The Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys:
Unraveling the Cultural and Institutional Dynamics of Democratization, 1997-2004

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Abstract

South Korea is regarded as the most influential and vigorous new democracy in East Asia. The country has not only transferred power peacefully to an opposition party but has also fully transformed its age-old crony capitalism into a competitive and transparent market economy. Yet the question remains: How much progress has Korea really made in democratizing its authoritarian institutions and its underlying cultural values that for nearly three decades supported the military dictatorships that ruled the country? This study addresses this question by analyzing the Korea Democracy Barometer surveys conducted over the period of 1997-2004. The results of this analysis reveal that, both institutionally as well as culturally, Korea remains far from being a consolidated democracy.
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The current wave of democratization began in Southern Europe thirty years ago and has spread to Latin America, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Africa (Huntington 1991; McFaul 2002; Shin 1994, 2006). In response to this proliferation of new democracies, an increasing number of individual scholars and research institutes have, especially over the past decade, expanded their efforts to study democratic regime change from the perspective of the mass citizenry in the midst of that change (Camp 2001; Linz and Stepan 1996; Montero 1993; Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). The Korea Democracy Barometer (KDB hereafter) represents one of these research endeavors seeking to monitor and compare the dynamics of democratization and its consequences for citizen well-being. The KDB is one of the oldest and most innovative democracy barometer projects, although it is not considered one of the best-known.

Among the best-known projects are the New Democracies Barometer, the New Europe Barometer, the Latinobarometer, the Afrobarometer, the AsiaBarometer, and the East Asia Barometer (Diamond 2001; Heath, Fisher, and Smith 2005; Norris 2004). All of these projects began in the early 1990s or later. In 1991, Richard Rose of the Center for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, commenced the New Democracies Barometer surveys and the New Russia and Baltic Barometer surveys in order to compare the mass experience of democratization in post-Communist countries (Rose 1998, 2000). Since 1995, Mata Lagos of Market Opinion
Research International in Santiago, Chile, has been conducting the Latinobarometer surveys on an annual basis to trace and compare the levels and sources of popular support for democracy and democratic reforms in fifteen Latin American countries and Spain (Lagos 1997, 2001). In 1999, Professors Michael Bratton of Michigan State University in the United States and Robert Mattes of the University of Cape Town in South Africa launched the Afrobarometer to map mass attitudes toward democracy, markets, and civil society in a dozen African countries (Bratton, Mattes, and Gymiah-Boadi 2005).

The KDB completed its first survey in 1988. The same year, nearly three decades of military dictatorship formally ended in South Korea (Korea hereafter) and a new era of democratic political life dawned with the installation of the democratic Sixth Republic. Since 1988, the KDB has been continually monitoring the dynamics of democratization and marketization, as well as their consequences on the quality of life experienced by the mass citizenry. The KDB is, therefore, a research program of greater breadth and depth than a multitude of sample surveys that individual scholars and various institutions have conducted to find out how Koreans are adapting to democratic change.

The KDB program is also superior because since 1996, it has partnered with other democracy barometer programs to develop questionnaires and share databases that permit inter-regional and inter-continental comparisons of mass responses to democratization (Chu, Diamond, and Shin 2001; Chu and Shin 2005; Mattes and Shin 2005; Rose and Shin 2001; Rose, Shin, and Munro 1999; Shin and Rose 1999; Shin and Shyu 1997; Shin and Wells 2005). Through a multi-layered strategic alliance with special research teams especially in Africa, Asia, and Europe, this ongoing survey research program seeks to provide meaningful and unique opportunities for the widespread study of contemporary
Korea on a global scale. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the findings of its recent surveys (1997-2004) and assess its unique contributions to the comprehensive and dynamic study of democratization.

This paper is organized into seven sections. The section that follows immediately discusses conceptual and theoretical foundations underlying the KDB program. The second section briefly describes the makeup of the KDB surveys conducted over the period of 1988 to 2004. The third section offers a historical perspective on the democratization of Korea. The fourth and fifth sections discuss, respectively, the institutional and cultural dynamics of Korean democratization on the basis of five KDB surveys conducted over the seven-year period between 1997 and 2004. The sixth section examines the shifting levels of congruence between cultural and institutional democratization in Korea. The seventh, final section highlights the unique ideas that the KDB surveys have offered to the study of democratization from comprehensive and dynamic perspectives.

**Conceptual and Theoretical 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. Seeking 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 found in the tradition of Schumpeter (1976), Dahl (1971), and Huntington (1989, 1991). Leading scholars of this tradition have made considerable efforts to standardize usage of the term *democracy* by confining its defining attributes primarily to the electoral domain of political life (Di Palma 1990; Huntington 1991). 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. For those masses who have endured 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 (Choi 1993; Drakulic 1993; Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005; Hahm and Rhyu 1997; Van Cott 2005). Those ordinary citizens expect democratization to be a movement that enhances the human lot and creates “a more equitable and humane society” (Macpherson 1977, 94). The KDB project, therefore, conceptualizes democratization as a multilevel transformation process.

On one level, the transformation must take place in individual citizens, and on another level, it must take place in the political regime that rules 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; UNDP 2004). At the citizenry level, democratic change relies on the extent to which average citizens detach themselves from the virtues of authoritarianism and become convinced of democracy’s superiority. Democracy is government by demos (the people) and, thus, cannot be foisted upon the unwilling for any extended period of time. A new democracy such as the one in Korea, therefore, becomes fully consolidated when an overwhelming majority of ordinary
citizens confers legitimacy on the regime by embracing democracy as the best form of government (Diamond 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996). By considering these various levels of democracy, the KDB program offers a much more comprehensive look at democratization than studies that examine only political procedures.

Furthermore, the KDB program does not view democracy as a dichotomous phenomenon, i.e. something that either exists or does not exist, but as a continuous process of change involving a complex system of factors and trajectories (Bollen 1993; Collier and Adcock 1999; Vanhanen 1997). Unlike other democracy barometer projects, the KDB acknowledges that democratic change does not proceed in a smooth, linear fashion; it is often subject to a series of crises and reversals. Constantly evolving at phases and 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 (McFaul 2002; Shin 2006; Whitehead 2002). For a more accurate and meaningful account of the emergence of democracy, the KDB uses a broader and more dynamic notion of democratic change than do other democracy barometer projects.

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. This supposition asserts first that 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 (Fuchs, Guidorossi, and Svensson 1995, 329), and second that these same people are regarded as intellectually capable of perceiving and considering all those changes together for a global assessment of the political regime and culture in which they live (Mishler and Rose 1996, 557). Consequently, repeated
surveys of a cross-section of the adult population over time 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 ten 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. 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) governments. The first two occurred in October 1988 (N=2,007) and November 1991 (N=1,185) when former General Roh Tae Woo was the first president of the democratic Sixth Republic, and the third took place in November 1993 (N=1,198), the first year of the second democratic government of President Kim Young Sam. The Gallup 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=1,117). The Gallup also conducted three surveys during the Kim Dae Jung government in October 1998 (N=1,010), in November 1999 (N=1,007), in March 2001 (N=1,005), and one survey under the current Roh Moo Hyun in July 2004 (N=1,037).

In conducting KDB surveys, the aforementioned 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 mainly because the size of its population is too
small to influence survey findings. Second, each region or large city was stratified by administrative subdivisions (Dong, Eup, Myun) on the basis of its proportion of the population. At the third stage, the primary sampling units (ban or village) were randomly selected, with six to eight households in a ban and twelve to fifteen in a village. At the household level, the interviewer was instructed to select for interview the person whose birthday came next. Respondents to the ten surveys were all interviewed, face-to-face, at their residences. The average interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. In all the surveys conducted by Gallup, 10 percent of those interviews were verified on a random basis.

**Korea as a Third-Wave Democracy**

Korea is widely known as one of the success stories of the current wave of global democratization that began in Southern Europe more than three decades ago. Since its transition from decades of military rule in the wake of the 1987 “founding elections,” Korea has chosen all four different governments through democratic elections. Moreover, free and competitive elections have been regularly held at all the different levels of government, as is the case in established democracies of North America and Western Europe. In Korea today, there is general agreement that electoral politics has become the only possible political game in town (Diamond and Kim 2000; Shin 2001).

In the presidential election held on December 18, 1997, Korea established itself as a mature electoral democracy by elevating an opposition party to political power and became the first new democracy in Asia that transferred power peacefully. In the latest presidential election held on December 19, 2002, the Korean people reconfirmed their commitment to electoral democracy by electing for the first time a relatively young and
progressive candidate to lead their nation — a nation where decades of conservative authoritarian rule promoted economic development.

To date, the country has successfully carried out a large number of electoral and other reforms to transform the institutions and procedures of military-authoritarian rule into those of a representative democracy (Kihl 2005; Shin 1999). Unlike many of its counterparts in Latin America and elsewhere, Korea has fully restored civilian rule by extricating the military from power. The democratic institutional reforms have also expanded civil liberties and political rights by downsizing and overhauling the various security agencies, which used to meddle in every important decision of both government and private organizations and controlled the behavior of private citizens. For more than ten years, Korea has received an average rating of 2.0 on Freedom House’s scale of political rights and civil liberties, placing it within the ranks of the world’s liberal democracies.

Currently, Korea is undergoing a political transformation from limited democratic rule to a fully consolidated liberal democracy (Choi 2005; Im 2004). In Asia, it is the first new democracy to have transferred power peacefully to an opposition party and to have transformed fully its age-old crony capitalism into a competitive and transparent market economy. In the world of new democracies undergoing the dual transformation of political and economic systems, Korea is also the first new market democracy to recover fully from the dire financial crisis that erupted in Asia eight years ago. One of the world’s third-wave democracies, Korea has already used the internet in a more active and crucial role in presidential elections than have more advanced democratic countries, including
those in Western Europe and North America (Choo 2002). As a result, Korea is widely regarded as one of the most vigorous and analytically interesting third-wave democracies.

**Institutional Democratization**

Ruled by the military for nearly three decades, Korea was long known as a prototypical development state. One of the most significant research topics for the KDB, therefore, concerns the transformation of the military dictatorship into a well-functioning liberal democracy. How democratic is the political system under which the Korean people currently live? How much progress has recently been made in transforming authoritarian political institutions into those of representative democracy? What direction and trajectory characterize the process of democratizing the institutions and procedures of the authoritarian past? These questions are explored with a set of three items selected from the five KDB surveys conducted to study the period of 1997-2004.

**The Extent of Democratization**

The KDB surveys asked respondents to rate political systems on a 10-point scale to indicate the extent to which the systems operate as a dictatorship or a democracy. This scale allows them 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.” Numeric ratings of the past, present, and future political systems on this scale provide valuable information about the experienced and expected dynamics of institutional democratization.

In the latest 2004 KDB survey, for example, we asked respondents to place their past, present, and future political systems on this 10-point scale. We also asked them to rate the political system in the North on the same scale. For these systems, Figure 1 and
Table 1 provides the percentages of respondents who chose each of the 10 positions or steps on the ladder scale. It also reports the average ratings on this scale for the past and present political systems. As the data in this figure reveal, a large majority (77%) rated the past regime as undemocratic by placing it at 5 or below. In sharp contrast, a substantial majority (72%) and an overwhelming majority (91%) rated, respectively, the current and future regime as democratic by placing it at 6 or above. These figures, when compared, make it clear that the political system of South Korea has democratized considerably over the past sixteen years in the eyes of its citizens and is expected to democratize further in the future.

(Figure 1 and Table 1 here)

Like the percentage ratings, the average ratings on this 10-point scale also indicate the extent to which citizens perceive the past and current regimes as either democratic or authoritarian. The average rating of the past regime was 4.0; for the present regime, the average increased to 6.3. In five years, it was expected to increase further to 7.5. This upward shift in the mean ratings from the past to the present confirms considerable progress in institutional democratization in the wake of the democratic regime change in 1998. Similar upward shift over the next five years indicates considerable optimism about the future of institutional democratization. The mean rating of 6.3 for the present system on a 10-point scale, however, suggests that in the eyes of its citizens, Korean democracy is quite limited even after more than a decade of democratic rule. Yet this rating is three times more democratic than North Korea’s rating of 2.2, which indicates a nearly complete dictatorship.
The Quality of Democratic Performance

How well does the current political system perform as a system of representative democracy? To explore this question, the 2004 KDB survey asked respondents how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the way democracy was working in their country. 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. Figure 2 reports the mean rating on this scale and percentages of those placed at each of its 10 scale points.

(Figure 2 here)

Figure 2 shows that more than three-fifths (63%) expressed satisfaction with the present regime with a rating of 6 or above on the scale. The percentage of satisfied respondents is 9 percentage points lower than the percentage of Koreans who perceived the current regime as a democracy. Among those who perceive the current regime as a democracy, the satisfied constitute about two-thirds (67%). The mean score of 5.9 on this 10-point scale is slightly higher than its midpoint (5.5) and reinforces this qualified response. These findings testify to the fact that Korean democracy is far from a well-functioning democracy in the eyes of its citizens.

For a comprehensive and balanced account of democratization taking place within the political system, we jointly consider positive and negative assessments of its substantive performance — responsiveness to the people — with democratic and authoritarian perceptions of its institutional character. These perceptions of the current regime and assessments of its performance 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 only 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.

About one-seventh of respondents (16%) falls into the first pattern by judging the existing political system as neither democratic nor functioning to their satisfaction. A smaller minority (11%) judged it as undemocratic but functioning to their satisfaction. One-fifth (20%) judged it as democratic but failing to function to their satisfaction. A plurality (48%) was fully positive about the character as well as performance of their current political system. Thus, to more than one-half of the Korean population, the Korean political system today does not represent a well-functioning democracy (Shin 2001).

Why is it that a majority of the Korean people refuses to endorse their regime as a well-functioning democracy? To explore this question, we selected another pair of questions from the 2004 KDB survey questions, both of which were derived from the two general principles of democratic governance: government by the people and government for the people. The questions were: “Do you think the Roh Moo Hyun government has been governed, by and large, by the will of ordinary people or ruled by a powerful few?” and “Do you think the Roh Moo Hyun government has worked for a majority of the people or some particular classes or political forces?” Relatively small minorities of less than one-third gave democratic responses to each of these questions (23% to the first question and 33% to the second one). When responses to both questions are considered together, less
than one-quarter (24%) perceives that the current regime fulfills both principles of democratic governance. More than two times as many (56%), on the other hand, say that the current regime works for neither the will of the people nor for their welfare. The regime’s failure to practice these two principles of democratic governance signals that the current regime malfunctions as a democracy.

**Trends**

What direction and trajectory characterize the institutional and substantive dynamics of Korean democratization to date? To address this question, we calculated for each year of the 1997-2004 period the average ratings of the present political system on the aforementioned two 10-point scales, which tap, respectively, the extent to which the system is perceived as a democracy or dictatorship and to which its performance is appraised as satisfying or dissatisfying. For each of those surveys, we also calculated percentages of those who viewed the current system as a well-functioning democracy (higher than 5 on 10-point scales).

The data reported in Table 2 reveal little or no significant downward or upward change in the perceptions of the current system as a democracy and the positive assessments of its performance. In 1997, on average, respondents rated the character of the current political system as 6.2, but by 1999, this rating dropped to 6.0. By 2004, it rose slightly to 6.3. In terms of percentages also, little has changed to the democratic perception of the current system. In 1997, 69 percent perceived it as a democracy. In 2004, seven years later, 71 percent did the same. From these ratings, it is apparent that Koreans have seen little progress in the expansion of their limited democracy.

(Table 2 here)
In improving the quality of its performance, however, Korea appears to have achieved significant progress in the citizenry’s view. The average rating of democratic satisfaction rose by 1 full point on a 10-point scale from 4.9 in 1997 to 5.9 in 2004. During the same period, those expressing satisfaction with the democratic performance of the existing regime rose more sharply by 25 percentage points from 35 percent in 1997 to 60 percent in 2004. As a result of this upward change in the perceived quality of democratic performance, the Koreans appraising the current regime as a well-functioning democracy rose substantially from 32 percent in 1997 to 48 percent in 2004. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that more than half the Koreans have yet to report such a democratic system.

**Cultural Democratization:**

Another main component of the KDB program deals with political values and beliefs. To what degree do the Korean people desire to live in a democracy? How strongly are they committed to the various practices of democratic politics? To what extent are they dissociated from the age-old practices of authoritarian rule? To explore these questions regarding the cultural dimension of democratization, the KDB surveys have differentiated democratic support into two broad categories: normative and empirical. Normative support consists of favorable orientations to democracy as a political ideal; empirical support involves the acceptance of democracy as a viable political system. This split notion of democratic support is based on the theoretical premise that there is a wide gulf between people’s aspiration for democracy-in-principle and their commitment to democracy-in-practice (Mueller 1999; Norris 1999; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Shin 1999).
**Affinity for Democracy**

All democracies, both new and old, depend on their citizens’ continuing and widespread support. Popular support is not only crucial for their legitimacy but also vital to their effective performances (Dahl 1992; Dalton 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996; McDonough, Barnes, and Lopez Pina 1998). In new democracies, consolidation depends more on citizen support for democracy than any other essential component of political culture (Montero 1993; Fuchs 1999; Shin and Wells 2005). As Diamond (1999) and Gibson (1996) point out, the beliefs, values, and attitudes of ordinary citizens structure, as well as limit, the pace and possibilities of democratic change.

To what extent do the Korean people embrace democracy as both a set of political ideals and political practices? Are they merely in favor of democracy as an embodiment of political ideals? To what extent do their abstract and concrete attitudes toward democracy cohere? To estimate the coherence or structure of favorable democratic attitudes, we used three separate questions from the KDB surveys. The first question asked respondents to express on a 10-point scale the extent to which they desire to live under the principles of democracy. The second question asked them to indicate on a 10-point scale the extent to which they think democracy is suitable for their county as a political system. The third question asked them whether democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government or whether a dictatorship would be preferable in certain situations.

In Table 3, we compare the percentages of respondents who offered positive responses to each, none, and all of the three questions to determine whether the Korean people tend to see democracy merely as a preferred ideal or both a normative and
empirical phenomenon. Nine of every ten Koreans (92%) remain at least somewhat favorably attached to the abstract idea of democracy. More than seven-tenths (73%) are in agreement that democracy is appropriate for their country. Yet when asked whether democracy is always the most preferable method of governance, a much smaller majority (58%) remains supportive. When favorable responses to all three questions are considered together, less than half the Korean population (46%) is fully supportive of democracy, both normatively and empirically. For many Korean people, it is evident that democracy as a set of political ideals means one thing and democracy as a set of political practices means something else.

(Table 3 here)

**Trajectories**

In order for new democracies to consolidate and become full democracies, their citizens have to increasingly orient themselves toward both the ideals and practices of democratic politics. Specifically, the direction and trajectories of popular support for these democracies affect their survival and effective functioning as much as the total amount of such support does (Mishler and Rose 1996, 565). Over time, four different trajectories are conceivable for democratic support. First, the trajectory of support becomes steadily positive or upward when its aggregate level increases on a continuing basis. Second, continuing decreases in its aggregate level make the trajectory steadily negative or downward. Third, a combination of upward and downward changes in the support level makes the trajectory erratic or fluctuating. Finally, the trajectory may be flat with little or no significant change of level in either an upward or downward direction.
What sort of trajectory best characterizes Koreans’ support for the ideals and practices of democratic politics during the past seven years? The data in Table 3 show that the number of people favoring democratic ideals fluctuates somewhat, revealing downward and upward changes during that period of time. With the deepening of the economic crisis in 1998, this indicator went down by five percentage points. With the economy recovering from the crisis in 1999, the level of normative support went up somewhat and then settled just above the 90 percent level.

Empirical support, on the other hand, has fallen more sharply during the same period, 1997-2004. The sense of democratic legitimacy, for example, has declined substantially from 69 percent in 1997 to 54 in 1998, 55 in 1999, and 45 percent in 2001, and then rose to 58 percent 2004. Before the outbreak of the economic crisis, more than two-thirds of the Korean people subscribed to the view that democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government. By 2001, less than one-half expressed this view of democratic legitimacy, while more than a half (55%) of all Koreans held that democracy is not always the best for their country. In 2004, this percentage rose sharply by 13 percentage points to 58. The full support for democracy in Korea has also weakened sharply and steadily from 47 percent in 1997 to 35 percent in 2001 and has started to rise up since then. As in the pre-economic crisis period, only a minority (46%) of Korean voters remains supportive of democracy both normatively and empirically.

In summary, 9 in 10 Koreans are fully supportive of democracy as an ideal political system, but less than one-half are equally supportive of democracy as a real system of governance. Even among those who are fully supportive of democracy-in-principle, a minority (49%) fully supports democracy-in-action even after more than one
and a half decades of democratic experiment. To a large majority of ordinary Koreans, democracy is appealing only when experienced as an abstract ideal or a distant goal, not as a working system of governance.

**Opposition to Authoritarian Rule**

Citizens of new democracies like the Korean people 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. Thus, popular opposition to non-democratic regimes is another important measure of support for democracy-in-action (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Shin 2001, 2006).

From the KDB surveys, we selected a pair of questions to tap orientations toward or against the practices of the authoritarian past. Specifically, respondents were asked whether or not they were in favor of having the military govern the country again. They were also asked about their views on getting rid of parliament and elections and having a strong leader decide everything. Table 4 reports the percentages rejecting military rule and civilian dictatorship. It also reports the percentages of those who refused both of these authoritarian alternatives, thus dissociating themselves fully from authoritarian solutions to policy problems.

(Table 4 here)
When asked about military rule, nearly 8 of 10 Koreans (79%) in 2004 disapproved replacing the current democratic regime with an authoritarian one controlled by the military. With respect to civilian dictatorship, a slightly smaller majority (77%) disapproved. Simultaneous consideration of these responses reveals that a large majority (66%) rejected both of these authoritarian institutions. Obviously, a large majority of the Korean population has successfully disengaged itself from the powerful institutions of the military and civilian authoritarian regimes. Yet, not every Korean is willing to reject the political institutions of the authoritarian past. A substantial minority of Koreans (34%) think that an authoritarian government of a military or civilian nature would sometimes be preferable. Meanwhile, the percentages fully detached from authoritarian politics changed little between 1997 and 2004 and hover around the 70-percent level.

**Patterns**

To ascertain the distinct patterns of cultural democratization among the Korean people, we must know whether they have fully embraced democracy as the best political system and whether they have fully rejected the virtues of authoritarian rule. Dichotomous responses to these two questions allow for four distinct patterns: (1) failing to embrace democracy and reject authoritarianism; (2) failing to embrace democracy without rejecting authoritarianism; (3) embracing democracy without rejecting authoritarianism; and (4) embracing democracy and rejecting authoritarianism simultaneously. While the first pattern features a lack of progress in either the pro-democratic or antiauthoritarian domain of cultural democratization, the second and third patterns represent partial progress through the advancement of one of the two domains. The fourth pattern, on the other hand, represents full progress in developing a democratic political culture.
Table 5 shows that about one-quarter (24%) falls into the first pattern of no progress by refusing to embrace democracy or to reject authoritarianism on a full scale. A larger minority (30%) falls into the second pattern of partial progress by rejecting authoritarianism fully without embracing democracy fully. The smallest minority (10%) falls into the third pattern of partial progress by embracing democracy fully without rejecting authoritarianism fully. The largest minority (36%) falls into the fourth pattern of full progress by fully embracing democracy and rejecting authoritarianism simultaneously. Among the Korean people, the partially democratized or barely democratized are nearly twice as many as the fully democratized (36% vs. 64%). This may be the reason why the Korean nation as a whole remains highly divided and quarrelsome over the ultimate end of democratic rule and the appropriate means of democratic governing (Choi 2005).

(Table 5 here)

For five survey years, Table 5 reports the percentages of those completely or fully democratized who not only favor democracy as a set of political ideals and practices but who also oppose the authoritarian rule of a civilian or military nature. In 1997, 37 percent of Koreans were completely committed to democratic politics by embracing democracy while rejecting authoritarian rule to the fullest extent. In the aftermath of the economic crisis, this figure suffered a general decline to 28 percent in 2001. Over the next three years, it climbed back to the pre-economic crisis level of 36 percent. Since the outbreak of the economic crisis in 1997, little progress has been made in democratizing the political values and beliefs of the Korean citizenry. At first glance, then, Korea seems to have seen no progress in its democratization since 1997. However, before the economic
crisis, the 36 percent that reported full commitment did so without having experienced a true test of their commitment. The 36 percent that report full commitment now do so after surviving a crisis. Thus, democracy proponents may have reason to hope that respondents falling into the present 36 percent have a stronger commitment to democracy than did respondents from the 36 percent in 1997.

**The Solidity of Democratic Support**

How solid or unwavering is the commitment of the Korean people to democracy? When citizens begin to attribute policy failures to democratic institutions and procedures, the democratic regimes cannot long remain a preferable alternative to non-democratic ones. New democracies, like the one in Korea, can survive and thrive only when citizens remain intrinsically supportive of democratic rule even if and when their economy, their government, and their regime fail to satisfactorily resolve the problems facing their society (Dutch 1999; Huntington 1991). These democracies become durable when their citizens are willing to defend democratic institutions and reject authoritarian solutions even in the face of growing economic and other policy failures of the democratically elected government (Dalton 1999; Gibson 1996). Such willingness to withstand economic and political crises by the method of democratic governance can be, therefore, considered an indicator of the behavioral quality of democratic citizenship (Shin, Park, and Jang 2005).

Table 6 provides the percentages of the Korean people who remain fully supportive of democracy and fully disengaged from authoritarianism among those who are dissatisfied with the performances of the national economy, the government, and the democratic regime. The same table also provides the percentages of authentic or
complete democrats among those who are dissatisfied with the economic and political conditions of their country. We define authentic democrats as those who not only fully support democracy but also fully reject authoritarianism.

(Table 6)

In Table 6a, we see that a large majority refused to support democracy fully when the economy, the government, and the democratic regime were not functioning to their satisfaction (see the Appendix for the survey items tapping these qualities). In all five surveys reported in the table, minorities ranging from 24 to 46 percent expressed full support for democracy when they were not satisfied with the performance of the economy, the government, or the democratic regime. When they were critical of both the economy and the polity, much smaller minorities were fully supportive of democracy. In the last four of the five surveys conducted since 1997, moreover, less than one-quarter of the critical citizens has been willing to continue their full support for democracy when they are deeply troubled by both economic failures and government and regime blunders. More notable is the finding that such intrinsic supporters of democracy have decreased by 25 percentage points from 41 to 16 percent in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis.

In rejecting authoritarian rule fully, the Korean people tend to remain steadfast even when they are dissatisfied with the way their economy, the government, and the regime perform. More than two-thirds of these critical citizens remain fully detached from the alleged virtues of military or civilian dictatorship (see Table 6b). The percentage of such fully committed authoritarian opponents was highest (72%) in 1997 and lowest (62%) in 1998. The figure for 2004 is 66 percent, a figure 6 percentage points lower than
what it was before the outbreak of the economic crisis. This indicates significant decreases rather than increases in unconditional opposition to authoritarian politics.

In Table 6c, authentic democratic orientations — fully pro-democratic and fully antiauthoritarian — are considered together in order to determine how many disaffected Koreans are willing to defend democracy unconditionally. The table shows that in all four of the latest surveys conducted over the 1998-2004 period, unconditional democratic defenders constituted one-fifth or less of the disaffected population in Korea. In 2004, more than four out of five fully disaffected Koreans (81%) were not likely to defend democratic politics when the economy soured and when democratic institutions and elected officials malfunctioned. This finding suggests that democratic support among the Korean people is, by and large, neither unqualified nor unconditional (Shin et al. 2003).

**Congruence Between Cultural and Institutional Democratization**

Overall progress in a country’s democratization involves more than the democratization of the political regime and of its cultural values on their own. The country’s institutions and its cultural values must make democratic advances alongside each other for the country to achieve congruence between institutional and cultural democratization (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1995; Shin 2006). This dimension of Korea’s democratic progress is estimated in terms of the percent of respondents who not only desired but also affirmed the democratization of their political system.

Figure 3 shows a combination of downward and upward changes in the level of congruence between citizens’ desire to live in a democracy and institutions’ fulfillment of their democratic desires. In May 1997, five months before the outbreak of the economic
crisis, two-thirds (67%) found their regime congruent with their democratic desire. In October 1998 when Korea was experiencing the worst economic crisis since the war with the North in 1950, two-fifths (61%) found congruence between their democratic affinity and regime character. With the rapid recovery from the crisis, the proportion of these Koreans began to rise. In July 2004, two-thirds (67%) found their political system commensurate with their democratic desire. Nonetheless, when this latest rating is compared with the pre-crisis rating, it is evident that the level of overall progress in Korea’s democratization has changed little in recent years.

(Figure 3)

Summary and Conclusion

In the current wave of global democratization, South Korea is widely regarded as one of the most successful examples. The country has not only transferred power peacefully to an opposition party but has also transformed fully its age-old crony capitalism into a competitive and transparent market economy. Unlike many other new democracies in Latin America and other regions, moreover, Korea has fully restored civilian rule by extricating the military from the political process. Yet the question remains: How much progress has Korea really made in democratizing its authoritarian institutions and its underlying cultural values that for nearly three decades supported the military dictatorships that ruled the country? This study addresses this question by analyzing the Korea Democracy Barometer surveys conducted over the period of 1997-2004. The results of this analysis reveal that, both institutionally as well as culturally, Korea remains far from being a consolidated democracy.
What distinguishes the KDB surveys from those undertaken by the Afrobarometer, the Latinobarometer, and other regional barometers? As all these regional barometer surveys have done (Norris 2004; Diamond 2001), the KDB surveys have sought to monitor progress in cultural and institutional democratization by tracing its breadth, depth, patterns, and trajectories on an ongoing basis. Of all the regional barometer programs, however, the KDB program was the first one that made use of a 10-point dictatorship-democracy scale to trace the entire process of transforming authoritarian rule into a complete or full democracy.

The KDB surveys compare the numeric ratings of the past authoritarian and current democratic regime on the same numeric scale and determine whether the public actually recognizes the occurrence of democratic regime change. These surveys monitor the numeric ratings of the new democratic regime over time and unraveled the depth and trajectory of transforming limited democratic rule into a complete or consolidated democracy. By tracing changes in the democratic perceptions of the past regime and the authoritarian perceptions of the current regime, it also ascertains the shifting qualities of democratic citizenship (Shin, Park, and Jang 2005).

Moreover, the KDB was the first democracy barometer program that investigated democratization as a dynamic process of ongoing interactions between individual citizens and institutions of their democratic regime. Specifically, the KDB surveys to date have repeatedly measured on the same 10-point numeric scale what citizens demand for democracy and what institutions supply. By examining how citizen demand for and institutional supply of democracy interact with each other, these surveys have made it possible to test the congruence theory of democratization that “shifts toward more or less
democracy follow the logic of reducing the incongruence between citizen demand and institutional supply of democracy” (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 187). The same surveys have also made it possible to determine whether new democracies such as the one in Korea face the problem of stagnant cultural democratization or stagnant institutional democratization.

As such, the KDB program offers a number of unique ideas contributing to the study of democratization from comprehensive and dynamic perspectives. The program makes it possible to ascertain the dynamics of cultural and institutional democratization and the patterns of their interactions more precisely than any other democracy barometer programs. It also makes it possible to compare such dynamics and patterns across regions. Accordingly, two regional barometers — the East Asia Barometer and the New Europe Barometer — have recently begun to monitor cultural and institutional democratization on the 10-point dictatorship-democracy scale that the KDB program developed. In its current fifth wave, the World Values surveys have adopted a modified version of this 10-point scale. Clearly, the KDB has played a significant role in expanding and refining our knowledge about the current wave of global democratization.
Acknowledgements

*The Korea Barometer surveys reported in this paper were supported by grants from the U. S. National Science Foundation (SRB-94-09835 & SES-99-09037). The Korea-Gallup provided support for writing this report.
Appendix
Survey Questions

A. Institutional Democratization
1. Perceptions of Political Systems

Q24. 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.

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

b. Where would you place our country under the Kim Dae Jung government?

c. At present, where do you think our country stands on this scale?

e. Where do you think our country will stand 5 years from now?

f. Where do you think North Korea stands now?

2. The Quality of Democracy

Q26. Here is a scale ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 10. On this scale, 1 means complete dissatisfaction and 10 means complete satisfaction. 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).

Q13. Do you think that the Roh Moo Hyun government has been governed, by and large, by the will of ordinary people or ruled by a powerful few?
   1. By the will of the people
   2. By a powerful few

Q29. Do you think the Roh Moo Hyun government has worked for a majority of the people or some particular classes or political forces?"
   1. For a majority of the people
   2. For some particular classes or political forces
B. Cultural Democratization

3. Attachment to Democracy-in-Principle

Q24-d. Here is another scale ranging from a low of 1 and a high of 10. On this scale, 1 means complete dictatorship and 10 means complete democracy. To what extent would you yourself want our country to be democratic right now? Please choose a number on this card.

4. Commitment to Democracy-in-Practice

Q25. Here is a scale measuring the extent to which people think democracy is suitable for our country. One means complete unsuitable while 10 means complete suitable. To what extent do you think is democracy suitable for our country? Choose a number on this scale.

Q19. 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.

5. Detachment from Authoritarian Rule

Q15. 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:

   a. The army should govern the country — agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly?

   b. Better to get rid of Parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide Everything — agree strongly, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?

6. Assessments of the National Economy and Governmental Performance

Q1) How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?
   1. Very good.
   2. Good
   3. Neither good nor bad
   4. Bad
   5. Very bad

Q39) Here is a scale measuring the extent to which people are satisfied with the government. Please choose a number on this scale where 1 means complete dissatisfaction and 10 means complete satisfaction.

Q14-1) On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the Roh Moo Hyun government handles problems facing our society?
References


Figure 1 Perceptions of the Past and Present Regimes on a 10-point Dictatorship-Democracy Scale

a. Past Political system

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
b. Current Political system

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
c. Future Political system

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
d. North Korean Political System

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
Table 1 The Democratic and Authoritarian Perceptions of regimes in South and North Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean on a 10 Point-scale</th>
<th>Democratic ratings (A)</th>
<th>Authoritarian ratings (B)</th>
<th>Difference (A-B)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Korea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past regime</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current regime</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
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<td>Future regime</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Korea</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current regime</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
Figure 2: Evaluations of the Performance of the Present Political System on a 10-point Dissatisfaction-Satisfaction Scale

Source: 2004 Korea Democracy Barometer survey
Table 2 Trends in Democratic Perceptions of the Current Political System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Year</th>
<th>Mean on 10-point scale</th>
<th>Functioning democracy (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>character</td>
<td>satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: dem. sys. refers to democratic regime. functioning democracy includes those who scored 6 or higher on two 10-point scales.

Source: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys.
Table 3  Support for Democracy: its Depth and Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of support</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suitability</td>
<td>64.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No support</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full support</strong></td>
<td><strong>46.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(1123)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys
Table 4  Opposition to Authoritarian Rule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Military Rule</th>
<th>Civilian Dictatorship</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>68.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>87.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>66.2</td>
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</table>

Sources: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embrace</th>
<th>Reject</th>
<th>Year 1997</th>
<th>Year 1998</th>
<th>Year 1999</th>
<th>Year 2001</th>
<th>Year 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
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<td>24.1%</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>37.9</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>36.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys
Table 6 Percentages Expressing Support for Democracy and Opposition to Authoritarian Rule among Dissatisfied Citizens

### a. Full Support for Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets of Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are percentages of partially and fully dissatisfied citizens who support democracy not only in principle but also in practice.

### b. Full Antipathy for Authoritarianism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets of Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are percentages of partially and fully dissatisfied citizens who reject both rule by a strongman and return to army rule.
c. Authentic and Full Support for Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are percentages of partially and fully dissatisfied citizens who are completely committed to democracy.

Source: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys
Figure 3  Changing Levels of Congruence Between Cultural and Institutional Democratization

Source: Korea Democracy Barometer surveys