Democratic Citizenship and Voices of Asia's Youth 研討會

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East Asian Youth's Understanding of Democracy

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Yun-han Chu

IPSAS, Academia Sinica and and Department of Political Science, NTU

yunhan@gate.sinica.edu.com

Min-hua Huang

Department of Political Science, Texas A&M University

neds5103@gmail.com

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Introduction

Students of democratization have long recognized that robust and widespread normative commitment to democratic form of government is critical to the survival of young democracies. As Larry Diamond puts it, the consolidation of democracy requires "broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine" (Diamond 1999, 65). To extend his argument, one might add that the future of a young democracy hinges largely on to what extent its youth generation has acquired a robust normative commitment to democratic form of government.

This proposition is anchored, however, on an assumption that citizens everywhere have the same cognitive understanding of what "democracy" is all about. But this could be a very heroic or even naïve assumption. More recently, many empirical evidences suggested that people living in different societies can have differing ideas of what democracy should be and actually is. Even people living under the similar cultural and social condition may conceive democracy in divergent ways (Shi, 2010; Chu and Huang 2010).

It is not difficult to understand why democracy embraces so many different meanings in different contexts, some of them even mutually exclusive. First of all, in our time democracy is a universal brand name. The concept of "democracy" has been embraced by virtually all politicians everywhere including leaders of non-democratic regimes. Even in the most authoritarian countries such as Cuba or North Korea, the dictators always praise the value of democracy and keep claiming their regime the most democratic one. At the same time, in the domain of public discourse, democracy has always been a contested concept. Social actors with different ideological agenda and priorities have all claimed intellectual ownership over this universal brand name. Therefore, the word "democracy" has lost its distinctive semantic meaning and usually is associated with desirable political values, covering any variety of political systems in the world.

The mainstream literature on democratic citizenship is anchored on a procedural definition of liberal democracy following either the Schumpeterian or Dahlian tradition. However, we have strong reasons to believe that popular conception of democracy may be quite different from those of political scientists. So when we

address the issue of popular support for democracy we have to look into what kind of democracy that people have in mind. Otherwise, we cannot make sense of some perplexing findings from recent Asian Barometer Survey.

For example, as Saiful Mujani and Hendro Prasetyo have shown in their paper, Asian people predominantly support democracy as a desirable and suitable political system. In many countries, democracy is also viewed by the majority as the most preferable form of government that can solve societal problems effectively. At the same time, according to Freedom House ratings, among twenty-six countries or territories in Pacific Asia, only six countries are rated as "Free" in 2012. Why is the idea of democracy so popular, but very few Asian countries actually adopt democracy as their form of government?

Furthermore a more striking finding from recent Asian Barometer Survey is that East Asian tend to think of their political system as a democracy, regardless how undemocratic in view of expert judgment according to Freedom House or Polity IV Project (Chu and Huang, 2012).

The above discussion pinpoints one important issue in democratic citizenship, that is, popular conception of democracy could vary greatly from country to country. When people have different cognitive understanding of what democracy is, their expectation and evaluation of democracy will also be different. Instead of being anchored to a given definition, democracy becomes an all-embracing vocabulary that can refer to whatever people believe as a good political system. If we cannot unravel what this malleable part of democracy means, democratic citizenship is then undefined because we do not know what the word "democracy" actually means in a given context.

Previous studies based on the open-ended questions from Asian Barometer found that popular conception of democracy can be summarized into four components: social equity, norms and procedures, good governance, and freedom and liberty. Social equity refers to the idea that democracy is a political system that guarantees the protection of the disadvantaged and the provision of the minimum living standard for all by the government. Norms and procedures component refers to the idea that democracy is essentially a set of procedural arrangement that institutionalizes equal rights, open political contestation, popular accountability and separation of power. Good governance refers to the idea that in a democracy the government should perform well in various dimensions related to provision of political goods. Freedom and liberty component conceives the key element of democracy is the protection of political freedom and civil liberty such as freedom of expression, association and religion. We can further combine the components of social equity and good governance and label them as substantive understanding of

democracy, because both are all related to specific government outputs in general. For the similar reason, we can combine the components of norms and procedures and freedom and liberty as procedural understanding of democracy, because both value the process of political practice but not necessarily associate that with certain end results.

The conventional definition of democratic citizenship in the mainstream literature fits nicely with the procedural understanding of democracy defined above. If Asian people do conceive democracy in procedural terms, the existing theory of democratic citizenship should apply to Asian countries well. However, if popular conception of democracy is closer to the substantive terms, this means that Asian people do have in mind an alternative model of democracy, in which democratic citizenship should be redefined in accord with what people expect and how they evaluate about democracy.

In the chapter, we are going to answer the following questions:

1. Do Asian youth tend to conceive democracy in procedural (liberal democratic) terms or in substantive terms? Is their conception of democracy largely falls in line with other age groups? Can we find any discernible patterns across East Asia countries?

2. How do Asian youth view the level of democratic development of their own country? Do they perceive more or less democratic progress than other age groups? Do they aspire for more or less democratic progress than other age groups?

3. To what extent are Asian youth cognitively capable of ranking major countries in the region? How do Asian youth rank the level of democratic development of major powers in the region? Does their ranking conform to the objective ranking of these countries more or less than older generations?

4. What explains the differences among the youth? What's the impact of education, urban residence, Internet use and family's economic status on democratic understanding?

5. What are the implications for support for democracy and demand for political changes?

Measuring Understanding of Democracy

To measure people's understanding of democracy, Asian Barometer Survey during its third (and the most recent) wave designs a set of four questions with the following opening statement: "Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. If you have to choose only one from each four sets of statements that I am going to read, which one would you choose as the most essential characteristics of a democracy?" Here, each question presents four

statements and they correspond to the aforementioned four components. With four questions, each component has an equal chance of being placed the first, second, third and last on the response grid. In this way, we neutralize the order effect and the answers to the four questions represent how a respondent understands democracy. The specific statements for the four questions are listed below:

Q1. (1) Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (social equity)
(2) People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. (norms and procedures)
(3) Government does not waste any public money. (good government)
(4) People are free to express their political views openly. (freedom and liberty)

Q2. (1) The legislature has oversight over the government. (norms and procedures)
(2) Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. (social equity)
(3) People are free to organize political groups. (freedom and liberty)
(4) Government provides people with quality public services. (good government)

Q3. (1) Government ensures law and order. (good government)
(2) Media is free to criticize the things government does. (freedom and liberty)
(3) Government ensures job opportunities for all. (social equity)
(4) Multiple parties compete fairly in the election. (norms and procedures)

Q4. (1) People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations. (freedom and liberty)
(2) Politics is clean and free of corruption. (good government)
(3) The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power. (norms and procedures)
(4) People receive state aid if they are unemployed. (social equity)

For each component, we can compute the probability of being chosen. For example, if a respondent selects social equity in two of the four questions, the probability of his/her understanding of democracy as social equity is 50%. By this ways, we can derive a country estimate of popular conception of democracy in terms of each component.

Asian Youth's Understanding of Democracy

The convention wisdom in political science believes that youth tend to be more ideological and progressive than adult. The main reason is that youth have limited social experiences, and therefore, the frustrations they live through are not yet enough

to reduce their passion. Another reason is related to less pressure from marital status and financial burden since many of the youth are still single and do not have to bear family obligation. Both factors belong to life-cycle effects, and as time goes by, the youth become adult, and they realize they should put the priority to the job, the family, and the economic well-beings.

Does this theory apply to Asian youth? If the conventional wisdom does explain, we expect to see a higher probability for the component of norms and procedures and freedom and liberty since both are more ideological. As Figure 1 makes evidence, 31% Asian youth conceive democracy as the component of good governance, 27% as social equity, 23% as norms and procedures, and only 19% understand democracy as freedom and liberty. This result apparently runs counter to the conventional wisdom because 58% Asian youth conceive democracy in substantive terms and only 42% conceive in procedural terms.

Figure 1   Understanding of Democracy among Asian Youth
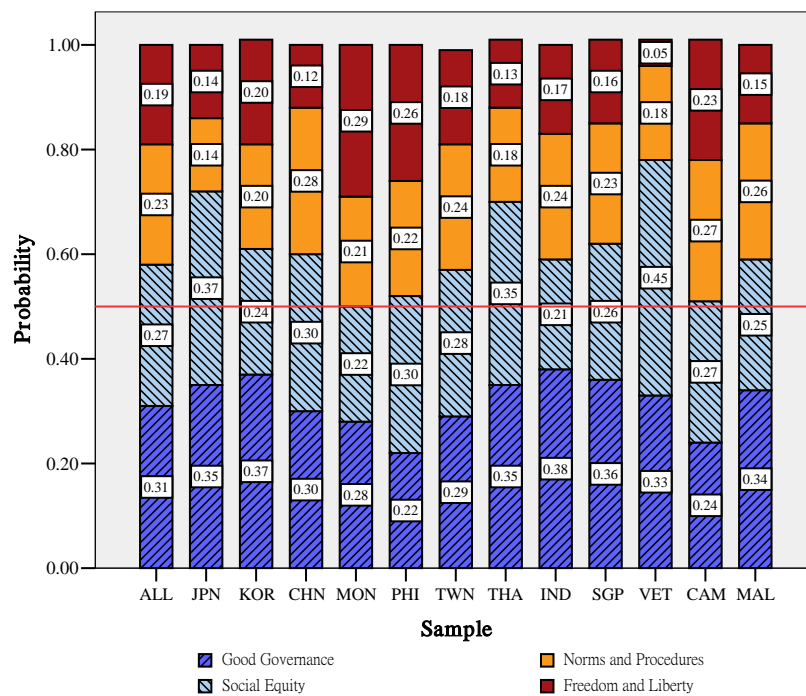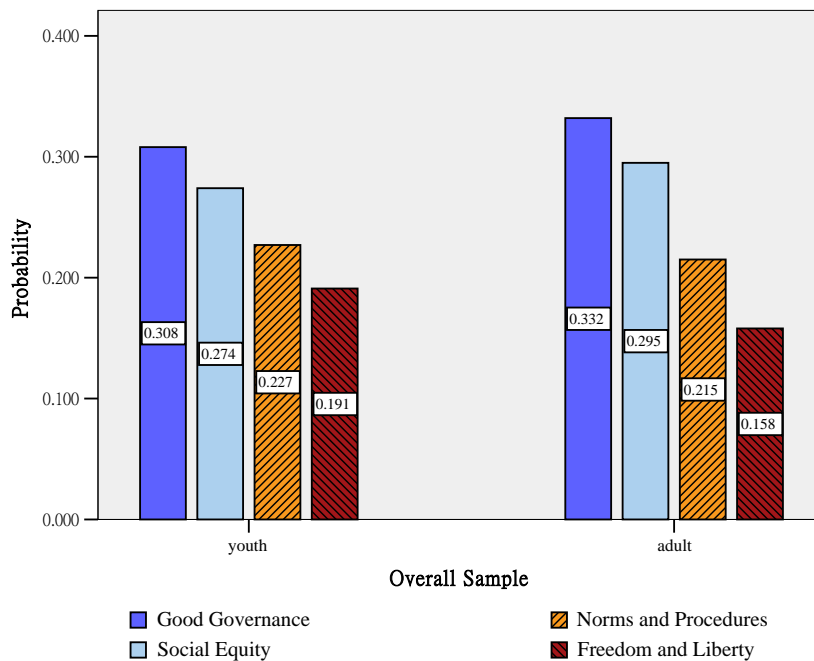

Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3 Wave 3

If we examine the result country by country, popular conception of democracy is consistently leaning to the substantive end instead of procedural end. Except for Mongolia and Cambodia, the numbers of substantive understanding are more than 50%, and this finding shows that Asian youth do tend to think of democracy in substantive rather than procedural sense. This conclusion is sustained by empirical findings cross East Asia countries.

It would be interesting to know whether this cognitive pattern is peculiar to Asian youth, or it is a general phenomenon to Asian people. To answer this question, we divide the overall as well as country samples into two dichotomized groups, youth vs. adult, and rank the four components by the probability measures from highest to lowest. As can be seen in Figure 2, Asian people in general think what is essential to democracy with the following order: good governance, social equity, norms and procedures, and freedom and liberty. This ranking appears in both of the youth and adult groups. Apparently, substantive understanding of democracy is not a particular cognitive character to Asian youth, but rather it pertains to all Asian people.

Figure 2   Understanding of Democracy by Age Groups

Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3 Wave 3

We further look into individual country cases and find that youth and adult do not differ much in terms of cognitive patterns regarding conception of democracy. Specifically, as Table 1 presents, in Japan, China, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia, the ranking of the two substantive components are all higher or equal (statistically indifferent) to the two procedural components, for both youth and adult. Therefore, we conclude that Asian youth's conception of democracy does largely fall in line with other age groups, and a discernible pattern frequently shows up across Asian countries is the top two ranking of two substantive components and the bottom two ranking of two procedural components for understanding of democracy.

Table 1 Probability Ranking for Components of Democratic Understanding

Sample	Youth's Rank	Adult's Rank
ALL	**GG>SE>NP>FL**	**GG>SE>NP>FL**
JPN	**SE=GG>NP=FL**	**GG>SE>NP>FL**
KOR	**GG>SE>FL=NP**	GG>NP>SE>FL
CHN	**SE=GG>NP>FL**	**SE>GG>NP>FL**
MON	FL=GG>SE=NP	**GG>NP=SE>FL**
PHI	SE>FL>NP=GG	FL=SE>NP>GG
TWN	**GG=SE>NP>FL**	**SE>GG>NP>FL**
THA	**GG=SE>NP>FL**	**SE>GG>NP>FL**
IND	**GG>NP=SE>FL**	**GG>SE>NP>FL**
SGP	**GG>SE=NP>FL**	**GG>SE>NP=FL**
VET	**SE>GG>NP>FL**	**SE>GG>NP>FL**
CAM	NP=SE>GG=FL	SE=NP>GG>FL
MAL	**GG>NP=SE>FL**	**GG>NP=SE>FL**

Note: SE: social equity, NP: norms and procedures, GG: good
governance, FL: freedom and liberty.
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3 Wave 3

**Asian Youth's Assessment of Democracy**

A distinguishing feature of youth population is their idealistic orientation toward politics. In Asia, major political events also exhibit this characteristic. For instance, student movements had been playing an important role in Korea's democratization process. In China, most of the participants in Tiananmen Square incident were college students. In Taiwan, the dissolution of the "ten-thousand-year Congress" was also associated with student's protest. These cases all show that Asian youth in the past were not just critical in ideas, but they were also leading activists. Thus, we expect to see that Asian youth are more critical for the past and current government, and more demanding for the future in the assessment of democratic development.

To evaluate the above expectation, we analyze three questions in Asian Barometer which ask people to assess how democratic of their past (ten years ago) and current government, and also how democratic they want for their future government. The rating scale ranges from one (completely undemocratic) to ten (complete democratic). Again, we divide the overall and country samples into youth and adult subgroups.

Figure 3 shows Asian youth's rating of their country's democratic development for three reference points. We find a conspicuous pattern of the result in the overall as well as individual country samples. Generally, Asian youth rank the current level of democratic development between 5 and 7. Except in Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia, Asian youth perceive the current level of democratic development higher than the past level. Meanwhile, they aspire for much higher level of future democratic

development, except in Japan. The lower ranking of the current democratic development in Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia is likely associated with the recent political hurdles in these countries. For instance, Thai politics has been somewhat unstable since 2006 military coup. Filipino Politics is also tumultuous during Arroyo's nine year presidency since President Estrada's step down in 2001. For Malaysia, political struggle inside United Malays National Organization (UMNO) has been heated since the political sack of the former deputy prime minister Anwar in 1998. The lack of variation for democratic assessment in Japan can be well explained by the long-time societal frustration toward unpopular political parties and politicians.

Figure 3   Asian Youth's Evaluation of Democratic Development
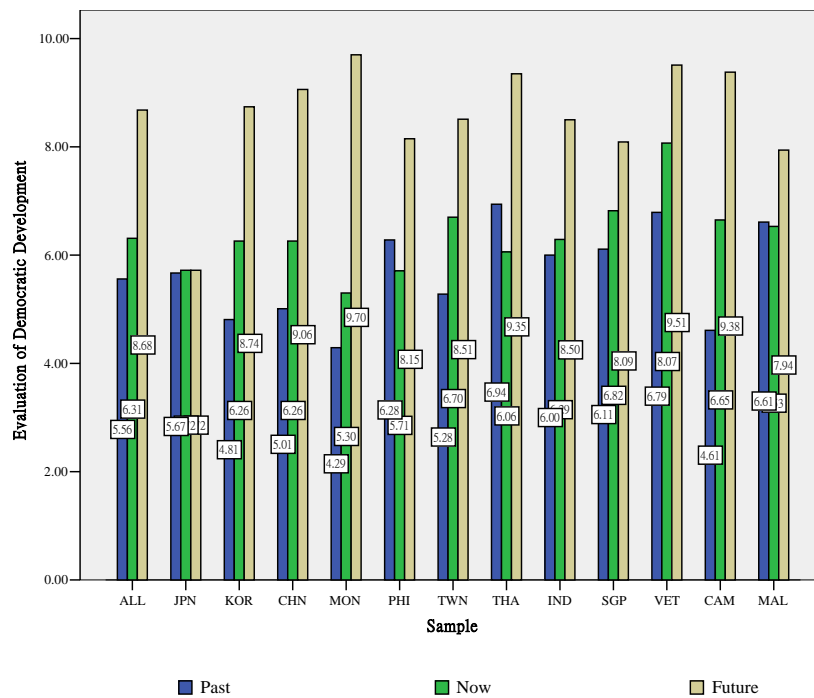
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

We further compare Asian youth with adult by using the overall samples. As Figure 4 shows, in comparison with adult, Asian youth tend to give lower ratings for the current and past level of democratic development, but expect to have a higher level for the future. These differences are all statistically significant, despite the fact the magnitude is very moderate, only -0.42, -0.25, 0.19 for the past, current, and future evaluation in terms of the 10-point scale. Nevertheless, this empirical evidence does confirm that Asian youth are more critical for the past and current evaluation, and they are looking forward to a higher level of democratic development in the future.

Figure 4　Assessment of Democracy in Asia, Youth vs. Adult
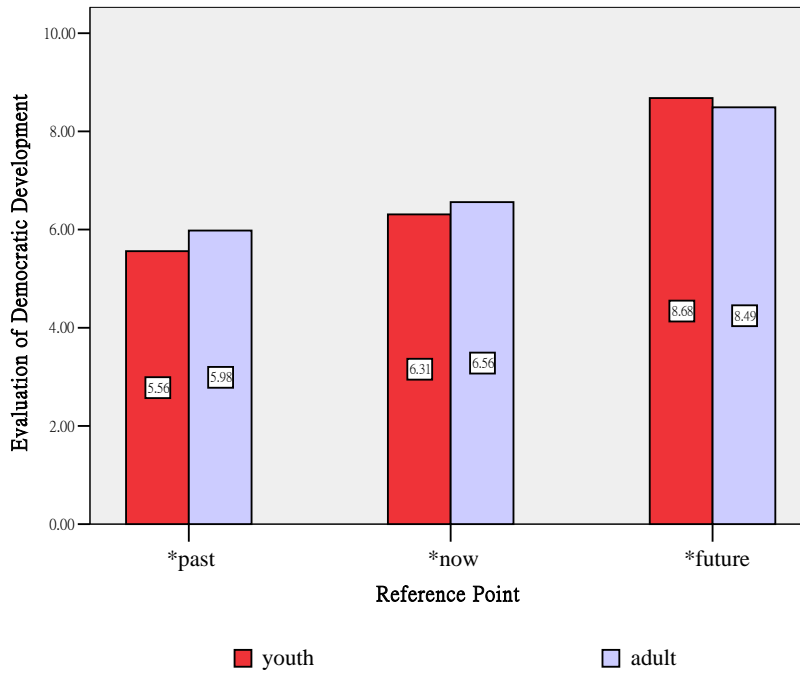
*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

**Table 2　Assessment of Democracy in Twelve Asian Countries,
Comparing Youth with Adult Subsamples**

Sample	Now	Past	Future
ALL	lower	lower	higher
JPN	lower	lower	lower
KOR	—	lower	—
CHN	lower	lower	lower
MON	—	—	higher
PHI	—	—	higher
TWN	—	lower	higher
THA	—	—	—
IND	lower	—	higher
SGP	—	—	—
VET	—	—	—
CAM	—	—	—
MAL	lower	lower	lower

Note: Only significant results are reported.
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

We extend the same comparison to the country samples, and the result is reported in Table 2. In general, we can conclude the same result as we found in the overall

sample. However, the finding is much weaker if we break down the overall sample into individual country samples. The criticalness for the past evaluation only significantly appears in Japan, China, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The criticalness for the current evaluation is merely significant in Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, and Malaysia. For the more demanding attitude toward the future, it only shows up in Mongolia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Indonesia, and there are even three cases against this finding, showing that young people expect lower future democratic development in Japan, China, and Malaysia.

While Asian youth are generally more idealistic in democratic assessment, the weaker findings in individual countries indicate that the substantial difference between youth and adult is limited. A plausible speculation is that the rapid development of the communication and internet technology for the past two decades has greatly narrowed the gap between younger and older generations. The flow of information and knowledge in the globalization era also synchronizes many different opinions and disposition for both youth and adult population. Therefore, despite the existence of minor difference, Asian youth and adult largely fall in line with regard to democratic assessment.

Asian Youth's Cognitive Capability

By definition, Asian youth were all born after 1980 and their socialization was immersed in the internet and globalization era after 1990s. They have more access to all kinds of information, and such technological breakthrough did not exist for their adult counterparts when they grew up before mid-1980s. In this sense, we expect to see Asian youth have more cognitive capability to understand democracy and international knowledge. In Asian Barometer, we can measure the respondent's cognitive capability of political knowledge by finding out what percentage of them are capable ranking the democratic development of major countries in Pacific Asia, including their own countries, China, United States, Japan, and India. If the answer is "do not understand the question", "cannot choose", or "decline to answer", we identify it as lacking cognitive capability. For other valid answers (from one to ten in the ten-point scale), we recognize it as having cognitive capability. Then we compute the probability of giving a valid answer out of the five questions and assign a capability score to each respondent.

Figure 5 summarizes the scores of cognitive capability for Asian youth and adult. Except in Vietnam, Asian youth do have more cognitive capability than their adult counterparts. Specifically, the overall sample shows that 86.0% Asian youth are cognitively capable to rank major countries, but only 78.2% Asian adult can do so. The largest margin appears in Indonesia and China, where youth are more capable

than adult by 19.5% and 16.3%, respectively. In Vietnam, youth only have a capability score 59.8% and it is lower than adult's score by 1.6%; however, the difference is not statistically significant. Overall, the measure of youth's cognitive capability is very close to or above 90% in most of Asian countries, but there are some exceptions. In Indonesia, the number is 77.3%, and in China, Thailand, and Vietnam, the statistics of youth's cognitive capability are 67.2%, 63.8%, and 59.8%, respectively.

Figure 5   Cognitive Capability in Asia, Youth vs. Adult
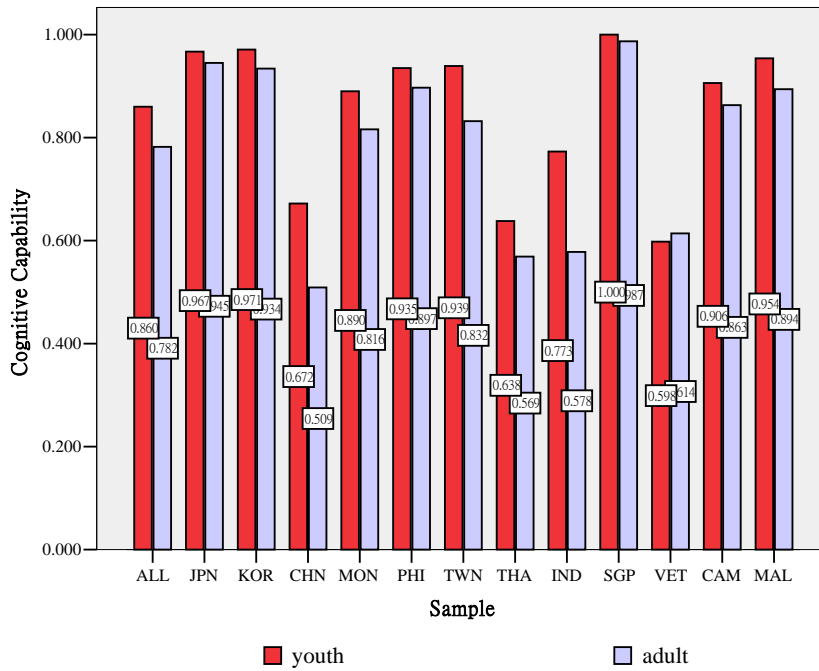
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

How do Asian youth rank the level of democratic development of major powers in the region? According to Freedom House ratings, United States ranks the first, Japan the second, India the third, and Chine the last. Their 2012 FIW (Freedom in the World, ranging from highest 1 to lowest 7) scores are 1, 1.5, 2.5, and 6.5, respectively. We use this rank order as the objective ranking to see whether Asian youth would rank the same. Figure 6 reports the rank order of Asian youth and adult by using the overall sample. The result indicates that Asian youth and adult both rank the four major powers in the following order: United States, Japan, India, and China, and it matches the objective ranking based on Freedom House ratings. Therefore, we can confirm the cognitive validity for Asian youth and adult.

Figure 6   Ranking Major Powers in Asia, Youth vs. Adult
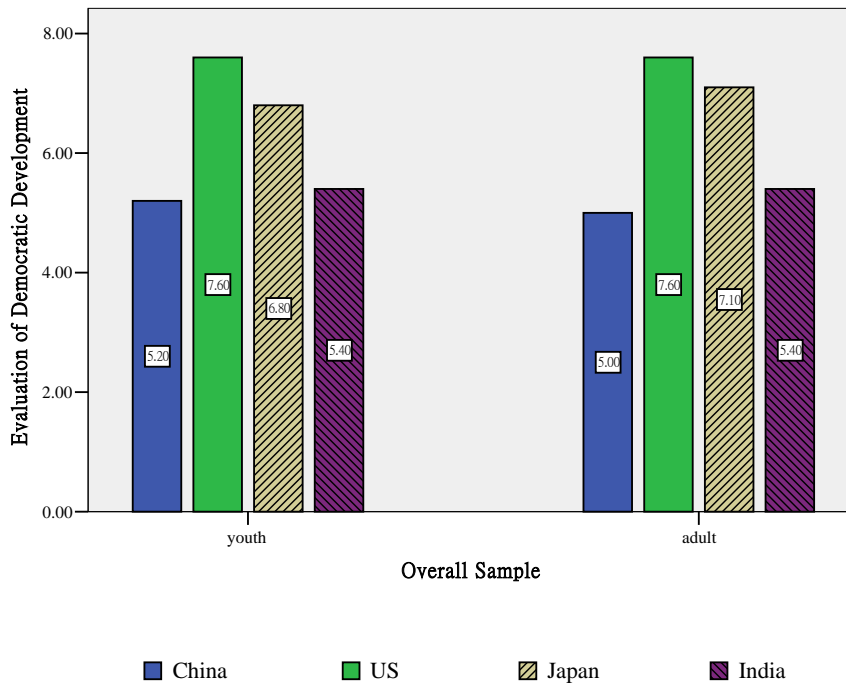
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Table 3   Ranking Major Power in Twelve Asian Countries, Youth vs. Adult

	Youth's Rank	Adult's Rank
ALL	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
JPN	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
KOR	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
CHN	US>Japan=China>India	China=US>Japan>India
MON	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
PHI	US>Japan>China>India	**US>Japan>India=China**
TWN	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
THA	US=Japan>China=India	**US=Japan>India=China**
IND	US>Japan>China>India	US>Japan>China=India
SGP	**US>Japan>India>China**	US>Japan>China>India
VET	Japan>China=India=US	Japan>US=China>India
CAM	**US>Japan>India>China**	**US>Japan>India>China**
MAL	Japan>US=China>India	Japan>US>China>India

Note: Only significant results are reported.
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Again, we extend the same comparison to the individual country samples. As Table 3 shows, some countries conform to the objective ranking, regardless of youth or adult, such as Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Cambodia. In Cambodia, youth's ranking conforms to the objective ranking but not the adult's ranking. In Philippines and Thailand, adult's ranking conforms to the objective ranking but not youth's ranking. In other four countries, such as China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and

Malaysia, we can see significant deviation from the objective ranking. In China, young people tend to rank China higher than India, but recognize US as a more democratic country; however, adult think China is the most democratic major power. In Indonesia, both the youth and the rest rank China higher or equal than India. In Vietnam and Malaysia, Japan ranks top, and US, China, and India follows in order, except in Vietnam where the youth ranks US the last.

Overall, Asian youth has very high cognitive capability to rank the democratic development of major powers in Pacific Asia. Their ranking conforms to the objective ranking published by NGOs, such as Freedom House. The difference between youth and adult is very limited. Asian adult have slightly lower cognitive capability than Asian youth, and the margin is less than 8% in most of the countries. Also, Asian adult rank major powers in the same order as their youth counterparts. These findings all show that Asian's youth do have the capability and knowledge to participate in politics.

Explaining Difference of Democratic Understanding among the Youth

Our earlier discussion has shown that Asian youth conceive democracy as four different components by different percentages, and specifically, the ranking from the highest to lowest are good governance, social equity, norms and procedures, and freedom and liberty. This raises a question: what are the factors explaining different understanding of democracy among Asian youth? To answer this question, we analyze the following explanatory variables, such as gender, education, urban residence, internet use, exposure to foreign media, and family's economic status, to look for possible explanatory sources. The target of the analysis is ABS third-wave overall sample, and all statistics are computed with the sampling weights which is the product of the country weight as well as individual weights.

The first explanatory variable is gender. As Figure 7 makes evidence, one significant finding is that 23.6% males tend to conceive democracy more as norms and procedures, and 21.9% females think so. The other finding is that 30.2% males choose good governance, and it is smaller than female's percentage, 31.4%. No significant difference can be concluded with regard social equity and freedom and liberty. In other words, males are more procedural oriented and females are more substantive oriented.

In Asian Barometer, education is measured with a ten-point scale, from no formal education (1) to post-graduate degree (10). Considering college education usually being defined as higher education, we dichotomize education variable into "college and above" (8 or above) and "below college" (7 or below). As Figure 8 shows,

Figure 7　Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Gender
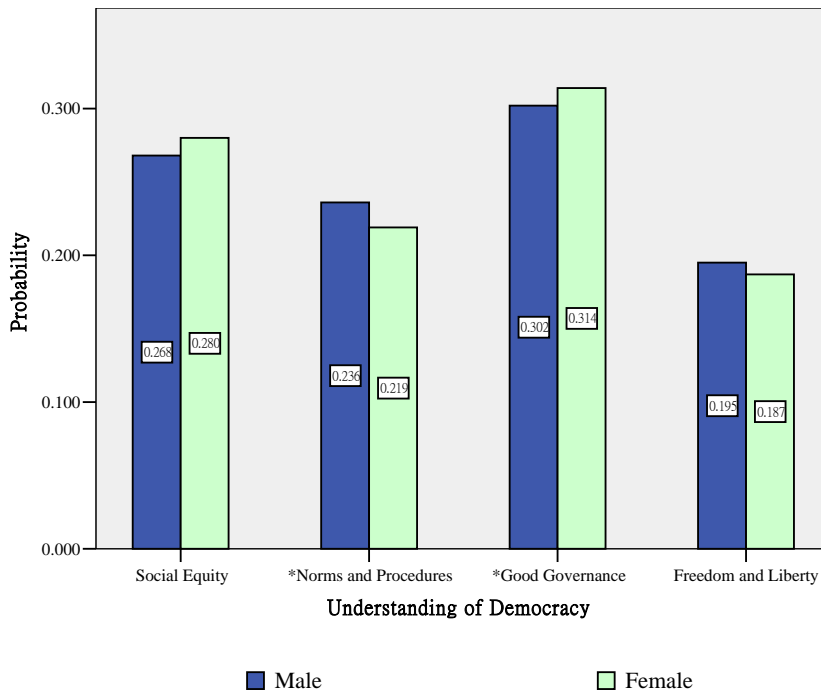
*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Figure 8　Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Education
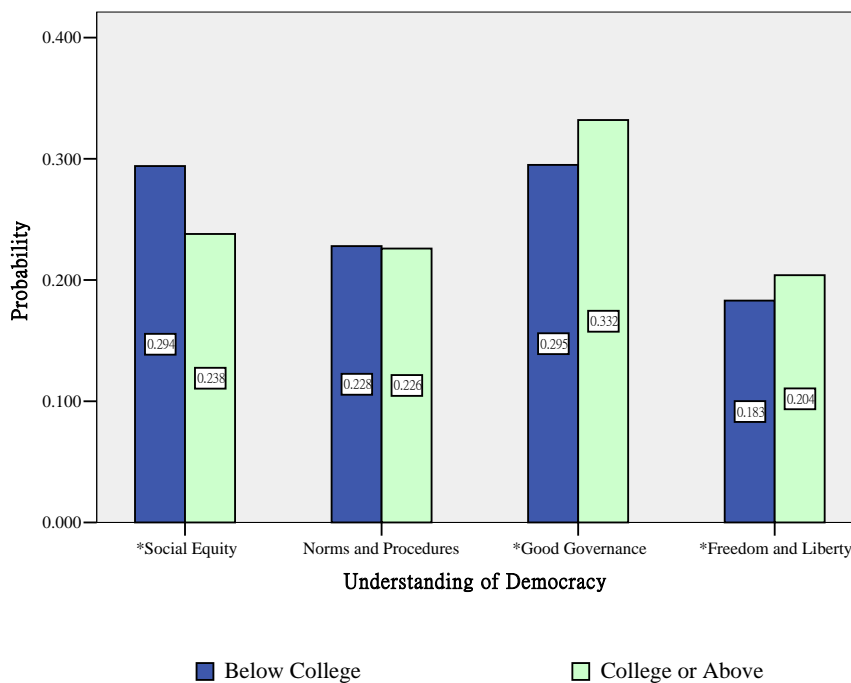
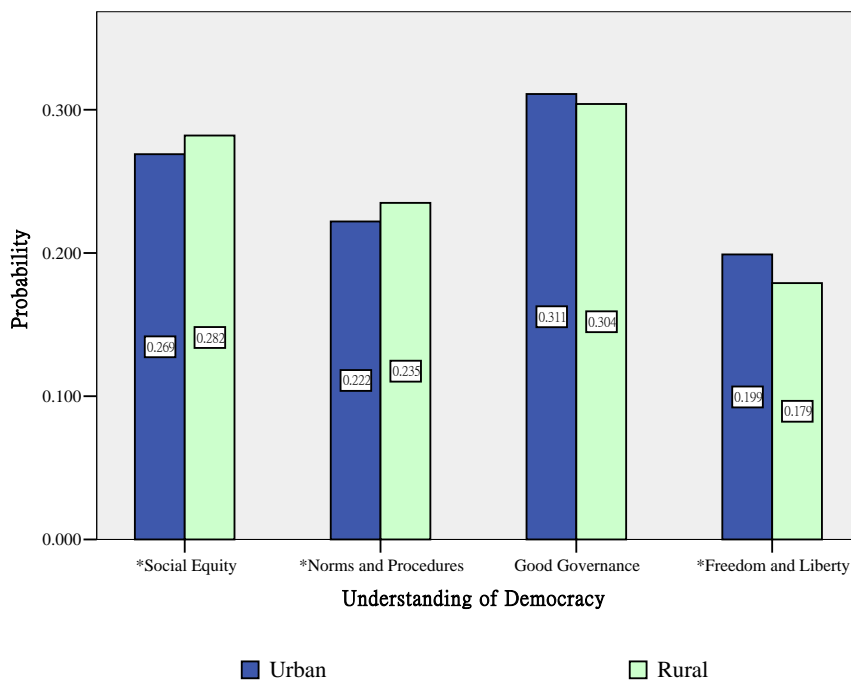

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

significant difference appears in social equity, good governance, and freedom and

liberty. For those whose education is college or above, their understanding of democracy as social equity is 29.4%, 5.6% higher than those whose education is below college. On the other hand, people who has below-college education have higher probability to choose good governance (33.2%) and freedom and liberty (20.4%). This result indicates that Asian youth with higher education tend to pay more attention to whether government can take care of people's need in their daily life. This might be related to a salient generation phenomenon, that is, the youth people in Asia in the recent decade have hardship to establish their career and financial status in comparison with the youth generation in the previous decades.

The famous modernization theory in political science has an argument that urban/rural residence will greatly affect their political values. Specifically, urban people are more likely to support the idea of democracy and they tend to be more idealistic. If we apply the same argument to Asian youth's conception of democracy, we should expect that urban residence is related to the component of norms and procedures or freedom and liberty. As shown in Figure 9, we find supporting evidence to this expectation since Asian youth who live in urban areas have a higher probability choosing freedom and liberty than their rural counterparts. However, the margin of the difference (2%) is very limited, so the substantial difference might be very moderate.
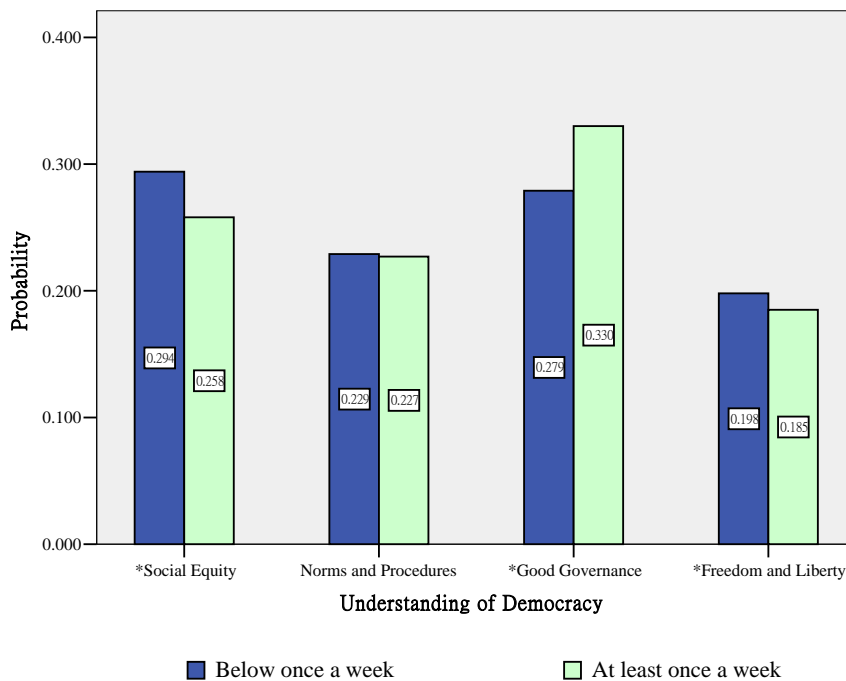
Figure 9　Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Urban Residence

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

As internet becomes a popular mode of communication since 1990s, the entry barrier for the access of political information has been largely lifted, even in authoritarian countries where the censorship is notorious. Comparing to those who seldom use internet, frequent internet users can know something they are interested in a much deeper and thorough way. Therefore, it would be interesting to know which component of democracy that frequent internet users value most. In Asia Barometer, the question that asks internet usage has a six-point scale, ranging from highest (almost daily) to lowest (Never). We recode the answers of this question by using "at least once a week" (1 to 2) for frequent users and the rest (3 to 6) for non-frequent users. Figure 10 shows the result that frequent users, comparing to non-frequent users, tend to conceive democracy more as good governance (33.0% vs. 27.9%), and less as social equity (25.8% vs. 29.4%) and freedom and liberty (18.5% vs. 19.4%). We can conclude that internet usage is closely associated with the tendency to conceive democracy as good governance. A possible explanation is that the objective information regarding whether the government performs well is not easy to acquire. So this finding reflects the fact that frequent internet users are more likely to pay attention and get access to the information for evaluating government performance.

**Figure 10   Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Internet Usage**

*Statistical significant at $p \leq 0.05$
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Economic factors might be another source of explanation to difference

conception of democracy among Asian youth. When people feel unsatisfied with their personal economic situation, they are likely to ask the government for more help and relatively pay less attention to something more idealistic in nature. In Asian Barometer, there is a question designed to ask respondent whether the total income of your household allow you to satisfactorily cover your needs. If the answer is positive, we recode it as "satisfied"; otherwise, it is coded as "unsatisfied". Table 11 reports the result and it shows that those who dissatisfied with their family's economic status tend to think democracy more as freedom and liberty (21.1% vs. 18.0%) and less as good governance (28.8% vs. 31.8%). This finding is contrary to the above expectation and it suggests that Asian youth cognitively agree with something they feel better. If they are satisfied with their family's economic status, they are prone to conceive democracy as good governance, something they value and have enjoyed. If they do not satisfy with their economic status, they choose to think democracy as something more idealistic and avoid the bad feeling of not having something they value.

Figure 11   Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Family's Economic Status
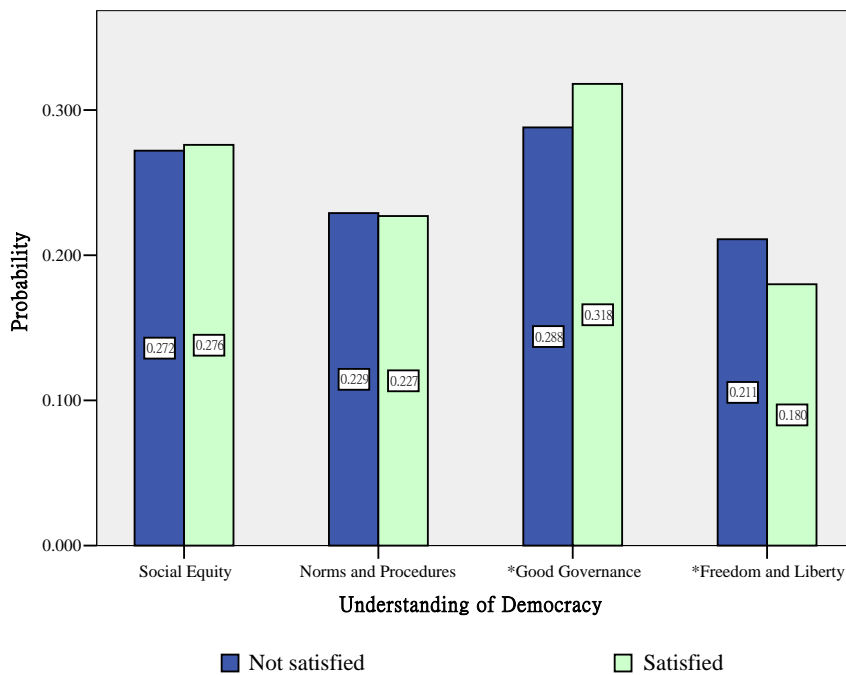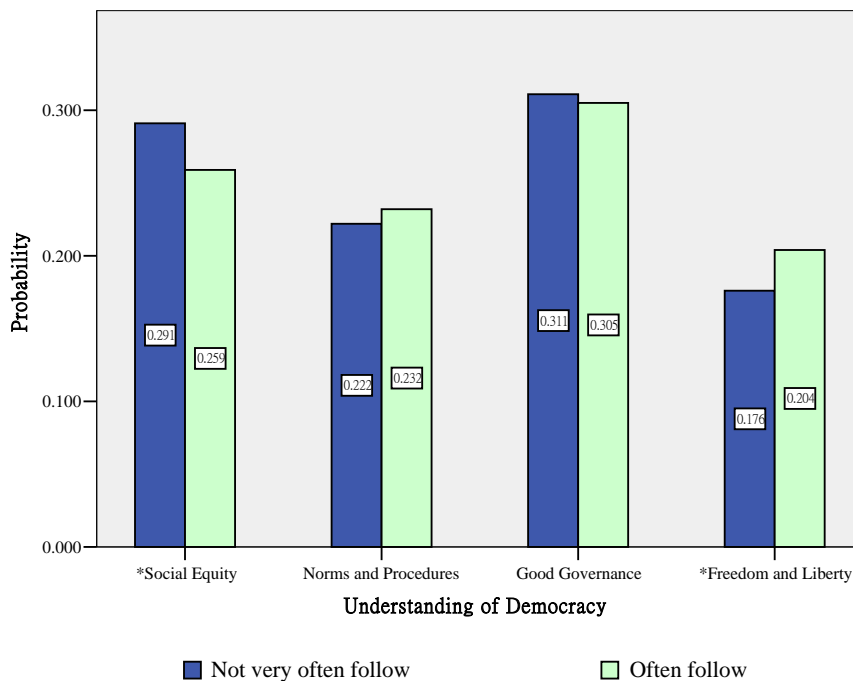

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Exposure to foreign media is a sign of internationalization. Particularly after the rapid development of telecommunication technology in 1990s, it is much easier to get access to foreign media in most of the Asian countries. For those who often follow foreign events or watch foreign programs, the scope of their knowledge should be

broader and they are more capable to understand democracy with more depth. For this reason, it would be informative to know how exposure to foreign media affects Asian youth conception of democracy. In Asian Barometer, exposure to foreign media is measured by two following question: "How closely do you follow major events in foreign countries / the world?" and "How often do you watch or listen to foreign programs (television, DVDs, movies, radio)?" For the former question, we dichotomize the answers into "often follow" and "not very often follow" by using "somewhat closely" as the cutoff point. For the latter one, we also dichotomize the answers into "often listen/watch" and "not very often listen/watch" by using "at least once a week" as the cutoff point. The results are presented in Figure 12 and 13.

Figure 12   Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Following Foreign Major Events

Both figures show the same result. For those who follow major foreign events or listen/watch foreign program frequently, their conception of democracy is more idealistic oriented, such as freedom and liberty (20.4% vs. 17.6% and 20.4% vs. 16.4%, respectively). For those who seldom expose to foreign media, however, their understanding of democracy is more leaning toward the substantive sense, such as social equity (29.1% vs. 25.9% and 31.0% vs. 25.5%, respectively). For the other components, the difference is not significant. The above results indicate that people who have broader knowledge base tend to give more weight to idealistic interpretation

of democracy and relatively pay less attention to substantive interpretation than those who have narrower knowledge base.

We can summarize the main findings of democratic understanding among Asian youth in Figure 7 to 13 by highlighting the largest percentage difference for each explanatory variable. As is shown in Table 4, males tend to conceive democracy more as norms and procedures than females. Less educated youth tend to conceive democracy more as social equity. Urban residents or people who frequently expose to foreign media tend to conceive democracy more as freedom and liberty. Frequent internet users and people who satisfied with their economic status tend to conceive democracy more as good governance.

Figure 13   Asian Youth's Conception of Democracy by Watching/Listening Foreign Programs

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05

Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

19
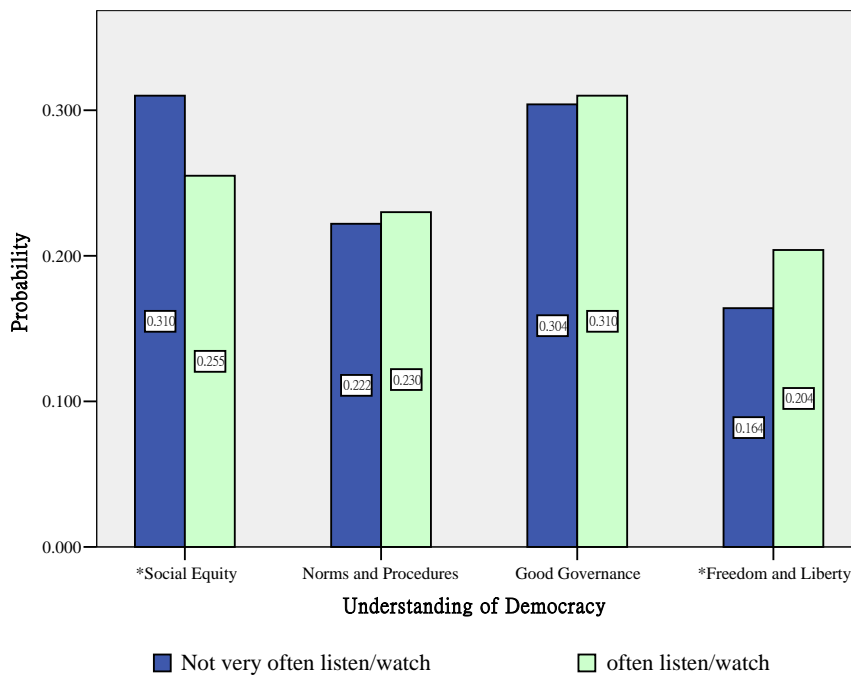
Table 4 Main Findings of Democratic Understanding among Asian Youth

Explanatory Sources	Inclined Interpretation of Democracy
Male	Norms and Procedures
Less Educated	Social Equity
Urban	Freedom and Liberty
Frequent Internet Usage	Good Governance
Better Family's Economic Status	Good governance
Frequent Exposure to Foreign Media	Freedom and Liberty

Note: All the findings summarized from the results presented in Figure 7-13.

Implication for Democratic Legitimacy and Demand for Political Changes

Our findings in previous sections have illustrated some salient characteristics of Asian youth for their attitudes toward democracy. Comparing to adult, Asian youth tend to more critical in evaluating democracy in general. They also tend to be more demanding and expect a higher standard of the future democratic development. In terms of conception of democracy, Asian youth are cognitively more capable and their conception is in accord to the objective ranking. Their understanding of democracy is more prone to the substantive interpretation, but relatively speaking, they are more idealistic than the adult counterparts.

What is the implication of these findings for democratic legitimacy and demand for political changes to Asian youth? On one hand, the criticalness may reduce the support for democracy since youth people might know the down side of democracy and tend to be harsher in evaluation than adult. On the other hand, the idealistic orientation may increase the support for democracy given the strong faith in democracy. The synthetic result depends on the relative strength of the two countervailing effects. With regard to demand for political changes, both criticalness and idealistic orientation predict a stronger request of political changes for youth than adult.

In Asian Barometer, we apply three questions to tap into the measure of democratic legitimacy. The first is labeled "preferability of democracy", which asks whether democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government. The second is labeled "efficacy", which asks whether democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society. The third is labeled "priority", which asks whether democracy is definitely more important than economic development. Answers to the three questions are all dichotomized into a positive or negative response. The three measures of democratic legitimacy shows different aspects of support to democracy as a political system. Preferability is an evaluative as well ideological question since people might perceive it as a statement of empirical fact or as a choice of favorable

political institution. Efficacy is also a question of the same nature, but more close to the evaluate end since the essential of the question is about evaluation of capability. However, priority is an ideological question since it is a choice of values instead of something needs to be evaluated.

We want to know whether different understanding of democracy would influence support for democracy and demand for political change. To define understanding of democracy, we apply 50% as the cutoff point of probability measures to recode each respondent as one of the four types: social equity, norms and procedures, good governance, and freedom and liberty. If a respondent has two 50% on two components, we count such person as both types. From Figure 14 to 17, we present Asian youth's support for democracy and demand for political change by four different types of democratic conceptions.

Figure 14 presents the result for Asian youth who understand democracy as social equity or not as social equity. Neither of support for democracy nor demand for political change has any significant result. Apparently, whether conceive democracy as social equity does not affect Asian youth's support for democracy and demand for political change.
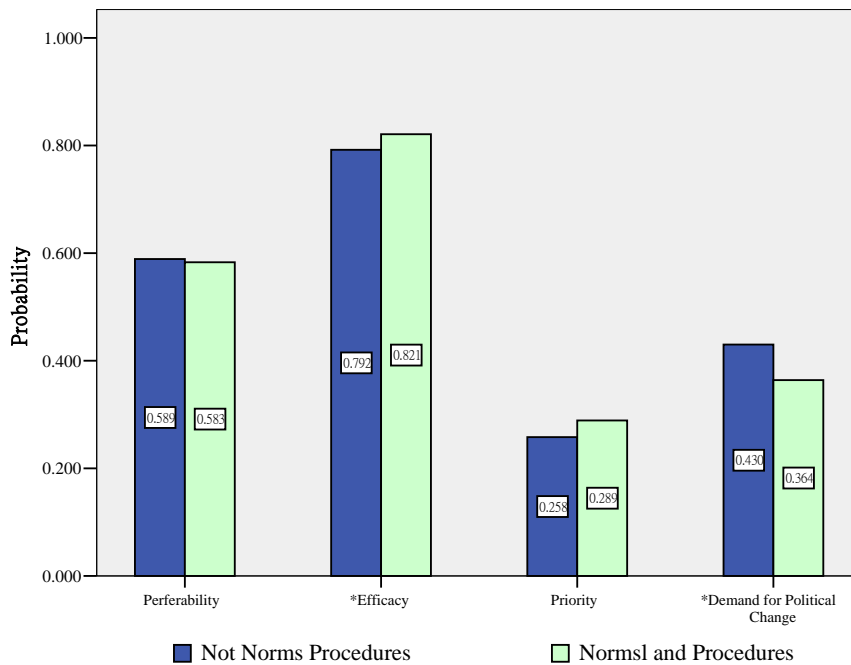
Figure 14   Asia Youth's Support for Democracy and Demand for Political Change by Social Equity
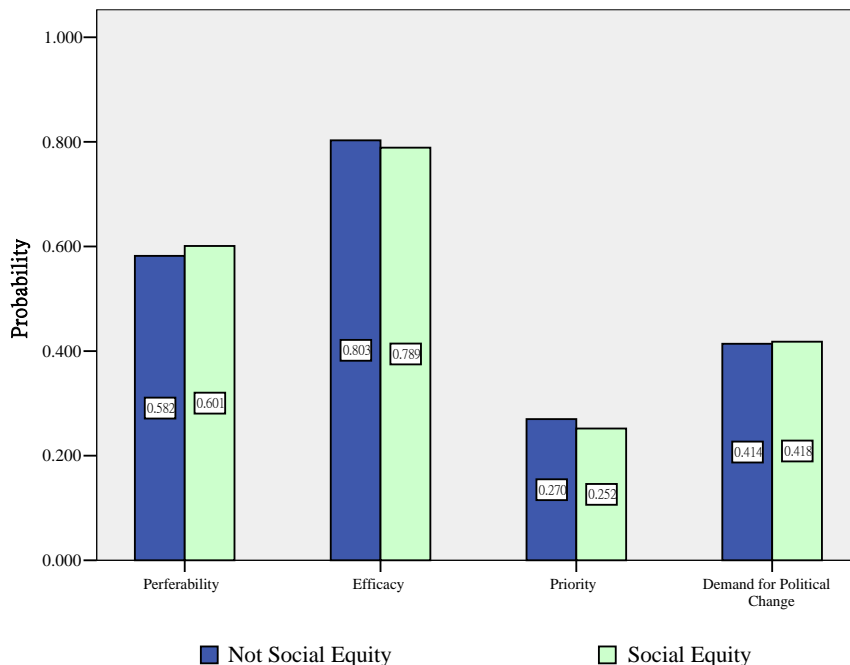
*Statistical significant at $p \leqq 0.05$
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

As Figure 15 presents, for Asian youth who understand democracy as norms and procedures, they are likely to think that democracy is capable of solving problems (82.1% vs.79.2%), but the margin of difference is very moderate and barely significant. However, a much salient finding is that Asian youth who do not understand democracy as norms and procedures, they tend to have a higher demand for political change (43.0% vs. 36.4%). This finding suggests that the conception of democracy as norms and procedures is associated with more supportive attitude toward the existing political arrangement. Asian youth with this conception are more positive toward democratic efficacy and less likely to demand for political change.
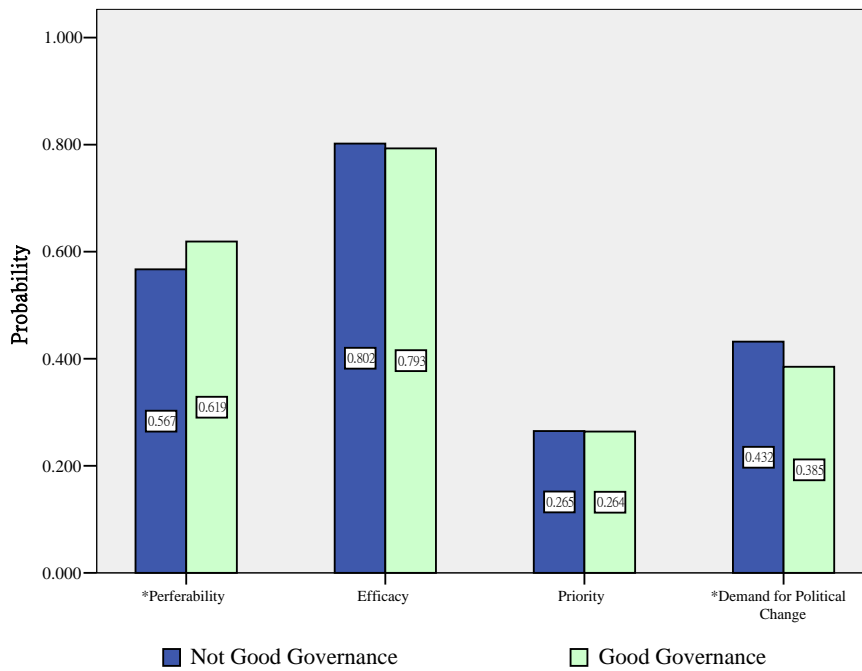
Figure 15   Asia Youth's Support for Democracy and Demand for Political Change by Norms and Procedures

*Statistical significant at p ≦ 0.05
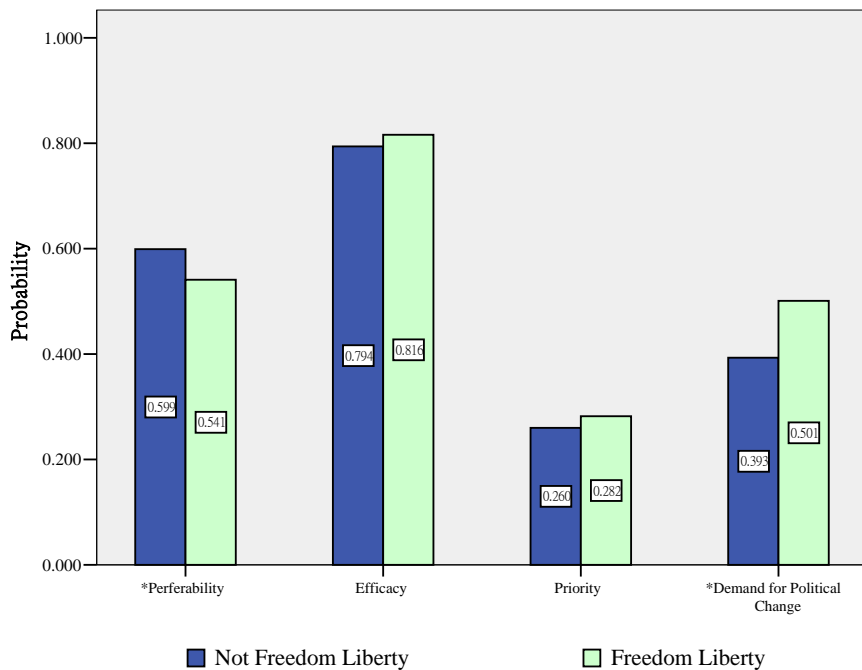Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

The similar finding is also found when we compare Asian youth who understand democracy as good governance to those who understand democracy as something else. As Figure 16 shows, Asian youth who understand democracy as good governance are more likely to agree that democracy is the most preferable system (61.9% vs. 56.7%) but meanwhile less likely to demand for political change (38.5% vs. 43.2%). Again, this indicates that the conception of good governance is also associated with more supportive attitude toward democracy and less demanding attitude toward political change.

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Figure 16   Asia Youth's Support for Democracy and Demand for Political Change by Good Governance

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

Figure 17   Asia Youth's Support for Democracy and Demand for Political Change by Freedom and Liberty

*Statistical significant at p≦0.05
Data Source: Asian Barometer Wave 3

The findings in Figure 17, however, show the opposite result from the previous two figures. As can be seen, Asian youth who understand democracy as freedom and liberty tend not to think that democracy is the more preferable political system (54.1% vs. 59.9%), and meanwhile, they are much more likely to demand for political change (50.1% vs. 39.3%). The margin of the difference for the latter finding reaches 10.8%, which is the greatest of all in Figure 14 to 17. This suggests that Asian youth's conception of democracy as freedom and liberty is associated with more criticalness toward democracy and greater expectation in political change.

How can we interpret all of the above findings? First of all, the major impact of understanding of democracy is not related to the "substantive vs. procedural" debate; rather, the real difference comes from "norms and procedure/good governance vs. freedom and liberty". In fact, norms and procedure and good governance share an essential element: both are about the soundness of the political system. The difference is that norms and procedures refer to something outside the executive's duty, but what good government refers all belong to the administration's responsibility. When we combine these two components into "soundness of political system" and contrast it with "freedom and liberty", we can conclude two opposite types of attitude toward democracy. For Asian youth who think the essential of democracy is freedom and liberty, their political orientation is more critical and idealistic and thus more likely to be the agent of political change. On the other hand, for those who view the soundness of political system as the essential of democracy, their orientation is more conservative and therefore they are complacent with the current political arrangement.

Conclusion

The most salient finding in this paper is that Asian youth are more likely to conceive democracy in substantive terms, and such understanding is associated with their acquiescence with   toward the current political system. If we believe that Asian youth will play a leading role in future political development, there should be more Asian youth whose understanding of democracy moves to freedom and liberty. However, the current evidence does not suggest that this is going to happen, because our finding also shows that people tend to conceive democracy less as freedom and liberty when they become older. This suggests, Asian youth will become even more complacency toward politics due to the life-cycle effect in next decades or so.

Under what condition   Asian youth is more likely to conceive democracy as freedom and liberty? Our analysis indicates that Asian youth tend to think democracy as freedom and liberty if they have a higher level of education, dissatisfy with family's economic status, or have more exposure to foreign media. If we look on the bright side, most Asian countries are developing countries and the overall education

level and quality will continue growing, and thus, this factor might cause the significant change of democratic understanding toward freedom and liberty. The same conclusion also applies to exposure to foreign media since most Asian countries are in the process of opening up their domestic entertainment market, and therefore more and more foreign media gain access to Asia. However, our analysis also shows that people's understanding of democracy might shift away from freedom and liberty if they are satisfied with family's economic status. This means that if the government can maintain its economic performance, Asian youth might conceive democracy less as freedom and liberty, but more as other values. This will attenuate youth's criticalness and passion for further political change. On the other hand, if more Asian youth are dissatifised with their fmaily's economic condition, the demand for social equity will prevail over other political values.

In view of the above results, we propose three policy recommendations, one very broad and the other two more specific, for promoting democratic citizenship among Asian youth:

First, all East Asian political systems have to deliver more in order to win over the heart of the youth generation. The Asian youth expect democracy to deliver not just popular accountability, rule of law and freedom but also social equity and effective governance. Regardless what donor organizations and expert panels have to say about the quality of democracy of any given political system, at the end of the day the legitimacy of all East Asian young democracies will be judged by this subjective benchmark widely held by Asian citizens in general and by the Asian youth in particular. We cannot afford being complacent about the challenges that East Asian third-wave democracies are facing in the age of economic globalization. The challenges have become even tougher as the global economy is entering an era of turbulence and uncertainty and all elected governments are struggling with growing economic disparity, depleted fiscal capacity, and rising unemployment among the youth.

Second, education does matter in terms of shaping youth's conception of democracy. For those Asian countries are still in the developing stage, the international society should devote more resources to assist them to elevate the nationwide education level. While this task might be very costly, it is the most reliable way to change how the youth think about democracy and what democracy should be in a more critical and demanding way.

Third, breaking the boundary barrier for mass media and promoting free flow of information are also important to cultivate Asian youth's democratic citizenship and their demand for political change. In fact, the force of the globalization has already loosened up the restriction and censorship in many Asian countries. As the progress of

internet and telecommunication technology, we can expect more and more difficult to maintain strict censorship and regulation. In this sense, the international society should dedicate to promote the liberalization of media policy in Asian countries, and increase the coverage of foreign programs in those countries which have rigid media control.

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