

The Third Wave in East Asia Comparative and Dynamic Perspectives

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Abstract

This article offers a comprehensive and dynamic account of democratization in East Asia over the past two decades. It first traces the history of democratic transitions in the region, and thereafter examines their contours, modes, and sources from a comparative perspective. It then considers the extent to which third-wave democracies have consolidated, by appraising the quality of their performances. Finally, it explores the prospect of democratic regime change in China and Singapore. Analyses of Freedom House and the World Bank data reveal that the East Asian region has been slow in responding to the surging wave of global democratization in terms of not only transforming authoritarian regimes into electoral democracies, but also consolidating electoral democracies into well-functioning liberal democracies. Analyses of the Asian Barometer surveys, on the other hand, suggest that the mass citizenries of China and Singapore endorse their current regime as a well-functioning democracy, and are not much in favor of democratic regime change in their respective countries.

Key words: Confucianism, democratization, illiberal democracy, majoritarian model, preconditionalism, sequentialism, universalism.

More than any other region, Asia will determine the global fate of democracy in the next to three decades.

—Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*

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Generalizing the achievement of East Asia for democracy and development promises emancipatory observations and projects hidden by Occidentalism.

—Edward Friedman, *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences*

Asia, the world's largest continent, is also the most populous continent on Earth. More than 60 percent of the world's population lives on the mass of land stretching from the Middle East to the South Pacific islands and as many as sixty countries have their homes there. Asia's cultural contributions include the birth of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Shinto, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and it is also home to the largest Muslim population in the world. Economically, Asia encompasses countries of great wealth, including Japan and Singapore, and countries of extreme poverty, including Bangladesh and Myanmar. Politically, as well, it covers a startling range of regimes, from the oldest non-Western democracies of India and Japan to the world's most oppressive regimes of Myanmar and North Korea. All in all, it is hard to overstate the enormous differences among countries in Asia in terms of their natural resources, cultural and religious heritages, socioeconomic development, and political legacies.

Indeed, Asia is so large and so diverse that it is difficult to compare all of its countries and identify even a few general patterns of "Asian democratization." In an attempt to ascertain such patterns, we follow the customary practice of separating the continent into regions and focus on the region known as East Asia, which covers the Northeastern and Southeastern parts of the continent.¹ In this article, we analyze the process of democratization that has taken place within this particular region since the third wave of globalization began to spread from Southern Europe in the mid-1970s. Of the fourteen countries in the region, much of our analysis presented below focuses on the seven countries that have undergone democratic regime change over the past two decades, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. In addition to these countries, we examine the prospects of democratic regime change in China and Singapore, two of the world's most notable nondemocratic regimes.

To offer a comprehensive and dynamic account of the third wave of democratization in East Asia, we conceptualize democratization as a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing much more than the installation of representative institutions and the establishment of a democratic constitution.

¹ Aurel Croissant, "From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asia Democratization," *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 156-178; Edmund Gomez, ed., *Political Business in East Asia* (London, UK: Routledge, 2002); and World Bank, *East Asia Decentralizes—Making Local Government Work* (Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2005).

Institutionally, our concept involves a transition from authoritarian rule to a political system that allows ordinary citizens to participate on a regular basis and compete in the election of political leaders. Substantively, it involves a process in which electoral and other institutions consolidate and become increasingly responsive to the preferences of the citizenry. Culturally, it represents a process in which ordinary citizens dissociate themselves from the values and practices of authoritarian politics and embrace democracy as “the only game in town.” Theoretically, we conceive democratization to be a dynamic phenomenon, constantly shaped by the extent to which the mass citizenry demands democracy and ruling elites are willing to supply it.²

The article begins with a brief discussion of the three forces—economic development, Confucianism, and elite conceptions of democracy—that are known to have caused the contours of democratization in East Asia to be different from the contours of all other regions. Next, we briefly discuss the history of the third wave of democratization in East Asia, which began with the demise of the personal dictatorship in the Philippines in 1986. In the following four sections, we analyze how East Asian countries have democratized institutionally, substantively, and culturally. After these multidimensional analyses of third-wave democratization in East Asia, we examine the prospects China and Singapore have of joining in the wave. The final section highlights the distinguishing characteristics of East Asian democratization and discusses their implications for the ongoing theoretical debate about the sources and consequences of democratization.

East Asia as a Region in Democratization

A multitude of forces, including domestic and international contextual factors, shape democratization, and the political leaders and ordinary people participate in its process.³ In the words of Samuel P. Huntington,⁴ the former constitute “causes” and the latter “causers” of democratization. Of the various causes reported to have shaped the process of democratization in East Asia

² Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Doh Chull Shin, “Democratization: Perspectives from Global Citizenry,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, ed. Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Time Books/Henry Holt, 2008), and Geddes Barbara, “What Causes Democratization?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Charles Boix and Susan Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

over the past two decades,⁵ economic development and Confucian Asian cultural values constitute the two most unique contextual forces. Of the people involved in the democratization process, political elites are known to be the most powerful causers.⁶ In this section, we explore how these two structural and cultural forces shape the reactions of political leaders and ordinary people to democratic regime change.

Economically, East Asia is vastly different from the rest of the democratizing world. Unlike their peers in other regions, a number of countries in this region achieved unprecedented economic growth and social modernization under authoritarian rule. Prior to their transitions to democracy, East Asian countries, with a few exceptions such as Mongolia and the Philippines, experienced rapid and sustained economic growth for decades and freed millions of people from poverty and illiteracy. This pattern of rising economic prosperity and expanding social modernization under authoritarian rule contrasts sharply with that of incessant economic stagnation and social decay that East and Central Europe experienced under communist rule, and Latin America under military rule.⁷ Growing prosperity under authoritarian rule meant ordinary citizens of new democracies in East Asia had less incentive to abandon authoritarian rule in favor of democracy than did their counterparts in other authoritarian regimes.

Culturally, East Asia is a region infused with the core values of Confucianism, even in Malaysia and other countries in non-Confucian Southeast Asia.⁸ These Confucian values, once promoted as “Asian values,” have historically played a significant role in prioritizing and justifying the rights and duties of individual citizens and the power and authority of their political leaders.⁹ Besides the

⁵ Yun-han Chu, “Third-Wave Democratization in East Asia: Challenges and Prospect,” *ASIEEN* 100 (2006): 11-17; Aurel Croissant, “From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asia Democratization”; and Becky Shelly, *Democratic Development in East Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁶ Robert Compton, *East Asian Democratization: Impact of Globalization, Culture, and Economy* (New York: Praeger, 2000); Gerald Curtis, “For Democratic Development: The East Asian Prospect,” *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 3 (1997): 139-145; and Edward Friedman, ed., *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

⁷ Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁸ Takashi Inoguchi and Edward Newman, “Introduction: ‘Asian Values’ and Democracy in Asia,” United Nations University Press, Tokyo, Japan (1997), <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/asian-values.html> (accessed May 1, 2008).

⁹ Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya, and David M. Jones, eds., *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995); Compton, *East Asian Democratization: Impact of Globalization, Culture, and Economy*; Lucian Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimension of Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Wei-ming Tu, ed., *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

distinct makeup of political institutions and their practices, these values have also shaped the formulation and implementation of political order and national security as national development goals. Additionally, they are known as the major source of delegative democracy, with the concentration of powers within the executive.¹⁰

As Huntington¹¹ and many others point out, these values emphasize family and community over individuals, discipline and hierarchy over freedom and equality, and consensus and harmony over diversity and conflict. Many theorists have argued that these cultural values of collectivism, hierarchism, and conformism are likely to detract from the process of cultural democratization by discouraging East Asians from rejecting the norms of authoritarian rule and accepting those of democracy.¹²

The same Confucian authoritarian values are also known to have affected East Asians' intellectual understanding of democratization by promoting nonliberal or undemocratic conceptions of good government and politics, especially among political leaders in these countries. Specifically, these values motivated some East Asian political leaders, such as former prime ministers Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, to develop a model of authoritarian governance under the name of "Asian democracy."¹³ Placing the peace and prosperity of the community above the rights and freedom of its individual citizens, these leaders equated democracy with benevolent or soft authoritarian rule and defended it as a viable alternative to Western liberal democracy, which is based on the values of individualism and pluralism. By invoking East Asia's cultural differences from the West, these leaders sought to fend off pressure for the democratization of their authoritarian political systems.¹⁴

¹⁰ Hyug Baeg Im, "Faltering Democratic Consolidation in South Korea," *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 179-197; L. H. M. Ling and Chih-yu Shih, "Confucianism with a Liberal Face: The Meaning of Democratic Politics in Postcolonial Taiwan," *Review of Politics* 60, no. 1 (1998): 55-82; and Shaun O'Dwyer, "Democracy and Confucian Values," *Philosophy East and West* 3, no. 1 (2003): 39-61.

¹¹ Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.

¹² Yutzung Chang, Yun-han Chu, and Frank Tsai, "Confucianism and Democratic Values in Three Chinese Societies," *Issues & Studies* 41, no. 4 (2005): 1-33; Wolf Linder and Andre Bachtiger, "What Drives Democratization in Asia and Africa?" *European Journal of Political Research* 44, no. 6 (2005): 861-880; and Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin, "Do Asian Values Deter Popular Support for Democracy?" *Asian Survey* 46, no. 3 (2006): 341-361.

¹³ Stephen Hood, "The Myth of Asian-Style Democracy," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 9 (1998): 853-866; Clark D. Neher, "Asian Style Democracy," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 11 (1994): 949-961; and Fareed Zakaria, "Culture Is Destiny: A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (1994): 109-126.

¹⁴ Donald Emerson, "Singapore and 'the Asian Values' Debate," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (1996): 95-105; Rosemary Foot, "Human Rights, Democracy and Development," *Democratization* 4, no. 2 (1997): 139-153; Tommy Koh, "The 10 Values Which Undergird East Asian Strength and Success," *International Herald Tribune*, December 11, 1993; Mark

Confucian values have affected not only the leaders of East Asia's authoritarian regimes but also the first-generation leaders of third-wave democracies in the region.¹⁵ As democratically elected presidents, for example, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung of South Korea recognized the installation of free, fair, and competitive elections as an essential component of democratic politics. Being inculcated in the Confucian norm emphasizing virtuous leadership above the rule of law, however, they themselves often failed to obey the basic laws and rules of democratic politics. In the case of Kim Dae Jung, he secretly transferred \$500 million to North Korea for the first summit meeting between the two Koreas, which earned him a Nobel Peace Prize. Even in the other East Asian countries, leaders are known to have a minimal conception of democracy, limited to free and competitive elections.¹⁶

In summary, the economic and cultural contexts in which democracy was introduced to East Asia were different from those of Europe and Latin America. The intellectual climate in which East Asian political leaders understood democracy was also different from that in the other regions. Improvements in their personal lives under authoritarian rule restrained ordinary East Asians from endorsing their new democratic governments unconditionally until the new governments began to deliver tangible material benefits to them. The Confucian notions of good government and leadership in terms of harmony and virtuous example were likely to have motivated the old generation of political leaders to embrace the notion that democracy brings chaos.¹⁷ Consequently, this notion was likely to have dissuaded them from accommodating citizen demand for democratic regime change and for expanding partial democracy into full democracy.

The Diffusion of the Third Wave of Democratization

The current third wave of democratization reached the shores of East Asia more than a decade after it began to spread from Southern Europe in 1974. The region's participation in this wave began in 1986, with the removal of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos through the bloodless people's power movement in the Philippines. One year later, South Korea ended military rule and elected a new president in a free and competitive election for the first time in nearly

Thompson, "The Survival of Asian Values as 'Zivilisationskritik,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 5 (2000): 651-86; and id., "Whatever Happened to Asian Values?" *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 4 (2001): 145-165.

¹⁵ Young Whan Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), and Doh Chull Shin, *Mass Politics and Culture in Democratizing Korea* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Going Down," *New Republic*, e-version, December 5, 2007.

¹⁷ Edward Friedman, "A Comparative Politics of Democratization in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 34 (2003): 103-123.

three decades. In the same year, after ending more than three decades of the Kuomintang's one-party rule, Taiwan lifted martial law and ushered in an era of highly competitive multiparty democracy. In 1990, Mongolia became a third-wave democracy by abandoning its sixty-year-old communist one-party system and holding competitive multiparty elections. The October 1991 Paris Accord¹⁸ made it possible for Cambodia to begin its transition to democracy. In 1992, Thailand reestablished democratic rule after massive protests ousted the military-backed government. In 1999, Indonesia ended three decades of Suharto's personal dictatorship and thereafter held democratic elections to become the largest third-wave democracy in the region. By the end of the last decade, the third wave had led to the rise of about seven new democracies in East Asia.

As this history shows, the third wave of democratization in East Asia has been a gradual movement. Today, more than three decades after democratization began to spread from Southern Europe, nearly half the countries in East Asia have yet to undergo democratic regime change (see table 1). Moreover, two of these third-wave democracies (Cambodia and Thailand) have reverted to authoritarian rule. The Philippines, also, is no longer rated an electoral democracy due to political killings targeting left-wing political activists. As a result, the 2008 report by Freedom House¹⁹ designates a minority of five countries (36 percent) in the region as liberal democracies: Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia, and Taiwan. All in all, the democratic transformation of authoritarian regimes in East Asia has virtually stalled for more than a decade.

Why has East Asia been slower than other regions in responding to the surging wave of global democratization? One reason is lack of precedent for change. In most of East Asia's history, governmental or regime change, not to mention democratic regime change, has been rare. In Singapore, for example, the People's Action Party has ruled since 1959. In Japan, except for a brief span of eleven months in the early 1990s, the Liberal Democratic Party has ruled since the end of World War II. In Malaysia, the United Malays National Organization of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed is still in power after more than fifty years. Indonesia's Golkar party ruled from 1967-2001, and Taiwan's Kuomintang governed for more than forty years. Many scholars attribute East Asians' unyielding allegiance to one-party rule and their general aversion to political turnovers to a Confucian value system that emphasizes deference to authority and antipathy to political change.²⁰

¹⁸ Sophal Ear, "Cambodia: Negotiating Peace Accords," Center for Asian Interdisciplinary Studies and Research, Princeton University (1997), http://www.sinoptic.ch/ceria/textes/Cambodge_SophalEar.pdf (accessed May 1, 2008).

¹⁹ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2008 Survey: Global Freedom in Retreat," Washington, DC (2008), www.freedomhouse.org (accessed May 1, 2008).

²⁰ Richard Robinson, "The Politics of Asian Values," *Pacific Review* 9, no. 3 (1996): 215-236.

Table 1. Changing Characters of Political Systems in East Asia

Country	Year				
	1985	1990	1995	2000	2007
Cambodia	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	6 (6/6) Not free	6 (6/6) Not free	5.5 (6/5) Not free
China	6 (6/6) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	6.5 (7/6) Not free	6.5 (7/6) Not free
Indonesia	5.5 (5/6) Partly free	5.5 (6/5) Partly free	6.5 (7/6) Not free	3.5 (3/4) Partly free	2.5 (2/3) Free
North Korea	7(7/7) Not free	7(7/7) Not free	7(7/7) Not free	7(7/7) Not free	7(7/7) Not free
South Korea	4.4 (4/5) Partly free	2.5 (2/3) Free	2 (2/2) Free	2 (2/2) Free	1.5 (1/2) Free
Japan	1 (1/1) Free	1 (1/1) Free	1.5 (1/2) Free	1.5 (1/2) Free	1.5 (1/2) Free
Malaysia	4 (3/5) Partly free	4.5 (5/4) Partly free	4.5 (4/5) Partly free	5 (5/5) Partly free	4 (4/4) Partly free
Mongolia	7 (7, 7) Not free	4 (4, 4) Partly free	2.5 (2, 3) Free	2.5 (2, 3) Free	2.5 (2, 2) Free
Myanmar	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free
Philippines	3.5 (4/3) Partly free	3 (3/3) Partly free	3 (2/4) Partly free	2.5 (2/3) Free	3.5 (4/3) Partly free
Singapore	4.5 (4/5) Partly free	4 (4/4) Partly free	5 (5/5) Partly free	5 (5/5) Partly free	4.5 (5/4) Partly free
Taiwan	5 (5/5) Partly free	3 (3/3) Partly free	3 (3/3) Partly free	1.5 (1/2) Free	1.5 (2/1) Free
Thailand	3.5 (3/4) Partly free	2.5 (2/3) Free	3.5 (3/4) Partly free	2.5 (2/3) Free	5 (6/4) Partly free
Vietnam	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	7 (7/7) Not free	6.5 (7/6) Not free	6 (7/5) Not free
Free (%)	7.10%	21.40%	21.40%	42.90%	35.70%
Partly Free (%)	50.00%	42.90%	35.70%	21.40%	28.60%
Not Free (%)	42.90%	35.70%	42.90%	35.70%	35.70%

Notes: Values of political rights and civil liberties are in parentheses;

Free: 1-2.5; Partly Free: 3-5; Not Free: 5.5-7

Democratic Transition

Modes of Democratic Regime Change

The first step in transforming authoritarian governments into *full* democracies is to exchange the authoritarian regime for a democratic one, even a limited democratic one. What role did ordinary East Asians and their political leaders play in this transition process? Concerning the modes of democratic transition, Huntington²¹ classified transition processes into three broad types in terms of those who play the leading role in those processes. When opposition groups play a role, *replacement* occurs. When ruling elites play the role, *transformation* occurs. When ruling elites and opposition groups together play equally important roles, *transplacement* occurs. Of these three modes, replacement and transformation represent, respectively, the most and least radical modes of democratic transition.

Table 2 lists all of the East Asian third-wave democracies, with their modes of transition and their combined Freedom House ratings of political and civil rights at the cusp of transition and their most recent score in 2008. Also included in this table is an indication of what forces drove each Asian country's transition, and whether the transition involved significant violence between the state and opposition forces. In East Asia, the Philippines was the only replacement case of installing democracy by this violent mode of popular uprising, while Taiwan was the only transformation case of gradual democratic regime change in which the ruling elite played the initial and leading role.

The Philippines

This country's move to democracy began with the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled for more than two decades from 1965 to 1986. During this period, he suspended and replaced the 1935 democratic constitution so that he could be elected for a term of six years with no term limits. He entrusted key positions in the government to his wife, children, and relatives or close friends. He also imposed martial law to solidify his power and allowed state security agencies to torture and kill more than thirty thousand people, including Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., the main opposition figure, in 1983. At the same time, he and his family were enriching themselves through open and widespread corruption. During his entire tenure as a civilian dictator, he legally earned no more than an annual salary of \$5,700. When he left the country in 1986, his personal fortune was estimated to be in excess of \$5 billion.

Increasingly rampant corruption and widespread political violence alienated every segment of the population, including Marcos's former supporters. In February 1986, he ran against Corazon Aquino for his fourth term. Though

²¹ Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 114.

Table 2. Modes of Transition and Democracy Ratings in East Asia

	Cambodia	Indonesia	Mongolia	Philippines	South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand
Method of transition	Intervention / Transplacement	Transplacement	Transplacement	Replacement	Transplacement	Transformation	Transplacement
Year of transition	1991	1998	1990	1986	1987	1992	1992
Strength of nonviolent civic associations	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
Level of violence	Significant violence	High violence	Nonviolent	Significant violence	Significant violence	Nonviolent	Significant violence
Source of violence	State and opposition	State and opposition	None	State	State and opposition	None	State
Force driving the transition	External inter-vention	Civil society and political elites	Civil society and political elites	Civil society	Civil society and political elites	Civil society and political elites	Civil society and political elites
Pretransitional rating	7	6	7	3.5	4.5	5	2.5
2007 rating	5.5	2.5	2	3	1.5	1.5	5.5
Change in composite rating	+1.5 (increase)	+3.5 (increase)	+5.0 (increase)	+0.5 (increase)	+3.0 (increase)	+3.5 (increase)	-3.0 (decrease)

** Transition data obtained from Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005); Freedom House data obtained from www.freedomhouse.org. Mode of transition is classified according to Huntington's (1993) classification scheme.

declared the winner of the highly fraudulent presidential election, Marcos was forced to leave the country for Hawaii on the day of his swearing in by a people's uprising, known as the "People Power Revolution," which involved as many as 500,000 ordinary Filipinos as well as a number of religious, political, and military leaders. With Marcos's departure, Corazon Aquino, the leader of the opposition movement, became the president of the first third-wave democracy in East Asia.

South Korea

From the Philippines, the third wave of democratization spread to other countries in East Asia and triggered a negotiated transition in South Korea. For nearly two decades beginning in 1961, General Park Chung Hee ruled the country ruthlessly, while developing its economy rapidly by promoting export industries. Less than two months after Park was assassinated on October 26, 1979, General Chun Doo Hwan assumed power through another coup d'état to suppress the awakening of the democracy movement following Park's death. On May 17, 1980, Chun extended martial law over the entire country and disbanded the National Assembly. On May 18, he dispatched troops to quell growing protests against martial law in Kwangju; those troops killed 207 people and injured 987. This event was symbolic of despotism, and to this day is remembered as the infamous Kwangju massacre.

From June 10 to June 29, 1987, street demonstrations, often referred to as the "June Popular Uprising," drew increasingly larger crowds and overwhelmed police forces. The Chun government confronted a painful choice. Should it bring in the army to quell those demonstrations just a few months before the scheduled Summer Olympics in Seoul, or accept the demands of antigovernment forces for the direct election of the president by the people? After seventeen consecutive days of demonstrations and under intense pressure from the United States and the International Olympic Committee, the government agreed to popular demands for democratic reforms. This agreement, dubbed the "June 29 Declaration of Democratic Reform," served as a foundation for South Korea's peaceful transition to democracy. It also served as a transplacement model of democratic transition in other East Asian countries.

Taiwan

Taiwan became a third-wave democracy after five years of gradual liberalization initiated by Chiang Ching-Kuo, the leader of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT hereafter) Party. Since Taiwan's break from China in 1949, the KMT had ruled the island as a one-party state under martial law. For nearly four decades, opposition parties were banned and political dissidents were not allowed to contest national elections. Beginning in 1980, however, the opposition movement against martial law gradually gained momentum, especially in the aftermath of the Philippines' People's Power Revolution and South Korea's June Popular Uprising. In September 1986, the movement illegally formed the

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as the first opposition party in Taiwan to counter the KMT. On June 12, 1987, the DPP sponsored a rally to protest the National Security Law in front of the Legislative Yuan. Realizing unmanageable consequences of growing protests and under increasing pressure from the U.S. Congress to build a framework for democracy, President Chiang Ching-Kuo lifted martial law on July 14, 1987, more than a year after he informally had indicated the need to end it.

With the lifting of martial law, the Taiwanese were legally permitted to engage in protests and demonstrations against the KMT government. More new political parties, including the Taiwanese Independence Party, were formed, which also demanded the end of one-party rule. These parties called for more political liberalization and challenged the KMT in every important policy arena, as well as about its close relationship with mainland China. Finally, the KMT and opposition forces agreed to a series of constitutional amendments, which provided for holding free, fair, and competitive national assembly elections in 1992, and the election of a president and vice president by direct popular vote in 1996. As compared to South Korea's transition to democracy, Taiwan's democratic regime change moved more slowly and gradually, while the leaders of the ruling party played greater leadership roles.

Thailand

Thailand followed a path similar to South Korea's in that the country had been under military rule for decades prior to its democratization. Beginning with a coup in 1932 that transformed the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, the army has ruled periodically. In 1986, General Prem, who was once the junta leader, began to liberalize the political system by allowing civil society forces and opposition groups to form. In 1988, the country conducted fully democratic parliamentary elections and formed a coalition government under General Chatichai Choonhaven. Although the economy was booming under his government, Prime Minister Choonhaven was arrested in a military coup on February 23, 1991, on charges of corruption and incompetence.

The new military junta, led by Generals Sunthorn and Suchinda, initiated draconian measures aimed at undoing the political liberalization reforms of Generals Prem and Choonhaven. This led to massive demonstrations in the streets. The junta responded with aggressive force, shooting protesters in Bangkok who were demanding the return of civilian rule. This did not deter the public from massing in the streets. After three weeks of significant violence in May 1992, the military junta and opposition forces entered into a binding agreement that the constitution would be amended to minimize the role of the military in politics. It was also agreed that the prime minister should be elected from among the members of the parliament instead of being selected by the military establishment. The "People's Constitution" of 1997, the region's most democratic constitution, created three new democratic institutions and mandated the direct election of the Senate; as a result, Thailand was well on

its way toward the consolidation of its nascent democratic rule. However, its military staged another coup to oust the democratically elected Thaksin government on September 19, 2006, claiming as a reason endemic corruption in his government.

Mongolia

Mongolia began its transition to democracy as the Soviet Union started to fragment. In early 1989, civic groups, mostly led by members of the middle class, began to demand democratic reforms and formed opposition parties such as the Mongolian Democratic Union. In response, soft-liners of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRD), the former communist party, entered into protracted negotiations with the opposition forces to pass democratic reforms and to draft a new democratic constitution. In July 1990, Mongolia held its first free and fair parliamentary elections, which led to the restoration of the MPRD to power under a democratic system. In July 2003, the first election was held under the new constitution, guaranteeing political rights and civil liberties. To date, Mongolia has the distinction of being the only country outside Eastern Europe to have made a successful transition from communist rule to a highly competitive multiparty capitalist democracy.

Cambodia

Like Mongolia, Cambodia began its transition to democracy from communist one-party rule. But unlike Mongolia, its history was blighted by an ongoing conflict with Vietnam, which necessitated a major role by the international community in Cambodia's transition to democracy. In October 1991, four rival groups (the Khmer Rouge, the royalist Funcinpec, the pro-Vietnamese CCP of Hun Sen, and a very small republican-bourgeois faction), together with eighteen countries, signed the Treaty of Paris, which began the transition process. The goal of the treaty was to make Cambodia a truly sovereign state, with limited Vietnamese influence in its domestic politics. The installed democracy, therefore, did not emanate from a strong grass-roots movement of middle-class segments. With the consociational agreements among promonarchy and pro-Hun Sen forces, the May 1993 parliamentary elections created a multiparty democracy, which became highly unstable. In July 1997, a bloody and brutal coup restored the dictatorial power of Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge soldier. Cambodia is unique among newly emerging Asian democracies primarily because its democratic constitution and free elections resulted from a peace settlement and the direct involvement of the United Nations.

Indonesia

Indonesia's transition to democracy marks the most recent civilian authoritarian regime to collapse in the East Asian region. The transition, which began in 1998, was mostly a result of protracted economic trouble fueled by the Asian economic crisis which erupted in late 1997. Food and medicine shortages led

university students and other ordinary citizens to wage waves of protests against President Suharto, who ruled the country for more than thirty years from 1967 to 1998. On May 21, 1998, facing growing mass mobilizations against his regime, he handed his power over to Vice President Habibie, a loyalist who also belonged to the Golkar party. For months, the new Golkar party negotiated with opposition parties and the military about a new democratic constitution and the holding of free, fair, and competitive elections. The successful negotiations between the ruling and opposition forces led to Indonesia's first democratic parliamentary elections in 1999 and a presidential election in 2004, which created the largest Muslim democracy in the world.

Pacted versus Unpacted Transitions

As we have documented above, six of the seven democratic transitions in East Asia involved a series of negotiations between the ruling and opposition forces and required compromises from each of them. The only exception to this mode of transplacement was the Philippines, where the people forced the authoritarian leaders to depart. Five of the seven transitions overturned authoritarian regimes that were not ideologically based (The Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Indonesia). Only two were transitions from states built on the ideology of communism (Cambodia and Mongolia).

The literature on the third wave of democratization shows that the mode of transplacement, which required political pact-making before the advent of transition, has consistently produced stable democracies that are less susceptible to reversals or breakdowns than those that follow other modes.²² In Portugal, Spain, and Greece, for example, such pacted transitions produced stable and consolidated democracies in less than a decade by facilitating conciliation, compromise-building, and consensus-seeking between the democratic opposition and authoritarian elites. In sharp contrast, unpacted transitions, from either above or below, have yielded either authoritarian reversals or unstable democratic regimes because either democratic or authoritarian forces were excluded from the process of installing a new democratic system.

The Philippines fits this pattern. A case of replacement, the Philippine transition to democracy has been highly unstable. The country has seen a series of unsuccessful coup attempts and mass protests. However, all of the other third-wave democracies in East Asia, which were built on pacts, have also been unstable. In Indonesia, the National Assembly impeached President Abdurahman Wahid and elected Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri as his successor. In South Korea, the National Assembly impeached President Roh Moo Hyun and suspended his executive powers. In Taiwan, James Soong, a loser in the 2000 presidential election, and his newly formed post-election People First Party, tried to bring down the democratically elected government

²² Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation*.

through the means of mass protests. Coups overthrew the democratically elected governments in Cambodia and Thailand. By dissolving parliaments and banning all political activities, these two countries reverted to authoritarian rule. Regardless of the mode of transition, new democracies in East Asia have been unstable. Evidently, the mode of transition is not determinative in the process of democratic consolidation in East Asia.

Causes of Democratic Transitions

What propelled seven East Asian countries to join the third wave of democratization? The existing literature has identified two sets of facilitating factors as the most probable causes of the current wave worldwide. The first set concerns political and other changes that had occurred within each country, whereas the second set deals with developments in neighboring or other foreign countries.²³ The particular mix of these two sets of factors is known to vary significantly from region to region and from country to country.²⁴ Between the two sets, it is known that the domestic set played a more powerful role in Latin America, while the international set predominated in Europe. In East Asia, as in Latin America, domestic factors have been more influential than international factors in propelling democratic transitions.

In Europe and Latin America, region-wide international organizations and individual governments promoted democracy. In East Asia, there were no such organizations or governments. The United States remained the single most powerful external actor. Until the collapse of the Berlin Wall, moreover, the international context of the Cold War severely constrained democratic development in East Asian countries by giving their authoritarian governments a rationale for repressing political opposition. The United States supported those repressive regimes to stop the spread of communism, and thus “created an unfavorable balance of power between the state and civil society for democratization.”²⁵ Only after decades of rapid economic development expanded civil society did it become powerful enough to challenge those in power. Then the United States intervened directly to constrain authoritarian regimes from using force against the budding democracy movement.

There is no question that the interventions of the United States contributed to peaceful democratic transitions, especially in the Philippines, South Korea,

²³ Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, and Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.

²⁴ Doh Chull Shin, “On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research,” *World Politics* 47, no. 1 (1994): 135-170.

²⁵ Shelly, *Democratic Development in East Asia*, and Tianjian Shi, “China: Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System,” in *How East Asians View Democracy*, ed. Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew Nathan, and Doh Chull Shin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

and Taiwan. As Diamond²⁶ and others point out, there is also no doubt that the desire of authoritarian rulers to see their countries accepted as developed countries in an international event, such as the Summer Olympics, contributed to peaceful transitions in these countries. The transition in the Philippines by means of the People Power Revolution also affected subsequent transitions in other East Asian countries by spreading methods and techniques of democratic change across borders.²⁷ With the exception of Cambodia, however, such international interventions or snowballing effects cannot be considered the direct or primary cause of democratic transitions in East Asian countries.

As in other regions, a variety of domestic factors facilitated third-wave democratization in East Asia. Among these factors, which included the rise of the middle class and shifts in cultural values in favor of democratic rule, the expansion of civil society is generally considered the direct and primary cause of East Asian democratization.²⁸ The growth of civic associations and groups in civil society alone produced the balance of power between authoritarian rulers and democratic opposition. In six of the seven third-wave democracies in East Asia, such a power balance led to successful negotiations between the two rival forces and produced democratic transition by the mode of transplacement or transformation. In South Korea, for example, religious institutions played a prominent role by promoting human rights and civil liberties. In Taiwan and Thailand, a variety of social movements organized by civil rights and environmental groups, mostly from the urban middle class, challenged repressive regimes and demanded democratic reforms.

According to Junhan Lee,²⁹ colonial legacies and external factors had no direct influence in spurring democratic regime change. It is the civic movements that spurred democratic changes in East Asia. Across the region, these movements weakened authoritarian elites by engaging in waves of demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes, and inculcated the spirit of democracy in ordinary citizens by demanding the election of new rulers and the establishment of their political rights. From Catholic Philippines to mainly Buddhist Taiwan and Thailand and multireligious South Korea, civic movements were the most decisive and powerful force that drove authoritarian rulers in a democratic direction.

The activities of civic organizations during the process of democratic transition are known to have had long-term consequences for deepening

²⁶ Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*.

²⁷ Ibid., and Tom Ginsburg, "East and South East Asia: Lessons from Democratic Transitions," *Orbis* 52, no. 1 (2008): 91-105.

²⁸ Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), and Fahimul Quadir and Jayant Lele, eds., *Democracy and Civil Society in Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).

²⁹ Junhan Lee, "Primary Causes of Democratization," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 6 (2002): 821-837.

and expanding limited democracy. A recent analysis of the Freedom House data collected by Karatnycky and Ackerman³⁰ has confirmed the long-term beneficial effect of civic activism on liberal democratization in the world.³¹ According to this analysis, of sixty-seven countries that underwent democratic transitions over the past three decades, 75 percent of the transitions driven by strong civic coalitions became liberal democracies. Only 18 percent of the transitions that lacked active involvement of civic coalitions turned into liberal democracies. The more vigorous civil society is, the more likely progress toward full democracy is. Where there is violence and less vigorous civil society, reversion to nondemocratic rule is more common. Is this generalization applicable to the East Asian region?

Contrary to inferences from the analysis of the Freedom House data, improvements in political rights and civil liberties in post-transition East Asia have little to do with *either the levels of civic activism or those of violence* (see table 2). For instance, the Philippines had strong civic associations pretransition, but their political systems failed to enlarge freedom even after more than a decade of democratic rule. Taiwan had only a moderate level of civic activism but formally became a liberal democracy. Indonesia and South Korea also formally became liberal democracies, despite the fact that they experienced significant levels of violence during their processes of democratic transition. Of the seven third-wave democracies in East Asia, only Mongolia fits the earlier finding that strong nonviolent civic activism leads to liberal democratization.

In conclusion, the importance of civil society associationalism in increasing freedoms and liberties is not as highly salient in East Asia as it is in other regions. However, if we link the shifting levels of freedom in the region to the mode of transition, one trend becomes apparent. Almost all of the pacted, transplacement transitions received improved Freedom House ratings for many years after the transition. Only the Philippines failed to improve political rights and civil liberties, and it is also the only country that went through an unpacted transition involving a complete break from the authoritarian past. This finding suggests that transitions based on replacement hurt more than help the subsequent stage of democratic consolidation. It also suggests that in East Asia, the mode of transition matters more than the level of civic activism.

³⁰ Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, "How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy," Washington, DC (2005), www.freedomhouse.org (accessed May 1, 2008).

³¹ Doh Chull Shin and Rollin Tusalem, "The Cultural and Institutional Dynamics of Global Democratization," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 1 (2007): 1-28.

Institutional Makeup and Reform

The makeup of democratic institutions is widely known to affect governmental performance and stability.³² Among different forms of government, for example, the presidential form delivers greater executive stability than the parliamentary form. The parliamentary form, on the other hand, is more flexible and capable of adjusting to changing situations than the presidential form. Among new East Asian democracies, the presidential form has been slightly more typical than the parliamentary form. There are four presidential democracies—Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan—and three parliamentary democracies—Cambodia, Mongolia, and Thailand (see table 3). The literature confirms that executive stability is slightly higher among the former countries than among the latter.³³ According to Benjamin Reilly,³⁴ the average duration of a cabinet for parliamentary democracies ranges from ten months in Thailand to forty-one months in Cambodia. The corresponding figures for presidential democracies range from twenty-six months in Indonesia to fifty-one months in the Philippines. In East Asia, a parliamentary democracy has a low level of cabinet stability, while a presidential democracy has a level of such stability.

While almost evenly divided in their forms of government, new East Asian democracies are similar in their electoral systems. Electoral systems set the basic rules for converting popular votes into parliamentary seats and thus determining the representation of the electorate in the policy-making process. In so doing, the electoral system also shapes the contours of the political party system. Electoral reforms are, therefore, widely viewed as the most powerful tool of democratic political engineering. Since their transition to democracy, all of the new East Asian democracies have implemented a variety of highly innovative electoral reforms in order to foster a stable party system or stable multiethnic systems of governance. According to Reilly,³⁵ these reforms forged a uniquely “Asian model of electoral system in order to engineer political stability through the design of democratic institutions.” Being in favor of a majority of the electorate, this system is also called the mixed-member majoritarian (MMM hereafter) system.

³² Francis Fukuyama, Bjorn Dressel, and Boo Seung Chang, “Facing the Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 2 (2005): 102-116, and Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

³³ Aurel Croissant, ed., “Electoral Politics in Southeast and East Asia,” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Office for Regional Co-operation in Southeast Asia, Singapore (2002), <http://library.fes.de/fulltext/iez/01361inf.htm> (accessed May 1, 2008).

³⁴ Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy and Diversity: Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁵ Benjamin Reilly, “Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region: Is There an ‘Asian Model’ of Democracy?” *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 11 (2007): 1350-1371.

Table 3. Forms of Government and Electoral Systems in Asian Democracies

Country	Form of Government	Former Electoral System	New Electoral System
Cambodia	Parliamentary	Closed-List PR	Closed-List PR (1998)
Indonesia	Presidential	Closed-List PR	Open-List PR (2002)
Japan	Parliamentary	Single Non-Transferable Vote	Mixed Plurality PR (1994)
Mongolia	Parliamentary	Block Vote	Two Round System (2000)
Philippines	Presidential	Plurality/Block Vote	Mixed Plurality PR (1998)
South Korea	Presidential	Modified Plurality	Mixed Plurality PR (1996/2003)
Taiwan	Presidential	Mixed SNTV-PR	Mixed Plurality PR
Thailand	Parliamentary	Block Vote	Mixed Plurality PR (2007)

Source: Benjamin Reilly, "Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region: Is There an 'Asian Model' of Democracy?" *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 11 (2007): 1350-1371.

For the past two decades, East Asian countries have abandoned the proportional representation (PR) or block vote electoral systems that produced highly unstable multiparty and fragmented coalitions in the legislature. Instead, they have adopted systems that mix the plurality and proportional methods of electing legislators (see table 3). These mixed systems weigh the plurality or majority component much more heavily than the minority element and behave more like plurality systems than the mixed systems in other regions. In Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, large majorities of legislative seats, from two-thirds to four-fifths, are elected by plurality rules, while relatively small minorities are elected by the proportional representation method. Indonesia switched from closed-list PR to open-list PR in 2003. Cambodia has made its closed-list proportional system more majoritarian by replacing its largest remainder method by the highest average method. This majority-favoring aspect of the MMM system that East Asian countries have recently adopted contrasts strikingly with the mixed systems in new democracies in other regions that guarantee a high level of minority representation.

Reilly³⁶ found that the adoption of majority-favoring MMM electoral systems has resulted in significant increases in the extent to which popular votes are disproportionately converted into legislative seats in all East Asian

³⁶ Ibid.

countries. According to his estimation of such electoral disproportionality, these countries as a whole are 50 percent more majoritarian than those in Latin America and Eastern Europe. As a result of this shift toward electoral majority, East Asian countries have moved toward the Anglo-American system of majoritarian democracy and away from the European system of consensus democracy.

In addition to electoral reforms, new East Asian democracies have recently carried out reform measures to build stable broad-based party systems. They require political parties to appeal to a broad spectrum of the population, and that prevents the entry of small parties into the parliament.³⁷ In Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Korea, political parties are now required to maintain a minimum membership and branch offices in one-third or more of regions or districts. Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan require vote thresholds of 2 to 5 percent to reduce the legislative representation of minor parties. In Indonesia, all parties failing to gain more than 2 percent of the seats in the lower house or 3 percent of the seats in regional assemblies are required to merge with other parties to contest future elections. In Indonesia and Thailand, moreover, only political party candidates, not independents, are allowed to run for lower house elections. In the wake of these party reforms, which have reduced the number of effective political parties, new East Asian democracies are expected to make considerable progress in building more coherent and stable party systems, with support from a broad spectrum of the population at the expense of small parties.

Why have East Asian countries adopted the institutional reforms benefiting majority voters and large political parties at the expense of minority voters and small parties? Reilly³⁸ attributes the uniform conversion of East Asian countries into the majoritarian model of democracy to the Asian values thesis that emphasizes the importance of political order and harmony.³⁹ Unlike electoral systems that promote minority representation and tend to produce political fragmentation with a large number of parties represented in the legislature, the majority-favoring MMM allows for the dominance of two major parties that can produce political stability.

³⁷ Croissant, "Electoral Politics in Southeast and East Asia"; Russell J. Dalton, Doh Chull Shin, and Yun-Han Chu, eds., *Party Politics in East Asia: Citizens, Elections, and Democratic Development* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008); and Reilly, "Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region: Is There an 'Asian Model' of Democracy?"

³⁸ Reilly, "Democratization and Electoral Reform in the Asia-Pacific Region: Is There an 'Asian Model' of Democracy?"

³⁹ Daniel A. Bell, *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); id., *Beyond Liberal Democracy*; and Emerson, "Singapore and 'the Asian Values' Debate."

Substantive Democratization

Democratic Governance

All new East Asian democracies, except the collapsed one in Cambodia, hold competitive and free elections regularly to choose political leaders for the national and local levels of government. In institutional terms, therefore, they have been successfully transformed into electoral democracies. In substantive terms, however, they become well-functioning, full democracies only when electoral and other political institutions perform according to the rules and norms of democratic politics and as these institutions become increasingly responsive to the preferences of the citizenry.⁴⁰ To monitor progress in this dimension of substantive democratization, an increasing number of scholars has attempted to evaluate improvements in democratic regime performance in other regions. Frances Hagopian⁴¹ and Matthew Carlson,⁴² for example, analyzed the World Bank Governance Indicators (WBI hereafter)⁴³ to assess and compare the changing quality of democratic governance in twelve Latin American countries.

How well do new East Asian democracies perform? How much progress have they made in consolidating democratic institutions and responding to the electorates? The WBI provides numerical measures on six dimensions of governance for the ten-year period of 1996-2006. As Hagopian⁴⁴ points out, the first two dimensions—voice and accountability, and political stability—capture the strength of democracy; the second two—government effectiveness and regulatory quality—the effectiveness of democracy; and the last two—rule of law and control of corruption—the strength of constitutionalism. Indicator values for each country are weighted averages of what is available from a variety of sources for that country. With a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1, they could range from a low of -2.5 to a high of +2.5. Negative scores indicate a substandard or relatively worse performance, while positive scores

⁴⁰ Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, *Assessing the Quality of Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2005), and Guillermo O'Donnell, Jorge Vargas Cullell, and Osvaldo M. Iazzetta, *The Quality of Democracy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

⁴¹ Francis Hagopian, "Conclusions: Governmental Performance, Political Representation, and Public Perceptions of Contemporary Democracy in Latin America," in *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America*, ed. Francis Hagopian and Scott Mainwaring (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴² Matthew Carlson, "Public Opinion on Dimensions of Governance in East Asia: An Analysis of Citizen and Expert Evaluations," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 8, no. 3 (2007): 285-303.

⁴³ World Bank, *Governance Matters 2007*, Washington, DC (2007), <http://www.govindicators.org> (accessed May 1, 2008).

⁴⁴ Hagopian, "Conclusions: Governmental Performance, Political Representation, and Public Perceptions of Contemporary Democracy in Latin America."

indicate a relatively better performance. For each new East Asian democracy, table 4 reports the 2006 scores for all six dimensions of democratic governance and the differences between these scores and the 1996 scores.

A look at the 2006 scores for each dimension across the seven new East Asian democracies reveals that none of the dimensions received consistently positive or consistently negative average ratings. In each dimension, the seven countries divide into two groups, one with positive ratings and the other with negative ratings. In three domains—voice and accountability, government effectiveness, and control of corruption—for example, four of the seven countries rated positively, while three countries rated negatively. In the dimensions of political stability, regulatory quality, and rule of law, on

Table 4. The Shifting Qualities of Democratic Governance
(World Bank Governance Indicators)

A. 2006 WBI Scores

Country	Voice and accountability	Political stability	Government effectiveness	Regulatory quality	Rule of law	Corruption control
Japan	0.91	1.11	1.29	1.27	1.40	1.31
Cambodia	-0.98	-0.48	-1.01	-0.63	-1.11	-1.19
Indonesia	0.25	-1.11	0.38	-0.26	-0.82	0.77
South Korea	0.71	0.42	1.05	0.70	0.72	0.31
Mongolia	0.10	0.78	-0.46	-0.31	-0.32	-0.54
Philippines	-0.18	-1.26	-0.01	-0.06	-0.48	-0.06
Taiwan	0.79	0.51	1.11	0.94	0.77	0.53
Thailand	-0.50	-0.99	0.29	0.37	0.03	0.26

B. Changes in WBI Scores over the 1996-2006 Period

Country	Voice and accountability	Political stability	Government effectiveness	Regulatory quality	Rule of law	Corruption control
Japan	+0.06	+0.22	-0.05	+0.71	-0.06	+0.10
Cambodia	0.00	+0.93	+0.11	-0.66	-0.02	-0.08
Indonesia	+1.38	-0.30	+0.24	-0.69	-0.46	+1.32
South Korea	+0.24	+0.31	+0.13	+0.18	+0.01	-0.21
Mongolia	-0.37	+0.20	+0.07	-0.38	-0.39	-0.22
Philippines	-0.40	-0.77	+0.02	-0.70	-0.45	-0.22
Taiwan	-0.19	-0.48	+0.32	+0.06	-0.04	-0.21
Thailand	-0.80	-0.71	-0.15	-0.22	-0.55	+0.13

Source: World Bank Governance Indicator, <http://www.govindicators.org>.

the other hand, four countries rated negatively, while three countries rated positively. Among the new East Asian democracies, therefore, there is no single dimension of democratic governance that performs consistently better or consistently worse as compared to the other dimensions considered in the WBI study. In every dimension, the quality of democratic performance is of a mixed nature.

Each country's average ratings, when compared across the six dimensions, reveal the three patterns of fully negative, mixed, and fully positive ratings. Cambodia and the Philippines belong to the fully negative pattern, while South Korea and Taiwan belong to the fully positive pattern. Indonesia, Mongolia, and Thailand, meanwhile, belong to the mixed pattern of positive and negative dimensional ratings. In East Asia as a whole, the new democracies that scored positive ratings in all six performance dimensions constitute a small minority of less than one-third. Moreover, even the two countries with fully positive ratings failed to score above +1.0 on the 5-point scale, ranging from -2.5 to +2.5 in all or most of the performance dimensions. Only in the governmental effectiveness dimension did South Korea and Taiwan score above +1.0. In this respect, the new East Asian democracies contrast sharply with Spain and other fully consolidated third-wave democracies, which scored above +1.0 in all six performance dimensions. Altogether these findings make it clear that the third-wave democracies in East Asia are far from being well-functioning consolidated democracies.

How much progress did the new East Asian democracies make in improving the quality of their democratic governance over the ten-year period between 1996 and 2006? To address this question, we examined changes in each country's dimensional ratings as reported in the second panel of table 4. The table shows that over the ten-year period, more performance dimensions changed for the worse than for the better in a majority of the seven countries—Cambodia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Only in one country, South Korea, did more performance dimensions change for the better than for the worse. In Indonesia and Taiwan, an equal number of dimensions experienced negative and positive changes. On balance, a larger number of new East Asian democracies did not substantially improve their performances over the past decade. Their failures appear to have little to do with any of the independent variables considered, including the mode of transition, the magnitude of civic activism, the form of government, and the level of socioeconomic development.

We now compare scores indicating changes in each dimension of governance across the seven countries. In a majority of four performance dimensions—political stability, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and corruption control—more countries experienced negative changes than positive changes. Only in the dimension of governmental effectiveness did more countries experience positive changes than negative ones. By a large margin of 4 to 1, the deteriorated dimensions outnumber the improved dimensions. In the case of the rule of law

dimension, all countries, except South Korea, experienced negative changes. Also, in controlling corruption, five of the seven countries registered negative changes. These negative changes indicate *a clear trajectory toward illiberal democracy during the past decade*.

The mostly negative current ratings of the six dimensions indicate that a majority of the new East Asian democracies do not perform as well as most of the other countries examined by the World Bank. Meanwhile, declines in their average ratings over the past ten years indicate that a large majority of these democracies have failed to improve their performance over the period. When these findings are considered together, it is evident that stalled progress in democratic governance is a notable characteristic of substantive democratization in East Asia.⁴⁵ The relatively poor quality of democratic governance and its downward trend have very little to do with the modes of democratic transition, the forms of government, or the levels of civic activism prior to the transition. The distinguishing factors of relatively better performing democracies are high levels of socioeconomic development and longer periods of democratic rule, as shown in South Korea and Taiwan.

Cultural Democratization

Political culture refers to a variety of political attitudes, beliefs, and values, such as efficacy, tolerance, and trust. The most fundamental of all these holdings is clearly the attitude that democracy is more preferable than any of its alternatives.⁴⁶ Unlike other forms of government, democracy is government by *demos* (the people) and thus cannot be foisted upon an unwilling people for any extended period of time. It depends principally on public support for its survival and effective performance.⁴⁷ Only when citizens confer legitimacy on a newly installed democratic regime can it make decisions and commit resources without resorting to coercion. Therefore, there is a growing consensus in the literature on third-wave democracies that democratization is incomplete until an overwhelming majority of the mass citizenry offers unqualified and

⁴⁵ Satyabrata Chowdhuri, "Asia's Dysfunctional Democracy," *Japan Times*, April 13, 2006, and Yutzung Chang, Yun-han Chu, and Chong-Min Park, "Authoritarian Nostalgia in Asia," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 66-80.

⁴⁶ Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy—Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1999); Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation*; and Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives*.

⁴⁷ Michael Bratton, Robert Mattes, and E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Russell J. Dalton, "Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies," in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and William Mishler and Richard Rose, "Five Years after the Fall: Trajectories of Support for Democracy in Post-Communist Europe," in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

unconditional support for it.⁴⁸

In the same literature, there is also general agreement that popular support for democracy, especially in new democracies, is a highly complex and dynamic phenomenon with multiple dimensions.⁴⁹ It is a multidimensional phenomenon because it involves the acceptance of democracy as a regime, along with the rejection of its alternatives. It is a multilevel phenomenon because it involves the acceptance of the liberal democratic mode of governance and the rejection of illiberal democratic alternatives. Many citizens, who have lived most of their lives under authoritarian rule, remain undecided about whether a democracy or dictatorship would offer the most satisfying solutions to the many problems facing their societies. Under such uncertainty, they often embrace both democratic and authoritarian political propensities concurrently.⁵⁰ For an accurate account of citizen support for democracy, therefore, it is necessary to measure both the acceptance of democracy and the rejection of authoritarianism at the levels of both regime and process.

To measure democratic regime support, we selected two sets of three questions from the second round of the East Asia Barometer surveys (EAB hereafter) conducted in 2006 and 2007. The three items in one set were intended to tap the extent to which respondents endorse the suitability, preferability, and efficacy of democracy as a political system. The three items in the second set, on the other hand, were intended to tap the extent to which respondents were detached from the virtues of authoritarian regimes, including those of military, civilian, and one-party dictatorships. We first counted the number of prodemocratic and anti-authoritarian regime responses to estimate the extent to which East Asians are attached to democracy and detached from its alternatives.

For each East Asian country, table 5 reports the percentages affirming the suitability, preferability, and efficacy of democracy, separately and together. In each of the eight countries, large majorities ranging from 57 to 86 percent judged democracy as suitable for its country. In all of these countries, smaller majorities from 54 to 77 percent judged democracy as being capable of solving national problems. In judging democracy's preferability compared to other government forms, however, East Asian countries were divided into two groups: In South Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan, which are three of the four oldest third-

⁴⁸ Francis Fukuyama, "The Primacy of Culture," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 7-14; Diamond, *Developing Democracy—Toward Consolidation*; and Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation*.

⁴⁹ Dalton, "Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies"; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "Mapping Political Support in the 1990s: A Global Analysis," in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Shin, "Democratization: Perspectives from Global Citizenry."

⁵⁰ Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives*; Shin, *Mass Politics and Culture in Democratizing Korea*; and Shin, "Democratization: Perspectives from Global Citizenry."

wave East Asian democracies, less than half of the populations expressed such democratic support. In Japan and the other four countries, majorities ranging from 51 to 73 percent expressed unqualified preference for democratic rule. Considering all three of these indicators of prodemocratic responses together reveals that full supporters of democracy constitute minorities, ranging from 29 to 46 percent in six countries, including Japan, the oldest democracy in East Asia. In Indonesia and Thailand, the newest third-wave democracies in the region, bare majorities of less than 55 percent were full supporters. *Combining all seven new East Asian democracies together, we find full supporters of democracy constitute a minority of 38 percent.* This indicates that more than three-fifths of the mass citizenry in East Asia have yet to embrace democracy fully, even after more than a decade of democratic rule.

Table 5. Levels of Prodemocratic and Anti-authoritarian Regime Orientations

	Attachment to Democracy				Detachment from Authoritarianism				
	Suit-ability	Prefer-ability	Effi-cacy	All three	Military dictator	Civilian dictator	One-party dictator	All three	All six
Japan	75%	63%	67%	46%	91%	78%	83%	71%	39%
S. Korea	79	43	55	29	91	83	88	77	25
Mongolia	85	39	77	31	83	35	71	28	14
Philippines	57	51	56	24	73	59	65	39	10
Taiwan	67	48	54	28	88	76	82	69	23
Thailand	82	73	66	50	71	69	73	55	31
Indonesia	80	64	76	53	62	84	87	56	34
Singapore	86	59	66	42	92	86	88	81	37

Source: The East Asia Barometer surveys (II).

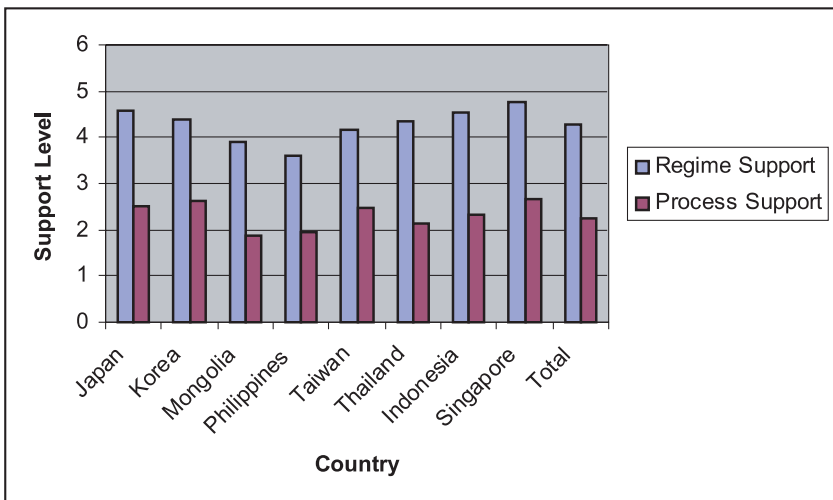
Table 5 also shows detachment from authoritarianism. As we did with democratic support, we counted the number of anti-authoritarian responses and estimated the overall level of detachment from authoritarianism. Scores on this index range from a low of 0 to a high of 3. The table shows that in every East Asian democracy, with the exception of Mongolia, substantial or large majorities ranging from 59 to 88 percent rejected each nondemocratic alternative. Considering the responses to all three nondemocratic regimes together, however, shows the fully detached from these regimes constitute minorities in two of the eight countries, Mongolia and the Philippines. Furthermore, considering all seven of the new democracies together reveals that full opponents of antidemocratic regimes constitute a substantial majority of 58 percent. This figure is twenty percentage points larger than that of full

supporters of democracy (38 percent). *Evidently, to a large number of East Asians, fully rejecting democracy's alternatives is one thing, and fully accepting democracy is another.* As a result, East Asians who fully support democracy and fully reject its alternatives constitute minorities ranging from 10 percent in the Philippines to 34 percent in Indonesia. Even in Japan, they constitute a small minority of less than two-fifths (39 percent).

We now measure the overall levels of democratic regime support across East Asian countries by combining into a 7-point index of overall democratic regime support the scores of two 4-point indexes measuring, respectively, the extent to which East Asians are attached to democracy and detached from authoritarianism. For each East Asian country, figure 1 reports the mean value on this index with values ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 6. All nine countries registered means ranging from 3.6 to 4.6, a range significantly higher than the index midpoint of 3.0. This finding clearly indicates that, in every East Asian country, a majority of the citizens tends to accept democracy and reject its alternatives. This finding does not, however, reveal the particular type of democratic government they support.

Do East Asians support the liberal democracy of the West? Or do they support the “Asian-style democracy” known as illiberal democracy? To ascertain the preferred mode of governance, we selected two sets of three items from the EAB. The first set was designed to tap the extent to which East Asians are attached to the norms of liberal democracy—the separation of powers, rule of law, and checks and balances. The second set was designed to tap the

Figure 1. Levels of Support for Democracy as a Regime and a Process



Source: The East Asia Barometer surveys (II).

extent to which they are detached from the traditional Asian norms of good governance—rule by morality, the state as a national family, and paternalistic rule (see appendix for the wording of these questions).

Table 6 shows the percentages affirming each and all of the three liberal democratic norms and those rejecting each and all of the three illiberal norms. In the left panel of the table, we see that persons fully attached to Western liberal norms of governance constitute small minorities, ranging from a little over one-tenth in Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand to nearly two-fifths in South Korea. In the right panel of the table, we see that citizens fully detached from Asian illiberal norms of governance constitute much smaller minorities, ranging from less than 5 percent in Indonesia, Mongolia, and Thailand to more than 10 percent in South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. Even in Japan, with more than six decades of democratic rule, less than one-third (29 percent) is fully detached from those illiberal norms. In every East Asian country, with the exception of Singapore, therefore, citizens who are fully attached to liberal norms outnumber those fully detached from illiberal norms. Understandably, it is far more difficult for East Asians to reject the traditional illiberal norms of governance than to embrace its new liberal norms.

Table 6. Levels of Attachment to the Liberal Mode of Governance and Detachment from the Illiberal Mode of Governance

	Attachment to Liberal Governance				Detachment from Illiberal Governance				
	Rule of law	Separation of powers	Checks & balances	All three	Rule by morality	Paternal rule	Familial rule	All three	All six
Japan	64%	59%	54%	32%	54%	54%	69%	29%	16%
S. Korea	73	72	57	39	34	39	60	11	6
Mongolia	43	43	36	12	17	21	26	3	0
Philippines	59	32	43	13	40	24	43	6	2
Taiwan	68	57	35	18	63	21	70	14	5
Thailand	34	28	38	11	26	22	39	5	2
Indonesia	68	56	56	30	52	8	23	2	1
Singapore	36	49	46	11	40	35	41	13	3

Source: The East Asia Barometer surveys (II).

As we did with democratic regime support, we counted the number of proliberal responses and anti-illiberal responses and combined them into a 7-point index of preference for liberal democratic governance. Figure 1 reports the mean value on this index, with values ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 6. All East Asian democracies scored below the index midpoint (3.0). Their means range from 1.9 in Mongolia to 2.6 in South Korea, indicating that

East Asians are not strong supporters of liberal democracy. In all new East Asian democracies, moreover, citizens fully committed to the liberal mode of governance constitute very small minorities, ranging from less than one percent in Mongolia to 16 percent in Japan. Even after more than six decades of democratic rule in this country, less than one-fifth of the electorate endorses liberal democracy unconditionally. This finding is a clear indication *that illiberal political culture persists in East Asia, even in the face of the powerfully surging waves of democratization, modernization, and globalization.*

What proportion of the East Asian citizenries tends to support Western-style liberal democracy? What proportion tends to support Asian-style illiberal democracy? To address these questions, we considered whether survey respondents scored above 3.0 on the two 7-point indexes tapping support for democracy as a regime and as a liberal mode of governance. Table 7 reports percentages falling into four types of citizens: (1) illiberal autocrats; (2) liberal autocrats; (3) illiberal democrats; and (4) liberal democrats. Illiberal autocrats are those who refuse to endorse democracy either as a regime or as a process, while liberal autocrats reject democracy as a regime but accept it as a process. Illiberal democrats are those who embrace democracy as a regime but reject it as a process, while liberal democrats support democracy as a regime and as a process.

Table 7. Types of Political Orientations

Country	Illiberal autocrats	Liberal autocrats	Illiberal democrats	Liberal democrats	(N)
Japan	12.3%	3.7%	34.1%	50.0%	(1067)
S. Korea	10.7	3.8	40.3	45.2	(1212)
Mongolia	28.7	1.4	58.8	10.2	(1211)
Philippines	31.3	10.2	45.1	13.5	(1200)
Taiwan	18.1	5.5	37.9	38.4	(1597)
Thailand	14.9	2.8	59.4	14.9	(1546)
Indonesia	18.1	2.1	51.6	28.2	(1598)
Singapore	23.0	2.8	59.4	14.9	(1012)

Source: The East Asia Barometer surveys (II).

Table 7 shows that in none of the new East Asian democracies do supporters of liberal democracy constitute a majority. Only in South Korea and Taiwan do they constitute pluralities. In five other democracies, liberal democrats are outnumbered by illiberal democrats by a large margin of more than twenty-four percentage points. Even in Japan, they constitute only half

the electorate. In Mongolia, Indonesia, and Thailand, moreover, illiberal democrats constitute majorities. In East Asia, the breadth of liberal cultural democratization, as measured by the relative size of liberal democrats, remains narrow. Furthermore, it appears to have little to do with the mode of transition, form of government, or civic activism. Socioeconomic development appears to be a driving force of liberal cultural democratization.

On the basis of the survey findings presented above, we can safely state that, at the regime level, democracy is the most favored regime among the mass publics of all new East Asian democracies. At the process level of formulating and implementing policies, however, democracy has yet to become the most preferred mode of governance in any of the countries. In East Asia, therefore, illiberal democratic cultures are still more prevalent than liberal democratic ones.

Prospects of Democratization in China and Singapore

In the whole world today, China and Singapore represent two of the most notable nondemocratic regimes. China is the largest and most populous autocracy that, so far, has successfully mixed capitalism with authoritarian rule. Singapore, on the other hand, represents the most affluent of all authoritarian regimes in the world. For all remarkable socioeconomic development in recent decades, these two countries have failed to democratize. What are their near-term prospects of joining the current wave of global democratization? This section addresses this question.

China: The Core State of Confucian Civilization

For millennia, China has been the center of Eastern civilization. As the birthplace of Confucianism, it constitutes the core state of this civilization.⁵¹ Economically, this country has outperformed other so-called “Asian tigers” to become the world’s fastest growing economy and in so doing, has freed nearly half of its population from extreme poverty. Today, more than 90 percent of the population is able to read and write. Internationally, as well, China has successfully integrated into the global economy. As the third largest trader, it holds more than 1.9 trillion dollars in foreign currency reserves. Despite these structural changes that are known in the literature to facilitate democratization, China remains the largest and most dynamic one-party dictatorship in the world, defying the longstanding theory that links modernization and globalization to democratization.⁵²

⁵¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

⁵² Henry Rowen, “When Will the Chinese People Be Free?” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 38-52.

Situated at the apex of East Asian civilization and atop a long stretch of undemocratic countries from Myanmar through Vietnam to North Korea, China's transition to democracy could trigger similar transitions in Northeast and Southeast Asia. China's continuing rise as an economic and military powerhouse under authoritarian rule, on the other hand, could inspire other nondemocratic countries in the region and elsewhere to follow its model of capitalism without democracy.⁵³ As the center of East Asian civilization and a rising economic and military powerhouse, China unquestionably holds the key to further democratization of the region and other parts of the world.

In 1988, the National People's Congress passed a law requiring all villages to hold competitive elections for their village committees, and all candidates to be nominated by villagers. Since then, China has experimented with competitive elections at the lowest level of its civil administration to introduce the so-called "four democracies": democratic election, democratic decision making, democratic management, and democratic supervision. Members of all village committees have been elected directly by their residents, and experiments with direct elections have occurred at the township and other high levels of civil administration on a selective basis. At the same time, people's congresses at various levels have become increasingly competitive and independent, as their deputies have been allowed to assert their own views in deliberating policy and personnel matters, independent of the ruling party.⁵⁴

All of these changes can contribute to building electoral democracy in China. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that, after more than two decades of electoral experiments, China is still in an early stage of political liberalization, not to mention democratization. Judging by the December 27, 2007 decision of the National People's Congress to postpone the popular election of Hong Kong's leader and the entire legislature for a minimum of one more decade, it is highly unlikely that President Hu Jintao and other fourth-generation leaders will soon allow the Chinese people to directly choose their political leaders, beyond the village and township levels, on the basis of free and competitive multiparty elections.⁵⁵ Through a continuing crackdown on political dissent and independent associations, China's fourth-generation leaders seem determined to avoid the fate of the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ What concerns these leaders most remains "political order and technocratic governance rather than popular participation and regime transformation."⁵⁷ Consequently, China's one-party

⁵³ Bruce Dickson, "The Future of China's Party-State," *Current History*, no. 9 (2007): 243-245.

⁵⁴ Dingping Guo, "Chinese Model of Political Development: Comparative Perspective," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 21, no. 2 (2007): 117-138.

⁵⁵ Joseph Fewsmith, "China's New Leadership: A One-Year Assessment," *Orbis* 48, no. 2 (2004): 205-215.

⁵⁶ Merle Goldman, "Authoritarian Populists—for Now," *Current History*, no. 9 (2007): 247-249.

⁵⁷ Dali Yang, "Trying to Stay in Control," *Current History*, no. 9 (2007): 249-251.

dictatorship, often called “democracy with Chinese characteristics,” is not likely to be transformed into a fully electoral democracy unless the leaders are forced to meet an increasing demand for democratization from the people.

There is no doubt that the rapid growth of China’s economy has expanded the capitalist or middle class, known to have played a key role in the development of democracy in the West. This has led to expectations that China’s capitalists or middle class would become the leading agent of democratic regime change.⁵⁸ Contrary to these expectations, an increasing number of these capitalists have been co-opted into the process of one-party rule and have become “red capitalists.” Even those who are not members of the party have “little interest in challenging the status quo that has allowed them to prosper.”⁵⁹ To date, China’s growing capitalist and middle class as a whole has failed to become an agent promoting democratic regime change.⁶⁰

Are other members of the Chinese mass public more interested in democratizing their authoritarian regime than are their conservative wealthier counterparts? To explore this question, we analyzed the first round of the EAB survey conducted in China in 2003. The survey asked Chinese respondents to rate their current regime on a 10-point scale, where a score of 1 indicates complete dictatorship and a score of 10 indicates complete democracy. It also asked them to rate on a 4-point scale the extent to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the regime was performing. We considered positive responses to these two questions to determine the proportion of the Chinese who endorsed the current regime as a well-functioning democracy. We compared

Table 8. How the Chinese Assess the Current Regime and Its Performance

Assessments of the current regime	Entire sample	Socioeconomic Resources Levels					Statistic (<i>eta</i>)
		Lowest	Low	Middle	High	Highest	
as a democracy	82%	86%	85%	82%	80%	82%	(.00)
as satisfying	79	90	84	81	77	73	(.01)
Both (WFD)	70	81	76	70	68	67	(.08)
None (MFA)	10	6	7	9	11	12	(.07)
(N)	(3180)	(291)	(592)	(829)	(778)	(690)	

Source: The East Asia Barometer Surveys (I).

Key: WFD = Well-functioning democracy
MFA = Malfunctioning autocracy

⁵⁸ Bruce Gilley, “Democrats Will Emerge,” *Current History*, no. 9 (2007): 245-247.

⁵⁹ Dickson, “The Future of China’s Party-State.”

⁶⁰ Dorothy Solinger, “Business Groups: For and Against the Regime,” in *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, ed. Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008).

this proportion across five levels of socioeconomic resources, composed of the respondent's own education and family income. Table 8 reports the results of this analysis.

As expected, given a lack of experience with democratic politics and limited exposure to a college education, a relatively high proportion (25 percent) of the Chinese respondents failed to answer one or both questions evaluating their country's democratization. Of those who answered the questions, a large majority of more than four-fifths (82 percent) rated their current regime as a democracy. A near equal proportion (79 percent) also expressed satisfaction with its performance as a democracy. When positive responses to both questions are considered together, a substantial majority of seven-tenths (70 percent) embraced the current regime as a well-functioning democracy. Only a small minority of one in ten (10 percent) Chinese fully rejects the current regime as an ill-functioning dictatorship.

Equally notable is the finding that democratic perceptions of the current regime vary little across different segments of the Chinese population. In each of the five segments, defined by respondents' levels of formal education and family income, a large majority of more than 80 percent recognizes the current regime as a democracy. As is the case in other countries, the level of satisfaction with the regime's performance is significantly lower among those better-off than those who are worse-off. In recognizing the regime as a democracy rather than as a dictatorship, however, the former are not much different from the latter. Regardless of their exposure to social modernization, the Chinese people are alike in failing to recognize the need to transform the existing one-party dictatorship into a democracy. This can be considered one piece of evidence indicating a low level of popular demand for democratization.⁶¹

Thanks to rapid socioeconomic development over the past three decades, China today stands on a structural foundation that has been expected to favor democratic regime change.⁶² Yet, elite and mass political cultures remain highly unfavorable to such regime change.⁶³ A lack of basic knowledge about democracy among the mass public and the unwillingness of the ruling elite to embrace the democratic norms of public participation and competition in the political process is keeping China in an equilibrium between low levels of popular demand for, and institutional supply of, democracy. Given this low-level equilibrium and its proven ability to adapt to various predicaments,⁶⁴

⁶¹ Tianjian Shi, "China: Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System," in *How East Asians View Democracy*, ed. Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, Andrew Nathan, and Doh Chull Shin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁶² Rowen, "When Will the Chinese People Be Free?"

⁶³ Minxin Pei, "How Will China Democratize," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 53-57, and Dali Yang, "China's Long March to Freedom," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no 3 (2007): 58-64.

⁶⁴ Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003): 6-17.

the existing authoritarian regime is likely to endure for many years to come.⁶⁵ This view does not accord with the claim that China will become a liberal democracy with the next fifteen to twenty years.⁶⁶

Singapore: The Most Deviant Case

Another notable democratic holdout in the East Asian region is Singapore. Since it was granted independence by the British in 1951, it has been ruled by the People's Action Party (PAP hereafter), and it remains a de facto one-party dictatorship. Even if opposition parties such as the Worker's Party of Singapore and the Singapore Democratic Party are allowed to compete in periodic elections, there is no chance for an alternation in power. Opposition parties, which are vocal about the perceived clientism, cronyism, and corruption by the PAP, are usually slapped with libel and slander charges. Individual citizens critical of the PAP's corrupt or malfeasant activities face prison time. Public protest and demonstrations are banned, and there is rigid press censorship. As a result, there are no effective opposition parties that can make Singapore democratic. In fact, in 2006, the Economist Intelligence Unit typified Singapore as a hybrid democracy, while the Freedom House organization has continuously classified Singapore as a "partly free" country.

Despite increasing modernization and the growth of a robust middle class, Singapore, like China, has remained an illiberal polity, defying the theory that economic development spurs democratic transition. The PAP has maintained its dominance of the political system by capitalizing on the fear that, if the PAP is out of power, Singapore's ethnic fragmentation would produce a weak and unstable regime like the one in place during the early 1960s. The emphasis that Lee Kuan Yew and other leaders of the PAP have placed on public order and social virtue may have emanated from the country's historical experience with ethnic violence. On the other hand, many believe that the Singaporean focus on law and order, morality, and ethics (for example, banning chewing gum, public lashings for those who commit vandalism, and the death penalty for transporting illegal narcotics), stems from the Asian value system that places a high premium on collectivism and the preference of greater communal good rather than on the Western values of individualism and liberalism.

To determine the extent to which Singaporeans support the current illiberal regime, we analyzed responses to the questions from the second round of the EAB survey that tapped the democratic perception of the current regime and satisfaction with it. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) perceived the current regime as a democracy, and a larger majority of 85 percent expressed satisfaction with it (see table 9). When these two ratings of the current regime

⁶⁵ John L. Thornston, "Long Time Coming: The Prospects for Democracy in China," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 1 (2008): 2-22.

⁶⁶ Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*, 162.

Table 9. How Singaporeans Assess the Current Regime and Its Performance

Assessments of the current regime	Entire sample	Socioeconomic Resources Levels					Statistic (<i>eta</i>)
		Lowest	Low	Middle	High	Highest	
as a democracy	73%	70%	74%	77%	76%	69%	(.01)
as satisfying	85	85	87	84	85	89	(.00)
Both (WFD)	67	63	65	67	65	69	(.00)
None (MFA)	8	6	7	9	8	0	(.00)
(N)	(933)	(114)	(205)	(249)	(278)	(87)	

Source: The East Asia Barometer Surveys (II).

Key: WFD = Well-functioning democracy

MFA = Malfunctioning autocracy

are considered together, two-thirds (67 percent) endorsed the current regime as a well-functioning democracy, while less than one-fifth (8 percent) rejected it as a malfunctioning nondemocracy. Supporters of the existing authoritarian regime outnumber its opponents by a large margin of more than 8 to 1. As in China, there is little variance in the percentages of such regime supporters and opponents across the five segments defined by the respondents' levels of education and income. Regardless of their exposure to social modernization, Singaporeans are alike in failing to recognize a need to transform their authoritarian regime into a democracy.

Recent developments indicate that there is little change in the illiberal conceptions of politics and governance among the leaders of the PAP. On August 12, 2004, Lee Hsien Loong, the oldest son of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, took over as the prime minister of Singapore from Goh Chok Tong. Since then, the PAP has lost none of its dominance. In the May 2006 parliamentary elections, the younger Lee led the PAP to win eighty-two of the eighty-four seats by a variety of means, including the handing out of cash bonuses to the electorate. Although he expresses an international outlook, he remains steadfastly attached to the Asian values of maintaining law and order and national consensus. In Singapore, recent leadership change is not likely to democratize *de facto* one-party rule in the foreseeable future. Nor is a majority of its citizens likely to demand its transformation into a competitive multiparty democratic system. These assessments run contrary to the prediction that Singapore will become a liberal democracy before 2015.⁶⁷

Majorities of ordinary Chinese people and Singaporeans are alike in perceiving their particular regime as a democracy and in expressing satisfaction

⁶⁷ Ibid., 156.

with its performance. Besides remaining attached to the Confucian value of political stability, they prefer the illiberal to liberal mode of governing (see table 6). From these findings, it is apparent that the mass citizenries of the two countries demand as little democracy as their elites provide. Trapped in the low-level equilibrium of democratic supply and demand, the near-term prospects for democratic regime change in these two countries are not bright.

Conclusion

This essay has examined East Asia responses to the surging third wave of global democratization. For the past two decades, this wave has transformed seven of the thirteen autocracies in the region into democracies. Of these seven, two were driven back to autocratic rule by the military. Even with the election of a civilian government in one of these two (Thailand) on December 23, 2007, there are more autocracies than democracies in the region. Included in this group of autocracies is China, the largest and most populous country and the core state of Confucian civilization. In view of the slow pace of democratic regime change and its limited liberal range, it is fair to conclude that there has been no truly region-wide movement toward democracy. It is also fair to say that, of all regions in the world, East Asia remains markedly resistant to the third wave of democratization. This is one notable characteristic of third-wave democratization in East Asia.

Institutionally, why is it that a region blessed with rapid economic development remains cursed with democratic underdevelopment? Prominent theories of democratic transitions contribute little to the explanation of this conundrum. The theories of modernization and culture cannot explain why South Korea and Taiwan successfully transitioned to democracy, while Singapore and Malaysia failed to do so. Why Mongolia joined the third wave, while China, North Korea, and Vietnam failed to do so, cannot be explained in terms of past regime experience. Why Indonesia and Mongolia became liberal democracies, while neighboring Malaysia and China failed to become even electoral democracies, cannot be explained in terms of diffusion theory. Unquestionably, these domestic contextual factors, known to be democratic regime facilitators in other regions, all fail to solve the democratic conundrum set forth in East Asia.

As a region in democratic change, East Asia is different from Europe and Latin America in that there is no regional organization promoting democracy and human rights.⁶⁸ The region is also geographically distant from the clusters of powerful democracies in the West. Even within the region, its core state of Confucian civilization remains a powerful authoritarian state that resists

⁶⁸ Chu, "Third-Wave Democratization in East Asia: Challenges and Prospect," and Shelly, *Democratic Development in East Asia*.

the spread of democracy. Authoritarian states in the region have been, by and large, immune from democratic reform impulses generated from the external environment. Due to the absence of such external impulses, democratic transitions have primarily had to emerge out of democratic demand from the mass citizenry in the form of a vigorous civic movement. This may explain why East Asia remains a democratically underdeveloped region. Another possible reason is the undemocratic conceptions of democracy and good governance among political leaders and their unwillingness to submit to the democratic norms of pluralism and diversity.

Substantively, despite growing experience with democratic politics, all new democracies in East Asia have failed to become effective liberal democracies. While many third-wave democracies in Europe became consolidated within the first decade of democratic rule, new East Asian democracies remain defective or illiberal democracies even in their second or third decade of democratic rule.⁶⁹ To alleviate their problems of democratic governance, they have recently carried out highly innovative electoral reforms favoring the majority of the electorate at the expense of the minority, and, as a result, have begun to make considerable progress in building stable and coherent party systems. Departing from the other regional reforms favoring the minority instead of the majority, and grounded in the Asian notion of political stability as the supreme goal of governance, this mixed-member majority system constitutes another distinguishing characteristic of East Asian democratization.

Culturally, liberal democracy has not become “the only game in town.” As a political regime, it enjoys the general support of substantial or large majorities of the East Asian citizenries. As a process, however, it fails to receive the majority approval. In every East Asian country with the exception of Japan, autocrats and illiberal democrats outnumber liberal democrats. Moreover, even among liberal democrats, including those in Japan, majorities are not unqualified in accepting liberal democracy as the most preferred regime and mode of governance. In East Asia today, unqualified citizen commitment to the deepening and expanding of limited democracy into fully liberal democracy is neither wide nor deep. A lack of progress in building a liberal democratic culture can be considered the third notable characteristic of third-wave democratization in East Asia.

On the whole, the third wave of democratization in East Asia has been more like *an ebb-and-flow tide than a surging wave*. There is little prospect for the further democratization of authoritarian regimes in the near term, mainly because citizens of East Asian countries and their political leaders are trapped

⁶⁹ Tun-Jen Cheng, “Political Institutions of the Malaise of East Asian New Democracies,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no. 1 (2003): 1-41; Yutzung Chang, Yun-han Chu, and Chong-Min Park, “Authoritarian Nostalgia in Asia,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 66-80; and Croissant, “From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asia Democratization.”

in an equilibrium between low levels of democratic supply and demand. On the other hand, the existing new democracies in the region are likely to gradually become more effective and stable through growing citizen experience with democratic politics and the increasing institutionalization of the majoritarian political party and electoral systems. These rules of the game can serve to prevent the recurrence of divided government and legislative-executive stalemates. In making these Western institutions of representative democracy work, the liberal norms of the West are not likely to prevail over the illiberal political norms of East Asia.⁷⁰ *The illiberal cultural values and norms do not prevent the birth or emergence of democratic regimes, but they do determine how its institutions function on a daily basis. For this reason, democracies in East Asia may never resemble the liberal democracies of the West.*

Theoretically, East Asian experiences to date provide a number of insights into the ongoing debates about the contours, dynamics, sources, and consequences of current global democratization. Contrary to modernization theory, which claims democracy is economically preconditioned, for example, democracy has blossomed in one of the world's poorest countries (Mongolia). Contrary to the notion that democracy requires a Judeo-Christian or liberal political culture, it has also successfully emerged in Buddhist (Mongolia and Thailand), Confucian (South Korea and Taiwan), and Muslim (Indonesia) countries. The successful emergence of democracies in culturally, economically, and politically diverse countries appears to support the *universalist* claim that the whole world can become democratic.⁷¹

Nonetheless, the failure of nearly two-thirds of East Asian countries to become and remain democratic appears to support more strongly the *preconditionalist* claim that democracy is not suitable for any and every type of society.⁷² Moreover, the enduring illiberal mode of democratic governance in all of the remaining democratic countries in East Asia supports the *sequentialist* claim that the introduction of democracy prior to the establishment of modern political institutions, such as the rule of law and multiple groups of civil society, leads to incomplete democracy.⁷³ The persistent and pervasive

⁷⁰ Bell, Brown, Jayasuriya, and Jones, *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*; Shelly, *Democratic Development in East Asia*; and Chih-yu Shih, *Democracy (Made in Taiwan): The "Success" State as a Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

⁷¹ Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, and Friedman, *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences*.

⁷² Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*; and Giovanni Sartori, "How Far Can Free Government Travel?" *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 101-111.

⁷³ Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin, "Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 2 (2001): 331-354; Amy Chua, *World on Fire: Exporting Democracy and Free Markets Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*.

embrace of illiberal political norms by the East Asian mass citizenries also supports the widely discredited *Asian values thesis* in the West that the liberal mode of democratic governance will not become a universal phenomenon.⁷⁴ It additionally undermines the characterization of Asian exceptionalism as an illusion.⁷⁵

Over the next two to three decades, East Asia is not likely to become a region of liberal democratic miracles. Instead, this region of amazing economic progress is likely to unfold the illiberal or a-liberal patterns of democratization hidden by Occidentalism, a tendency of the West to see other parts of the world from the perspective of its own values. The democratic transformation of authoritarian regimes and the enrichment of illiberal democracies will continue to evolve very slowly and in different ways in the various nations of East Asia. The specific evolutionary paths the different countries will take will depend upon how political leaders and the mass citizenries understand and perceive democratic politics and how they interact through democratic institutions.

(New York: Doubleday, 2004); Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22-43.

⁷⁴ Bell, Brown, Jayasuriya, and Jones, *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*; David M. Jones, "Democratization, Civil Society and Illiberal Middle Class Culture in Pacific Asia," *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 2 (1998): 147-169; and Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy."

⁷⁵ Francis Fukuyama, "The Illusion of Exceptionalism," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 3 (1997): 146-149.

Appendix

East Asia Barometer Survey Questions

Support for Democracy as a Regime

1. *Prodemocratic Regime Orientations*

Q101 Here is a scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 10. On this scale, 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. To what extent do you want our country democratic now? Please choose a number on this scale.

Q103 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 for our country today and “10” means that it is completely suitable, where would you place our country today?

Q121 Which of the following statements comes closest to your own opinion?

1. Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government.
2. Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.
3. For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a nondemocratic regime.

2. *Anti-authoritarian Regime Orientations*

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you approve or disapprove of the following alternatives? For each statement, would you say you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove?

Q124. We should get rid of parliament and have a strong leader decide things.

Q125. Only one party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.

Q126. The military should come in to govern the country.

Support for Democracy as a Process

3. Orientations in Favor of the Liberal Mode of Governance

I have here other statements. For each statement, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

Q137. When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the Executive Branch.

Q138. If the government is constantly checked (i.e., monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.

Q141. When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is okay for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.

4. Orientations in Opposition to the Illiberal Mode of Governance

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

Q64. The relationship between the government and the people should be like that between parents and children.

Q134. Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.

Q139. If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.

5. Perceptions of the Existing Regime and Its Performance as a Democracy

Q94. On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in our country? Very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all?

Q96. Here is a scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 10. On this scale, 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. Where would you place our country under the present government?

