Monitoring the Dynamics of Democratization in Korea

The Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys

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The past decade has witnessed a growth in major efforts to study mass reactions to democratic regime change on a global scale.[1] Since 1991 Professor Richard Rose, of the Center for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, has been conducting the New Democracies Barometer surveys and the New Russia and Baltic Barometer surveys to compare the mass experience of democratization in post-Communist countries.[2] Since 1995 Dr. Mata Lagos, of Market Opinion Research International in Santiago, Chile, has been conducting the Latinobarometro surveys on an annual basis to trace and compare the levels and sources of popular support for democracy and democratic reforms in 15 Latin American countries along with Spain.[3] Most recently, in1999, Professor Michael Bratton of Michigan State University in the United States and Robert Mattes of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa launched the Afrobarometer to map mass attitudes toward democracy, markets, and civil society in a dozen African countries.[4]

What do Koreans think of their new democracy? How broadly and deeply do they support the newly installed institutions and procedures of representative democracy? How actively are they involved in those institutions and procedures? How does their support for and involvement in a democracy compare with what is known in new democracies of other regions? How has their democratic support and involvement changed over the years of democratic rule? The Korea Democracy Barometer (hereinafter KDB) program was launched in 1988 to investigate these and other significant questions concerning the Korean experience of democratization. This was also the year when nearly three

decades of military dictatorships formally ended and the new era of democratic political life dawned in Korea with the installation of the democratic Sixth Republic.

Since 1996, the KDB program has joined forces with other democracy barometer programs to develop questionnaires and databases that permit inter-regional and inter-continental comparisons of mass responses to democratization.[5] Through a multi-layered strategic alliance with research teams in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, this ongoing survey research program seeks to provide meaningful and unique opportunities to bring about the widespread study of contemporary Korea on a global scale. The purpose of this article is to introduce the KDB program to the scholarly community and policy circles by highlighting the key components of its recent surveys.

Conceptual Foundations

The KDB program is designed to systematically monitor and make known both the institutional and cultural dynamics and substantive outcomes of democratization in Korea. For a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of one of the most enduring political concerns of mankind, the KDB program rejects the static, procedural notion of democratic politics. In the tradition of Schumpeter (1976), Dahl (1971) and Huntington (1989), considerable efforts have been made recently by leading scholars to standardize usage of the term *democracy* by confining its defining attributes primarily to the electoral domain of political life.[6] As a result, there is a growing tendency among political scientists and development planners to equate democracy with the occurrence of the mass public's free, fair, and competitive elections of political leadership on a regular basis.

In the minds of ordinary citizens in new democracies, however, democracy is not equated merely with the political procedures featuring the periodic participation of the mass public in fully contested elections.[7] Conceptually, for those masses who have suffered a great deal of political oppression, injustice, and poverty for all or most of their lives, democracy symbolizes much more than the abolition of repressive political institutions and the replacement of authoritarian political leaders.[8] Democracy represents opportunities and resources for a better quality of human life, for "it never systematically adopts a line of conduct hostile to the majority".[9] It also represents "a more equitable and humane society".[10] As Hahm and Rhyu aptly sum up, democracy is "an interacting, all encompassing system that is bigger than any one regime."[11] In other words, democratization is a movement that enhances the human lot and constitutes a process of transformation taking place at the levels of individual citizens, political institutions,

and the political regime itself.

Further, in the KDB program, democracy is not considered merely as a dichotomous phenomenon; instead, it is viewed as a continuous process of change involving a complex system of factors and trajectories.[12] Constantly evolving in phases and at paces over time, democratic change cannot be adequately captured in a few black-and-white snapshots, which are based on a dichotomous view of procedural democracy.[13] A more accurate and meaningful account of Korean democratization requires a broader and dynamic notion of democratic change that continuously occurs in several analytically distinct, but empirically overlapping, stages.

In the logic of causal sequence, these stages may run from the decay and disintegration of authoritarian rule or totalitarianism through the emergence of a new democracy to consolidation of the democratic regime.[14] In reality, however, democratization has often failed to proceed sequentially, and as Diamond correctly sums up, some democracies abort as soon as they emerge while others erode as much as they consolidate.[15] In short, democratization does not proceed in a smooth, linear fashion; it is often subject to a series of crises and reversals. The end product is not always a full or stable democracy.[16]The KDB program is also grounded on the notion that democratization is a political movement to establish popular rule by empowering the *demos* or people, and it can progress only when the mass public is increasingly in favor of it. A new democracy like the one in Korea, therefore, becomes fully consolidated when a large majority of ordinary citizens embrace it as "the only game in town".[17] Democracy is government by *demos* (the people) and, thus, cannot be foisted upon the unwilling for any extended period of time. Among ordinary citizens, those who stop viewing democracy as the best form of government are likely to embrace antidemocratic movements and overthrow a newly installed democratic regime, especially during a serious crisis. When citizens begin to question the legitimacy of their regime, they should be unwilling to oppose any regression to authoritarian rule so that their incipient democratic regime weathers economic crises and other policy failures.[18] When they confer legitimacy on the regime, it can govern effectively by making decisions and commit resources without resort to coercion.[19] When ordinary citizens participate actively in the democratic political process, moreover, political leaders can be restrained and held accountable for their actions. Most importantly, citizen democrats can force, if they so choose, an unwilling leadership to expand democratic rights and opportunities to those excluded from the democratic process by the original contracts, which were negotiated with authoritarian elites during the transition phase. This, in turn, thaws

frozen democracy and helps move it toward its fullest ideals.[20]

Unlike the earlier stages in which the masses were neither greatly involved nor their attitudes directly relevant, democratic consolidation involves a multitude of new and inexperienced political actors trying to secure their share of benefits from the new regime.[21] Therefore, consolidation cannot be achieved only by those elites who are "superficially" or "expediently" committed to democracy. For a transitional democracy to become a consolidated democracy, citizens must be convinced of the virtues of democracy and play active roles in the process.[22] "Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force".[23] In other words, there can be no consolidated democracy without democrats both at the top and the bottom of the ladder.

Finally, the KDB program is grounded in the supposition that the progress of democratization can be appreciated and evaluated accurately only by those who experience it on a daily basis. First, ordinary people, experiencing changes in the formal and informal rules of the political game on a daily basis, are the best judges of those changes.[24] Second, these same people are intellectually capable of perceiving and considering all those changes together for a global assessment of the political regime and culture in which they live.[25] Repeated surveys of a cross-section of the adult population over time, therefore, make it possible to reveal and compare the dynamics of trajectories of democratic change.

Parallel Surveys of the Korean Mass Public

Beginning in October 1988, the KDB conducted eight parallel surveys of the Korean mass public in order to determine the breadth, depth, direction, durability, and stability of mass support for and involvement in democratic politics.[26] The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) at Seoul National University conducted the first three surveys during the Roh Tae Woo (1988-1993) and Kim Young Sam (1993-1998) presidencies. The first two occurred in October 1988 (N=2,007) and November 1991 (N=l,185) when former General Roh Tae Woo was the first president of the democratic Sixth Republic, and the third in November 1993 (N=l,198), the first year of the second democratic government of President Kim Young Sam. The Korea-Gallup polling organization (hereinafter the Gallup Poll) conducted the next three surveys during the Kim Young Sam government. The first occurred in November 1994 (N= 1,500), the second in January 1996 (N=1,000), and the third in May 1997 (N=l,l 17). The Gallup Poll also conducted the latest two surveys during the current Kim Dae Jung government: one in October 1998 (N=l,010) and one in November 1999 (N=l,007).

Technically, the ISS and Gallup Polls selected their samples to reflect the population of the Republic of Korea age 20 and over. The advance report of the Population and Housing Census of the National Statistical Office was used first to stratify the population by region *(Do)* and the eight large cities on the basis of their proportionate share of the national population. The island of Cheju-Do, with 1.2 percent of the total population, was excluded. Secondly, each region or large city was stratified by administrative subdivisions *(Dong, Eup, Myuri)* on the basis of its proportion of the population. At the third stage, the primary sampling units *(ban or village)* were randomly selected, with 6 to 8 households in a *ban* and 12 to 15 in a *village.* At the household level, the interviewer was instructed to select for interview the person whose birthday came next. Respondents to the six surveys were all interviewed, face-to-face, at their residences. The average interview lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. In the surveys conducted by the Gallup Poll, 10 percent of those interviews were verified on a random basis.

Of the eight KDB surveys conducted to date, the five surveys conducted during the period from 1994 to 1999 were selected for this paper to examine the distinctive features of and recent trends in Korean democratization. Analyzing these five surveys on both individual and collective bases, this paper highlights the cultural and institutional dynamics of Korean democratization in terms of what the Korean people themselves have actually experienced during the second half of the past decade.

Democratization of Authoritarian Rule

This section focuses on the dynamics of transforming a developmental military dictatorship into a functioning democracy. How democratic is the current political system that replaced the military dictatorship of a decade ago? How well does the newly installed political system perform as the government by and for the people? How much progress has been achieved in democratizing the institutions and procedures of military rule that lasted nearly three decades? These questions are explored with three sets of items from the KDB survey conducted in November 1999 in order to tap public perceptions and assessments of democratization in progress and at repose.

Institutional Democratization

The 1999 KDB survey asked respondents to rate their current and the past political systems on a 10-point ladder scale. This scale allows participants to respond according to their own understanding of democracy and dictatorship. A score of 1 on this scale indicates "complete dictatorship" while a score of 10 indicates "complete

democracy." Responses to this question, as reported in Table 1, provide two important pieces of information concerning the perceived character of the old authoritarian and new democratic systems. For the two systems, Table 1 provides the percentage of respondents who chose each of the ten positions or steps on the ladder scale. As the data in this table reveals, a vast majority (87%) rated the past regime as undemocratic by placing it at 5 or below. In sharp contrast, a substantial majority (67%) rated the current regime as democratic by placing it at 6 or above. These figures, when compared, make it clear that the military authoritarian rule of three decades has been transformed into a democracy.

TABLE 1: Perceptions of the Current and Past Political Systems

Scale Points	*Distribution (%)* *Past regime (1980-88)*	*Current regime (1998-present)*
1 (complete dictatorship)	10.5	0.9
2	17.3	0.8
3	19.8	5.1
4	18.8	5.5
5	20.3	19.3
6	8.8	32.3
7	2.9	22.5
8	1.2	10.5
9	0.3	2.3
10 (complete democracy)	0.1	0.5
(mean score)	3.9	5.9

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey*

Table 1 also gives the average ratings on this scale for the current democratic and past authoritarian systems. Like the percentage ratings, the average ratings for the current system are indicative of the extent to which the mass public embraces it as democratic. The average rating of the past regime was 3.9; for the present regime, however, the average increased to 5.9. This shift in the mean ratings confirms considerable progress in institutional democratization in the wake of the democratic regime change in 1998. The mean rating of 5.9 for the present system on a 10-point scale, however, suggests that Korean democracy is, by

and large, a political system of a mixed nature even after more than a decade of democratic rule.

Substantive Democratization

A second pair of key questions asked in the 1999 KDB survey deals with how well the current political system performs as a democracy. Democratization has to bring about significant improvements in the extent to which a political system responds to the public. In addition, it should bring about similar changes to enable the masses to get involved in the making of public policies. The empowerment of ordinary citizens and the responsiveness of a political system to their preferences are at the core of substantive democratization.

TABLE 2: Citizen Empowerment and System Responsiveness

Degrees	*Citizen Empowerment*	*System Responsiveness*
A lot	32.1	3.1
Some	44.3	23.7
A little	20.5	51.1
None	1.6	19.7
(No answer)	1.4	2.4

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Survey.*

Respondents to the 1999 survey were asked: How much influence do you think the votes of people like yourself have on the way our country is governed: a lot, some, a little, or none? To what extent do you think government leaders take the interests and opinion of people like yourself into account when making important decisions: a lot, some, a little, or none? The data in Table 2 show the distribution of respondents across four different levels of empowerment and system responsiveness. Based on the nature of these distributions, we can determine how positively respondents feel about themselves as citizens

of a democratic state and their own state as a democracy. A large majority (76%) reported feeling at least some amount of empowerment under the present system of government. This suggests that Koreans tend to feel that they have a way to express their opinions and promote their interests under the present system. Unfortunately, a large majority (71%), nonetheless, reported that the system is only a little, or not at all, responsive. This suggests that although the people have the ability to express their opinions, they do not perceive the government as being responsive to them.

TABLE 3: Experiences of Substantive Democracy

Types of Experience		*Distribution*
Empowerment	Responsiveness	(percent)
No	No	17.1
No	Yes	4.8
Yes	No	52.8
Yes	Yes	21.7
(Nno answer)		3.6

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey*

Table 3 collapses four different levels of democratic experiences into two broad categories, one affirming and the other denying the experience of those two substantive qualities of democratic governance. By considering jointly these two categories of empowerment and responsiveness, four patterns were discerned to examine the deepening presence of democracy in the substance of policymaking. The first pattern refers to the absence of either quality. The second and third patterns refer to the presence of only one of those two qualities, which indicates a partial achievement of substantive democratization. The fourth pattern, on the other hand, refers to the presence of both qualities, attesting to the achievement of substantive democratization to the fullest degree. The particular pattern in which a majority or a plurality of Korean voters place them indicates how well or poorly the current political system works as the government by the people as well as for the people. Table 3 reveals that a majority (53%) felt that they were empowered in the new system, but that this system was not

responsive to their interests.

To assess the overall quality of its substantive performance as a democracy, the 1999 KDB survey also asked respondents how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way democracy works in their country today. On a 10-point scale, where 1 means complete dissatisfaction and 10 means complete satisfaction, respondents were asked to express the degree of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current practice of democratic politics. Table 4 provides the mean rating on this scale and the percentages of those placed at each of its 10 scale points. As this table shows, a minority of 42% expressed satisfaction with the present regime with the placement of the regime at 6 or above on the scale. The mean score of 5.2 reinforces this qualified response. Being lower than the midpoint (5.5) on the 10-point scale, the mean score indicates clearly that the Korean people as a whole are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the way the present democratic system performs.

TABLE 4: Evaluations of the Performance of the Present Political System

Scale Points	*Current regime (1998-present)*
1 (complete dissatisfaction)	1.5
2	5.0
3	6.7
4	0.5
5	34.1
6	25.8
7	10.4
8	3.7
9	1.7
10 (complete satisfaction)	0.7
(mean score)	(5.2)

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey*

Overall Patterns of Democratizing Authoritarian Rule

We can make a comprehensive and balanced account of Korean democratization only when we jointly consider positive and negative assessments of its substantive performance with democratic and authoritarian perceptions of its institutional character. In Table 5, these

perceptions and assessments are classified into four distinct patterns of democratization. The first pattern features the lack of progress in either the institutional or the substantive domain of democracy. The second and third patterns represent partial progress with the advancement of one of these two domains. The fourth pattern represents democratic progress on a full scale as evidenced in both domains. These patterns make it possible to unravel the dynamics of democratization and its distinctive characteristics.

As the data in Table 5 shows, one quarter (25%) judged their political system as neither democratic nor functioning to their satisfaction. A much smaller minority (7%) judged it as undemocratic but functioning to their satisfaction. One-third *(33%)* judged it as democratic but failing to function to their satisfaction. Slightly over one-third *(35%)* were fully positive about the character as well as performance of their current political system. To a large majority, the Korean political system today does not represent a well-functioning democracy.

TABLE 5: Overall Patterns of Popular Assessments of Democratization in Korea

Democratic Character	*Satisfying Performance*	*Distribution* (percent)
No	No	25.3
No	Yes	6.8
Yes	No	32.5
Yes	Yes	35.5

Source: ***1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey***

Democratization of Authoritarian Culture

Another important component of the KDB surveys focuses on the cultural dynamics of Korean democratization. To what degree do the Korean people desire to live in a democracy? How strongly are they committed to the expansion of limited democratic practices? To what extent are they dissociated from the age-old practices of authoritarian rule? To explore these questions, the KDB surveys differentiated democratic support into two broad categories: normative and empirical.

Normative support consists of favorable orientations to democracy as a political ideal while empirical support involves the acceptance of democracy as a viable political system. This notion of democratic support is based on two major theoretical premises. First, there is a wide gulf between people's aspiration for democracy-in-principle and their commitment to democracy-in-practice. Second, there is also a wide gulf between a people's desire for the expansion of limited democracy and their willingness to endorse specific measures of reform.

General Support for Democracy-in-Principle

Specifically the 1999 KDB survey asked a pair of questions to tap the breadth and magnitude of popular attachment to the general ideas of democracy and democratic change. Specifically, respondents were first asked to "consider the idea of democracy, not its practice." Then they were asked how much they were, in principle, for or against the idea of democracy. The same respondents were then asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "our political system should be made a lot more democratic than what it is now." In addition, they were asked to express the level of democracy they *desired* on a 10-point ladder scale where a score of 1 means "complete dictatorship" and a score of 10 means "complete democracy."

Tables 6 and 7 report, separately, the various responses to each of these three questions. As we can see in Table 6, nine in ten (91%) Koreans embraced the idea of democracy as either somewhat favorable or highly favorable. We can also see in Table 7 that nine in ten (90%) also expressed the desire to live in a democracy by choosing scores of 6 or higher on the 10-point political preference scale. In addition, a nearly identical proportion (88%) reported being somewhat or highly favorable to the idea of "expanding limited democracy." These findings suggest strongly that the Korean people as a whole are, in principle, favorably oriented toward democracy and its expansion.

To estimate the overall level of support for democracy-in-principle, an index of normative democratic support was constructed by counting the number of times that respondents answered affirmatively to these three questions involving the idea of democracy, the desirability of democracy, and, expanding limited democracy. A score of 0 means a complete lack of support for democracy as a normative phenomenon and a score of 3 indicates support to the fullest extent. According to this index, three- quarters (75%) responded affirmatively to all three questions, indicating strong and widespread support for democracy as an abstract ideal. Only one-fifth (20%) replied to one or two questions

TABLE 6: Orientations toward Democracy-in-Principle

Orientation Categories	*Idea of democracy*	*Idea of expanding limited democracy*
Highly favorable	40.1	37.3
Somewhat favorable	50.9	50.3
Somewhat unfavorable	5.7	9.5
Highly unfavorable	0.4	0.6
(No answer)	2.9	2.3

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey

affirmatively. Most surprising was that virtually no one (0.2%) refused to answer any of the three questions affirmatively. The high percentage that responded affirmatively to all three questions, when considered in light of the low percentages that refused to do so, suggests that a vast majority of the Korean people are attached to democracy as a political ideal.

General Support for Democracy-in-Practice

In addition to asking questions about the idea of democracy, the 1999 KDB survey asked a set of three questions to gauge the level of support for democracy as a viable political system. The first of these questions concerned the suitability of democracy for the country that has already been in democratic transformation for more than a decade. The second question bears on the relative preference of democracy as a method of governance. The third one addresses the salience of democracy as a national development policy. Tables 8 and 9 provide, separately, various responses to each of these three questions. For the first question, Table 8 shows that a substantial majority (63%) of those surveyed judged democracy to be suitable for their country with scores of 6 or higher on the 10-point scale. The mean score of 5.9 on the 10-point scale, however, suggests that their endorsement of democracy for the country is far from being enthusiastic.

TABLE 7: Desired Levels of Democracy

Desired Level *Scale points*	*Distribution* (percent)
1 (complete dictatorship)	0.1
2	1.5
3	0.8
4	1.1
5	6.2
6	7.5
7	15.7
8	26.1
9	18.3
10	22.8
(Mean score)	(7.9)

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey

As Table 9 shows, responses to the question about the relative preference of democracy to a dictatorship confirms the lack of enthusiastic support for democracy-in-action among the Korean mass public. Although a bare majority (53%) embraced democracy as always preferable to dictatorship, nearly one-third (31 %) subscribed to the view that a dictatorship would be preferable to a democratic regime under certain conditions. This suggests that the Korean people are not strongly committed to democracy as a viable form of government. The lack of strong commitment to democracy-in-practice becomes more evident when they were asked to rate the importance of democratization as a policy goal relative to economic development. Table 9 shows that only one in seven (14%) Koreans rated democratization more important than economic development while one in two (50%) rated economic development more important than democratization.

To estimate the overall level of support for democracy as a viable political system, we constructed an index of empirical democratic support, similar to one measuring the overall level of normative support for democracy. Again, this index was constructed by counting the number of times that respondents answered affirmatively to all three questions concerning democratic practices. On this index, a score of 0

TABLE 8: Suitability of Democracy for the Country

Scale Points	*Distribution* (percent)
1 (completely unsuitable)	0.6
2	0.5
3	5.0
4	8.8
5	22.2
6	29.4
7	17.8
8	10.4
9	4.4
10 (completely suitble)	1.0
(Mean score)	(5.9)

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Survey*

means the lack of any support for democracy as a collective political enterprise while a score of 3 means the fullest extent of support for it.

This index, unlike the one measuring normative democratic support, revealed a mixed picture of support for democracy as a viable political system. Only one-fifth (21%) expressed unqualified support for it by answering all three questions affirmatively. Two-thirds (68%) expressed partial support for democratic governance by answering two or one of the questions affirmatively. Refusing to answer any of them affirmatively, as many as one in ten (10%) Koreans expressed no empirical support at all. These figures contrast sharply with what was found in support for democracy as a normative phenomenon. While over seven in ten Koreans are fully attached to the ideas of democracy and democratic change, only one in ten is equally committed to the practices of democratic governance. Nearly two-thirds of the Korean voters refuse to embrace democracy "as the only game in town," although they are fully committed to its ideals and values. This finding testifies to the ambivalence in Koreans' support for democracy.

Trust in Democratic Institutions

Popular trust in democratic institutions has long been considered absolutely essential to the practices of democratic politics. When ordinary citizens trust the National Assembly and political parties, for example, these same citizens take part in the process of policymaking

TABLE 9: Orientations Toward Democracy-in-Practice

A. *Relative Preference of Democracy to Authoritarianism*

Response Categories	Distribution (percent)
Democracy is always preferable	52.9
Sometimes a dictatorship is preferable	30.8
It doesn't matter to people like me	16.4

B. *Salience of Democratization over Economic Development*

Response Categories	Distribution (Percent)
Economic development is more important	50.3
Democratization is more important	13.7
Equally important	35.5
(No answer)	0.5

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey*

where these representative institutions play a key role. When they trust the courts, the police, and civil servants, ordinary citizens also abide by the decisions and rules these institutions seek to enforce. What proportion of these citizens trust political institutions and to what extent? To explore this question, the 1997 survey asked respondents to rate six political institutions on a 4-point verbal scale ranging from "trust much" to "do not trust at all."

Table 10 shows that the levels of institutional trust in Korea vary a great deal. While almost three-quarters (72%) of Koreans, for example, trust the military, only one in five (20%) trusts political parties. Of the six institutions surveyed in the 1997 KDB survey, a majority of the Korean masses trust only two institutions, the military and courts. Slightly more than two-fifths trust the police and civil servants. And less than one-quarter trust the National Assembly and

the political parties. Evident from this finding is that the two fundamental institutions of representative democracy are trusted least by the Korean people. This may be the reason why many Koreans are, by and large, reluctant to support democracy-in-practice. (Table 10 here)

The general levels of political trust are estimated by counting the number of political institutions that are rated as trustworthy at least to some extent. According to this index, a majority (53%) judged as trustworthy one-third (2 institutions) or less of the six key institutions. By contrast, only a small minority (17%) judged as trustworthy more than two-thirds (4 institutions) of those institutions. Nearly one-fifth (18%) refused to trust any of these institutions. Obviously, the Koreans as a whole do not approve of the way the key political institutions have been functioning since the inauguration of the democratic political system more than 10 years ago.

Commitment to Democratic Reform

Nascent democratic rule constitutes nothing more than a limited and unconsolidated democracy-in-action, often with low levels of trust in the newly formed institutions that we have looked at in this study of Korea. To expand and consolidate the limited practices of democratic politics, people should be willing to support various measures of democratic reform. The 1999 KDB survey asked about the extent to which the people approved or disapproved of four specific measures to reform the current system of limited democracy. Table 11 provides the degrees of approval and disapproval for each of these measures.

As discussed earlier, Koreans generally favor the idea of expanding their democracy. Indeed, more than half of the Korean people support three of the four reform measures asked in the 1999 KDB survey. These include: (1) limiting the President's powers (53%); (2) making the National Assembly autonomous and independent (63%); and (3) opening the process of selecting candidates to the public (70%). Surprisingly there is little desire at this point for new political parties that would pursue definite policies. This may be due to the fact that Koreans still tend to weigh more heavily the personal qualities of their political leaders rather than the characteristics of political institutions.

Overall, people seemed highly supportive of the reforms that would expand the current practices of limited democracy. To estimate precisely the general level of commitment to democratic reform, an index was constructed by counting the number of reform measures of

TABLE 10: Levels of Trust in Political Institutions

LEVELS OF TRUST (%)					
Political Institutions	Trust much	Trust somewhat	Do not trust much	Do not trust at all	No answer
Courts	7.8	49.6	38.2	3.5	1.3
The Police	4.0	37.9	47.2	10.0	1.0
The Military	14.2	57.9	28.2	4.3	1.4
Civil servants	3.8	41.6	44.0	9.9	0.8
National Assembly	0.8	21.4	45.4	31.6	0.8
Political Parties	1.0	19.1	47.3	31.8	0.9

Source: *1997 Korea Democracy Survey*

Table 11: Orientations toward Democratic Reform Measures

TYPES OF ORIENTATIONS (%)

Reform Measures	Approve Strongly	Approve Somewhat	Disapprove Somewhat	Disapprove Strongly	No Answer
Limit President's powers	6.9	45.8	32.1	6.5	8.7
Make National Assembly autonomous and independent	16.4	46.6	25.6	5.5	7.0
Form new political parties pursuing definite policies	8.4	24.8	34.7	20.9	11.3
Open the process of selecting party candidates to the public	24.7	45.5	17.4	4.7	7.7

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey*

which Koreans approved. According to this index, the average Korean is supportive of more than half (2.4) of the four reform measures considered. More than three-fifths were (62%) supportive of two or more of those four reforms. This suggests that although Koreans tend to be critical of the current practices of democratic government, they are not opponents of democratic politics considered in itself; instead, they are supporters of greater democracy.

Dissociation from Authoritarianism

Citizens of new democracies like Korea lived all or most of their lives under a civilian or military dictatorship. Due to decades of socialization to authoritarian life, these citizens cannot be expected to dissociate themselves from authoritarian cultural values and political practices quickly and fully. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that their acceptance of democracy as the preferred political system would bring about the end of their association with authoritarianism as a normative

and empirical phenomenon. Favorable orientations toward democracy as well as unfavorable orientations toward authoritarianism should be taken into consideration to understand accurately the cultural contours and dynamics of democratization.

TABLE 12: Orientations Toward Beliefs in Authoritarianism
(in percent)

Authoritarian Values	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly	No Answer
No legislative restraint on a government	11.8	47.9	30.9	7.8	1.4
Leaving important things to morally upright leaders	20.0	40.1	29.7	9.3	0.9
Not too many competing groups for social harmony	14.4	50.6	27.2	5.9	1.9
Not too many diverse opinions for social order	14.6	49.2	26.0	8.8	1.4

Source: *1997 Korean Democracy Barometer survey*

The 1997 KDB survey asked a set of four questions, each of which concerns the deep-seated structure of Confucian values toward political authority and leadership, competition, and conflict. Respondents to the survey were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each of the following authoritarian value statements: (1) if a government is often restrained by an assembly, it will be unable to achieve great things; (2) people can leave things to morally upright leaders; (3) too many competing groups would undermine social harmony; and (4) too many diverse opinions would undermine social order. As is apparent from Table 12, many people in Korea still hold beliefs and values that defer to authority and harbor suspicion of excessive conflict and

pluralism. With each statement, a large majority of the Korean people expressed agreement (authoritarian orientation) while a minority expressed disagreement (democratic orientation). This confirms that it is still the authoritarian, not democratic, value orientations that are prevalent among the Korean electorate.

Overall, we find a mixed picture with respect to basic value orientations. When responses to the four statements are considered together, a large majority (63%) are found to adhere to both authoritarian and democratic values. Only one-third of Koreans uphold either authoritarian values *(27%)* or democratic ones (7%) to the fullest extent. Even after more than a decade of democratic rule, Korea remains a nation of mixed orientations with authoritarian values outweighing democratic ones.

TABLE 13: Orientations toward Authoritarian Rule
(in percent)

Categories of authoritarianism	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	No answer
Military dictatorship	1.4	6.6	25.0	61.7	5.3
Civilian dictatorship	2.3	13.0	31.8	49.4	3.5
Dictatorship in economic crisis	7.3	36.0	38.9	17.7	0.2

Source: *1999 Korea Democracy Survey*

The 1999 KDB survey also asked a set of three questions to tap the extent of dissociation from the past practices of authoritarian politics. Two of these questions asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements that a military or a civilian dictatorship should govern the country. The third question, on the other hand, asked respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "the economic crisis has demonstrated that Korea still works better under a dictatorship." Table 13 provides the percentages of those who agreed and disagreed with each of these statements in varying degrees.

From Table 13, it is clear that more than four in five Koreans do not want to return to any of the dictatorships they experienced in the past. By a margin of 87 to 8 percent, Koreans reject a return to military dictatorship. By a margin of 81 to 15 percent, they also refuse to replace the current regime with a civilian dictatorship. Korean rejection of authoritarianism, however, appears to be limited because it is contingent upon the circumstances in which the country finds itself. When faced with an economic crisis, for example, a substantial portion (43%) would choose a dictatorship of some kind over democracy that they value greatly in principle. Overall, a majority (52%) of the Korean people are yet to be fully dissociated from the political practices of the authoritarian past.

Trends in Institutional and Cultural Democratization

In order for new democracies to consolidate and become full democracies, political institutions have to represent ordinary citizens and respond to their preferences on an increasing basis. Those citizens, in turn, orient themselves toward the ideals and practices of democratic politics on an increasing basis. How much progress has recently been made in transforming authoritarian political institutions into those of representative democracy? How much progress has recently been made in transforming ordinary citizens into supporters of democracy? What has been the direction and trajectory of institutional and cultural democratization? These questions require a series of surveys using the same questions during a substantial period of democratic change.

Beginning in 1994, five national sample surveys repeatedly asked two pairs of questions, one for the democratization of political institutions and the other for the democratization of political orientations. Tables 14 and 15 trace, respectively, the direction and trajectories of institutional and cultural democratization in terms of mean scores on 10-point scales and percentages of those placed on two different levels of democratization. The trends evident in these two tables can be compared to determine whether democratization in Korea

TABLE 14: Trends in Popular Perceptions of the Current Political System as a Thriving and Functioning Democracy

Survey Years	Mean on 10-point scale character	Mean on 10-point scale satisfaction	Thriving democracy (%) character	Thriving democracy (%) satisfaction	Thriving democracy (%) both	Functioning democracy (%) character	Functioning democracy (%) satisfaction	Functioning democracy (%) both
1994	6.8	6.2	9.3	8.7	4.2	77.4	64.2	58.1
1996	6.8	5.8	9.2	2.7	1.2	78.2	57.4	50.8
1997	6.2	4.9	3.3	1.3	0.6	69.1	35.1	31.5
1998	6.1	5.3	3.5	1.5	0.9	64.6	43.2	37.0
1999	6.0	5.3	2.8	2.4	0.6	67.9	41.5	35.5

Notes: Thriving democracy includes scores of 9 and 10 on a 10-point scale; and functioning democracy includes those greater than 5 on this scale.

Source: *Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys*

is a multi-directional phenomenon that has been shifting at different paces over time.

The data reported in Table 14 reveal downward trends in the perceptions of the current political system as a democracy and the positive assessments of its performance. In 1994, on average, respondents rated the character of the current political system as 6.8, but by 1996, this rating dropped to 6.0. A similar pattern is also evident in the satisfactory rating of regime performance, though it is less consistent (declining from 6.2 through 4.9 to 5.3). This decline becomes more significant when we look at the proportions who believe that they are living in a well functioning democracy. In 1994, nearly three-fifths (58%), for example, reported that they were living in a satisfactorily functioning democracy. In 1999, a little over one-third (36%) concurred with this view. In just five years, more than one-fifth (22%) become disenchanted with democratic rule. For a large majority of the Korean people, the current regime fails to meet their standards for democratic political order. The sad truth about the democratization of political institutions in Korea during the last half of the past decade is that it has not been progressing; instead, it has been retrogressing on a steady basis.

Table 15 reports downward trends in cultural democratization, i.e., popular support for democracy. On a 10-point scale measuring the desirability of democracy, the mean rating has declined from 8.6 in 1994 to 8.0 in 1999. Over the same period, the mean rating of democratic suitability has registered a greater decline from 6.8 to 6.0. Downward trends become more evident when we compare the percentages expressing strong support for democracy by choosing 9 or 10 on the 10-point scales of democratic desirability and suitability. As compared to 12 percent in 1994,4 percent are now strongly supportive of democracy. As compared to 71 percent five years ago, 62 percent now believe that democracy is personally desirable and collectively suitable. As in the democratization of political institutions, there has been a steady and significant regression in the democratization of political beliefs and values. This is the most notable characteristic of Korean democratization in recent years.

Concluding Remarks

What distinguishes the KDB surveys from the surveys undertaken by the news media and academic institutions to date? With very few exceptions, other surveys are one-time surveys offering nothing more than snapshots of the continuously changing process of Korean politics; they cannot tell us about how Koreans have shifted in their opinions and behavior during the course of democratization. In

TABLE 15: Trends in Popular Support for Democracy

Survey Years	Mean on 10-point scale		Strong Support (%)			General Support (%)		
	desirability	suitability	desirability	suitability	both	desirability	suitability	both
1994	8.6	6.8	54.6	13.7	11.8	91.9	72.6	71.1
1996	8.6	6.7	57.4	13.0	12.2	92.1	68.3	67.0
1997	8.4	6.2	49.7	8.4	6.9	93.3	62.1	62.2
1998	7.9	6.1	40.3	6.0	5.3	88.7	61.9	59.6
1999	8.0	6.0	41.1	5.4	4.4	90.3	62.8	61.9

Notes: Strong support includes scores of 9 and 10 on a 10-point scale; and general support includes those scoring greater than 5 on the same scale.

Source: Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys

addition, the same surveys are often based on ateleological assumption that Koreans are becoming citizens of established democracies in the West. The KDB surveys, on the other hand, constitute the one indisputable reality that Koreans neither interpret nor value democracy in the same way as Westerners do.

Equally notable is that the KDB surveys generate trend data about how individual Koreans change their opinion and behavior over time and whether the performance of their representative institutions improves or deteriorates during the course of democratization. These surveys, which have been assembled over a period of more than a decade, offer the only databases that are currently available to analyze the direction and trajectories of both cultural and institutional democratization in Korea.[27] In short, the KDB surveys can be considered a much more discriminating tool for uncovering and unraveling how Koreans are adapting to democratic change than a variety of other sample surveys that individual scholars and various institutions have recently undertaken.

What more can be said about the role the KDB surveys play in the study of Korean democratization? In light of the parallel survey data presented above, it can be concluded that those surveys are contributing toward significant advances in the study of democratizing Korea. The surveys are grounded in the conception that democratization is a multi-dimensional, multi-directional, and multi-level phenomenon.[28] Theoretically, it is predicated on the premise that acceptance of democratic political order does not necessarily bring about rejection of authoritarian political practices. The KDB surveys, therefore, offer rich databases capable of providing a comprehensive and balanced account of Korean democratization.

Methodologically, the KDB surveys are built on the convention that trends in cultural and institutional democratization in a single country cannot be understood properly in isolation.[29] Only when we compare those trends across other new and old democracies can we meaningfully assess the problems and prospects of democratization in that country.[30] These KDB surveys, when analyzed in comparison with similar surveys conducted in other new democracies, can also offer empirical answers to fundamental questions about whether the attributes of individual citizens matter more than the historical and institutional characteristics of the country in which they live.

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APPENDIX A

A Sample of Survey Questions

1. Perceptions of the Current and Past Political Systems

Q49. Here is a scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 10. On this scale, 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. The closer to 1 the score is, the more dictatorial our country is; the closer to 10 the score is, the more democratic our country is.

On this scale, where would you place our country under the Chun Doo Whan government? Please choose a number on this card.

1. Where would you place our country under the Kim Young San government?
2. Where would you place our country under the Kim Dae Jung government?

2. Citizen Empowerment and System Responsiveness

Q32. How much influence do you think the votes of people like yourself have on the way our country is governed—a lot, some, a little, or none?

Q36. To what extent do you think government leaders take the interests and opinion of people like yourself into account when making important decisions-a lot, some a little, or not at all?

Q37. To what extent do you think government leaders take into account the interests and opinions of the interest groups and organizations before making decisions?

3. **Overall Performance of the Current Political System as a Democracy**

Q40. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in our country? Please choose a number on this scale ranging from a low of 1 (complete dissatisfaction) to a high of 10 (complete satisfaction).

4. Support for Democracy-in-Principle

Q49e. To what extent would you yourself want our country to be democratic right now? Please choose a number on this card where 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy.

Q42. Let us consider the idea of democracy, not its practice. In principle, how much are you for or against the idea of democracy-very much for, somewhat for, against somewhat, or against very much?

Q47. How much do you agree or disagree with the statement that our political system should be made a lot more democratic than what it is now—strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

5. **Support for Democracy-in-Practice**

Q43. With which of the following do you agree most?

1. Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government.
2. Under certain situations, a dictatorship is preferable.
3. For people like me it doesn't matter if we have a democratic or non-democratic
government.

Q48. Between the two National goals of democratization and economic development, which goal do you think is more important?

Q50c. Here is a scale measuring the extent to which people think democracy is suitable for our country. On this scale, 1 means complete unsuitability while 10 means complete suitability. During the present Kim Dae Jung government, to what extent is democracy suitable for our country?

6. **Trust in Political Institutions**

Q51. How much do you trust or distrust each of the following listed institutions? About each of these institutions, would you say you trust much, trust somewhat, do not trust much, or do not trust at all?

1. courts
2. the policy
3. the military
4. churches, temples
5. civil servants
6 national assembly
7. political parties

7. **Orientations toward Democratic Reforms**

Q46. What extent do you approve or disapprove of the following measures to reform our political system? Would you say you approve strongly, approve somewhat, disapprove somewhat, or disapprove strongly of each of these reform measures?

1. Adopt a parliamentary system
2. Limit the president's power
3. Make the national Assembly autonomous and independent
4. Form new political parties pursuing definite policies

Open the process of selecting party candidates to the public

8. **Orientations toward Authoritarian Rule**

Q34. Our present system of government is not the only one that this country has had, and some people say we would be better off if the country was governed differently. How much do you agree or disagree with their views in favor of each of the following:

1. The army should govern the country—agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly?
2. Better to get rid of Parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide everything—agree strongly, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

Q28. Some people say that a rule by a dictator like Park Chung Hee is the best

way to sort out the economic problems facing the country; others say that a democratically elected president is better. What do you think?

1. A rule by a dictator
2. A democratically elected president
3. Don't know

Q38C. Between democratic government and dictatorship, which one is better to get rid of political corruption?

1. Democratic government
2. Dictatorship
3. Don't know

Q56. If someone says to you, the economic crisis has demonstrated that Korea still works better under a dictatorship, how much do you agree or disagree—strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

10. Political Participation

Since the December 1997 presidential election, have you participated in any of the political activities listed on this card? Name all those activities you have done.

1. election or voting
2. participating in a political meeting or assembly
3. campaigning for a particular candidate
4. contributing money to a politician or political party
5. working with others on a community problem
6. contacting a civil servant or politician
7. Signing or submitting a demonstration
8. Taking part in a strike.