grid” deals with the question of behavior, i.e. How should I behave? By combining these two key dimensions of social life, grid-group cultural theorists have identified four viable ways of life: *hierarchism*, *individualism*, *egalitarianism*, and *fatalism* (also called *reclusivism*). Each of these four ways of life corresponds to a particular pattern of values that individuals cherish and that determine how their choices are made.

In this grid-group cultural theory, “group” stands for incorporation into a bounded group; it thus separates individuals into “those to interact with” and “those not to interact with.” According to Mary Douglas (1978, 14): “The strongest effects of group are to be found where it incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by exerting control over marriage and kinship.” In other words, the group dimension of social life refers to the strength of attachment to formal or informal associations. It is strong when those associations are tightly knit and penetrate every aspect of a person’s life. It is weak when they are loosely organized and allow their members to come and go as they please without any sense of allegiance or loyalty.

The grid dimension of social life stands for regulations or restrictions on individual behavior. According to Douglas (1978, 8): “. . . The term ‘grid’ suggests a cross-hatch of rules to which individuals are subject in the course of their interaction. As a dimension, it shows a progressive change in the mode of social control.” In other words, “grid” refers to the extent to which people are controlled in their interactions with other members of their own groups and the society in which they live. Therefore, the grid becomes strong or weak depending on the number of constraints placed on individuals’ interactions. A grid becomes strong when the rules and regulations directing people are so powerful that there is little room left for individual freedom. It becomes weak when people do not feel compelled to follow rules and regulations.

To what extent are people bound by the formal or informal groups with which they affiliate? To what extent do they face and comply with external restrictions on their behavior? Grid-group theorists maintain that the answers to these two questions, which deal with the two key dimensions of social life, hold the key to ascertaining people’s cultures (Ellis and Thompson 1997; Thompson 2008; Thompson, Wildavsky, and Ellis 1990). These cultural theorists also maintain that people formulate different value preferences and priorities as a consequence of their grid and group positions.

Table 1 depicts four distinct ways of life in terms of the strength of group affiliation and regulation of social relations. People who live with weak group affiliation and weak external regulation live in a culture of *individualism*. *Individualism* spawns a competitive culture as it places high priority on the individual pursuit of personal rewards. In this culture, people do not highly value personal ties based on family, ethnicity, and other personal characteristics. They favor a free flow of people from one type of group to others with widely varying characteristics (Lockhart 2001). Individualists are self-interested and seek to live free of others’ control; they

are, therefore, free to negotiate with others as they wish and are able to pursue what they think is best for them. They view fairness in social interactions mainly in terms of equality of available opportunity and blame themselves for their failures rather than institutional malfunctioning. In the individualist way of life, there is much competition and little cooperation among people.

(Table 1)

Strong group affiliation together with strong regulation results in a second distinct way of life called *hierarchism*. *Hierarchism*, unlike individualism, values affiliation with groups formed exclusively on the basis of family and other personal ties. It seeks to maintain strong solidarity among group members by placing highly binding proscriptions on their behavior. The proscriptions are justified on the ground that the collective whole is more important than its individual members. Assuming humans are not equal in their capacities, *hierarchism* emphasizes the need to differentiate roles for different people so that they can live harmoniously by avoiding competition and conflict. Further, hierarchism emphasizes respect for authority and the observance of historical customs, as well as existing rules and regulations to maintain law and order. Adherents of hierarchism, therefore, understand fairness in terms of equality before the law and blame disruptions of peace on those who do not conform to rules and regulations. Critics of hierarchism say the immense trust placed in authority poses a serious risk.

Strong group affiliation coupled with weak regulation produces a third distinct way of life called *egalitarianism*. *Egalitarianism* resembles hierarchism in highly valuing close and exclusive ties among group members. Unlike hierarchism, however, it dismisses the need for authority, regulation, and role differentiation because humans are viewed to be broadly equal in their capacities and capable of reaching collective decisions through discussions and consensus among group members. Egalitarians understand fairness in terms of equality of results. Critics of

this way of life, however, point out that an unwillingness to endorse authority as a means to resolve internal conflicts is likely to lead to frequent deadlocks.

Finally, the combination of weak group affiliation with strong regulations produces a culture of *fatalism*. People of this type of culture are separated from others by imposition or choice. Either way, they are barred from joining groups by the rules and regulations that control social relations, including the various qualifications set in terms of race, money, and education. As a result, they have no close friends with whom to talk and no incentive to cooperate with others. Social avoidance rather than social interaction distinguishes fatalists from the adherents of the other three cultures. For fatalists, therefore, there is no such thing as fairness. Because they blame their disappointments on fate itself or bad luck, they are not motivated to organize or make plans to change their lives.

Applying the group-grid analysis to Confucianism reveals that it is a culture that emphasizes both strong group identification and strong proscriptions on social relations (Shin 2012, chap. 3). In the Confucian world, family constitutes the most fundamental unit of social life. Just as the family consists of highly differentiated roles, so do all other groups and organization, which are ordered hierarchically with superiors and subordinates fulfilling their respective roles. In fulfilling those roles, individuals are required to abide by a variety of norms. With individuals feeling a strong identification with their families and accepting strong proscriptions on social relations, Confucianism as a way of life is an example of hierarchical culture.

Diffuse Regime Support

The notion of *diffuse regime support* originates from the conceptual framework David Easton (1965) proposed for the study of political legitimacy. In this framework, he distinguishes

three objects—political community, political regime, and authorities for governing—of support among individual citizens, and two different modes—diffuse and specific—of their support of those objects. Unlike political community in which people cooperate with others as fellow citizens and political authorities who are in charge of daily governing, the regime refers to the system of political institutions stipulated in the constitution. Accordingly, Easton defines *diffuse support* for regime as representing *stable and long-term commitments* to the system, which are independent of the actual performance of its component institutions. Diffuse regime support is, therefore, fundamentally different from *specific support* for elected and appointed officeholders, who are responsible for making and implementing political decisions on a daily basis. It is also a multidimensional construct denoting a “long-term and stable reservoir of favorable attitudes” or “affective citizen goodwill” (Easton 1965: 273).

Being a reservoir of affective goodwill, diffuse regime support is a multidimensional phenomenon (Dalton 2004; Klingemann 1999; Weatherford 1992). Specifically, it varies in breadth and depth, as do reservoirs of water. The breadth dimension refers to the number of favorable attitudes people hold toward the constitutionally stipulated system of institutions as a whole. The more favorable views citizens hold of the entire system of government from a variety of perspectives, the broader is their reservoir of good will. The more broadly they favor it, the more stable their support becomes. This is because citizens are likely to maintain a favorable view of their extant system when they value it from a variety of divergent perspectives, including those of absolutism, relativism, individualism, and communitarianism.

The depth dimension of the goodwill reservoir, on the other hand, concerns citizens’ attachment to separate components of the system, i.e., individual institutions stipulated in the constitution, which can be comparable to roots of an individual tree. The more institutions they

embrace as trustworthy, the deeper their commitment to the entire system of government. The deeper their commitment to the system, the longer it is likely to last. The shallower their commitment is, the shorter it is likely to last. The depth dimension, therefore, contributes to the endurance of the commitment, while the breadth dimension contributes to its stability.

Being a two-dimensional phenomenon, diffuse regime support can vary quantitatively and qualitatively. Each of the two dimensions varies in magnitude from broad to narrow or from deep to shallow. Such a quantitative difference in one dimension, however, does not always occur concurrently with a similar difference in the other dimension. In the real world, the level of diffuse regime support is more likely than unlikely to fluctuate across its two dimensions because the whole system oftentimes represents more than or other than a sum of its parts. When its two dimensions are considered together, therefore, there are qualitatively distinct types of differences in diffuse regime support.

To ascertain such types, we first order the level of diffuse regime support in each dimension into two categories, low and high.¹ Specifically, we employ narrow and broad categories in ordering the level of systemic support or support for the entire system of government, and shallow and deep categories in ordering support for individual institutions. We then consider these two categories of each dimension together and identify four distinct types of diffuse regime support. The first type, *the uncommitted*, features a low level of support in both dimensions, that is, narrow in systemic support and shallow in institutional support. The second and third types of partial support for the regime highlight unevenness in the support level, low in one dimension and high in the other. The second pattern called *the systemically committed* features a high level of systemic support and a low level of institutional support. The third

¹ On a 4-point scale tapping each dimension, which is discussed in detail, its scale midpoint of 1.5 is employed as a cut-off point. Specifically, the two highest scores of 2 and 3 are grouped into a high level, while the two lowest scores of 0 and 1 are grouped into a low level.

pattern called *the institutionally committed* features a low level of systemic support and a high level of institutional support. The fourth pattern called *the fully committed* highlights a high level of support in both systemic and institutional dimension.

Previous research on regime support has shown that the level of citizen regime support varies a great deal across the types of political systems. Specifically, citizens in non-democratic systems are significantly more supportive of their systems of government than are their peers in democratic systems (Chu et al. 2009; Dalton, and Shin 2006; Geddes and Zaller 1989). In light of this finding, we propose that the prevalent types of diffuse regime support vary significantly across the types of political systems in East Asia. It is likely that the *fully committed* are most prevalent in the most authoritarian regimes and least prevalent in the most democratic regimes. Conversely, the *uncommitted* are likely to be least prevalent in most authoritarian regimes and most prevalent in most democratic regimes.

The Prevalence of Four Cultural Types

How do the contemporary publics of East Asia live their lives? What types of culture do they practice most often? Do they still remain more attached to the Confucian culture of hierarchism than to the non-Confucian cultures of individualism? To explore these questions, we selected two three-item sets from the third wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS hereafter). The first set concerns the extent to which East Asians are attached to three different units—family (Q50), groups (Q51), and the nation (Q52)—of associations in which they interact with other people formally and informally. The second set deals with the extent to which rules and regulations constrain interpersonal life in family (Q55), school (Q56), and informal group (Q57). By counting affirmative responses to the three questions in each set, we constructed two 4-point

indexes, one measuring the overall strength of group attachment, and the other measuring that of grid constraint on social relations.

For each of the eleven countries in East Asia and the region as a whole, Figure 1 shows the mean of each of these two dimensional indexes, which can range from a low of 0 to a high of 3. On the index measuring the combined strength of group ties, all East Countries scored above 2.3, a score significantly higher than the index midpoint (1.5). In striking contrast, on the index measuring the overall strength of grid constraint on group life, all of these countries except Malaysia and Indonesia scored below the midpoint. On these two 4-point indexes, the group dimension scores nearly 1 point or over 60 percent higher than the grid dimension (2.3 vs. 1.4). This difference suggests that while East Asians still remain, by and large, attached to collective units, they are freed from many rules and regulations governing their associational lives.

(Figure 1 here)

Notably, all of the countries score significantly higher on group dimension than on the grid dimension of culture. More notably, while *the fully constrained* in the grid dimension constitute a majority in none of the countries, *the fully attached* in the group dimension constitute a majority in more than half the countries surveyed (China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam) (see Figure 2). These findings clearly indicate that in East Asia, the two dimensions of culture have been evolving unevenly; changes have been taking place in the grid dimension to a greater extent than in the group dimension. It appears that East Asians feel free in dealing with other people, but they still remain attached to the groups with whom they are affiliated.

(Figure 2 here)

All in all, what types of culture do East Asians favor most? Do they still favor the hierarchical way of life Confucius and early Confucians proscribed as proper? Or are they more in favor of other types of culture, which are known to be prevalent in the West? Does the prevalent type of culture vary across the countries of East Asia? In Table 2, we explore these questions in terms of the four distinct types of culture identified by low and high levels of group identification and grid regulation. For each East Asia country and the region as a whole, the table reports percentages of adherents to four cultural types.

(Table 2)

The most notable feature of the table is that a majority of people in East Asia does not report experiencing the Confucian culture of *hierarchism*. Those experiencing this culture form a small plurality of about one-third (35%) of the East Asian population. Although across the region as a whole, hierarchism is slightly the most prevalent culture, it is not the most prevalent type in most of the countries. Instead, hierarchism is less prevalent than egalitarianism among most of the countries in the region. In eight countries— Japan, China, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam—*egalitarianism* is the most experienced culture. Only in the three countries of Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia, in contrast, is hierarchism experienced the most. Contrary to what is expected from the Asian Values theses, East Asia is no longer a region of Confucian culture, which features strong group attachment and high grid constraint.

Another notable feature of the table is that none of the four cultures are experienced by a majority of the people across the entire region of East Asia. Instead, relatively small minorities, ranging from a low of 6 percent (fatalism) to a high of 35 percent (hierarchism) report experiencing each way of life. In all East Asian countries except Indonesia, moreover, those

experiencing any particular type of culture do not constitute even a bare majority. This finding clearly indicates that East Asia no longer forms a single cultural zone based on the Confucian culture of hierarchical collectivism. Instead, it represents a region where divergent cultures compete against each other as alternative ways of life.

In Figure 3, we explore whether the Confucian and non-Confucian sub-regions of East Asia are significantly different from each other in the prevalence of cultural experiences. For this exploration, we placed into the Confucian region China, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and into the non-Confucian region Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand. These two sub-regions are alike in that no culture is the experience of a majority and in that fatalism and individualism are the two least experienced cultures.

(Figure 3)

Nonetheless, the two sub-regions are significantly different in the two cultural types which people experience most. In Confucian East Asia, people experience egalitarianism more than hierarchism, by a margin of 8 percent (37% vs. 29%). In the non-Confucian region, people experience hierarchism more than egalitarianism by a larger margin of 10 percent (32% vs. 42%). This finding that hierarchical culture, which Confucius and his students prescribed as the proper way of life more than two millennia ago, is actually more prevalent in non-Confucian East Asia contradicts the central claim of the Asian Values thesis. This finding suggests that Confucian culture represents a traditional way of life not confined to historically Confucian East Asia. It also suggests that the region has begun to shift away from the Confucian culture of hierarchism.

Do East Asians' cultural experiences also differ across the types of regime in which they live? Figure 4 shows that in none of the four types of regimes does any of the four cultures have a majority experience. However, in all four regime types, people experience fatalism and

individualism much less than egalitarianism and hierarchism. Yet the two most experienced types are different across regime types. In liberal democracy and one-party states, egalitarianism is more prevalent than hierarchism. In electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism, on the other hand, the latter is more popular than the former. Why experiences of hierarchism are more commonplace in regimes with multiple parties than one-party states remain a mystery.

(Figure 4)

Another point worth noting is that the proportion of respondents reporting a culture of individualism vary a great deal more with their regimes' levels of democratization than do the proportions of respondents reporting living in the other three cultures. The more individualistic East Asians are in their cultural experience, the more democratic their regime is. Conversely, the more democratic the regime in which East Asians live is, the more individualistic are their cultural experiences. As a result, individualists are most numerous in liberal democratic regimes (30%), followed by electoral democracies (13%), electoral authoritarian regimes (10%), and one-party states (5%). They are six times more numerous in the most democratic state, Japan, than in the least democratic one-party states of China and Vietnam (30% vs. 5%). This suggests that even in East Asia, individualism represents the type of culture most conducive to democratic politics, as the grid-group theory of culture holds (Ellis and Thompson 1997; Shin, Chey, and Kim 1989; Thomson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990). Nonetheless, it should be noted that in none of countries in East Asia to date, including its oldest democracy, Japan (30%), does a majority report experiencing a culture of individualism.

Levels and Patterns of Diffuse Regime Support

Diffuse regime support, as discussed earlier, is conceptualized in this study as a subjective phenomenon with two distinctive dimensions of favorable political orientations. One

dimension deals with the favorable orientations people hold toward their entire systems of government, while the other deals with the orientations they hold toward those systems' component institutions. The first dimension, which can be called *systemic* or *holistic support*, deals with the breadth or stability of diffuse regime support. The second dimension concerns its depth or endurance and can be called *institutional support*. By considering breadth and depth of support together, this study seeks to offer a more comprehensive and balanced account of diffuse regime support, which David Easton characterized as consisting of "stable and long-term commitments".

To measure the stability dimension of systemic support, we selected from the third wave of the ABS a set of four questions (Q80, Q81, Q82, and Q83), each of which asked respondents to evaluate, either favorably or unfavorably, their entire governmental systems from a variety of holistic perspectives, such as pride, efficacy, and preference. To measure the second dimension of institutional support, which taps support depth or endurance, we also selected another set of four questions, each of which asked respondents to rate the trustworthiness of their regimes' key institutions—the national government (Q9), the courts (Q8), parliament (Q11), and political parties (Q10).

By summing up affirmative responses to the four questions in each set, we constructed two 5-point dimensional indexes of diffuse regime support each of which ranges from a low of 0 to a high of 4. These dimensional indexes are combined into a 9-point index to tap respondents' overall levels of support, which ranges from a low of 0 to a high of 8. With these two indexes, we attempted to measure *stable and long-term commitments* to the system of government. With the earlier waves of the ABS, diffuse regime support was measured primarily in terms of attachment to democracy in principle and in practice (Chu et al. 2008; Nathan 2007). In East

Asia where non-democracies outnumber democracies, however, democratic regime support cannot be equated with diffuse regime support.

For each East Asian country and the region as a whole, Figure 5 reports the means on the two indexes, one tapping the mean level of support for the entire system of government and the other tapping the mean level of support for its institutions. The region's means on these two indexes show that all eleven countries in the region together averaged above the midpoint (2.0) of each dimensional index, i.e., 2.9 on the index of systemic support, and 2.1 on that of institutional support. Being above the mean, these dimensional scores suggest that political regimes in East Asia are currently enjoying a comfortable level of citizen support. Yet a significantly lower level of institutional support suggests that many East Asians favor the *system* of their governments much more than their *institutions* and are far from being *fully committed* to their regimes.

(Figure 5)

A careful scrutiny of Figure 5 reveals a great deal of variation in *levels* of both systemic and institutional regime support across the countries in the region. The 0-4 point index measuring systemic support, for example, varies from a low of 1.6 in Korea to a high of 3.9 in Vietnam. The same 5-point index measuring institutional support varies a great deal more from a low of 0.8 in Korea to a high of 3.8 in China. According to these figures, the mean level of regime support is from two to four times higher in communist China and Vietnam than in democratic Korea. Of the eleven countries surveyed, moreover, Korea and Japan are the only two countries to score below the midpoint (2.0) on both dimensional indexes. China, Singapore, and Vietnam, on the other hand, scored above 3.0 on both dimensional indexes. Between these

two groups—democratic and nondemocratic countries—the *level* or *quantity* of diffuse regime support is significantly lower in the former than in the latter.

In Table 3, we examine cross-national differences in the qualitatively different *types* of regime support. For each country, the table shows the percentages falling into each of four support types, which are identified by considering together support levels in both dimensions. As described earlier, these types are *the uncommitted*, *the institutionally committed*, *the systemically committed*, and *the fully committed*. In China, Singapore, and Vietnam, *the fully committed* to the regime constitute large majorities of more than 60 percent, while *the uncommitted* constitute very small minorities of less than 5 percent. In Japan and Korea, in striking contrast, *the fully committed* to their regime constitute small minorities of about 10 percent, while the *uncommitted* constitute considerable majorities of more than 55 percent. These two groups of East Asian groups exhibit *qualitatively contrasting patterns* of regime support. Evidently, this finding suggests that the prevailing pattern of diffuse regime support among ordinary citizens has a great deal to do with the particular type of regime in which they live.

(Table 3)

In Figure 6, we explore whether the most prevalent types of regime support vary across the four types of regime. In liberal and electoral democracies, *the uncommitted* are the most numerous with a plurality of 31 percent. In electoral authoritarian states and one-party states, they are least numerous with a very small minority of less than 3 percent. The most numerous in electoral authoritarian and one-party states are *the fully committed*, who form a substantial majority of 60 percent. In the first group consisting of democratic regimes, *the uncommitted* are significantly more numerous in liberal democracies than in electoral democracies (45% vs. 28%). In the second group, consisting of non-democracies, on the other hand, *the fully committed* are

more numerous in one-party states than in electoral authoritarian states (60% vs. 59%). Increases in the level of democratization are always accompanied by decreases in *the fully committed* and increases in *the uncommitted* to the regime. Evidently, this finding of greater regime support among citizens of less democratic countries contradicts the democratic learning theory that holds that the experience of democratic politics leads to greater support for democracy, while it is consistent with the theory of critical citizens that claims that democratic political experience makes citizens critical of their regime.

(Figure 6)

Culture as an Influence on Diffuse Regime Support

Does culture matter significantly in orienting East Asians directly toward or away from the regime in which they live? Does it matter significantly in every type of regime in which they live? If it does, what types of culture are most and least conducive to regime support? Do those cultural types vary from one type of regime to another? How does culture compare with other known influences on regime support? To address these questions regarding cultural influences on regime support, we need to estimate and compare the net or independent effect that culture exerts directly on regime support with those of other known influences on it.

To this end, we first identified a set of eight variables, each of which is known in the theoretical literature to compete with culture as an alternative explanation of diffuse regime support, and we added to this set two new variables tapping, respectively, critical perceptions of democratic regimes and deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes among the East Asian population.² We then estimated and compared the net effects of these and cultural variables by

² These new variables are created by recoding responses to Q90, which asked respondents whether they perceive their resident regimes as “a full democracy,” “a democracy, but with minor problems,” “a democracy with major problems,” or “not a democracy”. It is important to

performing, on the third round of the Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS), the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA). Unlike other techniques of multivariate analysis, the MCA is uniquely capable of handling predictors measured on a nominal scale, such as the types of culture and regime perceptions. It is also capable of estimating the statistically adjusted and unadjusted values of each category of those nominal-scale predictors (Andrews, Morgan, and Sonquist 1973).

The ten predictors chosen as control variables for the MCA include gender, age, educational attainment, family income, assessments of governmental performance, assessments of the national economy, interpersonal trust, associational membership, and the two categories of regime perceptions. The two demographic characteristics of gender and age represent the theory of socialization, which holds that the values and norms learned during the formative years and practiced in life during those years remain lasting influences on the way in which people react to politics (Klingeman, Fuchs, and Ziolonka 2006; Nuendorf 2010). In this respect, they can be considered another set of indicators tapping cultural traits. Of the two variables of regime perceptions, the one tapping critical perceptions of democratic regimes represents the theory of the critical citizen, which attributes a low level of support for democratic regimes to those regimes' allowance, and even encouragement, of citizens being critical. The other variable, tapping deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, represents the flipside, which attributes a high level of support for authoritarian regimes to those regimes' insistence that citizens submit without voicing criticisms.

note that the leaders of non-democracies in East Asia, including leaders of China and Vietnam, claim that their countries are democratic; consequently, when citizens of these non-democracies report living in a well-functioning democracy, that response is considered indicative of a “deferential perception.”

The two socioeconomic variables of education and income represent the theory of modernization or neo-modernization, which holds that socioeconomic development exposes the masses to post-materialistic values and allows them to develop cognitive capacity (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The two variables tapping assessments of governmental and national economic performances, on the other hand, represent the theory of regime performance. This theory holds that when citizens assess their governments and economies positively, this builds their support of their regime, whereas negative assessments would lead to citizens lessening their support (Mattes and Bratton 2007; Shin and McDonough 1999). Finally, the two variables of interpersonal trust and association life represent the theory of civil society, which links such social capital to citizen allegiance to a regime, particularly when the regime is democratic (Misher and Rose 2005; Newton 2005; Putnam 2000).

Table 4 reports results of three pairs of MCA analyses. The first two pairs are based on the subsamples of democratic and non-democratic countries, respectively. The third pair is based on the pooled sample of all 11 democratic and non-democratic countries surveyed. The *beta* coefficients reported in this table are equivalent to standardized regression coefficients and thus allow us to determine the relative importance of each independent or control variable as an influence on the dependent variable of diffuse regime support. *Beta* coefficients of 0.7 and higher values are generally considered to indicate that predictors are direct influences of both statistical and substantive significance on the dependent variable.

(Table 4)

Does culture matter significantly as an influence on diffuse regime support in both democratic and non-democratic countries? If it does, how differently or similarly do its types affect the institutional and systemic dimensions of such support? These two questions,

concerning the magnitude and patterns of cultural influence, have not been addressed in any of the previous survey-based studies based exclusively on uni-dimensional conceptions of culture and regime support. To address these questions, we first collapsed liberal and electoral democracies into the subsample of democracies, and electoral authoritarian and one-party states into that of non-democracies to generate a sufficient number of cases for the MCA. On each subsample, we then performed a separate MCA of institutional and systemic support and estimated the magnitude of cultural impact on each dimension of regime support.

Table 4 shows that in the subsample of democratic countries, the two *beta* coefficients—one for institutional support (0.11) and the other for systemic support (0.17)—for the culture variable are both statistically and substantively significant. In the second subsample of non-democracies as well, the two *beta* coefficients are significant with 0.8 (institutional support) and 0.13 (systemic support). These findings, when considered together, make it clear that in democratic as well as non-democratic countries, culture affects both dimensions of diffuse support significantly. In other words, regardless of the type of regime in which East Asians live, the particular type of culture they experience has a significant impact on their regime orientation, whether it is positive or negative.

A careful comparison of the two *beta* coefficients in each subsample of East Asian countries reveals that in both subsamples, the coefficient estimating the magnitude of cultural influence on *systemic support* is much higher than the magnitude of cultural influence on *institutional support*. In democratic countries, the coefficient for systemic support is one-and-a-half times larger than the one for institutional support (0.17 vs. 0.11). In non-democratic countries, the same pattern holds with the former outweighing the latter by a similar margin (0.13 vs. 0.08). In both democratic and non-democratic countries, culture is more instrumental in

shaping orientations to the entire system of government itself than its component institutions. Thus, culture is more influential on the dimension tied to stability of support (systemic) than on the dimension tied to durability of support (institutional).

In addition, Table 4 reveals an interesting pattern of cultural influence when *beta* coefficients are compared across the two subsamples of East Asian countries—democratic and nondemocratic. The two coefficients for the democratic subsample reported in the first two columns of the table are much larger than the coefficients for the nondemocratic subsample reported in the third and fourth columns. Between these two subsamples, the democratic leads the non-democratic in the extent to which culture affects both the institutional dimension (0.11 vs. 0.8) and the systemic dimension (0.17 vs. 0.13) of diffuse regime support. Evidently, in East Asia, culture matters to a greater extent in democratic countries than in non-democratic countries, although it matters significantly in both types of regime.

If culture matters significantly, which particular cultural types contribute most and least to the institutional dimension of diffuse regime support? Which types contribute most and least to its systemic dimension? Do the most and least conducive cultural types vary across these two support dimensions? These questions, which have not been addressed in any previous studies, are explored in two steps. We first pooled the third wave of the ABS conducted in all eleven East Asian countries. Then we estimated the independent or net effect of the culture variable on the levels of dimensional and overall regime support in the entire region of East Asia. Figure 7 reports the *adjusted level* of such support for each of the four types of culture. This level refers to the level of such support after the effects of all other predictors are statistically removed.

(Figure 7)

Of the four cultural types discussed earlier, the figure shows that *hierarchism* registers the highest level of support on both dimensions, while *individualism* registers the lowest level on those dimensions (the same patterns holds true when the entire sample of 11 countries is disaggregated into the two subsamples of democratic and nondemocratic countries). As a result, the overall level of diffuse regime support is 1 point higher on a 9-point index among upholders of *hierarchism* than those of *individualism* (5.2 vs. 4.2).

Similarly, Figure 8 shows that the *fully committed* to the regime are most numerous among those experiencing *hierarchism* with 42 percent and least numerous among those experiencing *individualism* with 31 percent, even after the effects of all other predictors are statistically removed. All these findings make it clear that throughout East Asia, *hierarchical culture*, featuring strong group attachment and high grid constraint, contributes most to diffuse regime support. *Individualistic culture*, featuring weak group attachment and low grid constraint, on the other hand, contributes least to or detracts most from it.

(Figure 8)

How does culture compare with other predictors as an influence on diffuse regime support? According to results of the MCA reported in the fifth column of Table 4, which treated the *overall level* of diffuse regime support as the dependent variable, culture is not the only variable that matters significantly. Nor does it register the largest *beta* coefficient. Of the six predictors found to be significant both statistically, the culture variable (0.12) ranks fourth after deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes (.28) and assessments of governmental performance (0.27) and of the national economy (0.21). Evidently, culture is not the force *directly* shaping the breadth and depth of diffuse regime support most powerfully. Yet it affects such regime support more powerfully than six of the 10 other tested variables, including the

two—education and income—representing modernization, and the two—interpersonal trust and associational membership—representing social capital.

The most powerful set of direct influences consists of the two variables representing performance theory, i.e., the performances of the government and the national economy. According to the *adjusted level* of overall diffuse regime support reported in Figure 9, the more favorably East Asians rate the performance of their government and national economy, the more broadly and deeply they support their regime. Even when the type of resident regime is controlled for, better assessments of governmental and economic performances are always accompanied by higher levels of regime support. Such positive and monotonic relationships between them confirm the performance theory linking the satisfaction of citizen needs to regime support.

(Figure 9)

Another more notable feature of the data reported in the fifth column of Table 4 concerns the relative potency of the two variables tapping regime perceptions, both of which are statistically significant predictors. Those two variables, again, are *critical perceptions of democratic regimes* and *deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes*. Citizens of democracies were considered to have *critical perceptions* if they reported living in either a democracy with major problems or a non-democracy, whereas citizens of non-democracies were considered to have deferential perceptions if they went along with their leaders and reported living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems.

According to the *betas* reported in the column, a *deferential perception* of an authoritarian regime is the most powerful of all the predictors included in the MCA of overall regime support with a coefficient of .28. Furthermore, a deferential perception affects the overall

level of diffuse regime support among the East Asian population over two times more powerfully than a *critical perception* of a democratic regime (0.12 vs. 0.28). This finding indicates that the main cause of the relatively lower level of regime support in democratic East Asia is not the emergence of *critical democrats* in the region but the prevalence of *deferential authoritarians* in authoritarian East Asia. It also casts doubt on the central claim of the theory of critical citizens that democratic regimes enjoy a significantly lower level of citizen support than non-democratic regimes mainly because the former inherently contributes to the development of critical spirits among their citizens.

How do such divergent regime perceptions affect the way in which East Asians embrace their regimes? Which regime perceptions are the most and least likely to encourage East Asians from committing themselves *fully* to their regime? To address these questions, we first classified respondents into four types of regime perceivers by considering both the types—democratic and nondemocratic—of regime in which respondents live and their positive and negative perceptions of the regime. The four types of regime perceivers include *uncritical democrats*, citizens of democracies who report living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems; *critical democrats*, citizens of democracies who report living either in a democracy with major problems or a non-democracy; *compliant authoritarians*, citizens of non-democracies who report living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems; and *noncompliant authoritarians*, citizens of non-democracies who report living either in a democracy with major problems or a non-democracy.

Of these four, two types, *critical democrats* and *compliant authoritarians*, are directly relevant to the puzzle of diffuse regime support, that is, significantly lower regime support in democracies than in non-democracies. *Critical democrats* detract from such support by

perceiving their regime as a malfunctioning democracy or misperceiving it as a non-democracy. *Compliant authoritarians*, in contrast, contribute to regime support as deferential authoritarians, who misperceive their regime as a well-functioning democracy.

Of these four types of citizens, none comprises a majority of the entire East Asian population (see Figure 10). Yet *compliant authoritarians*, who go along with their leaders in calling their authoritarian system a democracy, are most prevalent, with a plurality of 34 percent. They are followed by *uncritical democrats*, who comprise 31 percent of the East Asian population, *critical democrats*, who comprise 21 percent, and *noncompliant authoritarians*, who comprise 8 percent. In East Asia as a whole today, residents who are uncritical in their regime perceptions outnumber those who are critical by a large margin of more than 2 to 1 (65% vs. 29%). Among uncritical perceivers, authoritarians outnumber democrats by a small margin (34% vs. 31%). Among critical perceivers, on the other hand, democrats outnumber authoritarians by a much larger margin of nearly 3 to 1 (21% vs. 8%). Consequently, in East Asia today, *deferential authoritarians* are most numerous; they are over one-and-a-half times as prevalent as *critical democrats* (34% vs. 21%).

(Figure 10)

Which type of regime is more successful in transforming the political mindsets of their citizenries? To explore this question regarding the effect of political re-socialization, we calculated the percentages of *critical* and *uncritical democrats* among the population of democratic East Asia and those of *compliant* and *noncompliant authoritarians* among the population of nondemocratic East Asia. According to the percentages reported in Figure 11, Non-democratic countries make their citizens oriented to the regime over four times more favorably than unfavorably (75% vs. 18%). Democratic countries, on the other hand, make their

citizens oriented to the regime only one-and-a half times more favorably than unfavorably (57% vs. 39%). When these differences are considered together, it is evident that the former are over two times more successful than the latter in eliciting favorable images and stifling unfavorable images of their regime.

(Figure 11)

Across these four types of citizens, Figure 12 compares the *adjusted percentages of the fully committed* to their regimes. These percentages are derived from results of the MCA reported in the sixth column of Table 4. Between the two types of *critical perceivers*, the *fully committed* are much less prevalent among citizens of democracies than those of non-democracies (22% of critical democrats are fully committed vs. 39% of noncompliant authoritarians being so). Between the two types of *uncritical perceivers*, also, they are much less prevalent among the former than the latter (26% vs. 63%). Regardless of whether they perceive their regime critically or uncritically, people in democratic East Asia are consistently less supportive of their regimes than their peers in nondemocratic East Asia are (24% vs. 59%). Undoubtedly, this finding is supportive of the theory of critical citizens linking the lower level of regime support among the former to the critical spirits of democratic politics and the practices of its contentious citizen politics. Nonetheless, it cannot be considered a full answer to the puzzle of why reservoirs of citizen goodwill are narrower and shallower in democracies than in non-democracies (Wang, Dalton, and Shin 2005).

(Figure 12)

A careful comparison of the percentages reported in Figure 12 suggests that the huge support gap of 35 percentage points (24% vs. 59%) between the two types of regime are mainly due to citizen *misperceptions* of authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies. Between

the critical and uncritical perceivers of *democracies*, there is a small difference of 4 percentage points in the adjusted percentage of *the fully committed* to the regime (22% vs. 26%). Between the critical and uncritical perceivers of *non-democracies*, in striking contrast, there is a large difference of 24 percentage points (39% vs. 63%). More noteworthy is that the commitment gap within nondemocratic East Asia is six times as large as the gap that exists within democratic East Asia (24% vs. 4%). This indicates that the extent to which positive regime perceptions among citizens of non-democracies contributes to those citizens' full commitment to their regimes is six times greater than the extent to which negative regime perceptions among citizens of democracies detract from their full commitment.

Figure 12 also shows that between the two categories of critical regime perceivers, citizens of nondemocratic regimes lead those of democratic regimes in full regime commitment by 16 percent (39% vs. 22%). Between the two categories of uncritical perceivers, citizens of non-democracies also lead citizens of democracies by a larger margin of 37 percent (63% vs. 26%). That is, to the extent to which *positive perceivers* of authoritarian regimes lead positive perceivers of democratic regimes is over two times as large as the extent to which *negative perceivers* of the former lead those of the latter (37 percentage points vs. 16 percentage points). This is another piece of evidence suggesting that the extent to which citizens of the former are deferential to their regime outweigh the extent to which those of the latter are critical of their regime.

All in all, some inherent quality of democracy that encourages citizens to be critical cannot fully explain the support gap of 35 percentage points that exists between democratic and nondemocratic East Asia. Instead, much of this gap is attributable to the preponderance of deferential authoritarians in nondemocratic East Asia, i.e., those who go along with their leaders

in describing their authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies. Consequently, we must conclude that the theory of critical citizens is, alone, insufficient for solving the puzzle of why citizens of non-democracies are far more supportive of their regime than their peers of democratic regimes. Arriving at a solution will require an alternative theory that takes into account regime perceptions.

Culture and Regime Perceptions

Among East Asians today, diffuse regime support depends largely upon how citizens perceive their regimes. According to the *betas* reported in the sixth column of Table 4, regime perceptions constitute the most powerful influence on the dependent variable of *the fully committed* to the regime. Specifically, the *beta* coefficient for this variable is over two times as large as the second and third powerful predictors: assessments of the government and the national economy (0.40 vs. 0.19; 0.40 vs. 0.16).

What motivates East Asians to perceive their regimes in the way they do? Does culture motivate them to do so? If it does, what particular types of culture contribute most and least to misperceptions of an authoritarian regime as a well-functioning democracy? What cultural types contribute most and least to perceptions of a democratic regime as a malfunctioning regime? To explore these questions, we need to compare the proportions of *deferential authoritarians* and *critical democrats* across the four previously defined cultural types.

Figure 13 shows that *deferential authoritarians*, who mistake their authoritarian regime for a well-functioning democracy, are most numerous among citizens experiencing a hierarchical culture (40%), followed by those experiencing egalitarianism (37%), fatalism (25%), and individualism (22%). In striking contrast, *critical democrats*, who perceive their democracies as malfunctioning or as non-democracies, are most numerous among those experiencing

individualism (32%), followed by those experiencing fatalism (29%), egalitarianism (22%), and hierarchism (20%). These findings, when considered together, reveal consistent patterns of association between cultural types on the one hand and regime perceptions on the other.

(Figure 13)

Specifically, the more strongly East Asians are attached to groups and the more strongly constrained they are by social norms, the more likely they are to perceive their authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies and the less likely they are to perceive their democratic regimes as either malfunctioning or a non-democratic. On the flipside, the less closely East Asians are tied to social groups and the less bound they are to social norms, the less likely they are to perceive their authoritarian regimes as democracies and the more likely they are to perceive their democratic regimes critically.

Another finding worth noting is the impact of group versus the impact of grid. In the cultures that mix, *Critical democrats* outnumber *deferential authoritarians* among individualists and fatalists, who do not experience strong group incorporation, while *deferential authoritarians* outnumber *critical democrats* among egalitarians and hierarchs, who do (see Figure 13). As discussed earlier, critical regime perceptions among citizens of democratic regimes discourage them from supporting their regimes diffusely, while deferential regime perceptions among those of authoritarian regimes encourage them to do so (see Figures 7 and 8).

The preponderance of *critical democrats* over *deferential authoritarians* among individualists and fatalists, therefore, entails a *net loss* of diffuse regime support. In contrast, the preponderance of *deferential authoritarians* over *critical democrats* among egalitarians and hierarchs entails a *net gain* of such support. As a result, reservoirs of citizen goodwill become

broader and deeper in non-democracies with larger portions of hierarchs than in democracies with larger proportions of individualists.

In short, the particular type of culture East Asians experience in daily life influences whether their regime perceptions will be critical or deferential. Which kind of perception they have, in turn, leads them to embrace or reject their regime. This two-step process of cultural influence on regime support constitutes an important piece of new evidence to suggest that culture affects regime support *indirectly* by affecting the way in which people perceive their regimes.

All in all, culture appears to be an ultimate source of diffuse regime support; it shapes such support directly and indirectly, positively and negatively (Douglas and Wildavsky 1983; Shi 2001; forthcoming; Shin 2012; Welzel and Inglehart 2009; Wildavsky 1993). Understanding the influence of culture puts in place several pieces of the puzzle regarding greater citizen support for non-democracies than for democracies in East Asia. The links between culture and support identified here call for a new theory of diffuse regime support, which is capable of overcoming the limitations of the widely popular theory of critical citizens. To build the new culture-based theory will require further analysis of the latest round of the Asian Barometer Surveys to determine more about the factors at work in the influence of culture.

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Table 1 A Typology of Cultural Preferences

		Group Incorporation	
		Low	High
Norm Compliance	Low	<i>Individualism</i>	<i>Egalitarianism</i>
	High	<i>Fatalism</i>	<i>Hierarchism</i>

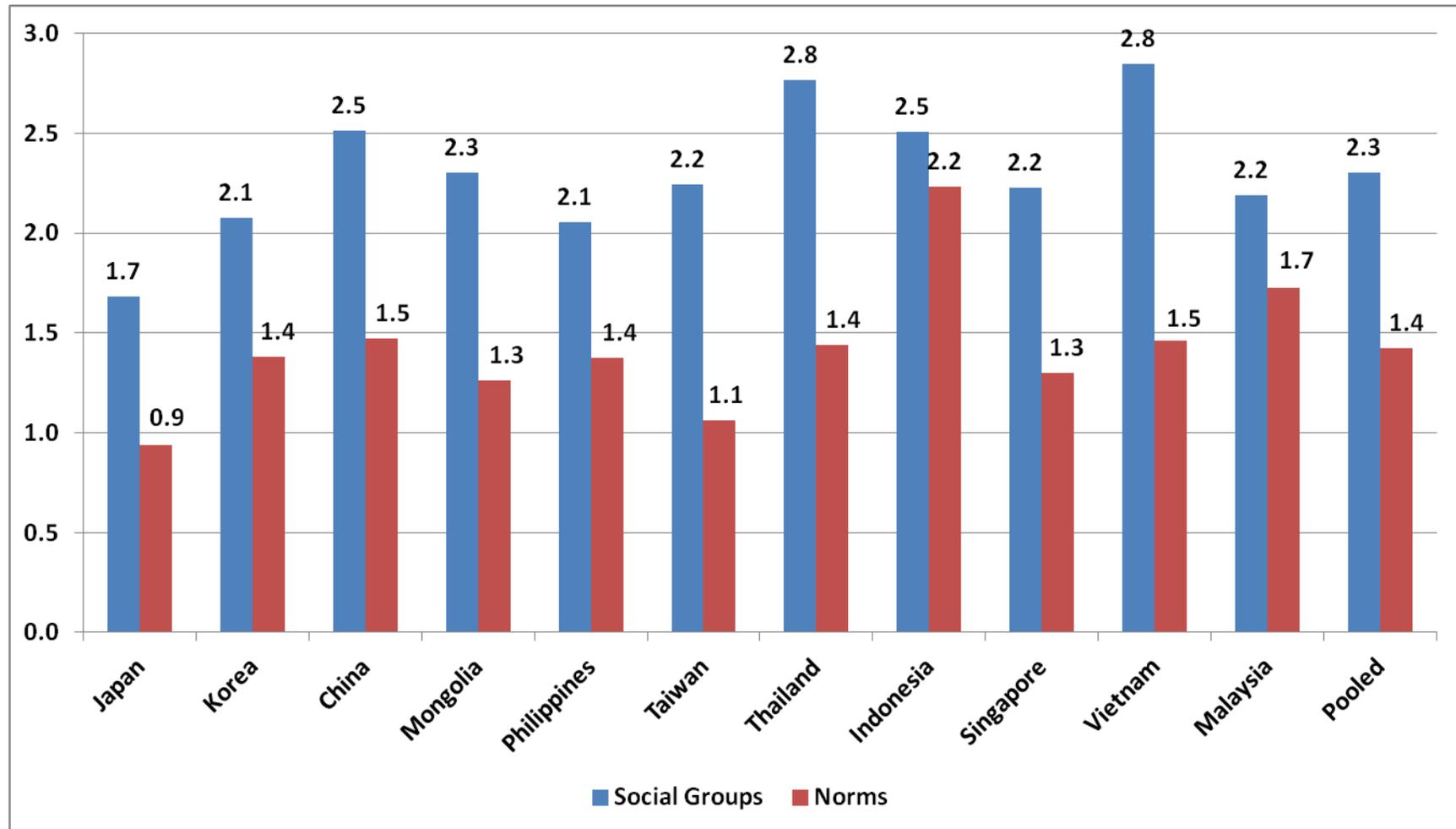
Figure 1 Mean Levels of Attachment to Social Groups and Norms (on a 4-point index)

Figure 2 The Fully Attached to Social Groups and Norms (in Percentages)

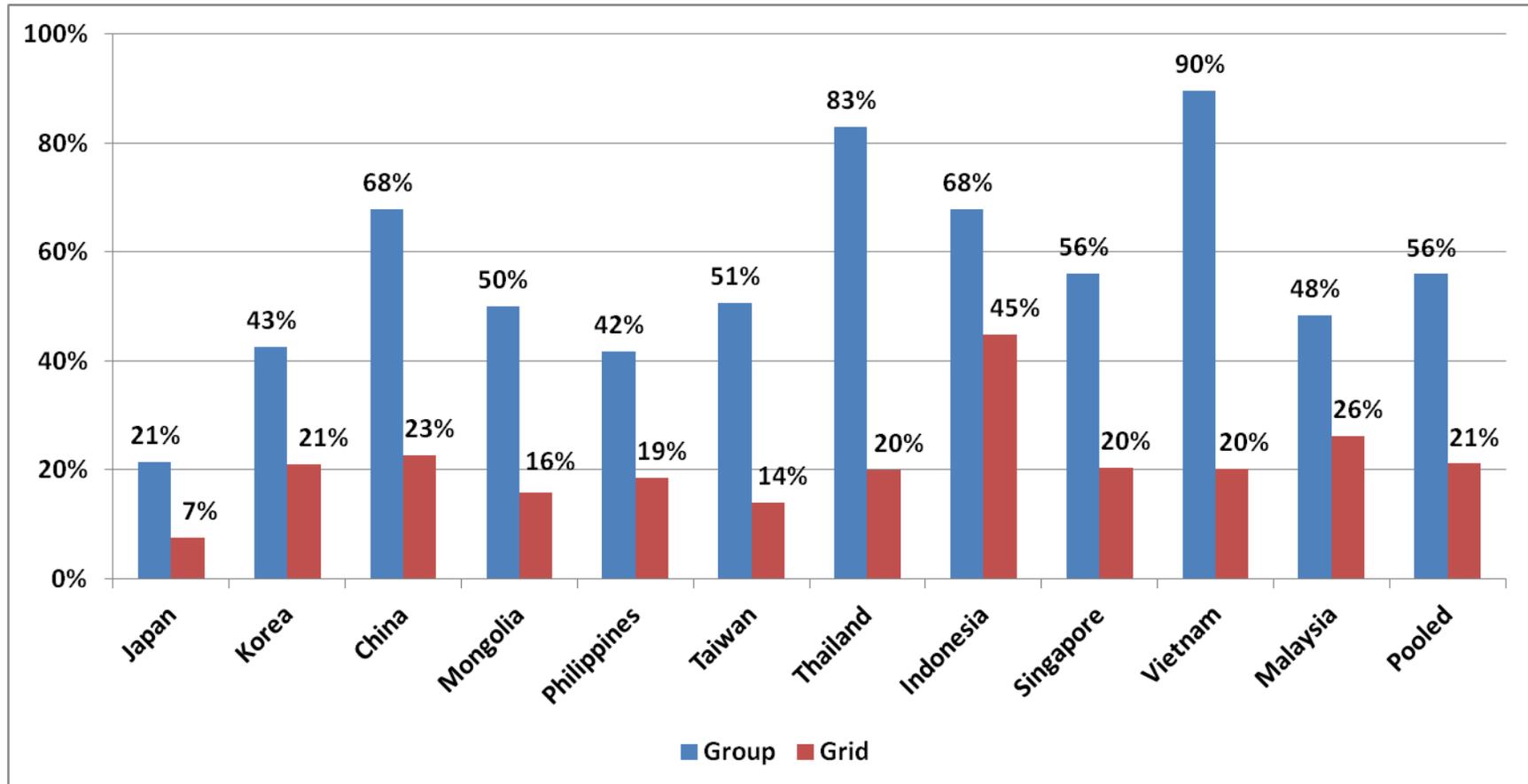


Table 2 East Asians' Cultural Experiences

	Types of Culture That Individuals Favor (%)			
	Individualism	Fatalism	Egalitarianism	Hierarchism
Japan	30%	7%	31%	15%
Korea	19	8	31	34
China	9	3	38	37
Mongolia	10	6	45	29
Philippines	19	7	36	34
Taiwan	14	4	44	23
Thailand	3	2	40	36
Indonesia	4	9	12	65
Singapore	17	6	37	32
Vietnam	1	0	39	32
Malaysia	11	10	24	48
Pooled	12	6	34	35

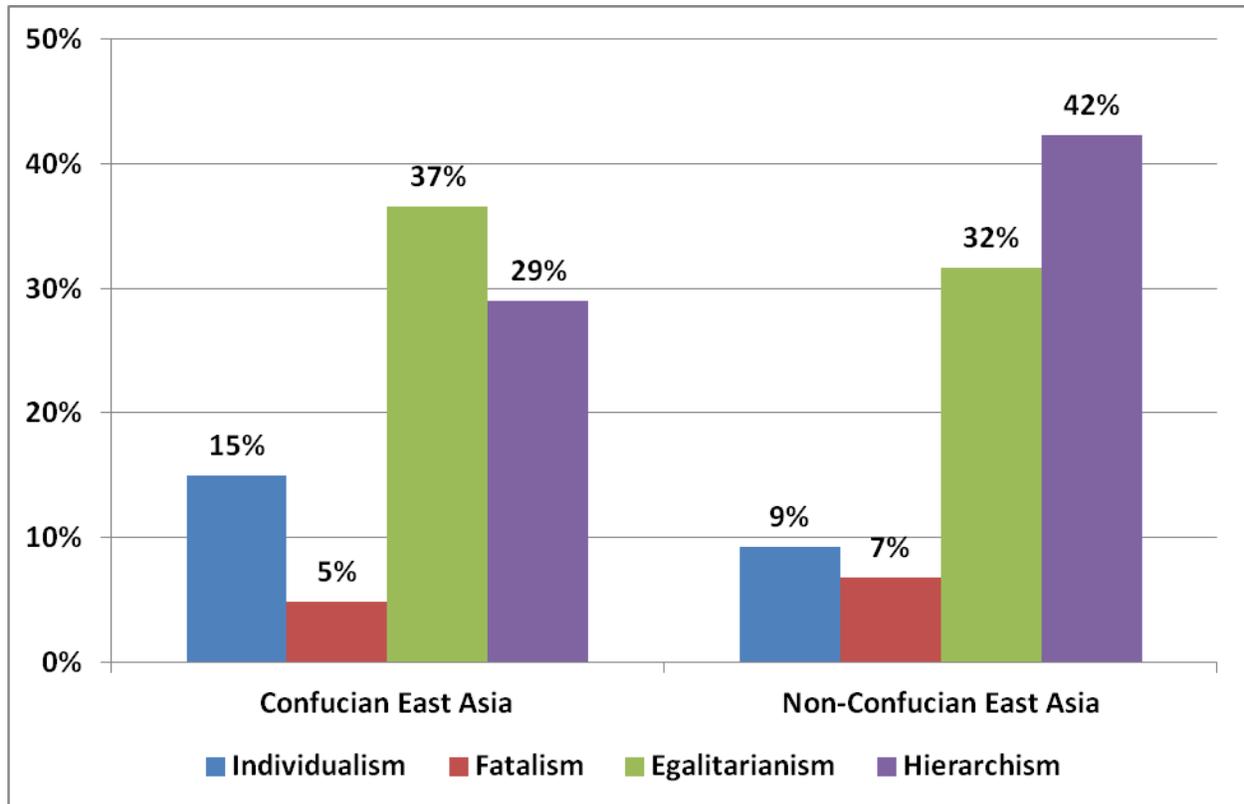
Figure 3 Cultural Experiences in Confucian And Non-Confucian East Asia

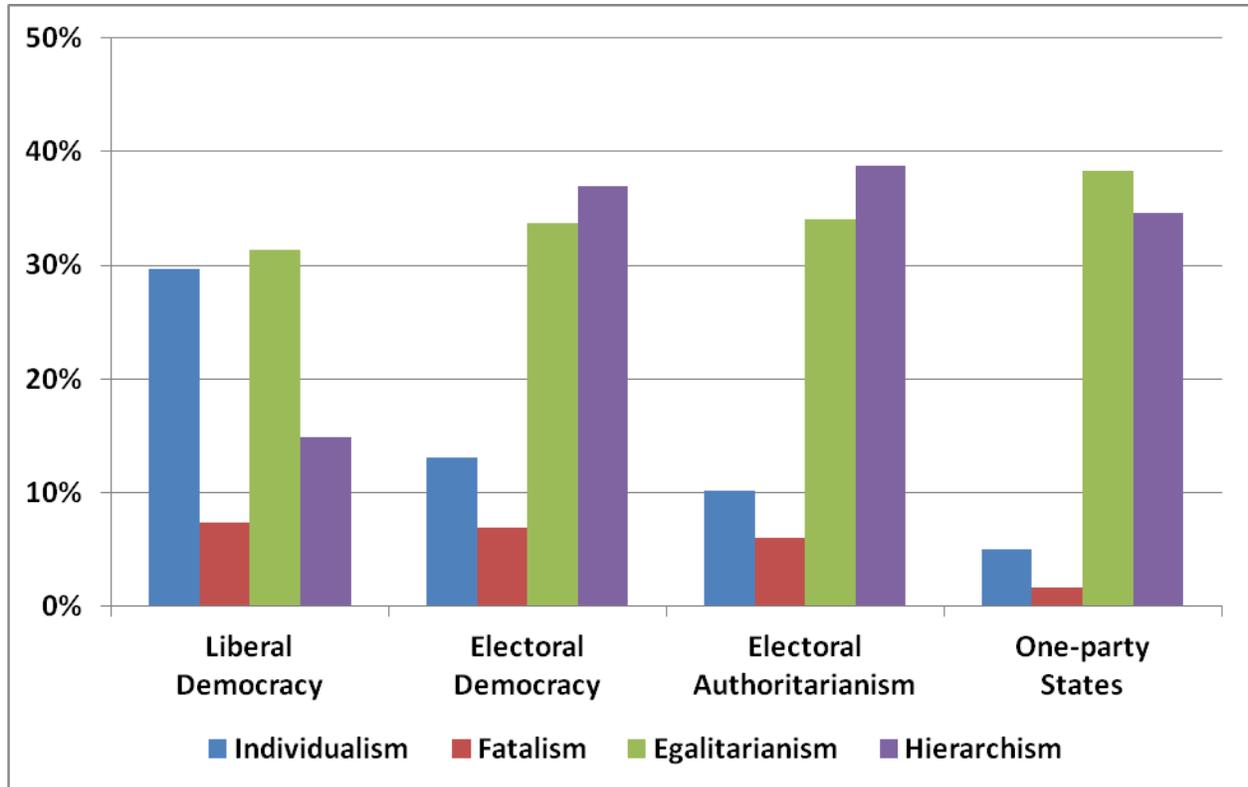
Figure 4 Prevalence of Cultural Experiences across Four Different Regime Types

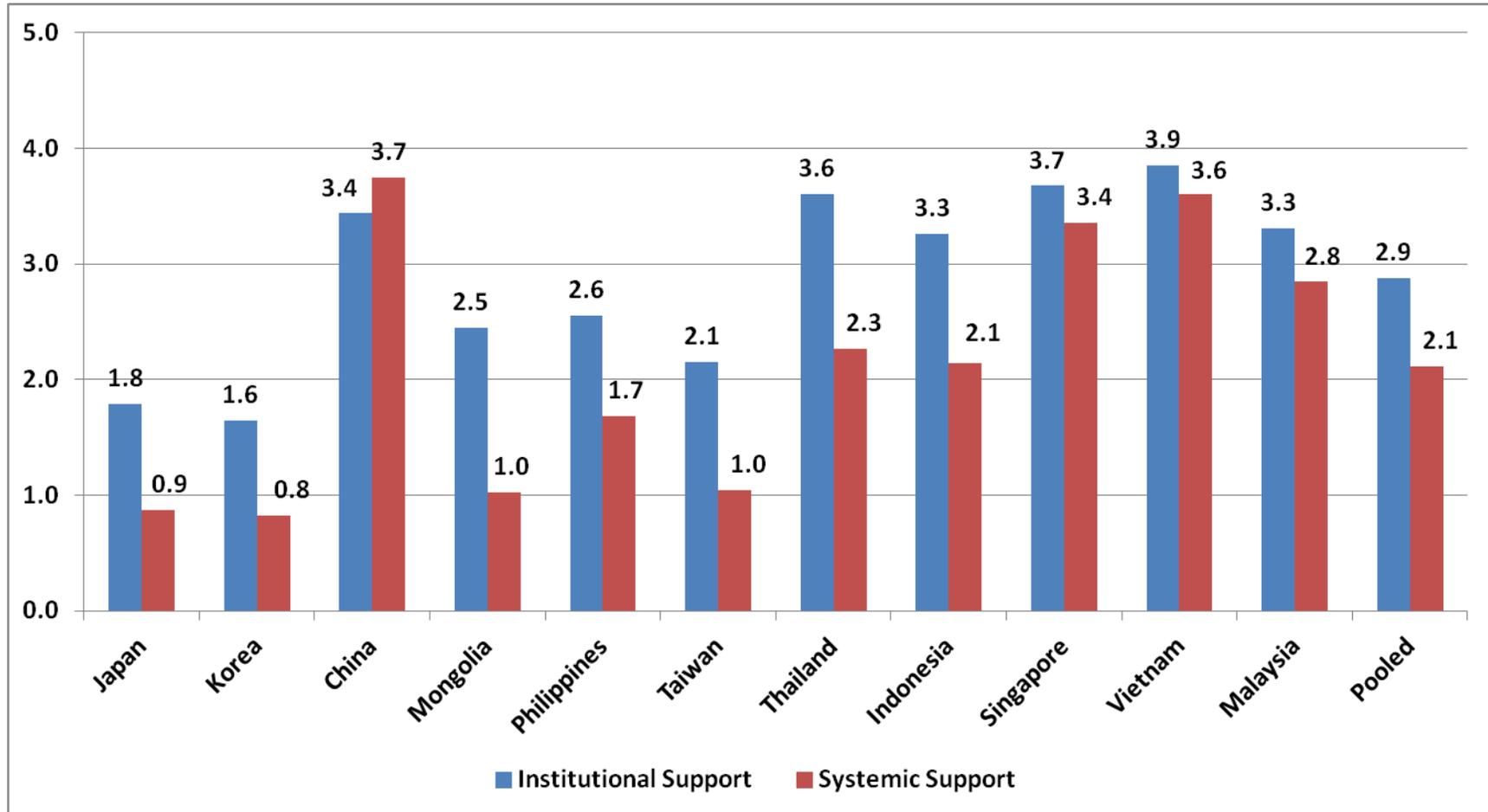
Figure 5 Levels of Institutional and Systemic Support (on a 5-point Index)

Table 3 The Prevalence of Four Types of Regime Support

	The Uncommitted	Systemically Committed	Institutionally Committed	Fully Committed
Japan	56%	4%	31%	9%
Korea	55	6	28	12
China	3	8	2	88
Mongolia	39	5	40	17
Philippines	24	13	31	32
Taiwan	42	5	34	20
Thailand	3	2	36	59
Indonesia	13	5	32	51
Singapore	2	2	10	87
Vietnam	1	1	4	93
Malaysia	8	6	13	72
Pooled	23	5	24	48

Figure 6 The Prevalence of Regime Support Types across Four Regime Types

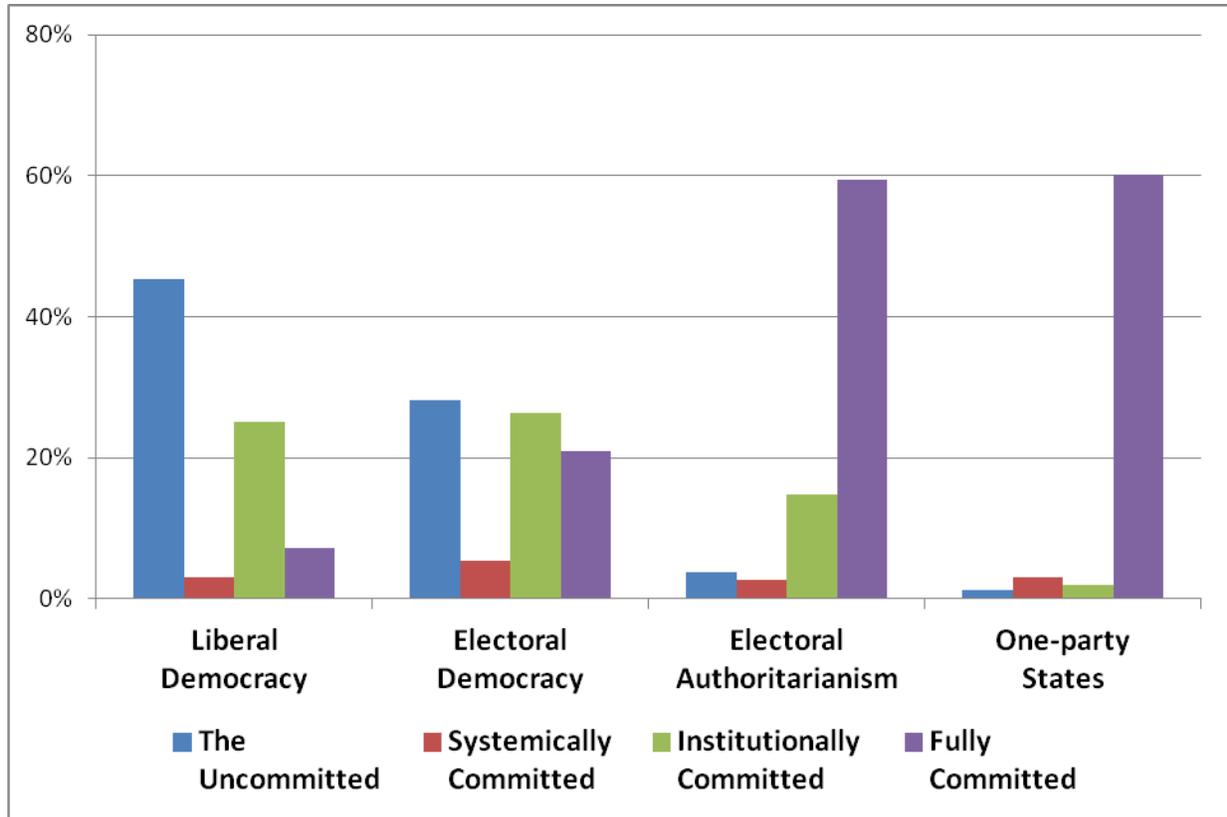


Table 4 Sources of Diffuse Regime Support (MCA Results)

Predictors	Democracies		Non-democracies		All countries	
	Institutional Support	Systemic Support	Institutional Support	Systemic Support	Overall Support	Fully Committed
Socialization						
Gender	0.006	0.003	0.051	0.019	0.007	0.027
Age	0.091	0.014	0.007	0.028	0.036	0.033
Culture	0.113	0.168	0.079	0.13	0.126	0.071
Modernization						
Education	0.108	0.126	0.039	0.025	0.104	0.054
Income	0.095	0.079	0.055	0.055	0.047	0.037
Regime Performance						
Government	0.228	0.203	0.342	0.282	0.267	0.191
Economy	0.197	0.19	0.226	0.054	0.215	0.158
Social Capital						
Trust	0.073	0.031	0.105	0.083	0.052	0.074
Association	0.088	0.077	0.022	0.031	0.023	0.011
Regime Perceptions						
Democracies	0.093	0.124			0.118	
Nondemocracies			0.136	0.129	0.279	
All countries						0.402
(R^2)	(0.225)	(0.235)	(0.340)	(0.179)	(0.513)	(0.427)

Figure 7 Adjusted Levels of Diffuse Regime Support by Cultural Types

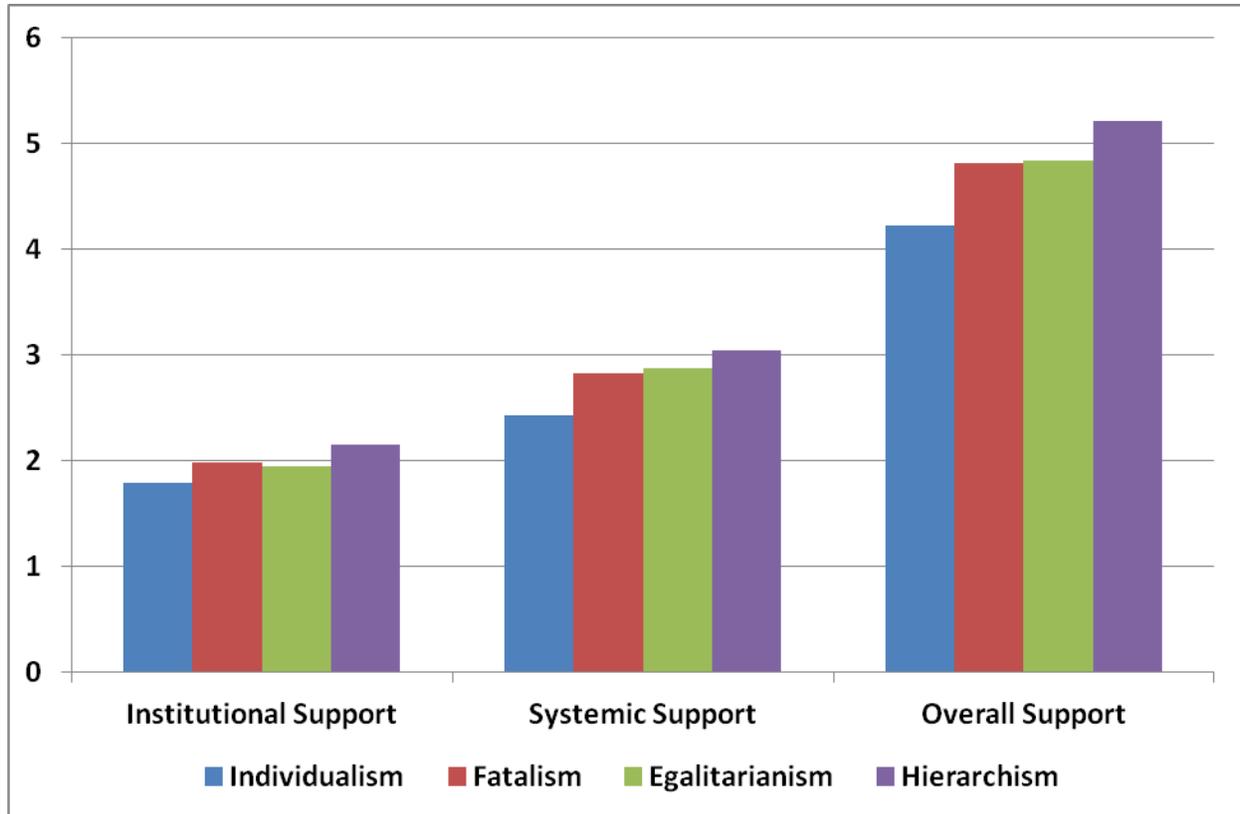


Figure 8 Adjusted Percentages of the Fully Committed to Resident Regime by Four Culture Types

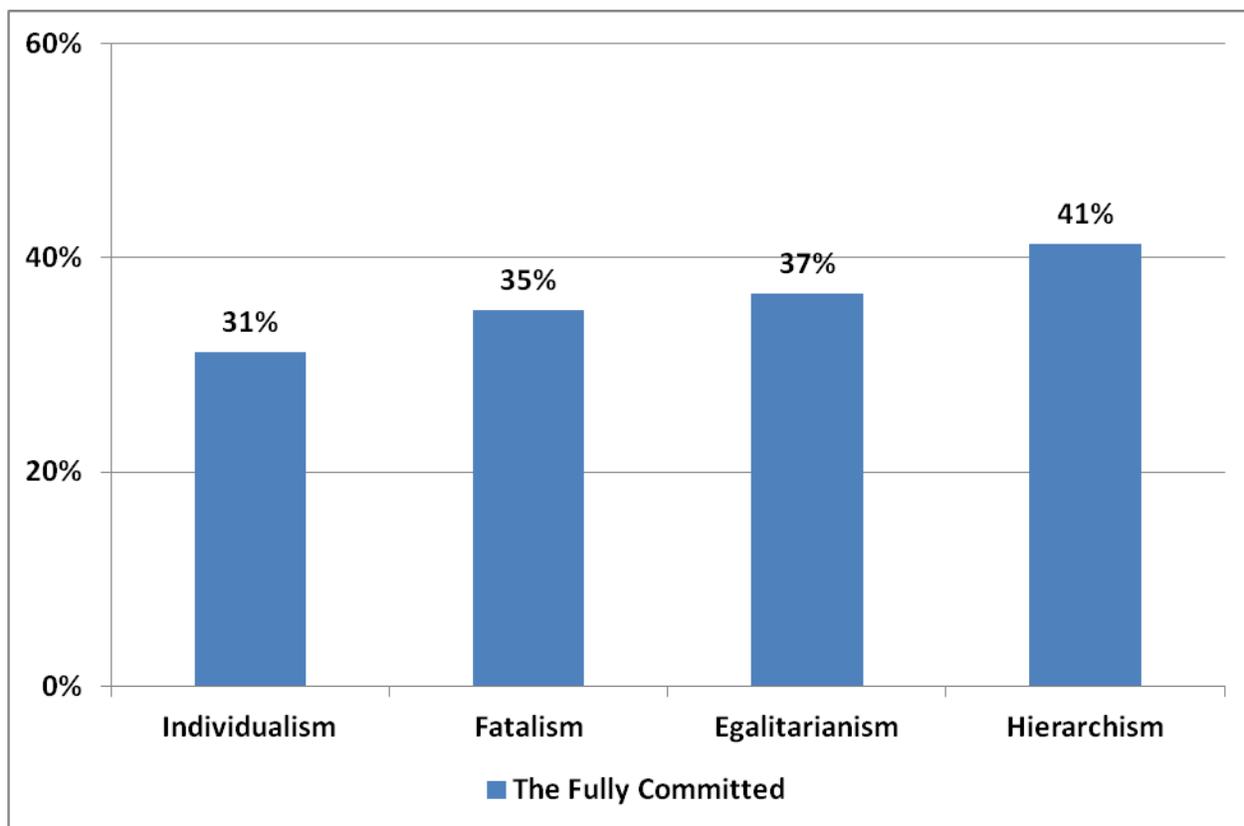


Figure 9 Adjusted Levels of Diffuse Regime Support by Levels of Satisfaction with Regime Performance

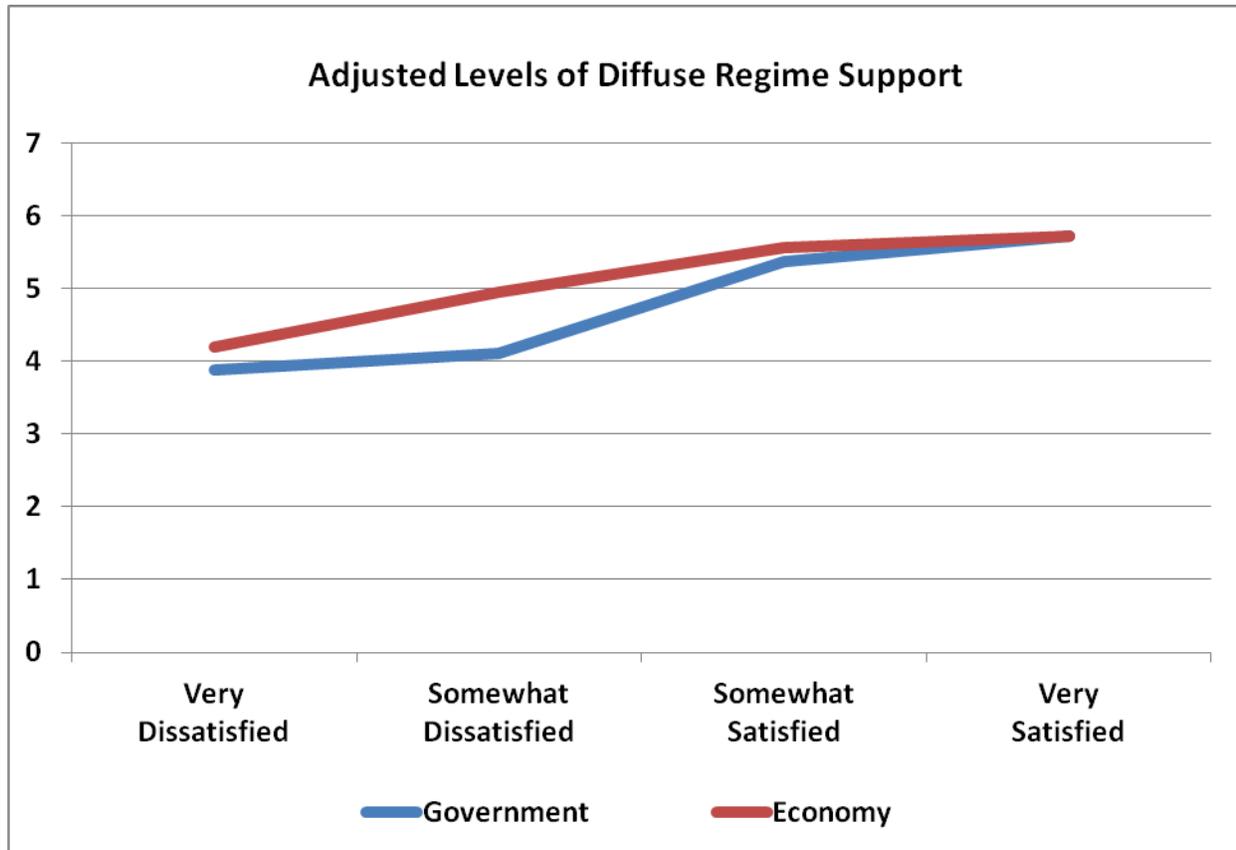


Figure 10 The Distribution of Four Types of Citizens by Regime Perceptions Among the East Asian Population

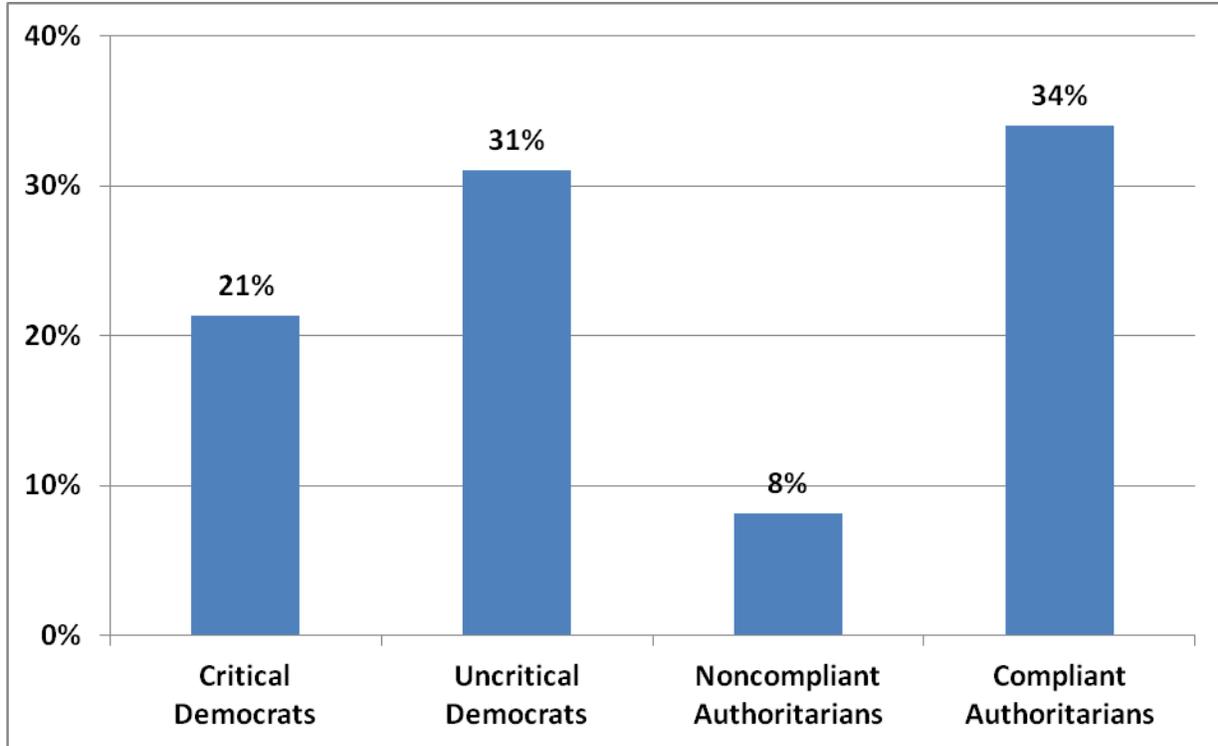


Figure 11 Regime Perceptions among Citizens of Democratic and Nondemocratic Countries

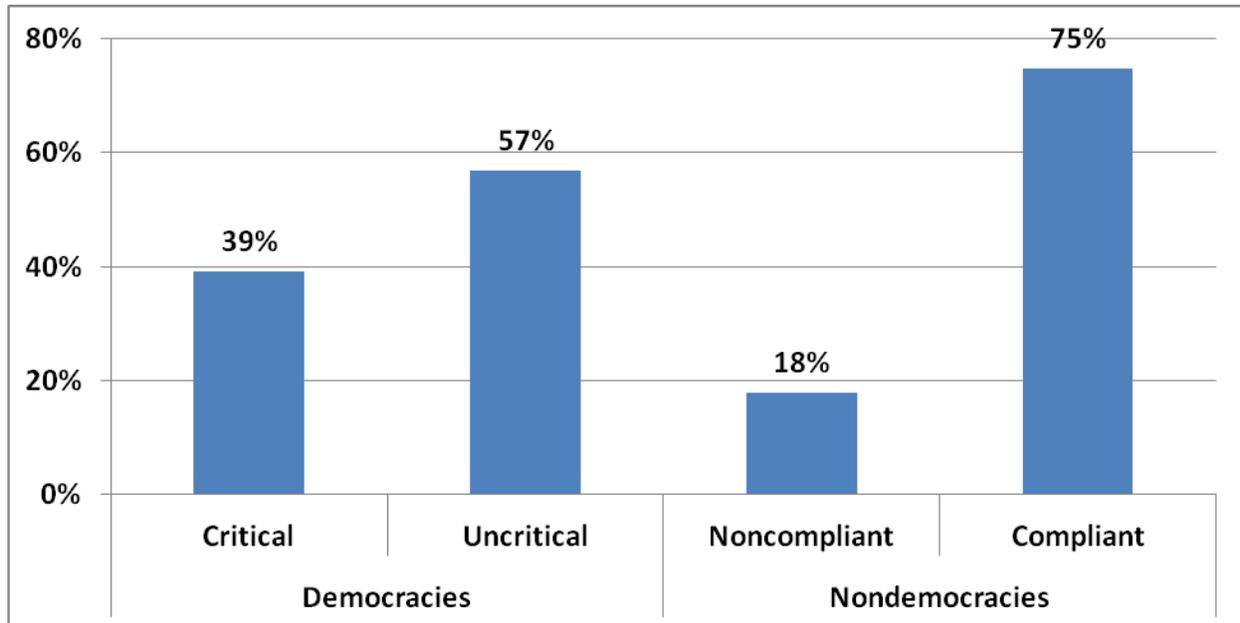


Figure 12 Adjusted Percentages of the Fully Committed among Divergent Perceivers of Resident Regime

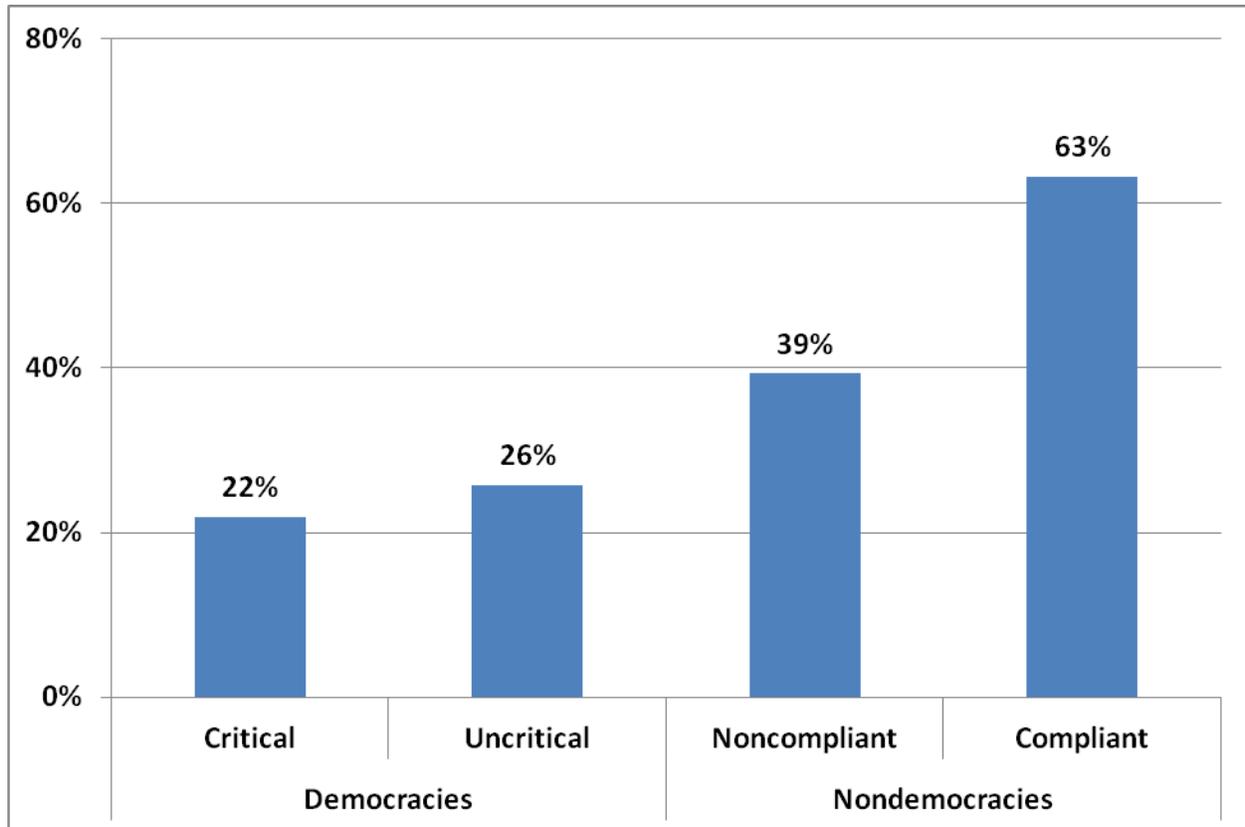


Figure 13 Percentages of Deferential Authoritarians and Critical Democrats among Each Cultural Type

