

Working Paper Series: No. 27

Japanese Attitudes and Values toward Democracy

Ken'ichi Ikeda
The University of Tokyo

Yasuo Yamada
Waseda University

Masaru Kohno
The University of Tokyo

Issued by
Asian Barometer Project Office
National Taiwan University and Academia Sinica

2004 Taipei

Asian Barometer

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

Working Paper Series

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

The ABS Working Paper Series is intended to make research result within the ABS network available to the academic community and other interested readers in preliminary form to encourage discussion and suggestions for revision before final publication. Scholars in the ABS network also devote their work to the Series with the hope that a timely dissemination of the findings of their surveys to the general public as well as the policy makers would help illuminate the public discourse on democratic reform and good governance. The topics covered in the Series range from country-specific assessment of values change and democratic development, region-wide comparative analysis of citizen participation, popular orientation toward democracy and evaluation of quality of governance, and discussion of survey methodology and data analysis strategies.

The ABS Working Paper Series supercedes the existing East Asia Barometer Working Paper Series as the network is expanding to cover more countries in East and South Asia. Maintaining the same high standard of research methodology, the new series both incorporates the existing papers in the old series and offers newly written papers with a broader scope and more penetrating analyses.

The ABS Working Paper Series is issued by the Asian Barometer Project Office, which is jointly sponsored by the Department of Political Science of National Taiwan University and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. At present, papers are issued only in electronic version.

Contact Information

Asian Barometer Project Office

Department of Political Science

National Taiwan University

21 Hsu-Chow Road, Taipei, Taiwan 100

Tel: 886 2-2357 0427

Fax: 886-2-2357 0420

E-mail: asianbarometer@ntu.edu.tw

Website: www.asianbarometer.org

Japanese Attitudes and Values toward Democracy

Ken'ichi Ikeda
Masaru Kohno
Yasuo Yamada

I. Introduction

Japan offers an intriguing case for comparing the experiences of democracy and value change across East Asia. Among other countries in the region, Japan has a relatively long history of sovereign independence. It is also arguable that the root of Japan's democracy is deeper than other Asian countries because even before World War II Japan had enjoyed an interim period of a democratic experiment known as Taisho-era democracy (until it was overtaken by the military-led authoritarian regime in the 1930s). Further, Japan's modernization took place much earlier than other Asian nations and, accordingly, changes in values and attitudes in the Japanese society, associated with economic growth, urbanization, and the introduction of Western life-style, are likely to be more complex and wide-spreading. Hence, any findings from the Japanese case should serve as a critical benchmark against which findings from other newer democracies in Asia can and should be contrasted. We hope that what follows offers valuable insights for such comparative purposes.

After a brief summary of postwar Japanese political development, we delve into manifold investigations of Japanese values and attitudes based on our survey conducted in January 2003. We find that responses to our questions regarding the basic concept of democracy, the legitimacy of Japanese democracy, and the performance of the current democratic regime are particularly revealing. Some of our important findings are: 1) the Japanese people almost universally recognize the fundamental transition of political regime as having occurred before and after World War II; 2) the Japanese people generally see the present regime as a democratic regime; 3) there are, nevertheless, some noticeable variations especially across different age groups in their conceptions of what democracy represents, as well as in their perceptions of the current regime performance; and 4) the trust in democratic institutions is rather low and seems to be in a continuing decline. While our analysis is largely exploratory at this point, we believe that these findings, when compared with those from other countries, will generate general and theoretical implications about democracy and democratization, and contribute to our understanding of political and social change.

II. Historical Background on the Country

Japan's democracy began to take its shape, in the aftermath of World War II, with the adoption of a new Constitution and a set of laws and administrative rules that regulate the democratic processes of elections, government formation, and policy making. The national Parliament, "the Diet," has become formally "the highest organ of state power" (The Constitution of Japan, Article 41), and the

expansion of popular suffrage and the emergence of new political parties has given the substance to the Japanese parliamentary democracy, which existed only nominally before the war.

It is now customary to view the postwar development of Japanese politics as having gone through three historical stages: 1945-1955, 1955 to 1993, and 1993 to the present. For the first decade of the postwar period, Japan's parliamentary democracy represented a typical multiparty system under which several major parties, from both conservative and progressive camps, competed for legislative seats and took turns forming government. Most of the governments formed during this period were either coalition or minority governments, and only one (of nine governments formed before 1955) was based on a single-party legislative majority. This early period also witnessed constant party switching by individual politicians and a series of mergers and breakups of political parties, and thus was characterized by a fluid partisan alignment.

Second, the multiparty framework was replaced by a new party system in 1955, when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was established, following the amalgamation of the conservative forces. For the next thirty-eight years, the LDP continuously formed a majority government. The Japan Socialist Party (JSP), also created in 1955, never became a viable alternative to the LDP.¹ The LDP did suffer a long-term decline in its vote share during the 1960s, with the two centrist parties entering the electoral race for the House of Representatives, the more important lower house, namely the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the Komei Party. During the period between 1983 and 1986, the LDP entered a coalition with the New Liberal Club (NLC), a small conservative group that had broken away from the LDP in 1976. But for this exception, however, the LDP consistently formed a single-party government throughout these years.²

The third and current phase began in the early 1990s, when the LDP's regime crumbled owing to sweeping political distrust born out of a series of scandals involving high-profile politicians. In 1993, the largest faction within the LDP broke into two groups, one of which eventually joined the opposition in passing a non-confidence bill against the LDP government. In the subsequent election, the LDP failed to obtain a majority and was thus forced to hand over its power to a non-LDP coalition government. However, due to not only the policy difference among various participating parties but also the dissonance of personal nature among their leaders, the non-LDP government collapsed within less than a year. The LDP then managed to form a coalition with its long-time rival, the JSP, and a small party called Sakigake, to establish a majority government. Subsequently, the LDP has survived the next three general elections as the plurality party and has been able to

¹ In 1991, the party changed its official English name to the Social Democratic Party of Japan. In order to avoid confusion with the Democratic Socialist Party, however, the name Japan Socialist Party is used for this part of the paper.

² The coalition with the NLC barely interrupted the dominant rule of the LDP, since the two parties were so different in size. A large part of the NLC was absorbed by the LDP after the 1986 election.

alternate coalition partners at each critical occasion in order to maintain its government. The non-LDP camp, on the other hand, has since suffered a continuous partisan realignment, having so far failed to regain the governing power.

As is clear from this summary, the most distinct characteristic of postwar Japanese politics is the legislative dominance of a single conservative party, the LDP during the second period described above. The political success of the LDP was remarkable, considering the fact that, over the period the party was in power, Japan underwent a radical and continuous change in its social and economic backgrounds, including industrial structures, occupational distribution, and living standards. The LDP was often compared with other dominant parties, such as the Social Democrats in Sweden and the Christian Democrats in Italy, but the LDP's record was truly exceptional in terms of both its longevity and the degree of its dominance. Of course, the LDP's long-standing rule led to many criticisms especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many observers believed that the sources of various problems, such as the LDP's chronic factionalism, its excessively money-driving disposition, and the lack of policy innovations in the age of globalizing economy, lied in the peculiar electoral system used in Japan since 1947, or the multimember, single nontransferable vote system for the House of Representatives.

It was in this context that when the non-LDP coalition government was formed in 1993, it put the top priority in revising the electoral law. By introducing at least partially the single-member district competition under its parallel system called "Heritsu-sei", there was a hope that a viable two party system would finally emerge in Japan. The establishment of the New Frontier Party (NFP) in December 1994 as an amalgamation of various non-LDP parties was clearly an incident that raised such hope, especially since the LDP had already returned to power by then. The hope, however, was a short-lived one. Even at the time the NFP was created, some parties, including the ever-defiant Japan Communist Party (JCP), remained independent from both the newly established NFP and the LDP. Just before the dissolution of the lower house in 1996, the Democratic Party was created, which then obtained a non-negligible share of the parliamentary seats in the general election. Meanwhile, the NFP's disappointing performance in the election led eventually to its dissolution, further digressing from the prospect of establishing a two-party system. The non-LDP camp, since then, has gone through several more phases of realignment.

Finally, in the most recent general election in 2003, the Democratic Party seems to have established itself as the alternative political force, which is certainly closing in on its gap in popular support vis-à-vis the LDP. Even so, the LDP and its current coalition partner Komei Party managed to obtain their majority of lower house seats. Whether Japanese political landscape will be approaching toward a two-party system with the Democratic party taking over the government from the LDP, hence, remains yet to be seen.

III. Meaning of Democracy

In this section, we present findings from our survey regarding Japanese people's understanding of democracy. As summarized in the previous section, Japan's postwar development reveals various patterns of governance and political process familiar in any democratic context, including party competition, partisan realignment, coalition politics, revisions of electoral rules, as well as the underlying potential of power transitions. It is fair to claim, moreover, that at least in comparison with other Asian countries, the root of Japan's democracy is relatively deep because, even before World War II, Japan had experienced "Taisho-era democracy" under which two opposing parties played a major role in controlling the legislature and forming government. Given these historical backgrounds, the first order question to be explored is the mass-level understanding of democracy in Japan. How do the Japanese people view democracy? Or, what do they understand by the term "democracy"? For this investigation, we start with an open-ended question in our survey: "To you, what does 'democracy' mean? What else?"

The summary frequency table on the most common meanings of democracy among Japanese people is presented in Table 1.³ Roughly two thirds of Japanese respondents gave at least one interpretation. A third gave two, and a ninth gave three.

As the table shows, almost half of the respondents who gave answers (N=933) understand democracy in terms of freedom and liberty (50.3%), particularly in terms of freedom in general (35.0%) and freedom of expression (12.3%). The next clearest understanding is in terms of social equality and justice, to which 30.2% of the responses belong. Five out of six responses in this category are related to equality, the image of democracy being tied more strongly to equality than justice. The third clear understanding appears in terms of political rights, institutions and processes (8.9%). In this category, the typical response is "majority rule".

Since the last category is relatively small compared with the first two (freedom and equality), it seems fair to say that the Japanese tend to conceptualize democracy relatively statically, and not as a regime to be attained dynamically by rights or through institutional protection. This may reflect the historical background of Japan having become democratic as a result of defeat in a war rather than through indigenous political movements with large-scale grass-root involvement.

³ To obtain the results presented in this table, we conducted a content analysis based on this survey question, using two coders. The contents of each coder were then analyzed independently, and the Japanese principal investigator decided on the final (multiple) codes. The consensus between the two coders was 75.8% at the most detailed categorical level with 3-digit categories, 83.5% at the double-figure level, and 86.4% at the three-figure level.

Arguably, such an interpretation is consistent with other findings reported elsewhere about low levels of active and challenging political participation in Japan, such as a lawful demonstration, a boycott, an unofficial strike, and/or occupying a building to protest (Dalton 2002, pp.62–63).

The next observation worth noticing is that a large number of people can express democracy only in terms of “abstract and positive terms”(31.2%) or in generic and/or populist terms (8.8%); for instance for the former category included “taking into account all parties concerned”, “fair treatment”, or “self-responsibility”; for the latter instances, “negative appraisal of *Japanese* democracy”, or “place too much on individual interests”. This may indicate that, for these Japanese people, democratic concepts are not well grounded as a reality in everyday life. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that only few respondents described democracy in negative terms (6.1%). A great majority of Japanese people, therefore, seems willing to accept the current status of Japan’s democracy.

Table 1 Meaning of Democracy

Understanding Democracy as:	% (N=933)	% over total (N=1418)
Freedom and Liberty	50.3%	33.1%
Political rights, institutions and process	8.9%	5.9%
Market economy	3.0%	2.0%
Social equality and justice	30.2%	19.9%
Good government	3.6%	2.4%
In generic and/or populist terms	8.8%	5.8%
In other abstract and positive terms	31.2%	20.5%
In negative terms	6.1%	4.0%
Others	12.5%	8.3%
Don't know, no response	–	34.2%

Some additional examinations of possible demographic variations reveal a few generational differences (Figure 1). One is that people in their early twenties tend not to connect democracy with the concept of freedom/liberty. Instead, their conceptualization tends to be slightly more vague and in generic/populist terms. People aged from 40 to 60, or those most affected by the earliest stage of Japan’s democratic system and education adopted after World War II, tend to emphasize the concept of social equality and justice. In terms of gender differences, more male respondents tend to give answers; 40% of female respondents do not express any understanding of democracy.

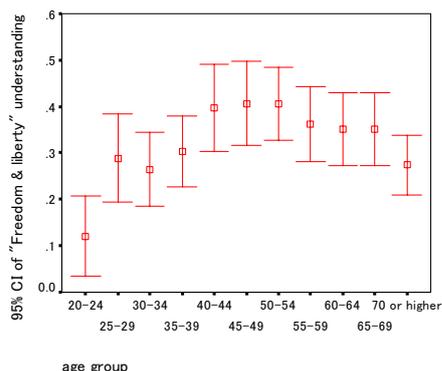
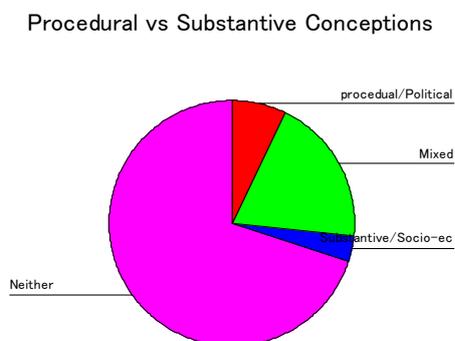


Figure 1 The meaning of democracy by generation

Next, we turn to highlight the difference in democratic understanding between “procedural” and “substantive” conceptions. By procedural conceptions, we refer to those answers which offer a meaning of democracy in terms of political and procedural concepts, whereas by substantive conceptions we refer to those which offer a meaning of democracy in terms of economic, social or other substantive concepts. According to Figure 2 which applied the procedural vs. substantive conceptions of democracy in the first chapter, the procedural/political understanding is slightly greater than socioeconomic understanding (7% vs. 3%), although one fifth of the total respondents gives mixed answers. Hence, more people in Japan view democracy as something in the realm of politics rather than as a socioeconomic concept, although if the mixed type of answer is included, a substantial number of people (23%) see democracy from the latter point of view as well.



(for those who responded; N=937)

Figure 2 Procedural vs. Substantive Conceptions of Democracy

The difference in democratic conceptualization varies with gender, age, and educational backgrounds. First, females are more likely than males to mention either type of concept. They are dominant among those who give procedural/political answers (56%) and among those who give substantive/socioeconomic answers (61%), whereas, among those respondents who conceptualize democracy as the mixed type, males are majority (59%). Second, procedural answers are slightly more in evidence in the younger generations (those under 49 consisted 48% of this answer

category), whereas substantive answers are more evident in the older generations (those over 50 consisted 70%). Third, it is found that, with higher levels of education, the number of procedural answers as well as that of mixed answers increase (49% and 42% respectively from those with more than a college level of education).

Finally, we examine whether Japanese people are familiar with the standard (and increasingly universal) definition of “liberal democracy.” The answer is clearly “No”. Those who understand democracy in terms of both freedom/liberty and institutions/process constitute only less than 2% of the total sample (Figure 3). Those who understand by institutional/procedural conceptualization exclusively constitute only 0.2%. Even if we relax the understanding level to include those who have liberal democratic understanding and those who have only democratic understanding, the proportion of people who are “literate” in the academic definition expands only close to 10%. This pattern reminds us with one of the classic findings of Converse (1964) who demonstrated that popular conceptions of politicians and political parties in terms of ideological wordings were very much different from those of political scientists. Clearly, the same can be said about contemporary Japan with regard to the concept of democracy.

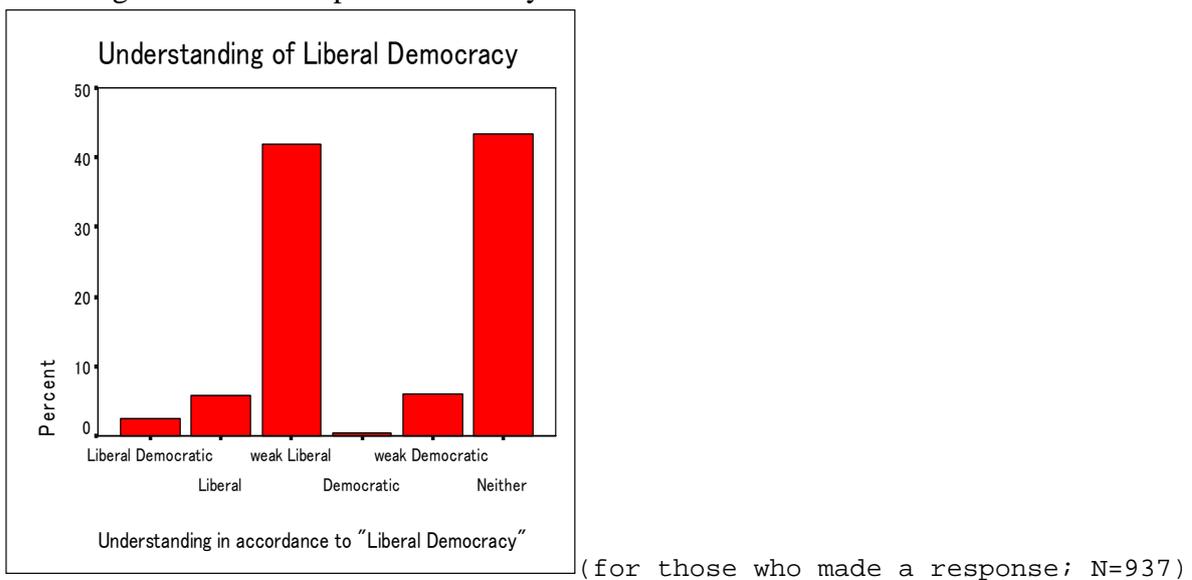


Figure 3 Level of Understanding of Democracy

In sum, the findings from our survey are illustrative of the ways in which people in contemporary Japan understand democracy. For an overwhelming number of Japanese people, democracy represents a positive thing, and it is most frequently thought of in association with freedom and liberty, although a textbook definition of liberal democracy is not widely shared among them. Some demographic factors do affect their understanding of democracy, perhaps most important being the impact of generation on the conceptual link between democracy and freedom/liberty.

IV. Assessing Democratic Progress and Its Consequences

In this section, we explore the nature of progress that Japan has made in consolidating its democracy and democratizing its underlying cultural orientation, as evidenced in the mass-level evaluation revealed in our survey. As noted earlier, the current democratic political system in Japan was established at the end of World War II, although the party system has since evolved in a number of phases. We thus start with the fundamental question: how do respondents compare the current political regime with the prewar regime?; and how do they evaluate that regime change?

Our survey includes a question, “Where would you place our country on this scale [1–10 = dictatorship–democracy scale] during the period of the most recent authoritarian rule?” The survey also includes its contemporary version, “Where would you place our country under the present government?” Several important findings emerge from these two survey items.

The first noteworthy finding lies in the sheer number of the responses itself. That is, our survey reveals that less than a sixth of the respondents has difficulty in evaluating the prewar regime in Japan, which is less than the proportion of DK answers to the question about the regime in five years’ time, i.e. only in the near future. Though most Japanese do not have first-hand experience of the prewar regime, they have a lot of indirect experience from their parents or grandparents, making the question relevant to them as well.

Second, the perceived contrast between prewar and present political regimes is stark in the aggregate. As shown in Figure 4, full democracy is recognized in the current regime by only slightly more than 10% of the respondents, but a large majority (72%) share the view that Japan has at least a limited democracy (by 10 point scale, 10 = full democracy; mean = 7.0, SD = 1.55). As for the prewar regime, almost 50% of respondents support a soft authoritarian interpretation, whereas more than 40% regard it as a hard authoritarian regime (by 10 points; mean = 3.09, SD = 1.78). In addition, these assessments do not vary with demographic variables. Hence, it is fair to conclude that people in Japan, at least at the aggregate level, recognize that there was a full-scale transition between the two regimes.

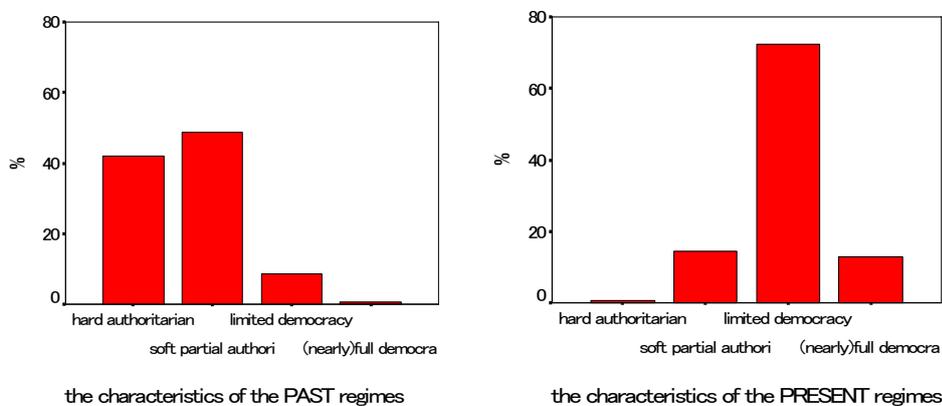


Figure 4 Assessment of Past & Present Regime

A further evidence for the universality of the regime change perception can be given by

correlating these assessments with the level of understanding of liberal democracy, as shown in Table 2 (by the mean scores). There is no statistical difference among the levels, pointing to the general consensus in the assessment of the regime change.

Table 2 Assessments of System Democracy Divided by Understanding of Liberal Democracy

Level of Understanding of Liberal Democratic	Past regime as a non-democracy		Current regime as a democracy		N
	%	mean score	%	mean score	
Liberal Democratic	100.0%	2.71	85.7%	8.11	21
Liberal or Democratic	92.6%	2.26	83.3%	7.84	54
Weakly Liberal or Democratic	92.8%	2.60	87.8%	7.56	403
Neither	90.7%	2.62	83.1%	7.46	367
Total	100.0%		100.0%		845

DK/NA = 27.2%

total sample size = 1418

Third, to gain a more accurate picture from our individual level data, we have constructed six different patterns of perceived regime change (Table 3). Although this procedure renders 18% of the data to be treated as missing, it is revealed that more than 80% of the remaining respondents do in fact recognize the change in the nature of two regimes. 12% of the respondents recognize the transition from dictatorship to a full democracy, and 65% to a limited democracy. Hence, a very large number of people, indeed a majority of the population, recognize the discontinuity between prewar and postwar regimes. Only 8 % recognize the demise of the authoritarian regime but not recognizing that a democracy was established after the war. Only 6% hold the minority viewpoint that Japan today still has an authoritarian regime. Those who contend that Japan has been a democratic country all the way from the prewar period (perhaps referring to “Taisho-era democracy” in 1920s) are also a minority (8%).

Table 3 Perceived Regime Changes or Continuity

	n	valid %
valid		
1. Authoritarian nostalgia	11	0.9
2. Authoritarian persistence	72	6.2
3. Authoritarian demise	89	7.7
4. Transition to a limited democracy	753	64.9
5. Transition to a full democracy	141	12.2
6. Democratic continuity	94	8.1
Sum	1,160	100.0
missing	258	
Total N	1,418	

The individual-level perception of the regime change is affected by demographic factors.

More precisely, we find: 1) male respondents perceive regime change more than female respondents by 5%; 2) those who are educated perceive changes more clearly (university degree 72% vs. least educated 58%); and 3) people under 35 years old perceive less changes (51-53% perceive changes) than older generations, especially those who are older than 45 (65-70%). Except for the ‘authoritarian nostalgia’ type which has too few respondents for meaningful cross-tabulations, we find a clear variation across generations in all other views. ‘Authoritarian persistence’ and ‘authoritarian demise’ types of views are held more in the younger generations (average 46, and 43 years old, respectively). On the other hand, ‘transition to limited/full democracy’ and ‘democratic continuity’ types are perceived by relatively older generations (average 52, 53, and 52 years old, respectively).

Having established that Japanese people today perceive the fundamental regime change as having occurred before and after World War II, we now move on to assess the comparative democratic performance of the two regimes. More precisely, respondents are asked to compare the present regime with the past regime with respect to nine major areas of political life: freedom of speech, equal treatment by the government, popular influence on the government, political corruption, economic equality, law and order, economic development, and an independent judiciary. The results are shown in Table 4, which reveals several noteworthy findings.

Table 4 Perceived Changes on Democratic Performance

	Mean	SD	Negative Change	Positive Change	PDI
Political Performance					
Freedom of Speech	1.5	0.7	1.6%	94.5%	92.9%
Freedom of Association	1.2	0.8	2.7%	86.5%	83.8%
Independent judiciary	0.7	1.0	13.8%	63.0%	49.2%
Equal treatment	0.6	1.0	17.5%	65.1%	47.6%
Popular influence	0.4	1.0	13.9%	50.4%	36.5%
Avg score for polit perf	0.9	0.6	7.1%	88.6%	81.5%
Policy Performance					
Economic development	0.6	1.2	23.4%	66.7%	43.3%
Economic equality	0.2	1.1	26.4%	49.7%	23.3%
Law and order	0.2	1.1	32.6%	49.2%	16.6%
Anticorruption	-0.3	1.2	42.4%	32.1%	-10.3%
Avg score for policy perf	0.2	0.9	33.7%	55.9%	22.2%

DK/NA = 32.2%

Valid sample = 961 / Total sample = 1418

First, as for the perceived changes in democracy and the rule of law, the transitions are very well received, meaning that the legitimacy of the regime has been established. On the freedom of speech, the PDI index, which shows the perceived changes before and after the regime transition, is very high (93). The next highest is the freedom to join an organization, where the PDI is 84. On the other hand, as far as equality and perceived political efficacy (such as equal treatment and popular

influence) are concerned, the PDIs are less impressive, owing to the less extent of perceived change as well as to the perception of fewer positive changes. As for the neutrality or freedom from political interference of judges and courts, the PDI reveals a slightly more positive perception.

Second, despite the remarkable success of Japan's economy from the 1950s to the 1980s, a certain number of Japanese perceive negative aspects of its change, making relevant PDI scores of policy performance not highly positive. For instance, for economic inequality, a quarter of the respondents perceive a negative change, making the PDI only 23. There has been more agreement on the success of economic development itself, but nevertheless almost a quarter of the respondents has a negative perception of the changes. To give some background figures for interpretations, it should be noted that comparing 1935 and the early 2000s, Japan's GNP multiplied more than 20,000 times. With regard to distributive aspects, there was a slight increase in inequality between 1970 and the late 1990s, but Japan's performance in this regard is relatively stable compared with other OECD countries (OECD report). The lack of reliable data going back to the 1930s makes it impossible to be conclusive, but there are some indications that the problem of inequality was more pronounced before the war. The Zini index was 0.451 in 1930 and 0.641 in 1940, figures that indicate far higher levels of inequality than, for instance, in 1980 when the index was 0.334 (Tachibanaki, 1998). Further, it should be also reminded that many of the postwar reforms undertaken by the occupation forces were targeted precisely to redress the distributional problems, including land, tax, and plutocracy reforms. With these figures and historical facts in mind, the apparently persistent reservations expressed by many respondents about the economic performance are puzzling, and they certainly suggest that further analyses are needed. Based on the background information, however, it may be argued that Japanese are more sensitive to and setting higher standard to economic equality than political performance including political equality, although the current democratic governance is also critically evaluated as shown in the next section.

Lastly, on the dimension of corruption, the PDI is very noteworthy, as more than 40% of the respondents perceive a negative change. This peculiar figure must be the result of the lengthy and frequent exposé of corruption related scandals in Japan's postwar history (Pharr, 2000).

We have investigated the interactions between standard demographic factors and these perceived changes. For this purpose, we have created two summary scales of Perceived Democratic performance, one by averaging PDIs for the *Political Performance* indices and the other by averaging PDIs for the *Policy Performance* indices. Examining these PDIs for each category of demographic variables shows that only the age variable is related with both of the indices. That is, political performance is slightly highly evaluated by those who are older than 45, i.e. basically more than 80% in PDI. Also, policy performance slightly higher among those older

than 50s. The exception are those people in 25-29 years old; both scored around 20% or higher for PDI.

We have also conducted a factor analysis to see what latent structure there lies under these perceived changes.⁴

Table 5 Factor Analysis on Perceived Changes on Democratic performance

	factor	
	1	2
Q105 Everyone is free to say what they think- is better than before?	0.427	0.321
Q106 Everyone is treated equally by the government- is better than before?	0.673	-0.051
Q107 People like me can have an influence on government- is better than before?	0.612	-0.043
Q108 Corruption in politics and government is under control- is better than before?	0.634	-0.356
Q109 The gap between the rich and the poor have narrowed- is better than before?	0.660	-0.175
Q110 Preventing crime and maintaining order- is better than before?	0.542	-0.137
Q111 Economic development- is better than before?	0.666	0.057
Q112 Judges and courts are free from political interference- is better than before?	0.621	0.157
Q113 You can join any organization you like- is better than before?	0.499	0.492

method:ML(before rotation)

The analysis yields a powerful first factor that explains the difference between the periods before and after the war. We may call this “the prewar–postwar cleavage” dimension. The second factor is basically related to “freedom and civil liberty.” Given the magnitude of the effect of the regime transition, the existence of the first factor that reflects the prewar -postwar division is perhaps inevitable. The existence of the second dimension is also understandable in light of the predominance of those who describe democracy positively in terms of “freedom and liberty” as reported earlier.⁵

In sum, the evidence is overwhelmingly clear that Japanese people today perceive the fundamental regime change as having occurred before and after World War II. Both aggregate and individual level data support this interpretation, with some important and predictable generational variations. Detailed analyses of various aspects of the perceived political change are also revealing. While the aspects of the regime related to freedom and liberty are highly evaluated, many Japanese seem to have some analytically puzzling reservations about the change in policy performance,

⁴ We used ML as the method with no rotation. The eigenvalue for the first factor was 3.79 (explaining 42% of the whole variance), and the second was 1.13 (12%).

⁵ For those who understand democracy, the score for factor 2 was higher than those who do not (t-value = 2.7), i.e., the evaluation is consistent with the image of open-ended answers on democracy. In addition, the second factor is positively correlated with educational level ($r = .123, p < .01$), whereas the first factor is not ($r = .025, n.s.$).

especially in social and economic inequality evaluations.

V. Evaluating Quality of Democratic Governance

In this section, we focus on Japan's current political regime and investigate the quality of democratic governance under it, as evidenced in the mass-level evaluation revealed in our survey. We begin our discussion by presenting findings regarding general satisfactions with the current government in Japan. We then move on to more specific questions regarding corruption, trust in institutions, government responsiveness to citizens, and political efficacy.

V-1) satisfaction with the way democracy works and with current government

First of all, we have investigated general satisfaction with the current democracy situation with a direct question; "On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in our country". The answer is clearly split into two, i.e. not highly satisfied but not highly dissatisfied at the aggregate level; "very satisfied" consisted 4%, "fairly satisfied" 41%, whereas "not at all satisfied" 7% and "not very satisfied" 39% (with 8% of DK). Demographic variations show that generations matter; males are slightly more dissatisfied than females; people over 60s are clearly dissatisfied than younger generations; no clear difference existed for education.

Related with this, respondents in our survey are asked about their general satisfaction with the current government (Koizumi cabinet) based on a four-point scale. Its mean was 2.8 (SD = .79). Only 3% responded "very satisfied" and 32% "somewhat satisfied", whereas 41% were "somewhat dissatisfied" and 19% "very dissatisfied." As 2.5 is in the middle, and the higher the figure the larger the level of dissatisfaction, it is clear that most respondents are not satisfied. However, this cabinet was welcomed to an exceptional degree when it was inaugurated (In its first year, it was supported on average by 63.8% of the people and not supported by 17.5%.)

Though we do not have any time-series data on satisfaction with the way democracy works nor with the current cabinet, monthly data are available elsewhere in which respondents are asked whether they support the current cabinet. Table 6 shows the average support and average nonsupport (expressed as a percentage) of cabinets from 1979 to the current Koizumi Cabinet. It is evident that in the past quarter-century, only half of the cabinets enjoyed more support than nonsupport. The one-party dominance by the LDP continued until 1993, and even then they recaptured the governing position in 1994. This party has consistently dominated Japanese politics, but the satisfaction level about the running of democracy appears far from high. Low levels of satisfaction did not prevent the LDP's dominance. Nor dominance caused continuing low support for Cabinets, while low satisfaction on democracy itself was undercurrent stream.

Table 6 Time Series Data on Cabinet Evaluation 1979-2003

Cabinet Evaluation time series data

	SurveyBegin	SurveyEnd	Average support(%)	Average non-support(%)
Ohira	Jan, 79	Apr, 80	34.2	42.8
Suzuki	Aug, 80	Sep, 82	38.5	38.3
Nakasone	Dec, 82	Oct, 87	47.5	34.1
Takeshita	Nov, 87	Apr, 89	39.1	40.1
Uno	Jun, 89	-	22.8	56.5
Kaifu	Aug, 89	Sep, 91	50.2	33.5
Miyazawa	Nov, 91	Jun, 93	30.4	55.3
Hosokawa	Sep, 93	Mar, 94	67.2	20.9
Hada	Apr, 94	Jun, 94	49.9	35.6
Murayama	Jul, 94	Dec, 95	39.1	44.8
Hashimoto	Jan, 96	Jun, 98	45.1	41.0
Obuchi	Sep, 98	Mar, 00	40.4	44.6
Mori	Apr, 00	Sep, 01	24.9	62.2
Koizumi	May, 01	May, 03	51.3	38.2

Source: Yomiuri Newspaper and its surveys

Keeping in mind that the Koizumi Cabinet is not typical and that our survey was conducted in January 2003 during his tenure, let us examine some demographic variations in the levels of satisfaction with the cabinet. The results can be summarized as follows.

- 1) Weak but significant positive correlation with age; the older, the more satisfied ($r = .112$, $p < .001$).
- 2) Weak but significant negative correlation with education ($r = -.071$, $p < .01$).
- 3) Positive correlations with the evaluation of the current Japanese economic condition ($r = .189$, $p < .001$), and with the evaluation of the economy over the past five years ($r = .132$; $p < .001$).

What inferences can we draw from the above? Generally, while Japanese people highly evaluate the current democratic system in contrast with the pre-war regime, they are nevertheless widely dissatisfied with the current government (or for that matter most of the successive cabinets in incumbency). In retrospect, it was not until 1993 that the level of dissatisfaction finally reached high enough to topple the LDP government. One reason that the LDP nevertheless had kept its majority was the lack of alternative, as the opposition parties were not accepted as parties responsible and able to govern. Ironically, the current prime minister Koizumi won a massive popular support in 2001 as an outsider of the political establishment by attacking the mainstream of the LDP itself. Hence, it is fair to conclude that the level of satisfaction with the incumbent government has played a significant role in shaping the underlying political dynamics in postwar Japan.

V-2) political corruption

We now turn to the question of political corruption, which obviously is salient for the evaluation of democratic governance. We focus, in particular, on the question as to whether political corruption is more serious at the national or local level of government in Japan. The question we have asked are: "How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in your local/municipal government?"; and, "how widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government?"

The result is striking in that more than half of the respondents perceive that most or almost all of the national government is corrupt (15% and 43% respectively). The percentage is 16% less for local government. The cross-tabulation shows that there is a fairly strong correlation between the two variables (Kendall’s Tau for ordered correlation is .542: $p < .01$).

The percentages expressing an affirmative response to neither, one, or both questions indicate the overall extent of perceived political corruption. The strongest denial response (“hardly anyone is involved (in corruption)” to both questions) was very small (0.8%). Those who responded to both questions affirmatively (more than “most officials are corrupt”) represented 40.0%.

The result may be a reflection of the widespread and lengthy press coverage of corruption among national politicians (Pharr, 2000). Finally, another question “Have you or anyone you know personally witnessed an act of corruption or bribe-taking by a politician or government official in the past year? (If witnessed) Did you personally witness it or were you told about it by a family member or friend who personally witnessed it?” revealed that corruption in Japan is neither “observed directly and personally”, nor “indirectly via a friend or family members”. The proportions of respondents who had observed corruption directly and indirectly were both negligible, 1% and 4% respectively.

V-3) trust in institutions

It is now widely recognized that trust in public institutions is an important aspect of “social capital” and hence an important ingredient for democratic governance (Putnam 1993). The bar chart in Figure5 indicates the levels of trust in various institutions in Japan.

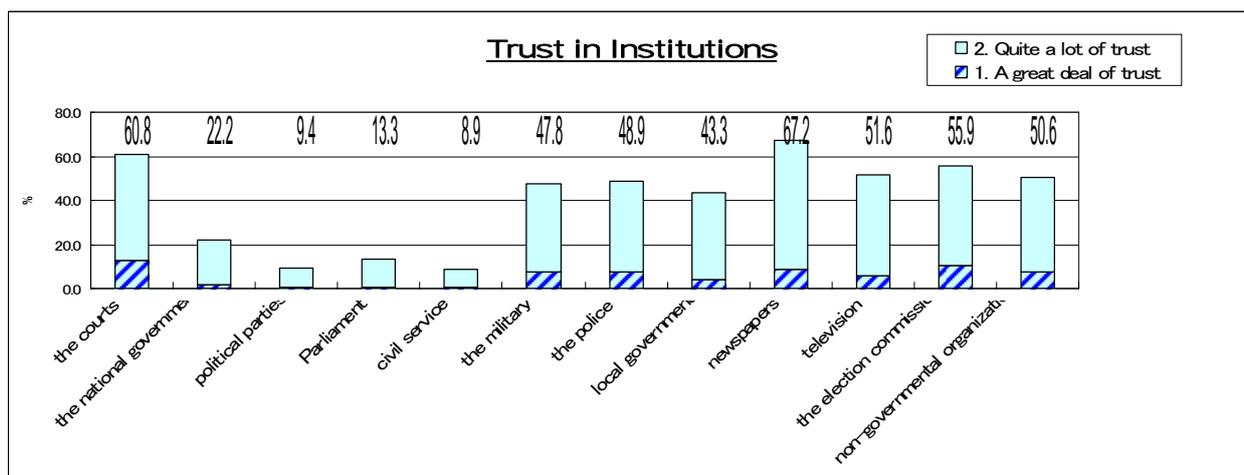


Figure 5 Trust in Institutions

Overall, as shown in the figure, trust in public institutions is fairly low in Japan. The only

institutions that receive clear majority trust are the courts and newspapers. The others receive less than 50% support even counting “quite a lot of trust” as well as “a great deal of support”. Looking at the above figure in more detail, it is possible to divide the institutions into two types, ones that suffer from low levels of trust and others that are trusted somewhat more.

The former are more or less related to national politics. The obvious political players are the national government (23% trusted), political parties (9%) and parliament (13%). Perhaps less obvious is the civil service, which is represented by national government bureaucrats but constitutes a powerful political actor in the eyes of many citizens; they also receive very weak trust (9%). These political actors are often severely criticized in the postwar period.

On the other hand, the military, police, and local governments are seen as relatively free from corruption and as relatively neutral national agents. The figures for these institutions are as high as 40%, 49% and 43% respectively. The courts (61%) and the electoral commission (56%) are more trusted, owing to their perceived distance from politics (although some scandals have recently been revealed even in these sectors as well). Nongovernmental organizations have a relatively brief history in Japan, but precisely because of their non-governmental nature, they are evaluated highly in terms of trust (51%).

As for the mass media, newspapers are evaluated most highly among all the institutions (67%). Trust in television is 15% behind newspapers, but still in the top group of the trusted (52%).⁶

All in all, trust in institutions seems to be highly related to perceived distance from political corruption in Japan. By dividing each trust score of the institutions into two groups (trusted vs. not trusted), we can compare perceived political corruption. In the group “distrust”, respondents see the more governmental corruptions consistently (t-test significance) except for NGOs.

We have some comparable trend data on trust in institutions since 1990 (Table 7). The data for JGSS uses a three-point scale that may inflate positive answers, but even with this measurement problem, the basic trend is obvious. The levels of trust in all the institutions related to politics are low throughout these years, probably reflecting the continuing corruption reports as well as

⁶ In Japan, television stations are not seen as a homogeneous group. Using JEDS 2000 data (data by Japanese Election and Democracy Study 2000. The national sampling survey on the study was conducted by face-to-face interviews in April 2000 during non-election time. The response rate was 64.7%, N=1,618. The data is available on <http://ssjda.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/pages/ssjda-e/>), we see that NHK (a half-governmental organization) and private TV stations are perceived differently. The former exceeds the level of trust given to newspapers, and the latter are far behind both. (On an 11-point scale (0-10), NHK received a 68% level of trust (6-10 points), commercial broadcasting stations 34%, and newspapers 67%). Although NHK is not totally a neutral political agent, as was shown in Krauss (2000), generally it is taken to be neutral and unaffected by upheavals of politics and corruption, as are national newspapers. Private TV stations are evaluated from a somewhat different aspect and are regarded as entertainment media.

perceived responsibility of those institutions for the stagnation of Japanese society.

Table 7 Time Series Data on Trust in Institutions 1990-2003

Summary of Trust in institutions					
	World Value Survey	World Value Survey	JGSS	East Asia Barometer	
	1990	1995	2000	2003	
the court	61.4	74.1	69	60.8	
the national government		30		13.3	
political parties		17.2		9.4	
Parliament	28.3	24.2	28.8	8.9	
civil service	33	35	43.1	22.2	
the military	24	59.5	61.6	47.8	
the police	57.8	76.3	67.3	48.9	
newspapers	54.6	71.6	89.4	67.2	
television		68.1	76.9	51.6	
	(4 point scale)	(4 point scale)	(3 point scale)	(4 point scale)	

Note: JGSS is Japanese General Social Survey started from 2000

Finally, we have combined relevant survey answers and constructed a scale of “trust in democratic institutions.” Correlation analyses with several major variables provide the following results.

1. Positive correlation with satisfaction with the incumbent performance; the higher the satisfaction, the higher the distrust ($r = .335, p < .001$).
2. Positive correlation with the evaluation of postwar democratization; the factor score for “pre/postwar cleavage of democratic performance” was positively and significantly correlated with the trust ($r = .238, p < .001$). That is, the higher one evaluates postwar democratization, the more one is trustful of democratic institutions. (On the other hand, the factor score on “freedom and civil liberty” (second score) was not correlated with trust, suggesting that freedom and civil liberty are perceived not to be related with social capital and democratic institutions).
3. No correlation with education.
4. Positive correlation with age; the older, the higher the trust ($r = .118, p < .001$).
5. No correlation with income.
6. No correlation with frequency of following politics in the media.

V-4) citizen empowerment and system responsiveness

Finally, we now turn to the question of political efficacy, which is one of the essential elements of democratic governance. Political efficacy as subjectively perceived by citizens under democracy has two aspects. One is their perceived power to engage in politics, and the other is the perceived responsiveness of the system, i.e., the sensitivity of political institutions to citizens’ needs and deeds.

We measure the former by asking two questions about the level of perceived empowerment. First, respondents are asked, straightforwardly, whether they feel that they are empowered politically, i.e. by the question whether they agree or disagree (4 point scale) on “I think I have the

ability to participate in politics”. For this, we find that just under a quarter of the respondents feel that they are empowered to some extent. Second, respondents are asked the same question in the reversed way, i.e., their feeling of powerlessness in the question “Sometimes politics and government seems so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what is going on”. Consistent with the answer to the first question, we find that a large majority of respondents feels indeed powerless. The advantage of the second question is that a lengthy set of time-series data is available for this question from Japanese National Election studies from 1976 to 1996 (Table 8). It is surprising to find that, on this score, there has been virtually no change over the last 25 years.⁷ These data indicate a perception that the extent of citizen empowerment has not increased in recent years.

Table 8 Time Series Data on Citizen Empowerment 1976-1996

(Source; Japanese Election Studies; JABISS 1976, JES 1983, JES2 1993-1996)

"POLITICS TOO COMPLICATED TO UNDERSTAND" by year of survey									
	1 Agree	2 Slightly agree	3 Can't say	4 Slightly disagree	5 Disagree	8 DK	9 NA	Sum	
YEAR	1976	30.8	26.0	17.3	6.7	5.9	13.2	0.1	100.0
	1983	37.9	24.8	14.7	7.5	10.8	4.1	0.2	100.0
	1993	38.4	28.4	9.7	8.8	12.0	2.5	0.2	100.0
	1995	39.7	30.9	10.0	9.2	8.2	1.8	0.3	100.0
	1996	36.8	31.3	10.6	8.3	10.2	2.7	0.0	100.0
Average %		37.0	28.6	12.0	8.2	9.6	4.4	0.2	100.0

With regard to the perception of system responsiveness, we first look at our measurement that focuses on the perceived concentration of power among the few. Almost six out of ten Japanese support the view that power is concentrated in the hands of the few in Japan. Hence, they perceive a deep cleavage between the few who govern and an overwhelming majority who are governed. Another question on responsiveness relates to the subjective assessment of voters’ influence. Slightly fewer than five out of ten support the view that voters in Japan have a significant (strong) influence over governmental actions. For this item, too, we are fortunate to benefit from a good set of time-series data (Table 9), which again shows no definite change over the years. In 1976, the feeling of powerlessness seems somewhat weak, but that is attributable to many DK answers. In both the “agree” and “disagree” groups, the percentages are smaller than in later years.

Table 9 Time Series Data on Perceived System Responsiveness 1976-1996

⁷ Note that the choice of categories in our data is slightly different from these previous data sets in that we have excluded a neutral choice “can’t say”.

(Source; Japanese Election Studies; JABISS 1976, JES 1983, JES2 1993-1996)

"HAVE NO SAY IN WHAT GOVERNMENT DOES" by year of survey									
	1 Agree	2 Slightly agree	3 Can't say	4 Slightly disagree	5 Disagree	8 DK	9 NA		Sum
YEAR	1976	28.3	21.5	17.0	8.3	10.1	14.5	0.2	100.0
	1983	40.0	18.6	13.6	7.8	14.1	5.4	0.5	100.0
	1993	39.1	19.7	9.7	11.5	17.1	2.8	0.2	100.0
	1995	37.8	21.7	14.8	11.4	12.5	1.7	0.1	100.0
	1996	36.1	22.3	11.5	12.0	15.4	2.5	0.1	100.0
Average %		36.6	20.8	13.0	10.4	14.1	4.8	0.2	100.0

We have further investigated the interactions between respondents' evaluation of political efficacy and their demographic outlooks and other relevant variables. First, the level of education correlates positively with the perception of empowerment as well as that of system responsiveness (for empowerment, $r = .187$, $p < .001$; and for responsiveness, $r = .112$, $p < .001$). Second, with the age variable, only the perceived system responsiveness is statistically related (one way of variance; $p < .01$), and the relationship is not linear. It is a bell-shape relationship with the peak in the age of late 50s. This age group belongs to a generation which experienced the dramatic student movements in the late 1960s. Despite this particular cohort's experience, the general trend since the 1970s seems that there has never been a meaningful change in the perceived responsiveness.

Third, the perceptions of empowerment and responsiveness are positively correlated with the pre/postwar evaluation of democracy ($r = .119$ and $-.187$ respectively ; both $p < .001$), although the general trends show that people perceive little changes after the war in terms of empowerment and responsiveness as shown in Table 8 and 9.

Fourth, the finding on the perception of corruption is an interesting mix. On the one hand, the correlation with responsiveness is statistically significant ($r = .102$). That is, the more a negative change in corruption is perceived, the less responsiveness is felt. On the other hand, this correlation does not apply in the case of empowerment, owing to the large variance of those who do not perceive more corruption. This result may be reasonable, because the empowerment does not relate to what politicians or bureaucrats do, while the concept of responsiveness, in its literal sense, should take into account whether these actors are corrupt and/or they take bribes.

Fifth, we find weak but significant correlations between the perceived political efficacy and trust in democratic institutions. The correlations between the levels of citizen empowerment and perceived system responsiveness, and trust in democratic institutions are $.150$ ($p < .001$) and $.166$ ($p < .001$), meaning that the more trustful respondents are of the institutions, the more they feel empowered and the more they perceive the system as responsive. Though the correlations are not very high, the result reminds us of the power of trust in producing social capital (Putnam, 1993; 2000). In other words, if Japanese institutions are more highly trusted, perceptions of empowerment and system responsiveness may be more strongly realized.

Finally, by cross-tabulating the two summary measures, we produce Table 10.

Table 10 The Perception of System Responsiveness

The perception of system responsiveness					
Level of citizen empowerment	very low	low	high	very high	Sum
very low	8.1	13.8	3.9	1.9	27.7
low	4.7	33.4	12.4	5.6	56.1
high	0.8	4.9	3.9	2.8	12.3
very high	0.2	1.2	0.4	2.0	3.8
Sum	13.8	53.2	20.7	12.3	100.0

It is apparent that six out of ten respondents are situated in very low/low cells where both citizen empowerment and system responsiveness are perceived to be low. Hence, many people in Japan feel helpless because they have little power themselves and because the political system is unresponsive. The second largest group is the low/high group with a low sense of empowerment but a high sense of system responsiveness. For this category of people, the political system perhaps represents paternalism. Only 9% are in the high/very high group, representing an ideal type of democratic citizen.

V-5) summary

The findings reported in this section are all illustrative of the ways in which Japanese people evaluate the quality of democratic governance under the current political regime. On all scores, namely on general satisfaction with the incumbent government, corruption, trust in public institutions, and political efficacy, our findings indicate that Japanese people today do not have a high appraisal of the functioning of their democratic government. Moreover, the additional analyses utilizing comparable trend data sets confirm that their low evaluations of various aspects of democratic governance have been consistent over the years.

These results, of course, should be taken with reservations before reaching any conclusions, since we have not yet established an objective benchmark against which to compare the Japanese findings and hence we have no way of assessing what truly constitutes a “high” or “low” evaluation. Fair assessment of the true meaning of the Japanese findings reported here, therefore, must await comparative analyses with other countries with similar democratic experiences.

VI. Popular Commitment to Democratic Legitimacy

In this section, we deal with a set of questions from our survey related to the legitimacy of democracy in Japan. Generally, as observers of democracy have reminded us, democratic legitimacy can be established ultimately when there is “no other game in town” or no alternative

system of governance is in sight to replace democracy (Linz 1990; Linz and Stepan.1996). Hence, it would be wrong to take for granted the superiority of democracy over other political systems; the existence of democracy is rather a product of constant choice-making by those who actually desire, prefer, support, and/or make commitment to democracy over other political systems.

To measure democratic legitimacy, then, requires a multidimensional task. For this purpose, we have at hand two clusters of questions from our survey. The first set of questions deal with values associated with the support for democracy, such as its desirability, suitability, preference, priority, and efficacy. The second set of questions deal with the rejection of authoritarian alternatives, including authoritarian strong leader, authoritarian one-party rule, authoritarian military rule, and authoritarian rule by technocratic experts.

VI-1) supporting democracy

We begin our investigation with two questions: how much Japanese people desire their country to be democratic; and how much they think Japan is suitable as a democratic country. The results are very clear. The mean score for desirability was 8.5 (SD = 1.33) on a 10-point scale (DK was only 9.5%). In addition, the mean score for suitability was 7.6 (SD = 1.71). A large majority thus support the idea of Japan being a democratic country. The difference between the two scores, of course, reflects the gap between ideal and reality so to speak, representing such difficult obstacles as corruption, polarizing politics and inefficient public institutions, which Japanese people have to face on day-to-day basis.

The desirability and suitability variables statistically interact with some demographic variables, although their correlations turn out to be weak. The more highly educated the respondents are and the more income they have, the more they wish the country to be democratic ($r = .058$, and $.064$ respectively). The older the respondents are, the more they think democracy is suitable for Japan ($r = .080$). Except for these weak findings, democracy is widely and evenly supported in Japan.

Consistent with the above findings, we find that an overwhelming majority, indeed almost 70%, of the respondents think that democratic government is preferable when compared with authoritarian government, whereas only 9% prefer authoritarian government. Furthermore, to probe the perceived efficacy of democracy, we have asked respondents whether democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society or not. The result again supports democracy. Almost two thirds support the view that democracy can solve societal problems, while only a seventh of the respondents do not support such a view.

Cross-tabulating the preference and efficacy questions reveals that 53% of respondents

believe that democracy is preferable and also is efficacious in solving societal problems (Table 11). These people are the core of democracy supporters. On the other hand, those who support authoritarian system do so not because they find democracy unsuitable for solving societal problems. Their responses are fairly scattered in a random way, indicating that there are no authoritarian core-supporters. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that Japanese support for democracy is truly substantial.

Table 11 Democracy Preference and Perceived Efficacy of Democracy

		Q118 Which comes closer to your own view?			
		1. Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society	2. Democracy can not solve our society's problems	8. Don't know	Sum
Q117 Which comes closest to your own opinion?	1. Democracy: preferable to any other kind of government	53.4%	6.0%	9.1%	68.5%
	2. Authoritarian government can be preferable	4.9%	3.2%	1.1%	9.2%
	3. Does not matter whether we have a non_or_democratic regime	2.3%	4.2%	3.0%	9.5%
	8. Don't know	2.5%	1.0%	9.3%	12.8%
	Sum	63.1%	14.3%	22.6%	100.0%

In another relevant question, respondents are asked to prioritize between democracy and economic development. Although Japan has the second largest GDP in the world, the economic slowdown since the 1990s has caused respondents to emphasize the importance of economic development, 21% being strongly economically oriented and 28% weakly so. These data suggest two possible interpretations. The first is that Japanese people are essentially economic-oriented people to whom democracy is relatively unimportant, even though a large majority supports it. The second is that as Japan has already attained a relatively satisfactory level of democracy, Japanese people now need more economic development or redevelopment. Cross-tabulating this priority variable with the democratic/authoritarian preference (Table 12) reveals that, even among those who give a high priority to democracy, almost half of them place the economy as their first priority (31.4% among 68.5%). This indicates that the second interpretation above seems more appropriate.

Table 12 Democracy Preference and Preference for Democracy vs. Economy

		Q119 choose between democracy and economic development?						
		1 Economic development is definitely more important	2 Economic development is somewhat more important	3 Democracy is somewhat more important	4 Democracy is definitely more important	5 They are both equally important	98 Don't know	Sum
Q117 Which comes closest to your own opinion?	1 Authoritarian government can be preferable	12.3 %	12.6	9.3	5.3	3.4	1.1	9.2
	2 Does not matter whether we have a non_or_democratic	15.8	10.8	5.5	1.8	6.1	15.1	9.5
	3 Democracy: preferable to any other kind of government	61.0	67.1	81.3	89.4	68.2	25.8	68.5
	98 Don't know	11.0	9.5	3.8	3.5	22.3	58.1	12.8
	Sum	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The pattern of prioritizing between democracy and economy, however, varies across different

generations. As shown below in Figure 6, there are curvilinear relationships between different generations and support for democracy. The youngest and the oldest are both skeptical about democracy. However, the youngest generation together with those in their 30s and 40s clearly prefer democracy rather than economic development (the rightmost Figure). In this context, the youngest generation thinks that democracy is important but is still dubious about its efficacy, while the oldest generation on the other hand thinks that democracy is less important than the economy and is also dubious about its efficacy (the central Figure).

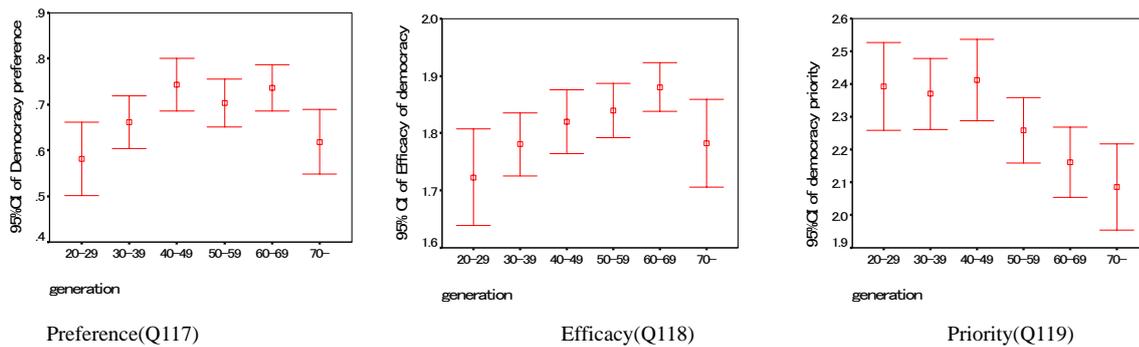


Figure 6 Preference, Efficacy & Priority of Democracy by Generation

To further measure the support for democracy in Japan, we have constructed a scale of popular commitment to democracy in accordance with the discussion in Chapter 1 (Table 13). Clearly, the majority are democracy supporters, “strong supporters” occupying 3%, “moderate supporters” 26%, and “skeptical supporters” 29%.

Table 13 Constructing a Scale of Popular Commitment to Democracy.

Popular commitment to Democracy		
	N	%
1 Strong support	42	3.0
2 Moderate support	372	26.2
3 Skeptical support	413	29.1
People holding incoherent views	285	20.1
4 Weak opponent	165	11.6
5 Strong opponent	141	9.9
Sum	1418	100.0

There is a substantial proportion of opponents, amounting to almost a quarter of the respondents (“weak opponents 12%, “strong opponents” 10%), but this owes largely to their doubt that democracy should be given priority over the economy. Among the strong opponents, as many as 71% of the respondents emphasize (more or less) economic development over democracy. On the other hand, among the moderate supporters, it is 21%, and among the strong supporters it is 45% who put priority in economy over democracy. “Skeptical supporters” of democracy are particularly interesting to note; 74% of them emphasize economy. Arguably, then, these

cross-tabulations suggest that the belief in the need to give priority to economic development is a major obstacle for substantial popular commitment to democracy in Japan.

As for correlations with demographic variables, we found gender, generation and educational differences (without “others” category in the scale) all matter. More concretely, males are stronger supporters of democracy than females. Also, the oldest generation over 70s score the highest in opposing democracy (significant by Tukey’s test for one-way of variance; Figure 7 left). And, the level of opposition to democracy goes down as the educational level goes up (Figure 7 right).

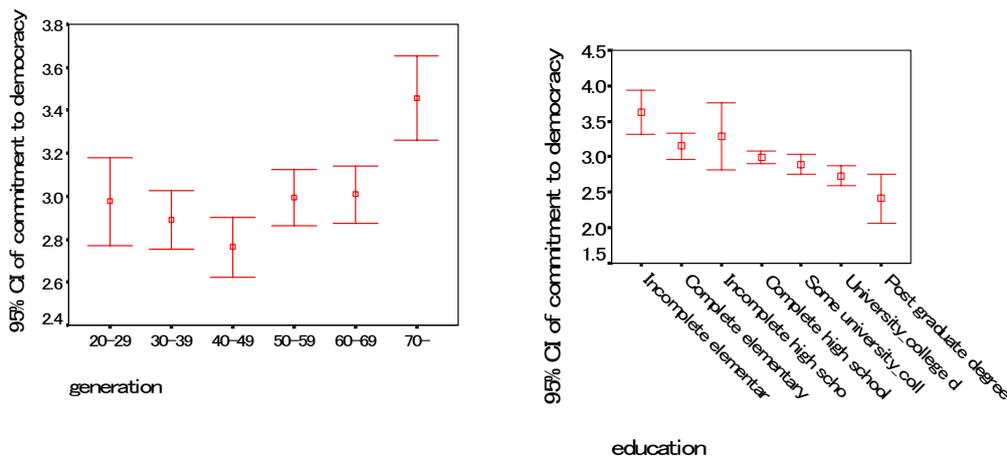


Figure 7. Popular Commitment to Democracy by Generation and Education

Lastly, in the vein of exploring support for democracy in Japan, we have investigated the extent to which people support the rule of law and constraints on power. Although a substantial minority of the respondents have difficulty in answering these questions, we find that Japanese people are generally highly committed to the democratic rule of law and the constraint of executive power. In particular, they clearly regard the rule of law as important even in difficult conflicting situations which is expressed in a hypothetical situation in our question “When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation” (Q125), and stress the need for the independence of courts from politics (Q136). Somewhat weak support of rule governance appeared in the answers to two questions; "If the government is constantly checked by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things" (Q137) and "The most important thing for a political leader is to accomplish his goals even if he has to ignore the established procedure" (Q145), where the complex democratic procedure received 10% less support than the previous two questions, though still a clear majority supports the democratic complexities, i.e., checks and balances.

We have constructed from these questions an Index of Support for Liberal Democracy (Figure 8). The support is prevalent: full or almost full-support cumulated to 51%, whereas zero support

was 9% and just one support was 17%.

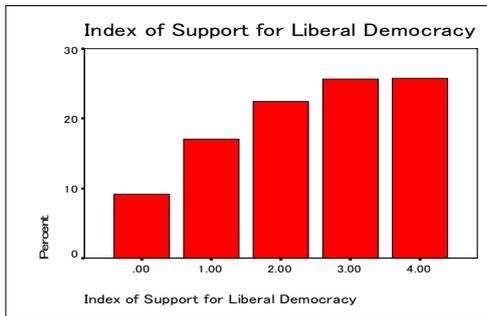


Figure 8 Index of Support for Liberal Democracy

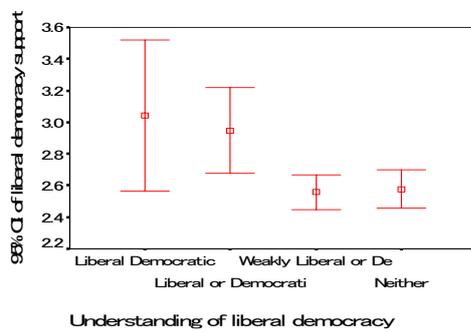


Figure 9 Support for Liberal Democracy Related with Understanding about Democratic Procedure

We have then examined the relationship between this index of support for liberal democracy and the understanding of democratic procedures. The bar graph with the confidential intervals in Figure 9 (score for index of support for liberal democracy by each category of “understanding of liberal democracy”) shows that the lack of understanding about democratic procedures is more prevalent among those who have the least support for liberal democracy. At the low level of understanding of democratic procedure, the level of support is substantially lower than those at the higher level of understanding. The relationships between this support index and demographic factors also yields some intriguing findings. Males are stronger supporters of democracy than females. The more educated and the higher the income, the stronger support for democracy. As for age (Shown in Figure 10), we have very clear picture of the correlation when focusing on 40s or older; the older, the weaker the support. On the other hand, focusing on 40s and younger, the relationship is reversed. Together with our earlier finding that the younger generations are more likely to be dubious about the efficacy of democracy, this result could be very consequential to the society.

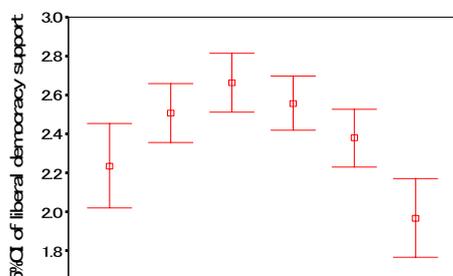


Figure 10 Support for Liberal Democracy by Age

VI-2) Rejecting Authoritarian Alternatives

The previous findings show that less than one out of ten respondents support an authoritarian government. Naturally, therefore, we wonder about the extent to which Japanese people believe that authoritarian alternatives should be rejected. Our survey includes four relevant questions in this regard, the result of which shows a very clear rejection of an authoritarian leader, one-party rule, military rule, and rule by technocratic experts, respectively. A cumulative total of these answers shows that more than 80% of respondents reject an authoritarian regime (55% received the maximum four points and 28% three points).

Cross-tabulating with demographic factors shows two distinct results. Age is clearly related to the authoritarian rejection. Only in the category of people over 70, who have had direct experience of an authoritarian rule does the level of rejection decrease, perhaps reflecting a sense of nostalgia. Also notable is the effect of education. The more one is educated, the more one rejects the authoritarian way of governing ($r = .205$, $p < .001$).

VI-3) summary

The findings reported above indicate that democracy is well supported in Japan. Although the economy comes first when respondents are forced to choose between them, there is still wide support for democracy except in the generations over 70 years old. The democratic experience after World War II has had a definite positive influence, even though Japanese people feel that their democracy is strongly unresponsive to voters, that they are ineffective in influencing it, and that it is run by untrustworthy institutions.

VII. Expectations about the Future of Democracy

Our last target of analysis is Japanese expectations about the future of their democracy. We have created the variable from two measurements. The first relates to the evaluation of the degree of democracy (on a 10-point scale, the mean = 7.0 and SD = 1.55), and the second relates to expectations about democracy in five years' time (on a 10-point scale, the mean = 7.3 and SD = 1.67). Table 14 shows that just a tenth of respondents think that they are already in a maturing

democracy (category 7). Another tenth or slightly more think that they are on the way to full democracy but are not far away from a maturing one (category 6). A great majority, i.e. 58%, think that the country is still struggling for democracy more than 50 years after the WWII. On the other hand, a tenth think that an authoritarian regime still persists (category 1).

Table 14 Expectations about the future of democracy

	n	valid %
1 Authoritarian persistence	114	10.1
2 Authoritarian reversal	48	4.2
3 Limited democratic transition	48	4.2
4 Advanced democratic transition	3	0.3
5 Struggling democracy	657	57.9
6 Developing democracy	140	12.3
7 Consolidating (maturing) democracy	124	10.9
Sum	1134	100.0
missing	284	
Total N	1418	

Cross-tabulation between future expectation and demographic factors reveals that the age is the only factor related to this variable, namely that the older, the higher such an expectation one has ($r = .166$, $p < .001$). By further correlational analyses of the major variables, we find:

1. The more one perceives changes from the pre-war era, the more mature a democracy one expects. Although this correlation is very high ($r = .691$), the expectation does not correlate with the form and level of understanding of democracy, i.e. not related with procedural vs. substantive conceptualization of democracy, nor with level of understanding of democracy.

2. The more trust in democratic institutions one has, the higher expectation one has of a mature democracy in the future.

3. The more one thinks the political system is responsive to citizens, the higher expectation one has of democracy, but the relationship is almost nil in the context of empowerment.

VIII. Conclusion

The findings and analyses presented in the previous sections point to various important patterns of Japanese experience of democracy and value change in the post World War II period. In concluding our paper, and for the purpose of further discussion, we would like to highlight two points in particular.

First, our findings suggest unarguably that the Japanese people regard the current political regime as a democratic one. This may be at odds with some persistent claims which emphasize the conservative rule, infrequency of government alternations, bureaucratic dominance in policymaking, and thus the “abnormality” of Japanese democracy. As far as our survey results are concerned, it is clear that Japan’s democracy is firmly grounded in the Japanese people’s

perceptions and values. There is no question that the Japanese people evaluate their democracy in a positive fashion. The fact that the Liberal Democratic Party has continuously formed a government means neither the lack of liberal democratic value nor the absence of competitive elections in this country. This may indicate that the Japanese people tend to understand democracy as a political “system” in a rather static fashion. “Process” (or the results of the process which take place under that system), on the other hand, seems to be their secondary concern. In accordance with this static perception, however, one may dare to argue that this is because Japanese democracy is “given” from outside and that it is an environment for Japanese to adjust to without feeling much empowered as a citizen and without perceiving the political system responsive.

In this context, one should be reminded of the theoretical distinction between procedural and substantive conceptions of democracy, which was also one of our topic of investigations. It is perhaps not a coincidence that our finding suggests that relatively few Japanese people understand the concept of democracy in a procedural sense. It is of course not clear, at this point, why the Japanese people have tendency to conceptualize democracy as a political system. Nevertheless, it may be worth speculating and further exploring whether such conception originates from the fact that the Japanese (and perhaps Asian) people fundamentally see democracy as something “imported” from the Western World.

Second, what emerged as a noticeable pattern throughout our investigations is the importance of age/generation as a factor influencing the Japanese people’s values and perceptions regarding democracy. It is probably safe to posit that the importance of this particular factor originates from the historical context in which the current Japanese democratic regime evolved since the end of World War II. For those who had direct and personal memories of war-time experience, as well as those who witnessed the poverty and hardship caused by that regime in the years immediately after the war, it is natural to pit the current democratic regime against the previous authoritarian regime for their conceptual formulation of what democracy means. In other words, their perceptions of democracy, democratic legitimacy and democratic performance are all formulated through inter-temporal comparisons between their own prewar and postwar political experiences. For younger generations who only know the postwar period, however, their understanding of democracy is gained through cross-national (cross-cultural) comparisons between Japan and other countries. The weight in their evaluation of democratic performance thus shifts toward the question, how well Japan’s democratic institutions and procedures are functioning *compared with* other democratic nations. This speculation leads us to a research agenda, which can be further explored in our project by comparing different countries: How far(long) does the original experience of democratization leave noticeable “scars” in the peoples’ values and attitudes toward democracy?

References

Converse, Philip E. 1964 The nature of belief systems in mass publics, (In) D. E. Apter (Ed.) *Ideology and discontent*, New York, NY: Free Press, Pp.206-261.

Linz, Juan. 1990. "Transition to Democracy". *The Washington Quarterly*, VOL. 13, No.3.

Linz, Juan, and Alfred Stepan. 1996. "Towards Consolidated Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 7(2), April, pp 14-33.

Krauss, Ellis S. 2000. *Broadcasting Politics in Japan: NHK and Television News*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Pharr, Susan J. 2000. "Officials' Misconduct and Public Distrust: Japan and the Trilateral Democracies." In Susan J. Pharr, & Robert D. Putnam (Eds.) *Disaffected democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.173–201.

Putnam, Robert D. with Leonardi, Robert & Nanetti, Raffaella Y. 1993. *Making Democracy Work : Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000 *Bowling Alone: The collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

OECD report 1997 Income distribution and poverty in selected countries: Annex 4. Main trends in income distribution and poverty: Evidence from recent studies. (Working party on social policy. DEELSA/ELSA/WP1(97)1/ANN4).

Tachibanaki, Toshiaki 1998 *Economic Inequality in Japan*. Tokyo: Iwanami Publishing Co.(in Japanese).

Asian Barometer Survey
A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

Working Paper Series

01. Yu-tzung Chang and Yun-han Chu. 2002. Confucianism and Democracy: Empirical Study of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.
02. Yu-tzung Chang, Alfred Hu, and Yun-han Chu. 2002. The Political Significance of Insignificant Class Voting: Taiwan and Hong Kong Comparison.
03. Robert B. Albritton, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2002. Support for Democracy in Thailand.
04. Robert Albritton, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2002. Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy in Thailand.
05. Jose Abueva and Linda Luz Guerrero. 2003. What Democracy Means to Filipinos.
06. Robert Albritton, Thawilwadee Bureekul and Gang Guo. 2003. Impacts of Rural-Urban Cleavages and Cultural Orientations on Attitudes toward Elements of Democracy: A Cross-National, Within-Nation Analysis.
07. Eric C.C. Chang, Yun-han Chu, and Fu Hu. 2003. Regime Performance and Support for Democratization.
08. Yun-han Chu, Yu-tzung Chang and Fu Hu. 2003. Regime Performance, Value Change and Authoritarian Detachment in East Asia.
09. Alfred Ko-wei Hu. 2003. Attitudes toward Democracy between Mass Publics and Elites in Taiwan and Hong Kong.
10. Ken'ichi Ikeda, Yasuo Yamada and Masaru Kohno. 2003. Influence of Social Capital on Political Participation in Asian Cultural Context.
11. Wai-man Lam and Hsin-Chi Kuan. 2003. Noises and Interruptions – the Road to Democracy.
12. Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin. 2003. Social Capital and Democratic Citizenship: The Case of South Korea.
13. Tianjian Shi. 2003. Does it Matter or Not? Cultural Impacts on the Political Process.
14. Chih-yu Shih. 2003. Back from the Future: Ambivalence in Taiwan's Democratic Conditions.
15. Doh Chull Shin, and Chong-min Park. 2003. The Mass Public and Democratic Politics in South Korea: Exploring the Subjective World of Democratization in Flux.
16. Yun-han Chu. 2003. Lessons from East Asia's Struggling Democracies.

17. Robert Albritton, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2004. Developing Electoral Democracy in a Developing Nation: Thailand.
18. Yu-tzung Chang, Yun-han Chu, Fu Hu, and Huo-yan Shyu. 2004. How Citizens Evaluate Taiwan's New Democracy.
19. Roger Henke, and Sokhom Hean. 2004. The State of Democracy in Cambodia, the Added Value of Opinion Polls.
20. Chong-min Park. 2004. Support for Democracy in Korea: Its Trends and Determinants.
21. Chih-jou Jay Chen. 2004. Getting Ahead in Rural China: Elite Mobility and Earning Inequality in Chinese Villages.
22. Yun-han Chu, Yu-tzung Chang, and Ming-hua Huang. 2004. Modernization, Institutionalism, Traditionalism, and the Development of Democratic Orientation in Rural China.
23. Andrew Nathan, and Tse-hsin Chen. 2004. Traditional Social Values, Democratic Values, and Political Participation.
24. Tianjian Shi. 2004. Economic Development and Political Participation: Comparison of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.
25. Yun-han Chu, and Doh Chull Shin. 2004. The Quality of Democracy in South Korea and Taiwan: Subjective Assessment from the Perspectives of Ordinary Citizens.
26. Chong-min Park, and Doh Chull Shin. 2004. Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy? The Case of South Korea.
27. Ken'ichi Ikeda, Yasuo Yamada and Masaru Kohno. 2004. Japanese Attitudes and Values toward Democracy.
28. Robert Albritton, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2004. Developing Democracy under a New Constitution in Thailand.
29. Gamba Ganbat, 2004. The Mass Public and Democratic Politics in Mongolia.
30. Chong-min Park, and Doh Chull Shin. 2005. Do East Asians View Democracy as a Lesser Evil? Testing the Churchill's Notion of Democracy in East Asia.
31. Robert Albritton, and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2005. Social and Cultural Supports for Plural Democracy in Eight Asian Nations: A Cross-National, Within-Nation Analysis.

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