

ASIAN  BAROMETER

A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

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Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy?  
The Case of South Korea

Chong-Min Park  
Korea University

Doh Chull Shin  
University of Missouri



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# Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

## Working Paper Series

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*Contact Information*

*Asian Barometer Project Office*

*Department of Political Science*

*National Taiwan University*

*21 Hsu-Chow Road, Taipei, Taiwan 100*

*Tel: 886 2-2357 0427*

*Fax: 886-2-2357 0420*

*E-mail: [asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw](mailto:asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw)*

*Website: [www.asianbarometer.org](http://www.asianbarometer.org)*

# **Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy? The Case of South Korea**

Chong-Min Park  
Doh Chull Shin

For more than a decade, scholars and policymakers have vigorously debated the suitability and compatibility of liberal democracy in East Asia (Bauer and Bell 1999; Emerson 1995; Fukuyama 1995; Thompson 2001; Chan 1997; Huntington 1996). Defenders of Asian values have claimed that Western-style liberal democracy is neither suitable for nor compatible with Confucian East Asia, where collective welfare, a sense of duty, and other principles of Confucian moral philosophy are deeply rooted (Zakaria 1994). As a viable alternative to a liberal democracy based on the principles of individual rights and social contract theory, the defenders have advocated the “Asian Way,” a benevolent paternalistic form of governance, which supporters of liberal democracy reject as anachronistic and oppressive rule (Bell 1995). Despite a decade of intense debate, however, no systematic effort to date has been made to determine empirically whether Asian values actually deter the development of Western-style liberal democracy in Confucian East Asia (Dalton and Ong 2003).

In this paper, we examine the prevalence of Asian values and test their compatibility or incompatibility with pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian political orientations among the Korean mass public. More specifically, we address the following questions: What are the specific components of politically relevant Asian values? How broadly and deeply are these components rooted in the minds of the Korean population? Do adherents of Asian values tend to reject democracy and accept authoritarianism, as the Asian values thesis suggests? These and other related questions are explored in the context of the East Asia Barometer (EAB hereafter) survey conducted in Korea during the month of February 2003.

This paper has four sections. The first section establishes widely cited Asian values and distinguishes their types and dimensions. The second section explores the extent to which contemporary Koreans remain attached to, or detached from, these values and the patterns of their attachment or detachment. The third section analyzes the bivariate and multivariate relationships between attachment to Asian values and regime support. The final section highlights the key findings of the EAB survey and explores their implications for the prospect of a new Korean democracy.

### **Asian Values and Confucian Morality**

In recent years, the nature and uniqueness of Asian values have been widely debated (Bauer and Bell 1999; Tatsuo 1999; Donnelly 1999; Sen 1999). Nonetheless, no consensus yet exists among scholars on what constitutes Asian values or their level of uniqueness. If Asian values are those values the peoples of all Asian countries have in common, the concept becomes of little use because only a few values, if any, meet this criterion. For this reason, much of the literature tends to view Asian values as those the peoples of Confucian East Asian countries hold in common. In this conception, Asian values mean, by and large, Confucian values. In this study, we use Asian and Confucian values interchangeably.

Values widely cited as Asian or Confucian include the importance of family, the concern for virtues and ethics, the primacy of group over individuals, the emphasis on unity or harmony, hard work, thrift, and the importance of education (Zakaria 1994; Tu 1996; Bauer and Bell 1999). Because this study focuses on politically relevant Asian values, such economic and social values as hard work, thrift, and the importance of education, which often appear in explanations of East Asian economic development, are excluded from the analysis.

Confucian morality, the principal source of various Asian values, assumes that the person is inherently connected to others (Marsella, De Vos and Hsu 1985; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus and

Nisbett 1998). In Confucianism, the ideal self is defined and established in terms of one's relationship to others. An ideal person is expected to work for the good of the group and to adjust the self according to others' expectations. Because they are not seen as separate from other people, individuals are obligated to work through the groups to which they belong. Therefore, a person's concern for his or her own needs and rights is always considered secondary to his or her social duty or collective welfare.

Confucianism is a moral code of ethics that emphasizes personal virtues rather than individual rights. In this virtue-based morality, the concept of rights is not deemed essential for human well-being. Consequently, any talk of rights is discouraged, while the sense of community is stressed (Chan 1999; Lee 1992; Bauer and Bell 1999). In politics, rule of virtue, not rule of law, is advocated and justified as the ideal mode of governance. Individuals are required to define their interests in terms of the interests of the communities to which they belong. In the Confucian notion of government, therefore, there is no place for the concept of individual rights in society and politics.

Confucian morality also emphasizes family honor and filial piety. Relations within a family are not based on the notion of contract or the impersonal calculation of benefits and costs. Instead, they are based on the principles of filial piety and loyalty, which stress family obligations and family welfare (Chung 1997; Hahm 1996). Personal conduct is morally judged on the basis of whether it promotes the good of the family as a whole. The family is envisioned as a microcosm of society and politics and idealized as the prototype of good governance. The metaphor of the household powerfully serves as the proper code of social and political behavior.

In Western moral tradition, however, a person is viewed as a separate and independent entity whose dignity depends on personal liberty. Individuals are treated as morally autonomous and capable of conducting their lives as they see fit. Each individual relates to society through

mutual consent with other individuals. The very idea of individual autonomy and the notion of social contract are at the core of liberal democracy, which stresses the importance of personal liberties and rights. The Western conception of rule of law is advocated to protect these liberties and rights from the state's arbitrary use of power. The morality of liberal democracy is primarily rights-based. In Western societies, significant moral goods include freedom, independence, self-determination, and individual rights.

In short, the Confucian moral tradition is qualitatively different from the Western moral tradition. The former stresses the norms of social obligations and collective good and the practice of fulfilling duties and living up to social-relational standards. In striking contrast, the latter emphasizes the principles of individual freedom and autonomy and the practice of respecting the rights of other people.

The core elements of Asian values that reflect Confucian morality are often differentiated into two broad types, Asian social values and Asian political values. The former features social collectivism and deals primarily with the norms of interpersonal life, including filial piety and family loyalty, respect for authority based on seniority, the primacy of community over individual, and the priority of collective order over personal freedom. The latter features political paternalism and focuses on the norms and practices of government, including those of benevolent paternalism, the moralistic role of the state, and anti-adversarial or consensual governance. Both types of values are rooted in the Confucian conception of self as an interdependent entity and that of family as the prototype of social and political institutions.

### **Attachment to Asian Social Values**

To estimate the levels of attachment to Asian social values, we selected eight questions from the EAB survey (see Appendix for the wording of these questions). Dealing with different aspects of social life, we divided these questions into four pairs, each of which refers to a distinct

dimension of social collectivism. They are: (1) social hierarchy (deference to authority), (2) social harmony (aversion to conflict), (3) group primacy (pursuit of collective welfare), and (4) anti-pluralism (preference of social unity).

### **Social hierarchy**

In the Confucian moral tradition, basic human relations are fundamentally hierarchical (Lee 1992; Chung 1997). In particular, a son is expected to follow every instruction of his father, no matter how unreasonable the demand. Similarly, the younger is expected to respect and obey the elder. The ideal society is conceived of as being dependent on hierarchical relationships of different statuses and positions. Deference to authority based on hierarchical social relations is the foundation of Confucian morality. Thus, reverence to ancestors' and parents' will is viewed as a core Asian value. Is this value still widely upheld among the contemporary Korean people?

The EAB survey data show that the value of social hierarchy is not widely accepted among the Korean population. First, more than half (52%) of the respondents indicated they do not uphold filial piety, a key component of Confucian ethic, by disagreeing with the statement "Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask." Yet, nearly a half (48%) still believes in the virtue of unconditional obedience to parents. Second, nearly three-fifths (56%) indicated they do not believe in the legitimacy of traditional authority based on seniority by disagreeing with the statement "If there is a quarrel, we should ask an elder to resolve the dispute." Thus, more Koreans disapprove rather than approve of the traditional method of resolving interpersonal conflicts. Yet a substantial minority (44%) still approve of the traditional method.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the social hierarchy value. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 means no attachment, and a score of 3 means full attachment. As shown in Figure 1,

more than one-third (36%) is unattached to the value of social hierarchy, while more than a quarter (27%) is fully attached to it. Noteworthy is that nearly two in three (64%) still remain at least partly attached to the value of deference to authority.

(Figure 1 here)

### **Social harmony**

In the Confucian moral tradition, excessive self-assertions and self-claims are regarded as detrimental to achieving collective harmony and welfare (Chan 1999; Lee 1992). Yielding and conceding are highly valued for the sake of interpersonal harmony. The act of claiming, on the other hand, is viewed as disgraceful because it tends to cause a disturbance of harmonious human relations. An ideal community is assumed to be composed of virtuous members placing shared goals and values over their own desires, not of egoistic individuals. One's self-sacrifice is emphasized for the preservation of the group to which one belongs. The Confucian model of social life stresses the importance of fitting in with others.

The EAB survey data show that the value of social harmony still remains widely accepted among the Korean population. First, seven-tenths (71%) prefer to avoid clashes with their neighbors even if doing so means yielding to them. This large majority agreed with the statement "When one has a conflict with a neighbor, the best way to deal with it is to accommodate the other person." Only three-tenths (29%) do not view concession as the best way of resolving interpersonal conflict. Second, three-fifths (61%) consider it essential not to be assertive at the workplace. This group agreed with the statement "A person should not insist on his own opinion if his co-workers disagree with him." Only two-fifths (39%) defend self-assertion at the expense of collective harmony. Notable is that the value of social harmony is emphasized more in one's neighborhood than at one's workplace, perhaps because the latter involves individual competition



more often than the former does. In any case, it is evident that a majority of Koreans see fitting in with others as desirable, regardless of the context involved.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the social harmony value. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 means no attachment, and a score of 3 means full attachment. As shown in Figure 1, nearly a half (49%) of all respondents is fully attached to the value of social harmony, while less than one-fifth (16%) is unattached to it. The fully attached are three times as numerous as the unattached. Striking is that nearly six-sevenths (84%) are still at least partly attached to the value of aversion to conflict.

### **Group primacy**

In the Confucian moral tradition, the virtue of sacrifice for collective welfare over personal interests is highly honored. The ideal Confucian human being is group-oriented rather than self-oriented. Whether the group is family or society, such group-oriented morality promotes the priority of individual obligations to the group over the rights of individuals (Koh 1996). The Confucian individual is regarded as being embedded in the group.

The EAB survey data show that this value of family primacy still remains widely endorsed by the Korean population. Nearly seven-tenths (70%) agree with the statement “For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.” Sacrificing one’s personal desires to promote family welfare and honor still is highly appreciated. Only a minority (30%) embraces the Western notion of self-seeking individualism by rejecting the subjugation of personal interests to the family good (Triandis 1995). In contrast, the value of society primacy is not overwhelmingly popular. Only slightly more than one half (55%) of respondents agrees with the statement “For the sake of the society, the individual should be prepared to sacrifice his personal

interest.” As a focus of loyalty, family appears to take on higher priority than society. This finding illustrates that loyalty to family is not necessarily extended toward the sphere of social life, as Confucianism would demand.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the group primacy value. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 means no attachment, and a score of 3 means full attachment. As shown in Figure 1, more than four-tenths (43%) of Koreans are fully attached to the value of group primacy, while less than one-fifth (18%) is unattached to it. The fully attached are two and a half times more numerous than the unattached. Significant is that more than four-fifths (82%) are still at least partly attached to the value of collective welfare over individual interests.

### **Anti-pluralism**

In the Confucian moral tradition, social uniformity is valued for achieving social unity and order. The open and free expression and competition of social differences is regarded as generating social confusion and disorder. Hence, controlling the organization of interests and restraining the expression of ideas are viewed as necessary for maintaining social unity. Linguistic and ethnic homogeneity in Korea have especially contributed to the value of anti-pluralism by maintaining social uniformity and conformity.

The EAB survey data show that this value of anti-pluralism is not widely accepted among the Korean people. First, only about one-third (35%) agrees with the statement “Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.” More Koreans appear to favor pluralistic social order. Second, less than a half (47%) agrees with the statement “If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic.” More people support rather than

oppose the open expression of divergent ideas. This finding suggests that a majority of Koreans see social pluralism as not necessarily adverse to social harmony.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the anti-pluralism value. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 means no attachment, and a score of 3 means full attachment. As shown in Figure 1, nearly two-fifths (39%) are unattached to the value of anti-pluralism, while one-fifth (21%) is fully attached to it. The unattached are nearly twice as numerous as the fully attached. Notable is that nearly three-fifths (61%) still remain at least partly attached to the value of anti-pluralism.

Overall, the EAB findings presented above show that of the four Asian social values we considered, aversion to conflict and pursuit for collective welfare still remain largely uncontested, while concern for social unity and deference to authority are being challenged in contemporary Korea.

### **Demographic differences**

After studying the Korean people's collective attachment to these values, we examined whether the level of attachment to each value varied among the different segments of the Korean population. Table 1 examines the relationship between the four dimensions of Asian social values on the one hand and five demographic variables on the other. The demographic variables include gender, age, education, income, and residential community.

(Table 1 here)

The EAB survey data reveal that attachment to Asian social values does vary across categories of the Korean people. First, those fully attached to the social hierarchy value are found more often among women, the elderly (60 and older), the poorly educated (primary education and less), and the residents of rural communities. Second, those fully attached to the social harmony or

group primacy value are significantly more numerous among the elderly (60 and older), the poorly educated (primary education and less), the lowest income group, and the residents of rural communities. Finally, those fully attached to the anti-pluralism value are significantly more present among the elderly (60 and older) and the poorly educated (primary education and less). In short, age and education make large differences in attachment to Asian social values, while income and residential community have less influence. These findings suggest that popular attachment to Asian social values in Korea may erode with the replacement of old generations, expansion of education, and advances in economic development and urbanization.

### **Attachment to Asian Political Values**

To estimate the levels of attachment to Asian political values, we selected six questions from the EAB survey. These questions reflect the Confucian conception of good governance featuring benevolent paternalistic rule, the moralistic role of the state, and anti-adversarial politics (Pye 1985). We divided them into three pairs, each of which represents a distinct dimension of Asian political values. They are: (1) the family-state (benevolent paternalistic rule), (2) the moral state (the moralistic and perfectionist role of the state), and (3) anti-adversarial politics (the concentration of governing powers).

#### **The family-state**

The Confucian ideal of society and politics represents an extension of the notion of ideal family life. “Just as there is the natural authority of the parent, so there is the natural authority of the president. The moral basis of family-state is based on the twin virtues of filial piety and loyalty that are rooted in human nature” (Hahm 1967). The Confucian family is viewed as a model of governance.

The EAB survey data show that the Korean people tend to subscribe to this Confucian notion of the state as a family. Nearly three-fifths (59%) consider family the prototype of

government and support paternalistic rule, expressing agreement with the statement “The relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children.” Additionally, nearly a half (48%) agrees with the statement “Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.” Affirmative responses to this second question are not as prevalent as those to the first one; nearly a quarter (25%) of those who agreed with the first statement disagreed with the second. This discrepancy may indicate that some Koreans are likely to remain loyal to their rulers only when they perceive the rule as benevolent. In the Confucian world of politics, the legitimacy of paternalistic rule depends on the supreme Confucian virtue of benevolence (Koh, 1996). If rulers fail to demonstrate this moral quality, their rule loses moral legitimacy and the ruled are justified in a revolt.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the family-state value. We measured their attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 indicates no attachment, and a score of 2 indicates full attachment. As shown in Figure 2, one-third (34%) is fully attached to the value of the family-state, while nearly three-tenths (28%) are unattached to it. Notable is that more than seven-tenths (72%) remain at least partly attached to the value of the family-state. This finding illustrates the lingering legacy of the Confucian paternalistic rule in contemporary Korea.

(Figure 2 here)

### **The moral state**

The Confucian ideal of governance advocates the rule of virtue, not the rule of law. Therefore, the ruler ought to possess wisdom rather than technical expertise or administrative skills. Furthermore, the ruler ought to serve as a virtuous example for the people; he should govern the people with the virtuous power needed to persuade and teach them, not with coercion,

force, or even law. The Confucian idea of governance also defends the moral character of the state. The state is conceived of as an education institution where the ruler teaches the people ethics (Tu 1996). This principle of public morality holds that the state should prevent people from behaving immorally and help them maintain morally worthy practices (Chan 1999). In conjunction with the ideal of paternalistic rule, this principle justifies the custodian role of the state in defending public morals for the society.

The EAB survey data show that this rule of virtue is still widely embraced among the Korean population. Nearly two-thirds (63%) agree with the statement “If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.” Rule by a few is widely endorsed as long as the few are endowed with the moral quality of leadership. Korean support for moral state, however, does not necessarily mean support for state censorship for public morals. In response to the statement “The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society,” only two-fifths (40%) expressed agreement. Comparing the affirmative responses to these two questions indicates that the Korean people as a whole reject the state’s guardian role in defending public morals for society while endorsing rule by virtue.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the notion of moral state. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 indicates no attachment, and a score of 2 indicates full attachment. As shown in Figure 2, the Korean people are nearly evenly divided in their orientations to moral state; the percentages of those fully attached and those unattached are practically equal (28% vs. 25%). Yet noteworthy is that three-quarters (75%) remain at least partly attached to the ideal of moral state. The belief in the legitimacy of moral state and the rule of virtues appears to be widely shared among the Korean people.

## **Anti-adversarial politics**

Confucian moral tradition assumes the innate goodness of human nature and rejects the underlying ethos of democratic institutions such as separation of powers and checks and balances. The separation of powers is regarded as fostering antagonism and confrontation within a supposedly harmonious “big family.” Dispersion of powers is also believed to jeopardize the unity of a polity as a big family. In Confucianism, therefore, good governance justifies institutional arrangements that unify rather than divide governing powers. The ideal of anti-adversarial and non-competitive politics legitimates the supremacy of the executive over the legislature or the judiciary.

The EAB survey data show that this ideal of adversarial politics is not widely held among the Korean people. First, less than a half (46%) agrees with the statement “If the government is constantly checked by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.” This indicates that more Koreans subscribe to the practice of adversarial politics by endorsing the legislative control over the executive. When asked about the role of judges, nearly seven-tenths (69%) endorse their independence from the executive branch by expressing disagreement with the statement “When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.” Comparing responses to these two questions clearly shows that the Korean people are more supportive of judicial independence than legislative control over the executive branch.

Considered together, responses to these two questions reveal the general level of attachment Koreans have to the ideal of anti-adversarial politics. We measured this attachment by counting the number of questions each respondent answered affirmatively. On this three-point index, a score of 0 means no attachment, and a score of 2 means full attachment. As shown in Figure 2, less than one-fifth (16%) is fully attached to the ideal of anti-adversarial politics, while nearly two-fifths (39%) are unattached to it. The unattached are nearly two and a half times more

numerous than the fully attached. Significant is that nearly three-fifths (61%) still remain at least partly attached to the ideal of anti-adversarial politics.

Overall, the EAB findings reported above clearly indicate that of the three Asian political values, benevolent paternalistic rule and the moralistic role of the state still remain largely uncontested ideals, while anti-adversarial or de-politicized governance are being challenged in contemporary Korea.

### **Demographic differences**

After studying the Korean people's collective attachment to these values, we then examined whether the level of attachment to each value varied among the different segments of the Korean population Table 2 examines the relationship between the three dimensions of Asian political values on the one hand and the five demographic variables on the other.

The EAB survey data reveal that attachment to Asian political values does vary across demographic categories of the Korean people. First, the proportions of those fully attached to the family-state or moral state ideal are significantly higher among the elderly (60 and older), the poorly educated (primary education and less), the lowest income group, and the residents of rural communities. Second, significantly higher proportions of those fully attached to the ideal of anti-adversarial politics are found among the elderly (60 and older) and the poorly educated (primary education and less). A person's age and education level thus have a great impact on his or her attachment to Asian political values, while gender makes almost no difference and income and residential community make only a limited difference in attachment to the family-state and moral state ideals. As in the case of social values, popular attachment to Asian political values in Korea may diminish with generational replacement, expansion of education, economic development, and urbanization.

(Table 2 here)



## **Asian Values and Regime Support**

The Asian-values thesis generates two related hypotheses, one at the macro-level and the other at the micro-level. The macro-level hypothesis states that countries where Asian values are more prevalent are less likely to develop democracy than those where they are less prevalent. On the other hand, the micro-level hypothesis states that individuals attached to Asian values are less likely to support democracy than those detached from them. Of these two hypotheses, this study is designed to test the micro-level hypothesis. The study does so by examining whether among ordinary Koreans, attachment to Asian values deters support for democracy while fostering support for authoritarianism. This section presents the data relevant to this question.

### **Regime support: democratic vs. authoritarian**

For a more comprehensive assessment of this question, two kinds of regime orientations are distinguished, pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian, and both of these are used as dependent variables, as done in prior survey research on mass reactions to democratic regime change (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Shin 1999). It is hypothesized that both pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian orientations are negatively related to each of the two broad dimensions—social and political—of Asian values.

Democratic support is measured by considering the responses to three questions: desirability of democracy, suitability of democracy, and preference of democracy (see Appendix for a list of these questions). How greatly respondents desire democracy was determined by asking them to rate how democratic they want the current political system to be on a 10-point scale. A score of 1 on this scale indicates “complete dictatorship,” and a score of 10 indicates “complete democracy.” Similarly, how suitable respondents believe democracy was determined by asking them to rate the suitability of democracy for the country on a 10-point scale. A score of 1 on this scale indicates “completely unsuitable,” and a score of 10 indicates “completely suitable.” Finally,

whether respondents prefer democracy was determined by asking them whether they believe democracy is always preferable to all other kinds of government. In order to estimate the overall level of democratic support, a four-point index is constructed by counting the number of democratic responses to these three questions. On this index, a score of 0 means no support, and a score of 3 means full support.

After measuring democratic support, we then gauged rejection of authoritarian rule by jointly considering the responses to three questions: rejection of civilian dictatorship, rejection of military dictatorship, and rejection of technocratic dictatorship. Whether respondents reject civilian dictatorship was determined by asking them whether they agree with the statement “We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.” Whether respondents reject military dictatorship was determined by asking them whether they agree with the statement “The military should come in to govern the country.” Lastly, whether respondents reject technocratic dictatorship was determined by asking them whether they agree with the statement “We should get rid of parliament and elections and have the experts decide everything.” In order to estimate the overall level of authoritarian rejection, a four-point index is constructed by counting the number of antiauthoritarian responses to these three questions. On this index, a score of 0 means no rejection, and a score of 3 means full rejection.

### **Bivariate analysis**

Table 3 shows the bivariate relationships between dimensions of Asian values on the one hand and the two kinds of regime support on the other. First, there is no significant relationship between democratic support and the first three dimensions of Asian social values—social hierarchy, social harmony, and group primacy. Yet the fourth dimension, anti-pluralism, has a significant negative association with democratic support. Those attached to this social value are less likely to express democratic support than those detached from it. Of the three dimensions of

Asian political values, the two involving moral state and anti-adversarial politics have significant negative associations with democratic support. Those attached to these political values are less supportive of democracy than those detached from them.

(Table 3 here)

Regarding anti-authoritarianism, two significant negative associations appear between the rejection of authoritarianism and the two social values of social hierarchy and anti-pluralism. Those attached to these social values are less likely to reject authoritarian rule than those detached from them. On the other hand, the other two dimensions of social values—social harmony and group primacy—are not significantly related to an anti-authoritarian sentiment. In contrast, all three dimensions of political values—family-state, moral state, and anti-adversarial politics—have significant negative associations with antiauthoritarianism. Those attached to these political values are less likely to reject authoritarian rule than those detached from them.

Taken together, the above results from the bivariate analyses neither uphold nor tear down the validity of the Asian-values thesis. Instead, they prove that all Asian values are not equally associated with pro-democratic or antiauthoritarian regime support. Social harmony and group primacy are associated with neither pro-democratic nor antiauthoritarian regime support; social hierarchy and family-state are associated only with antiauthoritarian regime support; and anti-pluralism, moral state, and anti-adversarial politics are associated with both pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian regime support. From these findings we can conclude that the impact of Asian values on regime support depends upon the value at play as well as the type of regime in question.

### **Multivariate analysis**

In order to estimate the independent and relative effects of Asian values on regime support, we regressed democratic attachment and authoritarian detachment, respectively, on seven dimensions—four social and three political—of Asian values and five demographic control

variables. Table 4 shows the results. The regression model accounts for 2.1 percent of the variance in democratic support and 11.0 percent of the variance in authoritarian rejection. The most notable finding is that most of the variance in democratic support is left unexplained. This indicates that neither social nor political Asian values matter much as a force inhibiting the Korean people from embracing democracy as a new political system.

(Table 4 here)

Let us first examine the effects of the Asian values on democratic support as shown in the first column of the table. For the most part, these effects are insignificant. The only dimension that has significant effects on democratic support is anti-adversarial politics. Its effects are in the expected negative direction and are substantial in magnitude. Those attached to the value of anti-adversarial politics are less likely than those detached from this value to desire democracy, consider it suitable for the country, or view it as the best form of government. None of the five demographic variables including education and income play a significant role in democratic support.

Second, let us examine the effects of Asian values on authoritarian rejection as presented in the second column of the table. All of these effects are significant; however, the effects of some dimensions are not in the negative direction expected from the Asian values thesis. The values of social hierarchy, anti-pluralism, family-state, moral state, and anti-adversarial politics do have negative effects. Those attached to these values, especially social hierarchy and anti-adversarial politics, are less likely to oppose any kinds of dictatorship than those detached from them. Intriguingly, however, the values of social harmony and group primacy have positive effects rather than negative ones. Those attached to these values are more likely to oppose any kinds of dictatorship than those detached from them. No demographic variable except residential

community affects authoritarian rejection to a significant extent. Surprisingly, rural residents appear to be more likely to reject authoritarian rule than urban residents.

Overall, the above findings illustrate that the relationships between Asian values and regime support are extremely complex. The ideal of family-state has some effects on authoritarian rejection but no effect on democratic support. Likewise, the value of group primacy has some effects on authoritarian rejection alone, but these effects are positive, not negative as one would expect. The values and ideals of social hierarchy, social harmony, anti-pluralism, and moral state, on the other hand, have no effect on democratic support but some effects on authoritarian rejection. Anti-adversarial politics is the only value dimension that consistently has some negative effects on all kinds of regime support. This consistency may be because the EAB questions tapping this dimension include support for the principle of checks and balances, which is a more direct measure of a polyarchy.

On balance, Asian values, when considered as a whole, are not uniformly negative in shaping pro-democratic or antiauthoritarian orientations. Some are negative but others are neutral or even positive. Nonetheless, it is evident that many of them do to some degree negatively affect antiauthoritarian orientations. Between the political and social components of Asian values, the former appears to affect regime support more directly and powerfully than the latter. Of the seven Asian values surveyed here, an anti-adversarial orientation toward politics turns out to be the most powerful force orienting ordinary people toward democracy and away from authoritarian rule. Why does it do so?

The Confucian ideal of hierarchical collectivism stresses achieving political unity through organizing society and polity hierarchically, not through a balance of divergent competing forces. The Confucian conception of good governance does not promote “the unity in diversity” as the polyarchy does (Dahl 1971). It advocates political unity through ideological conformity and

ethical perfection. Political pluralism is seen as producing chaos and disorder. The importance of countervailing forces as a prerequisite for stability has never been admitted.

As American Federalists contend, democracy is based on the assumption that no political actors can ever be perfect. Hence, in a democracy, institutional checks and balances are essential. In sharp contrast, the Confucian ideal of moral perfection maintains that as long as a ruler is virtuous and benevolent, there is no need for checks and balances or separation of powers. The Confucian insistence on perfect harmony in political life is not consistent with the political institutions and processes of a polyarchy. In fact, the ideals of hierarchical collectivism and benevolent paternalism see adversarial politics as detestable and disturbing. Adversarial politics signifies a failure of the rule of virtues.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The heated debate on Asian values primarily centers on the question of the suitability or compatibility of liberal democracy in Confucian East Asia. The advocates of the Asian-values thesis contend that Western-style liberal democracy may be unsuitable for Confucian East Asia or incompatible with values and ideals that East Asians uphold. Yet little empirical research has been made to test this thesis.

The Confucian conception of ideal community stresses shared values and goals, priority of common good over private interests, mutual love and caring, and collective harmony. The Confucian emphasis on virtue-based rather than rights-based political morality discourages individualistic assertion of personal rights and liberties, which is necessary for liberal democracy. Thus, champions of Asian values argue that Western-style liberal democracy is not applicable to Confucian East Asia. For them, the viable alternative is the “Asian Way,” based on Confucian moral philosophy, which emphasizes collective welfare before individual rights, order and

harmony based on hierarchy and conformity, and the ideal of virtue-based benevolent paternalistic rule.

The EAB survey findings presented here reveal that contemporary Korean political culture still manifests the Confucian legacy of hierarchical collectivism and benevolent paternalism. A majority of Koreans still remain at least partially attached to some widely cited Asian values. Only a few are fully detached from them. The Confucian ideal of family still remains a model of governance in the eyes of many ordinary Koreans. The family is still the moral source of social and political relations in their minds. The organic notion of society or polity as one big family is widely accepted. All elements of society are seen as hierarchically ordered and individual rights are viewed as less important than the collective welfare of the polity. As the analysis of demographic differences reveals, the replacement of older generations and socioeconomic modernization would reduce the pocket of Confucian tradition in Korea.

As the multivariate analysis shows, the relative effects of Asian values on regime support vary depending on the objects of support and dimensions of values. All Asian values matter for authoritarian rejection, with most of them having negative effects. However, social harmony and group primacy have positive effects. Regarding democratic support, most Asian values do not matter. Only anti-adversarial politics significantly affect this support. Those attached to Asian values still desire democracy, consider it suitable for the country, and view it as the best form of government. This finding is notable and worthy of further investigation.

Perhaps the incongruity of the above finding can be explained by the way the Korean people personally understand the notion of democracy. Perhaps their conception of democracy differs from the notion of Western-style liberal democracy based on equality in freedom, rule of law, checks and balances, and political and social pluralism. They may equate democracy to good

governance, and their model of good governance is not so much liberal as communitarian. We cannot prove this theory here because we have not explored how Koreans understand democracy.

Authoritarian rulers in Korea often exploited Confucian ideals and values in order to justify non-democratic political institutions and practices. Even democratic political leaders were tempted to rely on the Confucian legacy to legitimize the arbitrary use of state power for political purposes. To the extent that Confucian tradition of hierarchical collectivism and benevolent paternalism stir up popular nostalgia for authoritarian rule, the new Korean democracy may degenerate into a delegative or an illiberal populist democracy, if not authoritarianism (O'Donnell 1994). Nonetheless, continuing socioeconomic development, generational replacement, and democratic political learning will gradually diminish the pockets of Confucian traditionalism, which should help the new Korean democracy progress toward a consolidated liberal democracy.

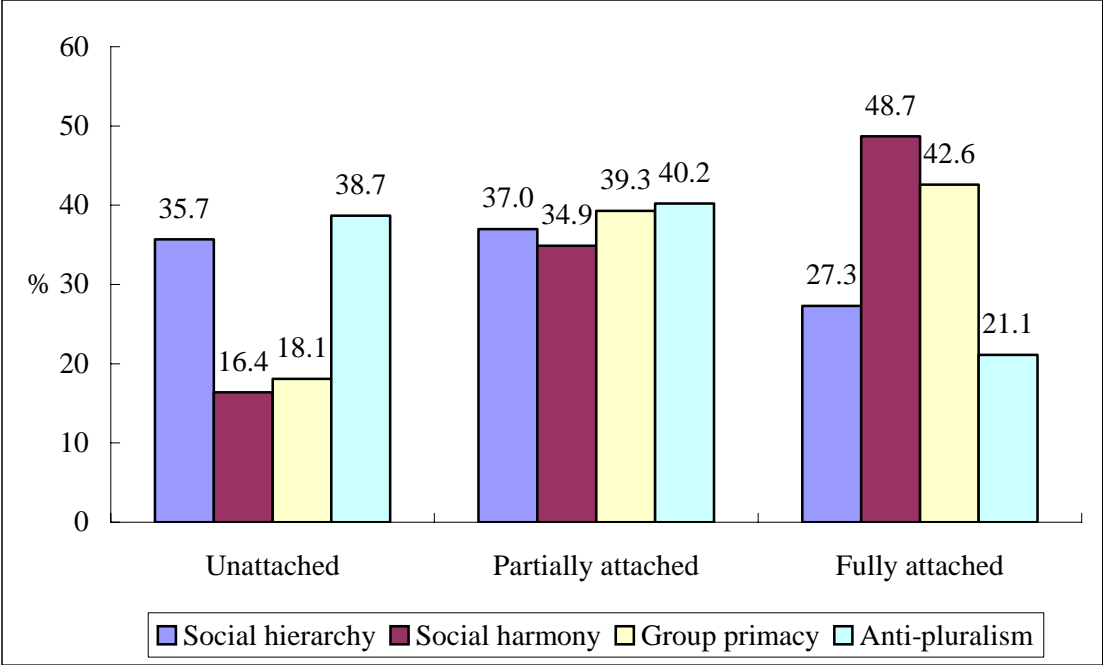


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**Figure 1. Attachment to Asian Social Values**

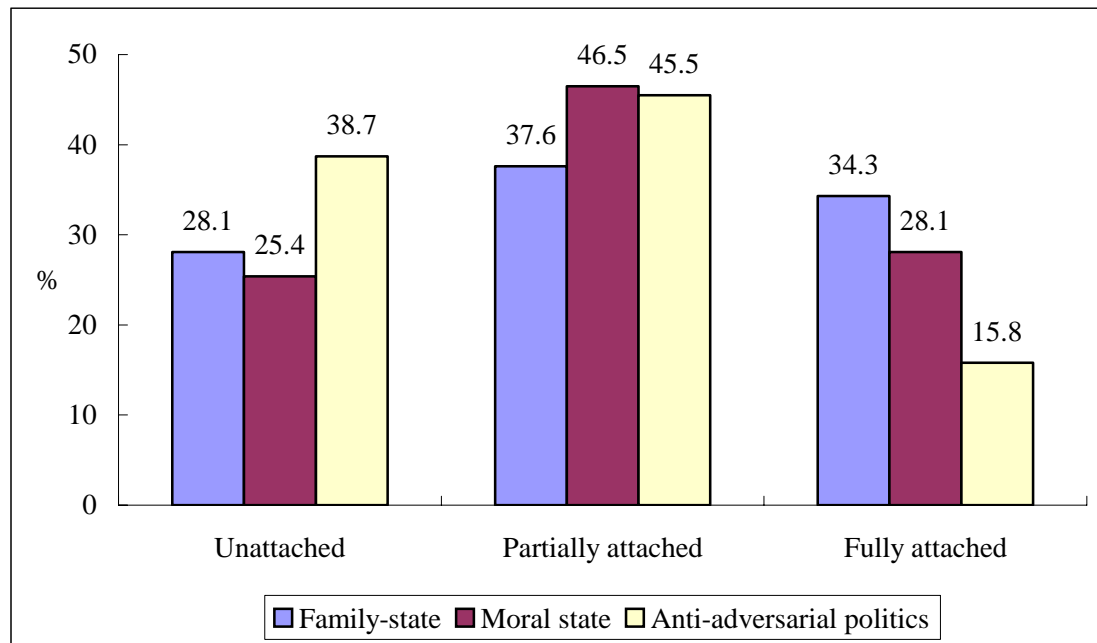


**Table 1. Demographic Differences in Attachment to Asian Social Values**

	Social Hierarchy	Social Harmony	Group Primacy	Anti-pluralism
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	23.7%	50.7%	42.9%	20.8%
Female	30.8	46.8	42.3	21.3
<b>Age</b>				
20-29	15.7	41.2	34.6	17.3
30-39	23.5	47.7	39.5	18.1
40-49	27.8	49.8	40.7	22.3
50-59	29.3	49.7	50.8	25.7
60 & older	50.0	60.2	56.6	26.5
<b>Education</b>				
Primary	48.8	57.8	60.8	26.5
Middle	35.5	59.1	49.1	26.4
High	25.2	46.8	42.1	21.7
College+	21.5	46.3	36.2	17.3
<b>Income</b>				
Lowest	32.5	59.6	55.3	24.4
Low	28.4	47.6	44.9	21.3
Middle	25.4	47.3	33.8	20.4
High	21.8	41.7	37.6	19.9
Highest	26.7	42.1	35.6	17.4
<b>Community</b>				
Large cities	22.9	44.8	36.2	18.4
Other cities	31.2	52.0	46.0	23.7
Rural areas	32.2	54.1	57.4	23.5

Entries are the percentages of respondents expressing full attachment to the respective dimensions of social values.

**Figure 2. Attachment to Asian Political Values**



**Table 2. Demographic Differences in Attachment to Asian Political Values**

	Family- state	Moral state	Anti-adversarial politics
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	33.9%	29.8	13.7
Female	34.7	26.3	17.9
<b>Age</b>			
20-29	29.7	24.2	11.8
30-39	32.4	27.3	15.8
40-49	30.0	27.8	12.2
50-59	37.2	28.8	18.3
60 & older	48.7	35.4	25.2
<b>Education</b>			
Primary	52.4	39.8	31.3
Middle	43.6	30.0	18.2
High	33.2	27.0	13.6
College+	28.0	25.3	13.3
<b>Income</b>			
Lowest	46.6	39.8	20.1
Low	38.3	29.9	15.0
Middle	32.3	27.7	16.5
High	23.7	19.5	12.8
Highest	24.3	18.6	13.0
<b>Community</b>			
Large cities	29.0	25.7	13.5
Other cities	39.1	28.5	17.7
Rural areas	39.9	36.1	19.1

Entries are the percentages of respondents expressing full attachment to the respective dimensions of political values.

**Table 3. Asian Values and Regime Support: Bivariate Analysis**

	Democratic Support	Authoritarian Rejection
<i>Social value dimensions</i>		
Social hierarchy	-.032	-.184**
Social harmony	-.022	.015
Group primacy	.001	-.027
Anti-pluralism	-.056*	-.139**
<i>Political value dimensions</i>		
Family-state	-.033	-.179**
Moral sate	-.065*	-.123**
Anti-adversarial politics	-.116**	-.228**

Entries are simple correlation coefficients.

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

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

**Table 4. Asian Values and Regime Support: Multivariate Analysis**

	Democratic Support	Authoritarian Rejection
<b><i>Social value dimensions</i></b>		
Social hierarchy	-.013	-.159**
Social harmony	-.004	.100**
Group primacy	.036	.051*
Anti-pluralism	-.020	-.064*
<b><i>Political value dimensions</i></b>		
Family-state	.019	-.099**
Moral sate	-.051	-.082**
Anti-adversarial politics	-.103**	-.178**
<b><i>Demographic variables</i></b>		
Gender	.002	.015
Age	-.008	.007
Education	.022	-.008
Income	.052	.038
Community	.036	.070**
R <sup>2</sup>	.021	.110

\* Significant at <.05. \*\* Significant at <.01.

*Gender.* Male (1), Female (2)

*Age.* 20-29 (1), 30-39 (2), 40-49 (3), 50-59 (4), 60+ (5)

*Education.* Years of formal education 0-6 (1), 7-9 (2), 10-12 (3), 13+ (4)

*Income.* <2000K (1), 2000K-2490K (2), 2500K-2990K (3), 3000K-3490K (4), 3500K+(5)

*Community.* Large cities (1), Other cities (2), Rural areas (3)



## Appendix. Survey Questions

### A. Asian values

For each statement, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?

#### *Social hierarchy*

- (1) Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.
- (2) If there is a quarrel, we should ask an elder to resolve the dispute.

#### *Social harmony*

- (1) When one has a conflict with a neighbor, the best way to deal with it is to accommodate the other person.
- (2) A person should not insist on his own opinion if his co-workers disagree with him

#### *Group primacy*

- (1) For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.
- (2) For the sake of the society, the individual should be prepared to sacrifice his personal interest.

#### *Anti-pluralism*

- (1) Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.
- (2) If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic.

#### *Family-state*

- (1) Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.
- (2) The relationship between government and people should be like that between parents and children.

#### *Moral state*

- (1) The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society
- (2) If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.

#### *Anti-adversarial politics*

- (1) When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.
- (2) If the government is constantly checked by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.

### B. Democratic support

- (1) Here is a scale: 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. To what extent would you want our country to be democratic now?
- (2) Here is a similar scale of 1 to 10 measuring the extent to which people think democracy is suitable for our country. If "1" means that democracy is completely unsuitable and "10" means that it is completely suitable, where would you place our country today?
- (3) Which of the following statements comes closest to your 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 government or a non-democratic government.

### C. Authoritarian rejection

There are some people in our country who would like to change the way in which our country is governed. We would like to know what you think of their views. For each statement, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

- (1) We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.
- (2) The military should come in to govern the country.
- (3) We should get rid of parliament and elections and have the experts decide everything.

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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.

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