

Asia's Challenged Democracies

East Asian democracies are in distress. From Bangkok to Manila to Taipei to Seoul to Ulaanbaatar, democratically elected governments in the last few years have suffered inconclusive or disputed electoral outcomes, political strife, partisan gridlock, and recurring political scandals. In 2006–2007, frustrated citizens in Manila and Taipei lost confidence in democratic procedures to the point where they tried to bring down incumbent leaders through extraconstitutional demonstrations, while a crippling political crisis in Thailand in 2006 triggered a military coup.

What lessons are people throughout Asia taking away from these frustrations? To assess Asian publics' views about political dysfunction and attitudes toward local regimes and democracy, a group of scholars collectively known as the East Asia Barometer (EAB) conducted national random-sample surveys in 2002 in five new democracies (Mongolia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand), one old democracy (Japan), one quasi-democracy (Hong Kong), and one authoritarian system (China).¹ Among these eight political systems, public satisfaction with the regime is surprisingly highest in authoritarian China, lowest in democratic Japan and Taiwan, and fragile in the other new democracies. What, therefore, lies ahead for democracy in East Asia?

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Weak Legitimization in New Democracies

The EAB asked five questions to estimate the level of support for democracy. The findings are shown in Table 1.² The desirability of democracy was measured by asking respondents to indicate on a 10-point scale how democratic they want their country to be, with 1 being “complete dictatorship” and 10 being “complete democracy.” In all countries except China and Taiwan, overwhelming majorities (87 percent or more) expressed a desire for democracy by choosing a score of 6 or above.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the suitability of democracy for their country on a 10-point scale, 1 being completely unsuitable and 10 being perfectly suitable. As shown in the second row, at least 75 percent of respondents in most East Asian societies considered democracy suitable for their country. The gap between the desirability and suitability measures suggests that many East Asians in principle desire to live in a democracy but do not believe that their country is ready for it. In all three culturally Chinese societies, the surveys

Table 1: Support for Democracy (percent of respondents)

Democracy is ...	China	Hong Kong	Japan	Mongolia	Philippines	South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand
Desirable for our country now*	72.3	87.6	87.1	91.6	88.1	95.4	72.2	93.0
Suitable for our country now*	67.0	66.8	76.3	86.3	80.2	84.2	59.0	88.1
Effective in solving the problems of society†	60.5	39.0	61.4	78.4	60.7	71.7	46.8	89.6
Preferable to all other kinds of government ‡	53.8	40.3	67.2	57.1	63.6	49.4	40.4	82.6
Equally or more important than development ≠	40.3	19.6	44.0	48.6	21.8	30.1	23.5	51.3
None of the above	13.6	7.2	5.7	1.4	1.5	0.7	13.0	0.5
All of the above	17.8	7.0	23.4	25.9	6.7	15.7	7.4	35.6
Mean number of items supported	2.9	2.5	3.4	3.6	3.1	3.3	2.4	4.0
NOTES * 6 or above on a ten-point dictatorship–democracy scale of where the country should or could be now. † Dichotomous variable. ‡ Trichotomous variable recoded into a dichotomous variable. ≠ Five-way variable recoded into dichotomous variable.								

found a sizable minority skeptical about the suitability of democracy, which reflects the influence of their common cultural values that privilege order and harmony.

Respondents were then asked whether they believed that “democracy is capable of solving the problems facing the country.” Across all eight cases, the proportion of people who registered doubt about democracy’s problem-solving potential was substantially higher than those question-

ing democracy’s desirability or suitability, suggesting that many East Asians attach themselves to democracy as an ideal but not as a viable political system.

We then adopted a widely used item for measuring popular support for democracy as a preferred political system. Respondents were asked to choose among three statements: (1) “Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government”; (2) “Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one”; and (3) “For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime.” Popular belief that democracy is preferable is lower in East Asia than in Greece, Portugal, and Spain (above three-quarters of the public) some years after their democratic transitions in the 1970s, but otherwise roughly comparable to the levels found in other democracies established during the so-called third wave of transitions that occurred between 1974 and 1995. The average for the five Asian new democracies was 59 percent, compared to 53 percent of respondents in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in 2004, about 62 percent in 18 African countries around 2005, and an average of 53–57 percent in Latin America in recent years.³

Finally, to measure the priority of democracy as a societal goal, the EAB survey asked, “If you had to choose between democracy and economic development, which would you say is more important?” Across the region, democracy lost favor to economic development by a wide margin. Only about one-third of Japanese respondents and slightly more than one-quarter of Mongolian respondents favored democracy, while fewer than one-fifth of respondents felt that way in Hong Kong, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Few people across the region gave democracy unqualified support. Even in Japan, only around 19 percent of respondents gave pro-democracy answers to all five of the questions. Democracy as an abstract idea was widely embraced, but fewer people endorsed it as the preferred form of government under all circumstances, and most would trade it for economic development. The results indicate that none of the five recent democracies of East Asia are fully

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consolidated at the level of public attitudes and values. Yet, the average level of preference for democracy in East Asia was not significantly lower than in Africa, post-Communist Europe, or Latin America.

Our more recent data for the five new Asian democracies collected in 2005–2006 shows general stability in these patterns with two noteworthy exceptions that demonstrate the sensitive response of these attitudes to political events. On most of these measures, support for democracy rose significantly in Taiwan, with

increases regarding democratic preference of 7 percentage points, desirability of 9 percentage points, and suitability and efficacy of 8 percentage points.⁴ In the Philippines, however, support for democracy between 2002 and 2005 fell sharply as democratic preference, desirability, and suitability decreased by 13, 17, and 24 percentage points, respectively, under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Incomplete Detachment from Authoritarianism

Referring to Winston Churchill's famous line, "Democracy is the worst form of government except all those others that have been tried from time to time," University of Aberdeen Professor Richard Rose and his colleagues argue that democracy may survive not because a majority believes it is intrinsically preferable but because there are no viable alternatives.⁵ To assess East Asian citizens' antipathy for authoritarian alternatives, the EAB asked respondents whether they would favor any of four conceivable authoritarian options: strongman rule, military rule, single-party rule, and technocratic rule by "experts" (the strongman and single-party questions were not asked in China). As shown in Table 2, more than two-thirds in each country, except Mongolia, rejected the idea of replacing democracy with strongman rule. Military rule was rejected even more vigorously, at levels higher than 80 percent, in every country except China and the Philippines. Rejection of single-party rule was less emphatic but still exceeded two-thirds in five countries. Finally, at least two-thirds in every country rejected the option of technocratic rule.

Yet, the survey identified significant pockets of authoritarian inclination in most countries. In Mongolia, the yearning for a return to strongman rule remains high, with only 59 percent of respondents opposing it. In the Philippines, fewer than two-thirds of the people rejected military rule, while support for single-party rule in Hong Kong and Thailand was substantial.

In only three countries—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—did more than one-half of respondents reject all four alternatives. In Mongolia and the Philippines, fewer than 40 percent of respondents rejected all four authoritarian options, making the average level of full authoritarian detachment in the seven survey countries (excluding China) 48 percent, identical to that reported by the New Europe Barometer covering nine central and eastern European new democracies.⁶ Yet, the result is not reassuring, considering that most post-Communist countries suffered much more severe and protracted economic turmoil during the transition to democracy than East Asian countries did, even taking into account the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis. More encouragingly, the propensity to reject the three principal authoritarian alternatives, leaving aside technocratic rule, had risen significantly in South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand by the time of our second round of surveys, although it fell 16 percentage points in Mongolia.

Most would trade democracy for economic development.

Table 2: Authoritarian Detachment (percent of respondents)

Item	China	Hong Kong	Japan	Mongolia	Philippines	South Korea	Taiwan	Thailand
Reject “strong leader”	*	71.5	79.1	59.2	69.4	84.4	68.3	76.6
Reject “military rule”	61.4	85.7	94.4	85.8	62.7	89.8	81.6	81.2
Reject “no opposition party”	*	62.4	66.7	72.4	69.6	86.7	70.3	61.3
Reject “experts decide everything”	74.5	73.5	85.4	66.1	76.8	82.3	71.3	77.7
Reject all authoritarian options	57.9†	49.4	54.3	37.0	35.6	65.1	50.0	43.1
Reject no authoritarian options	22.0†	9.0	3.6	4.0	4.1	0.9	10.1	5.5
Mean number of items rejected (0 to 4)	2.7‡	2.9	3.3	2.8	2.8	3.4	2.9	3.0
NOTES								
* Not asked in China.								
† Based on two questions.								
‡ Mean score multiplied by two for comparison with other countries.								

A correlation analysis at the level of the individual respondent shows, as one would expect, that positive orientations toward democracy go along in most countries with a disinclination to favor authoritarian options. Only in the Philippines were these two indexes not correlated at a statistically significant level. The correlation is less than perfect everywhere, however, suggesting that many citizens who have little experience in democratic politics consider democracy and dictatorship equally able or equally unable to provide solutions to their problems. Confronting such uncertainty, some citizens simultaneously embrace a mix of democratic and authoritarian political propensities.⁷

Disillusioned Democrats in Japan

Of all the publics we surveyed, the citizens of Asia's oldest and seemingly most consolidated democracy—Japan—turned out to be the most negative about their system's performance and the most pessimistic about its future. Yet, the Japanese show little interest in authoritarian alternatives. If democracy is consolidated in Japan, it is not because it is perceived as doing well but because most citizens see no acceptable alternative.

The EAB survey asked respondents to rate each of nine major government performance domains on a five-point scale in comparison with the performance of the previous regime, which in the case of Japan means the pre-1945 military regime. By calculating the percentage of respondents seeing positive change minus the percentage seeing negative change, we obtained a percentage differential index (PDI), which expresses the public's evaluation of the current regime's comparative performance.

Japanese citizens perceived significant improvements in their political and personal freedoms. The greatest improvements were felt in the areas of freedom of speech (+93 percent) and freedom of association (+86 percent), the largest improvements among the countries in the survey. Significant improvements were also registered in the other three areas of democratic performance (equal treatment for citizens, popular influence on government, and an independent judiciary). Yet, at the level of policy performance, our survey confirmed the persistent sense of crisis that has been shown in many studies over the years. A substantial number of respondents evaluated the policy performance of the regime negatively or as unchanged. In the dimension of corruption control, for instance, almost one-half (46 percent) of respondents evaluated the current regime's performance as worse than that of the old regime (a PDI score of -18 percent). Although most respondents approved of the present regime's performance in economic development, almost one-quarter (24 percent) evaluated the same area negatively, despite the fact that Japan's gross national product increased phenomenally between 1935 and the early 2000s. In the area

of economic equality, one-quarter of the respondents perceived negative changes, and the PDI score was only 23.9 percent.

The EAB survey assessed satisfaction with the current regime by asking, “On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in our country?” On this question the public appeared evenly divided. On the extremes, only 4 percent were “very satisfied” while 7 percent were “not at all satisfied”, while 42 percent were “fairly satisfied” and 39 percent were “not very satisfied.” The EAB included a pair of items probing whether corruption is perceived to be more serious at the national or at the local level of government. One-half (52 percent) of Japanese respondents believed that “almost all” or “most” officials in the national government are corrupt. Corruption at the local level was perceived to be less widespread, with 38 percent believing that almost all or most officials are corrupt. Considered together, less than one-third (31 percent) of respondents believed that officials at national or local levels were honest, whereas a slightly larger number (32 percent) believed officials at either level to be corrupt.

Trust in public institutions is also low. Less than one-half of our respondents trusted five of the 12 institutions in the survey, including the key institutions of Japanese democracy such as the parliament, national and local governments, and political parties. Although parliaments and political parties were rarely popular in any of the countries in our survey, the Japanese figures are the lowest, with roughly nine out of 10 respondents expressing distrust. Trust in the national government is the lowest as well, with some 76 percent of the public expressing distrust. By comparison, the administrative organs of the state enjoyed higher levels of public confidence. The self-defense force and the police were trusted by roughly one-half of our Japanese respondents, while the courts (68 percent) and the electoral commission (65 percent) enjoyed even higher levels of trust, perhaps because of their perceived political neutrality.

The one notable exception is the civil service, which with political parties is one of the least trusted institutions in Japan, perhaps due to the extraordinary power wielded by the bureaucracy in the Japanese system. In the eyes of the public, because the bureaucrats actually make policies, they are deeply enmeshed in the political process and, as a result, must take responsibility for the economic and other troubles that overwhelmed the country in recent years. The most trusted institutions were those outside the state. The mass media were well trusted, with newspapers judged to be the most trustworthy among all institutions listed in the survey. Although nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have a

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Democratic governments must win citizens' support through better performance.

relatively brief history in Japan, they were also thought to be highly trustworthy precisely because of their nongovernmental nature.

We asked respondents about their self-perceived political efficacy, as defined by their reported ability to understand politics and the capacity to participate in politics. Only 17 percent responded that they believed they could understand politics, and an even smaller number (14 percent) felt capable of active engagement. Overall, more than one half (59 percent) of

respondents believed they could neither understand nor participate in politics, while those who felt capable of both amounted to only 10 percent.

Despite being dissatisfied with the incumbent authorities, the Japanese public remains relatively strongly committed to democracy as a principle (Table 1) and has high scores among our survey populations for rejecting authoritarian options (Table 2). Compared to their neighbors, Japan exhibited the highest levels of disinterest in military or technocratic rule, suggesting that Japan's wartime experiences and recent economic difficulties have thoroughly discredited these authoritarian regime options. They were not as united in their opposition to single-party dictatorship, perhaps reflecting the public's profound mistrust of party politics and their prolonged experience with a dominant ruling party. Still, in aggregate, the Japanese see no acceptable alternative to democracy. Yet, the Japanese public's dissatisfaction with their political system should not be dismissed. We do not think that Japanese democracy is unconsolidated or at risk, but the political and economic troubles that the system faces are real, and they take a real toll on citizen support.

Legitimate Authoritarians in China

In an apparent paradox, citizens in the most authoritarian political system that we surveyed expressed both support for democracy as an ideal and, on most measures, the highest level of support in the region for their regime. The paradox begins to dissolve when we explore the answers the Chinese gave to our question, "What does democracy mean to you?" The Chinese were more likely than other respondents in Asia to associate democracy with the idea of government by and for the people. The most frequent responses that we coded under this heading were "the people are masters of the country" and "the authorities listen to people's opinions." Both of these responses are compatible not only with the official Chinese doctrine of socialist democracy but also with classic Confucian ideas of benevolent dictatorship. Neither requires competitive

political pluralism to come into effect. We also coded in this category the roughly four percent of respondents who defined democracy by reference to the official Chinese Communist Party's concept of "democratic centralism."

Also consistent with the regime's view of itself, 82 percent of Chinese respondents believed the nature of the regime had changed in a democratic direction since the start of Deng Xiaoping's reforms in 1979. Notably, in interpreting this finding, we did not ask for regime ratings objectively measured against a universal standard. They are generated by respondents as a function of their own conceptions of democracy and of the baseline against which they measure change, in this case Mao's China. The message is that, for many Chinese, a paternalistic government that denies political competition is consistent with their conception of democracy, and the increase in freedom they have enjoyed since the start of the post-Mao reforms marks a real step from the past toward what they see as democracy.

In contrast to Japanese respondents, Chinese respondents perceived corruption to be concentrated at the local rather than at the national level and to be less severe overall than did respondents in Japan. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said that most or all officials at the local level were corrupt, compared to only 7 percent who said the same for those at the central government. The central-local contrast was the sharpest we observed in any of the political systems in the study. Those who said that most or all officials were corrupt both at the local and central levels constituted only 6 percent of the sample, the lowest number in East Asia, compared to 32 percent for Japan and 42 percent for Taiwan.

We found high levels of trust in four central-level political institutions: the national government, the National People's Congress (national legislature), the Chinese Communist Party, and the People's Liberation Army. The percentage of respondents claiming that they did not trust any one of these institutions ranged from six to eight percent, which is by far the lowest levels of distrust for any institutions in the East Asian countries that were surveyed. The level of trust in local institutions was lower than that in central institutions, but still high compared to elsewhere in Asia. The survey reported that 17 percent of respondents did not trust the courts, 21 percent did not trust local government, and 23 percent did not trust civil servants. The most distrusted government institution was the local police station (*paichusuo*), which is distrusted by one-quarter of the respondents. These findings suggest that people in China trust political institutions that are removed from their daily lives more than they trust institutions with which they have regular contact, an outlook consistent with the traditional Chinese mentality that believes that the emperor is good even if local officials are bad.

In contrast to Japan, NGOs proved to be the least trusted institutions in China. As nongovernmental bodies, NGOs are perceived to lack prestige and effectiveness because citizens believe that they can appeal to higher levels of government for help when they run into problems with local authorities. Additionally, NGOs say that they represent special interests, an idea that strikes many Chinese as selfish rather than public spirited, whereas government institutions say they represent the interests of the whole population.

These findings suggest that citizens do not always draw the same stark contrast between democratic and authoritarian regimes that political scientists do. Many Chinese perceive their country to be more democratic than do citizens in many truly democratic societies in the region. Chinese citizens appear to trust their political institutions more than citizens in the other societies that were surveyed. Not only do people in China enjoy a sense of political efficacy equal to that of citizens in Japan and Taiwan, but they are more optimistic about their society becoming more democratic than citizens of any other society in the EAB survey except Thailand.

Just as disillusionment with democracy in places such as Japan and Taiwan does not necessarily portend retrogression to authoritarianism, so too in China we cannot assume that widespread support for democracy as an idea portends a likely transition in the regime. Pro-engagement optimists in the West are right to say that the forces of socioeconomic modernization and cultural globalization are spreading the abstract idea of democracy in China. Yet, they are wrong to assume that this attitudinal change creates an imminent threat to the authoritarian regime. Instead, for now the regime has persuaded its citizens that the current system is as democratic as they want it to be.

Forces that Affect Democratic Legitimacy

Our surveys measured citizen evaluations of two kinds of regime performance: democratic performance (providing advances in democracy, rights, and freedoms), and policy performance (controlling corruption, providing law and order, promoting economic development, and promoting economic equality). Earlier studies suggested that both kinds of perceived regime performance affect support for new democratic regimes, but that democratic performance matters more than policy performance in building support for democracy.⁸ Our findings suggest that the same is true in East Asia. As reported more fully in the book *How East Asians View Democracy*, both democratic performance and policy performance often have positive effects in most countries on citizens' beliefs that democracy is desirable and suitable and on their detachment from authoritarianism. Yet, democratic performance matters more than policy performance and has statistically significant effects more often.

The greater effect of democratic performance is particularly marked for the variable we call authoritarian detachment. If respondents think a regime performs well in providing democratic rights and freedoms, then they respond, in every country except the Philippines, by reducing their support for authoritarian alternatives. The impact of policy performance is less distinct. Respondents reward the regime for improved policy performance with increased authoritarian detachment in only one of the six countries analyzed, Thailand. Elsewhere, policy performance either has no statistically significant effect on authoritarian detachment or has a negative effect, as in Mongolia, the Philippines, and South Korea. Our interpretation of this seemingly contradictory finding is that democrats are critical and authoritarians are deferential. In essence, the citizens who most firmly reject authoritarian alternatives are also likely to be most critical of a regime's policy performance, regardless of the type of regime, while those who are more open to authoritarian options are also likely to be more deferential to the regime's policy actions, regardless of the type of regime.

Although perceived regime policy performance helps explain short-term fluctuations in regime support, a long-term evolution toward pro-democratic values is taking place under the influence of economic and social forces that are at work across the Asian landscape. When citizens in East Asia were asked about their commitment to rule of law, most gave positive answers. Yet, the tendency to support these values is higher among those who live in urban centers, especially in South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Education also has a strong positive effect on commitment to rule of law everywhere except in Thailand. These findings are not surprising. The power of modernization to change values is well established in the literature, although it affects different societies in different ways. We suspect, however, that citizens in East Asia's democracies will be slower to develop value commitments to democracy than were those in the new democracies of Western Europe. The democracies of East Asia, save for Japan and the Philippines, went through transitions to democracy without much prior experience with that form of government, in a less supportive regional environment, and with fewer material enticements for democratic consolidation. Yet, as these societies become more highly educated and more urbanized, we expect their citizens' values to become more liberal and democratic.

It's Performance, Stupid, Not Culture

Public attitudes are not the sole determinant of democratic regimes' fragility or robustness. As Larry Diamond has argued elsewhere, democratic consolidation should be seen as taking place in two dimensions (normative and behavioral) and at three levels (political elites; organizations such as parties, movements, and

civic organizations; and the mass public).⁹ The EAB surveys examined only one of these domains: what ordinary people believe and value. It is not necessarily surprising, therefore, that a coup occurred in Thailand in 2006 even though the public broadly supported democratic norms and values. Thai democracy fell short of consolidation not at the mass level but among elites. Significant leaders neither believed in democracy nor constrained their behavior by its principles. Sadly, this gap between popular democratic aspiration and elite political opportunism and polarization has persisted despite the return to popularly elected government.

Still, the domain of mass norms and beliefs is crucial to consolidation. If democracy is to become stable and effective, the bulk of the citizenry must develop a deep and resilient commitment to it. Absent such support, the regime is vulnerable to decay and collapse. Therefore, the core process of consolidation is legitimization. Democracy can be considered normatively consolidated at the mass level if at least 70 percent of the public believe that democracy is preferable to any other form of government and is suitable for the country, and if no more than 15 percent prefer an authoritarian alternative.¹⁰

By these standards, at the time of the 2002 EAB survey, democracy fell short of normative consolidation by considerable distances in all five new democracies and even in the old democracy of Japan. Five of the six cases exceeded the 70 percent threshold for democracy's suitability (Taiwan was the exception, where only 59 percent of the population considered democracy suitable for the country now). The percentage preferring democracy to all other kinds of government topped the 70 percent benchmark only in Thailand, and that remained the case in the 2006 survey as well. Furthermore, each of the EAB democracies had significant proportions higher than 15 percent supporting at least two of the four authoritarian alternatives. Each of the first three authoritarian options (leaving aside "experts decide everything") attracted more than 30 percent support in the Philippines, while 36 percent of Thais endorsed a one-party system, and 40 percent of Mongolians were willing to embrace rule by a strong man. In our 2006 surveys, support for authoritarian options had declined in South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, but increased in Mongolia and the Philippines. Strikingly, there is now little support for any authoritarian option in South Korea.

The overall lesson is not that a democratic form of government cannot find cultural roots in the region, but that democratic governments must win citizens' support through better performance, both in political and policy terms. The Asian societies that we studied are open to democracy but are not irrevocably committed to it. Support for democracy as an ideal is widespread but often leads citizens to be more critical and less, not more, supportive of their own democratic regimes. Support fluctuates and is sensitive to citizens' changing perceptions of regime performance and levels of corruption and the trustworthiness of their

political institutions. In politics, as in daily life, Asian citizens are skeptical consumers. They must be shown that democracy works. For the time being, many of them doubt that it does, indicating that consolidation is a longer process than many optimists foresaw, and its success is not a foregone conclusion.

The consolidation of democracy in East Asia will therefore require steps to make democratic systems more effective, responsible, and, yes, democratic. Among the priorities are reforms to develop structures of horizontal accountability, including legislative capacity and oversight, judicial competence and independence, and economic scrutiny and regulation; to monitor, deter, and punish corruption; and to improve party and campaign finance so as “to arrest the encroachment of money into politics.”¹¹ In some countries, constitutional reforms may be necessary to repair the tendency of presidential systems toward polarization and deadlock. Although citizens in the region are unlikely again to see the phenomenal rates of economic growth of the previous generation, consolidation will be aided if economies continue to produce at least moderately good records of economic growth and distribution while adapting to changing international market conditions.

East Asian democratic regimes face these challenges in a difficult global context. The world appears to have entered a period of democratic “recession,” in which setbacks to democracy are outnumbering advances.¹² Not only has democracy broken down in Pakistan and Thailand, but it has been slowly strangled in Russia and Venezuela, and is stalled and performing poorly in a number of African and Latin American countries. Now, East Asia may be on the cusp of having to confront a global economic recession as well, with diffuse challenges to policy performance. The rapid and seemingly confident rise of China suggests that authoritarian regimes remain serious competitors for legitimacy, at least so long as they can continue to deliver economic growth.

Yet, our findings also provide reasons to be hopeful. When asked about the future, most respondents anticipated democratic improvement, and they should know the likely trajectories of their regimes better than we do. They expect democratic deepening, not backsliding, and presumably are prepared to reward parties and politicians who deliver it. The responses of Hong Kong residents show that people who do not live under a democratic regime would like to have one, for all its flaws. The Chinese responses show that residents there share a concept of democracy that overlaps considerably with those of the other countries surveyed and that they value democracy highly.

Democracy in South Korea and Taiwan has shown resilience. In the face of scandals and political deadlock under each of South Korea's four presidents of the democratic era, spanning a 20-year period from Roh Tae-woo to Roh Moo-hyun, South Korea's democratic system has endured and in many respects become more democratic. Taiwan has gone through an even deeper political

trauma, involving debilitating conflict between president and legislature, intense polarization over identity issues, a bitterly disputed presidential election in 2004, and grave charges of corruption in the family of former president Chen Shui-bian. Yet, here too, the standing of democracy as the system of government does not appear to be in serious doubt, and popular support for democracy as an ideal has increased.

Democracy in East Asia thus stands in a twilight zone. Citizens do not want authoritarian rule but, in the crucial domain of public attitudes, have not strongly or consistently supported democracy. Those who interpreted the spread of democracy in the region as a decisive historic victory spoke too soon. The easy optimism of the end of history was premature. Yet, it is also too pessimistic to believe that democratic values are only Western and have no appeal in the East. If democracy is in trouble in Asia, it is not in worse shape than in other developing regions. Furthermore, encouraging and discouraging at the same time, its troubles are not undeserved. Ambivalent support is a response to mixed performance. Democracy in Asia has yet to earn its way.

Notes

1. Under the new name Asian Barometer Surveys, the group is carrying out its second round of surveys in the original eight countries plus five more: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Where available, some of the new data for the East Asian democracies are included here. For the methodology and full findings of the first-wave surveys, see Yun-han Chu et al., eds., *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
2. Except as otherwise noted, figures reported in this paper are calculated on the basis of "valid answers," which exclude "don't know" and "no answer" responses.
3. Russell J. Dalton, "Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies," in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, ed. Pippa Norris (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 69; Richard Rose, "Insiders and Outsiders: New Europe Barometer 2004," *Studies in Public Policy*, no. 404 (2005): 68; "The Status of Democracy, 2005–2006: Findings From Afrobarometer Round 3 for 18 Countries," November 2006, p. 2, fig. 1, http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfrobriefNo40_revised16nov06.pdf; "Informe Latinobarometro 2007," p. 77, <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>.
4. For results from the second-round survey for the five new democracies of East Asia, see Yu-tzung Chang, Yun-han Chu, and Chong-min Park, "Authoritarian Nostalgia in Asia," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (July 2007): 66–80.
5. Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 31.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
7. Doh Chull Shin and Chong-Min Park, "The Mass Public and Democratic Politics in South Korea: Exploring the Subjective World of Democratization in Flux," *Asian*

- Barometer Working Paper Series*, no. 15 (2003), <http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/workingpapers/no.15.pdf>.
8. Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 192–196.
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 64–73.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 68.
 11. Yun-han Chu and Doh Chull Shin, “South Korea and Taiwan,” in *Assessing the Quality of Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 209.
 12. Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: How Freedom Is Advancing Around the World, and How to Sustain It* (New York: Times Books, 2007), pp. 56–87.