

ASIAN  BAROMETER

A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

Working Paper Series: No. 117

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Do People in East Asia Truly Prefer  
Democracy to its Alternatives?  
Western Theories versus East Asian Realities

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# **Asian Barometer**

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## **Working Paper Series**

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**Globalbarometer**

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

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**Do People in East Asia Truly Prefer Democracy to its Alternatives?  
Western Theories versus East Asian Realities**

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## **Do People in East Asia Truly Prefer Democracy to its Alternatives? Western Theories versus East Asian Realities**

### **Abstract**

What type of political systems do people in East Asia truly prefer most? Is it democracy, as the Western theses of universal and liberal democratization suggest? If this is not the case, what other types do East Asians favor? To address these questions, we first review previous survey-based studies on cultural democratization, and highlight their limitations especially in comparing publicly revealed preferences for democracy across different cultures and regions. Then we propose a new typology of privately concealed preferences for a variety of political systems. Finally, we analyze the fourth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey to evaluate the Western theses. The analysis reveals that most people in both democratic and nondemocratic East Asia privately prefer to live in non-democracy while publicly avowing democracy as the best system of government. On the bases of this and other findings, we conclude that the Western theses of cultural democratization obscure the contours and dynamics of cultural change taking place in the region. To fully reveal and accurately account for those realities mostly concealed from the public, we need to develop alternatives to the concepts and theories available from the extant literature on cultural democratization.

**Do People in East Asia Truly Prefer Democracy to its Alternatives?  
Western Theories versus East Asian Realities**

“Strikingly, the belief that democracy is the best (in principle at least) is overwhelming and universal.”

Larry Diamond (2008: xi)

“Even as we raise questions about how soon everyone will get there, we should have no doubt as to what kind of society lies at the end of History.”

Francis Fukuyama (2014)

“public aspirations toward democratic ideals, values, and principles, or the demand for democracy, proved almost universal around the globe.”

Pippa Norris (2011, 10)

“Thus, the desire for democracy becomes more liberal with emancipative values.”

Christian Welzel (2013, 14)

“Studying people’s aspiration toward democracy without carefully examining what democracy means to them would cause researchers to reach inaccurate conclusions about the relationship between people’s support for democracy, regime change, and democratic consolidation.”

Tianjin Shi (2014: 220)

Over the past 15 years, the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS hereafter) has conducted four successive waves of parallel surveys throughout East Asia. These surveys have asked people in the region to appraise democracy and its alternatives as competing systems of government from absolute and relative perspectives. In every round of the surveys, the majority of East Asians in both democratic and nondemocratic countries have expressed greater affinity for democracy and less antipathy to it. These findings appear to be in accordance with the Western theories that hold that the surging waves of modernization and globalization are making the whole world democratic and that these waves will eventually enable liberal democracy to win over all other forms of government throughout the globe.

Is democracy really emerging as a universal value, as Amartya Sen (1999) and Larry Diamond (2008a) claim? Is democracy also emerging as the universally preferred system of government, as theorists of modernization and neo-modernization<sup>1</sup> advocate (Beetham 2009; Diamond 2013; Klingemann 2012; Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 2010; Norris 2011; Welzel 2013)? Is liberal democracy likely to win over all other democratic or non-democratic forms of government as the most preferred political system, as Francis Fukuyama (2014) continues to claim? These are the central questions we choose to explore in an attempt to test the Western theses and theories of cultural democratization in the context of East Asia.

To evaluate these theses and theories properly, our study aims to uncover the diversity of political systems that East Asians truly prefer, which is often concealed from the public, and compare hidden preferences for democracy with those for autocracy and other non-democratic systems. Ascertaining both *revealed* and *concealed* democratic system preferences, this study also aims to estimate the extent to which the former are falsified or inflated over the latter (Kuran 1990, 1995; see also Goodwin 2011; Kurzban 2004; Lu 2013).

Underlying this study is the widely-accepted truth that most people often refuse to reveal truthfully in public their genuine likes and dislikes for socially desirable or undesirable phenomena (Berinsky 1999; Turner and Martin 1989). Between these two types of democratic preferences introduced above, therefore, we assume that the *concealed* are more genuine and trustworthy than the *revealed*, and seek to determine whether the former have become prevalent throughout the region, as the theses of universal and liberal democratization suggest.

The outline of this paper is as follows. First, we highlight the three unique characteristics of East Asia as a region in democratization. Then we review previous studies on citizen support for democracy, and highlight their limitations in unraveling the true meanings of avowed democratic system preferences. In an attempt to overcome these limitations, we propose a new typology of concealed system preferences, which ascertains in sequence the types and subtypes of political systems people prefer without using the word “democracy” (“the D-word” hereafter). We apply this typology to the latest, fourth wave of the ABS, and examine the democratization theses and the inflation of democratic preferentialism in the context of East Asia. Finally, we explore the theoretical implications of the key survey findings for future research on cultural change and continuity in this and other non-Western regions.

### **East Asia in the Global Wave of Democratization**

At the outset, it should be noted that East Asia occupies a unique place in the study of cultural and institutional democratization. Institutionally, it represents the only region worldwide that has been “blessed” with socioeconomic development and yet “cursed” with slow democratization (Diamond, Plattner and Chu 2013; Fukuyama 2012; Shin 2008, 2012). Unlike Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America, this region became socioeconomically modernized under authoritarian rule. Yet, even three decades after the third wave of democratization reached its

shores, most of the political systems in the region remain autocratic, while all of its democracies remain “flawed.”<sup>2</sup>

Culturally Confucian legacies of meritocracy and paternalism have shaped the political mindsets of ordinary people and political leaders in East Asia for millennia (Shi 2014; Shi and Lu 2010; Schuman 2015; Tu 1996). Unlike their peers in the West, many of them remain attached to the Confucian principle of virtuous leadership, and understand democratic government more in substantive than procedural terms. As a result, upholders of the principle are very reluctant to understand democracy merely in liberal terms (Huang 2014; Huang, Chu and Chang 2013; Lu 2013; Lu and Shi 2014; Shin 2012).

Moreover, autocracies are known to enjoy greater citizen support than democracies within the region (Chu, Pan and Wu 2015; Shi 2014). In authoritarian countries like Singapore and Vietnam, for example, most ordinary citizens feel proud of their autocratic systems of government, which they regard as highly responsive to their preferences. In democracies like Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, by contrast, most citizens do not find their democratic systems to be responsive to their preferences. Nor do they take pride in the systems in which they live. Such legacies of authoritarian rule and paternalistic Confucian culture are likely to influence the ways in which East Asians react to democracy and other political systems in comparison to people in other regions.

### **Previous Public Opinion Research on Democracy and Democratization**

For decades, waves of global and regional barometer surveys have repeatedly revealed that ordinary people throughout the world find democracy to be valuable and prefer it to autocratic regimes. In the last two waves (the fifth and sixth) of the World Values Survey (WVS), for example, large majorities of more than 95 percent of the adult populations in all of the regions,



including Africa and the Middle East, were in favor of democracy for either themselves or their countries (see Figure 1). In a 2013 global survey that the United Nations conducted in 194 countries, democracy was chosen as one of the top three priorities for a future global development agenda (UNDP 2013). Even in Africa, the world's poorest region, it is preferred to any other kind of government in 30 out of the 34 countries, which the latest, sixth round of the Afrobarometer surveyed in 2014 and 2015.

(Figure 1)

From these findings, it is apparent that democracy has achieved an overwhelming mass approbation throughout the world. It is also apparent that democracy even as a system of government has become “virtually the only political model with a global appeal” (Inglehart 2003, 52; Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 264) and “really the only broadly legitimate form of government in the world” (Diamond 2008b, 13). Nonetheless, we need to carefully evaluate the validity of the key assumptions that researchers have made in designing survey questions and analyzing responses to those questions before we endorse the claims of universal democratization: “the belief that democracy is the best (in principle at least) is overwhelming and universal.” (Diamond 2008a, xi); and “the desire for democracy is very much a global phenomenon.” (Diamond 2013).

The various claims of universal democratization are predicated on two dubious assumptions about democratic citizenship. One assumption is that contemporary global citizenries are capable of understanding democracy. The other is the assumption that their understandings of democracy are, by and large, similar and thus can be comparable across different cultures and regions. These assumptions are grounded mostly in the mistaken belief that

understanding democracy represents a single dimensional concept, which involves nothing more than identifying or naming its properties.

Contrary to this belief, it is a multidimensional phenomenon that involves not only *identifying conceptually* its essential properties but also *differentiating empirically* those properties from the ones of its alternatives (Sartori 1987: 183-185; see also McClosky and Brill 1983; McClosky and Zeller 1984). Unlike what proponents of the universal democratization theses claim, most citizens, especially of authoritarian and post-authoritarian countries, are often found incapable of *differentiating* democratic regimes from autocratic ones, although they are able to *identify* or name some of its properties, such as freedom and elections (Cho 2015; Shin 2015; Welzel and Kirsch 2016; see also Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007).

Equally dubious is the assumption that ordinary people understand democracy so similarly that their overt reactions to it, either positive or negative, can be compared meaningfully regardless of differences in the cultures and regions in which they live. In the universal democratization theses, democracy is, by and large, regarded as an uncontested concept whose meanings are widely shared throughout the world. Since its meanings are assumed to differ little in kind, therefore, “support for democracy can be interpreted similarly in different contexts” (Moncagatta 2015, 5).

No matter how the cultural, economic, and political circumstances in which people live differ from each other, all avowed or self-proclaimed admirers of democracy are often assumed to understand it in the same or similar way, which is called “an illusionary appearance of comparability” (Heath, Fisher and Smith 2005, 321; see also Schedler and Sarfield 2007, 640). This assumption has led advocates of the theses to compare affirmative responses to the questions containing the “D-word” across regions of the world, and to proclaim its universal

appeal. Regardless of how differently they understand democracy, therefore, all those who respond positively to any of the survey questions containing the “D-word” are regarded as admirers or approvers of democracy.

In the real world of politics, however, democracy is a highly contested concept, which often means various things in different contexts. Its meanings, therefore, vary a great deal in quality and quantity across space and time (Arliely 2015; Arliely and Davidov 2011; de Regt 2013; Moncagatta 2015). When asked to define the term “democracy,” some name only one property while others identify many, including even those of authoritarian political systems (Canache 2012; Chu *et al.* 2008; Welzel 2013). In Southern Africa, for example, people revealed as many as 10 different categories of positive, negative, and neutral meanings when asked to define democracy in their own words (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

Even within Europe, people who have lived their entire lives in a democracy are also found to understand it in six different patterns, including electoral, liberal, social, direct, inclusive, and representative (Ferrin and Kriesie 2014; Moncagatta 2015). Undoubtedly, such qualitative and quantitative differences in popular conceptions of democracy make it highly *superficial* and *unreliable* to determine its universal appeal by counting and comparing sheer numbers of those who reply positively to the questions containing the “D-word”, regardless of how they understand it.<sup>3</sup>

Further, the proclaimed universal prevalence of democracy over autocracy is based on another dubious assumption that the former is the only viable alternative to the latter and that the latter also represents the opposite of the former (Levitsky and Way 2010; Rose 2009). Therefore, those who favor democracy more than authoritarianism while not rejecting the latter are all regarded as supporters of democracy, even though many of them favor some features of

authoritarian rule together with those of democracy (Chu *et al.* 2008; Dalton and Shin 2014; Klingemann 2014; Norris 2011, 2012).

In citizen politics, however, those who favor both democracy and authoritarianism simultaneously are neither democrats nor authoritarians. They are supporters of a hybrid system, which mixes some components of both systems (Bratton 2002, Mauk 2014; Shin 2015a). As a result, many previous survey-based studies have often obscured the diversity of individuals' system preferences and oversimplified a variety of political systems people really favor into just two broad types (Schedler and Sarfield 2007, 643). Such practices have led to an overestimation of democratic system preferences and an underestimation of non-democratic system preferences.

Finally, when citizens find democracy to be the best system of government, they are often assumed to accept a democratic political system *in its entirety* and *at once* instead of embracing it incrementally in sequence over a long period of time. Once they accept it as a political ideal, for example, they are viewed to support its policymaking institutions and the procedures to run those institutions. In the real world of politics in which people live, however, democracy is structured into multiple levels or tiers; it evolves in different sequences and matures slowly in different phases (Dahl 1971; Rose and Shin 2001; Tilly 2000). At each of these levels, people often evaluate whether democracy works better than its alternatives before they endorse it in part.

Therefore, it is highly unrealistic to assume that they embrace a democratic political system *in its entirety* and *at once*, as implied in the universal democratization theses that liken an approval of democracy in principle to full support for it in practice. It is more realistic to assume that they remain supportive of it at some levels while rejecting it at other levels for a substantial period of time, because all those levels may not be able to perform democratically in unison.

Normatively, moreover, it is desirable to assume that “in order to give meaningful support for democracy, people must learn what democracy means in practice.” (Rose 2007, 111).

The above reviews of previous studies make it clear that the claims of universal and liberal democratization result from either highly optimistic assumptions made about democratic citizenship and/or overly simplistic assumptions about the evolution of democratic political order. Assuming that ordinary people in all regions of the world do approve of democracy in its entirety with an accurate and comparable understanding of what it is, previous studies have overestimated individuals’ support for democracy as the preferred system of government. At the same time, the same studies have underestimated support for hybrid and other nondemocratic systems of government, assuming that people’s political preferences are not only dichotomous in kind but also invariant across the varying structural levels of political system.

### **Conceptualization**

What should be done to ascertain the diversity of political systems in which ordinary people in East Asia truly prefer to live? What should be done to establish the relative priority of their preferred systems? To address these questions more accurately than what was done in previous studies, we should first note that contemporary global citizenries usually equate the term “democracy” with a political ideal such as freedom and equality (Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007; Rose 2007). Throughout the world, therefore, people even without any knowledge or experience of democratic politics avow their support for it by replying positively to the questions containing this word in the belief that it is socially desirable to do so. To minimize such a positive bias resulting from the “D-word”, therefore, responses to any of those questions cannot be employed as a reliable and/or valid indicator of democratic system preference or support (Bratton 2010; Chu and Huang 2010).<sup>4</sup>

Further, we need to conceptualize democracy exclusively as a political system that exists in the real world in which we live, not as a political ideal. As a political system in actual existence, it represents a phenomenon with a multitude of properties, and it is also multi-tiered phenomenon whose properties are hierarchically structured into different layers or levels (Easton 1965, 1975; see also Norris 1999). As a multi-tiered phenomenon, its properties operate neither independently nor simultaneously. Instead, they operate interactively or sequentially from one level of its structure to another. In this study, therefore, the development of a democratic political system is viewed to evolve *sequentially* in stages over a long period of time (Huntington 1991; Rose and Shin 2001; Tilly 2000).

Analytically, a democratic political system-in-practice can be disaggregated into three levels of its structural makeup (Fuchs 2009).<sup>5</sup> The most fundamental level consists of the core tenets of democratic politics, which are formally embodied in the state constitution. As its ideological or intellectual foundation, these tenets identify and distinguish it from all other non-democratic types of political systems. They also define the relationships between citizens and their leaders and the specific roles they should play in the political process. The second level involves the structure of a regime and its political institutions, such as elections and political parties, which are established on the basis of those core tenets of democratic politics. The third and least fundamental level consists of the methods or processes of governing those institutions and putting into action their policy goals on a daily basis. Liberal and non-liberal democracies, for example, differ in the process of ensuring personal freedoms and rights or providing for a minimum level of welfare.

Theoretically, therefore, this study makes three assumptions about the dynamics of institutional democratization. The first concerns the *slow and uneven* development of a

democratic political system over a long period of time. The second concerns its hierarchical structure that is divided into multiple levels or tiers. And the third relates to the *varying priority* of these structural levels and their properties. These assumptions, considered together, suggest a sequential approach that allows for analyzing the evolution of a democratic political system by breaking it into various subunits and sequencing interactions among those subunits. It should be noted that these three assumptions contrast sharply with those of the previous studies—simultaneity and parity—that often underlie the techniques of factor analysis and summative indexing (Schedler and Sarfield 2007).

In parallel to the process of institutional democratization, this study makes similar assumptions about cultural democratization taking place in the minds of individual citizens. As the democratization of a political system evolves sequentially in stages, people do not embrace all the principles and practices of democratic politics *in toto* and *at once*; instead, they embrace those incrementally over a long period of time.<sup>6</sup> Having lived most or all of their lives in nondemocratic rule, moreover, many people in authoritarian and post-authoritarian countries do not think that a democratic system is fully capable of solving all the pressing problems facing their countries.

This pattern of thinking, in turn, motivates them to remain incoherent by rejecting democracy as a method of daily governance while accepting it as regime structure or vice versa. Naturally, ordinary people react differently and slowly to the structures and processes of democratic and other political systems as they become more familiar with them. In view of such reactions, the present study seeks to unravel the dynamics of political system preferences from the perspective of disaggregating them into developmental sequences.

## **Measurement**

As in other regions, people in East Asia are known to recognize democracy as a socially desirable phenomenon (Chu *et al.* 2008). Do they react more positively to the questions containing the word “democracy” than those which do not contain it? Do they also reveal greater affinity for democracy in public than what they hold in private and try to conceal from the public? To address these questions, we culled from the ABS fourth wave instrument three sets of items, one for revealed preferences and two for concealed preferences for democracy and non-democracy.

### **Revealed Democratic Preferences**

The fourth wave of the ABS asked a pair of “D-word” questions tapping the relative preferences of democracy to its alternatives. One of these questions (Q125), which Juan Linz formulated for his Spanish surveys conducted in the 1970s, asks respondents to choose one of three options. They are: (1) “Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government.”; (2) “Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.”; and (3) “For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a nondemocratic regime.”

The other question (Q129), which Richard Rose (1966) formulated, is based on the notion of democracy as a lesser evil. It asks: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.” In this study, we choose those who answered affirmatively—strongly agree and agree—to either or both of these two questions as avowed or revealed admirers of democratic system.



### **Concealed Democratic Preferences**

The ABS asked two sets of four questions to ascertain democratic and other system preferences without using the “D-word” (for the wording of all these questions, see Appendix B and C). One set deals with three core principles of democracy and its essential practice of press freedom.<sup>7</sup> The other set focuses on the practices of non-democratic politics, including those of civilian dictatorship, military rule, one-party government, and technocracy. In order to determine the variety of political systems East Asians favor, including those that are unknown in the extant literature, we consider together responses to these two sets of questions *in sequence* according to the importance or priority of the authoritarian or democratic system property each question probed.

What core principles undergird the most fundamental level of all democratic political systems in practice? From numerous principles of democratic politics, we chose the most widely-known three principles of popular rule, which President Abraham Lincoln coined and popularized: (1) government of the people (active citizenship), (2) government by the people (popular elections of government leaders), and (3) government for the people (responsive leadership). Of these three principles, we consider government by the people prior to the two others because the implementation of the two others requires the existence of the popularly elected government.

Without such a government by the people, citizens are not able to meaningfully participate in the political process and demand governmental actions without retaliation, nor can they hold their leaders accountable to them and responsive to their demands. Therefore, those who refuse to uphold this pivotal principle of electing political leaders are called supporters of a nondemocratic political system regardless of whether they endorse the two other principles of

popular rule. Upholders of this principle, on the other hand, are divided into three groups, as discussed below, depending on whether they are willing to abide by the outcomes of elections and endorse the two other principles of popular rule: government of the people and for the people.

To determine whether East Asians recognize the democratic principle of forming the government by the people, the ABS asked a question with two choices (Q82): “Political leaders are chosen by the people through open and competitive elections.” and “Political leaders are chosen on the basis of their virtue and capability even without election.” Those who refuse to endorse the democratic method of electing political leaders are considered non-democrats. These non-democrats are divided into two groups. One group supports *meritocracy* by favoring the method of selecting the virtuous and competent. The other group comprises supporters of *non-electoral autocracy*, who do not favor either of the two methods of electing and selecting political leaders.

It is necessary to examine whether those who recognize the method of competitive elections favor competitive elections in name only. To this end, we consider their responses to another question (Q131), which asked whether they would agree or disagree with the statement “Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.” Those who agree with this statement favor a one-party state in which the ruling party may allow its members to compete with other members of the party, but not with those of other opposition parties. Accordingly, they are classified as supporters of *one-party electoral autocracy*.

Can all East Asians who oppose such one-party rule be considered supporters of democratic politics, which always involves competitions among multiple parties? To determine whether opponents of a one-party state are unconditionally committed to such truly competitive

democratic elections, it is crucial to examine their willingness to abide by the outcomes of those elections.

To evaluate such willingness, we consider their responses to an additional set of three questions the ABS asked. Specifically, the ABS asked respondents whether they would agree or disagree with the nondemocratic practices of dissolving popularly elected parliament and returning to civilian dictatorship (Q130), military rule (Q132), or technocracy (Q133) (see Appendix C for the wording of these questions). Those who favor the return to any of these nondemocratic systems are not fully committed to the democratic system of multiparty competitions. Therefore, they are considered supporters of *multiparty electoral autocracy*.

Among opponents of a one-party state, there are voters who do not favor the return to nondemocratic government. These voters, unlike those of *multiparty electoral autocracy*, are willing to abide by the outcomes of the elections, regardless of whether those outcomes run counter to their own preferences. These voters, who are unconditionally committed to electoral competitions among multiple political parties, are classified as supporters of either a *democratic* or *hybrid* system, depending on whether they are able to recognize the two other principles of popular rule, that is, government of the people and government for the people. Those who accept both principles are classified as supporters of *democracy*, while those who refuse to do so are classified as supporters of a *hybrid system*, which combines the democratic practice of competitive multiparty elections with those of guardianship (Chan, 2007; Dahl 1980).

For the first of these two principles, we choose the question (Q80) which asked respondents to choose one of the two statements: “Government is our employee, the people should tell government what needs to be done.” and “The government is like parents, it should decide what is good for us.” For the second principle, we choose another question (Q79) with a

choice of the two statements: “Government leaders implement what voters want.” and “Government leaders do what they think best for the people.” Those who chose the first statement in each pair are classified as supporters of a *democratic system*. Those who refused to do so on either or both of the two pairs are classified *as supporters of a hybrid system*, who combine the democratic practices of competitive elections with the nondemocratic principles of guardianship or paternalism.<sup>8</sup>

Hybrid system supporters are divided into two groups. Those in the first group are *fully supportive* of guardianship by refusing to recognize either of the two principles of democratic politics: one that requires citizens to participate even in the non-electoral political process and the other that requires democratically elected political leaders to follow what they demand. Those in the second group are *partially supportive* of it by refusing to recognize one of those two principles.

Those in favor of democracy are divided into two groups, liberal and non-liberal, depending upon their responses to the question (Q81) the ABS asked to discern their reactions to the practice of censoring the news media. Those who want the government “to prevent the media from publishing things that might be politically destabilizing” are supporters of *non-liberal democracy*. Those who believe that “the media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control” are supporters of *liberal democracy*.

In summary, the typology we propose above portrays a more comprehensive and nuanced account of system preferences than what is known in the extant literature. While the literature is concerned primarily with identifying and comparing those in favor of democratic and autocratic systems (Carrion 2008; Chu and Huang 2010; Dalton and Shin 2014; Jamal and Tessler 2010; Norris 2011; Schedler and Sarfield 2007; Welzel 2013), our typology allows for uncovering the

popularity of other systems like hybrid and meritocratic systems, which are deeply rooted in the political legacies of Confucianism (Bell and Li 2013). In addition, it offers a more precise account by differentiating democratic and autocratic system admirers into various subtypes. Unlike previous survey-based studies, therefore, it minimizes an overestimation of preferences for democracy and an underestimation of those for its oppressive and non-oppressive alternatives by avoiding questions which contain the socially desirable term “democracy.”

### **Revealed Preferences for Democracy**

Do East Asians approve of democracy overwhelmingly and uniformly when they are asked to reveal their views openly? For each and all of 13 countries, Figure 2 reports the proportions of those who answered affirmatively to either of the two questions (Q125 and Q129) containing the “D-word” (for the wording of these two questions, see Appendix A). The proportions of *avowed democrats* form large or overwhelming majorities ranging from a low of 71 percent in China to a high of 96 percent in Cambodia. Five countries, which include the two commonly-known liberal democracies of Japan (91%) and Korea (92%), one electoral autocracy of Malaysia (91%), and two one-party states of Cambodia (96%) and Vietnam (94%), form overwhelming majorities of more than nine-tenths. Regardless of the types of political system in which they live, East Asians prefer democracy to its alternatives. Evidently, avowed preferences for democracy are *uniformly prevalent* through the entire region of East Asia. This can be interpreted as credible evidence that supports the thesis that democracy has become the universally preferred system of government.

(Figure 2)

Still, a careful scrutiny of Figure 2 reveals that between six democratic—Japan, Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Indonesia—and seven nondemocratic countries—China, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Myanmar, there is virtually no

difference in the extent to which democracy is preferred (87% vs. 86%). More noteworthy is that such democratic system preferences are the most prevalent in Cambodia and Vietnam, the socioeconomically least developed and politically most repressive of the 13 countries the ABS surveyed. These findings cast serious doubt on the authenticity of democratic system preferences East Asians revealed in response to the two “D-word” questions.

### **Concealed Preferences for Democracy and its Alternatives**

Do all those East Asians who publicly express an approval of democracy as the best system of government truly prefer it to its alternatives? If they do not, what types of non-democracies do they favor most and least? In Figure 3, we address these questions according to the proposed sequential model of concealed system preferences. As discussed in detail above, the model evolves in five phases, starting with the principle and practice of electing political leaders in competitive multiparty elections and honoring the results of those elections through active citizenship and responsive leadership, and ending with the freedom of the press.

(Figure 3)

Figure 3 reports that East Asians favor as many as eight types and subtypes of political systems, not just two types, democracy and autocracy. Out of the eight types identified, none wins an approval even among a sizable minority of more than one-fifth, not to mention a majority. Meritocracy is the most favored by one-fifth (20%), followed by multi-party electoral autocracy (18%), one-party electoral autocracy (16%), partial hybridity (15%), full hybridity (12%), liberal democracy (9%), non-electoral autocracy (7%), and non-liberal democracy (3%). Obviously, East Asians do not favor any type of political system overwhelmingly. Instead, they are divided into all eight types, none of which is powerful enough to overwhelm the rest. The

lack of a general agreement on the preferred type of political system is a modal characteristic of political cultures in East Asia.

In Table 1, we group eight types and subtypes into our main categories, autocracy, democracy, hybridity, and meritocracy. Of these four categories, democracy is not the system of government most favored in the entire region of East Asia. Nor is it the most favored system in any of 12 countries, which asked all three sets of questions in full.<sup>9</sup> Instead, it is the least favored or one of the two least favored systems. In eight countries, which include Korea (16%), China (5%), the Philippines (8%), Thailand (10%), Singapore (14%), Cambodia (12%), Malaysia (6%), and Myanmar (6%), democracy is the least favored system. In four democratic countries, including Japan (17%), Mongolia (10%), Indonesia (14%), and Taiwan (20%), it is one of the two least favored. Even in Taiwan which registers the highest level of concealed or genuine affinity for democracy, true believers in democracy form one of the two smallest minorities.

(Table 1)

In four countries, China, the Philippines, Malaysia and Myanmar, very small minorities of less than 10 percent are *authentic democrats* who not only embrace the principles and practices of democracy but also reject those of its alternatives. Once again, these minorities contrast sharply with overwhelming majorities of up to 96 percent of East Asians who overtly revealed their preference for democracy to its alternatives. In these and all other countries, overwhelming majorities of avowed or revealed admirers of democracy are *superficial* or *spurious democrats*, who privately prefer to live in a no-democracy while publicly expressing affinity for democracy.

Among a small minority of authentic democrats, liberal democracy is far more popular than non-liberal democracy (9% vs. 3%).<sup>10</sup> This pattern prevails throughout the entire region. In

all countries, however, liberal democrats represent a small minority of less than one-fifth. Even in three liberal democracies, including Japan where a liberal democratic system has governed consecutively since 1955, much less than one-fifth (17%) embraces it as the most favored system. From this finding alone, it appears that liberal democrats are not likely to celebrate “the end of history” in East Asia, contrary to what Francis Fukuyama (2014) has repeatedly predicted over the past twenty five years.

A more notable feature of Table 1 concerns the most preferred types of political systems. In all 12 countries, one form of non-democratic systems is favored most. In seven countries, including China (64%), Mongolia (56%), Thailand (56%), Indonesia (47%), Cambodia (37%), Malaysia (36%), and Myanmar (65%), an autocratic system is most popular. A hybrid system is most popular in three countries, Japan (45%), Korea (38%), and Taiwan (43%). A meritocracy is favored most in two countries, the Philippines (34%) and Singapore (29%). In all seven countries where autocracy is most popular, electoral autocracy is more popular than non-electoral autocracy. Of six of these seven countries except China, multiparty electoral autocracy is more popular than single-party electoral autocracy.

Even in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, which represent the three most advanced democracies in the region, a hybrid system is over one and a half times more popular than either autocratic or democratic systems. Between the two less preferred systems, autocracy is more popular than democracy. The greatest popularity of a hybrid system and the greater popularity of autocracy over democracy among citizens of these democracies suggest that in East Asia decades of democratic rule have been more conducive to transforming authoritarians into hybrids than into democrats (Shin 2015a).



Further, it should be noted that autocracy still remains the most preferred system in East Asia today. In the region as a whole, supporters of this system whose popularity is widely known to have waned a great deal in the wake of global democratization, form a sizable plurality of 41 percent. They outnumber supporters of any of the three other systems by a significantly large margin of more than 10 percentage points. In all 12 countries, including Japan, more than one-fifth still prefers to live in an autocracy. Evidently, autocrats remain a powerful force to contend with throughout the entire region.

What type of political system is the most preferred among *avowed democrats*, that is, those who proclaimed democracy as the best or always preferable? Is it also an autocracy? Figure 4 shows that of the four main system types identified above, autocracy is the most popular even among these avowed admirers of democracy; a substantial minority of just under two-fifths (38%) prefers this type of non-democracy. It is followed by hybrid system (29%), meritocracy (20%), and democracy (13%). If these four main system types are combined into the two broader types of democracy and non-democracy, supporters of the former are overwhelmed by those of the latter by a very large margin of 6 to 1.

(Figure 4)

In East Asia today, a vast majority (87%) of avowed or revealed democrats comprises *superficial democrats*, who prefer to live in a non-democracy while expressing affinity for democracy in public. In all countries, they also form very large or overwhelming majorities ranging from 79 percent in Taiwan to 94 percent in Malaysia (see Figure 5). Clearly, *superficial democrats* are populated densely and ubiquitously in all countries, including Japan (81%), a 6-decade old, second-wave democracy. The predominance of these democrats throughout the entire region contrasts sharply with that of critical or assertive citizens in the old democratic

West (Dalton and Welzel 2015; Klingemann 2014; Norris 2011). It also testifies that any effort to tap preferences for democracy overtly with the questions containing the word “democracy” is bound to inflate its preferences.

(Figure 5)

### **The Inflation of Democratic Preferentialism**

To what extent do East Asians inflate their preferences for democracy to its alternatives? In which countries are such practices of inflating democratic preferences most and least pronounced? Never before have these questions been raised in any of previous survey-based studies on democracy and democratization in East Asia or other regions. To address these questions, we need to measure the extent to which adult citizens in each country embrace democracy by ignorance or mistake, which involves identifying erroneously as democracy other systems of government they truly favor. The proportion of *superficial democrats* among those citizens is chosen as an indicator of democratic preferential inflation.

In principle, scores of this indicator can vary from a low of 0 to a high of 100. A score of 0 means the complete absence of such democratic inflation; it occurs when no citizen prefers to live in a democracy either superficially or genuinely. A score of 100 refers to the highest level of such inflation where every citizen publicly proclaims democracy as the best political system but privately prefers other systems to it. The higher the scores are, the higher the levels of democratic inflation are. Yet, any scores above its midpoint of 50 can be considered to indicate that political systems suffer from a high level of the inflation.

For 12 individual countries in East Asia and the region as a whole, Figure 6 shows the rates for citizens to inflate their preferences for democracy. As expected from the above separate analyses of revealed and concealed preferences for democracy, the region as a whole registers 71,

a score which is 21 points above the index midpoint. According to this score, seven out of ten East Asians are untrustworthy or *superficial democrats*. In all 12 countries, moreover, *superficial democrats* constitute solid or large majorities of their adult citizens, ranging from a low of 56 percent in China to 83 percent in Cambodia. Evidently the inflation of democratic system preferences is a region-wide phenomenon.

(Figure 6)

In eight countries, the index tops 67, a score which indicates that as many as two out of three adult citizens are *superficial democrats*. A careful scrutiny of Figure 6 reveals that such a high level of democratic inflation is not confined to countries in either democratic or nondemocratic East Asia. In both democratic and nondemocratic countries, as many as four out of six countries are currently experiencing such a high level of inflation. In addition, six countries in each sub-region average an identical level of inflation (71%). These findings indicate that the two sub-regions are alike in experiencing a high level of democratic preferential inflation, which stems from false or superficial desire for democratic rule among their citizens. Apparently, this inflation has deterred countries in democratic East Asia from becoming full democracies and countries in nondemocratic East Asia from becoming democracies. Therefore, it can be theorized as a powerful force that has kept the region as a laggard in the current wave of global democratization.

### **Theoretical Implications**

What types of people in East Asia truly believe in the virtues of democracy, the system a large majority of their fellow citizens refuse to embrace in private? What distinguishes such true or authentic believers of democracy from those of autocratic and hybrid systems, the two most popular systems in the region? Following the lead of modernization (Lipset 1981; see also

Diamond 2012; Fukuyama 2014; Wucherpfennig and Deutch 2009) and neo-modernization theories (Inglehart and Welzel 2010; Welzel 2013), we compare supporters of these political systems in terms of the socioeconomic resources they command and the values they cherish for themselves and their community. The theories hold that people come to prefer liberal democracy to other political systems when socioeconomic, intellectual, and psychological resources enable them to steer their own destinies under it.

### **Socioeconomic Modernization**

To measure the levels of economic and intellectual resources East Asians command, this study employs respondents' family income and their own educational attainment as indicators of those resources. The values of these two variables are first divided into three levels each of which contains a similar number of respondents. Their three levels are combined into a summary index, which assigns them to one of five different levels of socioeconomic resources.

On this index, those placed on the bottom rung represent the poorest and most uneducated or undereducated segment of the population, while those on the top rung represent its most affluent and college-educated population. According to the theory of neo-modernization, greater access to those resources motivates people to embrace democracy and reject its alternatives (Dalton and Shin 2006; Inglehart and Welzel 2010; Klingemann 2014; Welzel 2013). Those on a higher level of the resources index, therefore, are more likely to embrace it than those on a lower level. Among those on the top, moreover, supporters of democracy are also likely to outnumber those of its alternatives. In contrast, the former are likely to be outnumbered by the latter among those on the bottom.

For each level of the five socioeconomic resources, Figure 7 shows the proportions favoring democracy and three other types of political systems. As the theory of modernization

holds, preferences for democracy increase steadily from 7 percent at the bottom level to 18 percent at the top level, while those for autocracy decrease steadily from 51 percent to 31 percent. Contrary to what is expected from the Western theory of modernization, however, preferences for a hybrid system also increase steadily from a low of 21 percent to a high of 33 percent. As a result of its rising popularity, this hybrid system, which mixes democracy with guardianship, has emerged as the most preferred system among the most modernized segment of the East Asian population.

(Figure 7)

In none of 12 countries, is democracy the most favored system even among the socioeconomically advanced segment of their populations. In none of the countries, have advances in socioeconomic modernization occasioned a shift in the most favored system from autocracy to democracy. Despite such advances, people in five countries—China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Thailand—continue to favor autocracy most. In seven countries, which include the most advanced democracies of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, the favored system has shifted to hybridity, not to democracy, in the wake of greater modernization. Evidently, advances in socioeconomic modernization in East Asia have been contributing to the hybridization of mass political culture rather than its democratization. This finding makes it clear that the central claim of the modernization theory does not hold true in the context of East Asia.<sup>11</sup>

### **Cultural Liberalization**

Do East Asians also express greater affinity especially for liberal democracy when they enjoy a greater amount of freedom to disagree with other people and disobey those in authority? To measure their liberal value orientations, we chose from the ABS instrument the four items that observe the extent to which East Asians feel emancipated from the traditional authorities that

would proscribe the freedom of personal and interpersonal life. The four chosen norms deal, respectively, with respecting the authority of parents (Q60), mothers-in-law (Q61), teachers (Q62), and government leaders (Q142) (for the wording of these questions, see Appendix D). Responses expressing the unwillingness to abide by these four norms are equally weighted and combined into a summary index that scales personal emancipation into five levels.

On this index, the lowest of these levels indicates being fully adherent or bound to the norms, while the highest level indicates being fully detached or emancipated from them. Those placed at a higher level on this emancipation index are more likely to favor democracy than those at a lower level. Conversely, the former are less likely to favor a non-democracy than the latter. Among the former, democracy is expected to be more popular than its alternatives. Among the latter, in contrast, those alternatives are expected to be more popular than democracy.

Figure 8 shows that at each higher level of personal freedom, those who prefer democracy increase steadily by 13 percentage points from 6 percent to 19 percent. As a result, they are three times more numerous at the highest level than at the lowest level of the emancipation index tapping such freedom. Yet even among those at the highest level who feel completely emancipated from the oppressive social norms and practices, those who favor democracy and liberal democracy constitute small minorities of one-fifth (19%) and one-seventh (15%), respectively.

(Figure 8)

As it promotes affinity for democracy, greater freedom in interpersonal life leads to greater affinity for a hybrid system, increasing it steadily from 19 percent to 37 percent. As in the case of socioeconomic resources, its rising affinity turns it into the most preferred system among those at the highest level of emancipation index. As East Asians gain greater freedom to steer

their own destinies, the political system they prefer most shifts from an autocracy to a hybrid system, not to democracy or liberal democracy. Even in the region's three most advanced democracies, it is a hybrid system, not democracy, which is most favored among the culturally liberated.

In Japan, the oldest democracy in the region, more people do not embrace liberal democracy as they gain greater freedom in their interpersonal life. As Figure 9 shows, there is virtually no significant difference in embracing it across five successive levels of emancipation. As compared to 18 percent of the least emancipated of the Japanese, for example, 16 percent of the most emancipated prefer liberal democracy. Those who prefer a hybrid system, on the other hand, steadily increase from the lowest to the highest level. As a result, they are nearly three times more numerous at the highest level than at the lowest level (50% vs. 17%). More freedom in interpersonal life is always accompanied by greater propensity for a hybrid system, while having no bearing on that for liberal democracy. Undoubtedly, this finding directly disputes the claim that freedom is more highly valued by economically prosperous people (Welzel 2013, 339). It also disputes the claim that emancipative values connect people's desire for democracy with its critical-liberal notion (Welzel and Alvarea, 2014, 81).

(Figure 9)

### **Critical Citizens**

In East Asia, therefore, do citizens tend to remain allegiant to their political system even when they embrace all the three principles of popular rule (Wang, Dalton and Shin 2006)? Or do they become highly critical of the way their political system performs, as known in the West (Dalton 2004; Dalton and Welzel 2014, Klingemann 2014; Norris 2009, 2011, 2012)? In the region, is there also a discrepancy or gap between what people desire from democracy and what they

actually experience? If there is such a gap between their democratic desires (demand) and their democratic experiences (supply), is it caused by a relatively low level of democratic supply, as the thesis of critical citizen specifies? Or is it caused by a relatively low level of democratic demand?

In East Asia, those fully committed to the principles of popular rule constitute a small minority of one-fifth (26%). More notably, most of these democrats are not critical citizens, who are *dissatisfied* with the performance of their systems as a democracy. Instead, they are *allegiant* citizens, who are *satisfied* with its democratic performance. More precisely, the former constitute a small minority of less than one-third (31%), while the latter form a substantial majority of two-thirds (69%). In every country, *allegiant* citizens, not *critical* citizens, constitute a majority of the committed to democracy in principle, although their proportions vary considerably from a low of 54 percent in Mongolia and Myanmar to a high of 88 percent in Singapore (see Figure 10). Between those who are and are not fully committed to its principles, moreover, there is no difference in critical assessments of the performance (31% vs. 31%). The predominance of *allegiant* democrats over *critical* democrats and the paucity of *critical* democrats throughout the entire region contrast sharply with what is known in the West (Klingemann 2014; Norris 2011, 2012).<sup>12</sup> In East Asia, the embrace of democratic principles does not motivate ordinary citizens to become *critical* of their political system, as it does in the West.

(Figure 10)

In the West, growing discrepancies or gaps are known to exist between citizens' aspirations for the ideals of democracy and their satisfaction with its practices mainly due to the failure of the latter to match the former (Schmitter 2015). To capture these gaps, Pippa Norris (2011, 5) has popularized the concept of democratic deficits.<sup>13</sup> In countries in East Asia, as those



in the West, there are, indeed, wide gaps between citizen demand for and institutional supply of democracy. Yet these gaps, unlike the ones found in the West, do not stem from relatively lower levels of democratic supply (democratic underperformance). Instead, they result from those of democratic demand (democratic overperformance). This indicates that such gaps vary not only in degree but also in kind. To capture a variety of those gaps that exist especially in the non-Western world, we need to differentiate their types, including those driven mostly by either or both of democratic demand and supply.<sup>14</sup>

All in all, East Asians do not react to the forces of socioeconomic and cultural modernization and political democratization in the ways the Western theories of those changes have predicted. Therefore, further advances in socioeconomic modernization and cultural emancipation from oppressive social life are not likely to transform East Asia into a region of liberal democrats, as the “end of history” thesis predicts (Dalton 2008b; Fukuyama 2014). Instead, it is more likely to remain a region of hybrid citizens.

As Giovanni Sartori (1995, 102) once reminded us, all East Asians, like everyone elsewhere, “want to be free from political oppression, but not everyone wants to join the ranks of a free demos that asserts its political will.” This may be the reason why so many people in East Asia have joined the ranks of hybrid citizens by refusing to become *critical citizens* who are “staunchly committed” to the principles of democracy while being dissatisfied with its practices (Norris 2011).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In East Asia, as in other regions of the world, people tend to falsify or inflate their genuine preferences for socially desirable phenomena (Goodwin 2011; Inglehart 2003; Kuran 1995; Kurzman 2004). As a result, a vast majority of East Asians openly expresses the view that

democracy is the most preferred system of government. Contrary to what is known in the literature (Diamond 2008b, 2013a; Norris 2011, 2012; Welzel 2013), however, three-quarters of *avowed democrats* in the region refuse to endorse the democratic principles of popular rule. Besides, three-fifths of them are not capable of distinguishing the world's best known autocratic system of China from its best known democratic system of the United States. As a result, *nominal democrats*, that is, democrats in name only who publicly approve of democracy as the best system of government without knowing exactly what it is, constitute an overwhelming majority of East Asians who express such an approval.

Although three-quarters of these avowed democrats favor electing their political leaders, a larger majority of five-sixths consist of *superficial democrats* who subscribe to the practices of autocratic governance and/or the principles of guardianship while openly expressing affinity for democracy. In none of the East Asian countries today, does even a bare majority or sizable plurality comprises *authentic democrats* who fully endorse the principles and practices of democracy while rejecting those of autocracy and other nondemocratic political systems. Among all the East Asians who privately prefer one of the four main systems identified in this study, these true believers in democracy constitute the smallest minority.

In every country, moreover, even those who are socioeconomically advanced and culturally liberated refuse to endorse democracy as the most preferred system. More surprisingly, even in Japan, the most modernized country in the region that has continuously practiced democracy for over the past six decades, a hybrid system is three times more popular than a liberal democratic system. All these findings, when considered together, raise a number of important issues with the way political scientists have studied the contours and dynamics of cultural change, which has been taking place in the minds of ordinary people in East Asia.

Conceptually, most of the tools currently available from the extant literature are intended for analyzing those contours and dynamics from the biased perspective of promoting democratization. Therefore, these tools, such as assertive and critical citizens, and democratic deficits and legitimacy, are not capable of uncovering the nondemocratic attitudes that people try to conceal from the public. Even as tools for studying democratic attitudes, they are not capable of assessing the authenticity of these attitudes. As alternatives to these tools, we introduced and tested a number of new concepts, including concealed and revealed system preferences, the inflation of democratic preferentialism, and avowed, nominal, superficial, and authentic democrats.

Methodologically, the aforementioned findings suggest that survey questions containing the word “democracy” grossly inflate the genuine views people hold about it. Responses to these “D-word” questions, like those to the questions asking people to rate their own mother in public, are highly superficial and unreliable. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the tendency for people to inflate their pro-democratic attitudes when they openly express their views on democracy. To estimate the rate of such inflated democratic preferentialism for each country, we proposed the notion of superficial democrats and calculated their proportion among its adult population. According to this measure tapping false desires for democracy, East Asia is a region suffering from a high level of democratic inflation.

Analytically, democracy as a system of government involves a multitude of properties, which emerge in different phases and evolve slowly into several levels of structure. These properties do not act in isolation from others. Nor do they matter equally in establishing and consolidating democratic political order. Accordingly, people do not embrace all these properties in *toto* and at once. To accurately understand how they react to institutional democratization,

therefore, it is absolutely warranted to analyze their reactions sequentially from multidimensional and multilevel perspectives. The proposed sequential typology of system preferences allows for an analysis of those reactions from such a perspective.

Theoretically, the Western theses of universal or liberal democratization and democratic deficits conflict with the contrasting realities of system preferences among East Asians. Throughout the entire region of East Asia, for example, people who prefer to live in a non-democracy overwhelm those who do so in a democracy. Contrary to the Western theories of neo-modernization and human emancipation that link those developments to greater support for liberal democracy, moreover, East Asians continue to prefer the former to the latter even when they become highly modernized and fully liberalized from oppressive authorities and norms. Contrary to what these theories have predicted, moreover, the surging forces of socioeconomic modernization and cultural liberalization have been orienting them toward a hybrid system more powerfully than toward liberal democracy. Even in the distant future when history reaches its end, therefore, the region is not likely to be teeming with liberal democrats (Chu and Welsh 2015; Safi 2016; Stanley and Lee 2014).

In a nutshell, political scientists in the West have recently put forward numerous claims for the universalization of democracy.<sup>15</sup> In East Asia, however, all these claims contrast sharply with the realities of non-democratic system preferences among a large majority of its citizenries, including the affluent with a college education. The claims, therefore, no longer play the role of theoretically meaningful propositions, which can advance accurate knowledge about political system change taking place in the minds of ordinary citizens in non-Western regions (Rueschemeyer 2009; Lebow and Lichbach 2007). Instead, they serve merely as “prodemocracy

rhetoric,” which Thomas Carothers (1999, 3) once found “used deliberately to obscure a contrary reality.”

What are the notable cultural and political realities evolving in East Asia that Western theories of democratization have obscured? Those realities have little to do with the contours and dynamics of either institutional or cultural democratization. They deal with those of cultural hybridization, which blends proclivities for democracy and its alternatives (Chan, Shin, and Williams 2016; Mauk 2014; Shi 2014; Shin 2015a). They also concern institutional hybridization mixing the practices of democracy and other types of political systems (Bell 2015; Bell and Li 2013; Gilley 2014; Reilly 2008, 2015). To analyze obscured realities like these changes, we should follow the theoretical leadership that the late Tianjin Shi (2014) demonstrated, and develop theories of political hybridization, which has been taking place at the levels of both individual citizens and their political systems in East Asia.<sup>16</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For reviews of important works on these subjects, see Berman (2001, 2009) and Nathan (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Of 16 independent countries in the region, only 6 countries (37%) are known in the literature as electoral or liberal democracies. Yet, the Economist Intelligence Unit (2015) rates all these 6 countries as “flawed” democracies. For further details, visit <http://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Schedler and Sarfield (2007) review the four problems of direct questions on democratic support.

<sup>4</sup> Inglehart (2003, 51-52) characterized public approvals of democracy as a “lip service” phenomenon, which results from socially desirable response behavior.

<sup>5</sup> Norris (1999) introduces a variety of multi-level analyses of political system preferences.

<sup>6</sup> In post-authoritarian and authoritarian countries, ordinary people tend to embrace democracy first as a political ideal, followed by its principles and regime structure, institutions, and processes in this order.

<sup>7</sup> Lu (2013, 121-122) offers a detailed account of the historical backgrounds to the development of these measures.

<sup>8</sup> Bell (2015) examines the Chinese model of a political system from this perspective of hybridization.

<sup>9</sup> Vietnam was not included in this analysis because the country did not ask the entire set of 8 questions tapping into system preferences.

<sup>10</sup> The ABS asked a total of 10 questions tapping into authoritarian procedural orientations. Previous analyses of all these items reveal that in East Asia, non-liberal democrats are far more numerous than their liberal peers (Shin 2012).

<sup>11</sup> According to Nathan (2016, 8), “China’s middle class broadly approves of the regime and holds less favorable views of democracy than do other social strata, making the middle class an unlikely agent of democratic change any time soon.”

<sup>12</sup> Among East Asians, dissatisfied democrats constitute a very small minority of 7 percent. This figure amounts to one-fifth of those in Europe (34%), which is reported in Klingemann (2014, 127).

<sup>13</sup> Sullivan (2016) introduces the notion of “hyperdemocracy” (too much democracy) to explain the rise of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate, and indirectly disputes the thesis of democratic deficits. Lind (2016) evaluates Sullivan’s notion of over-democratization together with Zakaria’s (1997) illiberal democracy.

<sup>14</sup> Heyne (2016) identifies the different types—positive and negative—of discrepancies Europeans experience, and examines how each type affects their democratic satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Her analysis of the European Social Survey conducted in 2012 reveals that Europeans are dissatisfied with their democracies not because of democratic deficits or underachievement but because the particular model of democracy they personally prefer does not match to what they experience in their countries.

<sup>15</sup> In the 1840s, Alexis de Tocqueville predicted an imminent universalization of democracy in his *Democracy in America*. One hundred and fifty years later, Francis Fukuyama declared in 1989 the universalization of the Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government in his essay titled “The End of History.” For a critical assessment of democratic universalism as a historical phenomenon, see Katznelson (2015) and Rosanvallon (2009).

<sup>16</sup> In his book, which was published posthumously, Tianjin Shi proposes a new theory of culture, which traces the genesis of divergent conceptions of democracy among the Chinese to the norms defining their self-interests and relations to political and other authorities. This work represents the last decade’s most original contributions to the study of political culture, and most viable alternative to the neo-modernization theory of liberal democratization.

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## Appendix

### A. Concealed Preferences for Democracy as a Political System.

Q125. 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.

For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a nondemocratic regime.

Q129. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.”

### B. Concealed Preferences for Political Systems

Let’s talk for a moment about the kind of government you would like to have in this country. Which of the following statements do you agree with most? Choose the first or the second statement.

Q79. Statement 1. Government leaders implement what voters want.

Statement 2. Government leaders do what they think is best for the people.

Q80. Statement 1. Government is our employee. The people should tell government what needs to be done.

Statement 2. The government is like parent, it should decide what is good for us.

Q81. Statement 1. The media should have the right to publish news and ideas without government control.

Statement 2. The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things tht might be politically destabilizing.

Q82. Statement 1. Political are chosen by the people through open and competitive elections.

Statement 2. Political leaders are chosen on the basis of their virtue and capability even without election.

### **C. Concealed Preferences for the Methods of Governance**

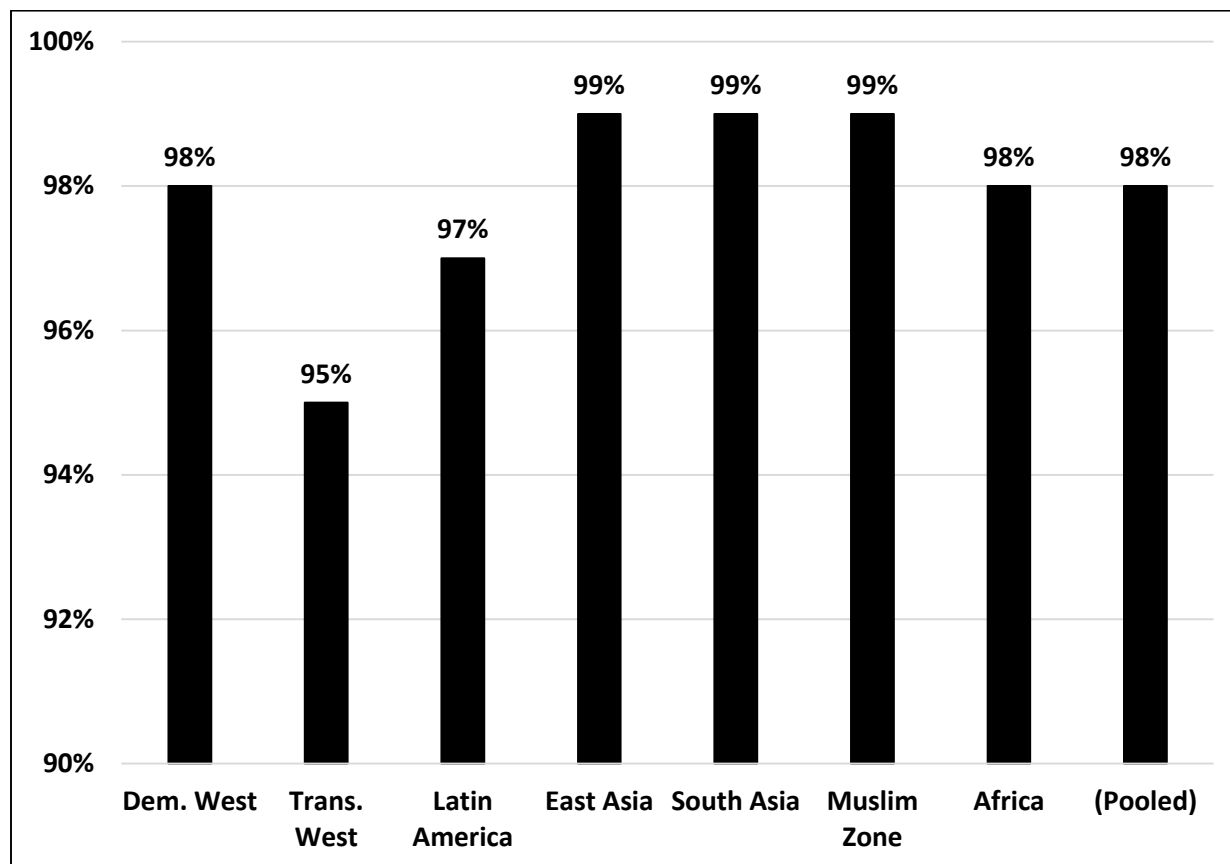
There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?

- Q130. We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.
- Q131. Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.
- Q132. The army (military) should come in to govern the country.
- Q133. We should get rid of elections and parliament and have experts make decisions on behalf of the people.

### **D. Emancipation from Traditional Authorities**

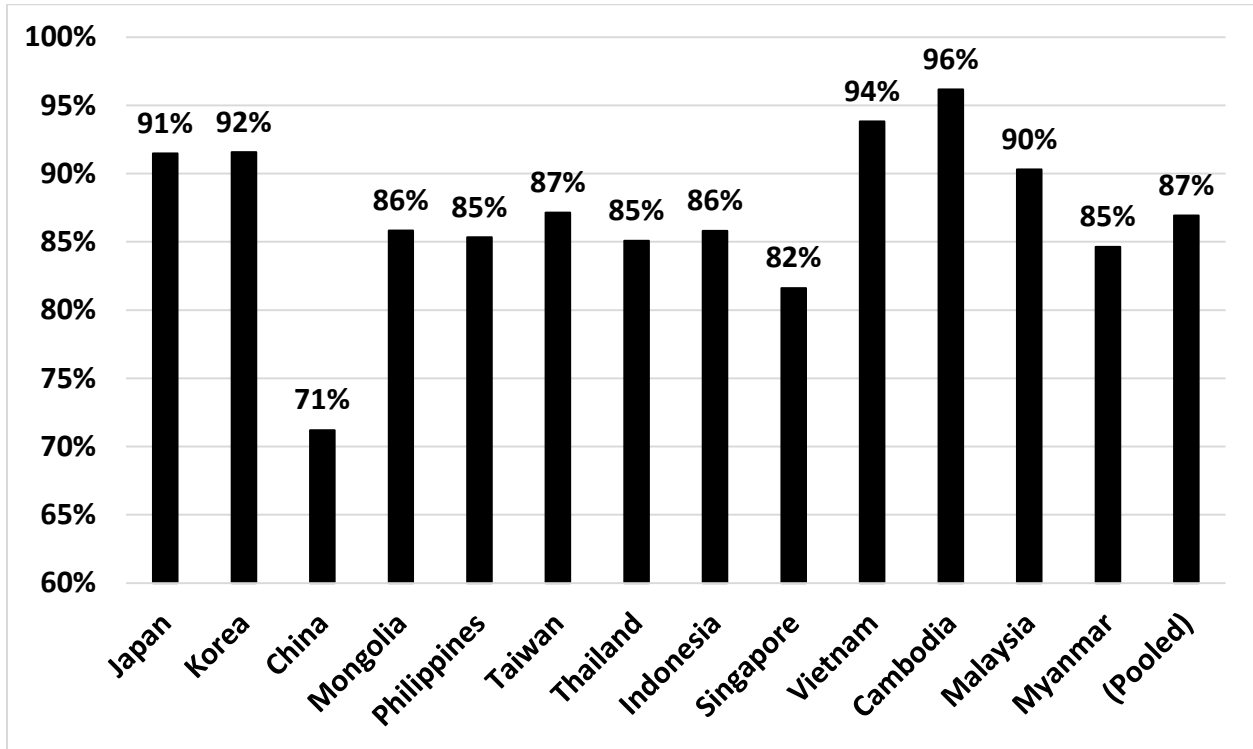
Please tell me how you feel about the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

- Q60. Even if parents demands are unreasonable, children still should what they ask.
- Q61. When a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law come into conflict, even if the mother-in-law is in the wrong, the husband should still persuade his wife to obey his mother.
- Q62. Being a student, one should not question the authority of their teachers.
- Q142. Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.

**Figure 1. Expressing Approval for Democracy among Global Citizenries**

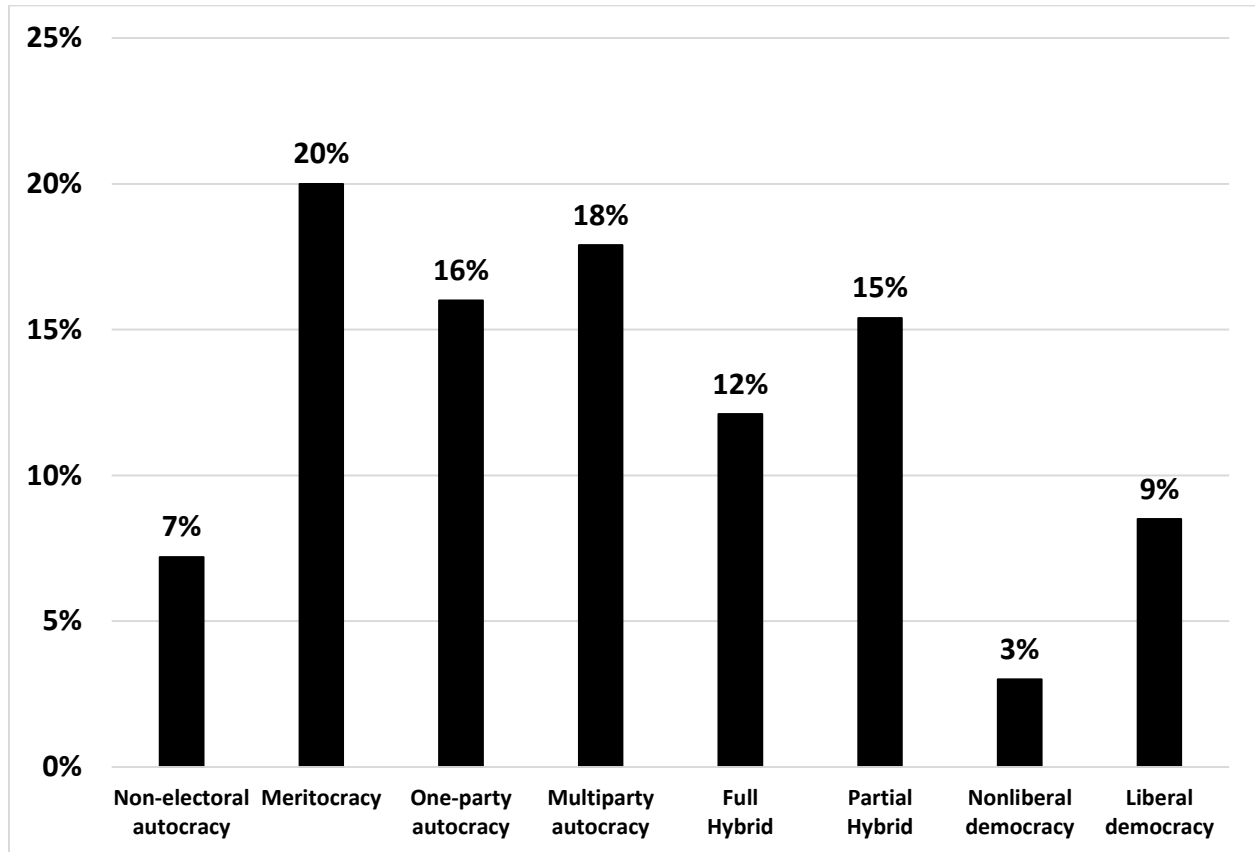
Note: The seven zones listed above are created by collapsing Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) five Western zones into the two zones of the old-democratic West and the former communist West.

Source: 2005-8 World Values Survey.

**Figure 2. Public Endorsement of Democracy as the Best System of Government**

Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

**Figure 3. A Variety of Political Systems East Asians Prefer in Private**



Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

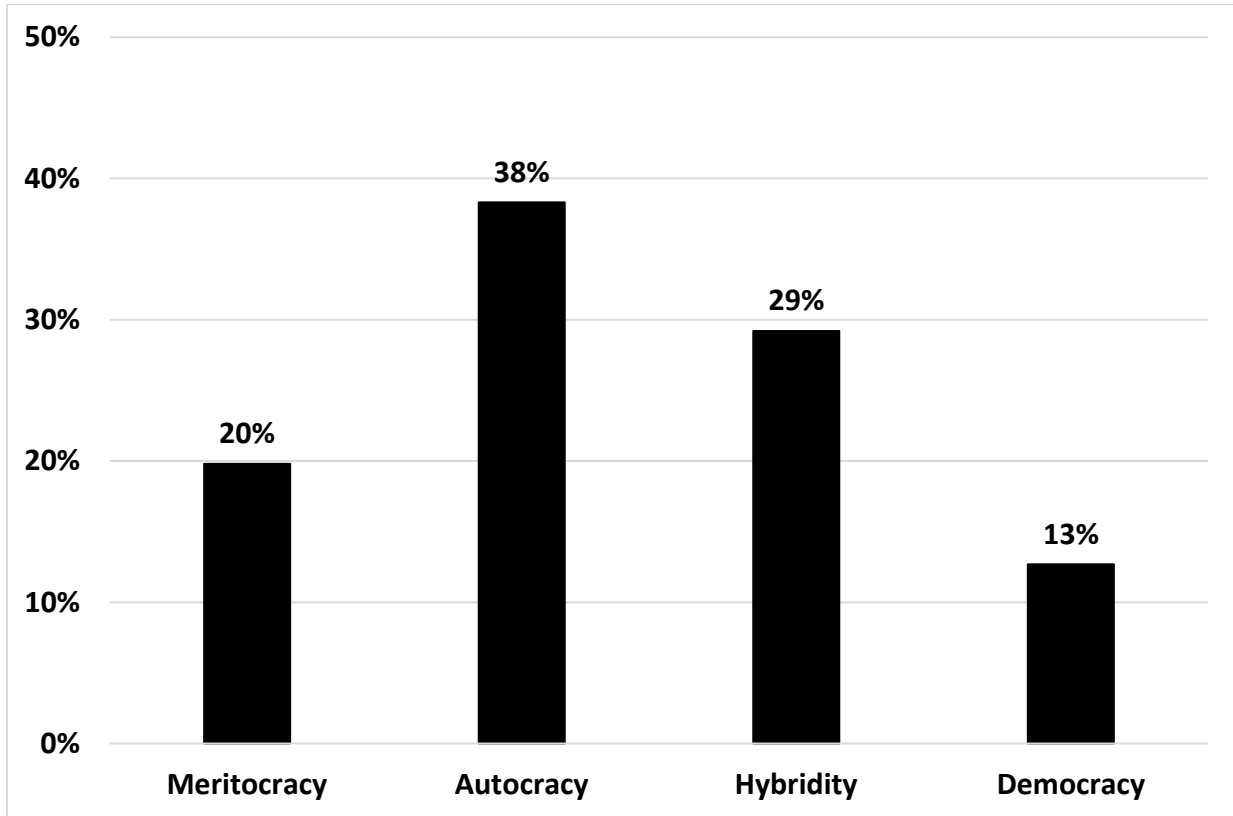


**Table 1. Concealed Preferences for Four Main Types of Political System**

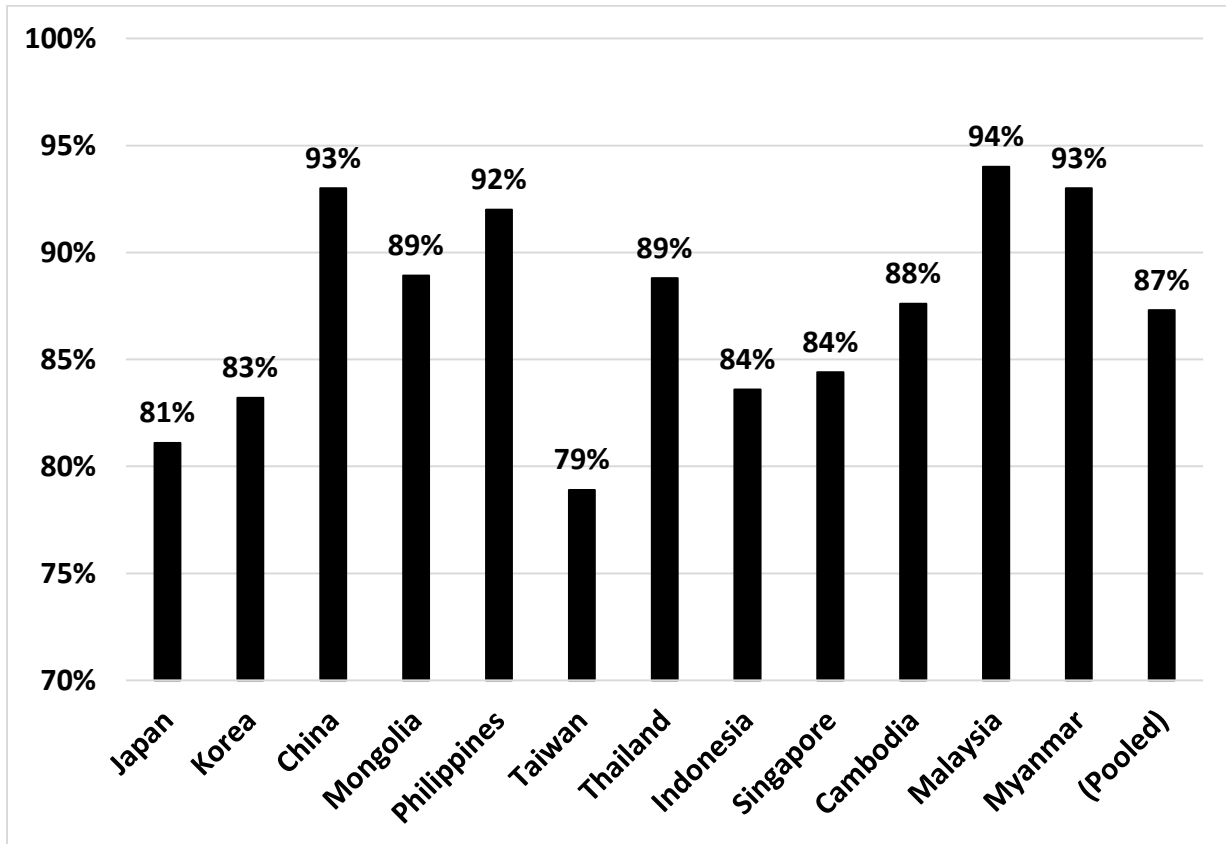
Country	Preferred Types of Political Systems			
	Meritocracy	Autocracy	Hybridity	Democracy
Japan	16%	21%	45%	17%
Korea	21%	25%	38%	16%
China	16%	64%	14%	5%
Mongolia	24%	56%	10%	10%
Philippines	34%	32%	27%	8%
Taiwan	15%	22%	43%	20%
Thailand	20%	56%	14%	10%
Indonesia	7%	48%	31%	14%
Singapore	29%	29%	28%	14%
Cambodia	17%	37%	34%	12%
Malaysia	25%	36%	33%	6%
Myanmar	16%	65%	13%	6%
(Pooled)	20%	41%	28%	11%

Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

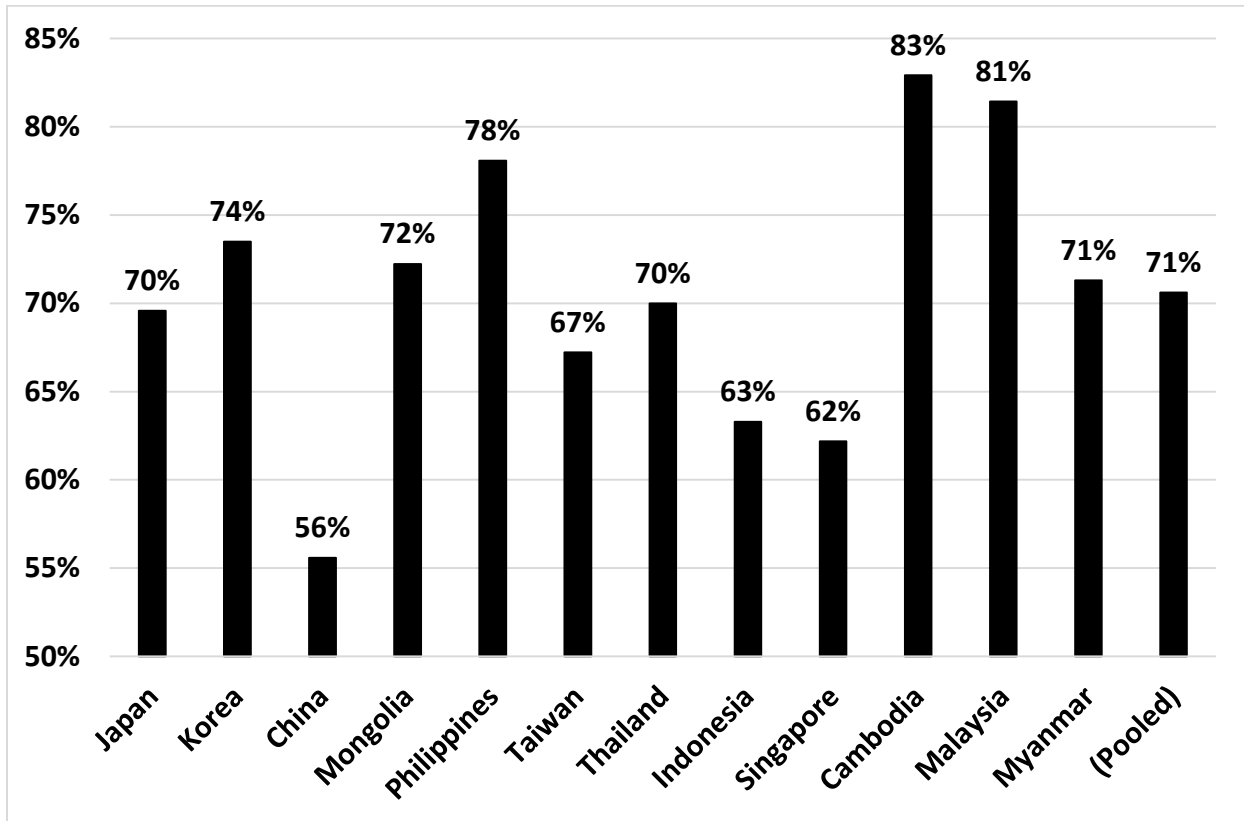
**Figure 4. Concealed Preferences for Four Main Types of Political System among Avowed Supporters of Democracy**



Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

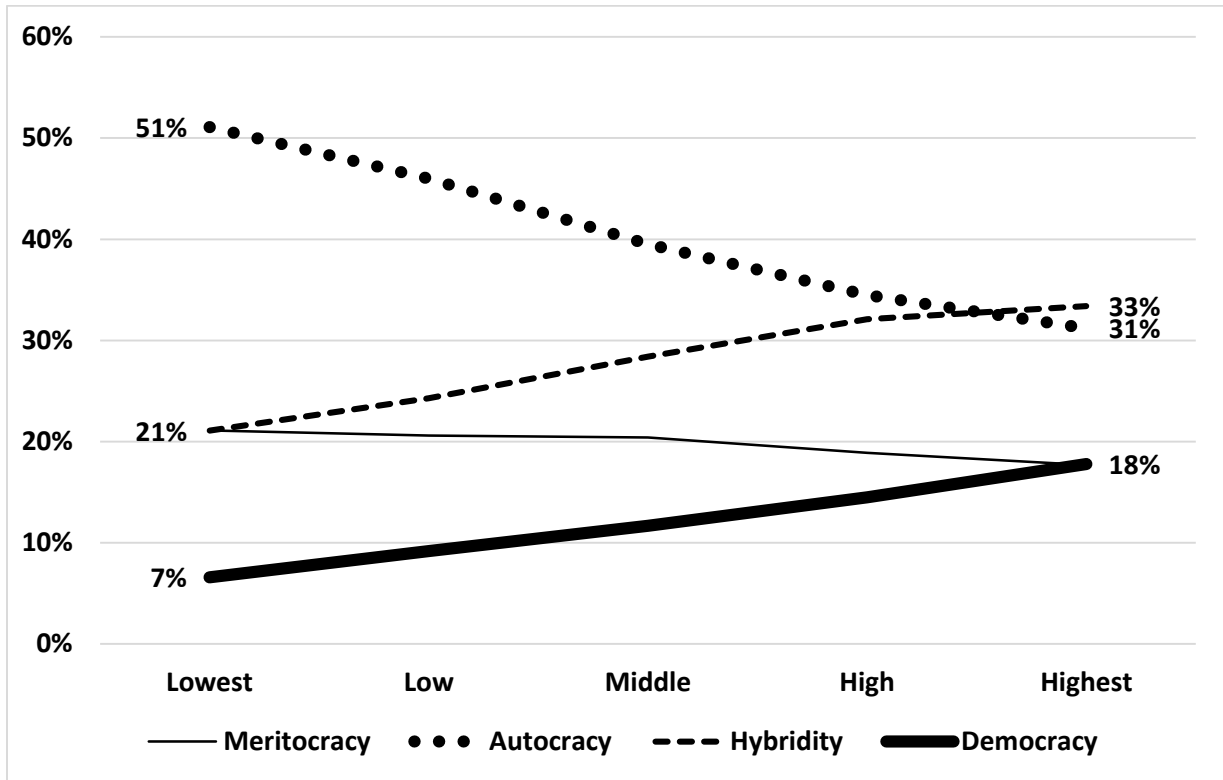
**Figure 5. Superficial Favorers of Democracy among its Avowed Supporters**

Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

**Figure 6. Varying Rates of Inflating Democratic System Preferences**

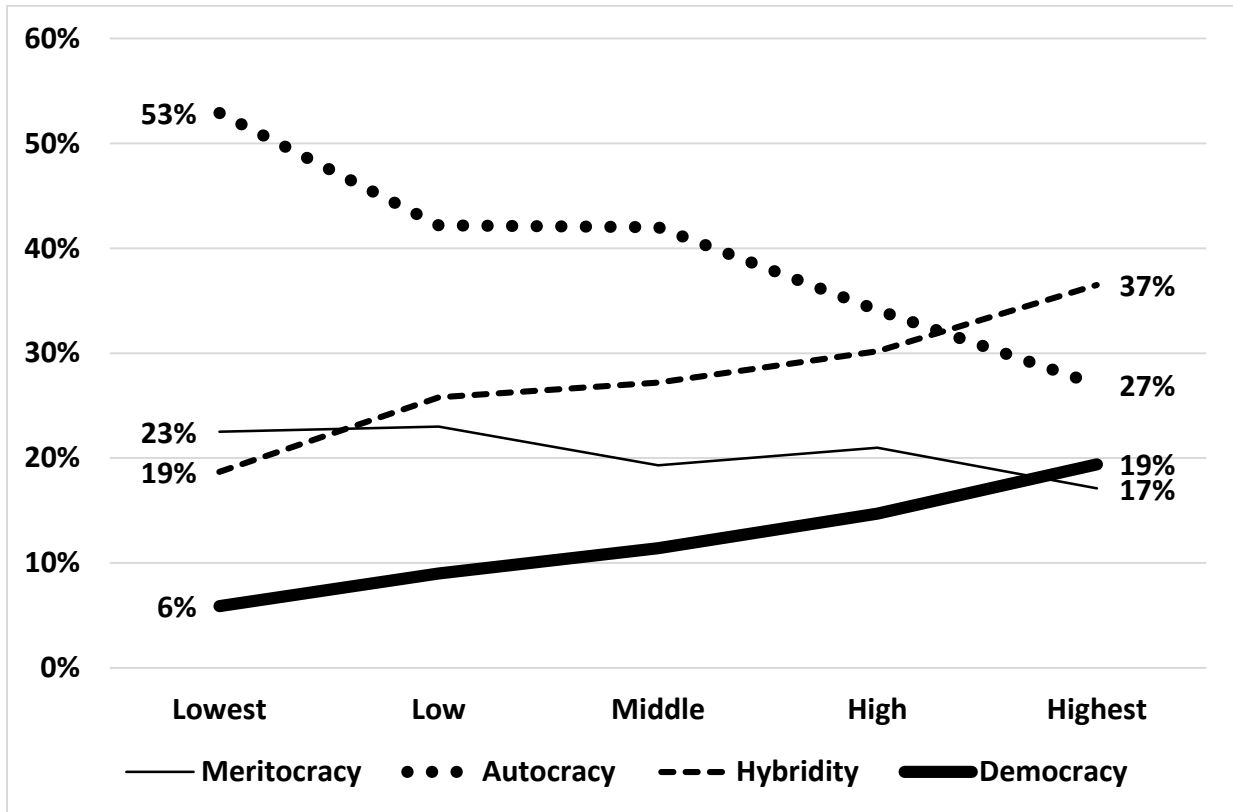
Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

**Figure 7. Socioeconomic Modernization and Political System Preferences**



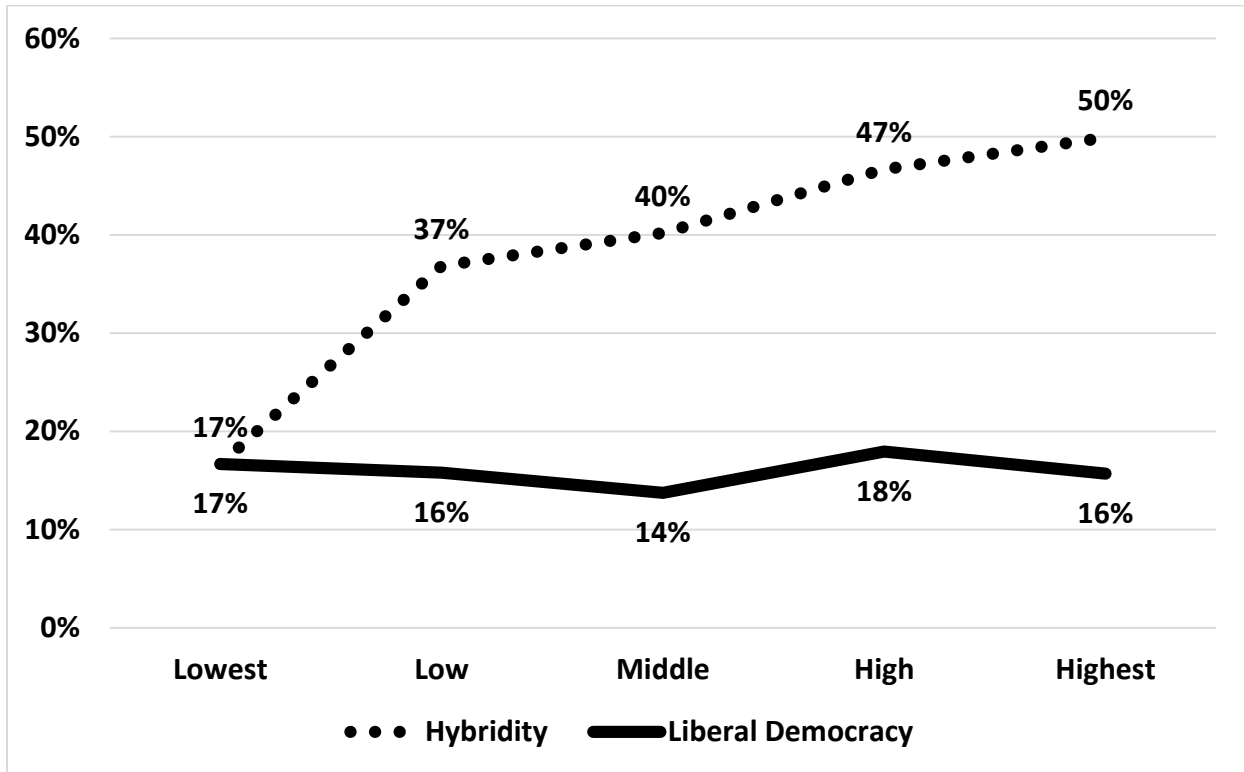
Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

Figure 8. Cultural Liberalization and Political System Preferences



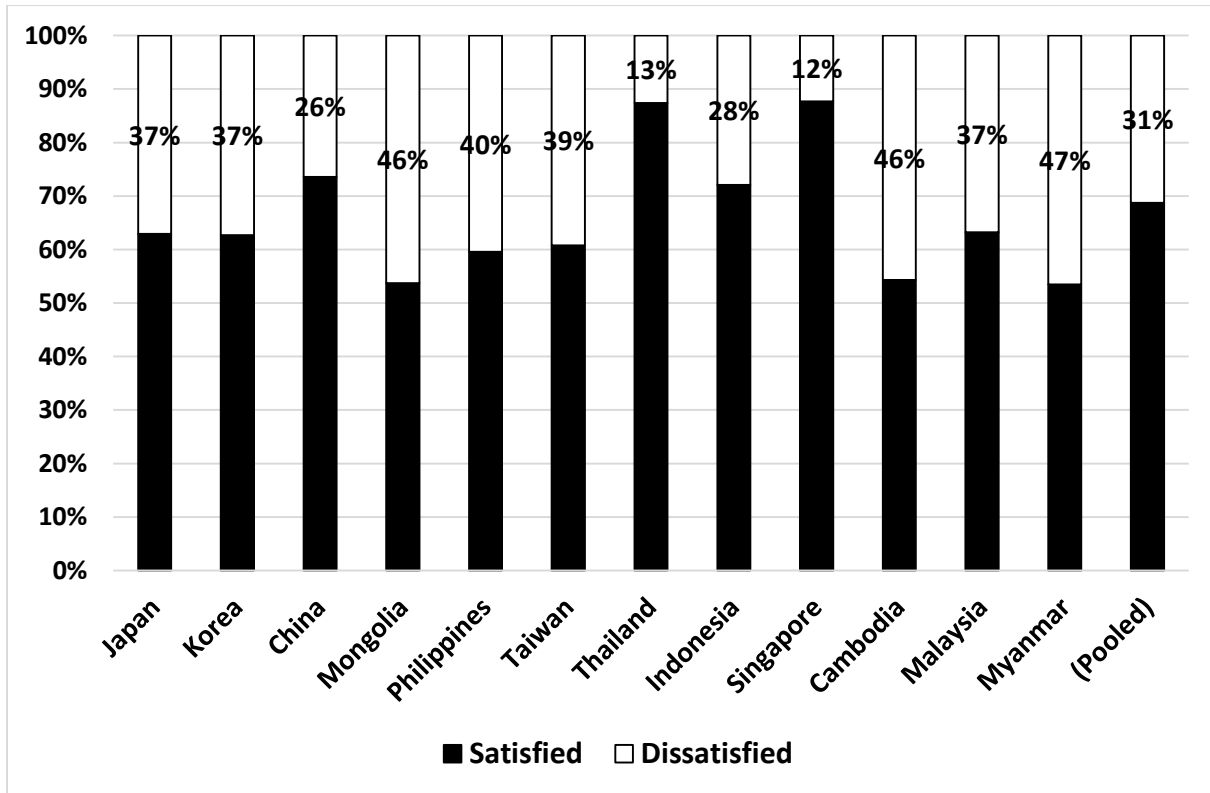
Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

**Figure 9. Cultural Liberalization and Preferences for Hybridity and Liberal Democracy among the Japanese**



Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.

**Figure 10. The Satisfied and Dissatisfied with System Performance among Unqualified Adherents to the Principles of Popular Rule**



Source: 2014-16 Asian Barometer Survey.



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