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## Introduction

We live in a monumental era for the advancement of democracy. For the first time since its birth in ancient Greece more than two and a half millennia ago, democracy no longer remains confined mostly to socioeconomically advanced countries of the West. Instead, it has become a global phenomenon for the first time in human history. As a set of political ideals as well as political practices, democracy has finally reached every corner of the globe, including the Middle East and North Africa, the two regions known as the most inhospitable to it (Corby 2011; Haerpfer et al. 2009; Huntington 1991; McFaul 2002; Shin 1994, 2007).

Almost everywhere on earth, democracy has emerged as the political system most favored by a large majority of the mass citizenry (Diamond 2008a; Heath et al. 2005; Mattes 2007).<sup>1</sup> More notably, according to Freedom House (2010), the family of democratic states has expanded from 40 member countries to 116 since 1974, when the third wave of democratization began to spread from Southern Europe. Democracies currently account for 60 percent of the world's independent states. Even economically poor and culturally traditional societies, such as Benin and Mali in Africa, have been transformed into functioning liberal democracies. Growing demands from ordinary citizens, along with increased pressures and inducements from international communities, have turned the third wave of democratization into the most successful diffusion of democracy in history.

<sup>1</sup> According to the latest wave of the World Values Surveys conducted in fifty-seven countries during the period of 2005–8, more than nine out of ten people (92%) rated democracy favorably on a 4-point scale ranging from “very good” to “very bad.”

**The Third Wave of Democratization in East Asia**

The third wave of global democratization reached the shores of East Asia more than ten years after it hit Southern European countries. Over the past two decades, beginning with the 1986 overthrow of the Marcos regime in the Philippines, this wave has transformed seven of the thirteen autocracies in the region into democracies (Diamond 2011; Shin 2008). These seven are Indonesia, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Of these countries, three – Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand – have since reverted into nondemocracies because their people and political leaders were unable to resolve political differences peacefully through the process of democratic politics. Other countries in the region resisted the wave and have yet to hold free and competitive elections. Included in this group of autocracies are China, the largest and most populous country and the core state of Confucian civilization, and Singapore, a city-state known as the world's richest non-democracy. Even with the recent return of the Philippines to democratic rule, nondemocracies outnumber democracies by a substantial margin of ten to six.<sup>2</sup>

The six democracies in East Asia today include one second-wave democracy, Japan, and five third-wave democracies: Indonesia, Mongolia, South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Despite growing experience with democratic politics, all five third-wave democracies in the region have failed to become truly functioning liberal democracies (Kaufman et al. 2007; Shin 2008). Although many third-wave democracies in Europe became consolidated within the first decade of democratic rule, new East Asian democracies remain defective or nonliberal in character even in their second or third decade of existence (Chang et al. 2007; Cheng 2003; Croissant 2004; Shin 2008). In view of the slow pace of democratic regime change and its limited liberal expansion, it is fair to conclude that in the region as a whole the movement toward democracy is stagnating. Of all the regions of the world, East Asia remains one of the most resistant to the third wave of democratization.

Why does a region blessed with rapid economic development remain cursed with democratic underdevelopment? Why have so many countries in this region, unlike their peers in other regions, failed to join the powerful wave of global democratization? Why have nearly half the countries

<sup>2</sup> According to Freedom House's (2010) survey of electoral democracies, Thailand is rated as one of ten East Asian nondemocracies, along with China, North Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Cambodia.

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that joined the third wave been unable to sustain democratic rule, making the third wave of democratization more like an ebb-and-flow tide than a surging wave? Why have all the new and old democracies in East Asia, unlike many of their peers in the West, failed to improve the quality of their democratic governance? These questions have yet to be addressed adequately in the literature on democratization in general or that on East Asian politics in particular.

**Confucian Legacies and Democratization**

East Asia is a region infused with the core values of Confucianism. These Confucian values, once promoted as “Asian Values,” have historically been used to prioritize and justify the rights and duties of individual citizens and to define the power and authority of their political leaders (Bell 2006; Bell et al. 1996; Compton 2000; Pye 1985; Tu 1996a). Together with the distinct makeup of the region’s political institutions and their practices (Reilly 2008), these values have led to political order and economic welfare being top national development goals.<sup>3</sup> These values have also ushered in delegative democracy with power concentrated within the executive branch (Im 2004; O’Dwyer 2003).

Accordingly, many scholars and policy makers have turned to the region’s Confucian legacies in an attempt to explain the slow pace of democratic progress in East Asia. For decades, they have vigorously debated whether those cultural legacies have served to deter the emergence of liberal democracy in the region, been neutral forces, or been advantageous to democracy (Bauer and Bell 1999; Emerson 1995; Huntington 1996; Moody 1996; Tamney 1991; Weatherley 1999). Yet little consensus exists about the relationship between Confucian cultural legacies and a lack of democratic political development in East Asia.

Lee Kuan Yew (1998) and other proponents of Confucian Asian Values, for example, have claimed that Western-style liberal democracy is neither suitable for nor compatible with the Confucianism of East Asia, where collective welfare, a sense of duty, and other principles of Confucian moral philosophy run deep in people’s consciousness (Barr 2000; Huntington 1996; Y. Kim 1997; Pye 1985; Zakaria 1994). These proponents advocate a benevolent and paternalistic form of governance as a

<sup>3</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, it is the supreme goal of Confucianism to build *datong shehui*, a community of grand harmony or unity in which people live in peace and prosperity.

viable alternative to a liberal democracy that is based on the principles of Western individualism.

In contrast, Kim Dae Jung (1994), Amartya Sen (1999), and many other advocates of liberal democracy have denounced the Confucian Asian Values Thesis as a politically motivated attempt to legitimate authoritarian rule and have rejected it as anachronistic and oppressive (Bell 2006; Bell and Hahm 2003; Hahm 2004). Francis Fukuyama (1995b) also rejects the portrayal of Confucianism and democracy as antithetical doctrines. However, Fareed Zakaria (2003) argues that democracies in Confucian Asia are likely to remain “illiberal democracies” because elites and ordinary citizens are reluctant to embrace and observe the fundamental tenets of constitutional liberalism.

*Theoretically*, despite decades of argumentation and debate, no systematic effort to date has been made to recast the Asian Values Thesis as a theory seeking to unravel the cultural dynamics of democratization. As a result, its claims linking Confucian cultural legacies to democratic underdevelopment in historically Confucian East Asia (defined in Chapter 1) have yet to be evaluated in view of congruence theory and other recent theoretical advances in the study of democratic cultural development.

*Empirically*, little systematic effort has yet been made to determine how Confucian values and norms actually affect the building of democratic nations in Confucian East Asia. To date, only a handful of studies have empirically explored – from the perspective of ordinary citizens in the region – how Confucianism affects the process of democratizing authoritarian rule (Blondel and Inoguchi 2006; Chang et al. 2005; Dalton and Ong 2006; Fetzer and Soper 2007; Kim 2010; Nathan and Chen 2004; Park and Shin 2006; Welzel 2011). These studies offer only a partial account of the complex relationship between Confucian legacies and the democratization among the mass citizenries of historically Confucian countries.

*Conceptually*, these empirical studies are based on narrow or thin conceptions of Confucianism and democratization. They often equate Confucianism with authoritarianism or familism, and democratization with the embrace of democracy as the preferred regime. *Theoretically*, these studies are also weak in that they search exclusively for a direct link between Confucian and democratic orientations, neglecting to examine indirect relationships through engagement in civic life, which Alexis de Tocqueville (2000 [1835]) once called “the schools of democracy.”

*Methodologically*, these studies have relied on techniques of quantitative analysis that merely allow estimating the level or amount of a specific

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Confucian or democratic property; as a result, they provide little information about how the various legacies of Confucianism and the divergent dimensions of democratization interact with one another in *qualitatively distinct patterns*. Moreover, these studies have examined only one country or a few in historically Confucian Asia or one or a few dimensions of Confucian and democratic orientations. Most do not adequately compare this region with other Asian and non-Asian regions to determine whether Confucianism is a truly regional phenomenon confined to East Asia (the development and spread of this phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 1).

Although these studies point in a valuable direction, neither singly nor together do they conclusively settle the age-old debate over the compatibility or incompatibility of Confucianism and democracy (reviewed in Chapter 2). This book is designed to resolve this debate empirically by analyzing how Confucian political and social norms encourage or discourage the mass citizenries of historically Confucian Asia from becoming members of a civic community and citizens of a democratic state. It is also designed to resolve the debate theoretically by evaluating the claims and counterclaims of the Asian Values Thesis in view of a variety of theories that have been recently advanced.

The empirical work that follows covers six of the seven countries in this region – China, Japan, South Korea (Korea hereafter), Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam – with the exception of North Korea. These countries are compared with one another and with those in other regions to highlight intraregional and interregional differences and similarities in the extent to which the masses are attached to the principles and practices of Confucianism and democracy; these comparisons also reveal different patterns in which those values and practices relate with one another in the minds of ordinary citizens.

**From the Perspective of the Mass Citizenry**

What constitutes democratization? Who promotes it and how? The existing literature on third-wave democracies generally agrees that democratization is a highly complex transformation that involves multiple actors and agencies, including political institutions and processes, civic associations and groups, and individual citizens and their political leaders (Boix and Stokes 2003; Bunce 2000, 2003; Diamond 2008a; Geddes 1999; Karl 2005; McFaul 2002; Rose and Shin 2001; Whitehead 2002). The same literature also agrees that the mass citizenry significantly shapes the pace

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and trajectories of the democratization process (Alagappa 2004; Bermeo 2003; R. Collier 1999; Newton 2001; Norris 2002; Tusalem 2007).

On a conceptual level, democratization is a multidimensional phenomenon because it involves the establishment of both democratic ideas and practices and the disestablishment of whatever came before. *Institutionally*, democratization typically involves a transition from authoritarian rule to a political system that allows ordinary citizens to participate on a regular basis and to elect their political leaders. *Substantively*, it involves a process in which electoral and other institutions consolidate and become increasingly responsive to the preferences of the citizenry.

*Culturally*, it is a process in which ordinary citizens dissociate themselves from the values and practices of authoritarian politics and embrace democracy as “the only game in town.” As Robert Dahl (1997), Terry Karl (2000), and Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) note, the process of democratizing a political system involves much more than the installation of representative institutions and a democratic constitution; as discussed in greater detail later, these elements are the “hardware,” but there is much citizen “software” that must also be in place.

Finally, democratization is a multilevel phenomenon because it involves ongoing interactions between individual citizens and institutions of their political system. On one level, the transformation must take place in individual citizens, and on another level, it must take place in institutions of the political regime that rule them. At the regime level, democratization refers to the extent to which authoritarian structures and procedures transform into democratic ones and in the process become responsive and accountable to the preferences of the mass citizenry (Dahl 1971). At the citizenry level, the extent to which average citizens become civic-minded and convinced of democracy’s superiority constitutes democratic change.

Of these two different levels of democratization, this study of democratization in Confucian East Asia chooses to focus on what takes place in individual citizens because of the notable Freedom House finding that ordinary people shape the actual process of democratic transition and consolidation. According to a recent worldwide study by Freedom House (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005), among fourteen countries in which ruling elites drove the transition from authoritarian rule, only 14 percent have become liberal democracies, whereas 50 percent have reverted to nondemocracies. Among the countries in which the transitions were driven by *strongly active* civic coalitions, not just active civic coalitions, 75 percent became liberal democracies, and only 6 percent emerged as

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nondemocracies. A comparison of these figures reveals that the incidence of becoming a liberal democracy posttransition is more than five times higher for countries with strong civic coalitions, whereas the incidence of reverting to authoritarian rule posttransition is more than eight times higher for those with strong ruling elites. Evidently, the mass citizenry plays a crucial role in lasting democratization.

What mass citizens think about democracy is also known to affect the process of democratic governance. Institutionally, a political system can become democratic with the installation of competitive elections and multiple political parties. These institutions alone, however, do not make for a fully functioning democratic political system. As Richard Rose and his associates (1998, 8) aptly point out, these institutions constitute nothing more than “the hardware” of representative democracy. To operate the institutional hardware, a democratic political system requires “software” that is congruent with the various hardware components (Almond and Verba 1963; Eckstein 1966). Both the scholarly community and policy circles widely recognize that what ordinary citizens think about democracy and their reactions to its institutions are key components of such software.

To build an effectively functioning democracy, moreover, people have to develop “the social ability to collaborate for shared interests” through norms and networks of civic engagement (Putnam 1993, 182; see also Nuyen 2002; Tan 2003b). They also have to develop the political ability to appreciate the virtues of democracy and then must commit themselves to those. Therefore, civics and politics constitute two distinct arenas in which individual citizens can contribute to the building of an effective democracy.

**Conceptualization**

This study is designed to examine the effects that Confucianism has on the democratization process at the level of individual citizens. To examine these effects, I chose democratic citizenship as a central conceptual tool and define it in broad terms from a Confucian communitarian perspective (S. M. Kim 2010). In this perspective there is no duality between the private and public spheres of life; instead, the two life spheres are seen as interdependent, and obligations and responsibilities to one’s community are crucial components of citizenship (Nuyen 2002).

This perspective derives from the Confucian ethic that individuals are not autonomous but are social beings defined and refined through their relationships with others and with their communities. Therefore, rights,

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duties, and responsibilities must be defined not in terms of the individual but in terms of the relationship between the individual and his or her community (Fox 1997). Citizenship is always a reciprocal and social idea; it requires both a strong sense of solidarity and active participation in social networks in which rights and responsibilities are mutually supportive (Park and Shin 2006; Putnam 1993).

This broad and deep notion of citizenship, which Charles Tilly (1996) characterizes as “thick citizenship,” contrasts sharply with the liberal notion of “thin” citizenship in which a citizen’s responsibilities are minimal and subordinate to any concern about rights. In the liberal democracies of the West, citizenship refers primarily to the right of autonomous individuals to pursue freely their conceptions of the good life. In such an atomized vision of human existence, there is little room for self-interested individuals to reflect about the importance of community in terms of their social responsibilities and role. As Xinzhong Yao (1999, 34) points out, “freedom without responsibility would result in the collapse of the social network and in the conflict between individuals and between individuals and society.” To avoid such conflicts, early Confucians advocated civic life as a crucial component of citizenship in the belief that any polity, either democratic or nondemocratic, cannot be sustained without citizens caring for each other and their community.

Following this civic tradition of Confucianism, in this study I define the two central terms of Confucianism and democratic citizenship broadly. I define Confucianism both as a system of social ethics endorsing a particular way of private and public life and as a system of political ethics advocating a particular system of government. As a code of social ethics, Confucianism refers to the norms prescribing proper interpersonal relationships with people we know and with strangers (discussed in Chapter 3). As a code of political ethics, Confucianism refers to the principles defining the relationship between rulers and the ruled (discussed in Chapter 4). I also define democratic citizenship more broadly than citizens’ cognitive competence or sophistication about democratic politics; I look at the processes through which they begin to engage in civic life and become committed to the ideals and practices of democratic politics.

Civic life plays a vital role in educating people about the art of democratic politics (Putnam 1993). Therefore, I examine how Confucian social ethics affects the way in which people in Confucian Asia engage with their fellow citizens *behaviorally* and *psychologically* and how these ethics affects how people in Confucian Asia become members of a civic



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community. Specifically, I measure civic engagement in psychological terms – how civic-minded are people – and behavioral terms – how they interact with other people. Because traditional political values influence how people orient themselves to or away from the democratization process (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Nathan and Chen 2004; Putnam 1993), I examine how Confucian political ethics affects the ways in which people react to the process *cognitively* and *affectively* and become democrats, with a small “d.” Specifically, becoming a democrat requires both an accurate understanding of democracy as a distinctive system of government and unconditional endorsement of it as the preferred regime structure and policy-making process.

In a nutshell, this study aims to offer a comprehensive account of the roles Confucianism plays in making democratic citizens by investigating its effects on the civic and political life of individual citizens. To analyze its effects on civic life, I chose civic engagement as a key conceptual tool and examine it in both behavioral terms – for example, joining voluntary associations – and psychological terms, for example, placing trust in other people. To analyze its effects on political life, I chose democratic commitment as a key conceptual tool and examine its cognitive and affective characteristics in terms of understanding democracy as a distinct political system and embracing it as “the only game in town.”

**Databases and the Methods of Analysis**

Do Confucian cultural legacies really matter in the process of building nations of democratic citizens in East Asia? To address this general question adequately, I needed to perform two types of comparative analyses. The first compares countries within the region of historically Confucian East Asia to determine whether these legacies still remain pervasive and prevalent throughout the region. The second compares countries in the Confucian region with those in non-Confucian Asia and other regions to determine whether Confucianism represents a unique system of ethics confined to the former. To perform both types of comparative analyses, I assembled two sets of multinational public opinion surveys as the main empirical base for our study: the Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS) and the World Values Surveys (WVS).

The second wave of the ABS was conducted during the 2005–8 period in six Confucian Asian countries – China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam – and six non-Confucian Asian countries:

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Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand.<sup>4</sup> This wave of the ABS consisted of batteries of questions tapping attachment to four principal Confucian legacies – familism, communitarianism, paternalism, and meritocracy – as well as civic engagement and orientations to democracy and its alternatives. To supplement the items on interpersonal trust asked in this second wave of the ABS, I selected one item tapping affective trust from its first wave, which was conducted in only four countries – China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan – during the 2001–3 period. These two waves together allowed a comparison of Confucian and non-Confucian countries within East Asia.

The fifth wave of the WVS was conducted during the 2005–8 period in fifty-seven countries, including five Confucian Asian countries – China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam – and three non-Confucian Asian countries: Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> For our purpose of cross-regional analysis, I classified the fifty-seven countries into seven major cultural regions – the democratic West, South Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America, ex-communist West, and Sub-Saharan Africa – by collapsing into two zones – democratized West and ex-communist West – the five cultural categories of Western culture constructed by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005).<sup>6</sup> From the WVS fifth wave, I selected two sets of questions, one tapping the Confucian way of life featuring hierarchism and collectivism and the other, a set of four items, tapping divergent conceptions of democracy and other types of regimes.

The WVS enabled an exploration of whether the people of Confucian East Asia are distinct from their peers in other regions in how they prefer to live their lives and whether they understand and think about democracy in different patterns. Yet the limited number of questions posed by both the ABS and the WVS to tap key Confucian social and political values and norms made it difficult to analyze this and other research questions fully. Due to this limitation, I had to choose a specific pair of questions for each of those values and norms.

I used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the items selected from the ABS and WVS. To conduct quantitative analyses I relied

<sup>4</sup> Detailed information on sampling methodology, fieldwork procedures, and questionnaires is available from <http://www.asianbarometer.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Detailed information on sampling methodology, fieldwork procedures, and questionnaires is available from [www.worldvaluessurvey.com](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com).

<sup>6</sup> These five cultural categories are: non-English-speaking Protestant West, English-speaking West, non-English-speaking Catholic West, ex-communist West, and ex-communist East.