Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the 'Asian Values' Hypothesis

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Abstract

The Singaporean patriarch Lee Kuan Yew popularized the argument that 'Asian values' derived from Confucian cultural traditions are inconsistent with the development of democracy in East Asia. There is an active scholarly debate over whether the hierarchic and deferential social authority relations of Confucian traditions are incompatible with support for democracy. Drawing upon the newest wave of the World Values Survey, we analyze public opinion in six East Asian nations and four Western democracies. We first assess orientations toward authority, and then link these sentiments to support for democracy. The results contradict the core tenets of the 'culture is destiny' argument in the Asian values literature, and offer a more positive view of the prospects for political development in the region.

Among the many explanations for the special course of political and economic development in East Asia, the theme of 'Asian values' has played an especially prominent role. The Singaporean patriarch Lee Kuan Yew claimed that Confucian values have influenced East Asian development. He pointed to the authority orientations particular to Confucian culture as an explanation for a unique developmental pattern in East Asia. The Confucian tradition of respect for authority and family, and the emphasis on community over individual rights were presented as antithetical to Western images of liberalism. In less polemic terms, this same principle has been an element of considerable scholarly research on East Asian political culture.[1]

[1] Donald Emmerson, 'Singapore and the 'Asian Values' Debate', *Journal of Democracy*, 6 (1995): 95–105; Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Robert

This proposition has generated much criticism and debate. Democratic reformers such as Korea's Kim Dae Jung have questioned whether Confucian traditions are a roadblock to democratization in East Asia.[2] As we discuss below, academic scholars have asked whether such cultural traditions still exist, and whether they are really inconsistent with democratic development.

Although the theme of Asian values has been debated widely, cross-national empirical research on what citizens in East Asia actually believe has largely been lacking from this discussion. Therefore, this article examines some of its underlying assumptions of the 'Asian values' thesis and tests these ideas with empirical survey data. Drawing upon new data from the 1999–2002 World Values Survey, we first describe orientations toward authority in various social settings. Then we consider whether these orientations significantly affect support for democracy among East Asians, with a comparison with the West. The findings give the publics of East Asia a voice in this debate on the content and consequences of Asian values and Confucian traditions, and provide evidence on the cultural conditions relevant to democratization in East Asia.

The Asian values debate

Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew popularized the 'Asian values' debate when he cited Confucian cultural traditions as a justification for non-democratic governments in East Asia,

> The expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of orderly society. In the East the main object is to have a well-ordered society so that everybody can have maximum enjoyment of his freedoms. This freedom can only exist in an ordered state and not in a natural state of contention and anarchy.[3]

The claim for a distinct style of political relations in East Asia is based on the ideal-type description of Asian versus Western society. According to 'Asian values' proponents, because of Confucian traditions, East Asian societies are paternalistic, accept hierarchic authority, and are community-oriented–characteristics that promote order and consensus. In contrast, Western societies are rights-based and individualistic, which is congruent with the competitive elements of a democratic system.[4] Moreover, similar descriptions of the Confucian cultural heritage are a well-established theme in the political culture literature on the region. Lucian Pye argued that these social

Scalapino, *The Politics of Development: Perspectives on Twentieth Century Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[2] Kim Dae Jung, 'Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values', *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (1994).

[3] Lee Kuan Yew, 'Culture is Destiny, an Interview with Fareed Zakaria', *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (1994): 109–126; Donald Emmerson, 'Singapore'; Surain Subramaniam, 'The Asian Values debate: Implications for the spread of liberal democracy', *Asian Affairs*, 27 (2000): 19–35.

[4] Siu-kai Lau and Shin-chi Kuan, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988); Gilbert Rozman (ed.), *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

values produce an allegiance to authority that appears inconsistent with democratic norms.[5] Robert Scalapino similarly stressed the limited potential for democratic development in East Asia because of cultural traditions that emphasized communalism with limited toleration for opposition groups.[6] Perhaps the strongest statement comes from Yung-Myung Kim who states, 'Confucian ideas are antithetical to Anglo-American democracy'.[7]

In contrast, other scholars have questioned the premises underlying the Asian values hypothesis.[8] For instance, Friedman and Sen have stressed the cultural diversity of East Asia, and the ability of democratic norms to take root in many different types of cultural traditions. Fukuyama sees the democratic potential of Confucianism to counterbalance some of the negative tendencies of an individualistic, atomized society as exists in some liberal democracies. Theodore de Bary similarly argues that elements of Confucianism can provide a basis for democratic governance.[9] Another viewpoint holds that Confucian orientations of community may help an individual expand social networks and accumulate social capital, which are normally seen as beneficial to democracy. Indeed, Confucius's actual writings in the *Analects* are so large and diverse, that many elements stress values that are conducive to democratic development.[10] The issue is not Confucianism – but how it is interpreted in relationship to current political matters.

Social modernization in East Asia, moreover, may transform social and political norms. With modernization comes urbanization, the breaking up of traditional social networks, and the spreading of a competitive mentality, some of the factors contributing to the growth of individualism in Asia. Flanagan and Lee, for example, demonstrated that social modernization variables were strongly related to support for more libertarian (less authoritarian) values in Japan and Korea.[11] Inglehart and Welzel similarly find

[5] Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power*.

[6] Robert Scalapino, *The Politics of Development*.

[7] Yung-Myung Kim, 'Asian-style democracy: A critique from East Asia', *Asian Survey*, 37 (1997): 1125. One could also note, however, that the other aspects of Confucian traditions appear more compatible with democracy. The emphasis on harmony and the responsibility of leadership, for instance, are consistent with classic democratic theory. Similarly, the value of the community also may be beneficial in developing a democratic culture.

[8] Edward Friedman, 'Democratization: Generalizing the East Asian Experiences', in Edward Friedman (ed.), *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999); Francis Fukuyama, 'Confucianism and Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, 6 (1995).

[9] William DeBary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[10] Roger Ames, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).

[11] Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rie Lee, 'Value Change and Democratic Reform in Japan and Korea', *Comparative Political Studies*, 33 (2000): 626–659; Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rie Lee, 'The New Politics, Culture Wars, and the Authoritarian–Libertarian Value Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies', *Comparative Political Studies*, 36 (2003): 235–270. Also see C. Neher and R. Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995).

that social modernization is strongly related to the spread of self-expressive values.[12] Consequently, the tremendous social change that many East Asian nations have experienced over the past generation may erode the very values and life styles that create the norms encapsulated in 'Asian values'. And rather than the persistence of traditional authority relations, recent descriptions of Japan, Korea and other East Asian nations often stress the erosion of traditional authority relations.[13]

National conditions and histories also vary widely across East Asia, which raises the question of whether there is a single East Asian culture. Although most of the region is linked to Confucian cultural traditions, this is certainly not universal. Indonesians are overwhelmingly Islamic, and Filipinos are disproportionately Catholic. The Communist regimes in China and Vietnam shunned Confucianism (although recently this rejection has tempered). Furthermore, for centuries, other philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhism have been interwoven into the fabric of East Asian life and traditions. Pye acknowledged that adherence to Confucianism varies greatly across the nations linked to this tradition.[14] Thus, it is problematic to talk of a single East Asian political culture or philosophy that reaches from Japan to Singapore.

The dialectic between the East and the West is voluminous, and we have only sketched the outlines of this discussion. However, this debate presents both views, but does not offer a social scientific model for theorizing and testing these contrasting positions. We suggest that it is useful to re-cast this debate in the framework of Harry Eckstein's congruence theory.[15] In essence, congruence theory holds that political systems tend to be based on authority patterns that are congruent with the authority patterns of other units of society. For instance, the hierarchic and paternalistic authority structures of the German family and society in Weimar and the Wilhelmine Empire were more congruent with the political norms of the Kaiserreich than democracy under the Weimar Republic. More generally, Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* treated family and school authority relations as structuring the political culture; Putnam's analysis of political development in Italy is another reflection of congruence theory.[16] Inglehart's analyses linking self-actualizing values and democratic development is another example of congruence theory. Many of these same arguments are made for the impact of

[12] Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[13] John Nathan, *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose* (New York: Hougton Mifflin, 2004); Doh Chull Shin, *Mass Politics and Culture in Democratizing Korea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[14] Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power*.
[15] Harry Eckstein, 'Congruence Theory Explained', in William Reisinger *et al.* (eds), *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia? Explorations in State-Society Relations* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).
[16] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

cultural traditions in East Asia; Confucian traditions are seen as more congruent with authoritarian political structures.[17]

This leads to a two-step research plan. First, we use the World Values Survey to assess the support for hierarchical, authority relations in family and other social relations. Indeed, empirical evidence on how people in East Asia describe their orientations toward authority has been strikingly absent from elite debates about the political culture in Asia. Then, we consider whether these orientations are linked to the public's support for democracy. These analyses thus address both sides of the Asian values debate and provide broader evidence on congruence theory as applied to the East Asian experience.

The World Values Survey

This research is based upon six East Asian nations and four Western democratic countries that participated in either the 1995–1998 or 1999–2002 waves of the World Values Survey (WVS).[18] Currently in its fourth wave, the WVS includes nearly 70 nations, representing approximately 80% of the world's population. The current subset includes data from six nations that have ties to Confucian traditions: China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Scholars such as Lucian Pye classify most of these countries as having significant Confucian influences; thus, it is reasonable to expect evidence of strong attachment to the concept of 'Asian values' in most of these nations. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States are established Western democracies that provide a benchmark for comparing political culture in East Asia to the Western condition. We select these four nations because they also border on the Pacific Rim, although they reflect a European cultural tradition.

The following table shows the number of respondents by country in each wave of the WVS. Not all nations are included in both waves, and when available the data from both waves are merged into the analyses to increase the empirical base of the analyses.

Wave	China	JPN	SING	SKO	TWN	VN	Aust	CAN	NZ	USA
1995	1500	1054	–	1249	1452	–	2048	–	1201	1542
2000	1000	1362	1512	–	–	1000	–	1931	–	1200

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[17] Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), and Ronald Inglehart, 'Culture and Democracy', in Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (eds), *Culture Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[18] We would like to thank Ronald Inglehart for inviting us to participate in the 1999–2002 World Values Survey and for facilitating our access to these East Asian surveys. We also gratefully acknowledge our collegial relationship Pham Minh Hac and Pham Thanh Nghi of the Institute for Human Studies in Hanoi in the collection of the WVS data for Vietnam. Only the authors of this paper are responsible for the views expressed here.

The WVS questionnaire taps a wide range of human values that are related to the theme of social and political modernization. For the purpose of this research, we focus on authority orientations first and then citizen attitudes toward democracy.

Orientations toward authority

There is a long tradition of empirical research on attitudes toward authority within Western societies that often begins with questions about the compatibility of these orientations and democratic commitments.[19] The World Values Survey sought to tap such orientations, so a variety of different questions asked about authority in various life domains.

One set of questions focuses on family relations as a basis of authority orientations. Indeed, numerous authors have claimed that familism is one of the foundations of Asian cultural traditions. The survey asked respondents whether one should always love and respect one's parents regardless of their faults, whether it is the parents' duty to do what is best for their children, and whether one of the main goals in life is to make one's parents proud.[20] Table 1 presents the responses to these questions across nations. If one treats the Western democracies as a control group, then respect for parents and allegiance toward one's parents are surprisingly strong among Western publics. For instance, 78% of Americans and 79% of Canadians say that one's parents should be respected regardless of their faults. Japanese sentiments are actually less deferential to parents than the Western average (73%). Respect for parents is somewhat stronger in other East Asian nations: 91% in Taiwan, 94% in Singapore and South Korea, and 99% in Vietnam.

The item on parental duty shows some variation across nations, but virtually no systematic difference between East Asian nations and Western democracies. The other item asks whether one's main life goal is to make your parents proud; positive responses average only slightly higher among the East Asian publics. On the whole, one would conclude that respect for parental authority is important in both cultural regions. The difference between the two regions averaged across these three parental questions is only about a 6% gap.

Other questions examined orientations toward authority outside of the parental relationship: belief that child rearing should emphasize obedience, one should follow

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[19]   Theodore Adorno, *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950); Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

[20]   The questionnaire with the specific wording of items is available at: www.worldvaluessurvey.org. The authority orientations index consists of six items:
  (1)   Regardless of the qualities and faults of one's parents, one must always love and respect them,
  (2)   Parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being,
  (3)   One of my main goals in life has been to make my parents proud
  (4)   Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home: obedience is important,
  (5)   One should follow one's superior's instructions even when one does not fully agree with them, and
  (6)   Greater respect for authority is a good thing.

Table 1. *Support for authority by nation*

Question	Western democracies				East Asian nations					
	Aust.	Can	NZ	USA	JPN	SK	TWN	Sing	PRC	VN
Family relations										
Respect parents	74	79	64	78	73	94	91	94	85	99
Parents duty	79	82	71	85	46	50	79	83	64	87
Make parents proud	69	82	58	79	56	60	64	94	69	97
Other social domains										
Teach obedience	28	35	–	31	5	14	33	47	35	56
Work instructions	49	58	35	66	29	16	17	26	24	46
Respect authority	73	69	53	74	5	16	46	53	49	80
High on Index	57	66	–	71	7	16	36	69	35	86

Note: Table entries are the percentage giving a response supportive of authority on each item; high scores on the authority relations index represent selecting four or more authority items on the six questions.
Source: Combined results of 1995–98 and 2000–02 World Values Surveys.

instructions of superiors at work even if one disagrees, and a desire for greater respect for authority in the society. The bottom panel of Table 1 displays the percentage giving positive responses toward authority on each of these items. When one moves outside of the family, the overlap in sentiments across the East/West divide is even more apparent. For instance, 35% of Americans and 31% of Canadians mentioned obedience as a value that parents should instill in their children – and the average across the East Asian nations is 33%. There is more variation in these opinions among East Asian nations, rather than between East and West.

The other items in the table also do not follow a clear East/West division. Agreement with the statement that one should follow a superior's instructions at work even if one disagrees averages slightly higher among the established Western democracies. None of the East Asian publics is more likely than Americans to say that one should follow instructions at work. In addition, beliefs that society should give greater respect to authority are generally much higher among the established Western democracies than in the East Asian nations. Taken alone, one might think that the low percentages calling for more respect for authority in Japan (5%), South Korea (16%), and Taiwan (46%) may occur because people believe that authority already garners too much respect in these nations – except that the other questions in the table fail to demonstrate strong orientations toward authority in these three nations. In other words, these three nations display modest support for authority, and believe that respect for authority is still too high.

We used factor analyses to verify that these six items tap a common dimension of respect for authority.[21] Thus, we created an additive index measuring support for authority based on the six questions in the World Values Survey.[22] All three of the Western democracies with full data have more than half the public with high scores on this index (i.e., agreeing with four or more authority items out of six): United States, 71%, Canada 66%, and Australia 57%. In comparison, Singapore (69%) and Vietnam (86%) have a majority with high scores, but only minorities hold these views in Japan (7%), South Korea (16%), the PRC (35%), and Taiwan (36%).

Thus, this initial empirical evidence already yields one striking finding: acceptance of authority is not sharply different between these East Asian nations and a set of established Western democracies around the Pacific Rim.[23] This finding runs counter to most of the past qualitative research, which claims that respect for authority is greater in these East Asian societies.[24]

It is possible that the wording of the survey questions created these patterns as a methodological artifact – but we discount this explanation. The new wave of public opinion surveys in East Asia is generally finding similar patterns. For example, Ahn and Kang asked three items on individualist versus collective orientations in their survey of Korean public opinion. They concluded, 'South Koreans are evenly divided between

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[21] Also see Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rie Lee, 'Value Change and Democratic Reform in Japan and Korea'. The six items were entered into a principal components analysis, and the following table presents the first unrotated dimension in each nation. The 'teach obedience' question was not asked in New Zealand. As in Flanagan and Lee, the results suggest a single dimension underlies these items. However, the limited variance on some variables restricted the correlations; this is most clearly apparent in the Vietnamese results.

	CAN	USA	Aust	NZ	JPN	SK	TW	SING	PRC	VN
Respect parents	0.63	0.63	0.67	0.69	0.50	0.35	0.56	0.46	0.57	−0.14
Parent duty	0.31	0.36	0.34	0.53	0.46	0.67	0.61	0.64	0.63	0.40
Parents proud	0.59	0.49	0.59	0.65	0.62	0.12	0.47	0.56	0.14	0.60
Teach obedience	0.44	0.43	0.45	–	−0.32	0.47	0.46	0.38	0.58	−0.22
Follow instructions	0.57	0.38	0.35	0.30	0.42	0.16	0.35	0.25	0.36	0.56
Respect authority	0.54	0.59	0.61	0.44	0.48	0.63	0.23	0.45	0.45	0.60
Eigenvalue	1.65	1.45	1.61	1.47	1.35	1.24	1.31	1.35	1.41	1.26
Percent variance	27.6	24.2	26.8	29.4	22.5	20.6	21.7	22.4	23.4	20.9

[22] The scale was computed as the simple sum of the approval of authority option on each of the six items. The scale thus runs from 0–6 in each nation, except in New Zealand where one item was not asked.

[23] The four Western democracies examined here are not markedly different from the findings in Europe from the 1999 European Values Survey that included these same questions. See Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave* (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 2002).

[24] In a presentation of these findings, a discussant claimed the questions were insufficient to tap attitudes toward authority in East Asia since they were derived from a survey first conducted in Europe. We disagree because we see these questions as broadly applicable across diverse national contexts, as was the intent of the World Values Survey. In addition, previous published studies of East Asia have interpreted these data as valid, and other studies have compared East Asia to the West using some of these WVS items (see Flanagan and Lee, 'The New Politics'; Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*).

individualism and collective orientations.'[25] Flanagan and Lee found that Japanese and Korean respondents in earlier waves of the WVS were nearly evenly divided in terms of their libertarian versus authoritarian orientations.[26] Preliminary analyses of familial authority questions from the East Asian Barometer show that measures of family hierarchy and family loyalty 'are rejected by over three-fifths of the respondents in the average Asian country'.[27] Thus, independent survey evidence is producing a picture of public opinion in East Asia that is consistent with the findings presented here. And, by making the first comparisons between East Asian opinion and Western democracies, the evidence becomes even stronger.

There are several possible explanations for our findings and the contrast to earlier cultural studies of East Asia. Most of these East Asian nations have experienced a considerable process of social modernization during the later twentieth century, in which many of these traditional cultural traditions may have attenuated with increasing social and geographic mobility, and the move from rural to urban lifestyles. This might apply especially to the non-family aspects of authority orientations, where opinions overlapped the most between East and West. Partial evidence backing this hypothesis comes by comparing generational differences within each nation. In the four Western democracies, support for authority is only slightly higher among older generations ($r = 0.06$). In contrast, the age gradient is much steeper in East Asia, especially in the three Asian democracies that have experienced economic and political modernization during the late twentieth century (Japan $r = 0.24$; South Korea $r = 0.27$, and Taiwan $r = 0.19$). In fact, the relationship in all East Asian nations is stronger than the average for the four Western democracies.[28] Thus, authority orientations are more strongly felt among older Asian generations, but these sentiments are distinctly weaker about the young.

Another explanation is that the stereotypes of previous descriptive studies of East Asian political culture were overdrawn, or based on socially observed behavior

[25] Chung-Si Ahn and Won-Taek Kang, 'South Korea's Political Culture at the Dawn of the New Millennium: Undoing or Reinventing a Developmental State?', Discussion Paper No. 5, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2003.

[26] Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rie Lee, 'Value Change and Democratic Reform in Japan and Korea'.

[27] Andrew Nathan, 'Patterns of traditionalism in East Asia', paper presented at the conference on 'How East Asians View Democracy', Taipei, Taiwan, 2003, p. 9.

[28] Generational comparisons potentially reflect the impact of five or six decades of history, and long-term time series dating back to the 1950s or 1960s might display such trends. However, these trends are not apparent for the shorter time span of the World Values Surveys. Three items were included with comparable wording over the four waves of the World Values Survey in Japan and Korea: respect parents, teach obedience, and respect for authority. The average giving the authority response across these three items had not changed significantly over this two decade time span:

	1981	1990	1995	2000
Japan	28%	32	29	27
Korea	38	42	41	41

rather than personal attitudes that are internal to the individual. Admittedly, the social traditions in many East Asian nations still place a priority on parents and a sense of duty that is seen as exceptionally strong by Western observers and experts of the region (as noted in our literature review). But social customs are not the same as individual beliefs. Rituals of ancestor devotion can be as ceremonial as a Western Christian who goes to church each Sunday, even while disagreeing with core teachings of the Church. Eckstein described a pattern of ritual conformity as 'compliance without commitment' to prevailing social rules as one typical response when governing authority is not congruent with popular values.[29] Moreover, excessive ritual may cause counter-reactions, as apparently is seen in the Japanese rejection of the need for greater respect for authority.

In summary, recent empirical evidence – our findings and those of other recent surveys – suggests that past descriptive characterizations of the pattern of authority relations held by people in East Asia are not reflected in current public opinion. While a nation's historical traditions may shape orientations toward authority, there does not appear to be a sharp East/West clash of values in this domain as some scholars have previously argued.

Measuring support for democracy

Our goal is to determine whether orientations toward social authority affect support for democracy among East Asian publics. Our set of nations is unusual in the range of political systems they include. According to Freedom House 2003 report, the level of democratic development across these nations covers nearly their entire range of scoring – from the most democratic to the least.[30]

Given such a wide range of political regimes, the measurement of political values is an empirical challenge. Because democracy is now rhetorically embraced even by many non-democratic regimes, we assessed support for democracy somewhat indirectly. We asked about orientations toward non-democratic political regimes first and then support for a democratic regime. The objective was to lessen superficial support for democracy by also asking about autocratic regimes. Hans-Dieter Klingemann argued that measuring regime norms by assessing opinions toward non-democratic and democratic alternatives produces a more robust index.[31]

The WVS question asked agreement with the following items:

(1) *Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections*;
(2) *Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country;*

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[29] Harry Eckstein, 'A Culturalist Theory of Political Change', *American Political Science Review*, 82 (1988): 797.

[30] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2003: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

[31] Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 'Mapping Political Support in the 1990s', in Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
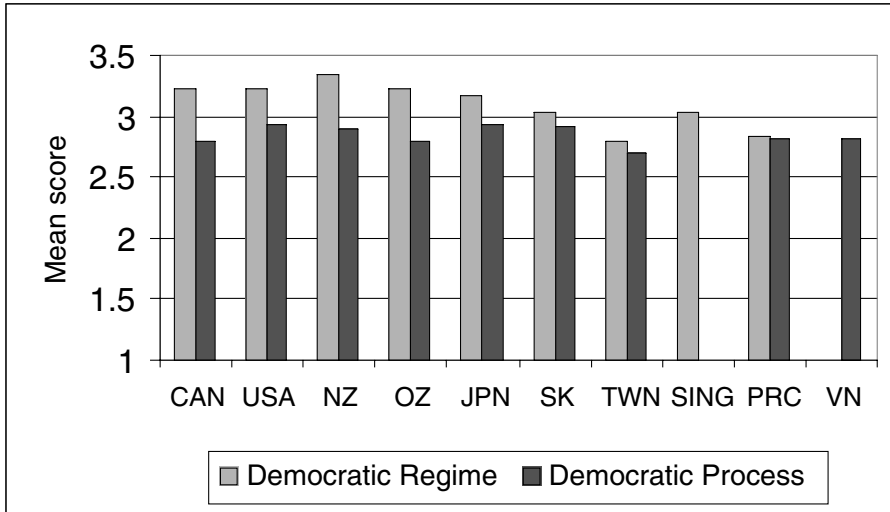
Figure 1 Democratic orientations by nation
Source: 1995–98 and 2000–02 World Values Surveys.

(3)   *Having the army rule;* and

(4)   *Having a democratic political system.*

Pro-democratic responses are defined as *disagreeing* with the first three items and *agreeing* with the fourth. These four items form a common factor, and thus they can be summed up (with reversed polarity for the fourth item on democracy) to create an index of support for democracy. Scores range from 1.0, supporting non-democratic regime forms, to 4.0 as the highest level of pro-democratic sentiment.[32]

Figure 1 presents the mean scores on this democratic regime index. Pro-democratic sentiments are more common in the advanced industrial democracies (mean = 3.24) than in the other nations in the figure (mean = 2.92). More striking, however, is the cross-national breadth of democratic aspirations! In each nation the mean score tends

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[32] For more extensive analyses of these items see Russell J. Dalton, 'Democratic Aspirations and Social Modernization', paper presented at the conference on 'Citizens, Democracy and Markets around the Pacific Rim', East West Center, Honolulu, 2004. The following table presents the factor analysis results for the four items combined in the democratic orientations index. In almost every instance the same structure appears for these four items.

	CAN	USA	Aust	NZ	JPN	SK	TW	SING	PRC
Strong leaders	0.77	0.79	0.76	0.79	0.76	0.73	0.74	0.77	0.80
Expert rule	0.68	0.73	0.64	0.65	0.59	0.04	0.32	0.78	0.74
Army rule	0.69	0.72	0.69	0.64	0.62	0.73	0.79	0.57	0.25
Democratic rule	−0.44	−0.44	−0.65	−0.61	−0.45	−0.64	−0.53	−0.23	−0.03
Eigenvalue	1.84	1.87	1.89	1.82	1.51	1.48	1.55	1.58	1.25
Percent variance	46.1	46.7	47.3	45.5	37.8	36.9	38.7	39.5	31.2

toward the democratic end of the continuum (that is, above the midpoint of 2.5).[33] Democratic aspirations, or at least the preference for democracy over non-democratic political regimes, seem to be a common desire – even across the considerable range of nations represented in the figure. This pattern has been consistently observed in the World Values Survey and is even more apparent in the fourth wave that includes a greater number and variety of non-democratic nations.[34]

We are primarily interested in measuring support for democracy as a regime principle, and so our analyses will focus on the democratic regime index in Figure 1. However, some scholars claim that support for democracy as a principle is different from democracy as a process. In the context of East Asian economic development, it is commonly suggested that citizens (and political elites) view democracy as an impediment to growth and stability – even if they endorse democracy in principle.[35] This supposed tension between democracy and economic development was also prominent in Lee Kuan Yew's criticism of democracy. Singapore is widely cited as the archetypical case of where citizens accept a restriction of their political rights and liberties in exchange for the economic progress of the non-democratic regime.

To tap such sentiments, the World Values survey also asked respondents about various traits attributable to a democratic process, such as the tradeoff of economic growth, political stability, and decisiveness.[36] These items allow respondents to express doubts about democracy, without directly rejecting democratic principles. Moreover, the focus is on broad features of democratic governance, and not short-term judgments about specific governments. The first three items also are phrased so that criticism of democracy is easy to express as approval of the statement. The disadvantage is that by explicitly asking about democracy, these questions might tap affective support for the democratic ideal. The second columns in Figure 1 present opinions on this

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[33] The Taiwanese survey did not ask this question in the urban half of the sample (in towns greater than 10,000 population). Since urbanization is related to support for democracy (see Russell J. Dalton, 'Democratic Aspiration'), this likely depresses the overall support for democracy registered in Taiwan. This rural sampling also applies to the democratic process variable described below.

[34] Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy*; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 'Mapping Political Support'.

[35] Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson. *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2000).

[36] The question wording is: 'I'm going to read off some things that people sometimes say about a democratic political system. Could you please tell me if you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly, after I read each one of them?
- In a democracy, the economic system runs badly
- Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling
- Democracies aren't good at maintaining order
- Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government.'
These four items were averaged together (reversing the polarity of the fourth item) and the mean scores are presented in Figure 1.

democratic process index.[37] We again find that majorities in each nation are positive toward democratic process, averaging above the midpoint on this index. These images of the democratic process are not dramatically different between the citizens of East Asia and the established Western democracies of the Pacific Rim. Moreover, because these process questions tap some of the themes about democracy's supposed limitations from the perspective of an East Asian cultural critique, it is significant that the actual opinions of most people in East Asia do not fit this pattern.

As with orientations toward authority, the surprising finding is the lack of large differences in orientations both toward a democratic regime and the democratic process between citizens in East Asia and the Western democracies of the Pacific Rim. Given the wave of democratization that transformed the world over the past decade, some analysts might argue that the endorsement of democracy among publics in East Asia is not surprising. But, when large majorities of the Chinese and Vietnamese say that democracy is the best form of government, this suggests that the democratic ideal has more appeal than government officials in Beijing or Hanoi would presumably prefer. This also highlights the point that expressed support for democracy is not a set of simple survey responses that articulate socially acceptable norms, because in many of these nations the regime does not advocate democracy.

Still, one must be cautious in interpreting these findings. In several of the national contexts in East Asia, the average citizen is unlikely to understand the full benefits and limitations of the democratic system.[38] It is not realistic to think that when Chinese respondents express support for democracy these sentiments carry the same meaning as when citizens are surveyed in an established Western democracy. But, at the same time, a Chinese peasant certainly understands government by oligarchic leaders: What is especially striking is the broad disapproval of such a governing system in nations such as China and Singapore, where the oligarchic experience is still common.[39]

Although caution is warranted, the patterns in the WVS are consistent with several other comparative opinion surveys. For instance, the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Survey used the reference of 'democracy as it exists in the United States' to offer a clear reference to democracy as practiced in the West, rather than democratic socialism or

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[37] For additional discussion of these two democracy indices and their component questions see Russell J. Dalton, 'Democratic Aspiration'. We used the democratic process index for Vietnam in the following analyses since the Vietnamese survey did not include the democratic regime index.

[38] Surveys from Eastern Europe in the early 1990s detected similarly positive sentiments toward democracy, but mixed evidence on whether the public understood what democracy really required of elites and the citizenry. See Robert Rohrschneider, *Learning Democracy: Democratic and Economic Values in Unified Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Richard Rose, Christian Haerpfer, and William Mishler, *Democracy and its Alternatives: Understanding Post-communist Societies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

[39] To use these two nations to illustrate this point: A large majority in China (81%) and Singapore (78%) disapprove of a strong leader exercising power without democratic control, while even larger majorities express approval of a democratic regime form.

other hybridization of democracy.[40] Majorities of the public in Vietnam (62%), Japan (62%), and South Korea (58%) were favorable toward democracy. The initial results from the new East Asian Barometers used other questions to tap support for democracy versus authoritarian regimes; they also found majorities in support of a democratic regime in most of the nations they surveyed. Similarly, democratic values of political equality, elite accountability, and pluralism are the modal opinions in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and even in the PRC these democratic norms are surprisingly common.[41] Tianjin Shi described relatively high levels of support for democratic values in China. Supporting evidence comes from surveys in poor rural Chinese villages, where support for democratic principles was widespread.[42] Doh Shin found that large majorities of the Korean public favored a democratic system and believed democracy was suitable for Korea.[43]

In summary, in contrast to the previous claims that East Asian political cultures lean toward authoritarian regime forms, the emerging consensus from cross-national survey research is that democratic aspirations are widely endorsed across contemporary East Asia – even in several non-democracies. This support for democracy may be more indicative of the breadth of democratic aspirations, and popular understanding of the full meaning of democracy may vary across nations. As Rohrschneider has persuasively argued in his study of political culture in eastern Germany, public understanding of democracy and commitment to democratic principles develops primarily through

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[40] One might criticize this choice of wording, because it conflates support for democracy with the image of the US, and the later has decreased since 2002. But the intent was to offer a clear reference that this is not democratic socialism, democratic centralism, or other non-democratic regime forms that expropriate the democratic label.

[41] Doh Chull Shin and Jason Wells, 'Is Democracy the Only Game in Town? Testing the Notion of Democratic Consolidation in East Asia', *Journal of Democracy*, 16 (2005); Yun-han Chu and Yu-tzung Chang, 'Culture Shift and Regime Legitimacy: Comparing Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong', in Shiping Hua (ed.), *Chinese Political Culture, 1989–2000* (Armonk: ME Sharpe, 2001).

[42] Tianjian Shi, 'Cultural Values and Democracy in Mainland China', *China Quarterly*, 62 (2000): 540–559; Andrew Nathan and Tianjin Shi, 'Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China', *Daedalus*, 122 (1993): 95–124; David Zweig, *Democratic Values, Political Structures and Alternative Politics in Greater China* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2002).

[43] Doh Chull Shin, *Mass Politics and Culture*, and *The Dynamics of Democratization in Korea: The Korea Democracy Barometer* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2000); Chung-Si Ahn and Won-Taek Kang, 'South Korea'. Perhaps, the most interesting new evidence comes from the East Asian Barometer project. In a paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association meeting in Chicago in 2003, Robert Albritton and Thawilwadee Bureekul find strong support for democracy among the Thai population. They also asked an open-ended question about the meaning of democracy. They found that most Thais define democracy in terms that are apparently similar to Western meanings of this term. Nearly half the respondents replied with examples that fit traditional notions of liberal democracy, and an additional third mentioned personal freedoms or civil liberties that are very consistent with traditional definitions of civil liberties. Also significant was what was not mentioned: 'Most surprising was the low response rate in terms of traditional "Asian values" as commonly understood – good governance, social equality, or duties to society. Only one respondent mentioned "openness or government transparency", and no one mentioned "solving employment", "providing social welfare", or "finding someone a job".'

experience.[44] Still, we believe that these aspirations are meaningful in demonstrating the preference for democracy over authoritarian regime forms, and indicate an emerging democratic norm in East Asia. As such, these norms are important in providing a context conducive for democratization, even if these norms must be deepened and tested by democratic experience.

Testing congruence theory

The culmination of our analysis examines the link between social authority orientations and support for a democratic regime. If authority relations in the family, workplace, and social life are a basis of political orientations, as congruence theory implies, then we expect that acceptance of parental and hierarchic authority patterns would not be a fertile basis for democratic values.

We begin with the bivariate relationships between our six measures of authority relations and the democratic regime index (Table 2). In the advanced industrial democracies there is normally a modest, albeit statistically significant, relationship between authority patterns and democratic values. For instance, Americans who say that parents should always be respected are somewhat less likely to endorse democracy over authoritarian regimes ($r = -0.10$). The same pattern appears for the 'make parents proud' item for the Western democracies.

This pattern does not carry over to the East Asian nations in our study, however. Some nations display a positive relationship and some a negative relationship; the overall average is close to a null relationship. A notable anomaly is Vietnam, where respect for authority often is positively related to support for democracy. Even though we use the democratic process index in Vietnam, we do not believe this explains the anomaly, since the regime and process indices are positively correlated in the other nations where both were asked.

The same general pattern applies for the three other authority questions in the lower half of the table. Those who mentioned obedience as a trait to socialize are significantly less likely to endorse democratic values in the Western democracies. Among the nations of East Asia – including Japan – this relationship is essentially non-existent. The only item that shows a pattern of strong congruence in East Asia is the question on greater respect for authority – though we noted earlier that few respondents in the nations where this relationship is strongest actually subscribe to these beliefs (see Table 1 above).

The final bit of evidence comes from the combined respect for authority scale in the last two rows of the table. Again, the relationships are generally stronger in Western democracies (democratic regime index, average $r = -0.14$) – consistent with congruence theory (although these relationships are not large).[45] The average correlation is substantially weaker among the East Asian nations. Even if one excludes

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[44] Robert Rohrschneider, *Learning Democracy.*
[45] We also repeated these analyses with the democratic process index and obtained similar results.

Table 2. *Correlations between authority orientations and support for democratic regime*

	CAN	USA	NZ	Aust	West Avg	JPN	SK	TW	Sing	PRC	VN	East Avg
Parental respect	−0.15*	−0.10*	−0.13*	−0.14*	*−0.13*	−0.03	−0.00	−0.09*	0.02	−0.07	−0.04	*−0.02*
Parental duty	−0.05	0.01	−0.01	−0.03	*−0.02*	0.05	−0.08*	−0.06	0.00	−0.02	0.10*	*−0.01*
Make parents proud	−0.18*	−0.08*	−0.15*	−0.12*	*−0.14*	−0.03	0.02	−0.10*	−0.02	−0.02	0.01	*−0.03*
Teach child obedience	−0.09*	−0.09*	−	−0.13*	*−0.10*	−0.02	−0.06	−0.06	0.02	−	−0.03	*−0.03*
Follow work instructions	−0.04	0.01	−0.02	−0.06	*−0.04*	−0.01	−0.05	0.01	−0.10*	−0.03	0.04	*−0.03*
General respect for authority	−0.05	−0.02	−0.09*	−0.12*	*−0.07*	−0.19*	−0.14*	−0.11*	−0.14*	−0.08*	0.23*	*−0.06*
Authority index and Democratic Regime	−0.15*	−0.09*	−0.14*	−0.18*	*−0.14*	−0.04	−0.10*	−0.17*	−0.09	−0.05	−	*−0.06*
Authority index and Democratic Process	−0.20*	−0.07*	−0.17*	−0.19*	*−0.16*	−0.09*	−0.02	−0.10*	−	−0.06	0.12*	*−0.08*

Note: * means the Pearson's r is significant at 0.05 level.
Source: Combined surveys from the 1995−98 and 1999−2002 World Values Survey.

Vietnam because of its anomalous pattern, the average correlation is only –0.09 in the other five Asian nations.

Again, because our findings run counter to previous claims from ethnographic research, it is important to note that there is supporting evidence from the East Asian Barometer surveys. Albritton and Bureekul analyzed the relationship between authority measures and democracy scales in Thailand.[46] They also find only a weak, non-significant relationship between familial values and support for democracy. In fact, the direction of the relationship in Thailand is reversed to that predicted by theory. Thus the findings presented here are also apparent in other empirical studies of public opinion.

These weak relationships are significant because they contradict the widely claimed – but seldom tested – thesis that traditional authority orientations in East Asia will undermine support for democracy. It is true that deference toward authority has a negative impact within advanced industrial democracies, which is one reason this thesis developed in the political culture literature. But the same pattern is not apparent in East Asia. This is not because variance is restricted on either the dependent or the independent variables, since similar distributions exist in West and East. And it is not a function of a single question or two, since the pattern is generally consistent across the multiple indicators in Table 2. Indeed, the absence of a systematic relationship in the East Asian nations suggests that there are contrasting elements of Asian culture that may have counterbalancing effects, such as the emphasis on community and collective values.

Multivariate analyses

The bivariate correlations provide initial tests for the relationship between authority orientations and political culture. But before concluding that authority orientations are without strong effects, we want to consider whether these relationships are affected by other factors that influence democratic values. For instance, the dramatic social modernization in East Asia may be shifting opinions, and this may appear in age or social status differences that are related to authority orientations. Alternatively, other established predictors of support for democracy, such as social trust, might have confounding influences on these relationships. And across such a wide range of regimes, the role of financial or policy satisfaction might also affect these relationships.

To test for such effects, we included the index of authority relations with a set of other variables in a multivariate model predicting support for a democratic regime (Table 3).[47] Education and political discussion were included to see if sophisticated

[46] Robert Albritton and Thawilwadee Bureekul, 'Impacts of Asian values on Support for Democracy in Thailand', paper presented at the annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies, San Diego, 2004.

[47] The regression models in Table 3 are not strictly identical across all ten nations. In about half the nations we used the 'age left school' variable as a measure of education; in the other half we used a country-specific ranking of educational levels. The authority relations index lacked one item in

Table 3. *Multivariate analyses of support for democratic regime*

	CAN	USA	NZ	Aust	JPN	SK	TW	Sing	PRC	VN
Authority Index	−0.10	−0.08	−0.13	−0.12	−0.08	−0.10	−0.14	−0.08	−0.04	0.11
Education	0.14	0.09	0.08	0.12	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.01
Age	0.17	0.18	0.09	0.12	0.16	0.06	0.05	0.15	−0.01	−0.03
Financial satisfaction	−0.01	0.00	0.11	0.01	−0.04	0.04	−0.05	−0.02	−0.03	0.12
Social trust	0.13	0.08	0.07	0.14	0.07	0.01	0.04	0.02	−	−0.02
Discuss politics	0.16	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.06	0.07	0.20	0.11	0.08	0.03
Multiple R	0.30	0.30	0.29	0.36	0.21	0.16	0.28	0.19	0.12	0.18

Note: Table entries are standardized regression coefficients; pairwise deletion of missing data was used in these models.
Source: Combined surveys from 1995−98 and 1999−2002 World Values Surveys.

and involved citizens were more supportive of democracy. A measure of financial satisfaction taps whether immediate economic performance is related to support for a democratic regime. Social trust is based on Putnam's analyses of democratic support in the West. We also included age to see if there are generational patterns in these attitudes, since potential generational change has been discussed in several East Asian nations.

In most Asian nations the impact of authority orientations is quite modest, far short of the cultural determinism that is implied by the Asian values thesis (see Table 3). The other predictors do not attenuate this impact of authority relations, because they are only weakly related to support for democracy in East Asia. Among the Western nations, the impact of authority relations is slightly weaker in the multivariate model, and is now outweighed by other predictors such as education, age, or political engagement. The Vietnam survey shows the same pattern as the bivariate relationship, with authority patterns positively related to support for a democratic regime (see Table 1 above).[48]

The Confucian constellation of China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam thus do not speak in unison about the relationship, if any, between social authority orientations and democratic values. The weak relationships between authority patterns in the Asian family and support for democracy contradict the view that democracy may not be able to take root in Asia, particularly within countries strong in Confucian traditions. The democratic potential of these nations should be judged by factors other than the social relationship between parents and their children.

New Zealand, the social trust variable was not included in the Chinese survey, and an alternative democracy scale was used in Vietnam as noted in footnote 37. For these reasons, we present standardized regression coefficients in the table. Comparing results where possible with the unstandardized coefficients yielded essentially similar results.

[48] Perhaps, the meaning of democracy for the Vietnamese is different than other East Asian countries. Like China, Vietnam has been experimenting with grassroots democracy, where the people contribute to policy making at the local level. In these exercises, however, Vietnamese authorities always emphasize the importance of democratic practice within boundaries, meaning that the people should be aware of factors who try to 'take advantage' of democracy and promote ideas harmful to societal structure and harmony. Hence, the value patterns shown in the analysis may indeed reflect governmental constraints.

Conclusion

Our research should, at the least, contribute empirical evidence to other criticisms of the 'Asian values' thesis, which claims that Confucian traditions and the resulting social authority relations are a significant impediment to democratization in Asia. Multiple opinion items point to a pattern of social authority norms in East Asia that is not dramatically different from the established Western democracies of the Pacific Rim (or Europe). Moreover, other recent opinion surveys in East Asia are providing evidence that supports the findings presented here. Thus, the cultural explanation for the place of Asia and, more specifically, countries with a Confucian tradition, in current history seems to be much weaker when viewed in terms of this evidence from public opinion surveys. National levels of authority orientations within East Asia are not strongly linked to a Confucian heritage, and are not markedly different from the Western democracies of the Pacific Rim.[49]

For countries with a history of political authoritarianism, a habit of thinking that the culture impeded democratization was probably built into some analysts' perceptions of East Asia. This view might have arisen from the observable actions of authoritarian elites and social traditions, to generalizing that these patterns represented the values of the citizenry. It is also apparent that some non-democratic political elites used a cultural argument to sustain their rule and rejection of liberal social norms. People in the non-democratic nations of East Asia, however, do not necessarily hold beliefs consistent with what their leaders prefer. In fact, citizens in Singapore, China, and Vietnam are often critical of oligarchic and autocratic principles. Amartya Sen has reached a similar conclusion: 'to see Asian history in terms of a narrow category of authoritarian values does little justice to the rich varieties of thought in Asian intellectual traditions. Dubious history does nothing to vindicate dubious politics.'[50]

In addition, generalizations about the undemocratic political culture of East Asia may have been true in the past, but the social modernization in the region during the late twentieth century has changed public opinion. We found that a generational shift away from authority orientations is much greater in East Asia than in Western democracies – although in both regions elders decry the declining respect for authority in their respective societies.

In summary, the evidence presented here and other recent public opinion surveys suggest that Asian authority orientations are not an impediment for the formation of democratic norms among contemporary publics. This does not mean that democratization will immediately follow, but it does imply that mass political culture is not the impediment to democratization that some analysts and political leaders have claimed.

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[49]   Although we do not present these data, survey evidence from the Catholic Philippines and Islamic Indonesia finds levels of support for authority that are at the upper end of the range for the Confucian nations in our survey.

[50]   Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. 248.

Our results also raise questions about treating all of East Asia as adhering to a single model of 'Asian values'. The nations of the region differ widely in their economic condition and their political histories. East Asia spans the range from Vietnam to Japan, from South Korea to Singapore – these are very different nations, with different social, religious, and political traditions. The citizens also differ significantly in their support for different elements of what has been described as Confucian traditions toward family and authority. Other philosophies, such as Taoism and Buddhism, are interwoven into fabric of East Asian common life and traditions; and contemporary regimes have responded differently in accepting or impeding these traditions. At least in terms of the authority orientations examined in this paper, there is not a single East Asian political culture. Diverse value patterns exist across the publics of these nations.

Furthermore, our findings challenge one of the seminal theories in political culture theory as applied to East Asia. Eckstein's congruency theory held that social authority relations should be congruent with those of the political system.[51] Eckstein's theory allowed for graduate disparities between adjacent social spheres, with the belief that social relations most proximate to politics – such as social group activity – should be most strongly linked to political authority relations. But the theory also predicts a relationship between family/work relations and politics.

Our test of the authority relations hypothesis shows only weak evidence that authority relations within the family or the workplace are related to attitudes toward political authority (that is democracy versus autocracy). Those who support a democratic regime do not have to defy traditional authority relations within the family or in the workplace. Therefore, prospects for further democratization in East Asia might not be incompatible with Confucian family or workplace orientations, as some scholars have argued. In other words, orientations toward democratization within an individual's set of values and a nation's policy agenda, respectively, do not have to create dissonance and tension with the non-political, private spheres.

We do not see this research as disconfirming the impact of political culture on the political process. Indeed, other research from the World Values Survey project underscores the importance of cultural influences on democracy.[52] Rather, the results raise questions about one aspect of political culture research that claimed personal social authority relations had a direct and strong impact on political norms. Such a relationship may exist in some settings, as the stronger relationships for Western democracies suggest. But there are a variety of social models that political norms may draw upon, and it is not necessarily the case that orientations towards one's parents provide the model for how individuals think about governments.

Diverse values exist among the citizens in East Asia. This observation may be one of the most optimistic and liberating views for democratic prospects in the region. Our

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[51] Harry Eckstein, 'Congruence Theory Explained'; Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*; Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture.*

[52] Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy.*

findings provide evidence that further democratization in the region is not inconsistent with the cultural traditions of the region. The speed of democratization will inevitably be faster than the slower pace of change in social relations or cultural traditions, but, as long as no incongruence is perceived or the political is kept separate from the non-political spheres of values, then experiencing democratic development will not require a culture shift.

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