



A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

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Does It Matter or Not? Cultural Impacts on the Political  
Process



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A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

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**Does it Matter or Not?**  
**Cultural impacts on the Political Process**  
(Draft)

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Prominent theories of democracy, both classical and modern, have asserted that democracy requires a distinctive set of cultural values and orientations from its citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Although most political scientists generally agree that cultural values can have certain impacts on political processes in different societies, they disagree on the following three issues: 1) which particular cultural orientation can influence political processes in different societies.<sup>2</sup> Is there an “Asian Culture” that shapes political processes in such societies; 2) what specific cultural orientation influences political process and how do specific orientations exert their influence over the political process,<sup>3</sup> and 3) whether culture has independent effects on political processes.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I am trying to provide a preliminary answer to these critical

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<sup>1</sup> {Almond & Verba 1963 #18}.

<sup>2</sup>. (Almond and Verba 1989a; Almond and Verba 1989b; Inglehart, Ronald. 90a. Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 90a).; Inglehart, Ronald. 97. Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in Forty-Three Societies (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 97).; Inglehart, Ronald. "The Renaissance of Political Culture." American political science review Vol, 82 No. 4 (88).; Inglehart 1977; Putnam 2000; Putnam, Robert D. 93. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 93).; Gibson, James L. "Alternative Measures of Political Tolerance: Must Tolerance be "Least-Liked"?" American Journal of Political Science Vol. 36 No. 2 (92).; Gibson, James L. and Duch, Raymond M. "Anti-Semitic Attitude of the Mass Public: Estimates and Explanations Based on a Survey of the Moscow Oblast." Public Opinion Quarterly Vol. 56 No. 1 (92).; Gibson, James L., Duch, Raymond M., and Tedin, Kent L. "Democratic Values and the transformation of the Soviet Union." Journal of Politics Vol, 54 No. 2 (92).; Gibson, James L. and Duch, Raymond M. "Emerging Democratic Values in Soviet Political Culture." In Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies, eds. Miller, Arthur H., Reisinger, William M., and Hesli, Vicki L. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 93) ).

<sup>3</sup> Almond and Verba argue that political culture influences democratic consolidation, other scholars believe that political culture can influence democratic transition. Still others believe that political culture influences the way democracy works in different societies.

<sup>4</sup> For the argument that the political culture has independent effects on political processes, see (Laitin, David D. and Wildavsky, Aaron. "Political Culture and Political Preferences." The American Political Science Review Vol. 82 No. 2 (88).; Pye, Lucian W. "Political culture revisited." Political psychology Vol, 12 No. 3 (91).; Wilson 1992; Inglehart, Ronald. "The Renaissance of Political Culture." American political science review Vol, 82 No. 4 (88).). For the critique of cultural theory, see (Jackman, Robert W. and Miller, Ross A. "The Poverty of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science Vol, 40 No. 3 (96).; Jackman, Robert W. and Miller, Ross A. "A Renaissance of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science Vol, 40 No. 3 (96).).

questions. The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, I illustrate why culture is crucial for us to understand politics in different societies. Next, I evaluate alternative approaches in cultural studies. Based on such an evaluation, I identify cultural orientations that are crucial for us to understand political processes in different societies and suggest that culturalists should focus on norms rather than attitudes and beliefs in their studies. The third section specifies the paths by which norms influence political process in different societies. Using data gathered from Asian barometer studies, I demonstrate how norms influence the political process in eight different Asian societies.

### Does Culture Matter or Not?

The publication of “The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism” attracted many social scientists to use cultural values to explain social phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> A benchmark study of the behavioral revolution in the study of politics is Almond and Verba’s exploration of the impacts of political culture on the consolidation of democracy across five societies.<sup>6</sup> Since the publication of the Civic Culture, culturalists have tried to explore different aspects of people’s orientation and studied their respective impacts on the political process in different societies.

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<sup>5</sup>(Weber1958).

<sup>6</sup> (Almond, Gabriel A. and Verba, Sidney. 63. The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 63).)

More recently, cultural studies have been challenged by students of rational choice. To them, political, social and economic institutions in a society structure the distribution of incentives for individual action that individuals try to optimize in view of the above constraints.<sup>7</sup> The behavioral logic underlying the rational choice approach is utility maximization. Although those scholars do not deny that culture plays a certain role in the political process, they see culture as constructed. Political actors conform to cultural values because such values help them get what they want. While criticizing students of political culture for taking the incentive structure as given, the rational choice theorists assume that institutional change will alter the opportunities available to political actors, and, even allowing for some inelasticity, thereby modify actors' behavior.<sup>8</sup> Since institutions can explain the strategic choice of individuals, they see no reason to study political culture and suggest that students of political science direct their attention to the opportunity structure within which political figures make strategic choices.<sup>9</sup>

I see at least two major problems with the rational choice approach. The first one is that the foundation of the building blocs used by this approach may have a basic problem—the behavioral logic used by rational choice scholars to construct the incentive structure for political actors may not be the one that actually shapes their political behavior. Since the behavioral logic of political actors is treated as a constant in their

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<sup>7</sup> (Riker, William H. "Political Science and Rational Choice." In Perspectives on Positive Political Theory, eds. Alt, James E. and Shepsle, Kenneth A. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 172)

<sup>8</sup> (Jackman, Robert W. and Miller, Ross A. "A Renaissance of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science Vol, 40 No. 3 (1996), 655)

<sup>9</sup> (Geddes, Barbara. 1994. Politician's Dilemma: Building State Capacity in Latin America (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).)

study, rational choice theorists do not think they need to explore its validity—they simply treat such an assumption as a given and deduce the incentive structure based on the above hypothesis. Secondly, while rational choice scholars criticize cultural explanations as *ex post*, their incentive structure of political actors deduced from behavioral logic is usually *post hoc*. This problem is exemplified in the “paradox of voting.” When instrumental interests deduced from the utility maximization cannot be used to explain voting behavior, Downs introduced the concept of expressive interest to explain it. In doing so, he altered the behavioral logic used as the fundamental assumption of his study. Although such an interpretation is being packaged as being compatible with utility functions, it is clearly a *post hoc* interpretation.

Since culture is a collective and societal phenomenon, students of politics may treat it as a constant when studying political processes in a single country. However, when we study politics in different societies, trying to deduce the incentive structure of political actors simply based on the behavioral logic of utility maximization can often be misleading. This is especially true when we study politics in East Asia.

Now, let me demonstrate the problem. In our Asian Barometer studies, we asked people in different societies to evaluate whether democracy is suitable for their society and asked them to report their subjective evaluation of the current level of democratic development in their societies on a ten point scale. I present the answer acquired from different societies in figure 1. One means their societies are totally unsuitable and ten means they are totally suitable for democracy. I also present the

mean score of people's answer to this question.

Figure 1 is about here

Our analyses shows that among all people residing in these eight Asian societies, people in Thailand believe that democracy is most suitable for their country. The record of the Thais is followed by people in mainland China. To our surprise, people in newly democratic Taiwan believe democracy is least suitable for their society. Although such a finding seems to be counter-intuitive, rational choice theorists will argue that despite people in mainland China having had no prior experience of democracy, they may accept democratic values brought to them by the "third wave" of democratization and thus believe that democracy can resolve the problems they face and that democracy is suitable for their country.

In figure 2, we present people's evaluation of the level of democracy in their own society on a ten point scale. One means that respondents see their society as totally undemocratic and ten means that they sees it as totally democratic. Again, the Thais are most optimistic about the level of democracy in their own country. The mean score from Thailand is 8.22, while people in Hong Kong are most pessimistic. The mean score for Hong Kong is 5.23 which tells us that a substantial proportion of people in Hong Kong believe that their society is undemocratic. If we examine the curve carefully, we will find that more people in Hong Kong gave 1 to 5 scores than people in any other societies included in this study.

Figure 2 is about here

The real challenge in this figure is the evaluation of the level of democracy in mainland China. The mean score provided by people in mainland China is 7.22 which is the second highest score among all eight societies. At the same time, mainland China is the only authoritarian society included in this survey. Why do people in the most undemocratic society among the eight gave the second highest score for democracy to their own country? For rational choice scholars, this can be explained by the incentive structure deduced from the behavior logic of utility maximization. Since the regime in China still does not hesitate to suppress unauthorized expression, people may not want to tell interviewers their true feelings in the survey for fear of possible political persecution. Thus, the question asking people's evaluation of the level of democracy in their own country becomes a proxy of political fear. In other words, rather than revealing people's true evaluation of the level of democratic development in their own society, the score perhaps reflects the level of political fear in mainland China.

There is, however, an alternative approach to understanding the answer given by people in Mainland China related to what March and Olsen call the "logic of appropriateness."<sup>10</sup> This is the core argument made by political cultural theory – in addition to rules and procedures, the behavioral logic of political actors may also play a critical role in shaping their behavior. Unlike institutionalists, culturalists argue that

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<sup>10</sup> According to Marsh and Olson, actors can also internalize roles and rules not for instrumental reasons but because they understand the behavior to be good, desirable, and appropriate.

students of political science in general and comparative politics in particular cannot deduce the preference structure of political actors simply from rules and procedures in different societies. Thus, if behavioral logic varies, the same rules and procedures may induce a different preference structure and lead to different behavior. More specifically, notions of duty, responsibility, identity, and obligation (all social constructions) may drive behavior as well as self-interest and gain. Culturalists agree that the logic of appropriateness necessarily must have a structure-driven component, but they believe it may not change simply with changes in institutions. This is because one's "logic of appropriateness" is usually crystalized in early life. Thus a political actor may carry such a specific logic of appropriateness throughout his adult life.

Following this line of reasoning, an alternative interpretation for the puzzle of why mainland Chinese gave a high score for the level of democracy in their own country is that the understanding of democracy by people in mainland China might be somewhat different from the way people in other societies understand it.

To test the first interpretations of the high score in mainland China, we included two relevant questions in the survey. The first asked "if you speak critically of the government, are you worried that someone might report you?" and the other asked "If you speak critically of the party or national leaders, are you worried there is someone report you?." These two questions are designed to measure political fear in authoritarian China. If people praise the current level of democracy in China for fear of political persecution, we should be able to find: 1) that a high level of political fear exists

in China today, and 2) political fear is positively and strongly correlated with people's subjective evaluation of the level of democracy in mainland China.

Table 1 is about here

In Table 1, we present the frequency distribution of the answers to the above two questions as well as the correlation between the two measurements of political fear and people's evaluation of the level of democracy in mainland China today. The data shows that political fear is still a problem. There are still 25.4 percent people in China who claim that they are somewhat afraid of someone reporting them if they criticize the government while 2.1 percent claim that they are very afraid that someone might do so if they criticize the government. As to criticizing government leaders, 20.8 percent are somewhat afraid and 2.6 percent are very afraid. The data seem to suggest that mainland China is still not a free country.<sup>11</sup>

For our purposes, the real question is whether political fear in mainland China contaminated people's evaluation of the level of democracy. The analysis clearly demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between political fear and people's evaluation of the level of democracy in mainland China. The correlation between the measurements of political fear and subjective evaluations of the level of democracy is either in the "wrong" direction or so small as to suggest that the score of the subjective

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, there could also be an alternative explanation for the finding. In 1993, five years after democratization, we asked exactly the same question on Taiwan and got a similar result. Since political fear is a subjective feeling, it could be a legacy of the authoritarian past in the country.

evaluation of the level of democracy is not a proxy of political fear.

Before we can reach the conclusion that the scores of the level of democracy given by people in mainland China represent their true feeling rather than a proxy of political fear, however, we need to rule out another possibility—both the answers to the questions measuring political fear and the level of democracy are contaminated by political fear. One may reasonably argue that if political fear is really a problem in China, people would not dare to tell interviewers that it is a problem because such an answer is a politically incorrect one and thus may attract regime retribution. In other words, if political fear is a grave problem, the questions measuring it might not give us a valid result.

If this is the case, we should expect respondents to give positive answers to all the questions asking them to evaluate government behavior to avoid possible political persecution. If, however, we can find a substantial number of people in China who gave our interviewers negative evaluations on certain aspects of government behavior, we should be able to rule out the possibility that political fear in China is so grave that people dare not give interviewers candid answers to measurements of political fear.

Table 2 is about here

Table 2 presents a distribution of the answers to questions asking people to evaluate changes in civil liberty, political rights, economic performance, social order and

corruption of government officials since the reforms began in 1978. The analyses shows that the absolute majority of people in China reported that civil liberty, measured by freedom of expression, freedom of residence, freedom of religion, and freedom of association has improved substantially over the past two decades. Specifically, more than 85 percent of people in China believe they are freer today than 25 years ago. Most important, we do find a substantial number of people in China who gave negative evaluations on certain aspects of political and economic life therein. While 83.2 percent of people reported that corruption had become worse, 74.7 percent reported that China had become more unequal as compare to the situation before the reforms. Taking together, these findings clearly tell us that political fear, even though it may still exist in China, does not prevent people from giving candid answers to survey questions. The findings rule out the explanation offered by rational choice theorists that high scores on the subjective evaluation of level of democracy in China is the product of political fear.

To understand the high score of the subjective evaluation of the level of democracy in mainland China, we must turn to culture to examine if people in different societies understand the meaning of democracy in the same way. To examine the meaning of democracy for people in different societies, we rely on an open-ended question included in the survey. The question reads, “what does ‘democracy’ mean for you?” We asked interviewers to probe twice after the first answer from respondents. Since the question is an open-ended one, respondents can give interviewers whatever answer they choose.

The popular understanding of democracy of people in mainland China can be divided into the following categories: 1) freedom or equality--either respondents mentioned the word freedom or equality or they tell interviewers that democracy means that they can do whatever they wanted; 2) Soliciting people's opinion when making decisions. To them, democracy means government leaders solicit people's opinions when making decisions. However, solicitation of their views represents the good will of the government rather than coming from its obligations. For those people, whether the government listen to listen to their opinion or not is not important. As long as the government solicited their opinions, it is a democratic government; 3) joint decision making. Responses belonging to this category include whether government officials consult people's opinions and encourage people to express their opinions before making decisions. Similar to the previous category, the government does not have an obligation to listen to their opinions, however; 4) government for the people-- when government makes decisions on issues facing society, do it takes people's interests into consideration; 5) does authority listen to people's opinion when making decisions. People belong to this category believe the government has obligations to listen to people's opinion when making decisions; 6) elections or participation in decision making process. Such people adopt a procedural view of democracy. They perceive democracy as procedural arrangement for people to participate in the decision making process in society; and 7) Rights -- the final category includes those people who mention the word the rights of people either to monitor government behavior, to participate in the decision making process, or to make requests to their government.

Table 3 presents a distribution of alternative understanding of the meaning of democracy given by respondents in China. Since each respondent is allowed to give more than one answer to the question, the total percentage exceeds 100. The alternative categories of the answers to this question may be further divided into 3 groups. The first group includes one category, that is, freedom and democracy. The analysis shows that most people in China see democracy in terms of freedom and equality—nearly one fourth of the people in mainland China gave interviewers this answer.

The second group includes three categories—democracy means leaders solicit people’s opinions when making decisions, joint decision making, or the government taking people’s interests into consideration when making decisions. Such people understand democracy in terms of paternalism, i.e., they perceive the government as a parental figure. As long as the government takes consideration of their interests into account when making decisions, they would categorize the government as democratic. Such an understanding is parallel to the requirement of good traditional authority as described by Weber. The last group includes those who gave three categories of answers: those who perceive democracy as the obligation of the regime to listen to people’s opinions when making decisions, a political process that allows mass participation in the decision making process and/or choose their leaders through elections, and people in the society who have rights to participate in the decision making process or to monitor and/or constraint the behavior of political leaders. Finally, there

are a substantial number of respondents in China who do not know the meaning of democracy.

Table 3 is about here

The findings illustrated in Table 3 clearly demonstrate that different people perceive democracy in different ways. We expect that institutionalists will challenge our findings in mainland China by arguing that the reason why so many people perceive democracy in terms of parentalism and so few people perceive democracy in terms of procedures, the obligation of government to make decision based on people's will, and rights rather than privileges is due to its authoritarian institutions. In other words, their understanding is shaped by the authoritarian rules and procedures in their society.

Although a thorough test of institutionalists' claims is beyond the scope of this section, we do think it is necessary for us to provide some evidence to falsify the above claim. On the right hand of the table, we provide answers to the same question with respondents from Taiwan, a society where a democratic transition occurred more than 15 years ago. If rational choice institutionalists are right and procedures and rules indeed structure the preference of actors, we should expect that people in Taiwan perceive democracy differently from their compatriots in mainland China. Given the experiences of living in a working democracy for one and half decades, we should expect that more people in Taiwan perceive democracy in terms of procedure, the obligation of their government to be responsive to its people, and the right of citizens to

participate in politics, especially elections than in mainland China. The data presented in the right hand of the table clearly indicates this is not the case. Although less people in Taiwan give interviewers don't know answers and perceive democracy as paternalistic attitudes by their government, they gave no more answers belonging to the third group than did respondents in mainland China. Despite institutional change that have altered the opportunities available to political actors in Taiwan as a consequence of democratization, their incentive structure has yet to change.

The statistics used in this section are simple but provide readers with clear evidence to forcefully refute the central claim of rational choice institutionalists—analyzing the opportunity structure within which political actors make strategic choices is the only way that helps us to understand political behavior.<sup>12</sup> As we have forcefully demonstrated in this section, analyzing opportunity structure can neither help us understand why people in mainland China gave such a high score to the level of democracy in an authoritarian society, nor help us understand why no more people in Taiwan perceive democracy as popular constraint on government or as popular participation in the decision making processes. Instead, our analyses show that focusing on the opportunity structures within which political actors make strategic

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<sup>12</sup> See among others, (Jackman, Robert W. and Miller, Ross A. "The Poverty of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science Vol, 40 No. 3 (96).; Jackman, Robert W. and Miller, Ross A. "A Renaissance of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science Vol, 40 No. 3 (96).). Pay attention to the conclusion of both articles.

choices does not help us to understand the incentive structure of people in different societies. To understand the preferences of political actors, we need to return to culture.

### Culture and Political Culture

There are four major traditions in the study of political culture.<sup>13</sup> The first comes from the anthropological tradition. This approach is derived from the Weberian concern with the meaning of social action and culture and is defined as the collective meanings that groups create, share, and symbolically express. It tries to uncover constraints on people's behavior in the forms of myth, ritual, and discourse.<sup>14</sup> Causal relationships are validated through the observation of repetitive patterns.

The "culture theory" approach represented by the works of Mary Douglas also evolved from the anthropological tradition. It explicitly eschews direct reference to individual psychological variables but focuses on topological distinctions between subgroups in each society differentiated by two criteria: 1) the extent to which individual behavior within the group is socially prescribed and 2) the degree to which persons are locked into membership in their respective group. Based on the relative strength of these criteria, ideal subcultures are identified according to behavioral patterns that vary from apathetic, to intense concern with hierarchy, to competitive, to egalitarian, and

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<sup>13</sup> For a thorough review of various approaches in cultural studies, see Richard Wilson's article in *World Politics*.

<sup>14</sup> For students of Chinese politics who adopt this approach in their study of political culture, see among others, (Wasserstrom and Perry 1994).

finally, to autonomous. The specific ways that subcultures interact with each other provides the theoretical basis for understanding political life.

The third one – the social character approach is rooted both in national character studies and anthropological studies of culture and personality. While this approach links the anthropological and psychological approaches, it shifts emphasis from symbolic interpretation and the analysis of discourse to the psychology of learned behavior. Personality variables are utilized as the major means for typifying significant value orientations. To such scholars, societies are described in terms of the unique ways their members 1) view authority relations, 2) are committed to particular religious/ideological views, and 3) fear social disorder or are excessively dependent. Case-studies of social norms and behavior thus reveal contextually how tensions associated with particular orientations are conceptualized and resolved. The dependent variable is either regime transition or revolution—it is used to explain why regimes make the transition to (or from) democracy and/or why populations suddenly explode into revolutionary activity.

The fourth and last is the social learning approach which emerged in the process of the behavioral revolution. This approach is grounded in psychological theories of social learning which contend that socialization is the critical determinant of the psychological orientation of political actors. The central arguments of this approach are 1) the incentive structure of political actors can be, to some extent, independent from rules and procedures shaped by the current social and physical environment; and

2) the incentive structure of political actors can and usually conditions how they respond to outside stimuli. There are, however, alternative conceptualization of political culture.

For Almond and Verba, political culture refers to values, norms, attitudes and beliefs, while for Inglehart, political culture means a postmaterialist value or orientation, but for Putnam, political culture means mutual trust among citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Each of these approaches made significant contributions to the study of political culture. While the first approach correctly directs our attention to the meaning of social action, it also reminds students of political science that social actions usually have normative connotations as well. However, although correctly pointing out important issues in cultural studies, this approach, we believe, operationalizes culture in a improper way. Since the meaning of symbols, myth, ritual, and discourse are subject to different interpretations, it is hard for students of political culture to properly infer meaning from them.

Cultural theory as represented by Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky made three major contributions to the study of political culture. First, the theory directs our attention in the right direction, i.e., hierarchal, egalitarian, and autonomous and points out that these core values can have significant impacts on people's political behavior in

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<sup>15</sup> (Almond, Gabriel A. and Verba, Sidney. 63. The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 63).; Inglehart, Ronald. 90a. Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 90a).; Inglehart, Ronald. 97. Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in Forty-Three Societies (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 97).; Inglehart, Ronald. "The Renaissance of Political Culture." American political science review Vol, 82 No. 4 (88).; Putnam, Robert D. 93. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 93).).

different societies. Second, rather than seeing those core values in individual form, cultural theory suggest that these values work in aggregate form in different societies. Third, it reminds us that political culture is a social rather than an individual phenomenon and suggests treating culture as more than psychological orientation of individuals.

We believe, however, that there are two major problems with this approach. By correctly pointing out that culture is a social phenomenon, this approach directs our attention to differences among subgroups. Although focusing on subgroup differences allows us to explore cultural impacts within a given society, it makes cross-country comparisons extremely difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, while treating culture as an endogenous variable by emphasizing culture as socially prescribed, cultural theory fails to address a critical issue in cultural studies--the relationship between culture and institutions.

The personality approach also explores crucial orientations that influence the political process, especially authority relationships. These orientations are the ones that attribute meanings to alternative political action. Again, we see two problems with this approach. First, since most works adopting this approach are based on case studies, they fail to provide solid evidence for the impacts of cultural orientation on people's political behavior. Secondly, since few scholars belonging to this group have tried to address problem of endogeneity, their works are also subject to the criticism of institutionalists.

Finally, by pointing out that one's early socialization conditions later socialization, the social learning approach makes an important theoretical argument, i.e., culture is usually independent from institutions. Unfortunately, students of social learning usually also ignore cultural orientations that provide political action with meaning which leads students of political culture to also forget about meaning from political action.

It seems to me that there are two major reasons for this neglect. First, cultural orientations that provide actions with meaning are usually difficult to measure. An even more important reason is related to the infatuation of political scientists with economic methods, trying to explain political behavior along the lines of utility maximization. Rather than perceiving political acts as having different meanings for different people, such an approach sees utility maximization as the only meaning for political action. Of course, there are many issues that cannot be explained by such logic. One of the most important and well known one is the paradox of voting.

More recently, constructionists have demonstrated that rationality itself is a social construct. If that is true, we should expect that rationality in one society may be different from another. When studying rationality it should be crucial for students of political science to understand political processes in different societies. To understand the rationality of political actions, we thus need to study the behavioral logic of people in different societies. More specifically, we need to treat the behavioral logic of people in different societies as an empirical issue rather as a basic assumption of our study.

Such an inquiry requires that students of political culture explore the psychological orientation of people in different societies.

In studying psychological orientation, culturalists have failed to distinguish the behavioral logic and orientation that is produced by alternative behavioral logic. Successful mapping of the normative structure of political actors requires us to separate values and norms from attitudes and beliefs because they are different psychological properties. For example, one may believe that a person should respect his father. However, the actual attitudes of a person toward his father is influenced by the internalized norms acquired in his early life as well as his father's behavior.

Concentrating our study on values and/or norms is crucial for three important reasons. First, they play different functions. While norms define rights and wrongs, attitudes and beliefs reflects people's disposition toward a particular object. Second, the sources of their formation are different. While values and norms are shaped primarily by early socialization, attitudes and beliefs are products of interaction between values and norms acquired from early socialization and the behavior of concerned actors. Finally, a major criticism of cultural theory is about the formation of culture itself.

Institutionalists argue that people's preference structures are shaped by institutions and thus that they will co-vary with institution. Such an argument may be valid if and only if one equates culture with attitudes and beliefs. Thus, one's attitudes toward one's father may change as a consequences of the behavior of his father. However, the norms that one should respect their father may not change with the change in

attitudes toward ones father. More importantly, norms may also influence not only the speed of changes in one's attitudes but also the stimuli required to generate attitudinal change. For those who have internalized the norm that one should respect their father, unexpected behavior by a father may not necessarily induce one to change attitudes toward one's parents. The same unexpected behavior may successfully induce a change of attitude for those who do not internalize such norms.

Given the above considerations, we thus argue that students of political culture should pay special attention to a particular form of psychological orientation—norms. Norms provide standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identifies. Norms embody a quality of “oughtness” and shared moral assessment and prompt justifications for action. There are generally two major categories of norms: 1) regulative norms which order and constrain behavior and 2) constitutive norms which create new actors, interests, or categories of action. We believe regulative norms are more relevant in shaping people's behavior. We thus limit our inquiry to them in this study.

Following Pye, we argue that two types of regulative norms are crucial for us to understand politics in Asian societies. The first is the norm that defines the relationship between actors and authority—what is the proper relationship between individuals and authority? We can find two fundamental different ways in defining such relationships. Confucian culture sees such relationships as hierarchical or paternalistic. Western culture, on the other hand, defines such relationships as reciprocal. Those who

perceive authority relationship as hierarchical may be dependent on authority, expecting those in power to take care of their interests when making decisions, but do not think it is proper for them to force those in power to satisfy their demands. Although they may also withdraw support from those in power, the threshold for such actions is high. Those who perceive their relationship as reciprocal tend to expect authority to treat them equally. When they disagree with those in power, they do not hesitate to challenge their decisions because they believe it is proper for them to do so. It is also easier for them to withdraw support for those in power.

The second type of norm refers to what is the proper way for political actors to define interests. Some cultures recognize the legitimacy of individual interests and encourage individuals to pursue private interests. Confucian culture, on the other hand, does not recognize the legitimacy of personal interests. Instead, personal interests are perceived to be tied to certain collective entities, such as family, group, or nation. Private interests are not seen as having an independent status. The way people define interests, we expect, can have a significant influence over political processes in different societies.

Table 4 is about here

In Table 4, we present frequency distribution of the above two norms in the eight Asian societies included in the survey. For orientation toward authority, we may roughly divide these eight societies into three clusters. The first cluster include

Mongolia, Thailand, and Mainland China. Although the institutional setting in these societies are different from each other, the majority of people define relationships with authority as hierarchical. The next cluster includes Taiwan, the Philippine, South Korea, and Japan. Substantial numbers of people perceive the proper relationship with authority as a hierarchical one. The last cluster includes only one society—Hong Kong which is rather unique in Asia. Despite Hong Kong still not being a democratic society, only around one third of its population still perceives the proper relationship with authority as hierarchical. Instead, the majority believes that the proper relationship with authority should be a reciprocal one.

For the second dimension of culture—people’s orientation toward interests—we find great similarity in these societies. The majority of people in Asia subscribe to collectivism and believe they should sacrifice their own interests for that of certain collective entities with the exception of only one country—Japan. Different from the situation in other Asian societies, substantial numbers of people in Japan have acquired individualistic orientation and disagree that they should sacrifice their private interests for collective ones.

The data presented in Table 4 also provides us with two important pieces of information. First, the analysis reveals substantial variation in the way people define a proper relationship with authority as well as the way people define the interests existing in each society. This finding confirms that the “logic of appropriateness” can be different for different people. Second, the finding presented in table 4 also reveals that

variation in the above orientation cannot be explained by variation in the institutions in these societies as expected by rational choice theory. The finding clearly indicates that the preference structure for people in each society indeed varies, and such variance cannot be simply explained by institutions in their respective societies.

### Cultural Impacts on Political Processes

In this section, I am going to demonstrate how cultural values influence political processes. The first generation of culturalists argued that certain cultural values, such as political interests, knowledge of governmental processes, political efficacy, and trust are important because they facilitate participation. Differences in the distribution of these important values between “traditional” and “modern” societies should be, at least, partially responsible for differences in the level of participation by citizens in different societies. When people in traditional society acquired “democratic orientation,” the level of political participation in that society increase which in turn will press political leaders to further “open the society up.”<sup>16</sup>

This line of reasoning, it seems to me, is built largely on the institutionalist assumption. It assumes that the behavioral logic for people in different societies is identical. The differences among people in different societies more often lie in whether

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<sup>16</sup> (Nie, Norman H., Powell, Bingham G. Jr. , and Prewitt, Kenneth. "Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships, Part I." American Political Science Review Vol, 63 No. 2 (69).; Nie, Norman H., Powell, Bingham G. Jr. , and Prewitt, Kenneth. "Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships, Part II." American Political Science Review Vol, 63 No. 3 (69).).

they understand particular governmental processes and whether they are efficacious. People are characterized either as parochial who are not aware of the impacts of politics on their life, or subjects who do not think they can influence political processes, or citizens who are aware of their own rights and believe they are capable of participating in politics. When parochial and subjects acquire psychological resources to become citizens, the behavioral logic identified by rational choice theorists—to maximize utility—will prompt them to participate in politics.

But such an argument is only partially a cultural one. By assuming the behavioral logic of people in different societies to be identical, scholars fall into the institutional trap. What has been forgotten by the first generation of culturalists is that the behavioral logic for people in different societies may be different and such differences can have significant consequences on various aspects of political life. We agree that institutional change will eventually alter the behavioral logic of people in traditional society, but our analyses presented in the previous section suggests such change does not occur over night with simple changes in institutions.

Specifically, we expect political culture as exemplified by norms influences political processes in the following ways. First, people's orientation toward authority and collectivism shape their perception of "good government." Since democratic ideas have become widespread globally after the "third wave" of democratization, every government, even the most authoritarian ones, packages themselves as being a certain form of democracy, we can expect these norms should help shape people's

understanding of democracy. Those who see authority relationships as hierarchical should be more likely to understand democracy in terms of paternalistic care by government of its own citizens, rather than as an institutional arrangement for people to choose government leaders and to supervise their behavior. To them, democracy means government officials soliciting people's opinion before making decisions and taking their interests into consideration when making decisions with regard to the country. Alternatively, those perceiving proper relationships with authority as reciprocal are more likely to perceive democracy as a procedural arrangement for them to participate in politics and more importantly, as providing citizens with rights to constrain government behavior. For the same reasons, we can expect a similar division between individualistic and collective orientation.

Secondly, we would expect that such norms should influence the intentions of people to get involved in unconventional political action. It is reasonable to argue that a collective and hierarchical orientation may make political actors either give up their own interests for those of certain collective entities or believe it is not proper for them to burden those in power with their private interests. Such orientations, however, do not prevent people from participating in politics. Instead, they establish a threshold that limits the choice of political actors in their private interest articulation. We thus expect that people with these two traditional norms are unlikely to engage in and approve unconventional political actions.

Finally, we expect that tolerance for bad behavior by government varies for people with different psychological orientations. Those perceiving proper relationship

with authority as hierarchical and those with a collective orientation should be more likely to tolerate their government than others, even if it is not responsive, nor provides them with good policies or honest officials. In the former case, they are more willing to believe there is a reason behind such bad behavior and the government either will take care of their long term interests and/or will take care of their interests later on. For the latter, although certain policies may jeopardize their interests, they may be willing to give up their private interests for a collective entity rather than withdraw their support of the government. For people with a different orientation, however, the relationship with authority may be perceived as reciprocal—when they delegate power to the government to rule, they expect the government to have an obligation to deliver what they want. If the government fails to deliver, they will withdraw their support. We thus expect such an orientation also influence whether people trust their government in different societies.

Do people's orientation have any impacts on their understanding of democracy? To explore this question, I recoded the answer to the question asking the meaning of democracy into two categories. The answers perceiving democracy in terms of paternalism are coded into -1 and the answers perceiving democracy in terms of procedures, participation, and rights into 1. We then added all answers together to create an index. Positive values in the index tells us that people perceive democracy in terms of procedures, participation, and rights. Zero means the answer given by the respondents are mixed.

As is continually argued, a sense of rights of ordinary citizens is at the center of

modern democracy. Only when political actors perceive democracy as an institutional arrangement for them to exercise their right to choose governmental leaders and/or to participate in the decision making process can we expect democracy in a society to function properly. We thus code the answers which sees democracy as a right as 1 -- all the others, including missing values as zero and use it as another variable that measures people's understanding of democracy.

Table 5 is about here

Table 5 examines the impact of people's preference structure on their understanding of democracy. In model 1, we use two norms – 1) reciprocal orientation towards authority and 2) individualistic orientation to predict people's understanding of democracy. These two variables are simple additive indexes of the variables reported in table 4. Higher numbers in the index indicates respondents perceiving their relationship with authority as reciprocal or more individualistically orientated.

The analyses presented in Table 5 reveals that norms have a significant impact on the way people understand democracy--those perceiving proper relationship with authority as reciprocal and those adopting an individualistic orientation are more likely to see democracy as an institutional arrangement for people to constrain the behavior of their government or as political rights of citizens in society. The contrary is also true -- those perceiving a proper relationship with authority as hierarchical are more likely to see democracy as representing a certain kind of paternalism by government in treating

its citizens.

Before we can draw any conclusion about cultural impacts on the political process, we need to rule out structural and institutional explanations. Although structural and institutional theory agrees that certain values may have influence over the political process in different societies, they both believe such influences are not independent. Modernization theorists argue that political culture in a society covaries with the level of economic development, and institutionalists argue cultural values among people in a society are largely determined by institutions.

Model 2 in the table is designed to falsify the argument that political culture has independent effects on political processes as demonstrated in model 1. We include three structural variables in the model. Among them, the most important one is education as measured by years of formal schooling. Values and norms are transmitted through the socialization process and education plays a crucial role in such a process.<sup>17</sup> Education may also influence people's understanding of democracy. This raises the possibility that the relationship between the basic orientation of individuals and their understanding of democracy is actually a spurious one—that is, both are shaped by education. We include gender in the model for the same reason. According to modernization theorists, urban experiences are also found to be a powerful

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<sup>17</sup> (Inglehart, Ronald. 90b. Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 90b).){Inglehart 1997 #255}

mechanism for modernizing people.<sup>18</sup> Such experiences can influence both people's orientation and their attitudes towards government. We thus include place of residence in the model to see if the cultural impacts revealed in table 1 are independent from the above structural variables.

The news media is however, a critical vehicle for continued learning. Modernization theorists have found that information can influence people's orientation and shape their attitudes towards politics.<sup>19</sup> Since the media in China is still largely controlled by the government, we believe media access there actually measures an important aspect of institutional effects, propaganda by government to shape people's opinion about the nature of democracy. Since government propaganda is aimed not at making people independent citizens, but making them dependent on authority, the cultural effects revealed in model 1 may actually be spurious effects of political institutions. We include that variable to rule out such a possibility.

The finding presented in model 2 can be summarized as follows: 1) despite serious attempts, we failed to falsify the effects of political culture on the political process. Cultural values do have significant and independent effects on people's understanding of the meaning of democracy; 2) both education and the experiences of urban residence have important impacts on how people in mainland China understand

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<sup>18</sup> (Inkeles, Alex and Smith, David H. 74. Becoming Modern (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 74), 173-91).

<sup>19</sup> (Deutsch, Karl W. "Social Mobilization and Political Development." American Political Science Review Vol, 55 No. 3 (61)).

democracy; and 3) we also find that institutions influence people's understanding of the meaning of democracy but not in the predicted direction. Listening to government controlled radio, rather than making people see democracy as meaning paternalistic care by government, makes people perceive democracy as institutional arrangement for people to supervise their government or as the right of private citizens to constrain the behavior of their government.

Table 6 is about here

In table 6 and table 7, we examine the cultural impacts on the propensity for people to get involved in unconventional political action and their trust of the political authorities. The dependent variable in table 6 is an additive index of the questions asking respondents if they very much agree, agree, disagree, or very much disagree that people should employ such unconventional political acts as demonstrations, strikes, blocking traffic, wrecking public property, attacking government organizations, engaging in work slow downs, and sign petitions to express their opinions. The dependent variable in table 7 is an additive index of the questions asked respondents report if they trust the courts, the central and local government, the CCP, the National People's Congress, government officials in general, the army, the public security apparatus and local police in a six point scale. One represents complete distrust and six represents complete trust. This index measures both trust for incumbents and for institutions in China overall.

Table 7 is about here

The findings in table 6 and table 7 are quite similar to that of Table 5. That is, norms have significant impacts both on the propensity for people to get involved in unconventional political actions to express their opinions as well as political trust. More importantly, such impacts are independent—they can neither be reduced to the influence of structures nor institutions.

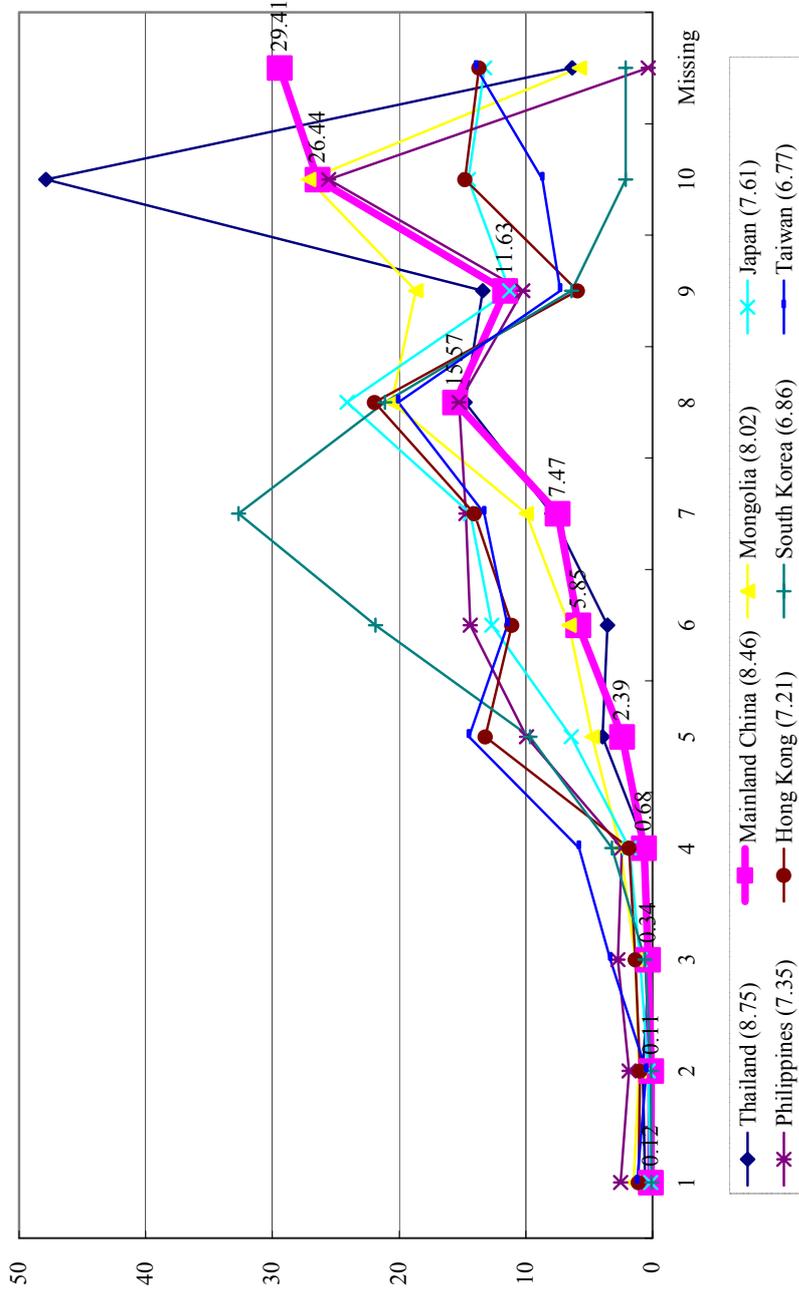
Conclusion to come

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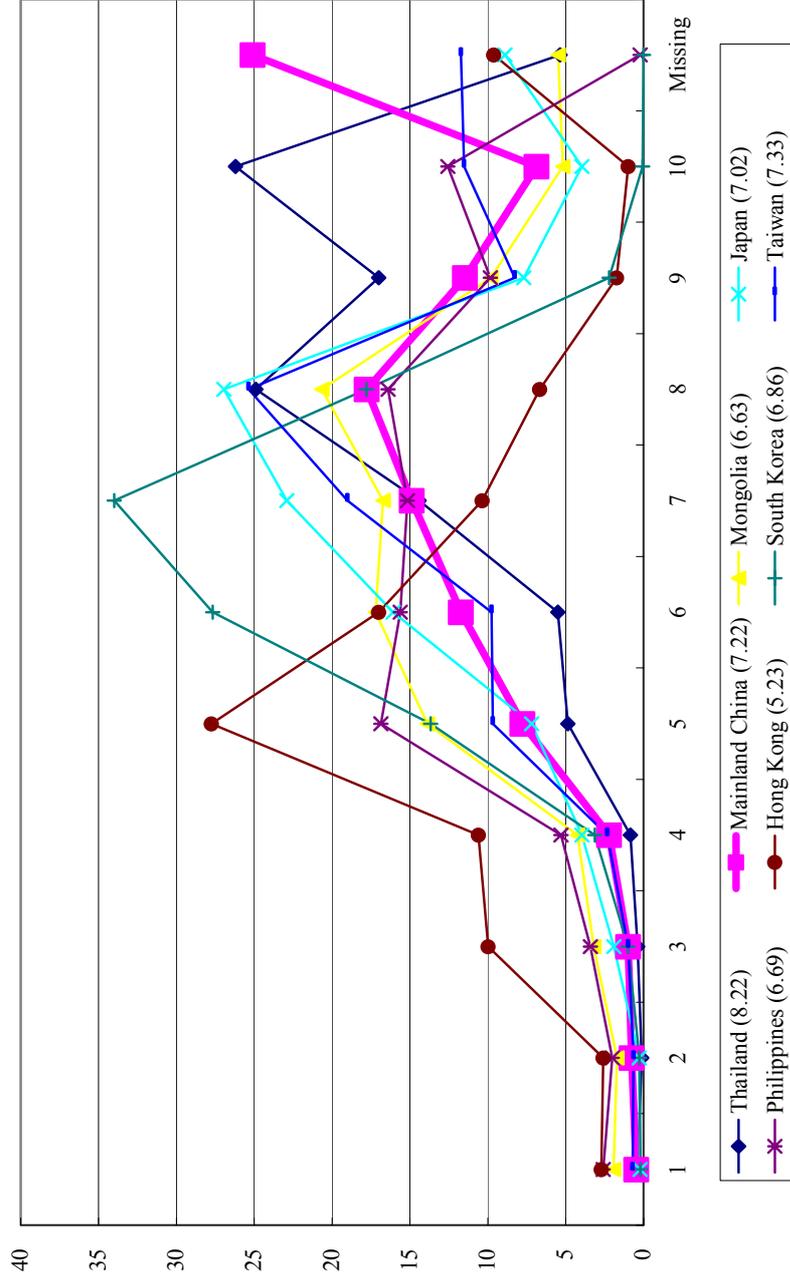
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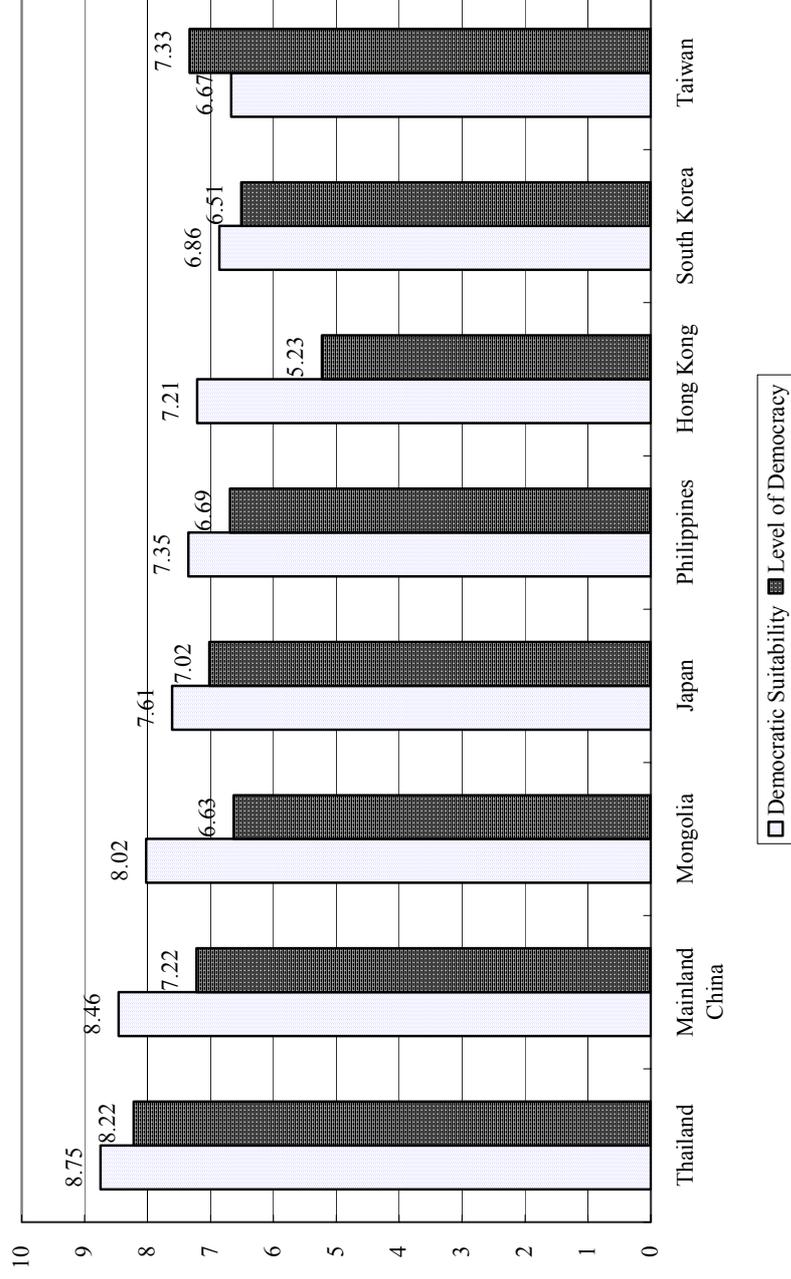
**Figure 1. Whether Democracy is Suitable for the Society in which Respondents Reside**



**Figure 2. Levels of Democracy in Different Societies as Perceived by Their People**



**Figure 3. Subjective Evaluation of Democratic Suitability and Levels of Democracy in their own Society**



**Table 1. Political Fear and its Correlation with People's Evaluation of the Level of Democracy in China in 2002.**

	No Fear at all	Not Fearful	Somewhat Fearful	Very Fearful	Don't know	Correlation with Democracy Scale
<b>If you speak critically of the government, are you worried that someone might snitch on you?</b>	4.3	55	25.4	2.1	13.1	-0.04
	-138.0	-1753.0	-810.0	-66.0	-417.0	
<b>If you speak critically of Party or National Leaders, are you worried there is someone snitching on you?</b>	4	54	20.8	2.6	18.1	0.01
	(141)	(1720)	(663)	(81)	(577)	

Source: 2002 Mainland China Survey

Note: Entries are Percentage. Entries in parentheses are Ns. Missing values are excluded.

**Table 2. Perception of Performance of the Current Government As Compared to that of 1979**

	Better	No Change	Worse	B-W
<b>Civil Liberty</b>				
Freedom of Expression	85.0 (2,174)	12.1 (310)	2.9 (73)	82.1
Freedom of Residence	82.5 (2,118)	14 (358)	3.6 (91)	78.9
Freedom of Religion	75.7 (1,569)	20.4 (422)	3.9 (80)	71.8
Freedom of Association	74.2 (1,435)	21 (406)	4.8 (93)	69.4
<b>Political Rights</b>				
Personal Political Rights	69.3 (1,664)	24 (576)	6.7 (162)	62.6
Independence of the Legal System	61.8 (988)	21.1 (337)	17.1 (273)	44.7
Equal Treatment by the Government	60.5 (1,489)	23.3 (574)	16.2 (398)	44.3
Influence on Government Policy	39.0 (766)	47.1 (926)	13.8 (272)	25.2
<b>Economic Performance</b>				
Economic Development	96.6 (2,804)	1.6 (47)	1.8 (52)	86.3
Inequality	21.2 (600)	4.1 (115)	74.7 (2,109)	-53.5
<b>Corruption</b>	12.4 (319)	4.4 (113)	83.2 (2,138)	-70.8
<b>Social Order</b>				
Public Security	45.3 (1,293)	6.1 (175)	48.5 (1383)	-3.2

Source: 2002 Mainland China Survey

Note: Entries are Percentage. Entries in parentheses are Ns. Missing values are excluded.

**Table 3. Meaning of Democracy for Respondents in China and Taiwan**

	Mainland China		Taiwan	
	Percent	N	Percent	N
<b>To you, what does democracy mean?</b>				
<b>Freedom</b>				
Freedom and/or Equality	22.9	739	48.6	687
<b>Parental Care</b>				
Soliciting People's Opinions when Making Decisions	17.1	544	5.7	81
Joint Decision Making	16.9	538	6.8	96
Government for the People	7.2	229	7.8	111
<b>Procedures, Obligations, or Rights</b>				
Listen to People's Opinions when Making Decisions	13.5	429	13.4	190
Elections and Participation in the Decision Making Process	11.6	371	10.4	147
Rightst	6.3	200	4	56
Don't Know	42.1	1340	17	241

Source: 2002 Asian Barometer Study

Note: Total exceeds 100 percent due to multiple answers being allowed for each respondent

**Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Normative Orientation in Eight Asian Societies**

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Mongolia	Thailand	Philippine s	South Korea	Japan
<b>Orientation toward Authorities</b>								
If there is a quarrel, people <i>should</i> ask elders to resolve the dispute.	69.5	33.8	65.5	71.5	77.3	75.8	44.0	61.5
Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children <i>should still</i> do what they ask	33.3	22.3	22.9	69.0	38.8	29.2	47.5	41.7
When a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law come into conflict, even if the mother-in-law is in the wrong, the husband <i>should still</i> persuade his wife to obey his mother	50.3	34.3	45.2	29.4	43.3	27.9		21.4
	153.1	90.4	133.6	169.9	159.4	132.9	91.5	124.6
<b>Orientation toward Interests</b>								
be prepared to sacrifice his personal interests	82.8	45.1	56.3	58.3	95.4	66.2	54.8	16.2
For the sake of the family, individual <i>should</i> put his personal interests second	85.8	84.9	79.0			68.2	82.4	
A person <i>should</i> not insist on his own opinion if people around him disagree	42.9	48.0	58.1	68.5	62.0	57.0	61.2	56.1
	211.5	178.0	193.4	126.8	157.4	191.4	198.4	72.3

Sources: Asian Barometer, 2002

Note: Entries are percentage of respondents giving positive answers

**Table 5. Cultural Orientation and Understand of Democracy in Mainland China**

Independent Variables	Democracy as Rights (Logistic Model)			
	Model I		Model II	
	Beta (SE)	Coefficient (SE)	Beta (SE)	Coefficient (SE)
<b>Norms</b>				
Orientation toward Authority	.18*** (.02)	.21 (.02)	.16 (.09)	.83*** (.09)
Individualist Orientation	.13*** (.03)	.11 (.03)	.09 (.1)	.43*** (.11)
Age		-.004* (.002)	-.06	-.02** (.007)
<b>Structural Variables</b>				
Education		.02* (.01)	.07	.09** (.03)
Place of Residence		.08*** (.03)	0.09	-.04 (.08)
Gender		.06 (.05)	.03	.13 (.17)
<b>Political Information</b>				
Access to Political News		.02 (.02)	.02	.10 (.07)
Reading Newspapers		-.03 (.02)	-.04	.08 (.08)
Radio Listening		.07*** (.02)	.08	.19* (.007)
(Constant)		-2.32*** (.21)	-2.39*** (.28)	-12.72*** (.10)
R <sup>2</sup>		.06	.10	
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>			0.23	0.27
-2 Log likelihood			1003.63	837.31

**Table 6. Cultural Orientation and Approval of Unconventional Political Acts**

Independent Variables	Democratic Index			
	Model I		Model II	
	Coefficient (SE)	Beta	Coefficient (SE)	Beta
<b>Norms</b>				
Orientation toward Authority	.10*** (.03)	.03	.10** (.04)	.06
Individualist Orientation	.92*** (.08)	.23	.83*** (.08)	.21
Age			-.01*** (.004)	-.08
<b>Structural Variables</b>				
Education			-.02 (.02)	-.03
Place of Residence			.02 (.05)	0.01
Gender			.06 (.10)	.01
Satisfaction with Own Life			-0.1*** -0.02	-.09
<b>Political Information</b>				
Interests in Politics			.13* (.06)	.04
Reading Newspapers			-.08 (.05)	-.04
Radio Listening			.003 (.04)	.01
(Constant)		15.53*** (.45)		16.6*** (.61)
R <sup>2</sup>		.06		.08

**Table 7. Impacts of Cultural Orientation on Trust in Institutions**

Independent Variables	Democratic Index			
	Model I		Model II	
	Coefficient (SE)	Beta	Coefficient (SE)	Beta
<b>Norms</b>				
Orientation toward Authority	-.29*** (.4)	-.15	-.14*** (.04)	-.08
Individualist Orientation	-.32 (.06)	-.12	-.21*** (.06)	-.10
Age			.03*** (.004)	.15
<b>Structural Variables</b>				
Education			-.03* (.02)	-.05
Place of Residence			-.31*** (.05)	-.14
Satisfaction with Own Life			.10*** (.02)	.13
<b>Political Information</b>				
Access to Political Information			.02 (.04)	.01
Access to Grapevine			-.24*** (.11)	-.05
(Constant)		26.57*** (.42)		24.15*** (.55)
R <sup>2</sup>		.04		.12

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# Asian Barometer

## A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

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.

*For more information, please visit our website: [www.asianbarometer.org](http://www.asianbarometer.org)*