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A Comparative Survey of

DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

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How Citizens Evaluate Taiwan's New Democracy



Yu-tzung Chang

Yun-Han Chu

Fu Hu

National Taiwan University

Huo-yan Shyu

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Asian Barometer

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Contact Information

Asian Barometer Project Office

Department of Political Science

National Taiwan University

21 Hsu-Chow Road, Taipei, Taiwan 100

Tel: 886 2-2357 0427

Fax: 886-2-2357 0420

E-mail: asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw

Website: www.asianbarometer.org

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Yu-Tzung Chang

Yun-han Chu

Fu Hu

Huo-yan Shyu

I. Introduction

The data we present here derives from the most serious and revealing effort to date to compare and comprehend levels of support for democracy and related values and attitudes in Taiwan and to understand the sources of those orientations. This paper also represents a preliminary effort to compare citizens' orientations toward democracy in Taiwan with those in other East Asian political systems and, for that matter, other third-wave democracies around the world. The picture we arrive at is a mixed one. We did not believe at the beginning of our research that democracy is in imminent danger in Taiwan, and we find little in the survey data to shake that confidence. On the other hand, by some measures, support for democracy in Taiwan lags well-behind the levels found in other emerging and established democracies. As a matter fact, citizens in Taiwan register the lowest level of support for democracy among all new East Asian democracies. One of the major reasons why the growth in democratic legitimacy has been slow and uneven in Taiwan is that the old regime enjoyed a track record of delivering social and economic performance and was never really discredited. Indeed, nostalgia about the rule under Chiang Ching-kuo, the last strong man, abounds and is alive and well. We found a large number of disaffected citizens who do not approve of the way democracy works in their country today and view the transition from a one-party authoritarian regime to a competitive democratic system more as an incremental political change rather than a quantum leap. While they do not think the new democracy has performed better than the old regime on some key aspects of governance, in particular the regime's capacity to deliver social order, social equity, clean politics, and economic development, they do appreciate the marked improvement in political freedom and opportunities for citizen participation. As in many other emerging democracies, one can see evidence of disillusionment with certain aspects of democratic practice. A majority of Taiwan citizens have grown to distrust not just their democratic leaders but also democratic institutions. They see rampant corruption within government at both the national and local levels. Also, a substantial percentage of Taiwan's public exhibit a significant residue of authoritarian or non-democratic orientations, as they are open to some alternatives to democratic arrangements. In a way, Taiwan's democracy is burdened with authoritarian nostalgia, generating unreasonably high expectations

about the performance of new democratic regime.

II. A Retrospective Appraisal of Taiwan's Democratization

In the summer of 2001, the year when we did this survey, Taiwan was suffering from its worst economic recession since the first oil crisis of 1972-73. Over the whole year, the economy contracted by 4.7 percent, the currency depreciated about 12 percent, and the stock market plummeted by more than 40 percent. The great expectations for the island's first real transfer of power after democratization have turned sour.

It is important to put the first two years of Chen Shui-bian's presidency into perspective. The March 18, 2000 election was only the second direct presidential election in the country's history. The first, in 1996, completed Taiwan's long decade of peaceful, incremental democratization. It also confirmed—for the first time in a truly democratic presidential election—the KMT's continuing domination of the political system. In 1996, the incumbent President Lee Teng-hui won decisively, capturing an absolute majority of the vote (54%) despite the presence of two breakaway challengers from the KMT, in addition to the candidate of the historic opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Prior to the year 2000, the DPP had never won more than a third of the vote in a national election. This led most observers to figure that the DPP had a ceiling of something like 35 percent on its potential vote in a presidential election, and that a DPP victory could only be possible if the KMT vote split and the other 65 percent of the vote were fairly evenly divided between two strong contenders. Such divisions have opened the way to traumatic upsets, most dramatically in the 1994 election for Mayor of Taipei. In its inability to achieve reconciliation with James Soong, the former Governor of Taiwan Province, and keep him within the party, the KMT dealt itself a severe blow.

Chen Shui-bian's victory in 2000 was a historical event by any measure. It put an end to the KMT's fifty-five years of continuous rule over the island. It foreclosed an epoch of one-party dominance and set forth a period of party dealignment and realignment. It deflated Lee Teng-hui's charisma and brought his era to an abrupt and calamitous end. It triggered a generational turnover of the elite stratum and pushed the baby boomers to the forefront of governing responsibility. Most significantly, it pushed the island's political system a major step forward toward the consolidation of democracy.¹

¹ For an extensive introduction to the concept of consolidation, see Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996): pp. 4-7.

From the perspective of democratic development, the transfer of power at the turn of the century was long overdue. Among the third-wave democracies, Taiwan's democratic transition was oftentimes cited as a unique case where a quasi-Leninist party not only survived an authoritarian breakdown but also capitalized on the crisis to its advantage.² From the late 1980s through the late 1990s, with the principle of popular accountability and open political contestation being steadily legitimized and institutionalized, the KMT kept its political dominance largely intact through an impressive streak of electoral successes.³ The born-again KMT built a winning majority, increasingly in much the same way as other dominant parties in advanced industrial democracies, on a rare combination of flexibility and rigidity and uniquely blended symbols and payoffs.⁴ Although a partisan grip on the state apparatus was no longer the most decisive element, it remained an important ingredient of the KMT's electoral fortunes.

The political legacy of persistent hegemony by a former quasi-Leninist party has long complicated the prospects for democratic consolidation in Taiwan. Certain residual authoritarian elements were preserved and transplanted into the new regime. Incumbant-initiated constitutional change carried too many elements of unilateral imposition as well as short-term partisan calculation to give the nedemocratic institutions a broadly-based legitimacy. The KMT's past, widespread practice of electoral mobilization was transmitted into national politics. It infested electoral politics with organized crime and money politics and caused a very uneven development of the competitive party system from the very beginning. This legacy was also responsible for the ubiquitous presence of partisan politics in all organized sectors of the society, which compressed the unconstrained sphere for public discourse, left too little space for an autonomous civil society, and made the creation of non-partisan mass media and a politically neutral civil service and military a daunting task. As a result, Taiwan's new democracy has suffered from many lingering deficiencies and newly-developed weaknesses. None of them were deemed tractable as long as the KMT remained in power.

² The old KMT resembled Leninist regimes as far as the symbiosis between the party and the state and the way the party-state organized and penetrated the society are concerned. For the quasi-Leninist features of the KMT, see Tun-jen Cheng. "Democratizing the Quasi-leninist Regime in Taiwan." *World Politics*. 42 (July 1989): 471-499. However, it is also important to point out that on many important scores the KMT regime was quite different from the Leninist regimes of former Soviet bloc. Unlike the Communist regime, the KMT was long associated with the West; it had ample experience with private property rights, markets and the rule of law, and it enjoyed the support of a distinctive development coalition. For a full treatment of the Leninist legacy in the Eastern European context, see Beverley Crawford and Arend Lijphart eds. *Liberalization and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions*. International and Area Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1996.

³ Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, "Building Democracy in Taiwan," in David Shambaugh ed. *Contemporary Taiwan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998

⁴ Yun-han Chu, "A Born-Again Dominant Party? The Transformation of the Kuomintang and Taiwan's Regime Transition," in Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins eds. *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Domination and Democracy*. (Capetown: Tafelberg Publishers 1999).

Therefore, despite all the progress that was accomplished on his watch, toward the end of Lee Teng-hui's political tenure, Taiwan's new political system still faced a series of daunting challenges as the new democracy slogged along the road toward consolidation. The first issue was the political neutrality of the military and security apparatus. This privileged branch of the state had long been a political instrument of the ruling party and was prominently featured in the KMT's formal power structure. Another problematic legacy of the undisrupted dominance of a hegemonic party has been uneven development of the competitive party system. The inherited prevailing structural as well as institutional constraints had limited the opposition from developing into a viable alternative to the KMT at the national level. The KMT's undisrupted hegemonic presence also aggravated the epidemic problem of so-called "money politics" and "Mafia politics" and their troubling implications for the legitimacy of Taiwan's new democracy. With the opening of an electoral avenue, structured corruption was quickly transmitted into national representative bodies. This trend was aggravated also by the speedy indigenization of the KMT party's power structure. The old institutional insulation that protected the party's central leadership from the infiltration of social forces via interpersonal connections and lineage networks melted down. The issue of national identity remained the most unsettling factor for Taiwan's democratic consolidation because this issue, much like ethnic conflict, revolves around an exclusive concept of legitimacy and symbols of worth. Internally, the crisis evolved into a clash between two irreconcilable emotional claims about Taiwan's statehood and the national identity of the people of Taiwan. Externally, much mirroring Taiwan's own internal conflict, a tug-of-war across the Taiwan Straits between two competing nation-building processes dragged on as the PRC attempted to impose its vision of nation-building, i.e. the one-country two-system model, on Taiwan and vowed to use military means if necessary to stop the movement toward independence. While the internal conflict over national identity has died down considerably, as Lee Teng-hui has been quite successful in harnessing the DPP's independence zeal with a call for the formation of "a sense of shared-destiny among the twenty-one million people" and a gradual backing-away from the so-called One-China principle, Taiwan's democratization has, however, increased the possibility of external intervention. At the same time, the threat of external intervention has created an additional burden on the new democracy. The perceived need to contain the political infiltration of the PRC has visibly clashed with the respect for political pluralism, minority rights, and due process.

Last but not least, an important challenge that Taiwan's new democracy faces is the underdevelopment of constitutionalism. When the presidential campaign started to pick up steam in the fall of 1999, the country was actually in the middle of a major constitutional crisis, which had the potential to shroud the very meaning and significance of the election in doubt. On September 4, 1999, the KMT-dominated National Assembly, the representative body responsible

for constitutional amendment, passed a series of hotly contested constitutional changes to extend their own terms by more than two years, and add five months to the current legislative term.⁵ Under another amendment, future elections for the National Assembly were to be canceled. Starting in June 2002, National Assembly deputies were to be assigned by political parties by a proportional rule – based on their vote shares in last parliamentary election. The DPP struck a deal with the KMT on term extensions in exchange for the safe passage of the proportional representation system, which was promoted by some DPP leaders as a way to suppress vote-buying as well as a necessary stepping stone for the eventual abolishment of National Assembly.

This latest episode of constitutional tinkering was simply another revealing incident about the island's politics of constitutional reform, which has been largely driven by unsavory hidden-agendas and short-term political calculations at this particular juncture of the island's democratic transition. Also, the KMT-initiated constitutional changes carried too many elements of unilateral imposition. The past authoritarian equilibrium depended mainly, in the words of Adam Przeworski, on equitable affluence, rather than lies and fears. At the dawn of regime transition, society was relatively void of highly divisive socioeconomic cleavage that might have been exploited by the opposition and translated into polarized political cleavage. The cohesiveness of the political coalition underlying the development strategy could not be easily disrupted. This, in turn, substantially slowed down the pace of social mobilization and reduced the range of the confrontational and mobilization strategies available to the opposition at the juncture of regime opening. This historical condition strengthened the hands of the incumbent elite in setting limits on the scope and speed of democratic reform, crafting new political institutions, and working on societal acceptance for a semi-democratic solution. As a result, certain residual authoritarian elements were preserved under a largely KMT-initiated reform. Some key elements in the abolished Temporary Articles, the hallmark of the old authoritarian rule, including the emergency powers of the president and the creation of National Security Agency under the presidential office, were transplanted into the new amendments.

Furthermore, there is an intense lack of consensus over both the nature and logic of the emerging constitutional order among the contending political forces.⁶ After four phases of constitutional revision between 1990 and 1997, the R.O.C. Constitution shifted away from a

⁵ A survey conducted by the United Daily News on the eve of passage indicated that over 50 percent of respondents were against the National Assembly's extension of its current term.

⁶ For the controversies over constitutional design, see Yun-han Chu, "Consolidating Democracy in Taiwan: From *Guoshi* to *Guofa* Conference" in Hung-mao Tien and Steve Yui-sang Tsang eds. *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China*. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998).

parliamentarian system and shifted steadily closer to a semi-presidential system, akin to the French Fifth Republic. However, the emerging system is still different from the French system in key ways. First, the French system requires the president to acquire a majority mandate through the device of a run-off election, if no candidate wins a majority on the first ballot. Under the ROC Constitution, the president is elected by plurality with no threshold of minimum electoral support. Second, the French system has built-in mechanisms to break a potential deadlock between the president and the assembly during a period of *cohabitation*. Under the revised ROC Constitution, the president cannot dissolve the assembly on his own initiative. Instead, the president can dissolve the assembly only when the Legislative Yuan unseats the cabinet with a vote of no confidence. Third, the French system empowers the cabinet to steer the legislative agenda. Under the ROC Constitution, government bills enjoy no priority. The legislature controls its own agenda. Neither the president nor the premier possesses the constitutional weapon of “executive veto” to check legislative assertiveness. The cabinet can send back objectionable legislation and resolutions to the parliament for re-consideration. But the parliament has the final say if the same bill is passed again with an absolute majority, i.e., half of the total seats plus one. The functioning of the system may become highly unpredictable when the majority party in the parliament is different from the president's party or no party has a parliamentary majority.

In addition, the new amendments are vague on two important issues. First, it is unclear if the new amendments empower the president to dismiss a sitting cabinet without the premier's own initiative and, thus, change the power relationship between the president and the premier in a fundamental way. Second, it is unclear if the president enjoys preeminence in the areas of national defense and foreign policy. With the introduction of popular election for president, it has become unrealistic to expect any future president, especially one with majority support, to exercise self-restraint in the two contested areas. This was not an issue under Lee Teng-hui, as he could exercise control over the premier as well as the KMT caucus in the parliament in his capacity as the chairman of the KMT. The prospect of a transfer of power after the year 2000 election had prompted many constitutional scholars to wonder how a non-KMT president could shape the cabinet and steer national policies without a power-sharing arrangement with the KMT, which will most likely continue its majority control over the parliament until January 2002. In a nutshell, toward the end of Lee's tenure, the credibility, legitimacy and integrity of the existing constitutional order were under severe strain. The existing constitutional arrangements were not adequately designed for the prospect of a divided government.

Chen Shui-bian paid a high price for overestimating his chance to get away with the imperative of “cohabitation.” By the time he had become convinced that he was unable to rule

without a working majority in the parliament, it was already too late to negotiate either a coalition government or a cross-party majority coalition in the legislature. The challenge of governing as the minority has consumed much of the new government's energy and political capital leaving Chen Shui-bian little breathing space for tackling issues of democratic reform.

From the perspective of democratic governance, the DPP has probably come to power before its time. Chen Shui-bian did not deliver a convincing electoral victory. The DPP still lacks the necessary power base in the Legislative Yuan to steer the policy agenda at the national level. In terms of its mentality, organizational capability, and administrative experience, the DPP is not fully prepared to take over governing responsibility. More fundamentally, the DPP has yet completed its ideological transformation to represent the mainstream views of society. The challenge of governing responsibility has turned out to be so formidable that it has substantially diluted the significance of this historical transfer of power. It is ironic and unfortunate that the DPP government is now torn between two polar expectations. On the one hand, the turnover of presidential power seems to provide a historic opportunity to push through many long-awaited reforms, such as regulating party-owned business, suppressing vote-buying by overhauling the electoral system, reducing levels of government and augmenting local government's powers and functions, strengthening the integrity and independence of the judicial system, and creating an independent human rights commission, none of which would be possible under undisrupted KMT rule. The popular expectation was indeed very high. On the other hand, the challenge of governing as the minority has consumed much of the new government's energy and political capital, leaving Chen Shui-bian little breathing space for tackling issues of democratic reform. Now with rising unemployment, a gloomy economic outlook, an imminent fiscal crisis, a sluggish stock market and a weakened NT dollar, Taiwan's electorate suddenly has the economic bottom-line to worry about.

III. The meaning of democracy

The starting point of our analysis concerns the people's conception of "democracy," a cognitive issue that has been taken for granted by most students of democratization. We think this is not something that can be assumed away; otherwise, our analysis about people's attitudes and orientations toward democracy could be as fragile as a house of cards. In order to find out the popular perception of what is "democracy," we employed the question: "To you, what does 'democracy' mean?" To this open-ended question, respondents were encouraged to give up to three answers.

1. What do people understand by the term "democracy?"

Table 1 shows a distribution of different types of answers that people gave to this question.

Essentially we condensed the various verbal answers down to eight substantive categories. Among the eight categories, 34.7% of people understand “democracy” as “freedom and liberty,” 30.3% of people understand “democracy” in abstract and positive terms, 15.0% of people understand “democracy” as “political rights, institutions and process,” 19.3% of people understand “democracy” in generic and/or populist terms, 5.8% of people understand “democracy” in terms of social equality and justice, 6.4% of people define “democracy” in negative terms, 3.7% of people understand “democracy” in terms of good government, and only 1.6% of people conceive “democracy” as market economy, with 17.1% of respondents expressing “don’t know” or giving no response to such question.

Table 1 Meaning of Democracy

Understanding democracy as:	%
1. Freedom and liberty	34.7
2. Political rights, institutions and procedures	15.0
3. Market economy	1.6
4. Social equality and justice	5.8
5. Good government	3.7
6. In generic and/or populist terms	19.3
7. In other abstract and positive terms	30.3
8. In negative terms	6.4
9. Others	12.1
10. Don’t know, no response	17.1
N	1415

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

According to the data, we find that less than half of Taiwan’s public holds a perception about democracy that is consistent with a standard view of “liberal democracy”, i.e., defining democracy either in terms of “freedom and liberty” or as “a set of political rights, institutions and procedures.” More people tend to define democracy in very generic or abstract terms, such as “popular sovereignty”, “people’s power” or “care what people think”. Generally speaking, a great majority of Taiwan’s public associated democracy with positive things, while the substance of their understanding varied a great deal. Given the island’s average level of education, the level of political sophistication is not very impressive.

2. Procedural vs. substantive concepts

The next classification scheme we employed groups the various answers into two broad categories, procedural or substantive concepts. Under procedural concepts, people define democracy in terms of due process, human rights protection, election, checks-and-balances, electoral competition, popular accountability, one-person-one-vote, etc. Under substantive concepts, people associate democracy with equality, social justice, economic well-being, social welfare, etc. In table 2, we find that only 12% of respondents emphasize the procedural aspects of democracy, and only 12.5% of respondents underscore the substantive dimensions of democracy. Moreover, few respondents define democracy using both concepts, while about three quarters of our respondents did not use either the procedural or substantive concepts to describe democracy.

Table 2 Procedural vs. Substantive Concepts

Categories	%
Procedural	12.0%
Substantive	12.5%
Mixed	0.0%
Neither	75.5%
N	1415

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

3. Level of understanding in accordance with standard view of liberal democracy

Here that we impose a standard (and increasingly universal) definition of “liberal democracy” on our data to find out to what extent the popular understanding of democracy conforms to this benchmark. The results are summarized in frequencies indicating 1) the proportion of respondents whose answers cover both liberal and democratic dimensions, 2) the proportion of respondents whose answers cover liberal dimensions with some depth, 3) the proportion of respondents whose answers cover democratic dimensions in some depth, and 4) the proportion of respondents whose answers contain none of the two elements. Table 3 shows that 33.6% respondents underscored procedural dimension of democratic concepts, and that only 2.4% emphasized only the liberal dimension and only 4.5% emphasize both the liberal and democratic dimensions. On the other hand, 59.4% of people do not think of democracy in these terms. This means the popular understanding of democracy in Taiwan falls into one polar extreme. The democracy portion of the population has a rather impressive level of understanding of democracy. But a larger portion of the population still has a flimsy and rudimentary grasp of liberal democracy.

Table 3 Attachment to the Notion of Liberal Democracy

Liberal Democracy	4.5%
Liberal	2.4%
Democracy	33.6%
Neither Liberal nor Democracy	59.4%
N	1415

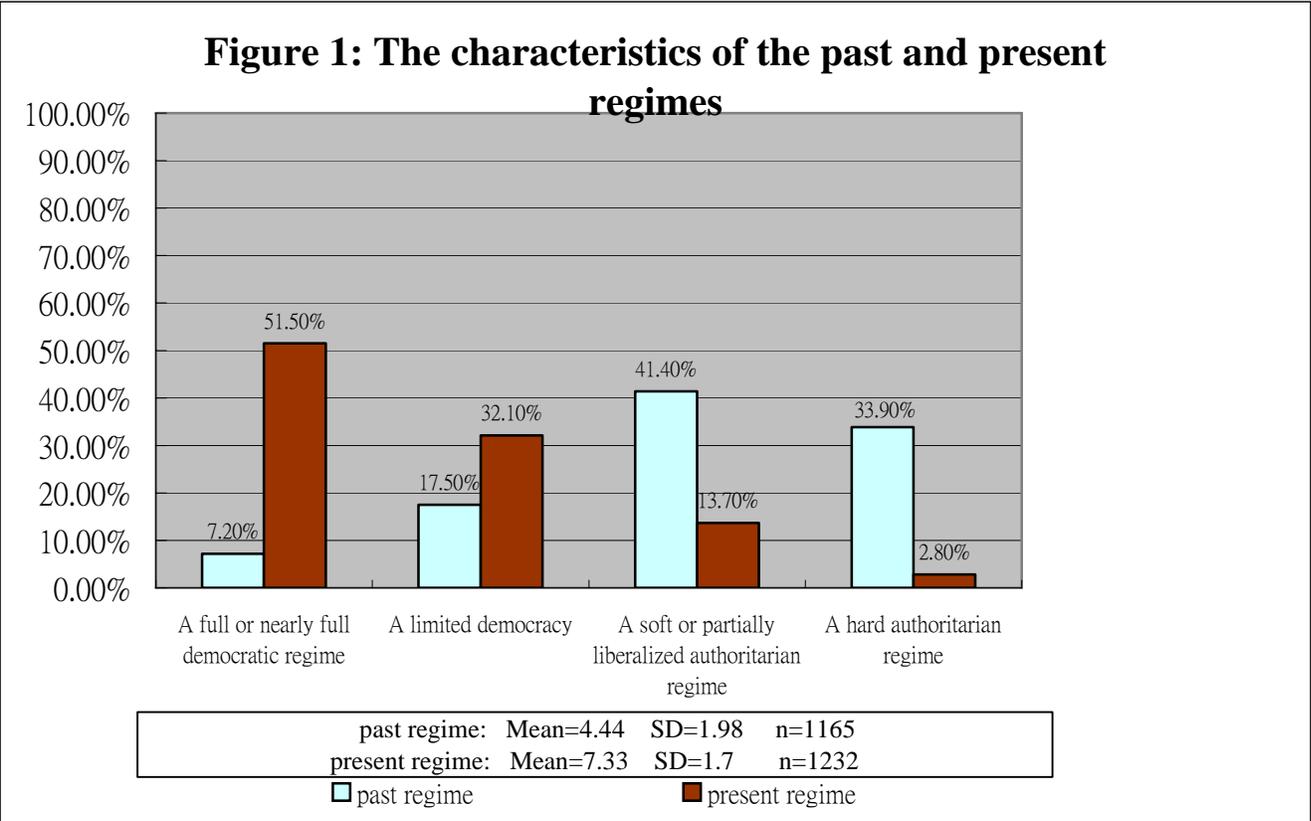
Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

IV. Assessment of the democratic system, past and present

1. The characteristics of the past and present regimes

In order to understand how Taiwanese people evaluate the process of democratization and how democratic they think the current system is, we employed the following two questions: “Where would you place our country during the period before 1988?” and “Where would you place our country under the present government ?” We asked our respondents to use a 10-point scale, on which 10 represents complete democracy and 1 represents complete dictatorship. For a succinct presentation, we group their scores into four classes of regime development: 8-10 stands for a full or near full democracy, 6-7 represents a limited democracy, 4-5 represent a soft or partial liberalized authoritarian regime, and 1-3 represents a hard authoritarian regime.

Figure 1 shows that 51.5% of respondents think that Taiwan’s democracy is now a full or near full democracy, while 7.2% of our respondents suppose that Taiwan’s political system before 1988 was already a full or near full democracy. It also shows that 32.1% of our respondents believe that Taiwan’s democracy remains a limited democracy, while 17.5% suppose Taiwan’s political system before 1988 was a limited democracy. Only 13.7% think that Taiwan’s current system is a soft or partially liberalized authoritarian regime. In contrast, 41.4% believe that before 1988 Taiwan was a soft or partially liberalized authoritarian regime. Very few people think that Taiwan today remains a hard authoritarian regime, while 33.9% believe that Taiwan before 1988 had a hard authoritarian regime. Taking together, there is a strong consensus among the citizens that Taiwan today is a democracy, and only less than 16% of respondents disagree with that assessment. By comparison, more than three quarters of our respondents believe that the system Taiwan had before 1988 was an authoritarian one. So the populace does perceive that the political system has undergone a significant transition between 1988 and 2001. However, measured in numerical scores, on average people don’t view the transition of the 1990’s as a quantum leap. The average score they assign to the past regime is 4.4 and the score for the current system is 7.33. On average, there are less than three full points of difference between the past and the present regime on the 10-point scale.



Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

2. The experience of regime change or continuity: six patterns

Next, we cross-tabulated the two measures and identified six possible patterns of “perceived regime change” in this complex 10x10 cross-tabulation: Authoritarian Reversal, Authoritarian Persistence, Authoritarian Liberalization, Limited Democratic Transition, Advanced Democratic Transition, Democratic Continuity. Consistent with our earlier findings, most people do perceive a clear-cut regime transition. As table 4 shows, 48.9% of people in Taiwan think that the political system has accomplished a transition from authoritarian regime to at least a “limited democracy,” while 14.8% of our respondent think that Taiwan has already moved between 1988 and 2001 from an authoritarian regime to a full or nearly full democracy. There are also some notable exceptions to this mainstream perception. Most notably, 19.9% of our respondent don’t think that Taiwan has experienced a regime transition because the system before 1988 was a democracy already, so from 1988 to 2001 the system has been essentially unchanged. So their perception is best labeled as “Democratic Continuity.” This is a clear example of popular nostalgia about the past regime, considering it just as democratic as the current system. Or in other words, the current system is no more democratic than the one we had before 1988. In addition, only very few people

still think that they are still living in an authoritarian system. Among them, 7.7% of respondents see no significant changes between 1988 and 2001, i.e. suggesting that the system today is just as authoritarian as it was, thus to be put under the label of “Authoritarian Persistence.” 3.4% of respondents think the political system has moved from a hard authoritarian regime to a soft one because Taiwan is not yet a democracy. Finally, 5.2% of our respondents see political regression over the last thirteen years. Strangely, they think the system has been reversed from a democratic regime to an authoritarian regime. This is indeed a case of authoritarian nostalgia gone astray.

Table 4 Patterns of Perceives Regime Change

Patterns	%
1.00 Authoritarian Reversal	5.2
2.00 Authoritarian Persistence	7.7
3.00 Authoritarian Liberalization	3.4
4.00 Limited Democratic Transition	48.9
5.00 Advanced Democratic Transition	14.8
6.00 Democratic Continuity	19.9
N	1149

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

V. Perception of Democratic Performance

In our survey, we also asked respondents to compare the present regime with the past regime with respect to nine major domains of political life and/or governing functions, including freedom of speech, freedom of association, equal treatment by the government, people’s influence on the government, controlling political corruption, narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, maintaining law and order, promoting economic development, and upholding an independent judiciary. On these nine indicators, we asked our respondents whether things have become worse, stayed about the same, or become better between the period before 1987 and the present time.

On the question “everyone is free to say what they think,” 81.3% think things have become better over the last thirteen years, and only 9% of respondents think the situation has become worse. On “everyone is treated equally by the government”, the perceived improvement is expressed by about two-thirds (59.3%) of our respondents, and only 14.4% of our respondents think that the situation has become worse. On “people like me can have an influence on government,” the perceived improvement is much less impressive. Only 37.9% of respondents think the situation is better today than thirteen year ago, while 15% think the situation has

regressed. Almost half (47.1%) of our respondents feel that they are as equally powerless as they were before 1988, registering a very low level of having a sense of political efficacy under the new regime. This finding is consistent with the results from our survey using the standard political efficacy battery. On the question “judges and courts are free from political interference,” about half (49.9%) of our respondents feel that it is better today, but 20.4% of our respondent still see things as going in the opposite direction. On freedom of association, “joining any organization you like,” the people’s assessment is similar to the question on freedom of speech. As many as 83.9% think it is better today, and only 3.6% see it as has having regressed. As we move from the characteristics of the political system to the functional domain, people’s judgments about how things have changed become increasingly less positive. On the question of controlling corruption, about 49.6% of respondents think the situation has become better, but an equal number think the level of corruption has either stayed the same (27.2%) or become worse (23.2%). This divergent assessment suggests that many recent revelations of political scandal implicating high-ranking officials cut both ways. On the one hand, people saw that more and more corrupt officials and politicians were brought to trial; on the other hand, people were stunned by the extent and magnitude of political corruption. On whether “the gap between the rich and poor has narrowed,” the popular perception is on the negative side. Only 26.7% think that the economic distribution has improved, while 39.9% of people feel that the distribution has become less equal during regime transition, with the remaining one third feeling that things have stayed much the same. This subjective assessment is backed up by most objective measures of income distribution. Taiwan used to boast of its achievement of growth with equity. During the 1990s, however the income distribution has become increasingly unequal. On economic development, 31.7% of our respondents feel that the situation has changed for the better. But the positive camp is outnumbered by the people who think things have become worse, 54.7% of our respondents to be exact. The most negative assessment about accompanying changes during the regime transition falls in the area of law and order. On the question about “preventing crime and maintaining order,” 57.6% of our respondents see a worsened situation, while only 22.8% see things going in the opposite direction. The picture our data arrive at is one that seems to have stabilized. The citizens’ assessment about changes in these key areas of governance during the regime transition slips through a descending curve. It starts off from a very positive assessment about improvement in the area of territory political freedom and rule of law, to a modestly positive judgment about changes in the area of citizen empowerment and cracking down corruption. Then it descends sharply into negative territory when it comes to the performance of the new regime over income distribution, economic development and law and order. While Taiwan’s sluggish economic growth and worsened income distribution during the second half of 1990s have a lot to do with the on-going economic restructuring, this does little to soften the popular view that the old regime enjoyed a

stronger record in sustaining economic growth and maintaining a more equitable income distribution. (see Table 5 for details)

Table 5 Perceptions of Regime Performance

Democracy & Rule of Law					
Item	Better (A)	Worse (B)	Much the Same	PDI* (A-B)	Valid Cases
Everyone is free to say what they think	81.30%	9.00%	9.80%	72.30%	1328
Everyone is treated equally by government	59.30%	14.40%	26.30%	44.90%	1305
People like me can have an influence on government	37.90%	15.00%	47.10%	22.90%	1206
Judges and courts are free from political interference	49.90%	20.40%	29.70%	29.50%	1090
You can join any organization you like	83.90%	3.60%	12.60%	80.30%	1221
Corruption					
Item	Positive	Negative	Same	PDI	N
Corruption is under control	49.60%	23.20%	27.20%	26.40%	1249
Economic performance					
Item	Positive	Negative	Same	PDI	N
The gap between the rich and poor has narrowed	26.70%	39.90%	33.40%	-13.20%	1276
Economic development	31.70%	54.70%	13.60%	-23.00%	1317
Order					
Item	Positive	Negative	Same	PDI	N
Preventing crime and maintaining order	22.80%	57.60%	19.60%	-34.80%	1332

* The percentage differential index.

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

2. The objective (macro-level) data on political and socio-economic changes in Taiwan

In addition to understanding the subjective evaluation of people in Taiwan of the concomitant changes during the decade of democratization, we also gather some objective macro-data and expert opinion for comparison, including the Freedom House's survey on Taiwan's political rights and civil liberties, GNP and the Gini coefficient. Table 6 shows that the Freedom House's survey gave Taiwan an average score of 5 (average of the five years before

1988) on political rights, Taiwan scored 5 in 1988 and an average of 1.6 during the five years between 1996 and 2001. The two figures suggest that the expert panel of the Freedom House has accredited Taiwan a marked improvement in the area of political rights during the last 15 years. On civil liberties, Taiwan scored an average of 5 between 1983 and 1988 and scored 2 between 1996 and 2001, also registering significant progress toward protection for civil liberties. The Freedom House survey is largely consistent with the popular perception of the changing character of the political regime, witnessing a substantial improvement in the area of freedom and the rule of law. In the economic realm, the popular assessment also accurately reflects the changes in the real economy. In terms of GNP, Taiwan enjoyed an average growth rate of 8.73% between 1983 and 1988 that contracted to 3.32% between 1996 and 2001. Measuring income distribution with the Gini coefficient, Taiwan scored 2.95 between 1983 and 1988, a remarkable record among developing countries. Between 1996 and 2001, the score increased to 3.29, still quite impressive by world standards, showing a downward trend nevertheless. The setback in the momentum of economic growth is more salient than income distribution, a nuance that is also picked up by our respondents as shown in Table 6. One thing that the Freedom House survey did not measure is whether ordinary citizens feel that they can effectively exercise newly enfranchised political rights and have an impact on the government. A marked improvement in the provision of political rights can co-exist with a relatively low level of political efficacy among the populace, not an uncommon phenomenon in the established democracies.

Table 6 Macro-data of regime change

	1983-1988*	1996-2001*
Freedom House: Political rights	5	1.6
Freedom House: Civil liberties	5	2
Average rate of growth in per capita GNP	8.73%	3.32%
Gini coefficient	2.95	3.29

*Averaged over the past five years.

Based on these results, we conducted a factor analysis to see if how the nine characteristics/performance indicators relate to each other. It turns out that they converge on two factors: the first dimension might be conceived as a Political Characteristics dimension. The Eigenvalue for the first factor was 2.890 (this means that the first factor accounts for 32.1% of the total variance). The second dimension might be conceived as an Output Performance dimension

with an Eigenvalue of 1.2. Basically, people on Taiwan see clear improvement along the first dimension but stagnation or even some deterioration on the second, yielding a balanced scorecard for the overall performance of the new democracy. (see Table 7 for details)

Table 7 Dimensions: Factor Analysis

Taiwan		
	Political Characteristics Dimension	Output Performance Dimension
Everyone is free to say what they think	.749	
Everyone is treated equally by government	.656	
People like me can have an influence on government	.633	
Corruption is under control		.599
The gap between the rich and poor has narrowed		.705
Preventing crime and maintaining order		.660
Economic development		.542
Judges and courts are free from political interference		.573
You can join any organization you like	.709	
Eigenvalue	2.890	1.199
% of variance explained	32.107%	13.319%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

3. Political corruption

In most new East Asian democracies, the most troubling development under the new regime in the eyes of the citizens is the encroachment of money politics and growing incidence of rampant corruption. This perception is in part associated with a more vigorous mass media that scrutinizes and publicizes the conduct of public officials. There has been a widely held popular belief that political corruption has spread into national politics and eventually reached the core of government since the country became democratized. Recent revelations of the scandalous behavior of Lee Teng-hui's closest associates has simply reinforced these perceptions. In the survey, we asked our respondents to evaluate the extent of corruption at both the central and local levels. Table 8 shows

that 57.7% of our respondents think that most national officials are corrupt, while 32.8% of them believe that they are not. Their image of local government officials is even more disparaging. As many as 63.6% of respondents think that the officials of local government are corrupt, while only 26.9% believe that they are not. This perception is consistent with the prevailing view among political pundits that corruption is more serious in local government. Also, the cross-tabulation in Table 7 suggests that the two evaluations are strong correlated. If one believes that most officials are corrupt at the local level, then one also tends to believe that the same thing is true for the national government, and vice versa.

	Local Government			
National government	Hardly anyone is involved	Not a lot of officials are corrupt	Most officials are corrupt	Almost everyone is corrupt
Hardly anyone is involved	0.90%	1.10%	0.40%	
Not a lot of officials are corrupt	0.50%	20.70%	10.80%	0.80%
Most officials are corrupt	0.40%	4.90%	49.70%	2.20%
Almost everyone is corrupt	0.10%	0.20%	2.80%	4.60%
Total	1.90%	26.90%	63.60%	7.60%

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

4. Satisfaction with the way democracy works

One of the most widely-used measures to tap into citizens' perceptions about the overall quality of a new democracy is to ask people if they are satisfied with the way democracy works in that particular country. Of course, this measure is short-term oriented, and the outcomes might vary substantially over time depending on many contingent developments. Also, this measure, while being conceptually distinct from the approval rate for the incumbent, is oftentimes correlated with people's evaluation of the government in power. Since we used this measure in our previous survey, we can compare the citizens' evaluation of the system's overall performance after Taiwan's first popular election for the president with the period right after the island's first real transfer of power. Table 9 shows that in 1996 more than two-thirds of the citizens were largely satisfied with the way democracy works in Taiwan (including 4.4% who were very satisfied and 62.8% who were fairly satisfied), while close to one third were not happy with the way democracy works. The level of satisfaction dropped somewhat four years later. Only 54.4% of our respondents were satisfied (including 4.4% very satisfied and 49% fairly satisfied). The number of unsatisfied citizens increased to 46.6 percent in 2001. We believe that this has something to do with the fact that Chen Shui-bian won the election without a strong popular mandate, winning only 39.7% of

the popular vote.

Table 9: Satisfaction with the way democracy works in Taiwan

Year of Survey	1996	2001
Very satisfied	4.40%	4.40%
Fairly satisfied	62.80%	49.00%
Not very satisfied	30.20%	41.60%
Not at all satisfied	2.60%	5.00%
Mean	2.31	2.47
SD	0.6	0.66
Valid Cases	1256	1270

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

In order to further explore the sources of people’s satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) in conjunction with the way democracy works, we undertook some bivariate statistical analysis. We started out with demographic variables, such as education, age and income. Table 10 shows that years of education and satisfaction has a weak negative correlation ($r=-.142$, $p<.01$); that is, the better educated people are, the slightly more likely they are to become disaffected citizens, not a surprising outcome. As for age, there is no evidence that any meaningful relation exists. As for income, the income of the respondent is also negatively correlated with satisfaction ($r=-.061$, $p<.05$). But the association is so weak as to warrant serious qualification. Next, we correlate the level of satisfaction with people’s assessment of some tangible performance indicators of the political system, starting with their assessment of the present economic situation. As expected, this short-term evaluation is positively correlated with satisfaction ($r=.125$, $p<.01$). So positive assessment of the current economic situation does lead to higher probability of being satisfied with democracy. Also correlated with satisfaction ($r=.110$, $p<.01$) is their medium-term evaluation of the economic situation during the past five years. However, it is approval of the performance of the incumbent that registers the strongest correlation with satisfaction. It should be noted that the two measures are not the same thing as indicated by a modest correlation coefficient ($r=.323$, $p<.01$). That satisfaction with the performance of a democratically elected government contributes to overall satisfaction with the way democracy works should surprise no one. This does not mean that satisfaction with democracy is largely determined by short-term factors. Long-term forces are also at work. For instance, people’s perceived changes on the political characteristics dimension (as defined in Table 6) is also significantly correlated with the satisfaction measure ($r=.276$, p

<.01). So the more people perceive visible improvement in the area of freedom and rule of law, the more likely it is that they feel satisfied with the new democracy. What also matters is their evaluation of the output performance of the system. The sum score on this six-indicator measure is also positively correlated with satisfaction ($r=.223$, $p<.01$). This means that people care both how democratic the system has become and how effective it has become in delivering essential governing functions. Lastly, perception of the extent of corruption within both local and national government is negatively correlated with satisfaction ($r=-.148$, $p<.01$), i.e. the more serious the perceived corruption at local and national levels, the less satisfied people are.

Table 10 Satisfaction with the way democracy works: correlation analysis

	Satisfaction with the way democracy works
Years of formal education	-0.142**
Age	-0.031
Income	-0.061*
Evaluation of the economy today	0.125**
Evaluation of the economy over the past five years	0.110**
Satisfaction with the performance of the incumbent	0.323**
Sum score of the perceived changes on political dimension	0.276**
Sum score of the perceived changes on policy output dimension	0.223**
Sum score of the perceived corruption at local and national level	-0.148**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

VI. Trust in institutions

The governing quality of a democratic system depends on the good functioning of some key public institutions, such as elections, parliament, the court, political parties, as well as some indispensable organizations in civil society, like the mass media and NGOs. The level of trust that citizens place on these institutions tells us a great deal about the operational quality of a democracy. In our survey, we asked the respondents to express how much trust they place on twelve institutions that perform essential functions in a democratic system: (in the order they appeared on the questionnaire) namely the courts, the national government, political parties (not any specific party), parliament, the civil service, the military, the police, local government, newspapers,

television, the election commission, and non-government organizations. As it turns out (see Figures 2a and 2b), the most trust-worthy institutions in Taiwan in the eyes of the citizens are the military (in all 69% of our respondents expressing they have a great deal or quite a lot of trust), NGOs (68% overall), the civil service (60%), and the election commission (55%). At the other extreme, institutions that the people trust least are: political parties (only 19.6%) and the parliament (at a miserably low level of 23%), the two key institutions in a representative democracy. The remaining institutions receive a very mixed evaluation from the citizens, and these are the national government (47% overall), local governments (56% overall), the police (49.5% overall), the courts (50.3% overall) and the television (50% overall).

The results reveal both the strengths as well as the weaknesses of Taiwan's emerging political system. On the positive side, the new democracy was endowed with an effective state as manifested through relatively high level of popular trust in the civil service, the military, and the election commission. Also, the integrity of some key civil society actors, in particular the mass media and the NGOs, largely live up to people's expectations. This is important in the sense that Taiwan's democracy still possesses good potential for democratic deepening with a highly competitive media sector and a vibrant civil society. However, the system is fraught with a dysfunctional party system and a paralyzed parliament. Apparently, as a great majority of Taiwanese citizens witnessed the endless in-fighting between political parties and crippling gridlock on the parliamentary floor, all familiar symptoms under a divided government, their respect and trust for these two political institutions wore pretty thin.

Figure 2a: Trust in Institutions

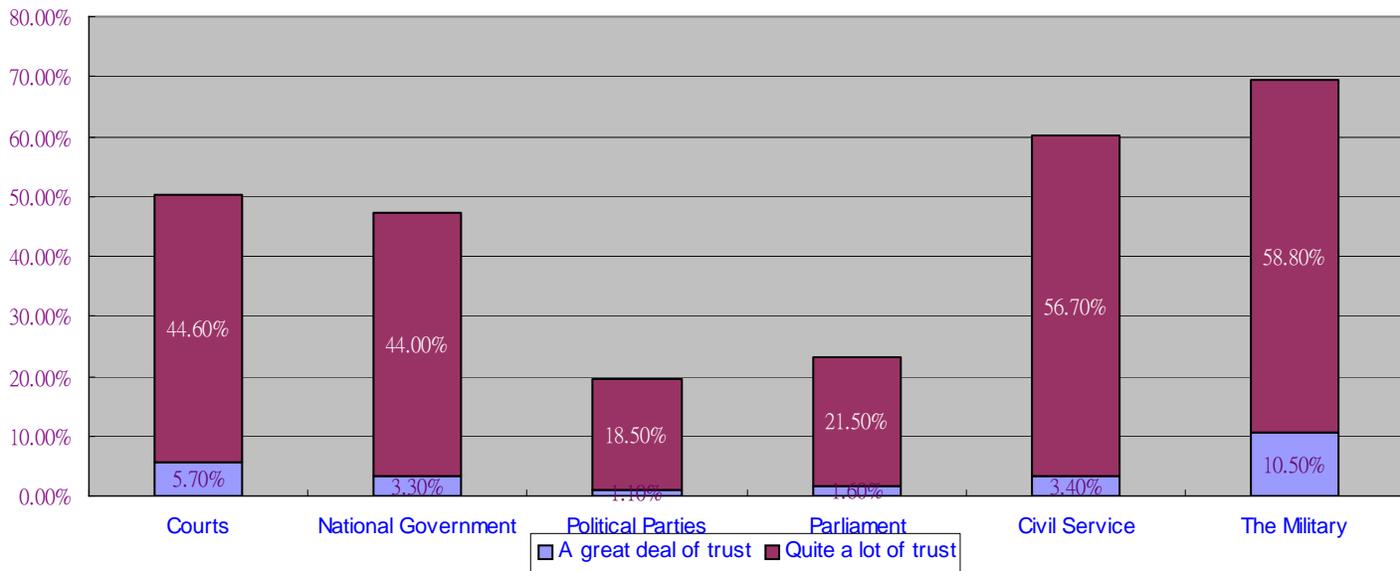
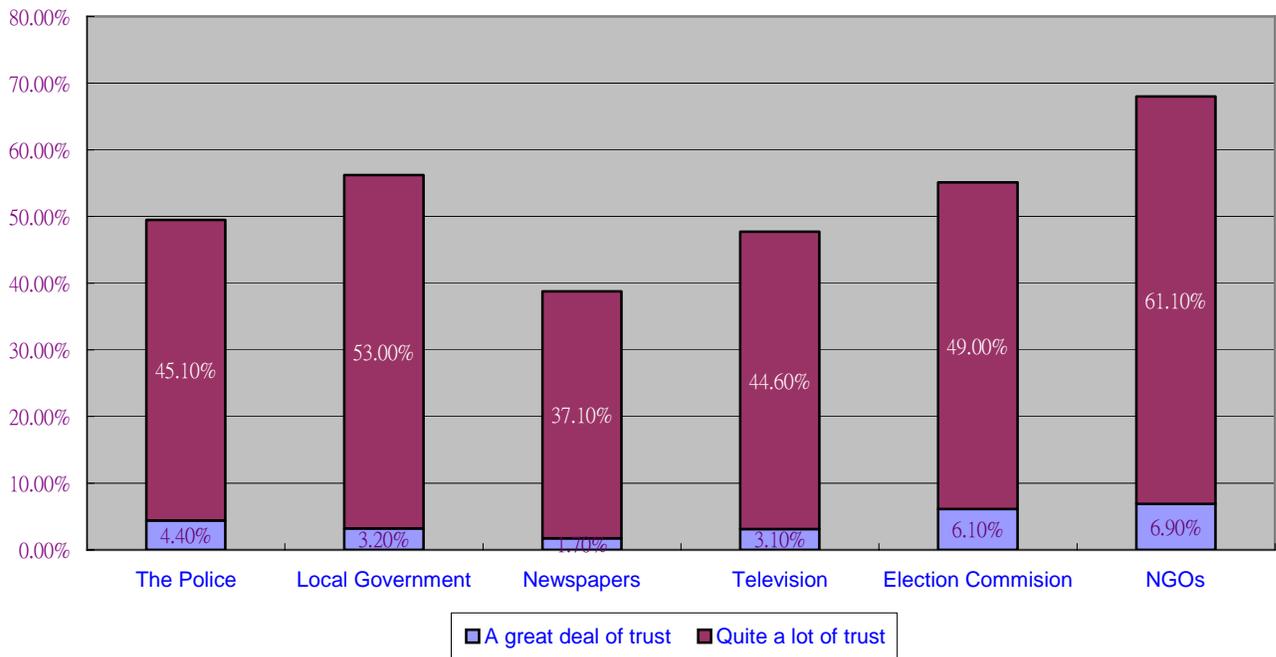


Figure 2b: Trust in Institutions



Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

VII. Citizen empowerment and system responsiveness

Another widely-used measure of the characteristics of a political system is the political efficacy scale, measuring both citizens' internal efficacy (also to be referred to as citizen empowerment) and external efficacy (system responsiveness). Four standard questions were used in our survey, two for each subdimension (see Table 11 for details).

Table 11 shows that based on the two measures of citizen empowerment the level of political efficacy is not very high. Only 30.5% of the people in Taiwan feel that they themselves are capable of participating in politics, while 69.1% do not. In a similar vein, as many as 77.2% of the people feel that "politics is too complicated and hard to understand," while only 22.8% of the people feel that they have a good grip on politics. Moving down to the two indicators for measuring citizens' perception about system responsiveness, the picture is not very different. A great majority, 61.7% of our respondents, feel that the politics is monopolized by a few people, while only 38.3% do not think so. Also, 70.3% of our respondents don't think that they have much influence on what government does, with only 29.7% thinking the opposite. Also it is worth noting that the two subdimensions are highly correlated (Likelihood Ratio = 110.625, P=.000) with each other (see Table 12). A perception of system responsiveness breeds a sense of citizen empowerment and vice versa. It is worthwhile to find out why most people in Taiwan don't feel that they are politically empowered. To this end, we conducted a series of bivariate analyses.

Table 11 Citizen Empowerment and System Responsiveness

Citizen Empowerment					
Item	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N
I think I have the ability to participation in politics	1.80%	28.70%	59.40%	10.10%	1288
Sometime politics seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand	9.90%	67.30%	21.30%	1.50%	1333

System Responsiveness					
Item	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N

The nation is run by a powerful few and ordinary citizens cannot do much about it	7.60%	54.10%	32.90%	5.40%	1285
People like me don't have any influence over what the government does	9.00%	61.30%	27.70%	2.00%	1318

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Table 12 Citizen Empowerment and System Responsiveness: cross-tabulation analysis

Empowerment	Responsiveness				N	Likelihood Ratio	Significance
	very low	low	high	very high			
very low	27.3%	61.3%	6.7%	4.7%	150	110.625	.000
Low	34.7%	11.0%	5.3%	15.2%	878		
	7.6%	75.5%	14.5%	2.4%			
High	56.8%	79.4%	67.9%	45.7%	147		
	6.1%	52.4%	32.0%	9.5%			
very high	7.6%	9.2%	25.1%	30.4%	11		
	9.1%	27.3%	27.3%	36.4%			
	.8%	.4%	1.6%	8.7%			

N=1186

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

VIII. Popular commitment to democratic legitimacy

Over the years, political scientists have been grappling with the concept of democratic legitimacy, trying different measurement strategies. We conceive of democratic legitimacy as a multi-faceted phenomenon with no single indicator up to the task. Therefore we devised a very sophisticated battery to assess the level of popular commitment to democratic legitimacy. Our battery essentially comprises of two clusters of question. The first cluster focuses on the constitutive elements of what we call “support for democracy.” It includes questions that measure peoples’ belief in the desirability, suitability, superiority, priority and efficacy of democracy.⁷ The

⁷ The exact wording of these questions is as follows: Desirability: To what extent do you want our country to be democratic now? (a 1-10 numerical scale). Suitability: To what extent do you think democracy is suitable for our country? (a 1-10 numerical scale). Preference: Which of the following statements comes 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”, or “For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a nondemocratic regime”? Priority: If you had to choose between democracy and economic

second cluster of questions involves popular objection to authoritarian alternatives. This includes the rejection of authoritarian strong leader, one-party rule, military rule, and rule by experts.

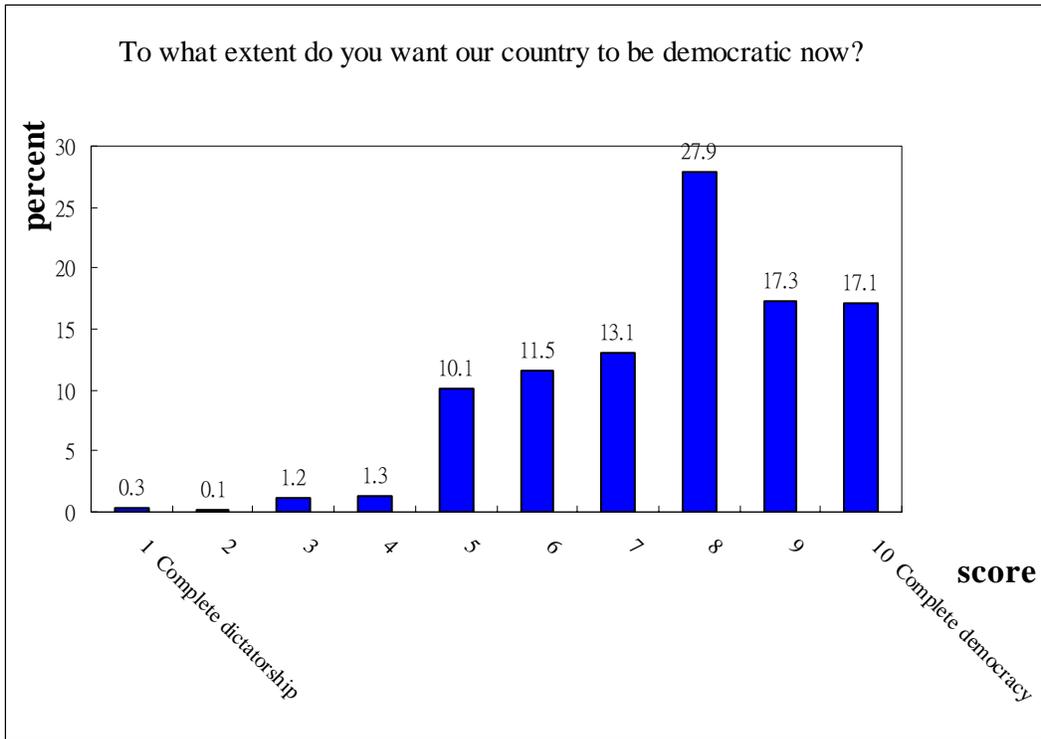
1. Desirability and Suitability

Figure 3 shows how democratic Taiwanese want their country to be now and how suitable they think democracy is for Taiwan. The result is self-explanatory: Most people (over 60%) in Taiwan are hoping that their democracy is located somewhere close to a full democracy or nearly a full democracy (i.e. around scores 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale), although the rest of our interviewees hold a more modest aspiration. The mean score on this desirability measure is a modest 7.7, suggesting that many respondents factored a strong sense of realism into their considerations. They aimed for something that is realistically achievable, as there is only less than a half point difference between where on average they think the country is and where they want it to be on a 10-point scale from complete dictatorship and complete democracy.

On the suitability question, we find an interesting bimodal distribution in Figure 4. Close to 40% of our respondents think that democracy is highly suitable for Taiwan (answering 8 or above). But the proportion of people who hold some reservations on the issue of suitability is quite sizable, although few people express the view that democracy is totally unsuitable. For instance, more than 46% of our respondents gave a score between 5 and 7, registering a lingering doubt about how suitable democracy is for Taiwan. (See Figure 4)

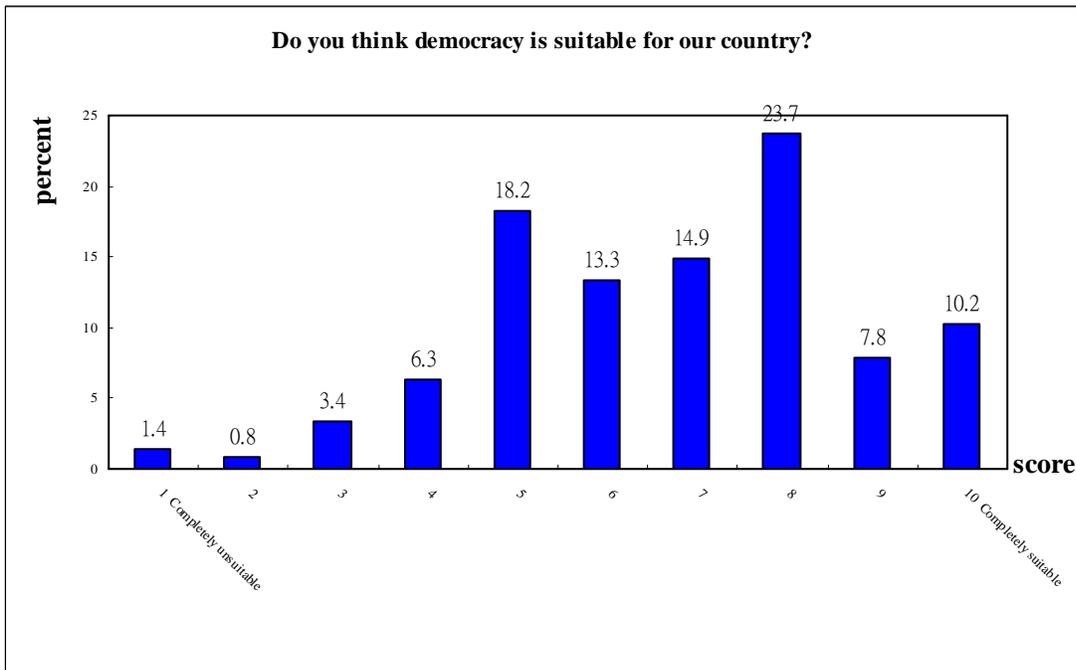
development, which would you say is more important? Efficacy: Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view: “Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society” or “Democracy can not solve our society’s problems”

Figure 3 Opinion on desirability of Democracy



Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Figure 4 Opinion on suitability on Democracy



Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Apparently, the way democracy has worked in Taiwan has not yet convinced a large number of people about democracy’s suitability. A modest mean score of 6.75 and a large standard deviation (2.02) also underscore the divergence of people’s views on this issue. (SD=2.02).

2. Preference, Efficacy and Priority of Democracy

The professed reservations of a substantial number of people on Taiwan toward democracy runs through all the three remaining measures, on preference, efficacy and priority, respectively. Table 13 shows that only 40% of our respondents think “democratic government is always preferable under all circumstances.” A surprisingly large proportion of people (23.2%) actually think that under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one. Equally troubling is the proportion of people who feel that “it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime”.

Table 13 Preference & Priority of Democracy

Q117 Which comes to closest to you own opinion?	Q118 Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view?	Q119 If you had to choose between democracy and economic development, which would you say is more important?
1. Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government. 40.4%	1. Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society 46.8%	1. Economic development is definitely more important 27.7%
2. Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one. 23.2%	2. Democracy can not solve our society’s problems 34.4%	2. Economic development is somewhat more important 43.8%
3. it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime 25.9%		3. Democracy is somewhat more important 9%
		4. Democracy is definitely more important 1.6%
		5. They are both equally important 13%
8. Don’t know and no answer 10.5%	8. Don’t know and no answer 18.8%	8. Don’t know and no answer 4.9%
Sum 100.0%	Sum 100.0%	Sum 100.0%

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

In a nutshell, there are more people who are skeptical about democracy’s superiority than people who truly believe in its superiority. On the efficacy of democracy, 46.8% of people in Taiwan support the view that democracy can solve our problems, but still 34.4% of them do not support that view. Lastly, when our respondents were forced to choose between democracy and economic development, the twin aspiration of most developing societies, democracy lost favor to economic development by a ratio of more than 5:1, with only 10.6% of our respondents believing that democracy is more important. In contrast, almost two-thirds support the view that economic development is more important. The result is quite clear. Our data show that unqualified support for democratic legitimacy has not yet taken hold in Taiwan.

3. Reject Authoritarian Alternatives

Many democracies survive not because a majority of people believes in its intrinsic legitimacy but because there are simply no viable alternatives. This observation fits Taiwan’s case equally well. Among the four plausible authoritarian alternatives that we presented to our respondents, most were rejected handsomely. For instance, with the statement, “we should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things”, more than two-thirds of our respondents disagree (see Table 14). The remaining three alternatives are even less favorable among Taiwan’s citizens. For instance, 70.3% of our respondents registered their rejection of one-party rule, 81.7% of military rule and 71.3% of rule by experts.

Table 14 Rejecting Authoritarian Alternatives

	Strong Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strong Disagree	Others
121. We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.	2.4%	16.2%	50.4%	17.9%	13.1%
122. No opposition party should be allowed to compete for power	1.8%	13.9%	55.7%	14.6%	14.1%
123. The military should come in to govern the country.	0.6%	6.6%	52.2%	29.5%	11.1%
124. We should get rid of parliament and elections and have the experts decided everything.	1.3%	13.5%	52.8%	18.5%	13.9%

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

4. Overall Assessment of popular commitment to democratic legitimacy

For a succinct presentation of the above analysis, we create a two-dimensional composite index for assessing the strength of popular commitment to democratic legitimacy. We can group our respondents into five distinct groups based on the following criteria:

Strong supporters of democracy: People who reject all authoritarian alternatives and hold a strong preference for and confidence in democracy.

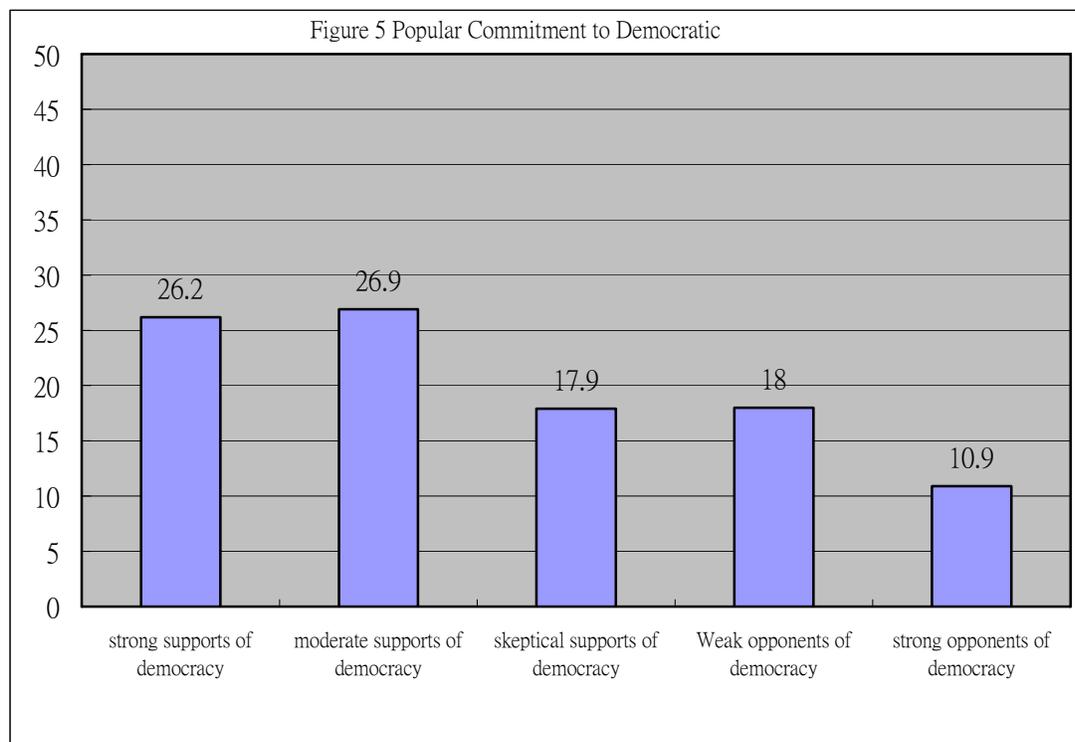
Moderate supporters of democracy: people who reject all authoritarian alternatives and hold a moderate level of preference for and confidence in democracy.

Skeptical supporters of democracy: People who reject all authoritarian alternatives but hold little preference for or confidence in democracy.

Weak opponents of democracy: People who do not reject all four authoritarian alternatives but still hold a moderate level of preference for and confidence in democracy.

Strong opponents of democracy: People who do not reject most authoritarian alternatives and hold little preference for or confidence in democracy.

Based on this crude but easy to understand classification, 26.2% of our respondents can be classified as strong supporters of democracy, 26.9% moderate supporters of democracy, 17.9% skeptical supporters of democracy, 18% weak opponents of democracy, and 10.9% strong opponents of democracy. Since strong and moderate supporters of democracy constitute the simple majority, Taiwan's new democracy does enjoy a sufficient footing of popular support. On the hand, the existence of large number of people who are skeptical toward democracy or find non-democratic alternatives appealing is also quite troubling. The large proportion in the later categories (close to 47%) suggests that the dust has yet quite settled in the ideological arena, and that democracy has yet established itself as the only game in town. (See Figure 5)



Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Next, we try to sketch the socio-economic profiles of the five groups. What are the distinctive socio-economic traits of strong supporters for democracy? Which age or income groups are more likely to be strong opponents of democracy? In Table 15, we do cross-tabulation between the popular commitment to democracy and four standard socio-economic variables: age, education, income and sub-ethnic background. First, we found that age and level of commitment to democracy is moderately negatively associated (with $X^2=44.944$). Overall, the variation among the five age cohorts is not great, except that the ratio of being a strong opponent of democracy is much higher among the oldest cohort (people aged 60 or above), or twice as large as the average, and that the ratio of being a strong or moderate supporters of democracy among this group is also relatively lower than other age groups (about 25% lower). However, the negative association between age and level of commitment to democracy does not conform to a strictly linear pattern. Among the youngest age cohort (between ages 20 and 29), we also found the highest ratio (24.9%) of being moderate opponents to democracy. The Table 14 basically shows that Taiwan's democracy draws its most solid support from neither the youngest nor the oldest people, but from the middle-age groups, people aged between 30 and 59, the backbone of the society. Since the oldest cohort is also on average the least educated, the lower level of commitment to democracy could be also explained by their lower level of education, a point we will turn to soon. The less enthusiastic support for democracy among the younger generation might have something to do

with their experience of political learning. They had no experience living under an authoritarian regime since adolescence while witnessing all the shortcomings of the new democracy.

Among the four socio-economic variables, education registers the strongest association ($X^2=108.053$) with level of commitment to democracy. The respondents with the highest level of education (university or above) are more likely to be supporters of democracy (41.2% strong supporters and 31.3% moderate supporters) and least likely to be opponents of democracy (only 1.5% strong opponents and 13.7% weak opponents). The supporters outnumber the opponents by a ratio of 4.5 to 1. In contrast, people with primary school education or less are as likely to be supporters as opponents of democracy. This general pattern of a positive linear correlation between level of commitment to democracy and education holds up well across the table, indicating the strong influence of education on the acquisition of a democratic orientation.

As compared to the effect of education, economic status as measured by family income is less salient but remains statistically significant ($X^2=63.905$). The people falling into the lowest bracket of income are, relatively speaking, less likely to be the supporters of democracy, while more likely to be opponents of democracy. However, the highest percentages of supporters for democracy come first from the very-well-to-do people (the group with second highest family income) and next from the super rich (with the highest family income). While the pattern of association is not strictly linear, our table reveals a basic pattern such that levels of democratic commitment tend to go up with economic status. People who are economically privileged support liberal democracy most, a phenomenon not difficult to comprehend as the current wave of democratization came with economic liberalism, which tends to bias the distributive consequences of the political system against the socio-economic disadvantaged groups.

Lastly, we examine the relationship between respondents' sub-ethnic background and level of commitment to democracy. The goodness-of-fit statistics show that the association between the two is comparatively weak ($X^2=32.993$) but still significant. Among the four sub-ethnic groups on Taiwan -- the Minnan-speaking native Taiwanese, the Hakka-speaking native Taiwanese, the mainlanders, and the aboriginal, variation in the distribution of the five types of commitment to democracy is not as great as we have seen for the level of education or family income. The Minnan-speaking native Taiwanese, accounting for more than 72% of the population, has the highest percentage of strong supporters of democracy, i.e., 27.6%. But that is only 1.5% above the average. The mainlander group, that has rapidly lost its privileged political status during democratization, has the largest percentage of opponents to democracy (21.1% weak opponents and 14.3% strong opponents). Again, the number is only 6% below the average). The only marked

deviation from the average is the percentage of strong supporters of democracy among the aboriginal (17.2% or 9% below the average). However, taking the percentage of moderate supporters (44.8%) together, the aboriginal group is not that different from other sub-ethnic groups. The third largest sub-ethnic group, the Hakka-speaking people, tend to take a more reserved attitude toward democracy, being more likely to be either moderate supporters or skeptical supporters of democracy than others. In a sense, they conform to mainstream values but not enthusiastically so. Overall, the association between sub-ethnic background and level of commitment to democracy is not as strong as one might predict. Obviously, the simple logic of which sub-ethnic group might benefit most from democratization (and therefore support democracy most) has been largely neutralized by other structural and institutional factors.

Table 15 Cross-tabulation of Socio-economic Background with Commitment to Democracy

		Popular Commitment to Democracy %					n	LRX ² (p-value)
		1	2	3	4	5		
		strong support	moderate support	skeptical support	moderate opponent	strong opponent		
Age	20-29	26.1	27.2	15.2	24.9	6.6	257	44.944 p=0.000
	30-39	28.2	29.5	19.5	15.4	7.5	241	
	40-49	26.8	26.8	21.0	13.7	11.7	205	
	50-59	25.0	28.0	20.0	16.0	11.0	100	
	Above 60	22.3	20.2	11.7	17.0	28.7	94	
Education	Completed primary /elementary and below	15.5	22.4	15.5	17.2	29.3	174	108.053 p=0.000
	Completed secondary /high school	17.3	28.9	26.6	15.6	11.6	173	
	High school: technical /vocational type	29.4	26.1	17.3	20.6	6.5	306	
	College-level, with diploma	30.4	27.8	16.5	20.9	4.3	115	
	University and Above	41.2	31.3	12.2	13.7	1.5	131	
Income	Less than NTD 35000	17.4	22.9	20.5	20.9	18.2	258	
	NTD35001~ 65000	28.0	30.3	17.5	14.6	9.6	314	

	NTD65001~90000	28.3	27.5	14.5	23.9	5.8	138	
	NTD90001~120000	42.9	29.9	9.1	16.9	1.3	77	
	NTD120001 and above	39.1	20.3	20.3	15.6	4.7	64	
								63.905
								p=0.000
Ethnicity	Minnan	27.6	25.7	17.7	18.8	10.1	626	
	Hakka	22.7	38.7	24.0	9.3	5.3	75	
	Mainlanders	25.5	23.6	15.5	21.1	14.3	161	
	Aborigines	17.2	44.8	17.2	0.0	20.7	29	
								32.993
								p=0.001

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

IX. Support for Liberal Democracy [items 125, 136, 137, 145]

To explore the depth of popular commitment to democracy, we also examine how our respondents respond to statements expressing some cardinal principles of liberal democracy, such as the rule of law, the separation of powers, and horizontal accountability. If people are truly committed to democratic values, they should also embrace these fundamental principles. Otherwise, we might suspect that their belief in the superiority and desirability of democracy in abstract is quite shallow, or even superficial.

What we found is quite fascinating. In response to the statement, “When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is okay for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation”, 55% of our respondents disagree and 13% strongly disagree (see Table 16). This suggests that more than two-thirds of Taiwanese people believe that the government should abide by the law and act legally even when the country is facing a difficult situation. In response to a related statement, “The most important thing for a political leader is to accomplish his goals even if he has to ignore the established procedures”, again 71% of our respondents disagree and 16% strongly disagree. Evidently, the principle of rule of law has enjoyed robust popular support on Taiwan. Next, we ask what our respondents think of the statement, “When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.” The result is not different from the previous observation. About two-thirds of our respondents don’t think that judges should accept the view of executive branch (with 54% disagreeing and 12% strongly disagreeing). Lastly, we asked our respondents if they agree or disagree with the statement that, “If the government is constantly checked [i.e. monitored and supervised] by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.” Again more than two-thirds of our respondents think that the

government ought to be checked by legislature. Both the principle of horizontal accountability and separation of powers have enjoy widespread acceptance in Taiwan. These findings reinforce our confidence that the cultural foundation for a liberal democracy is already well developed despite some lingering doubts about the suitability of democracy.

Table 16 Support for Liberal Democracy

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N
Ok for government to disregard law	2%	29%	55%	13%	818
Judges should accept views of executive	2%	31%	54%	12%	832
Cannot accomplish if constantly checked by legislative	3%	29%	59%	10%	850
Okay for political leader ignore the established procedure	1%	12%	71%	16%	866

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

X. Expectation about the future of democracy

Lastly, what do people on Taiwan think of the prospects of Taiwan’s democratic development in future? We ask our respondents where they expect our country to be in five years on a ten-point scale from complete dictatorship to complete democracy. Comparing with the benchmark of 7.33 (the average score when they were asked to place where our country is today), their expectation for the country’s democratic development is a very modest one, predicting a glacial movement toward nearly full democracy. The average score is only 7.91, slightly more than a half-point ahead of what they think of where their country is today. Also, a large standard deviation (1.90) also suggests that people hold different expectations for Taiwan’s political future; some are more optimistic and others are less optimistic. (See table 17)

Table 17 Expectation about the future of democracy

Item	Mean	SD	N
Place our country under the present government	7.33	1.79	1232
Place our country to be in five years	7.91	1.90	958

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Then, we compared the numeric responses to the present evaluation and future expectation to determine whether the citizenry tends to be optimistic or pessimistic about the future of democratic

change. This comparison enables us to identify seven different patterns of prediction: for example, with some predicting a movement from a limited democracy (scoring 6 or 7) into a full (or nearly full) democracy (scoring 8, 9 or 10), therefore considering Taiwan to be “a developing democracy”. At the other extreme, some people predict an “authoritarian reversal”, i.e. the country will regress from a democracy (scoring above 5) back to an authoritarian system (scoring 5 or below). Still others see the possibility of a “struggling democracy,” falling from a full or nearly full democracy to a limited democracy. The most notable difference between this predictive measure and the assessment of the present condition is the degree of certainty held by our respondents. There are 1,232 valid cases (about 88% of the total sample) for the later, but there are only 958 (only about 70% of the sample size) for the former. A large number of people simply don’t know what to make of Taiwan’s democratic future (see Table 14). As Table 18 indicates, only 5% of our respondents project “authoritarian reversal.” On the other hand, a large number people (44.5%) are quite confident of Taiwan’s democratic future, predicating the scenario of “consolidating democracy”, i.e. Taiwan is and will remain to be a full or nearly full democracy. In addition to this, 19.5% of respondents project a “developing democracy.” Noticeably, a minority is less sanguine about Taiwan’s political future. For example, 16% of our respondents predict a “struggling democracy” and 7.5% still believe that Taiwan will be trapped in a scenario of “authoritarian persistence”, i.e. Taiwan is still an authoritarian system (scoring 5 or below) and will remain so in the next five years. Despite the existence of these pessimistic minorities, close to two-thirds of Taiwan’s citizens remain optimistic.

Table 18 Expectation about the future of democracy

Category	Frequency
1.Authoritarian persistence	7.50%
2.Authoritarian reversal	5.00%
3.Transition to a limited democracy	3.90%
4.Transition to a (nearly) full democracy	3.20%
5.Struggling democracy	16.40%
6.Developing democracy	19.50%
7.Consolidating (maturing) democracy	44.50%
N=954	

Source: 2001 East Asia Barometer Survey in Taiwan

Conclusion

On several counts, our findings hold out some hopeful signs for Taiwan's new democracy. A great majority of Taiwanese citizens register a guarded optimism about the island's democratic future. Most of them appreciate the marked changes taking place in the areas of political freedom, the rule of law and opportunities for citizen participation. A substantial percentage of them thought that democratization has brought more effective control of political corruption. However, our data also show the more worrisome aspects of recent developments in Taiwan. The popular commitment to democracy is not rock-solid. Only about half of the population rejects all plausible non-democratic alternatives. Almost the same proportion of people are dissatisfied with the way democracy works as are satisfied after the country experienced its real transfer of power after being democratized. Also a great majority saw deterioration in the capacity of the political system to deliver economic growth, social equity, and law and order. Also not a small minority also considered the political system to be more corrupt and less responsive to their voices and concerns. It is not a pretty picture. The most stunning finding is that most people distrust some key institutions in representative democracies, such as parliament and political parties. The recent incidence of fierce partisan bickering and endless political gridlock apparently has left a very negative impression on most people. In the past three years, the citizens of Taiwan have experienced for the first in their lives governance under an elected minority president who lacks reliable legislative majorities and must battle for every policy initiative. The problem of divided government has virtually brought the political system to a state of total paralysis. The imminent governance crisis has not only seriously eroded public trust in political parties and parliament, but also led to widespread dissatisfaction with the way democracy works. It might have also dampened the popular commitment to democratic legitimacy. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for the existing institutional deficiencies, nor for ambiguities in Taiwan's constitutional design, because it is very unlikely that any future proposals for constitutional amendment can enlist the support of the required three-quarters majority of the parliament. Thus, putting a conclusive end to the constitutional conundrum and laying down a solid institutional foundation for Taiwan's new democracy may remain an illusive goal. Taiwan's new political system will still face a series of daunting challenges as the new democracy slogs along the road to consolidation.

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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.

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

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

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