Cultural Origins of Diffuse Regime Support among East Asians
Exploring an Alternative to the Theory of Critical Citizens

Doh Chull Shin

Abstract

Why do some Asians support their regime, while others do not? Do they do so due to the particular type of culture they experience in their daily lives? If culture matters significantly, does it shape their diffuse regime support directly or indirectly? To address these questions, this essay first introduces multidimensional conceptions of both culture and diffuse regime support, and then analyzes their empirical relationships, qualitatively and quantitatively, within the context of the third round of the Asian Barometer Surveys conducted in eleven countries. Results of this analysis reveal that the particular type of culture East Asians uphold significantly influences whether their regime perceptions become critical or deferential. The critical or deferential perceptions they possess, in turn, lead them to embrace or reject their regime. This important finding, that culture shapes regime support indirectly by affecting the way in which people perceive their regimes, challenges the popular theory of critical citizens, and calls for an alternative theory of regime support based on the prevalent types of culture in existence at the time.

Keywords: Confucianism, critical citizens, culture, regime perceptions, regime support.

Over the past decade, the Asian Barometer program has conducted three successive rounds of public opinion surveys to explore East Asia’s democratization. These surveys have examined both the institutional and the cultural dynamics of democratization in East Asia and have revealed that most people in the region have yet to become unqualified supporters of democracy.¹

---

Doh Chull Shin is Jack W. Peltason Scholar in Residence at the Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine. <ShinD@missouri.edu>

While scholars agree there is a lack of enthusiasm for democracy among East Asia citizens, there has been little consensus concerning the reason. No theory has been able to explain fully why so many East Asians are reluctant to unconditionally embrace this system of government that is preferred in other regions of the world.²

To address the question regarding the sources of democratic cultural underdevelopment in East Asia, an increasing number of social scientists have looked to the region’s Confucian cultural legacies.³ However, much of the resulting research on these legacies has suffered from conceptual and theoretical limitations.⁴ This study seeks to overcome these limitations with multidimensional conceptions of both culture and diffuse regime support. With the benefit of these nuanced concepts, the study then explores the direct and indirect links between culture and democratic politics within the context of the latest third wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS). The theory of critical citizens is evaluated, which attributes the lower level of support for regimes of democracies than for regimes of nondemocracies exclusively to the contentious nature of democratic citizen politics.⁵ After showing how this theory falls short, the study explores a viable alternative by linking cultural preferences and regime support among East Asians to the various ways in which they perceive their own political regime.

This essay is organized into six sections. The first introduces anthropologist Mary Douglas’s fourfold typology of culture, and thereby distinguishes Confucian culture from three other types of culture for comparative analysis. The second section introduces the two distinct dimensions of diffuse regime support—institutional and systemic—ascertaining four different types of regime support. The next section analyzes the latest wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys and identifies the most and least prevalent types of culture among East Asians. The fourth and fifth sections provide, respectively, (1) a comparison of the levels and patterns of regime support across East Asian countries and their

---


⁴ For a detailed discussion of these limitations, see Doh C. Shin, Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chap. 2.

regime types, and (2) an analysis and comparison of Confucian hierarchical culture with other cultures as an influence on diffuse regime support as well as comparison of the overall influence of culture on such support with that of demographic, socioeconomic, and other variables. The final section takes up the puzzle of why nondemocracies enjoy greater diffuse regime support than democracies. By establishing the powerful links between regime perceptions and support and between culture and regime perceptions, this study challenges the popular theory of critical citizens and calls for an alternative theory of regime support based on the prevalent types of culture.

**Four Types of Culture**

What constitutes culture? What distinguishes Confucian culture from other types of culture? More than thirty years ago, anthropologist Mary Douglas proposed the grid-group analysis as a heuristic tool for identifying cultural diversity and comparing cultures. Since then, political scientist Aaron Wildavsky and other scholars have developed the grid-group analysis into a theory that explains how individual citizens and institutions formulate their political preferences and act to realize those preferences in the political process. As a unique way of “combining functionalism and rationality,” this cultural theory, also named grid-group analysis, is known to “take [the] theory of ‘bounded rationality’ a long step forward.”

Central to the theory is the notion that viable ways of life are limited and determined primarily by the patterns of sociality or social relations for which people opt. The patterns of social relations, in turn, depend exclusively on the group with which people associate and the norms or rules that direct their interactions with other people in the group. As Wildavsky notes, the first dimension of social life called “group” deals with the question of identification (i.e., Who am I?). The second dimension called “grid” addresses the question of behavior (i.e., How should I behave?). By combining these two key dimensions of social life, grid-group cultural theorists have identified four viable ways of life: **hierarchism, individualism, egalitarianism,** and **fatalism** (also called **reclusivism**). Each of these four ways of life corresponds to a particular pattern of values that individuals cherish and which determines how their choices are made.

---

9 Wildavsky, “Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions.”
In grid-group cultural theory, “group” stands for incorporation into a bounded group; thus, it separates individuals into “those to interact with” and “those not to interact with.” According to Douglas, “The strongest effects of group are to be found where it incorporates a person with the rest by implicating them together in common residence, shared work, shared resources and recreation, and by exerting control over marriage and kinship.”\(^{10}\) In other words, the group dimension of social life refers to the strength of attachment to formal or informal associations. It is strong when those associations are tightly knitted and penetrate every aspect of a person’s life. It is weak when they are loosely organized and allow their members to come and go as they please, without any sense of allegiance or loyalty.

The grid dimension of social life stands for regulations or restrictions on individual behavior. According to Douglas, “The term ‘grid’ suggests a cross-hatch of rules to which individuals are subject in the course of their interaction. As a dimension, it shows a progressive change in the mode of social control.”\(^{11}\) In other words, “grid” refers to the extent to which people are controlled in their interactions with other members of their own groups and the society in which they live. Therefore, the grid becomes strong or weak depending on the number of constraints placed on individuals’ interactions. A grid becomes strong when the rules and regulations directing people are so powerful that there is little room left for individual freedom. It becomes weak when people do not feel compelled to follow rules and regulations.

To what extent are people bound by the formal or informal groups with which they affiliate? To what extent do they face and comply with external restrictions on their behavior? Grid-group theorists maintain that the answers to these two questions, which deal with the two key dimensions of social life, hold the key to ascertaining people’s cultures.\(^{12}\) These cultural theorists also maintain that people formulate different value preferences and priorities as a consequence of their grid and group positions.

Table 1 depicts four distinct ways of life in terms of the strength of group affiliation and regulation of social relations. People who live with weak group affiliation and weak external regulation live in a culture of individualism. Individualism spawns a competitive culture, as it places high priority on the individual pursuit of personal rewards. In this culture, people do not highly value personal ties based on family, ethnicity, and other personal characteristics. They favor a free flow of people from one type of group to others with widely

\(^{10}\) Douglas, *Cultural Bias*, 14.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 8.

varying characteristics. Individualists are self-interested and seek to live free of others’ control; they are, therefore, free to negotiate with others as they wish and are able to pursue what they think is best for them. They view fairness in social interactions mainly in terms of equality of available opportunity and blame themselves for their failures rather than institutional malfunctioning. In the individualist way of life, there is much competition and little cooperation among people.

Table 1. A Typology of Cultural Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Incorporation</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Fatalism</td>
<td>Hierarchism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong group affiliation together with strong regulation results in a second distinct way of life called **hierarchism**. Hierarchism, unlike individualism, values affiliation with groups formed exclusively on the basis of family and other personal ties. It seeks to maintain strong solidarity among group members by placing highly binding proscriptions on their behavior. The proscriptions are justified on the grounds that the collective whole is more important than its individual members. Assuming humans are not equal in their capacities, hierarchism emphasizes the need to differentiate roles for different people so that they can live harmoniously by avoiding competition and conflict. Further, hierarchism emphasizes respect for authority and the observance of historical customs, as well as existing rules and regulations to maintain law and order. Adherents of hierarchism, therefore, understand fairness in terms of equality before the law and blame disruptions of peace on those who do not conform to rules and regulations. Critics of hierarchism say the immense trust placed in authority poses a serious risk.

Strong group affiliation coupled with weak regulation produces a third distinct way of life called **egalitarianism**. Egalitarianism resembles hierarchism in highly valuing close and exclusive ties among group members. Unlike hierarchism, however, it dismisses the need for authority, regulation, and role differentiation because humans are viewed to be broadly equal in their capacities and capable of reaching collective decisions through discussions and consensus among group members. Egalitarians understand fairness in terms of equality of results. Critics of this way of life nevertheless point out that an

---

unwillingness to endorse authority as a means to resolve internal conflicts is likely to lead to frequent deadlocks.

Finally, the combination of weak group affiliation with strong regulation produces a culture of fatalism. People of this type of culture are separated from others by imposition or choice. Either way, they are barred from joining groups by the rules and regulations that control social relations, including the various qualifications set in terms of race, money, and education. As a result, they have no close friends with whom to talk and no incentive to cooperate with others. Social avoidance rather than social interaction distinguishes fatalists from the adherents of the other three cultures. For fatalists, therefore, there is no such thing as fairness. Because they blame their disappointments on fate itself or bad luck, they are not motivated to organize or make plans to change their lives.

Applying the group-grid analysis to Confucianism reveals that it is a culture that emphasizes both strong group identification and strong proscriptions on social relations. In the Confucian world, family constitutes the most fundamental unit of social life. Just as the family consists of highly differentiated roles, so do all other groups and organizations, which are ordered hierarchically, with superiors and subordinates fulfilling their respective roles. In fulfilling these roles, individuals are required to abide by a variety of norms. With individuals feeling a strong identification with their families and accepting strong proscriptions on social relations, Confucianism as a way of life is an example of hierarchical culture.

**Diffuse Regime Support**

The notion of diffuse regime support originates from the conceptual framework David Easton proposed for the study of political legitimacy. In this framework, he distinguishes three objects of support among individual citizens—political community, political regime, and authorities for governing—as well as two different modes of their support for those objects—diffuse and specific. Unlike a political community in which people cooperate with fellow citizens and political authorities who are in charge of daily governing, the regime refers to the system of political institutions stipulated in the constitution. Accordingly, Easton defines diffuse support for the regime as representing stable and long-term commitments to the system, which are independent of the actual performance of the regime’s component institutions. Diffuse regime support is, therefore, fundamentally different from specific support for elected and appointed officeholders, who are responsible for making and implementing political decisions on a daily basis. It is also a multidimensional construct

---

14 Shin, Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia, chap. 3.
denoting a “long-term and stable reservoir of favorable attitudes” or “affective citizen goodwill.”\textsuperscript{16}

Being a reservoir of affective goodwill, diffuse regime support is a multidimensional phenomenon.\textsuperscript{17} Specifically, it varies in breadth and depth, as do reservoirs of water. The breadth dimension refers to the number of favorable attitudes people hold toward the constitutionally stipulated system of institutions as a whole. The more favorable the views of citizens are toward the entire system of government from a variety of perspectives, the broader their reservoir of good will is. The more broadly they favor the regime, the more stable their support becomes. This is because citizens are likely to maintain a favorable view of the extant system when they value it from a variety of divergent perspectives, including those of absolutism, relativism, individualism, and communitarianism.

The depth dimension of the goodwill reservoir, on the other hand, concerns citizens’ attachment to separate components of the system (i.e., individual institutions stipulated in the constitution, comparable to roots of an individual tree). The more institutions they embrace as trustworthy, the deeper their commitment to the entire system of government. The deeper their commitment to the system, the longer it is likely to last. The shallower their commitment is, the shorter it is likely to last. The depth dimension, therefore, contributes to the endurance of the commitment, while the breadth dimension contributes to its stability.

Being a two-dimensional phenomenon, diffuse regime support can vary quantitatively and qualitatively. Each of the two dimensions varies in magnitude from broad to narrow or from deep to shallow. A quantitative difference in one dimension, however, does not always occur concurrently with a similar difference in the other dimension. In the real world, the level of diffuse regime support is more likely than unlikely to fluctuate across its two dimensions because the whole system often represents more than or other than a sum of its parts. When its two dimensions are considered together, therefore, there are qualitatively distinct types of differences in diffuse regime support.

To ascertain such types, we first order the level of diffuse regime support in each dimension into two categories, low and high. Specifically, we employ narrow and broad categories in ordering the level of systemic support or support for the entire system of government, and shallow and deep categories in ordering support for individual institutions. We then consider these two categories of each dimension together and identify four distinct types of

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 273.
diffuse regime support. The first type, the uncommitted, features a low level of support in both dimensions, that is, narrow in systemic support and shallow in institutional support. The second and third types of partial support for the regime highlight unevenness in the support level, low in one dimension and high in the other. The second pattern, called the systemically committed, features a high level of systemic support and a low level of institutional support. The third pattern, the institutionally committed, is characterized by a low level of systemic support and a high level of institutional support. The fourth pattern, the fully committed, highlights a high level of support in both the systemic and institutional dimensions.

Previous research on regime support has shown that the level of citizen regime support varies greatly across the types of political systems. Specifically, citizens in nondemocratic systems are significantly more supportive of their systems of government than are their peers in democratic systems. In light of this finding, we propose that the prevalent types of diffuse regime support vary significantly across the types of political systems in East Asia. It is likely that the fully committed are most prevalent in the most authoritarian regimes and least prevalent in the most democratic regimes. Conversely, the uncommitted are likely to be least prevalent in most authoritarian regimes and more prevalent in most democratic regimes.

The Prevalence of Four Cultural Types

How do the contemporary publics of East Asia live their lives? What types of culture do they practice most often? Do they still remain more attached to the Confucian culture of hierarchism than to the non-Confucian cultures of individualism? To explore these questions, we selected two three-item sets from the third wave of the Asian Barometer Surveys conducted in eleven countries (see the appendix for general information about sample size, the fieldwork, and the wording of the survey questions). The first set concerns the extent to which East Asians are attached to three different units of association—family (Q50), groups (Q51), and the nation (Q52)—in which they interact with other people, formally and informally. The second set addresses the extent to which rules and regulations constrain interpersonal life within the family (Q55), school (Q56), and informal group (Q57). By counting affirmative responses to the three questions in each set, we constructed two four-point indexes, one measuring the overall strength of group attachment, and the other measuring grid constraint on social relations.

For each of the eleven countries in East Asia and for the region as a

---

whole, figure 1 shows the mean of each of these two dimensional indexes, which can range from a low of 0 to a high of 3. On the index measuring the combined strength of group ties, all East Asian countries scored above 2.3, a score significantly higher than the index midpoint (1.5). In striking contrast, on the index measuring the overall strength of grid constraint on group life, all of these countries, except Malaysia and Indonesia, scored below the midpoint. On these two four-point indexes, the group dimension scores nearly one point, or over 60 percent higher than the grid dimension (2.3 vs. 1.4). This difference suggests that, while East Asians, by and large, still remain attached to collective units, they are freed from many rules and regulations governing their associational lives.

![Figure 1. Mean Levels of Attachment to Social Groups and Norms (on a four-point index)](image)

Notably, all of the countries score significantly higher on group dimension than on the grid dimension of culture. More strikingly, while *the fully constrained* in the grid dimension constitute a majority in none of the countries, *the fully attached* in the group dimension constitute a majority in more than half of the countries surveyed (China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam—see figure 2). These findings clearly indicate that, in East Asia, the two dimensions of culture have been evolving unevenly; changes have been taking place in the grid dimension to a greater extent than in the group dimension. It appears that East Asians feel free in their interactions with other people, but still remain attached to the groups with which they are affiliated.

All in all, what types of culture do East Asians favor most? Do they still favor the hierarchical way of life Confucius and early Confucians prescribed
as proper? Or are they more in favor of other types of culture, which are known to be prevalent in the West? Does the prevalent type of culture vary across the countries of East Asia? In table 2, we explore these questions in terms of the four distinct types of culture identified by low and high levels of group identification and grid regulation. For each East Asian country and for the region as a whole, the table reports percentages of adherents to the four cultural types.

The most notable feature of the table is that the majority of people in East Asia does not report experiencing the Confucian culture of *hierarchism*. Those

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Culture That Individuals Favor (%)</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Fatalism</th>
<th>Egalitarianism</th>
<th>Hierarchism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experiencing this culture form a small plurality of about one-third (35 percent) of the East Asian population. Although across the region as a whole hierarchism is slightly the most prevalent culture, it is not the most prevalent type in most of the countries. Instead, egalitarianism is more prevalent than hierarchism in most of the countries of the region. In eight countries—Japan, China, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam—egalitarianism is the most experienced culture. In contrast, in only three countries, Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia, is hierarchism experienced the most. Contrary to what is expected from the Asian Values thesis, East Asia is no longer a region of Confucian culture, which features strong group attachment and high grid constraint.

Another notable feature of the table is that none of the four cultures is experienced by a majority of the people across the entire region of East Asia. Instead, relatively small minorities, ranging from a low of 6 percent (fatalism) to a high of 35 percent (hierarchism), report experiencing each way of life. Moreover, in all East Asian countries except Indonesia, those experiencing any particular type of culture do not constitute even a bare majority. This finding clearly indicates that East Asia no longer forms a single cultural zone based on the Confucian culture of hierarchical collectivism. Instead, it represents a region where divergent cultures compete against each other as alternative ways of life.

In figure 3, we explore whether the Confucian and non-Confucian subregions of East Asia are significantly different from each other in the prevalence of cultural experiences. For this exploration, we placed China,
Korea, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam into the Confucian region, and Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand into the non-Confucian region. These two subregions are alike in that upholders of any cultural type do not constitute a majority, and fatalism and individualism are the two least experienced cultures.

Nonetheless, the two subregions are significantly different in the two cultural types which people experience most. In Confucian East Asia, people experience egalitarianism more than hierarchism, by a margin of 8 percent (37 percent vs. 29 percent). In the non-Confucian region, people experience hierarchism more than egalitarianism by a larger margin of 10 percent (32 percent vs. 42 percent). This finding that hierarchical culture, which Confucius and his students prescribed as the proper way of life more than two millennia ago, is actually more prevalent in non-Confucian East Asia contradicts the central claim of the Asian Values thesis. It suggests that Confucian culture represents a traditional way of life not confined to historically Confucian East Asia. Also, it reveals that the region has begun to shift away from the Confucian culture of hierarchism.

Do East Asians’ cultural experiences also differ across the types of regime in which they live? Figure 4 shows that none of the four cultures has majority experience in any of the four types of regimes. However, in all four regime types, people experience fatalism and individualism much less than egalitarianism and hierarchism. Yet, the two most experienced types are different across regime types. In liberal democracies and one-party states,
egalitarianism is more prevalent than hierarchism. In electoral democracies and electoral authoritarian states, on the other hand, hierarchism is more popular than egalitarianism. Why experiences of hierarchism are more commonplace in regimes with multiple parties than in one-party states remains a mystery.

Another point worth noting is that the proportion of respondents reporting a culture of individualism varies a great deal more with their regimes’ levels of democratization than among the proportions of respondents reporting living in the other three cultures. The more individualistic East Asians are in their cultural experience, the more democratic their regime is. Conversely, the more democratic the regime is in which East Asians live, the more individualistic their cultural experiences are. As a result, individualists are most numerous in liberal democratic regimes (30 percent), followed by electoral democracies (13 percent), electoral authoritarian regimes (10 percent), and one-party states (5 percent). They are six times more numerous in the most democratic state, Japan, than in the least democratic one-party states of China and Vietnam (30 percent vs. 5 percent). This suggests that, even in East Asia, individualism represents the type of culture most conducive to democratic politics, as the grid-group theory of culture holds. Nonetheless, it should be noted that in none of the countries in East Asia to date, including its oldest democracy, Japan (30 percent), does a majority report experiencing a culture of individualism.

Levels and Patterns of Diffuse Regime Support

Diffuse regime support, as discussed earlier, is conceptualized in this study as a subjective phenomenon with two distinct dimensions of favorable political orientation. One dimension concerns the favorable orientations people hold toward their entire systems of government, while the other reflects the orientations they hold toward those systems’ component institutions. The first dimension, which can be called systemic or holistic support, notes the breadth or stability of diffuse regime support. The second dimension, institutional support, concerns its depth or endurance. By considering breadth and depth of support together, this study seeks to offer a more comprehensive and balanced account of diffuse regime support, which David Easton characterized as consisting of “stable and long-term commitments.”

To measure the stability dimension of systemic support, we selected from the third wave of the ABS a set of four questions (Q80, Q81, Q82, and Q83), each of which asked respondents to evaluate, either favorably or unfavorably, their entire governmental system from a variety of holistic perspectives,

such as pride, efficacy, and preference. To measure the second dimension of institutional support, which taps support depth or endurance, we also selected another set of four questions, each of which asked respondents to rate the trustworthiness of their regimes’ key institutions—the national government (Q9), courts (Q8), parliament (Q11), and political parties (Q10).

By summing affirmative responses to the four questions in each set, we constructed two five-point dimensional indexes of diffuse regime support, each of which ranges from a low of 0 to a high of 4. These dimensional indexes are combined into a nine-point index to identify respondents’ overall levels of support, which range from a low of 0 to a high of 8. With these two indexes, we attempted to measure stable and long-term commitments to the system of government. Using the earlier waves of the ABS, diffuse regime support was measured primarily in terms of attachment to democracy in principle and in practice. In East Asia where nondemocracies outnumber democracies, however, democratic regime support cannot be equated with diffuse regime support.

For each East Asian country and for the region as a whole, figure 5 reports the means on the two indexes, one indicating the mean level of support for the entire system of government and the other denoting the mean level of support for its institutions. The region’s means on these two indexes show that all eleven countries in the region together averaged above the midpoint (2.0) of each dimensional index (i.e., 2.9 on the index of systemic support, and 2.1 on

Figure 5. Levels of Institutional and Systemic Support (on a five-point index)

---

the index of institutional support). Being above the mean, these dimensional scores suggest that political regimes in East Asia currently enjoy a comfortable level of citizen support. Yet, a significantly lower level of institutional support indicates that many East Asians favor the system of their governments much more than their institutions and are far from being fully committed to their regimes.

Careful scrutiny of figure 5 reveals great variation in levels of both systemic and institutional regime support across the countries in the region. The 0-4-point index measuring systemic support, for example, varies from a low of 1.6 in Korea to a high of 3.9 in Vietnam. The same five-point index measuring institutional support varies much more, from a low of 0.8 in Korea to a high of 3.8 in China. According to these figures, the mean level of regime support is from two to four times higher in communist China and Vietnam than in democratic Korea. Of the eleven countries surveyed, moreover, Korea and Japan are the only two countries to score below the midpoint (2.0) on both dimensional indexes. China, Singapore, and Vietnam, on the other hand, scored above 3.0 on both dimensional indexes. Between these two groups—democratic and nondemocratic countries—the level or quantity of diffuse regime support is significantly lower in the former than in the latter.

In table 3, we examine cross-national differences in the qualitatively different types of regime support. For each country, the table shows the percentages falling into each of four support types, which are identified by considering together support levels in both dimensions. As described earlier, these types are the uncommitted, the institutionally committed, the systemically committed, and the fully committed. In China, Singapore, and Vietnam, the fully committed to the regime constitute large majorities of more than 60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Uncommitted</th>
<th>Systemically Committed</th>
<th>Institutionally Committed</th>
<th>Fully Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
percent, while the uncommitted constitute very small minorities of less than 5 percent. In Japan and Korea, in striking contrast, the fully committed to their regime constitute small minorities of about 10 percent, while the uncommitted constitute considerable majorities of more than 55 percent. These two groups of East Asian countries exhibit qualitatively contrasting patterns of regime support. This finding suggests that the prevailing pattern of diffuse regime support among ordinary citizens has much to do with the particular type of regime in which they live.

In figure 6, we explore whether the most prevalent types of regime support vary across the four types of regime. In liberal and electoral democracies, the uncommitted are the most numerous, with a plurality of 31 percent. In electoral authoritarian states and one-party states, they are least numerous, with a very small minority of less than 3 percent. The most numerous in electoral authoritarian and one-party states are the fully committed, who form a substantial majority of 60 percent. In the first group consisting of democratic regimes, the uncommitted are significantly more numerous in liberal democracies than in electoral democracies (45 percent vs. 28 percent). In the second group, consisting of nondemocracies, on the other hand, the fully committed are more numerous in one-party states than in electoral authoritarian states (60 percent vs. 59 percent). Increases in the level of democratization always are accompanied by decreases in the fully committed and increases in the uncommitted to the regime. This finding of greater regime support among

Figure 6. The Prevalence of Regime Support Types across Four Regime Types
citizens of less democratic countries contradicts the democratic learning theory that holds that the experience of democratic politics leads to greater support for democracy, while it is consistent with the theory of critical citizens that claims that democratic political experience makes citizens critical of their regime.

**Culture as an Influence on Diffuse Regime Support**

Does culture matter significantly in orienting East Asians directly toward or away from the regime in which they live? Does it matter significantly in every type of regime in which they live? If it does, what types of culture are most and least conducive to regime support? Do those cultural types vary from one type of regime to another? How does culture compare with other known influences on regime support? To address these questions regarding cultural influences on regime support, we need to estimate and compare the net or independent effect that culture exerts directly on regime support with those of other known influences on it.

To this end, we first identified a set of eight variables, each of which is known in the theoretical literature to compete with culture as an alternative explanation of diffuse regime support, and we added to this set two new variables exploring, respectively, critical perceptions of democratic regimes and deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes among East Asian populations. We then estimated and compared the net effects of these and cultural variables by performing, on the third round of the ABS, the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA). Unlike other techniques of multivariate analysis, the MCA is uniquely capable of handling predictors measured on a nominal scale, such as the types of culture and regime perceptions. It is also capable of estimating the statistically adjusted and unadjusted values of each category of those nominal-scale predictors.\(^{21}\)

The ten predictors chosen as control variables for the MCA include gender, age, educational attainment, family income, assessments of governmental performance, assessments of the national economy, interpersonal trust, associational membership, and the two categories of regime perception. The two demographic characteristics of gender and age represent the theory of socialization, which holds that the values and norms learned during the formative years and practiced in life during those years remain lasting influences on the way in which people react to politics.\(^{22}\) In this respect, they can be considered another set of indicators reflecting cultural traits. Of the two variables of regime perception, the one concerning critical perceptions of

---


democratic regimes represents the theory of the critical citizen, which attributes a low level of support for democratic regimes to those regimes’ allowance, and even encouragement, of citizens to be critical. The other variable, tapping deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes, represents the flipside, which attributes a high level of support for authoritarian regimes that insist that citizens submit without voicing criticism.

The two socioeconomic variables of education and income represent the theory of modernization or neomodernization, which holds that socioeconomic development exposes the masses to postmaterialistic values and allows them to develop cognitive capacity. The two variables bearing on assessments of governmental and national economic performances, on the other hand, represent the theory of regime performance. This theory holds that when citizens assess their governments and economies positively, their support of their regime builds, whereas negative assessments lead to citizens’ lessening their support. Finally, the two variables of interpersonal trust and associational life represent the theory of civil society, which links social capital to citizen allegiance to a regime, particularly when the regime is democratic.

Table 4 reports the results of three pairs of MCA analyses. The first two pairs are based on the subsamples of democratic and nondemocratic countries, respectively. The third pair is based on the pooled sample of all eleven democratic and nondemocratic countries surveyed. The beta coefficients reported in this table are equivalent to standardized regression coefficients and, thus, allow us to determine the relative importance of each independent or control variable as an influence on the dependent variable of diffuse regime support. Beta coefficients of 0.7 and higher values are generally considered to indicate that predictors are direct influences of both statistical and substantive significance on the dependent variable.

Does culture matter significantly as an influence on diffuse regime support in both democratic and nondemocratic countries? If it does, how differently or similarly do its types affect the institutional and systemic dimensions of such support? These two questions, concerning the magnitude and patterns of cultural influence, have not been addressed in any of the previous survey-driven studies based exclusively on unidimensional conceptions of culture and regime

---

23 Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*.


Table 4. Sources of Diffuse Regime Support (MCA Results)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Democracies</th>
<th>Nondemocracies</th>
<th>All Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>Systemic Support</td>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>0.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Perceptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracies</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nondemocracies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((R^2))</td>
<td>(0.225)</td>
<td>(0.235)</td>
<td>(0.340)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
support. To address these questions, we first collapsed liberal and electoral democracies into the subsample of democracies, and electoral authoritarian and one-party states into that of nondemocracies to generate a sufficient number of cases for the MCA. On each subsample, we then performed a separate MCA of institutional and systemic support and estimated the magnitude of cultural impact on each dimension of regime support.

Table 4 shows that, in the subsample of democratic countries, the two beta coefficients—one for institutional support (0.11) and the other for systemic support (0.17)—for the culture variable are both statistically and substantively significant. In the second subsample of nondemocracies as well, the two beta coefficients are significant with 0.8 (institutional support) and 0.13 (systemic support). These findings, when considered together, make it clear that in democratic as well as nondemocratic countries, culture affects both dimensions of diffuse support significantly. In other words, regardless of the type of regime in which East Asians live, the particular type of culture they experience has a significant impact on their regime orientation, whether it is positive or negative.

A careful comparison of the two beta coefficients in each subsample of East Asian countries reveals that, in both subsamples, the coefficient estimating the magnitude of cultural influence on systemic support is much higher than the magnitude of cultural influence on institutional support. In democratic countries, the coefficient for systemic support is one-and-a-half times larger than the one for institutional support (0.17 vs. 0.11). In nondemocratic countries, the same pattern holds with the former outweighing the latter by a similar margin (0.13 vs. 0.08). In both democratic and nondemocratic countries, culture is more instrumental in shaping orientations to the entire system of government itself than its component institutions. Thus, culture is more influential on the dimension tied to stability of support (systemic) than on the dimension tied to durability of support (institutional).

In addition, table 4 reveals an interesting pattern of cultural influence when beta coefficients are compared across the two subsamples of East Asian countries—democratic and nondemocratic. The two coefficients for the democratic subsample reported in the first two columns of the table are much larger than the coefficients for the nondemocratic subsample reported in the third and fourth columns. Between these two subsamples, the democratic leads the nondemocratic in the extent to which culture affects both the institutional dimension (0.11 vs. 0.8) and the systemic dimension (0.17 vs. 0.13) of diffuse regime support. Evidently, in East Asia, culture matters to a greater extent in democratic countries than in nondemocratic countries, although it matters significantly in both types of regime.

If culture matters significantly, which particular cultural types contribute most and least to the institutional dimension of diffuse regime support? Which types contribute most and least to its systemic dimension? Do the most and least conducive cultural types vary across these two support dimensions? These
questions, which have not been addressed in any previous studies, are explored in two steps. We first pooled the third wave of the ABS conducted in all eleven East Asian countries. Then we estimated the independent or net effect of the culture variable on the levels of dimensional and overall regime support in the entire region of East Asia. Figure 7 reports the adjusted level of such support for each of the four types of culture. This level refers to the level of such support after the effects of all other predictors are statistically removed.

Of the four cultural types discussed earlier, the figure shows that hierarchism registers the highest level of support on both dimensions, while individualism registers the lowest level on those dimensions (the same patterns holds true when the entire sample of eleven countries is disaggregated into the two subsamples of democratic and nondemocratic countries). As a result, the overall level of diffuse regime support is one point higher on a nine-point index among upholders of hierarchism than those of individualism (5.2 vs. 4.2).

Similarly, figure 8 shows that the fully committed to the regime are most numerous among those experiencing hierarchism, with 42 percent, and least numerous among those experiencing individualism, with 31 percent, even after the effects of all other predictors have been statistically removed. All these findings make it clear that, throughout East Asia, hierarchical culture, featuring strong group attachment and high grid constraint, contributes most to diffuse regime support. Individualistic culture, featuring weak group attachment and low grid constraint, on the other hand, contributes least to or detracts most from it.
How does culture compare with other predictors as an influence on diffuse regime support? According to the results of the MCA reported in the fifth column of table 4, which treated the overall level of diffuse regime support as the dependent variable, culture is not the only variable that matters significantly. Nor does it register the largest beta coefficient. Of the six predictors found to be significant statistically, the culture variable (0.12) ranks fourth after deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes (.28), assessment of governmental performance (0.27), and assessment of the national economy (0.21). Evidently, culture is not the force directly shaping the breadth and depth of diffuse regime support most powerfully. Yet, it affects regime support more powerfully than six of the ten other tested variables, including the two—education and income—representing modernization, and the two—interpersonal trust and associational membership—representing social capital.

The most powerful set of direct influences consists of the two variables representing performance theory (i.e., the performances of the government and of the national economy). According to the adjusted level of overall diffuse regime support reported in figure 9, the more favorably East Asians rate the performances of their government and of the national economy, the more broadly and deeply they support their regime. Even when there is control for the type of resident regime, better assessments of governmental and economic performances are always accompanied by higher levels of regime support. Such positive and monotonic relationships between them confirm the performance
theory linking the fulfillment of citizen needs to regime support.

Another more notable feature of the data reported in the fifth column of table 4 concerns the relative potency of the two variables pertaining to regime perceptions, both of which are statistically significant predictors. These two variables, again, are critical perceptions of democratic regimes and deferential perceptions of authoritarian regimes. Citizens of democracies were considered to have critical perceptions if they reported living in either a democracy with major problems or a nondemocracy, whereas citizens of nondemocracies were considered to have deferential perceptions if they went along with their leaders and reported living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems.

According to the betas reported in the fifth column, a deferential perception of an authoritarian regime is the most powerful of all the predictors of overall regime support included in the MCA, with a coefficient of .28. Furthermore, a deferential perception affects the overall level of diffuse regime support among the East Asian population, over two times more powerfully than a critical perception of a democratic regime (0.12 vs. 0.28). This finding indicates that the main cause of the relatively lower level of regime support in democratic East Asia is not the emergence of critical democrats in the region but the prevalence of deferential authoritarians in authoritarian East Asia. It also casts doubt on the central claim of the theory of critical citizens that democratic regimes enjoy a significantly lower level of citizen support than nondemocratic
regimes, mainly because the former inherently contributes to the development of critical spirit among their citizens.

How do such divergent regime perceptions affect the way in which East Asians embrace their regimes? Which regime perceptions are the most and least likely to encourage East Asians from committing themselves fully to their regime? To address these questions, we first classified respondents into four types of regime perceivers by considering both the types—democratic and nondemocratic—of regime in which respondents live and their positive and negative perceptions of the regime. The four types of regime perceivers include *uncritical democrats*, citizens of democracies who report living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems; *critical democrats*, citizens of democracies who report living either in a democracy with major problems or a nondemocracy; *compliant authoritarians*, citizens of nondemocracies who report living either in a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems; and *noncompliant authoritarians*, citizens of nondemocracies who report living either in a democracy with major problems or a nondemocracy.

Of the four types, two, *critical democrats* and *compliant authoritarians*, are directly relevant to the puzzle of diffuse regime support, that is, significantly lower regime support in democracies than in nondemocracies. *Critical democrats* detract from support by perceiving their regime as a malfunctioning democracy or misperceiving it as a nondemocracy. *Compliant authoritarians*, in contrast, contribute to regime support as deferential authoritarians, who misperceive their regime as a well-functioning democracy.

Of the four types of citizens, none comprises a majority of the entire East

Figure 10. The Distribution of East Asians across Four Types of Regime Perceptions
Asian population (see figure 10). Yet compliant authoritarians, who go along with their leaders in calling their authoritarian system a democracy, are most prevalent, with a plurality of 34 percent. They are followed by uncritical democrats, who comprise 31 percent of the East Asian population, critical democrats, who comprise 21 percent, and noncompliant authoritarians, who comprise 8 percent. In East Asia as a whole today, residents who are uncritical in their regime perceptions outnumber those who are critical by a large margin of more than two to one (65 percent vs. 29 percent). Among uncritical perceivers, authoritarians outnumber democrats by a small margin (34 percent vs. 31 percent). Among critical perceivers, on the other hand, democrats outnumber authoritarians by a much larger margin of nearly three to one (21 percent vs. 8 percent). Consequently, in East Asia today, deferential authoritarians are most numerous; they are over one-and-a-half times as prevalent as critical democrats (34 percent vs. 21 percent).

Which type of regime is more successful in transforming the political mindset of its citizens? To explore this question regarding the effect of political resocialization, we calculated the percentages of critical and uncritical democrats among the population of democratic East Asia and those of compliant and noncompliant authoritarians among the population of nondemocratic East Asia. According to the percentages reported in figure 11, citizens of nondemocratic countries are oriented toward their regime over four times more favorably than unfavorably (75 percent vs. 18 percent). Citizens of democratic countries, on the other hand, are oriented toward the regime only one-and-a-half times more favorably than unfavorably (57 percent vs. 39 percent). When these differences are considered together, it is evident that

Figure 11. Regime Perceptions among Citizens of Democratic and Nondemocratic Countries

![Bar chart showing regime perceptions among citizens of democratic and nondemocratic countries]

December 2013 | 25
the nondemocratic regimes are over two times more successful than democratic ones in eliciting favorable images and stifling unfavorable images of their governance.

Across the four types of citizens, figure 12 compares the _adjusted percentages of the fully committed_ to their regimes. These percentages are derived from results of the MCA reported in the sixth column of table 4. Between the two types of _critical perceivers_, the _fully committed_ are much less prevalent among citizens of democracies than those of nondemocracies (22 percent of critical democrats are fully committed vs. 39 percent of noncompliant authoritarians). Between the two types of _uncritical perceivers_, also, they are much less prevalent among democracies than nondemocracies (26 percent vs. 63 percent). Regardless of whether they perceive their regime critically or uncritically, people in democratic East Asia are consistently less supportive of their regimes than their peers in nondemocratic East Asia (24 percent vs. 59 percent). Undoubtedly, this finding is supportive of the theory of critical citizens, linking the lower level of regime support among democracies to the critical spirit of democratic politics and the practices of their contentious citizen politics. Nonetheless, it cannot be considered a full answer to the puzzle of why reservoirs of citizen goodwill are narrower and shallower in democracies than in nondemocracies.26

---

A careful comparison of the percentages reported in figure 12 suggests that the huge support gap of thirty-five percentage points (24 percent vs. 59 percent) between the two types of regime is mainly due to citizen misperceptions of authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies. Between the critical and uncritical perceivers of democracies, there is a small difference of four percentage points in the adjusted percentage of the fully committed to the regime (22 percent vs. 26 percent). Between the critical and uncritical perceivers of nondemocracies, in striking contrast, there is a large difference of twenty-four percentage points (39 percent vs. 63 percent). More noteworthy is that the commitment gap within nondemocratic East Asia is six times as large as the gap that exists within democratic East Asia (24 percent vs. 4 percent). This indicates that the extent to which positive regime perceptions among citizens of nondemocracies contribute to those citizens’ full commitment to their regimes is six times greater than the extent to which negative regime perceptions among citizens of democracies detract from their full commitment.

Figure 12 also shows that between the two categories of critical regime perceivers, citizens of nondemocratic regimes lead those of democratic regimes in full regime commitment by 16 percent (39 percent vs. 22 percent). Between the two categories of uncritical perceivers, citizens of nondemocracies also lead citizens of democracies by a larger margin of 37 percent (63 percent vs. 26 percent). That is, the extent to which positive perceivers of authoritarian regimes lead positive perceivers of democratic regimes is over two times as large as the extent to which negative perceivers of the former lead those of the latter (thirty-seven percentage points vs. sixteen percentage points). This is another piece of evidence suggesting that the extent to which citizens of the nondemocracies are deferential to their regime outweighs the extent to which those of democracies are critical of their regime.

All in all, some inherent quality of democracy that encourages citizens to be critical cannot fully explain the support gap of thirty-five percentage points that exists between democratic and nondemocratic East Asia. Instead, much of this gap is attributable to the preponderance of deferential authoritarians in nondemocratic East Asia (i.e., those who go along with their leaders in describing their authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies). Consequently, we must conclude that the theory of critical citizens, alone, is insufficient for solving the puzzle of why citizens of nondemocracies are far more supportive of their regime than their peers living under democratic regimes. Arriving at a solution will require an alternative theory that takes into account regime perceptions.

**Culture and Regime Perceptions**

Among East Asians today, diffuse regime support depends largely upon how citizens perceive their regimes. According to the betas reported in the sixth column of table 4, regime perceptions constitute the most powerful influence
on the dependent variable of the fully committed to the regime. Specifically, the beta coefficient for this variable is over two times as large as the second and third powerful predictors: assessments of the government and the national economy (0.40 vs. 0.19; 0.40 vs. 0.16).

What motivates East Asians to perceive their regimes in the way they do? Does culture motivate them to do so? If it does, what particular types of culture contribute most and least to misperceptions of an authoritarian regime as a well-functioning democracy? What cultural types contribute most and least to perceptions of a democratic regime as a malfunctioning regime? To explore these questions, we need to compare the proportions of deferential authoritarians and critical democrats across the four previously defined cultural types.

Figure 13 shows that deferential authoritarians, who mistake their authoritarian regime for a well-functioning democracy, are most numerous among citizens experiencing a hierarchical culture (40 percent), followed by those experiencing egalitarianism (37 percent), fatalism (25 percent), and individualism (22 percent). In striking contrast, critical democrats, who perceive their democracies as malfunctioning or as nondemocracies, are most numerous among those experiencing individualism (32 percent), followed by those experiencing fatalism (29 percent), egalitarianism (22 percent), and hierarchism (20 percent). These findings, when considered together, reveal consistent patterns of association among cultural types, on the one hand, and regime perceptions, on the other.

Figure 13. Percentages of Deferential Authoritarians and Critical Democrats within Each Cultural Type
Specifically, the more strongly East Asians are attached to groups and the more strongly constrained they are by social norms, the more likely they are to perceive their authoritarian regimes as well-functioning democracies and the less likely they are to perceive their democratic regimes as either malfunctioning or nondemocratic. On the flipside, the less closely East Asians are tied to social groups and the less bound they are to social norms, the less likely they are to perceive their authoritarian regimes as democracies and the more likely they are to perceive their democratic regimes critically.

Another finding worth noting is the impact of group versus the impact of grid. In the cultures that mix, critical democrats outnumber deferential authoritarians among individualists and fatalists, who do not experience strong group incorporation, while deferential authoritarians outnumber critical democrats among egalitarians and hierarchs, who do (see figure 13). As discussed earlier, critical regime perceptions among citizens of democratic regimes discourage them from supporting their regimes diffusely, while deferential regime perceptions among those of authoritarian regimes encourage them to do so (see figures 7 and 8).

The preponderance of critical democrats over deferential authoritarians among individualists and fatalists, therefore, entails a net loss of diffuse regime support. In contrast, the preponderance of deferential authoritarians over critical democrats among egalitarians and hierarchs entails a net gain of such support. As a result, reservoirs of citizen goodwill become broader and deeper in nondemocracies with larger portions of hierarchs than in democracies with larger proportions of individualists.

In short, the particular type of culture East Asians experience in daily life influences whether their regime perceptions will be critical or deferential. Which kind of perception they have, in turn, leads them to embrace or reject their regime. This two-step process of cultural influence on regime support constitutes an important piece of new evidence to suggest that culture affects regime support indirectly by affecting the ways in which people perceive their regimes.

All in all, culture appears to be an ultimate source of diffuse regime support; it shapes such support directly and indirectly, positively and negatively. Understanding the influence of culture puts in place several pieces of the puzzle

---

regarding greater citizen support for nondemocracies than for democracies in East Asia. The links between culture and support identified here call for a new theory of diffuse regime support, which is capable of overcoming the limitations of the widely popular theory of critical citizens. To build the new culture-based theory will require further analysis of the latest round of the Asian Barometer Surveys to determine more about the factors at work in the influence of culture.
Appendix
The Asian Barometer Third-Wave Surveys

1. Sample Size and Fieldwork Period

The Asian Barometer third-wave surveys were conducted in eleven countries between January 2010 and November 2011 by means of face-to-face interviews with a national sample of each country’s voting-age population. Listed below are the sample size and date of the fieldwork for each of the eleven surveyed countries. Further details about sampling and interviewing respondents are available from www.asiabarometer.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Fieldwork Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1,592</td>
<td>January – February 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>March 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>April – May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>April – August 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>September – October 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1,512</td>
<td>August – December 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>1,207</td>
<td>May 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>May 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3,473</td>
<td>July – October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1,214</td>
<td>October – November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Questions Concerning the Preferred Types of Culture

Please tell me how you feel about the following statements. Would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

**Attachment to Groups**

Q50. For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.

Q51. In a group, we should sacrifice our individual interest for the sake of the group’s collective interest.

Q52. For the national interest, individual interest could be sacrificed.

**Commitment to Norms**

Q55. Even if parents’ demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.

Q56. When a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law come into conflict, even if the mother-in-law is in the wrong, the husband should still persuade his
wife to obey his mother.
Q57. Being a student, one should not question the authority of his or her teacher.

3. Questions Concerning Diffuse Regime Support

Support for the Overall System of Government
Now I would like to ask you about the kind of government that we have in our country. These questions are not about the current leaders, but about our overall system, the way the government is set up in general, even though leaders might come and go. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Q80. Over the long run, our system of government is capable of solving the problems our country faces.
Q81. Thinking in general, I am proud of our system of government.
Q82. A system like ours, even if it turns into problems, deserves the people’s support.
Q83. I would rather live under our system of government than any other that I can think of.

Trust in Institutions
I am going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?

Q8. Courts
Q9. National government
Q10. Political parties
Q11. Parliament
Classification and Rating of Democracy
A Comparison

John Högström

Abstract

This study compares three indexes of democracy, the EIU, Freedom House, and Polity IV, and their classifications and ratings of the level of democracy in 157 countries in 2010. The comparison is based on dichotomous, trichotomous, and continuous measures of democracy. The findings show that the three indexes have discrepancies in all comparisons applied in this study. As a consequence, researchers and others who use democracy indexes should be aware that the indexes reach different conclusions concerning their classifications and ratings of democracy. Scholars also should be aware that the indexes favor and disfavor different countries and regions of the world in their ratings of democracy.

Keywords: Indexes of democracy, comparison, EIU, Freedom House, Polity IV.

This study contains a comparison among three indexes of democracy and their classifications and ratings of the level of democracy in 157 countries in 2010. Included are two of the current leading indexes of democracy, Freedom House and Polity IV, and one quite new index of democracy, the Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU’s) index of democracy. The aims of this study are threefold: (1) to investigate whether the three indexes rate countries with the same level of democracy and whether they classify the same countries in the world as democracies and nondemocracies, and as democracies, semidemocracies, and nondemocracies; (2) to discover whether any of the three indexes, when compared with the other indexes, favors or disfavors any specific geographic region in the world in its rating of countries’ level of democracy; and (3) to explore whether specific countries in each geographic region differ in their level of democracy compared with the other countries in the region, and whether the same countries differ in all three of the indexes’ ratings. The comparison is based on dichotomous, trichotomous, and continuous measures of democracy.

John Högström is a lecturer in political science in the Department of Social Sciences, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden. <john.hogstrom@miun.se>