

Confucianism and Corruption: The Sources of Support for Democracy in Northeast Asia

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Scholars of comparative politics have long sought to understand the relationship between Confucianism and support for democratic regimes and institutions. Confucianism can manifest itself in a preference for economic growth over democratic politics among citizens. In this paper, we consider the effect of corruption perceptions on support for democracy in Asia's liberal democracies (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan). Using latent class analysis (LCA), we find that although some in Northeast Asia value economic growth more than democratic development, this view does not necessarily threaten evaluations of democratic performance or translate into a clear preference for dictatorship. We also find that perceptions of government corruption fully color the views individuals have about how desirable democracy is as a political regime and how it performs in their country. All told, our research reconceptualizes the relationship between regime performance and cultural orientations in East Asia's Confucian democracies.

Key Words: Democracy Support, Confucianism, Corruption, Northeast Asia, Latent Class Analysis

I. Introduction

Over the past few decades, scholars have analyzed democracies to understand the bases of citizen support (Dalton 2008; Rose and Shin 2001). Some have considered the disconnect between support for liberal values and disappointment with the performance of democratic regimes and governments (Norris 1999, 2011; Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018). In Asia, there have been attempts to link attitudes towards democracy among

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citizens to cultural predispositions such as Asian values and Confucianism (Shin 2012). If publics the world over have anything in common, it is that support for democracy is usually contingent on how democratic regimes perform, particularly regarding the economy (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 152; Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 11).

Scholars, however, have not extensively studied the relationship between Confucianism, corruption, and support for democracy. The work that exists suggests that because Asian culture emphasizes hierarchical relationships, order, and social harmony, corruption does not undermine trust in political authority. Instead, citizens from Asian countries trust political institutions "even when corruption reigns." (Chang and Huang 2016, 27). These scholars go as far as to claim that "citizens in Asian countries might exhibit unusually high tolerance for corruption." (Chang and Huang 2016, 33).¹

In this paper, we evaluate patterns of support for democracy that have developed across the liberal systems of Northeast Asia. Early in the transition from dictatorship to democracy, some doubted whether corruption rendered government officials immune to accountability. In Korea, for example, the first wave of the Asian Barometer survey (2003) revealed that "almost half of the respondents perceived their national government to be corrupt" (Chang 2013, 78-79). Until the early 1990s, Japan was notorious for the role money played in politics (Norris 2016, 13) and problems with money and the media remain in Taiwan (Fell 2005; Norris 2016, 21). In recent years, moreover, the new democracies in Korea and Taiwan were tested in fundamental ways. The "Red Shirt" Movement in Taiwan (2006) saw tens of thousands of supporters of all political parties take to the streets to protest the rampant corruption of President Chen Shui-bian and his associates. In South Korea, the Candlelight Democracy Movement (November 2016 to March 2017) led to the ouster of President Park Geun-hye after the largest demonstrations in nearly three decades paralyzed the streets of major cities for several consecutive weeks (Moberand 2018, 3). The catalyst for the demonstrations was corruption by the president and her associates.

While we do not doubt the persistence of these democratic regimes, three trends have developed in the region that call into question "the extent of normative commitment to democracy among the public at large and thus ... how far the[se] political system[s] ha[ve] really travelled toward democratic consolidation." (Chu and Huang 2010, 114). The first is that a majority of East Asians, "including the Japanese, remain attached to the authoritarian method of governance [under which they once lived]" (Shin 2015, 3). This does not necessarily mean that East Asians hold anti-democratic attitudes, but

1 Chang (2013) finds, however, that corruption (or rather its perception) decreases trust in government in Taiwan and South Korea.

it begs asking to what extent perceived corruption is compatible with the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy - unconditional support for popular sovereignty and individual rights.² The second issue to arise is that "in the region's advanced economies (in particular Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan), the age of globalization has coincided with sharp increases in inequality" (Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 4), leading some to perceive a "growing anti-establishment sentiment" (Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 2). Finally, and related to the previous point, in surveys conducted in the last two decades, perceptions of aggregate economic performance have been "very negative" in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, dampening support for democratic regimes there (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 157).³

In light of these realities, it is important to examine the sources of support for liberal politics in the Confucian democracies of Northeast Asia. Using latent class analysis (LCA), we undertake such an investigation. We draw on LCA's ability to classify individuals, which we sort into four groups: unconditional optimists, conditional optimists, conditional pessimists, and unconditional pessimists. Beyond serving a typological function, the analysis also uncovers the reason some citizens (but not others) unconditionally support liberal democracy in the region. We find that, by affecting individual evaluations of how democracy performs, perceptions of government corruption fully color the views individuals have about how desirable democracy is for their countries.

We begin by reviewing the literature on culture and democracy in East Asia. Following that, we assess the role of authoritarian legacies - rapid economic development in particular - and the effect of performance variables such as corruption on support for democracy in the region (Keum and Campbell 2018; Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 12). We then introduce latent class analysis to our discussion of methodological refinements with an eye towards distilling trends in support for democracy across the populations of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

II. Status of Democratic Support in East Asia

Scholars have long debated the feasibility of democratic governance across the political systems of Asia. As with the democratizing countries of Eastern Europe, South America,

2 For those who care about democratic consolidation, the key concern is whether people connote democracy "in exclusively liberal terms." (Welzel 2011, 14).

3 "For instance, between 2000 and 2011, Taiwan saw virtually no growth in real wages (Dou and Hsu 2011)", cited in Weatherall, Huang, and Whang (2018, 2).

and Africa, individuals initially pointed to a cultural predisposition away from democracy, particularly the idea that Asians have "distinctly '*inter*-dependent' personalities in juxtaposition to the '*in*-dependent' personalities of 'Westerners'" (Welzel 2011, 3). Scholars also distinguished between specific and universalistic obligations, with Western political thought allegedly privileging the latter whereas Confucianism privileged the former. (Shin 2012, 49). As a result, in the World Values Survey, historically Confucian East Asia emerged as the cultural region "with the least assertive people." (Shin 2012, 48)

Government officials also drew contrasts between ideals of the political community in Eastern and Western political thought. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore claimed for example that "Western-style" democracy could not take hold in Asia because of liberalism's philosophical focus on competition in politics and holding politicians accountable (Zakaria 1994).⁴ This contrasted with Confucianism's emphasis on social harmony (Shin 2012, 147), "loyalty to authority" (Im 2020, 131), and "cooperation for the common good" (Jang 2004, 181). South Korea provided evidence for this claim, since adherence to Confucian norms rejecting adversarial politics detracted from support for democracy there. (Park and Shin 2006; Shin 2012, 68). And, although popular at first, Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian promoted "rancorous political debate" that, along with rampant corruption in his administration, left his approval ratings in the single digits by the time he left office in 2008 (Copper 2010, Chapter Four; 2018, 18).

Lee also presupposed a dearth of moral guidance for citizens of liberal democracies (Zakaria 1994, 113), in particular concerning unequal relationships (Jang 2004, 179). According to Jang, [t]he Confucian solution derived from familism suggests that the capable should take more responsibility for the public good while the less capable, less." Confucianism can thus be seen as "better designed than liberalism for facilitating the building of a humane and just society in which ... material goods are equally distributed." (Shin 2012, 79). Finally, scholars of political culture noted the prevalence of particularized rather than generalized trust in Confucian societies. "Particularized trust focuses on trust that only extends to family members, friends, or acquaintances. Generalized trust, however, refers to a willingness to engage in cooperative behavior with strangers." (Huang and Schuler 2018, 123). Only the latter, according to these scholars, "has a causal impact on support for democracy." (Huang and Schuler 2018, 123).⁵

Several contemporary writers challenged these dichotomies. East Asian people had

4 The "Asian Values" thesis championed by Lee viewed two ideas central to Western political thought as being inherently in tension: individual freedom and rights, and popular sovereignty. (Jang 2004, 169).

5 Norris (2011, 36), citing Zmerli and Newton, noted though that "[t]he claim that the socially trusting individuals are also politically trusting has poor empirical support."

already demonstrated their assertiveness through popular demonstrations against authoritarian regimes, a pattern of behavior that engenders political accountability. Prominent individuals also argued that Asian values could coexist with the institutions of modern democracy (Chang, Wu, and Weatherall 2017; Kim 1997). Kim Dae-Jung for example wrote before assuming the presidency in 1998 that the requirements of the technology-based economy of the twenty-first century would increase pressure on governments to democratize in ways that a more labor-intensive workforce did not (Kim 1994). Scholars agreed, claiming that "the Confucian emphasis on education contributes positively to the development of democracy because a high level of education facilitates people's participation in political debates." (Im 2020, 132). The effect of education and mass communication is seen as going beyond the ability of individuals to contribute to political debates, transforming them into assertive citizens (Welzel and Dalton 2016, 3). Furthermore, the continued focus on Confucianism, defined broadly, leads to over-generalization at best and determinism at worst; an analysis regressing specific Confucian values (family loyalty, social hierarchy, and social harmony) on support for democracy did not find evidence that they conflicted with support for democracy (Fetzer and Soper 2007, 152).

Fukuyama (1995) addressed this dichotomy as part of his entry into the conversation. On the one hand, Confucian values reach beyond the individual to emphasize the group. On the other hand, these values constitute a personal, not political, ethic. Economic growth increases the power of individuals and their families to further their interests. As individuals become wealthier, they develop a desire for accountable governance. This, according to Fukuyama, favors democratization and is not incompatible with a cultural predisposition towards groups and families rather than atomistic individuals. As Im (2020, 131) writes,

Confucianism nurtures political accountability by its emphasis on the reciprocity of respect for authority and public accountability. Confucianism regards the political order as a moral community, and therefore post-Confucianism fosters social interconnectedness, public spirit, social trust and social capital, the essential features of post-individualistic democracy.

Ultimately, predictions about Confucian culture leading to authoritarianism do not bear out in the most obvious of cases; looking at Japan, its form of "neo-Confucianism," with paramount obligations to the state, should have been conducive to unaccountable rule by elites but, instead, produced a fully functioning democratic state (Fukuyama 1995, 27).

And yet, citizens of autocratic countries like China and Vietnam "express a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the way their country is 'governed democratically' than do those of democratic Japan, Korea, and Taiwan" (Shin 2015, 4).⁶ In other words, "the

countries which have greater institutional trust are those with one-party authoritarian regimes rather than established democracies." (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 158). This, perhaps, reflects an "instrumental" view of democracy, focused on good governance rather than freedom and equality (Pietsch 2015).

Of particular concern in this regard is the way the democratic systems of South Korea and Taiwan have been designed and operate. According to Keum and Campbell (2018, 32), "[c]onstitutions [in those countries] do not provide adequate legislative checks ...as [b]oth countries' presidencies operate largely independently from legislative oversight or control".⁷ This is why in the eyes of some "the most significant challenge for the Korean political system is curbing the centralization of power within the presidency" (Keum and Campbell 2018, 39). Likewise, in Taiwan, the inability to unseat Chen Shui-bian during the "Red Shirt" protests in the face of cross-party consensus for his removal was problematic for many (Fell 2012, 208-209). It is also noteworthy that "[p]opulist or 'outsider' politicians such as Lee Jae-myung in South Korea and Ko Wen-je in Taiwan" have gained in popularity in recent years (Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 18). These authors add, however, that citizen dissatisfaction is not directed at incumbent administrations only, but at the entire political class in these countries (Weatherall, Huang, and Whang 2018, 11).

An additional factor weighing on democracy assessments in the region is that "the majority of East Asians do not equate democracy exclusively with political freedom." (Shin and Cho 2010, 21). There is some disagreement about the extent to which this is true worldwide. For some, ordinary people value the substantive outcomes of politics such as economic prosperity "more than the procedures that allow them to participate in the political process" (Shin 2015, 9). "Others consider political performance more influential than economic success. Recent studies of third wave democracies demonstrate that political performance plays a greater role in fostering support for democracy." (Park 2013, 109). Whatever the case, global support for representative democracy is widespread but often thin. (Wike and Fetterolf 2018). Rising economic anxiety, cultural unease, and political frustration can all make citizens "increasingly open to alternative systems of government."⁸ Thus, "[w]hile the term democracy is positively understood worldwide, the meaning of the term is not fixed. Instead, the term is highly ambiguous" (Ulbricht 2018, 1388). Across Third Wave democracies, moreover, support for this regime type has been declining due to

6 See also Nathan (2020).

7 The phenomenon of an "imperial but weak president", in the sense that (s)he can govern uncontested but for a single five-year term, has been noted in the Korean context (Im 2020, 195).

8 See <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/issue/october-2018/>.

"low satisfaction with how democracy works in practice" (Chu et al. 2020, 166).

In sum, economic growth, which played an outsized role in the development of support for democracy across Northeast Asia⁹, has slowed in recent years and inequality increased. As Weatherall, Huang, and Whang (2018, 2) note, these economies enjoyed "rapid growth together with declining inequality during the 1960s and 1970s - in particular South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong". While economic and political liberalization have taken place (albeit in fits and starts), even these democracies have experienced a great deal of anti-establishment sentiment and popular protest (Sanborn 2015; 2018). In East Asian democracies then, as much as individuals might endorse liberal democracy in theory, that support may be conditional on how democratic systems perform.

III Perceptions of Corruption and Previous Citizen Classifications

We argue in this section that comparatively speaking, Northeast Asian democracies are not extremely corrupt but some citizens perceive them to be so, and this drives their evaluation of government performance and assessment of the suitability of democracy for their societies. Because in the Confucian communitarian perspective, the nation is like an extension of the family, politicians should not violate the trust the people have placed in them to create a government "for the people", but not by them (Shin 2012, 148). Corruption then decreases generalized trust, undermines accountability, and violates the sense that the nation is a moral community whose leaders are looking out for the commonwealth rather than their well-being. Corruption may even be blamed for greater inequality if it is perceived as being pervasive enough.¹⁰ In fact, in surveys conducted between 2010 and 2012, control of corruption showed the strongest relationship with regime support out of eight elements of democratic quality (Park 2013, 110).¹¹

9 Dalton and Ong (2005) and Flanagan and Lee (2001) showed for example "that the process of modernization has changed the values of South Koreans and the Japanese in ways that promoted democratic reforms in these countries." (Welzel 2011, 5).

10 Weatherall, Huang, and Whang (2018, 9) find for example that "citizens in East Asia are less satisfied with their government's performance on reducing income inequality and more likely to distrust those in power than their counterparts in Southeast Asia. In particular, economies that are the most reliant on China (Taiwan and Hong Kong and to a lesser extent South Korea) have the highest levels of anti-establishment sentiment and very high levels of dissatisfaction with their government's performance on reducing income inequality."

11 The other ones were law-based governance, freedom, electoral competition, equality, public participation, vertical accountability, and horizontal accountability. Interestingly, the rule of law, which is related to control of corruption, was conceived separately from the latter in this study.

Elections are clean in Japan and South Korea compared with the rest of the world, (Norris 2016, 6). Using novel data, Ang (2020, 32) likewise finds that among fifteen developed and developing countries, "Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea ... all rank among the least corrupt, followed by the United States." The type of corruption prevalent in these countries, moreover, is the exchange of money for access, which is not as deleterious for the economy as the three other forms of corruption: petty theft, grand theft, and speed money. What matters, however, is how citizens perceive reality because in East Asia "ordinary people's evaluations of the quality of democracy diverge from expert-based assessments and ... the more democratic a country is, the more likely its citizens are to have an unfavorable opinion of the quality of democracy." (Park 2013, 93).

Because of their lack of experience with democracy and familiarity with governments (including authoritarian ones) that performed well, East Asians tend to define democracy in substantive rather than procedural terms (i.e., they emphasize social equity and good governance rather than liberty and democratic procedures). (Chang, Wu, and Weatherall 2017, 347; Park 2013). This causes expectations about the political system to be very high among some individuals (Park 2013, 104). In South Korea,

[t]he average domestic investment rate in the democratic period is 32.5%, while in the authoritarian period it was 31.1%. The gross fixed capital formation (% of GDP) under democracy is 32.2%, while in the authoritarian period it was 24.4%. The GDP growth rate in the democratic period is 6.7%, while under authoritarianism it was 7.8%...The international balance of trade shifted from perennial deficits in the authoritarian period to continuing trade surpluses in the democratic period. The inflation rate in democratic [sic] period is 4.7% while in the previous period it was 12.7%. Lastly, the unemployment rate under democracy is 3.4%, compared to an earlier figure of 4.3%. (Im 2020, 11-12).

Thus while the Korean economy has fared better under democracy than under dictatorship in all respects but one, economic growth was higher overall during the authoritarian period, a reminder of how well authoritarian regimes performed in this realm. This matters for democratic consolidation because, as Weatherall, Huang, and Whang (2018, 12) assert, impressions of corruption are built up over a long period, reflecting long-term assessments of regime performance.

In Asia, there have been attempts to classify democratic citizenship based upon Waves 1 and 2 of the Asian Barometer Survey. Chu and Huang (2010) for example used factor analysis to develop ratings of democratic performance and liberal values. The former scale results from questions asking respondents to rate the suitability of democracy for their

country as well as the ability of democracy to solve their country's problems. The questions also ask respondents to choose between a strong economy and a democratic regime and to note how much they want democracy. For the latter scale, the authors sought to distill a commitment to liberal values using questions that avoid the word "democracy" (Chu and Huang 2010, 115). This makes sense, since "[t]he variance in meaning attributed to democracy across countries undermines the efficacy of items that employ the general term "democracy" rather than adduce a specific aspect of this concept." (Ariely 2015, 622).

Omitting the word can help researchers distinguish support for democracy in the abstract from evaluations of institutional performance under particular governments.¹² This is important since scholars often "seek to distinguish between an "idealistic" measure [of regime support] based on explicit employment of the word "democracy" and a "realistic" measure that relates to support for alternative regimes." (Ariely 2015, 624; Park and Chang 2013). Above we saw another important distinction, between procedural and substantive understandings of democracy. Procedural notions emphasize the procedures of democratic regimes such as changes in government through free and fair elections and application of the rule of law (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 149). "Substantive democracy refers to a shared belief that democracy is...about how a government's actions satisfy its people's needs." (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 149). Confucian East Asia and South Asia stand out for their substantive conceptions of democracy: only in these two regions are citizens with egalitarian orientations more numerous than "upholders of any other culture" (Shin 2012, 98).

In creating their four quadrants of democratic citizenship, Chu and Huang use the average score on these scales to separate respondents, which permitted analyses across countries, demonstrating "the existence of a common conception of the procedures of democracy that enables cross-national comparison." (Ariely 2015, 622). Roughly half of Japan's population emerged as consistent democrats -- those individuals who rated democratic practice and liberal values highly. Critical democrats were individuals who scored in the top half of the liberal values scale but on the bottom half of the democracy scale. Forty to fifty percent of Taiwanese and South Koreans emerged as critical democrats, offering support for liberal values but conditioning it on democratic practice. In each of these countries, support for liberal values was firm; consistent and critical democrats constituted the largest categories of citizens in Japan and Taiwan and in South Korea, respectively.

Citizenship categories can provide a lens through which to understand the beliefs of democratic citizens during a time of regional regime transition and consolidation

12 As Ariely (2015, 629) notes, "it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of democracy and those of government performance...[on] democracy-assessment."

(Mishler and Rose 1994; Loewenberg, Mishler, and Sanborn 2010). Notably, segments of the population of these countries emerged as either superficial democrats (offering little support for liberal values but rating democracy highly), or as non-democrats. This approach, however, can infuse bias into the evaluation of systems (Bollen and Paxton 2000) because of the statistical assumptions required of factor analysis and the need to make arbitrary judgments about the cut-offs (e.g. the mean) for placement along the liberalism and democracy scales.¹³

As noted above, economic development played an outsize role in the democratization of Northeast Asia. Accordingly, "people in East Asian democracies tend to emphasize the importance of economic well-being when democracy is referenced." (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 148). It is not surprising then that in these countries, legitimacy, to a large extent, is associated with the incumbent government's economic performance." (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 152). Crucially, however, perceptions of the economy are generally more negative than warranted in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 157).

Except for the question about economic or democratic preference, however, Chu and Huang's typology limited the scope of the economy's influence on developing support for democracy. Scholars of post-communist Europe observed support for liberal institutions among individuals with higher social status and wealth (Mishler and Rose 1994). Although scholars of East Asia typically note that citizens with greater resources support democracy, "regime legitimacy tends to be lower in Asia if a critical sentiment permeates society." (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 163).

The entire record of democratic government in these countries is at issue then when examining the role perceptions of corruption play in evaluations of democracy. Rightly or wrongly, many in Taiwan and South Korea link the nature of power and institutional arrangements to "a culture of corruption". (Keum and Campbell 2018, 39). The gap between expert assessments and ordinary impressions can be wide, as when we learn that efforts at combating corruption in Taiwan have largely been successful (Goebel 2016, 137), or that

Korea's corruption is probably more pervasive, but ordinary Taiwanese tend to believe that their system is uniquely corrupt ... Korean voters tend to react to corruption scandals by swinging away from the incumbent party and electing the opposition party. (Keum and Campbell 2018, 40).

13 Coppedge et al. (2011) discuss the limitations of aggregated scales and provide researchers with guidelines to make their own inferences in combination with expert-driven indicators. More recently, there has been a call for people-centred scales of democracy combining public opinion data with expert rankings (Doorenspleet 2015).

In sum, scholars have created scales of mass belief in democracy, resulting in typologies of citizen support. This approach can capture the varying attitudes towards democracy by the citizens of different countries, be it in terms of support for the regime or the intrinsic meaning of democracy (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Chu et al. 2008). Economic variables, however, did not feature prominently in previous analyses of public opinion in Northeast Asian democracies. These limitations, subsequently, hindered the explanatory power of these studies.

IV. Data

We use data drawn from the Asian Barometer Survey to develop our typology of democratic citizenship. We do not include the first wave of surveys, as it did not contain data on all variables of interest. Our analysis begins in 2005; the most recent survey year in our dataset is 2015.

We focus our analysis on the most robust democracies in Northeast Asia: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Japan became a democracy after World War II, although it did not experience "two turnovers" of power until the twenty-first century -- more a symptom of the use of a single non-transferable voting system that produced a fractured collection of parties than a failure of democratic consolidation. With the turnovers in power that took place in Korea (1997) and Taiwan (2000), the return to power of traditional elites in subsequent elections in Taiwan, and the end of "the three Kims" era in South Korea (2002) (Im 2000, chap. 8), it seems these systems have finally "consolidated, in the sense of having experienced at least two peaceful alternations in office that resulted from elections." (Przeworski 2019, 21). Thus, we should be able to trace support for democracy across these populations given the prominence of democratic politics in these three countries.

We limit our analysis to democratic countries because research indicates systematic differences in attitudes towards representative, liberal democracy between dictatorships and democracies. Not long ago, Kuran (1997) introduced to political science the notion of "preference falsification", when citizens lie about their views for fear of social ostracism or retribution, including from the government. Since people in less democratic countries "tend not to answer questions relating to their evaluation of their democracy" (Ariely 2015, 628), we may surmise that preference falsification could account for some of the differences in public opinion we observe between the liberal and less liberal systems in East Asia. Some, moreover, see variation in democratic quality among the countries in Northeast

Asia. Ulbricht (2018, 1426) for example labels Japan and Taiwan "democracies" whereas he considers South Korea a "hybrid democracy".¹⁴ Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, it seems as if the three countries we study provide some useful variation in the level of democracy (Ariely 2015, 621)¹⁵. At the same time, institutional performance and citizen perceptions of this performance set this trio apart from other countries in the region.

We use several variables in our analysis. First, we include a measure of regime support. The variable asks respondents whether they think democracy is suitable for their country. As Park (2008, 308) points out, this "question elicits orientations to democracy as a value, not institutional practices of democracy." The second question asks respondents to evaluate how democratic their current system is. This guards against the possibility that we mistake academic impressions of the extent of democratic consolidation with popular ones. Third, we include an indicator of government support; respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the way democracy works in their country. The purpose of including all three questions is so that we can determine "respondents' capacity to distinguish between support for democracy in their country and [abstract] support for the political regime." (Ariely 2015, 625). As Park (2013, 98) writes, "[a]lthough evaluations of democratic quality and regime support are all directed to the current regime, their foci and modes differ. The former reflects cognitive evaluation of regime performance against standards of democracy, whereas the latter, affect for the regime as a whole."¹⁶

We also acknowledge the role of economics by including the previously mentioned indicator prompting a choice between economic development and a democratic regime. Some researchers do not find very strong evidence that citizen qualities, such as micro-social influences or cultural predilections, affect belief in the legitimacy of the system (Mishler and Rose 2001; Booth and Seligson 2009; Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg 2015). Conversely, others have claimed that "Asian values detract from cultural democratization primarily by keeping the mass public oriented toward the virtues of authoritarian politics." (Park and Shin 2006, 341). Dalton and Ong (2005, 229) find, however, "only weak evidence

14 The other two possible regime categories in the study are "hybrid autocracies" and "autocracies". Mainwaring and Bizarro (2019, 107) found that Taiwan and South Korea both became more democratic compared to the year in which their democratic transitions occurred. They also found, contrary to Ulbricht, that Korea not only advanced more than Taiwan, but ended up with a higher "liberal democracy score" in 2017. Shin (2012, 53) also referred to Taiwan as a "flawed" democracy.

15 Outside East Asia, "[c]itizens in countries rated as democracies tend to think their country to be more democratic." (Ariely 2015, 629).

16 Another way to approach this contrast is to note that, "popular demand for democracy is not the same thing as democratic regime preference or support. Instead, demand for democracy arises from dissatisfaction with democracy-in-practice." (Qi and Shin 2011, 245).

that authority relations within the family or the workplace are related to attitudes toward political authority."

Finally, we include a measure of respondent perceptions of corruption by government officials.¹⁷ This is so that we can control for the possibility that respondents' assessments of democratic performance or its desirability are influenced by how (un)corrupt they perceive their public officials to be. The five indicator variables are coded so that lower values indicate negative and higher values positive perceptions. We also include exogenous covariates to help measure the latent variable: gender, age, education, satisfaction with one's family income, and satisfaction with the country's economic situation (Ariely and Davidov 2011, 284).¹⁸

It is important to include satisfaction with both one's family income and the country's economic situation because the difference between how survey respondents felt about their economic circumstances and how they felt about aggregate economic circumstances was "highly negative in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea, but very positive in China, Mongolia, and Vietnam". (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 157). This provides evidence that respondents felt on average satisfied with their "household financial situation but provided a poor overall economic evaluation" (Huang, Chu, and Chang 2013, 156), contrary to the situation in the rest of Asia. In all cases, we weigh observations to account for the survey's sampling design.

V. Methods

To study the relationship between perceived corruption and attitudes towards democracy, we rely on latent class analysis. LCA, a form of mixture modeling, is similar to factor analysis in that it tries to derive a latent attitudinal construct from multiple indicators of this construct. LCA, however, accommodates the ordinal nature of survey questions instead of assuming that they follow a multivariate normal distribution (Kankaraš and Moors 2009, 562). It also lets indicator variables "follow any distribution, as long as they are unrelated to each other (independent) within classes" (Oberski 2016, 7). The resulting classes - constituting categorical as opposed to continuous latent variables - are "characterized

17 The actual question reads: "How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government [in capital city]? Would you say ...? (SHOWCARD) Hardly anyone is involved; Not a lot of officials are corrupt; Most officials are corrupt; Almost everyone is corrupt". See http://www.asianbarometer.org/pdf/core_questionnaire_wave2.pdf.

18 Regarding age, Huang, Chu, and Chang (2013, 162) found that "older people are prone to support the existing social order."

not by exact response patterns but by response profiles or typologies described by the relative frequencies of item endorsements" (Masyn 2013, 556).

Welzel (2011, 29) found "gradual differences between Asian and Western countries over emancipative values and liberal notions of democracy but no categorical difference." Dalton and Ong (2005, 229) claimed that "[n]ational levels of authority orientations within East Asia are not strongly linked to a Confucian heritage, and are not markedly different from the Western democracies of the Pacific Rim." These studies uncovered important differences in value orientations among geographical regions. They did not, however, shed light on intra-regional ones.

Any analysis of latent value constructs has to guard against the risk associated with social desirability bias and the possibility this bias varies by country. "Democracy referring to an ideal form of government, some respondents tend to favor it even when they do not understand its meaning and/or endorse undemocratic values." (Ariely 2015, 624). The approach we follow, multigroup latent class structure modeling, can easily diagnose and accommodate several forms of heterogeneity. Similar approaches such as multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MCFA) exist for models with continuous indicator and latent variables. Multigroup latent class structure modeling, however, outperforms MCFA in detecting inequivalence among groups in "intercept and slope parameters both at the scale and the item levels." (Kankaraš, Vermunt, and Moors 2011, 279).

In sum, LCA, which scholars have yet to use extensively in the democracy support literature, naturally handles the polytomous instruments common in population surveys, providing a way to sort individuals in the analysis into exclusive subpopulations "based on similar patterns of observed cross-sectional and/or longitudinal data." (Berlin, Williams, and Parra 2014, 175). The model essentially asks how likely a subject is to belong to one of N categories in a nominal latent variable. The assumption of independence within classes requires the omission of all higher-order interactions from the model (e.g., interaction terms between the latent variable and indicator variables). As Nagelkerke, Oberski, and Vermunt (2016) point out, however, the assumption of unit independence is automatically violated when observations are nested in groups, as in many studies featuring surveys conducted in multiple countries. In this case, it is important "to detect misfit that originates from the model not fitting particular groups as well as others." (Nagelkerke, Oberski, and Vermunt 2016, 255). This can occur if countries vary systematically in their citizens' evaluations of democracy.¹⁹

19 In a recent application using the European Social Survey, for example, Quaranta (2018, 191) deals with country heterogeneity using Bayesian factor analysis with country random effects.

Nagelkerke, Oberski, and Vermunt define a between-group bivariate residual that they calculate by using the grouping variable as a nominal covariate with its effect set to zero (Vermunt and Magidson 2016, 121). Researchers then estimate the model and examine residuals between the grouping variable and indicators.

"[L]arge residuals indicate large direct effects of particular group variables...If...large residuals are associated with group variables, an appropriate strategy is to include the direct effects of the group variable with the largest residuals, re-estimate the model and check the updated residuals after this new model is estimated. This procedure can be repeated until all of the residuals between group variables and response variables become small." (Moors 2004, 309).

Researchers should likewise determine if other violations of the independence assumption have occurred. LCA requires that manifest variables share no systematic associations, conditional on values of the latent variable. Relaxing this assumption allows for the possibility that indicator variables are correlated even after conditioning on the latent variable. In this case, we would have to set the bivariate residuals between the indicator variables in question to zero and re-estimate the model. We thus follow a specific model development strategy that allows us to pick the best specification to report (Vermunt and Magidson 2005, 43).

First, we estimate unconditional models (or models without covariates) with two, three, and four latent clusters. We then add covariates to these models (conditional estimation) to help explain the indicator variables. Finally, we check for violations of the conditional independence assumption and include direct effects, as necessary. To do this, we explore bivariate residuals between the grouping variable and indicator variables, between pairs of indicator variables, and between pairs of covariates and indicators. Residuals that exceed 3.84 indicate a violation.²⁰ As explained above, the pair with the largest residual is set to zero, and the model re-estimated (the relationship is directly estimated).

Having added one parameter (or restriction), researchers should check bivariate residuals again for additional parameters to restrict until all residuals exhibit acceptable values. At every step, we examine the log-likelihood (LL) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) for information on parsimony and fit, respectively. Generally speaking, lower values for these statistics indicate a better fit. As more residuals are set to zero and the ones left unrestricted decrease in value, we obtain diminishing increases in model fit (as

20 "For 1 degree of freedom effects, bivariate residuals larger than 3.84 indicate statistical significance at the .05 level. (Vermunt and Magidson 2005, 125).

judged by progressively lower BIC values), and more stability in parameters (the size of indicator and covariate coefficients and their signs).

VI. Analysis and Discussion

Although a model with two clusters, judging by the number of parameters it contains (44) and its log-likelihood, is (not surprisingly) the most parsimonious, a model with four clusters yielded the lowest BIC. The latter specification also resulted in smaller bivariate residuals. We thus opted to proceed with this specification. Figure 1 provides a visual summary of our 4-cluster solution for our indicator variables in waves 2-4 of the Asian Barometer Survey.

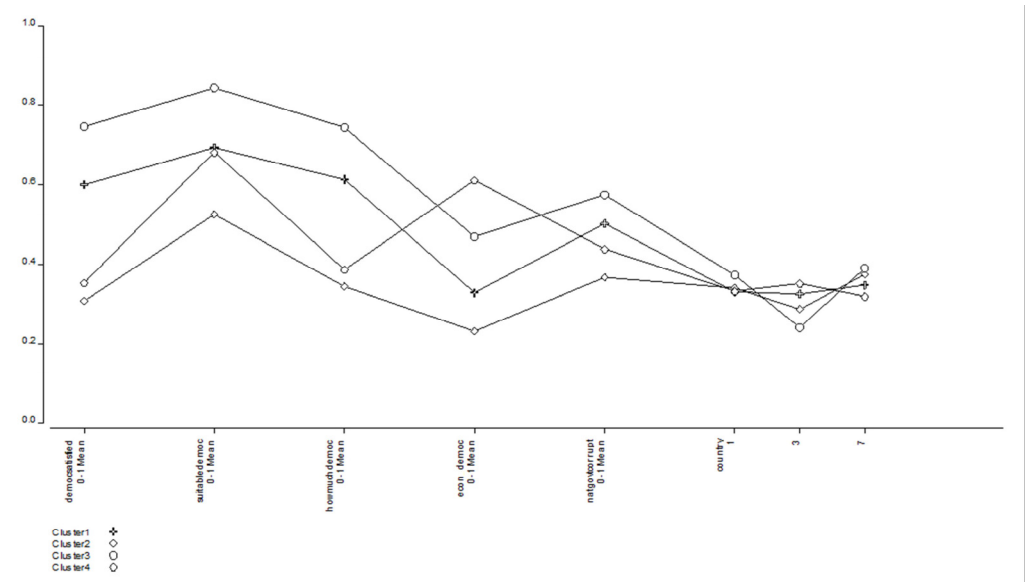


Figure 1. Profile plot of cluster solution for LCA of democratic attitudes in Northeast Asia

As Figure 1 indicates, four groups of individuals are distinguishable in the data, in descending order: two that have mostly positive attitudes towards democracy (clusters 3 and 1), and two that hold mostly negative ones (clusters 4 and 2). Individuals, that is, either express satisfaction with how democracy performs in their country, think that this regime is suitable for them, and rate the level of democracy in their country highly, or they do not. The two groups with mostly positive opinions, which we label "unconditional" and "conditional optimists", respectively, also think corruption is not widespread in their

political systems, whereas the opposite is true for those with more negative appraisals - which we label "conditional" and "unconditional pessimists", respectively. Thus corruption (or the lack thereof) seems to be driving negative (or positive) evaluations of democracy in the region.

Patterns become a little bit more nuanced when we consider the next variable, which asks individuals to choose between economic development or a democratic regime as more important. A group of individuals (cluster 1) has positive attitudes about democracy but regards economic development as slightly more important than the attainment of a democratic regime. Conversely, the group just below it judges democracy somewhat negatively but thinks it is more important to achieve than economic development (cluster 4). Also of note is that Japan ("country 1") is the country with the least polarized public, while Korea ("country 3") exhibits the most polarization.

We can also report the results just visualized numerically. It is important to note that for the "Model for Clusters" section of the table, a positive coefficient implies that a particular variable is more likely to place/keep individuals in a certain class, whereas a negative one indicates that the variable is likely to place individuals in a different class.

Table 1. Multilevel LCA of attitudes about democracy in Northeast Asia

Model for Indicators							
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Wald	p-value	R ²
satisfied with democracy?	0.853	-2.237	3.136	-1.753	443.014	0	0.450
democracy suitable?	-0.027	-0.527	0.615	-0.061	197.519	0	0.206
how democratic?	0.845	-1.928	2.594	-1.512	428.659	0	0.394
development vs. democracy	-0.226	-0.583	0.198	0.611	155.121	0	0.134
national government corrupt?	0.220	-0.837	0.866	-0.249	324.143	0	0.085
Direct Effects							
age group	national government corrupt?						
	18-29	-0.350			Wald	p-value	
	30-39	-0.168			140.315	0.000	
	40-49	0.002					
	50-64	0.148					
	65+	0.368					
country	satisfied with democracy?				Wald	p-value	
	Japan	-0.286			57.591	0.000	
	Korea	0.027					
	Taiwan	0.259					
country	how democratic?				Wald	p-value	
	Japan	0.123			44.365	0.000	
	Korea	0.134					
	Taiwan	-0.257					

Table 1. Continued.

Direct Effects				
country		development vs. democracy	Wald	p-value
	Japan	0.354	481.187	0.000
	Korea	-0.084		
	Taiwan	-0.270		
country		national government corrupt?	Wald	p-value
	Japan	0.632	534.945	0.000
	Korea	-0.065		
	Taiwan	-0.568		
Intercepts		Overall		
satisfied with democracy			Wald	p-value
	not at all	-1.784	1667.390	0.000
	not very	1.747		
	fairly	2.104		
	very	-2.067		
democracy suitable?		Wald	p-value	
	completely unsuitable	-3.186	1957.726	0.000
	2	-3.158		
	3	-1.279		
	4	-0.403		
	5	1.011		
	6	1.308		
	7	1.731		
	8	1.993		
	9	1.103		
	completely suitable	0.879		
how democratic is your country?			Wald	p-value
	not a democracy	-2.059	1997.887	0.000
	a democracy with major problems	1.572		
	a democracy with minor problems	2.020		
	a full democracy	-1.533		
development vs. democracy			Wald	p-value
	development definitely more important	0.216	2159.456	0.000
	development somewhat more important	0.930		
	both equally important	-0.469		
	democracy somewhat more important	0.578		
	democracy definitely more important	-1.255		
national government corrupt?			Wald	p-value
	almost everyone is corrupt	-0.728	2982.929	0.000
	most officials are corrupt	1.467		
	not a lot of officials are corrupt	1.470		
	hardly anyone is involved	-2.209		

Table 1. Continued.

Model for Clusters						
Intercept	C 1	C 2	C 3	C 4	Wald	p-value
	0.895	-0.172	0.246	-0.969	20.754	0.000
N	5912	2072	1854	1193		
Covariates						
female	C 1	C 2	C 3	C 4	Wald	p-value
male	-0.103	-0.139	0.191	0.052	31.525	0.000
female	0.103	0.139	-0.191	-0.052		
age group						
18-29	-0.051	-0.040	-0.169	0.260	54.707	0.000
30-39	0.170	0.320	-0.462	-0.027		
40-49	-0.115	0.038	0.126	-0.049		
50-64	-0.081	-0.076	0.177	-0.020		
65+	0.078	-0.241	0.328	-0.164		
education						
No/Incomplete Formal	0.156	0.622	0.535	-1.313	96.964	0.000
Completed Primary	0.093	0.358	-0.387	-0.064		
Completed Secondary	-0.016	-0.052	-0.306	0.375		
Completed University	-0.232	-0.928	0.158	1.002		
family economic situation						
Very Bad	0.017	-0.076	0.147	-0.088	14.467	0.27
Bad	0.194	-0.017	-0.182	0.005		
So	0.182	-0.131	-0.032	-0.019		
Good	0.021	-0.133	0.075	0.038		
Very Good	-0.413	0.356	-0.008	0.065		
country economic situation						
Very Bad	-0.038	1.101	-1.078	0.015	183.343	0.000
Bad	0.220	0.467	-0.667	-0.020		
So	0.265	-0.090	-0.121	-0.054		
Good	0.217	-0.290	0.466	-0.394		
Very Good	-0.664	-1.188	1.399	0.453		
N	10662					

The realization that the indicator with the highest means in Figure 1 is the "suitability of democracy" question must be tempered with the results displayed in Table 1. They reveal that conditional optimists (individuals located in cluster 1) are the most numerous (N = 5912). Cluster 2 (unconditional pessimists) follows this group (N = 2072). Cluster 3, the class of individuals with the most positive appraisals, is ranked third (N = 1854), while conditional pessimists constitute the least numerous category (N = 1193). Close inspection of Figure 1 also reveals that cluster 3 is the most dominant of all groups in Japan, while 4 prevails in Korea, followed by 1. In Taiwan, similar to Japan, cluster 3

is the most prevalent class, followed by cluster 2.

The table under "Direct Effects" also reveals important country-level differences among the three democracies. Considering how responses to these prompts translate into numerical values, positive coefficients reveal more positive attitudes and vice-versa. Accordingly, although the Japanese are the least satisfied with democracy and Taiwanese the most, Taiwanese rate their system as the least democratic. Another important difference is that the Japanese are the least likely to think that their politicians are corrupt, while the Taiwanese locate themselves on the opposite end of this spectrum (Keum and Campbell 2018, 40). Japanese citizens are also the most likely to prioritize democracy over development, and Taiwanese the least.

The "Model for Indicators" provides an R^2 that captures how well the latent variable explains these indicators. The latent variable is primarily picking up attitudes about satisfaction with democracy and secondarily, how democratic respondents think their country is - those two variables have the highest R^2 s in the table. R^2 s and direct effects together indicate that while the Japanese conception of democracy is fundamentally procedural (and hence different from that of Koreans and Taiwanese), the Japanese are cynical about how well these procedures work in their country (Park and Chang 2013, 69). On the other hand, Taiwanese (and to a lesser extent South Koreans) seem to value the freedoms and procedures afforded by democracy (judging by the positive signs on the direct effect of the "satisfaction" indicator) but care more about the substance of democracy such as the prosperity or integrity it generates. Finally, and as expected, increasing youth is associated with increasingly more negative perceptions of corruption among government officials.

Our analysis indicates that, because its citizens favor democracy over development, Japan is the least Confucian democracy in Northeast Asia (Shin 2012, 94). We cannot say with certainty whether their conception of democracy places more emphasis on democratic procedures or individual rights (Park 2013), but the Japanese stand apart from the Taiwanese and South Koreans, where Confucianism manifests itself in the priority some citizens still give to economic development.

Finally, the analysis reveals that while perceptions of corruption do not add very much to the measurement of democratic attitudes, they affect how individuals perceive the desire for, level of, and quality of democracy in their societies. One's financial situation, on the other hand, does not seem to differentiate individuals very much in their attitudes, and neither do appraisals of the country's economic situation. This agrees in part with the analysis in Huang, Chu, and Chang (2013, 160-161), who found that "only *Overall Economic Evaluation* is positively significant [on regime legitimacy], not *Household Economic Satisfaction*", which they attribute to some features of collectivism in the Asian context.

Taken together, our results indicate that although citizens in Northeast Asian democracies see economic growth as being somewhat in tension with liberal governance, this view does not necessarily threaten evaluations of democratic performance or translate into a clear preference for dictatorship. The marginal probabilities for being in class 1 indicate, moreover, that a majority of Japanese, Koreans, and Taiwanese (55.45%) feel somewhat "optimistic" about their political system, with another 17% placing in class 3 and thus feeling very positive about their system. Koreans, however, seem more dissatisfied with their democracy than Taiwanese people, and this translates into the high levels of protest Koreans exhibit (Alemán 2019).

VII. Conclusion

We set out to find how assessments of performance influence support for democratic systems in Northeast Asia. We have found that, while democracy has taken hold institutionally, it is still subject to varying levels of support based upon citizen evaluations of how the system works in practice. Our analysis further uncovered two classes of citizens that we refer to as "optimists" who regard their country as democratic, like how their political system is working, and think of democracy as suitable for their country. We also found two groups of individuals we dub "pessimists" who think the opposite. How corrupt respondents regard their government drive these patterns: optimists feel not many government officials are corrupt, whereas pessimists think a majority are. Perceptions of government corruption thus color the views individuals have about how democracy performs and how desirable it is, regardless of whether they rate economic or political development as more important. More optimistic individuals are less cynical about the performance of government actors and have reserved, but positive, outlooks about the future of democracy. Their counterparts are more pessimistic, sometimes prioritizing economic development while also questioning the ethics of their leaders and the likelihood that democracy will persist in their country.

This framework offers guidance for scholars who seek to understand the relationship between Confucian values and democracy support in Northeast Asia. If democracy has a large number of disaffected citizens, how does this skepticism affect democratic governance? There are competing claims about the effects of these dynamics on elections, attitudes towards fellow citizens, and political engagement. Disaffected citizens might possess certain characteristics that may then translate into preferences separate from the greater population. For example, individuals who perceive a disconnect between democratic ideals and performance might be predisposed towards unconventional forms of political participation.

Thus, as scholars unpack the nature of these relationships, they can examine how the attitudes citizens hold towards democratic rule can mobilize them to engage in the political process or deter them from action.

Acknowledgments

The data analyzed in this article were collected by the Asian Barometer Project (2005-2008, 2010-2012, 2013-2016), which was co-directed by Professors Fu Hu and Yun-han Chu and received major funding support from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Academia Sinica, and National Taiwan University. The Asian Barometer Project Office (www.asianbarometer.org) is solely responsible for data distribution. The authors appreciate the assistance in providing data by the institutes and individuals aforementioned. The views expressed herein are the authors' own. We would also like to thank participants in panels at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association and the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association (where previous versions of this paper were presented) for helpful comments and questions.

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Received 일 월 2021

Received in revised form 일 월 2021

Accepted 일 월 2021