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Are Associations the Schools of Democracy across Asia?

Chong-min Park
Korea University

Jaechul Lee
Sogang University

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Are Associations the Schools of Democracy across Asia?

> We cannot assume that the more secondary associations that exist, the better off liberal democracy will be. More of civic importance probably depends on the nature of associations than on their number.

> - Amy Gutmann (1998, 31)

In the last decade a number of political scientists drawing on the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville have emphasized the importance of associations, key actors of civil society, for the viability of democracy. For instance, Robert Putnam (1993) holds that a civic community with dense networks of voluntary associations matters for democratic institutional performance. Michael Foley and Bob Edwards (1996) emphasize the role of civil society in mobilizing resistance to an authoritarian state while recognizing its role in producing virtuous citizens. Larry Diamond (1999) notes that civil society advances democracy by contributing to democratic transition as well as consolidation. James Gibson (2001) demonstrates that social networks as a key attribute of civil society are important for the diffusion of democratic ideas in Russia. Along these lines, scholars of civil society tend to agree that the viability of democracy depends on the nature and intensity of associational life (Warren 2001). They consider a vibrant civil society as an important factor, if not the most important one, in determining the quality and consolidation of democracy.

In this paper we attempt to explore whether the view of associations as a school of democracy applies across Asia, where cultural traditions of social hierarchy and distrust still remain strong (Fukuyama 1995; Pye 2001). We chose seven Asian

nations - South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Mongolia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore – to examine the potential democratic effects of associations. Our set of Asian nations displays striking variation in their political conditions. According to the 2007 Freedom House report (Freedom House 2007), South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia and Indonesia are electoral democracies and rated free. Both South Korea and Taiwan each received a combined score of 1.5 on the seven-point political rights and civil liberties scale, Mongolia a score of 2.0 and Indonesia a score of 2.5. The Philippines is an electoral democracy but rated as partly free, with a score of 3.0. Singapore is not an electoral democracy, but rated as partly free, with a score of 4.5. Because of the September 2006 military coup, Thailand is no longer an electoral democracy and rated as not free, with a score of 5.5. Despite a wide difference in the level of democracy, it is known that the role of civil society has been prominent in the democratic transitions in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and even Thailand (Alagappa 2004; Diamond 1999).

In this paper we try to explore whether associations are a school of democracy across these Asian nations. More specifically, we address the following questions: Are association members more likely than nonmembers to display trust, reciprocity and citizenship norms? Are members more likely than nonmembers to support democratic values and norms? Are members more likely than nonmembers to get involved in politics? We address these and other related questions in the context of the 2005-6 Asian Barometer (AB hereafter) survey.

This paper is organized into four sections. The first reviews some prior theory and research on the socializing role of associations in advancing democracy. The second examines national levels of associational membership across Asia and the types of

associations to which Asians belong. The third assesses the effects of associational membership on civic virtues, democratic values and norms, and political activism across Asia. The last highlights the key findings and discusses their implications for democratic consolidation in the region with little liberal-pluralist tradition.

Associations and Democracy

Nearly two centuries ago, in his monumental work, *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (2000) emphasized the vibrancy of associational life as a key to American democracy. He held that voluntary associations contribute to democracy by protecting individual freedom, preventing tyranny of the majority and training virtuous citizens. Especially noteworthy is his emphasis on the role of associations in cultivating civic virtues among individuals, which enable them to pursue their common desires.

Drawing on the insights of Tocqueville, contemporary theorists and researchers of democracy have emphasized the cultural function of associational life. In their pioneering work, *The Civic Culture*, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963) stressed the importance of social participation for a stable democracy. The propensity of civic cooperation is, they argued, rooted in social attitudes and beliefs, such as having faith in people, which is cultivated through taking part in voluntary associations. They held that such associations infuse their members with habits of cooperation and norms of reciprocity, which are conducive to civic engagement. They considered social participation as one of the ultimate sources of democratic citizenship by linking associational life to civic values of tolerance and support for democratic institutions.

In his seminal work, *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam (1993) explicitly related civil society to democratic governance through the concept of social capital in his analysis of regional governance in Italy. He argued that a dense network of

voluntary associations generates social capital by cultivating norms of reciprocity and trust and empowering citizens for civic engagement, which improve the quality of democratic institutions. Horizontal associations are considered to benefit democracy both internally and externally. Internally, these associations allow their members not only to acquire civic skills and resources but also to learn democratic values and norms. Externally, they facilitate the articulation and representation of citizen interests to a democratic state. A civic community is viewed to enhance the quality of democratic governance through networks and norms of trust, that is, social capital.

In their extensive study of political action, *Voice and Equality*, Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman and Henry Brady (1995) proposed a civic voluntarism model of political participation. They argued that citizens may be inactive because they lack resources, such as time, money and civic skills; because they lack psychological involvement in politics such as interest in politics and a sense of political efficacy; or because they are not effectively linked to the networks that help to mobilize them for political action. They emphasized that associations provide these political sills, resources and opportunities that facilitate political participation.

In his comprehensive study of third-wave democracies, Larry Diamond (1999, 242) noted the socializing role of associations in democratic consolidation. He pointed out that civil society promotes democratic consolidation by "inculcating not only the participatory habits, interests, and skills of democratic citizenship but also the deeper values of a democratic political culture, such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and a respect for opposing viewpoints."

In an attempt to synthesize prior theory and research on the role of associations in advancing democracy, Mark Warren (2001) distinguished three potential

democratic effects of associations - developmental, public sphere and institutional. He held that associations may have developmental effects on individuals by cultivating democratic values and norms among members or public sphere effects by serving to form public opinion and collective judgments, or institutional effects by making public decisions and implementing them.

In this paper we primarily focus on the socializing, developmental effects of associations because those benefits are what neo-Tocquevillian scholars envision. The developmental effects emphasize associations as a school of democracy, from which the predispositions and capacities of democratic citizenship are learned (van Deth, Maraffi, Newton and Whiteley 1999). Participation in association is supposed to "foster norms of reciprocity, citizenship and social trust and provide networks of social relations that can be mobilized to pursue shared goals for common good" (Edwards, Foley and Diani 2001, 17).

So, we begin by hypothesizing that social participation is likely to develop democratic citizenship. In the analysis we distinguish three qualities of democratic citizenship: civic virtues, democratic values and norms, and political activism. To the extent that associational membership is linked to these qualities of democratic citizenship, associations can be considered as a school of democracy. Does the thesis of association-as-school of democracy apply across Asia? Are members more likely than nonmembers to display those qualities of democratic citizenship across Asia? In what ways are associations likely to advance democracy in this region?

Associational Membership

In this section we examine the level of associational membership across Asia by analyzing individual participation in social groups. It is said that there is a flowering

of social groups across Asia in the wake of democratization during the last two decades (Alagappa 2004). Yet, the proliferation of social groups does not necessarily indicate high levels of associational membership among ordinary citizens. It is not yet certain whether these social groups maintain significant memberships unless the level of individual participation is directly ascertained.

To measure the level of associational membership the 2005-6 AB survey asked respondents whether they were members of any organizations or formal groups. Our respondents were not given any list of social groups. They were simply asked to name up to three of the most important social groups to which they belonged. In order to measure the level of associational membership other well-known surveys such as the World Values Survey ask respondents to indicate whether they are members of each category of social groups presented before them. Since our measure limits the maximum number of memberships to three and it is more difficult for respondents to name social groups unless they are active, the level of associational membership reported by the AB survey is likely to be lower than that reported by the World Values Survey.

Table 1 shows the percentage of the public in each nation that belonged to none, one, and two and more social groups. Mongolia has the highest level of associational membership among the Asian nations surveyed. One-third (33%) reported at least one membership. Perhaps this may reflect the legacy of state-mobilized group activity under the Communist rule for more than a half century. In the level of associational membership, Mongolia is followed by Indonesia (31%), Taiwan (29%), the Philippines (25%), Thailand (24%) and South Korea (24%). As expected, at the end of the range is Singapore where only one-tenth (10%) reported at least one membership. Even when associations serve a training ground for democratic norms and skills, only a

minority of ordinary citizens in each nation of Asia would have opportunities to learn from them.

The table also shows that only a small minority reported multiple memberships across Asia. About one in ten in South Korea (11%), Indonesia (11%), Taiwan (10%), and Mongolia (9%) and one in twenty in the Philippines (5%) and Thailand (5%) reported multiple memberships. Again, Singapore is at the end of the range. Only a few (2%) belonged to two and more social groups. Noteworthy is that single joiners outnumbered multiple joiners across most Asian nations. The only deviation from this pattern is South Korea, where multiple joiners are as numerous as single joiners.

(Table 1 about here)

It is evident that Asian nations are hardly nations of joiners. In South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand where civil society action was prominent in their democratic transitions, a large majority of ordinary citizens stayed away from civil society groups. The low level of social engagement is also found in Taiwan and Indonesia where civil society groups played a critical role in mobilizing civic resistance to authoritarian rule. In each of these nations more than two-thirds of ordinary citizens belonged to no social groups. In Singapore where freedom of association is restricted, an absolute majority (90%) reported no membership at all. Despite an alleged flowering of civil society groups across Asia, there is a widespread absence of individual participation in these groups. Ordinary peoples across Asia remain socially disconnected, even though civil society groups appear to multiply rapidly in the wake of

democratization.[1]

Another notable feature of the table is that national levels of associational membership do not reflect levels of democratic or economic development, as Dalton (2006) also found in an analysis of Asian nations. For instance, the level of associational membership is lower in South Korea and Taiwan than in Mongolia and Indonesia even though the former are more democratic and affluent than the latter. This finding suggests that institutional democratization or economic development may not necessarily lead to a vibrant civil society across Asia.

Perhaps more important than the level of associational membership is the types of social groups to which ordinary citizens belonged (Stolle 2003; Maloney and Rossteutscher 2007). What sorts of social groups are most and least popular among Asian peoples? Table 2 shows the distribution of their membership across 19 different categories of social groups, including residential associations, labor unions, political parties, religious groups, and sports and leisure clubs. The most popular types of social groups vary across the nations of Asia. Among the minority of South Korean joiners, a plurality (45%) belonged to alumni associations, which are of bonding type. In Mongolia an overwhelming majority (75%) belonged to political parties perhaps because of the legacy of the Communist rule for a long period of time. If political groups are most likely to socialize members to political skills and norms, joiners in Mongolia would be more politically engaged than joiners in other democratic Asian nations. In Indonesia where Islam is the popular force, more than half (51%) belonged

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[1] There are cross-national differences in perceived levels of freedom of association, which are likely to influence actual individual participation in civil society groups. The 2005-6 AB survey shows that the percentage of those who agree that people can join any organization they like without fear was 64 percent for South Korea, 77 percent for Taiwan, 79 percent for Mongolia, 65 percent for the Philippines, 69 percent for Thailand, 90 percent for Indonesia and 46 percent for Singapore.

to religious groups. Notable is that a large minority (39%) belonged to residential and community associations, reflecting the customs of community mutual assistance and discussion (Pye 2001). In Thailand more than half (58%) belonged to residential and community associations, and more than a third (36%) farmers unions or agricultural associations. In Taiwan about a quarter each belonged to either sports and recreational groups (27%), or religious groups (25%). In the Philippines about a quarter each belonged to either religious groups (29%), or charities (25%). Among a few Singaporean joiners one third (36%) belonged to religious groups while a quarter (24%) residential and community associations.

(Table 2 about here)

Overall, the most popular types of social groups across many nations of Asia appear to be the ones built out of group identities. They tend to emphasize primordial identities rather than economic interests. These identity-based groups are likely to encourage in-group solidarity or the 'dark side' of social capital (Newton 1999; Putnam 2000; Warren 2001). Especially notable is that the large majority of South Korean joiners tend to unite with those from the same school or the same province or the same clan for sharing their common identities.

Another notable feature of the table is that economic interest groups such as labor unions, professional organizations, business associations, which are a common civil society activity in Western democracies, are the least popular types across Asia. It is also noteworthy that the extent of membership in public interest groups such as environmental, human rights, and other nongovernmental civic groups which represent civil society groups, is largely negligible. This indicates that prominent civil society groups across Asia apparently failed to maintain significant memberships. Moreover,

the finding suggests that the popular types of social groups across Asia tend to be bonding rather than bridging networks. Participation in these types of social groups is not likely to foster civic norms and democratic values emphasized by the civil society argument.

Who belongs to social groups? Do Asians of "all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions" join social groups? Does associational membership reflect social inequalities of gender, age, education, and class? Table 3 shows the distribution of associational membership by standard demographic categories of the population in each Asian nation. In South Korea, associational membership is more frequent among men and people aged 35 to 64, an economically active segment of the population. In Taiwan, associational membership is more frequent among people aged 55 to 64. In Mongolia, men are more likely than women to join social groups. In the Philippines, associational membership is more frequent among people aged 65 and over, and highest income people. In Indonesia associational membership is more frequent among the most educated. In Singapore, there is no notable demographic difference in associational membership. In Thailand, associational membership is more frequent among people aged 55 to 64. Contrary to the general pattern found in other Asian nations, associational membership in Thailand is more frequent among the least educated and lowest income people.

(Table 3 about here)

Notable is that social participation is not for men only in many Asian nations. The exceptions are South Korea and Mongolia, where women are more likely than men to stay away from social groups. In South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand there is a slight curvilinear relationship between age and membership, with a peak among people aged

45 to 64, the most economically active segment. Yet, in the Philippines the relationship is apparently linear. Another notable feature of the table is that associational membership does not increase with socioeconomic status in every Asian nation. In South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia people who are better educated or more affluent are most likely to join social groups. In Thailand, however, people who are less educated or less affluent are most likely to join social groups. In other nations of Asia such as Taiwan and Singapore the distribution of membership does not reflect social inequalities of education and income. Overall, the findings suggest that expanding education and increasing affluence may not necessarily bring about a vibrant civil society across Asia.

The Effects of Associational Membership

In this section we examine the potential democratic effects of associations across Asia. As noted earlier, neo-Tocquevillian scholars consider associations as a training ground for democracy. They hold that associations teach members trust, reciprocity, and citizenship norms as well as social and political skills for collective action. Does this neo-Tocquevillean argument apply across Asia? To answer this question, we examine the developmental effects of associational membership across Asia.[2]

Trust, reciprocity, and citizenship norms

The first alleged benefits of associational membership are the development of civic virtues. Associations supposedly cultivate trust and norms of reciprocity among

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[2] Our measure of associational membership indicates whether respondents belong to any social group or not. Hence, it has two values, 0 (no membership) and 1 (at least one membership). We used this measure because what could matter for civil society is belonging to at least one social group and, more importantly, the number of cases with multiple memberships is limited across the Asian nations surveyed. Yet, it should be noted that a measure indicating the number of memberships may be useful to ascertain cross-cutting pressures or identities.

their members. Especially, scholars of social capital consider associations as a prime

source of social trust (Putnam 2000; Hooghe and Stolle 2003). In order to examine the

role of associations in cultivating civic virtues, we correlate associational membership

to social trust, reciprocity and citizenship norms.

Table 4 first presents the correlation between associational membership and

social trust.[3] Evidently, the relationship between associational membership and social

trust varies across Asian nations. There is a positive, albeit weak, correlation in three

consolidated Asian democracies such as South Korea (0.98), Taiwan (0.90) and

Mongolia (0.61). The relationship is stronger in Thailand where a new democracy

collapsed recently by a military coup (0.133). In contrast, there is no correlation in the

Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore. Notable is that in the latter two nations the

correlation is negative, although insignificant. This finding evidently suggests that the

social capital argument does not uniformly apply across Asia. Being members instead of

nonmembers does not necessarily foster trust in fellow citizens in some Asian nations.

The table also shows that there is no significant relationship between

associational membership and reciprocity[4] across Asian nations. The only exception is

Indonesia, where the correlation is positive, albeit weak (0.049). Across most Asian

nations members are not more likely than nonmembers to believe in the norm of

reciprocity. This finding also suggests that the social capital argument does not apply

across Asia. Notable is that members and nonmembers alike tend to believe in the

Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The norm of

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[3] Social trust is measured by a single question which has been repeated in numerous surveys around the world: "Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be careful in dealing with people?" It has two values, 0 (you must be careful) and 1 (most people can be trusted).
[4] The norm of reciprocity is measured by a single agree-disagree format question: "By helping people in trouble today, someone else will help me when I am in trouble someday." Its values ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree).

reciprocity is broadly supported across Asian nations despite a wide difference in the level of democratic and economic development.

The table also presents the correlation between associational membership and citizenship norms.[5] There is a positive correlation in the Philippines (0.129) and Thailand (0.067). In both nations members are more likely than nonmembers to value law-abiding and engaged citizenship. In contrast, there is no correlation in democratic nations like South Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, Indonesia and even non-democratic Singapore. In these nations participation in social groups apparently does not encourage citizenship norms.

(Table 4 about here)

In short, the potential role of associations in socializing members into civic virtues varies across Asian nations. In Thailand associations appear to foster trust and citizenship norms, not reciprocity. In South Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia, associations appear to foster trust, not reciprocity and citizenship norms. In Indonesia associations tend to cultivate reciprocity, not trust and citizenship norms. In the Philippines associations tend to inculcate citizenship norms, not trust and reciprocity. In Singapore associations fail to foster any civic virtues.

Overall, it can be said that the socializing role of associations for civic virtues is quite limited across Asian nations. Associational membership is linked to trust in people across some Asian nations.[6] This piece of evidence may be taken to support the

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[5] The norms of citizenship are measured by two agree-disagree format questions: "(1) A citizen who does not actively participate in the affairs of his local and national community is not performing his duties;" and "(2) Citizens should always obey laws and regulations, even if they disagree with them." Affirmative responses to both questions are considered together to construct a 3-point index ranging from 0 (no support) to 2 (full support).

[6] It should be noted, however, that the level of associational membership is unrelated to the level of social trust at the national level, implying that nations with more joining citizens are not necessarily the nations with more trusting citizens.

view that the experiences of working with others in social groups tend to create social

capital. However, it should also be noted that associational membership is unrelated to

another "touchstone" of social capital, the norm of reciprocity across most Asian nations.

Democratic values and norms

The second alleged role of associations is a source of support for democracy.

In order to examine this socializing role of associations, we correlate associational

membership to key democratic values and norms such as attachment to democracy,

detachment from authoritarian rule, support for political institutional pluralism and the

rule of law.

Table 5 presents the results. First, there is no correlation between associational

membership and attachment to democracy[7] across most nations of Asia. Members are

not more likely than nonmembers to display attachment to democracy. The only

deviation from this pattern is the Philippines where the correlation is positive, albeit

weak (0.074). In this fragile democracy associations appear to socialize members into

the legitimacy of democracy. Notable is that members and nonmembers alike are likely

to be supportive of democracy across Asian nations.

Second, we correlate associational membership to detachment from

authoritarian rule[8] because attachment to democracy does not necessarily indicate

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[7] The level of attachment to democracy is measured by the following two questions: (1) "Which of the following statements comes to closest to your own opinion? Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government; under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one; for people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime"; (2) "Which of the following statements comes to your own view? Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society; democracy cannot solve our society's problems." Pro-democratic responses to both questions are combined to construct a 3-point index ranging from 0 (no attachment) to 2 (full attachment).
[8] The level of detachment from authoritarian rule is measured by the following two agree-disagree format questions: (1) "We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things"; (2) "The army (military) should come in to govern the country." Antiauthoritarian responses to both questions are combined to construct a 3-point index ranging from 0 (no detachment) to 2 (full detachment).

rejection of authoritarian alternatives. There is no correlation between them in both democratic and non-democratic nations of Asia. No matter where they live in Asia, members and nonmembers alike reject authoritarian alternatives such as civilian and military dictatorships. Noteworthy is that social disengagement does not encourage less detachment from authoritarian rule.

Third, the relationship between associational membership and support for institutional pluralism[9] does not hold consistently across Asia. Even in democratic nations the correlation varies. For instance, there is no correlation in South Korea and Taiwan. In contrast, there is a positive correlation in Mongolia (0.078) and Indonesia (0.129). Notable is that associational membership is most strongly linked to support for institutional pluralism in Indonesia. In the Philippines and Thailand where democratic political institutions faltered or collapsed, associational membership is negatively linked to support for institutional pluralism. In both nations members are less likely than nonmembers to be supportive of a system of institutional checks and balances, implying that engaged citizens are more critical of political stalemate caused by excessive institutional competition than disengaged citizens.

Lastly, the relationship between associational membership and the rule of law[10] does not hold across most nations of Asia. Members and nonmembers alike are likely to support the virtue of law-abidingness by government and political leaders. The

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[9] The level of support for political institutional pluralism is measured by the following two agree-disagree format questions: (1) "When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch"; (2) "If the government is constantly checked by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things." Negative responses to both questions are combined to construct a 3-point index ranging from 0 (no support) to 2 (full support).

[10] The level of support for the rule of law is measured by the following two agree-disagree format questions: (1) "When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation"; (2) "The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if they have to ignore the established procedure." Negative responses to both questions are combined to construct a 3-point index ranging from 0 (no support) to 2 (full support).

exception to this pattern is South Korea, where there is a positive, albeit weak correlation (0.059). South Korean joiners are more likely to value the rule of law than non-joiners.

(Table 5 about here)

In short, the effects of associational membership on democratic values and norms vary cross-nationally. Associational membership has no notable effects in democratic Taiwan and non-democratic Singapore. In both nations being members instead of nonmembers is not likely to encourage attachment to democracy, detachment from authoritarian rule, and support for institutional pluralism and the rule of law. In electoral democracies of South Korea and Mongolia associational membership has limited positive effects on some specific democratic norms such as institutional pluralism or the rule of law. In the Philippines where democracy faltered, associational membership has inconsistent effects on democratic values and norms. Associational membership is positively linked to diffused support for democracy while negatively linked to specific support for institutional pluralism. In Thailand where a new democracy collapsed associational membership is negatively linked to support for institutional pluralism.

Overall, we can find little evidence across Asia indicating associational membership is a reliable source of democratic values and norms. Associational experiences hardly encourage the learning of democracy and pluralism across Asia. The effects of associational membership on democratic values and norms, if any, are largely negligible. All the findings suggest that associations failed to serve a training ground for democratic values and norms across Asia.

Political activism

The third potential effects of associations are political involvement and participation. Associations supposedly provide political skills, resources and opportunities that facilitate political involvement and participation. In order to examine the role of associations in stimulating political activism, we correlate associational membership to some dimensions of political activism such as political efficacy, political interest, and four modes of political participation – voting, campaign activity, contact activity and protest activity.

Table 6 presents the results. First, the relationship between associational membership and political efficacy[11] does not hold consistently across Asia. In four democratic nations such as South Korea (0.078), Taiwan (0.050), Mongolia (0.101), and Indonesia (0.069), associational membership is linked to political efficacy, which is considered as a key psychological resource for political action. In contrast, associational membership is unrelated to political efficacy in the Philippines and two non-democratic nations such as Singapore and Thailand. In these nations members are not more likely than nonmembers to feel politically competent.

Second, there is a positive correlation between associational membership and political interest[12] across Asia, meaning that members are more likely than nonmembers to be interested in politics and to follow news on government and politics. Participation in social groups provides access to information about political events, which encourages political interest. Noteworthy is that associational membership is

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[11] The level of political efficacy is measured by the following two agree-disagree format questions: (1) "I think I have the ability to participate in politics"; and (2) "Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on." Responses to both questions are considered together to construct a 3-point index of political efficacy ranging from 0 (low efficacy) to 2 (high efficacy).

[12] The level of political interest is measured by the following two questions: (1) "How interested would you say you are in politics"; and (2) "How often do you follow news about politics and government?" Responses to both questions are considered together to construct a 3-point index of political involvement ranging from 0 (low involvement) to 2 (high involvement).

most strongly linked to political interest in Singapore (0.189). In this partly free but non-democratic nation, civil society groups appear to play a notable role in stimulating political interest.

Third, the relationship between associational membership and voting[13] does not hold consistently across Asia. In three electoral democracies such as South Korea (0.095), Taiwan (0.115), and Mongolia (0.088) associational membership is linked to voting. Even in Thailand (0.094) where a new democracy collapsed, associational membership is related to voting. However, in Indonesia and the Philippines associational membership is unrelated to voting. Notable is that in Singapore associational membership is negatively linked to voting (-0.089), which may be seen as a meaningless political act. This finding suggests that the effects of association on voting vary depending on the nature of elections or the type of regime.

Fourth, associational membership is strongly linked to campaign activity,[14] a more active form of conventional participation, across Asia. Members are more likely than nonmembers to attend campaign rallies and to persuade others how to vote. Notable is that the correlation is stronger in democratic nations than non-democratic nations – South Korea (0.190), Taiwan (0.141), Mongolia (0.215), Indonesia (0.131), and the Philippines (0.119) as compared to Singapore (0.089) and Thailand (0.052). Perhaps since a large majority of Mongolian joiners reported their memberships in political parties, the correlation turns out to be the strongest there.

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[13] Voting is measured by a single question which was asked respondents to indicate whether they voted in the most recent national election. It has two values 0 (did not vote) and 1 (voted).

[14] The level of campaign activity is measured by the following two questions. One asked respondents to indicate whether they attended a campaign meeting or rally in the last national election. The other asked respondents to indicate whether they tried to persuade others to vote for a certain candidate or party in the last election. Affirmative responses to both questions are counted to construct a 3-point index of campaign activity ranging from 0 to 2.

Fifth, associational membership is also strongly linked to contact activity[15] as in South Korea (0.179), Taiwan (0.083), Mongolia (0.238), Indonesia (0.254), the Philippines (0.199) and Singapore (0.181). The only exception to this pattern is Thailand, where the relationship is insignificant. Associational membership appears to encourage contacting government officials, representatives of political parties, and activists of non-governmental organizations. Even in Singapore where political rights and civil liberties are restricted, associational membership encourages kinds of political action requiring more skills and resources. The strong correlation in Indonesia and the Philippines may partially reflect the working of patron-client networks (Pye 2001).

Finally, associational membership is linked to protest activity[16] across most nations of Asia – South Korea (0.087), Taiwan (0.071), Mongolia (0.121), Indonesia (0.109), the Philippines (0.087), and Singapore (0.120). Notable is that the correlation is stronger in non-democratic Singapore than most democratic nations. The only exception to this pattern is Thailand, where associational membership is unrelated to protest activity. Another notable feature of the table is that even though protest is known as one of the key civil society activities, participation in social groups is more strongly linked to conventional political action like campaign or contact activity than unconventional political action like protest activity across democratic nations of Asia.

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[15] The level of contact activity is measured by the following four questions: "In the past three years, have you never, once, or more than once done the following because of personal, family, or neighborhood problems, or problems with government officials and policies?; (1) Contacted government officials; (2) Contacted elected officials or legislative representatives at any level; (3) Contacted officials of political parties or other political organizations; and (4) Contacted representative of non-governmental/civil society organizations." Affirmative responses to four questions are counted to construct a 5-point index of contact activity ranging from 0 (none) to 4 (all).

[16] The level of protest activity is measured by the following three questions: "Have you, personally, never, once or more than once done any of these things during the pass three years?; (1) Refused to pay taxes or fees to the government; (2) Got together with others to raise an issue or sign a petition; (3) Attended a demonstration or protest march." Affirmative responses to these questions are counted to construct 4 point index of protest activity ranging from 0 (none) to 3 (all).

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(Table 6 about here)

In our Asian nations the effects of associational membership on the behavioral dimension of democratic citizenship are largely positive and significant. In consolidated new democracies like South Korea, Taiwan and Mongolia, associational membership has significant effects on political efficacy, political interest, and all forms of political action. In Indonesia associational membership has significant effects on political efficacy, political interest and all forms of political participation except voting. In the Philippines associational membership is linked to political interest and three forms of political participation except voting. In Thailand associational membership is related to political interest, voting and campaign activity. Even in a restrictive political environment like Singapore associational membership is linked to most dimensions of political activism except political efficacy. These findings indicate that participation in civil society groups tends to encourage political engagement across Asia.

Experiences of belonging and acting together seem to cultivate skills and resources for political participation. Social engagement generally tends to stimulate political engagement across Asia. The findings suggest that associations are a training ground that provides competence, information, and skills that encourage political activism. Associational membership is a strong correlate of political engagement across Asian democracies. Even in non-democracies, associational membership simply increases the levels of political activism.

Summary and Conclusion

For the last decade, there has been a growing scholarly interest in civil society as a key factor contributing to the quality and consolidation of democracy. Especially, neo-Tocquevillian scholars drawing on the insights of Alexis Tocqueville emphasize the

importance of associations as a school or training ground for democracy. They consider civil society groups to foster "habits of hearts" associated with democratic citizenship. Does the Tocquevillian thesis apply across Asia, where traditions of pluralism and autonomy remain weak? Do Asian peoples have inclination to associate, unite or combine with their fellow citizens for pursuing their common desires or collective interests? Do associations serve as a training ground for democratic citizenship across Asia? To answer these questions, we examined the level and nature of associational membership and its effects on civic virtues, democratic values and norms, and political activism by using new empirical evidence from the 2005-6 AB survey.

First, we find that the level of associational membership varies cross-nationally. It tends to be higher in democratic than non-democratic nations. Nonetheless, the great majority of the public in each nation of Asia still remain socially disengaged even though the number of civil society groups has steadily grown in the wake of democratization during the last two decades. Notable is that the national levels of associational membership do not reflect the levels of economic or political development. In view of the level of associational membership, each Asian nation has yet to develop a vibrant civil society.

Second, we also find that the types of social groups to which Asians belong are diverse. Yet, notable is that economic interest groups such as labor unions, professional associations and business associations are not the type of social groups to which Asians frequently belong. The most popular type of social groups across Asia tends to be of boding type emphasizing religious, ideological or primordial identities.

Third, it is found that the distribution of associational membership does not necessarily reflect social inequalities of class, education, age and gender. In every nation

of Asia associational membership does not necessarily increase with socioeconomic status. Yet, in some nations of Asia education and money appear to encourage social engagement.

Fourth, the impact of associational membership on civic virtues appears to be limited. As scholars of social capital maintain, associational membership is linked to social trust in some, not all, Asian nations. Furthermore, associational membership is unrelated to reciprocity or citizenship norms in most Asian nations. Noteworthy is that the national levels of group membership and social trust are not related.

Fifth, we find that associational membership does not foster democratic values and norms across most Asian nations, unlike many Latin American nations (Booth and Richard 1996). Engaged citizens are not more likely than disengaged citizens to be supportive of democratic institutions. Russell Dalton (2006) similarly found that the relationship between membership and support for democracy is negligible or even weak in the opposite direction across Asia. To the extent that social disengagement does not undermine support for democracy, low levels of associational membership may not necessarily be a stumbling block to democratic consolidation across this region.

Finally, it is found that associational membership is related to dimensions of political activism in democratic and non-democratic nations alike. Associational membership appears to stimulate political interest and nurture political efficacy even in non-democratic nations. Furthermore, it is also found that associational membership encourages political participation like campaign, contact and protest activity across most Asian nations. To the extent that associational membership promotes political participation, social inequalities of associational membership may reflect unequal voices

in politics of women, the poor or the uneducated across some nations of Asia.

In summary, citizen participation in civil society groups is largely limited across Asia. Social engagement does not encourage the learning of civic virtues, and democratic values and norms, but provide political skills and information to facilitate political activism. If associations have any democratic effects, they would do so not by fostering civic virtues, and democratic values and norms, but by providing participatory resources and skills. If associations contribute to democratic consolidation across Asia, it would do so by stimulating citizen activism rather than producing virtuous citizens. If associations are a training ground for democracy, it would be so not by cultivating democratic values and norms but by encouraging political participation.

The analysis evidently suggests that there may be no essential connection between the density of associations and democratic consolidation across most Asian nations, despite the fact that civil society groups played a prominent role in their democratic transitions. A number of associations may not necessarily strengthen democracy because not every association is supposed to cultivate civic capacities and predisposition essential to democracy (Bell 1998; Warren 2001). The democratic effects of associational membership appear to vary depending on the nature and content of associational experiences.

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Table 1 Level of Associational Membership

Number of membership	S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
None	75.8	70.3	66.2	68.8	73.5	90.1	75.7
One	12.8	19.6	23.2	19.3	20.3	8.1	19.1
Two and more	10.7	9.8	9.3	11.4	5.0	1.8	4.9
(N)	(1,212)	(1,587)	(1,211)	(1,598)	(1,200)	(1,012)	(1,546)

Table 2 Type of Associations

	S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Political parties	5.3	5.6	74.6	7.1	2.0	3.0	1.1
Residential and community associations	9.1	12.0	2.0	38.9	16.5	24.0	57.8
Religious groups	23.9	25.1	2.3	51.1	29.0	36.0	3.2
Sports/recreational clubs	17.5	27.3	2.3	8.1	1.0	11.0	2.4
Culture organizations	2.1	14.4	1.3	2.6	1.3	4.0	1.1
Charities	1.8	15.7	10.9	1.2	25.4	6.0	1.3
Public interests groups	9.1	8.4	5.1	2.2	0.3	4.0	1.9
Labor unions	2.1	1.9	11.5	1.8	1.7	9.0	0.0
Farmers unions or agricultural associations	2.1	4.3	3.6	10.8	5.0	1.0	36.3
Professional organizations	2.5	10.3	4.1	4.5	3.6	3.0	3.0
Business associations	1.1	2.4	1.0	0.4	3.3	1.0	0.3
Parent-Teacher associations	3.9	2.4	2.5	1.0	2.3	4.0	1.9
Producer cooperatives	0.4	0.9	2.3	2.2	2.6	0.0	0.0
Consumer cooperatives	0.4	0.0	0.5	1.4	5.3	0.0	0.0
Alumni associations	44.6	1.7	0.3	1.6	1.0	10.0	2.4
Candidate support organizations	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.0	0.5
Other occupational organizations	6.7	1.1	4.8	8.4	4.0	2.0	8.1
Other volunteer organizations	8.4	8.6	6.9	11.0	16.5	6.0	7.5
Others (Hometown or clan associations)	23.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(N)	(285)	(466)	(393)	(491)	(303)	(100)	(372)

Entries are percentages of respondents indicating membership in each type of social groups. Since up to three separate responses were coded, percentages cannot be directly summed.

Table 3 Demographic Differences in Associational Membership

		S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Gender	Female	17.4	28.9	29.7	29.0	23.6	9.4	22.9
	Male	30.1	30.0	37.3	32.7	27.5	10.3	25.5
Age	24 & under**	12.1	12.8	-*	24.4	16.1	8.8	6.9
	25-34	17.4	14.4	-*	26.4	19.4	10.3	17.5
	35-44	27.9	30.5	-*	35.1	27.0	8.1	28.1
	45-54	30.9	36.2	-*	34.5	27.3	12.0	30.5
	55-64	29.5	43.1	-*	30.5	28.1	10.7	35.6
	65 & over	14.1	38.8	-*	35.9	40.5	8.7	24.2
Education	0-6	15.2	35.7	32.5	27.6	21.1	6.1	31.5
	7-9	24.2	29.6	30.7	34.8	27.5	12.8	17.8
	10-12	25.2	27.5	27.4	33.7	24.5	9.2	14.6
	13 & more	24.4	27.8	39.9	41.8	32.2	12.8	11.6
Income	Lowest	18.6	29.2	-*	20.6	23.0	8.8	36.3
	Low	21.5	28.2	-*	30.4	26.5	10.8	26.1
	Middle	28.0	32.1	-*	36.2	37.1	9.5	13.1
	High	25.0	29.7	-*	28.7	33.3	17.8	17.2
	Highest	30.6	29.5	-*	37.5	40.0	7.5	9.1

Entries are percentages of respondents indicating membership in social groups. * Not available for Mongolia.
** 17-24 for Indonesia; 18-24 for the Philippines and Thailand; 19-24 for South Korea; 21-24 for Taiwan and Singapore.

Table 4 Correlation between Associational Membership and Civic Virtues

	S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Social trust	.098**	.090**	.061*	-.013	.026	-.042	.133**
Reciprocity	.006	.045	-.020	.049*	.026	.018	.007
Citizenship norms	.017	.023	.034	.025	.129**	.018	.067**

Entries are Tau-b. ** Significant at the .01 level. * Significant at the .05 level

Table 5 Correlation between Associational Membership and Democratic Values and Norms

	S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Attachment to democracy	-.026	.034	.049	.047	.074**	.000	.037
Detachment from authoritarianism	-.040	.034	.020	-.039	.024	.028	.049
Institutional pluralism	-.025	.007	.078**	.129**	-.061*	-.035	-.081**
Rule of law	.059*	-.003	.006	.046	-.003	.007	-.011

Entries are Tau-b. ** Significant at the .01 level. * Significant at the .05 level

Table 6 Correlation between Associational Membership and Political Activism

	S. Korea	Taiwan	Mongolia	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
Political efficacy	.078**	.050*	.101**	.069**	.000	.019	.042
Political interest	.150**	.122**	.140**	.093**	.086**	.189**	.111**
Voting	.095**	.115**	.088**	.038	.049	-.089**	.094**
Campaign activity	.190**	.141**	.215**	.131**	.119**	.089**	.052*
Contact activity	.179**	.083**	.238**	.254**	.199**	.181**	.037
Protest activity	.087**	.071**	.121**	.109**	.087**	.120**	.010

Entries are Tau-b. ** Significant at the .01 level. * Significant at the .05 level.

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

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

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