

## **Is Democracy the Only Political Game Worth Playing in Korea? Exploring Citizen Attitudes toward Democratic Legitimacy**

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### **Abstract**

For the past three decades, a great deal of public opinion research has been conducted throughout the world of newly democratizing countries to compare and monitor the process in which democracy becomes legitimate rule in the minds of their citizens. Much of this survey research on democratic legitimacy, however, has been concerned exclusively with their affective orientations to democracy-in-principle. Consequently, little is known about how citizens react to democracy-in-practice. Much less is known about their cognitive and behavioral orientations to democracy. In view of these limitations of earlier survey research, this study first introduces a new multi-dimensional model of studying democratic legitimacy and legitimization through public opinion surveys. It then employs this model to the analysis of the 2010 Korean Barometer surveys, and examines how broadly, deeply, firmly, and evenly ordinary Koreans have embraced their present system of government as a legitimate democracy. Analyses of the surveys reveal that a majority of them is yet to become fully informed and unconditionally committed to democratic rule. On the basis of this finding, we conclude that the Korean people tend to engage in the legitimization of democracy-in-practice that is more superficial than profound, and more passive than active.

Scholars and political analysts agree that mass political orientations are crucial to the democratic transformation of authoritarian political systems and the consolidation of nascent democratic systems (Dalton 2004; Diamond 1999; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Qi and Shin 2011; Shin 2007; Welzel 2007). On the institutional level, a political system becomes democratic with the adoption of a democratic constitution, competitive elections, and multiple political parties. However, these institutions alone do not make for a well-functioning representative democracy. Nor do they produce a fully liberal democracy.

As Richard Rose and his associates (1998, 8) aptly point out, the institutions constitute nothing more than “the hardware” of representative democracy. To operate properly, a democratic political system requires “software” congruent with the various hardware components (Almond and Verba 1963; Dalton and Shin 2005; Eckstein 1966). Citizen attitudes to democracy and their reactions to its institutions are key components of the software required for democracy to work.

All democracies, both new and old, can perform effectively and thrive long-term only with support from a majority of their respective citizenries (Dalton 1999; Mishler and Rose 1996). More notably, new electoral democracies become fully consolidated liberal democracies only when an overwhelming majority of the mass citizenry embraces democratic rule as “the only game in town” (Diamond 1999, 2008; Linz and Stepan 1996; Shin 2007). For this reason, how ordinary citizens view democracy and react to its institutions and processes has recently become a central concern in research and theory on the legitimization of democratic rule in third-wave democracies (Booth and Seligson 2009; Chu et al. 2008a, 2008b; Dalton 2004; Fails and Pierce 2010; Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird 2003; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Kuan and Lau 2002; Levi, Sacks and Tyler 1998; Nathan 2007; McDonough, Barnes and Lopez Pina 1986, 1998; Norris 1999, 2011; Shin and Wells 2005; Tyler 2006; Zeldich 2001).

This paper seeks to examine how much progress has been made in building a democratic political culture that is fully compatible with the institutions of representative democracy in South Korea (Korea hereafter), one of five third-wave democracies in East Asia. To this end, we first propose a new multidimensional model of democratic legitimization to unravel how individual citizens come to legitimize democracy-in-practice as the most appropriate system of government for their country. On the basis of this model, we then explore the breadth, depth, types, and patterns of, and unevenness in, democratic

legitimatization unfolding among the Korean people by analyzing the latest 2010 wave of the Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed three-dimensional model of democratic legitimacy and legitimatization is built on the ACC model (*A* for *affect*, *C* for *cognition*, and *C* for *conation*) that social psychologists have developed to offer a complete account of attitudes.<sup>2</sup> This study's proposed model of democratic legitimacy also rests on the premise that the legitimatization of democratic rule is a process of political learning and thus involves much more than the cultivation of positive affective orientations to democracy in principle and in practice; also involved are cognitive understanding of democracy and a willingness to act in its favor (McClosky and Zaller 1984).

The paper begins with a brief introduction to institutional democratization in Korea and as well as to the development of the Korea Democracy Barometer (KDB hereafter) project that provided the basic public opinion data for the present inquiry. It then reviews previous public opinion research on democracy and the ACC model of attitudinal inference. On the basis of these reviews, this paper proposes a new conceptual model capable of offering a more accurate and complete account of democratic legitimatization than what has been known in the extant literature. The paper then goes on to discuss the results of the analysis of the KDB surveys and to explore how broadly, deeply, firmly, and evenly democracy has become ingrained in the minds of the Korean mass public. Finally the paper highlights key findings and discusses their implications.

### **Historical and Institutional Backgrounds to Korean Democratization**

Korea is one of many new democracies that have evolved out of a military dictatorship (Huntington 1991). Between 1987 and 1988, Korea accomplished a peaceful transformation from a military dictatorship headed by former general Chun Doo Hwan to a democratic state that allowed people to choose the president and other political leaders through free and competitive elections. During nearly three decades prior to the advent of democracy (1961-1987), the military ruled the country as a developmental dictatorship with the rationale that such a government was necessary for economic development and for national security against the Communist North (Moon and Kim 1996). Institutionally, the

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<sup>1</sup> Anthropologist Robert Oppenheim (2005) offers a different perspective for the study of political legitimacy in Korea.

<sup>2</sup>This model is also called the ABC model (*A* for *affect*; *B* for *behavior*; and *C* for *cognition*).

developmental state provided the president with unprecedented and unlimited power, both executive and legislative in character, to the extent that he dissolved the National Assembly and took emergency measures whenever he deemed them necessary.

By invoking national security and anti-communist laws, the military dictatorships headed, successively, by former Generals Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan suppressed political opposition and curtailed freedom of expression and association (Moon and Kim 1998). Through security agencies, such as the Korean Central Agency and the National Security Command, those regimes placed the news media under strict censure and kept labor unions and educational institutions under constant surveillance.

Moreover, these regimes controlled opposition parties and other non-political civic and business organizations by using a variety of tactics including co-optation and intimidation. By suppressing political opposition and disallowing individual citizens and civic groups from taking part in the political process, the military dictatorships insulated policymaking from the pressures of social and political groups. In pre-democratic Korea, therefore, it was technocrats and bureaucrats, not elected representatives, who played the key roles in the policymaking process.

The current constitution of the democratic Sixth Republic, which was ratified in a national referendum held in October 1987, has laid out a new institutional foundation for representative democracy (for a full text of the constitution amended on October 29, 1987, see Kil and Moon, 2001, 327-352 ). It provides for direct election of the president with a single, nonrenewable five-year term. As in the past, the president serves as the head of the state and the government. Yet the president's powers are reduced considerably, while those of the legislative and judicial branches are significantly expanded.

Specifically, the president's powers regarding emergency decrees and the dissolution of parliament are abolished. The National Assembly's power to oversee the executive branch, meanwhile, is broadened and strengthened. The process of appointing judges is institutionalized to ensure the independence of the judiciary. The Constitutional Court is newly instituted to enforce the principles of the democratic constitution and to ensure the rule of law. Civil liberties and political rights were expanded, and the protection of economic and social rights was strengthened. The constitution protects political parties from being disbanded by arbitrary governmental action, and the constitution also explicitly requires political neutrality by the military.

To implement the democratic ethos and principles of the new democratic constitution, popularly elected governments, headed by the two best-known opponents of military rule,

adopted a variety of democratic reforms. The Kim Young Sam government (1993-1998), for example, instituted civilian supremacy over the military and implemented the constitutional principle of political neutrality of the military. This first civilian government also enacted financial reform legislation to mandate the use of real names in financial transactions in order to dismantle the structure of political corruption.

The Kim Dae Jung government (1998-2003) furthered democratization by expanding economic and social rights. This second civilian government also expanded the social security system to include health insurance, unemployment insurance, pension insurance, and workers' accident compensation insurance (Shin and Lee 2003). New laws gave citizens the right of access to government information. With these reforms, the Korean political system moved beyond electoral democracy on a path toward democratic consolidation.

In the wake of the 1988 transition to democracy, popular elections have become the only method to choose governors and lawmakers at the national, provincial, and local levels of government. Five free and competitive presidential elections have taken place since the demise of military rule. 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. In the presidential election held on December 19, 2002, the Korean people for the first time elected a relatively young and liberal candidate in his 50s to lead their nation — a nation where age has long played an important role in the political arena and all other aspects of Korean life.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these presidential elections, six rounds of parliamentary elections also enabled the people to choose their representatives to the National Assembly. In all local communities, as well, popularly elected governors and legislators have taken the place of appointees of the central government.

The institutionalization of free and fair elections for both local and central governments has also expanded the involvement of the mass public in electoral politics and policymaking. Farmers, factory workers, women, the elderly, the urban poor, businessmen, and journalists have all formed new public interests groups to serve as competing forces against various institutions of the government. Today, more than 6,000 non-governmental organizations are known to operate in Korea (S. Kim, 2000). As a result, civic associations and interest groups have become formidable players in the policy process, which was formerly dominated by bureaucrats and technocrats.

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<sup>3</sup> For critical assessments of the Roh Moo Hyun and Lee Myung Bak governments, see Ham and Lee (2008) and Kihl (2009).

In short, the democratic institutional reforms to date have 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. The reforms have firmly established civilian control over the military by purging politicized military generals and disbanding secret societies within the military establishment.

Accordingly, Korean democracy today meets the criteria for procedural democracy or polyarchy specified by Dahl (1971) and many other scholars (Przeworski et al., 2000; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 1998; Schmitter and Karl, 1991). It is a political regime characterized by free and fair elections, universal adult suffrage, multiparty competition, civil liberties, and a free press. In the words of Kim Byung-Kook (2000, 52), “. . .electoral politics has become the only possible game in town for resolving political conflicts.”

For nearly two decades (1993-2011), Korea has received an average rating of 2.0 on Freedom House’s 1-7-scale of political rights and civil liberties, placing it within the ranks of the world’s liberal democracies (see Figure 1). Korea, together with Japan, has recently been recognized as one of only two full democracies in East Asia (the Economist Intelligence Unit 2010). Nonetheless, Korea, one of the third-wave democracies with a “partly free” news media (Freedom House 2011), cannot be regarded as a fully consolidated liberal democracy. Nor can it be recognized as a well-functioning representative democracy (Cheng 2003; Crosissant 2004; Im 2004; Lee 2007). According to United Nations Development Programme’s Worldwide Governance Indicators project (Daniel Kaufman, Aart Krray, Massimo Mastruzzi, 2010), Korea has failed to make any significant improvement in the quality of democratic governance during the past decade, while its peers in Central and Southern Europe have seen progress (see Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

(Figures 1 and 2)

The KDB surveys of the Korean mass public conducted over the past decade have shown no significant progress in the quality of democratic governance. According to the 2010 KDB surveys, a large majority of over three-quarters (78%) of the Korean people believes that their political system neither follows their wills nor works for them, a proportion similar to what was found a decade ago. Equally notable there has been no significant increase in

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<sup>4</sup> Trautvetter (2010) offers a more comprehensive account of political and socioeconomic changes taken place in Korea since 1945.

either the extent to which citizens demand democracy or the extent to which their institutions are perceived to supply it (see Figure 3). Only 1 percent of the Korean population believes that the country is currently either a complete democracy or is it completely suitable for democracy. Why has Korea, the country that was able to recover most promptly and fully from the dire financial crisis that erupted in Asia a decade ago, not been able to make steady progress in political democratization?

(Figure 3 here)

The recent theory of democratic demand and supply suggests that the political orientations of ordinary Koreans and their political leaders are powerful forces hindering Korea's steady progress in broadening and deepening its limited democratic rule (Qi and Shin 2011; see also Dalton and Shin 2006; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007, Norris 2011; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). This study, therefore, seeks to explore how congruent or incongruent the software of mass political orientations is with the institutional hardware of representative democracy. Specifically, this study's central question is, How deeply and firmly have ordinary Koreans embraced their present system of government as a legitimate democracy?

### **The Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys**

The public opinion data for the present study are assembled from the latest wave of the Korea Democracy Barometer (KDB hereafter) surveys conducted during the months of October and November 2010. The KDB completed its first survey in 1988, years before the New Democracies Barometer and other regional barometer projects were initiated in Europe and elsewhere. This was also the year when nearly three decades of military dictatorship formally ended and the new era of democratic political life dawned in Korea with the installation of the democratic Sixth Republic.

Since 1998, the KDB has continually monitored a triple transition – political democratization, cultural globalization, and economic liberalization – and its consequences for quality of life. It is, therefore, a research program of greater breadth and depth than the multitude of ad-hoc sample surveys that individual scholars and various news media have conducted in order to find out how Koreans are adapting to democratic change. Unlike those

surveys, the KDB surveys allow for ascertaining the cultural and institutional dynamics of democratization and their trends.

Beginning in October 1988, the KDB conducted eleven parallel surveys of the Korean mass public. 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 Korea 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), November 1999 (N=1,007), and March 2001 (N=1,005); one survey under the Roh Moo Hyun government in July 2004 (N=1,037); and one survey under the current Lee Myung Bak government in October and November 2010 (N=1,003). Of these eleven waves of the KDB surveys, the present study chose the latest 2010 wave to examine how firmly and deeply democracy as a system of government has taken root in the minds of the Korean people.

### **Previous Research on Mass Political Attitudes to Democracy**

How do ordinary citizens, who have lived all or most of their lives under authoritarian rule, transform themselves into citizens of a democratic state and become true supporters of democracy? What motivates them to reject authoritarianism and embrace democracy as the preferred system of government? For the past two decades, individual scholars and research institutes have conducted numerous national and international surveys to address these and other related questions in an effort to unravel the process by which ordinary citizens embrace and legitimize democratic rule.<sup>5</sup> Previous studies based on these surveys have offered a number of insights for our study of democratic legitimization in Korea.

First, democratic support or affinity, especially among citizens of new democracies, is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, with one dimension involving the development of favorable orientations to democratic ideals and practices, and another involving the opposite

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<sup>5</sup> Heath, Fisher, and Smith (2005) and Mattes (2007) review these surveys.



trend in orientations toward authoritarianism. Citizens with little experience of and limited sophistication concerning democratic politics may be uncertain whether democracy or dictatorship offers more satisfying solutions to the problems facing their societies. Because of such uncertainty, citizens who are democratic novices often embrace democratic and authoritarian political propensities concurrently (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi, 2005; Lagos 2001; Rose and Mishler 1994; Shin 1999).

Consequently, the acceptance of democracy does not necessarily bring the rejection of authoritarianism or vice-versa. Pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian regime orientations, therefore, vary not only in level or quantity but also in quality or patterns (McDonough, Barnes, and Lopez-Pina 1998; Shin and Wells 2005). Thus, popular support for democracy in emerging democracies should not be considered as unqualified commitment to democratization unless the mass citizenry both accepts the new democratic regime *and* rejects its authoritarian and other non-democratic alternatives.

Second, democratic support is a multi-level phenomenon. To citizens of states in democratic transition, democracy at one level represents the political ideals or values to which they aspire. At another level, democracy refers to a political regime-in-practice and the actual workings of its institutions, which govern citizens' daily lives (Dahl 1971; Mueller 2001; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). Popular support for democracy, therefore, needs to be differentiated into two broad categories: abstract and practical. The abstract level is concerned with democracy-in-principle, or democracy as a theoretical ideal. The practical level is concerned with the various aspects of democracy-in-practice, including regime structure, political institutions, and political processes.

At the first level, support for democracy refers largely to the psychologically loose attachment citizens have to the positive symbols of democracy (Easton 1965). Democratic support at the second level refers to favorable evaluations of the structure and behavior of the existing democratic regime. Previous research has revealed a significant gulf between these two levels of democratic support (Klingemann 1999; Mishler and Rose 2001; Norris 1999). Even at the practical level, it has revealed a significant distinction between orientations toward democracy as a regime on the one hand and those toward its processes of governance on the other (Shin and Wells 2005). To offer a comprehensive and balanced account of democratic support, therefore, all of the various levels of support should be considered together.

Finally, previous research has documented that many citizens of new democracies are not cognitively capable of understanding or defining democracy (Bratton, Mattes and

Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Dalton, Shin and Jou 2007; Schedler and Sarfield 2004; Shin and Cho 2010). Even among those who express support for democracy and opposition to its alternatives, there are many who are not capable of imputing meaning to these terms and who lack the capacity to distinguish the former from the latter. Support for democracy by people who are unclear on its meaning is highly superficial and fragile. For this reason, such support should not be equated with authentic commitment to democracy.

In summary, orientations to democracy are viewed as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon, in that they entail favorable orientations to democracy and unfavorable orientations to its alternatives, at both the abstract and the practical level. Moreover, pro-democratic and antiauthoritarian orientations constitute authentic support for democracy only when these affective orientations are grounded in a cognitively accurate understanding of democracy and its alternatives. These insights from prior survey research serve as bases for the present analysis of how the Korean people have legitimized their system of government as a democracy, that is, the most appropriate system of government for their country.

### **A Tripartite Model of Attitudinal Inference**

What constitutes democratic and other attitudes? How does one measure and analyze these psychological orientations? Social psychologists have long addressed these questions and proposed a variety of conceptual and theoretical models. The models differ considerably even in their definitions of *attitude*. Some scholars like Alice H. Eagly and Shelly Chaiken (1993) define *attitude* as an evaluative tendency, while others like Icek Ajzen (2005) think of it as a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object. Still others, including Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1981), treat it as positive or negative feelings to those attitude objects. In striking contrast, Gordon Allport (1935, 180) conceptualizes it as “a mental and neural state of readiness”.

Despite such subtle differences across the definitions, all social psychologists agree that the most essential feature of an *attitude* is an evaluative judgment of the object as a sum total, and this judgment predisposes, energizes, and directs an overt behavior relevant to the object (Maio and Haddock 2010). Social psychologists also agree that an attitude is a hypothetical construct or latent variable that cannot be observed directly. Consequently, it can only be inferred from a variety of measurable responses.

What observable responses should be taken into consideration to infer an attitude? Can a variety of those responses be classified into theoretically meaningful categories? Following the early lead of Plato, social psychologists, in general, agree that all responses expressing an evaluative judgment can and should be classified into three distinct categories or dimensions. They are cognition, affect, and conation (Ajzen 2005). In short, attitude is a multi-dimensional construct, which allows for a summary evaluation of an object, an evaluation consisting of cognitive, affective, and conative components.

Further, social psychologists are in general agreement that all three attitudinal categories or components should be taken into account in order for a true evaluative judgment to emerge; the different categories do not constitute different ways of saying the same thing. Each response category reflects a different theoretical component of attitude and the evaluation expressed in it can differ from the other component. As each component explains some part of the overall attitude that is not explained by the other components, the three components explain the overall attitude in unique but complementary ways. Three components, therefore, should be analyzed separately and jointly to estimate their individual and collective contributions to an overall evaluative judgment. This tripartite model of attitudinal inference serves as a conceptual foundation for our study of democratic legitimacy.

### **Conceptualization**

What constitutes the legitimacy or legitimization of democratic rule? Should full and unconditional support for democracy as a system of government be equated with democratic legitimacy? Or does the attainment of legitimacy require more than this support? Political philosophers and scientists offer a variety of defining criteria and perspectives on the notions of political legitimacy and democratic legitimacy (Alagappa 1995; Barker 1990; Beetham 2008; Buchanan 2002; Chu et al. 2008a; Gilley 2009; Levi 1989; Hechter 2009; Kane, Chieh, and Patapan 2010; Linz 1998; Nathan 2007; Peter 2011; Rothstein 2009; Tyler 2006). Some scholars, for example, define legitimacy normatively, while others do so descriptively or empirically (Peter 2011). In defining it normatively, philosophers often employ either or both of procedural and substantive norms (Arneson 2003; Peter 2009; Thornhill 2011). In defining it descriptively, social scientists use either or both of macro and micro perspectives (Gilley 2009; Weatherford 1992).

In defining legitimacy descriptively, moreover, social scientists do so either uni-dimensionally or multi-dimensionally (Beetham 2004; Easton 1965; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Lipset 1959). When they do it uni-dimensionally, some focus exclusively on diffuse regime support, while others consider specific governmental support (Booth and Seligson 2009; Nathan 2007). Even when they define it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, they define it either actively or passively (Barker 1994; Levi, Sachs, and Tyler 2009).<sup>6</sup> Even in defining legitimacy passively, some are concerned with its substance, while others are with its appearance (Chu and Huang 2010). While some analyze it as a dichotomous phenomenon, others see it as a continually evolving phenomenon (Chu and Huang 2007; Gilley 2009). As such, there is no consensus on the constituents of legitimacy and the methods of its analysis, not to mention those of democratic legitimacy.

Among empirical researchers, however, there is a general agreement that legitimacy is a subjective phenomenon that resides in the minds of citizens, and thus to measure legitimacy, one must measure citizen attitudes. There is also a general agreement that legitimacy is expressed in terms of “a high level of positive affect” or “a reservoir of good will”, which is known as diffuse support (Easton 1965, 273; Lipset 1959). Even among those who conceive of legitimacy as an overall judgment of the political order as “the most right or appropriate one for the society” (Diamond 1999, 65), however, there is no agreement over whether it entails much more than such affective or evaluative orientations.

As discussed earlier in the section on a tripartite model of attitudinal inference, social psychologists emphasize the importance of considering together all three categories or components—cognitive, affective, and conative—of orientations or responses to an attitude object, such as democracy. The cognitive component of attitudes refers to the beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge we associate with about an object. The affective component refers to positive or negative feelings or emotions linked to an attitude object, such as liking or disliking. The conative component, on the other hand, concerns the inclination or willingness to do something for the sake of the object.

Drawing upon the ACC model of attitudinal inference social psychologists have developed, this paper proposes a multidimensional model of orientations to the existing democratic system of government to present an accurate, balanced, and complete account of its legitimacy. Specifically, this study conceptualizes *democratic legitimacy* as consisting of three distinct but related components: affect, cognition, and conation. Applied to democratic

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<sup>6</sup> Definitions become active or passive, depending upon whether or not behavioral intentions are taken into account.

legitimization, *affect* refers to an unqualified preference for democratic regime over its alternatives, *cognition* refers to the capacity to distinguish the democratic system of government from non-democratic systems, and *conation* refers to the inclination, or willingness, to defend and promote the democratic system. Accordingly, this study recognizes the *legitimatization* of democracy as a process by which citizens develop favorable orientations toward democracy across all three dimensions of attitude.

This inclusion of all three dimensions makes this study more thorough than many previous studies that measured democratic legitimacy exclusively in affective terms (Booth and Seligson 2009; Chu et al. 2008a; Chu and Huang 2010; Fails and Pierce 2010; Gibson et al. 1998, 2003; Kuan and Lau 2002; Levy et al. 2009; McDonough, Barnes and Lopez Pina 1986). The problem with equating true commitment with avowed affinity for democracy is that such affective orientations do not necessarily motivate people to fulfill their moral obligations as citizens of a democratic state or to defend democracy when it is threatened. This is because those orientations more often than not fail to translate to action (Kelman 2001).

To be effective supporters of democratization, citizens of nascent democracies must not just desire democracy but also demand it. They must develop the conation, or inclination, to take action both to promote democracy at all times and to defend democracy in times of crisis. As Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005) suggest, such favorable orientations to democratic politics are not likely to endure unless good feelings are accompanied by action.

Moreover, in new democracies, like the one in Korea most citizens have limited experience with democratic politics and so have yet to learn what democracy means in principle and how it operates in practice. Lacking conceptual and practical knowledge about democracy, they are not fully capable of distinguishing democratic governance from its alternatives. Consequently, some citizens misunderstand an authoritarian regime as a democracy, while others mistake democracy for authoritarianism. Being misinformed or uninformed about democracy, as reported in Table 1 below, their affective or behavioral orientations to democracy cannot be considered dependable.

As Robert Dahl (1997) and Giovanni Sartori (1987) note, support for democracy, either diffuse or specific, means little in the real world of democratization unless it is based on an accurate understanding of democratic politics. It is, therefore, necessary to gauge their democratic knowledge to determine the authenticity and dependability of their affective and behavioral commitment to democratic rule. Taking into account the extent to which people

are informed about democratic rule, the proposed model is capable of offering a more reliable account of democratic legitimacy than the ones based exclusively on the notions of democratic support or loyalty (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003; Levi, Sachs and Tyler 2009).

The proposed three-dimensional model is also capable of offering a more complete and accurate conceptual account of democratic legitimacy than what is available in extant survey-based studies. Because this study conceptualizes legitimization broadly in terms of all three components of democratic attitudes, it offers a more complete account than do one-dimensional models, which are based on the notion of either diffuse or specific regime support (Booth and Seligson 2009; Chu and Huang 2010; Chu et al 2008b) or loyalty (Gibson, Caldeira and Spence 2003). Taking into account all three dimensions of democratic attitudes, moreover, our study allows for determining accurately the extent to which citizens understand the need for the further democratization of their limited democratic rule and are motivated to demand it.

In analyzing data, the proposed model allows for unraveling the dynamics of democratic legitimacy. Previous survey-based studies have been concerned exclusively with the level of legitimacy, e.g., the extent to which democracy is preferred over authoritarianism either in principle, in practice, or both. The model offered here, on the other hand, is capable of determining how the three components of legitimacy interact with one another and of ascertaining the distinct patterns of their changes over time. It can also determine the particular components of democratic legitimacy that are most and least lacking among the various segments of the population at a particular point in time and trace the dynamics of those components and their consequences with multiple surveys over time. In short, our model, unlike others, allows for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of democratic legitimacy.

### **Cognition: Democratic Knowledge**

As of late, an increasing number of public opinion surveys are asking open-ended and/or closed-ended questions to determine how accurately ordinary citizens understand democracy and in what terms they understand it. These surveys have revealed that many citizens in countries in democratic transition are either misinformed or uninformed about democracy (Dalton, Shin, and Zou 2007; Shedler and Sarsfield 2007). An analysis of the latest fifth wave of the World Values Survey, for example, shows that of the seven regions of

the world, the fully democratized West is the only region where a majority of the mass citizenry has an accurate conception of democracy as government by the people and is fully capable of distinguishing it from non-democratic governments led by military and religious leaders (see Table 1).

(Table 1)

In all other regions including East Asia, however, only small minorities ranging from 13 percent in South Asia to 45 percent in East Asia are found equally well-informed about democracy. This finding indicates that especially in new democracies, the mass citizenries lack a great deal of conceptual as well as practical knowledge about democracy as a distinct type of government. It also suggests that many of those citizens are no more than avowed democrats performing lip service to democracy (Inglehard 2003). Their support and preference for democracy can be *authentic* only when they are accurately and fully informed about the principles and practices of democratic rule. Accordingly, democratic knowledge should be taken into account as an integral component in analyzing the legitimatization of democratic rule.

How well are the Korean people informed about the defining characteristics of democracy? Do they know what distinguishes it from its alternatives, when they uphold it as the only political game worth playing? To examine the level of their knowledge about democracy-in-practice, we chose a pair of questions from the KDB surveys, which asked respondents to describe the level of democracy they experienced on a 10-point scale. On this scale, scores of 1 and 10 indicate, respectively, “complete dictatorship” and “complete democracy”.

The first question asked respondents to rate, on a 10-point scale, how democratic their country was during the period when former General Chun Doo Hwan was president, a time when Korea was rated as “partly free”, registering scores of 5 and 6 on Freedom House’s 7-point scales tapping, respectively, political rights and civil liberties. The second question asked them on the same scale how democratic their country was at the time of the KDB survey, more than two decades after the demise of his military rule and a time when Korea was rated as “free”, registering scores of 1 and 2 on the same scales.

On the first question, the Korean people as a whole gave an average score of 3.4, a score that is significantly lower than the scale’s midpoint of 5.5. On the second question, they gave an average score of 5.9, which is slightly above the scale midpoint. The first mean score

indicates that they tend to rate the Chun Doo Hwan period of military rule as dictatorial, while the second mean score indicates that they tend to rate the present period of free and competitive elections as democratic, though just barely so. The percentages reported in Figure 4, however, indicate that not everyone in Korea rated the military regime period as non-democratic; nor did every Korean rate the present democratic period as democratic in nature.

(Figure 4 here)

A careful scrutiny of the percentages in the figure shows that nearly one in eight Koreans (12%) did not rate the military regime period as authoritarian or dictatorial; instead, they rated it as democratic, placing it above the scale midpoint of 5.5. More surprisingly, a much larger group representing two out of five Koreans (40%) did not rate the current democratic regime period as democratic. These figures indicate that a large majority of Koreans is incapable of distinguishing democracy from non-democratic rule.

To measure the overall level of democratic knowledge or cognitive capacity, we first collapsed the first 5 numbers on the scale (1-5) into the broader category of non-democratic responses and the last five numbers (6-10) into the broader category of democratic responses. We then constructed a 3-point index of democratic knowledge by determining whether respondents accurately perceived the past military regime period as a non-democracy and whether they rated the present democratic regime period as a democracy. A score of 0 on this scale indicates complete ignorance about democracy, while scores of 1 and 2 indicate, respectively, partial and full understanding of it. Those fully knowledgeable are those capable of recognizing the occurrence of democratic regime change in their country from a military dictatorship into a democracy by rating the past military regime as dictatorial and the current democratic regime as democratic.

As shown in Table 2, among the Korean people, the fully knowledgeable, who rated both periods accurately, are most numerous, yet they constitute only one-half (50%) the population, not even a bare majority. They are followed by the partially knowledgeable (44%) and the completely ignorant (6%). Among the partially knowledgeable, those who misunderstood the present democratic period as non-democratic are over four times as many as those who misunderstood the authoritarian past as a period of democratic rule (36% vs. 8%).



(Table 2)

The completely ignorant, on the other hand, are almost evenly divided into the completely misinformed who misunderstood both periods (3%) and the unaware who were unable to judge either period (3%).<sup>7</sup> In Korea today, nearly one-half (47%) either partially or fully misinformed about what constitutes democracy and its distinctions from other types of government. The most notable of these findings is that exactly half the Korean population is incapable of recognizing the democratic regime change, which took place in their country more than two decades ago.

### **Affect: Democratic Affinity**

Many citizens of new democracies are often found to hold ambivalent attitudes to democracy and its alternatives. Having lived all or most of their lives under non-democratic rule, they remain attached to the practices of the authoritarian past while welcoming the arrival of democracy. This ambiguous position does not represent true legitimization of democracy. Citizens legitimize democracy as the most appropriate system of government only when in principle, they no longer conceive of any viable alternative to democracy arriving in the future (Dogan 1992, 110), and when in practice, they recognize the current democratic system as better than any of the non-democratic systems of the past (Linz 1998, 65). In short, their democratic regime preference becomes truly *unqualified* only when they no longer conceive of any better alternative, either in principle or in practice.

To examine the extent of democratic affinity, we selected a pair of items from the KDB surveys. The first of these items was intended to tap attachment to democracy *in principle* by asking respondents to choose from three different views of democracy the one that corresponds most closely with their own. The three views were: (1) “Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government”; (2) “Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government is better than a democratic one”; and (3) “For some people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or non-democratic government.”

Of the three response categories, the first and last ones were, respectively, most and least popular among the Korean population. By choosing the first response category, nearly two-thirds (65%) endorsed, in principle, the view that there is no better alternative to

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<sup>7</sup> The unaware are those who did not answer the two questions.

democratic government. Another one-third, however, remained either attached to the virtues of authoritarian rule (19%) or indifferent to regime type (9%).<sup>8</sup> Even after more than two decades of democratic rule, nearly one in every five Koreans remains attached to the virtues of authoritarian rule, while one out of ten remains politically indifferent.

Of the three groups of the Korean people identified by levels of political knowledge, the most knowledgeable are the most attached to democracy (65%) and the least attached to authoritarianism (19%), while the least knowledgeable are the least attached to democracy (43%) and the most attached to authoritarianism (37%). Evidently, the more Koreans become knowledgeable about democracy, the more they are supportive of it. This is a piece of evidence confirming the theory of democratic learning that holds that increases in knowledge about democracy leads to greater support for it (Anderson and Dodd 2005; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003; Rohrschneider 1999; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998).

More notable than this finding confirming the theory of democratic learning is that even those who report an absolute preference for living in a democracy are not all fully capable of distinguishing it from authoritarianism. Nearly one-half (49%) of these avowed democrats is not fully informed about the distinctive characteristics of democracy and authoritarianism; they are either uninformed or misinformed (2%) or partially informed (47%). Their avowed democratic support, therefore, can be considered neither trustworthy nor unqualified.

The second question from the KDB was intended to tap affinity for democracy-*in-practice* by asking respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement “For all its defects, the current system of democratic government is better than any other system we had in the past.” A substantial majority of three-fifths (62%) endorsed the superiority of democratic governance to the authoritarian rule of the past by agreeing with the statement strongly or somewhat.<sup>9</sup> A substantial minority of more than one-fifth (27%), however, refused to endorse democracy’s superiority.<sup>10</sup> This minority, which is attached to the practices of authoritarian governance, is significantly larger than the one in favor of authoritarian rule in principle (26% vs. 19%). The significant disparity in authoritarian support levels suggests that the age-old practices of authoritarian politics are more difficult to abandon than its ideals.

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<sup>8</sup> Seven percent failed to answer this question.

<sup>9</sup> Among those attached to democratic governance, only three-fifths (61%) are fully informed about it. Informed supporters of democracy constitute a minority of two-fifths (43%).

<sup>10</sup> Ten percent did not answer this question.

How deeply has democracy taken root in the minds of the Korean people as the preferred system of government? To explore this question concerning the depth of democratic affinity, we combined into a 3-point index pro-democratic responses to the two questions tapping, respectively, abstract and practical support for democracy. A score of 0 on this index means a lack of any support for democracy, while a score of 2 means full support covering democracy-in-principle and –in-practice. A score of 1, on the other hand, indicates partial support either for democracy’s political ideals or its political practices. Table 2 shows how Koreans are distributed across these three levels of democratic affinity.

The table shows that full supporters of democracy are most numerous with 44 percent. They are followed by partial supporters (33%) and non-supporters (8%).<sup>11</sup> Notably, full or unqualified supporters, who recognize democracy as the most appropriate system of government in principle as well as in practice, constitute a minority, and they are not significantly more numerous than those who express partial or no support. More notable is that those unqualified democratic supporters are not all fully informed about democracy.

Among the full supporters, only three in five (60%) are fully capable of distinguishing democracy from non-democratic rule. Consequently, among the Korean population today, well-informed and unqualified supporters of democracy constitute a relatively small minority of less than one-third (31%). And they are outnumbered by those who express partial or no support by a large margin of 17 percentage points (31% vs. 48%).

### **Conation: Democratic Loyalty**

How fruitful have pro-democratic orientations been in producing demand for democracy in Korea? Favorable orientations to democracy matter in the real world of democratization only when those positive attitudes are accompanied by a willingness to defend and promote democracy through action. Therefore, newly installed democratic governments can be sustained only when citizens disapprove of reversals to authoritarian rule and, further, are willing to take action to prevent such setbacks. This opposition to authoritarian reversal and willingness to take action for the defense of the nascent democratic regime are conceptualized as antiauthoritarian and pro-democratic loyalty to democracy, respectively.

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<sup>11</sup> 15 percent did not answer both questions.

From the KDB surveys, a set of three questions were selected to measure loyalty to democracy. Two questions tapping *antiauthoritarian loyalty* to democracy asked respondents whether they would agree or disagree with the ideas of returning to a military and a civilian dictatorship, which ruled the country in the past. When asked about the reversal to military dictatorship, an overwhelming majority (89%) opposed it, while a small minority of less than one-tenth (9%) were for it. When asked about the reversal to civilian dictatorship, a nearly equally large majority (87%) opposed it, while an equally small minority (10%) endorsed it.

The two anti-authoritarian responses are considered together to identify those who fully oppose an authoritarian reversal. More than four out of five Koreans (82%) opposed this development fully. In striking contrast, only one in fifteen (6%) supported it fully. Among the Korean people, over 13 times as many are fully antiauthoritarian than fully pro-authoritarian, and among the fully antiauthoritarian, one-eighth (13%) is fully or partially uninformed or misinformed about regime characteristics.

The KDB question tapping *pro-democratic loyalty* to democracy asked respondents how much or little they are willing to take part in any citizen movement to protect the current democratic system of government if it faces a serious crisis. The Korean people as a whole are more willing than unwilling to defend democracy. Specifically about one-half (50%) is willing, either very much or somewhat, to participate in such a pro-democratic civic movement, if needed. A much smaller proportion (42%) is unwilling to defend democracy, while the rest are indifferent. In Korea today, there appears to be more *active* than *passive* supporters of democracy. More surprising is that a majority (51%) of these potential defenders of democracy is not fully informed about it. To estimate the overall level of citizen willingness to defend democracy, we combined responses expressing antiauthoritarian and pro-democratic loyalty into a 3-point index of overall democratic loyalty. Not all opponents of the authoritarian reversal are willing to defend their democratic government, should it face a crisis in the future. Only a bare majority (54%) of these authoritarian opponents are willing. As a result, fully loyal democratic defenders constitute a minority of two-fifths (41%) and are outnumbered by those partially loyal (43%). The fully non-loyal form a smaller minority of less than one-tenth (9%) (see Table 2).

As with democratic affinity, democratic loyalty matters in the real world of democratic politics only when it is reinforced by an accurate and full understanding of what democracy is. Among those fully willing to defend the existing democratic regime, less than one-half (48%) is fully capable of distinguishing democracy from authoritarian rule.

Consequently, only one out of five Koreans (22%) is an authentic (fully informed) defender of democracy.

### **Types of Democratic Legitimacy**

Of the three components or dimensions of democratic legitimacy, the affective component featuring unqualified preference for democratic regime to its alternatives represents the defining characteristics of legitimacy. The cognitive and conative components, on the other hand, represent the defining characteristics of democracy as government by the people. For a new democratic regime to survive, its citizens must first embrace it as the preferred system of government. This is because the new regime is likely to survive when no alternative is conceived of, regardless of whether it is perceived as a democracy or a non-democracy. Their democratic regime preference, therefore, should be considered the most essential of the three components

Considering this affective dimension as the most essential, we identified four types of democratic legitimacy: (1) uninformed passive; (2) uninformed active; (3) informed passive; and (4) informed active. To identify these types, we first singled out those who expressed unqualified affinity or support for democracy as avowed democrats. Then we analyzed their cognitive and conative orientations together. Depending on their understanding, or misunderstanding, of democracy-in-practice and on their willingness, or unwillingness, to defend democracy, they were classified into four types.

Specifically, those who fully embraced democracy, preferring it both in principle and in practice and who also distinguished democracy from its alternatives and were willing to defend democracy are labeled the *informed active* and are considered democracy's most reliable supporters. On the other end of the supporter spectrum are those who also preferred democracy both in principle and in practice but who failed to distinguish democracy from authoritarianism and reported an unwillingness to defend democracy; these are labeled the *uninformed passive* and are considered democracy's least reliable supporters. The support of democracy by the unknowledgeable but willing and by the knowledgeable but unwilling, on the other hand, constitutes two somewhat reliable groups, the *uninformed active* and the *informed passive*.

Table 3 shows the percentages of the Korean population falling into each type. A notable feature of Table 3 is that these percentages vary relatively little across the four types, ranging from 7 percent for the uninformed passive to 12 percent for the informed passive. This

indicates that among the Korean people there is no prevalent type of democratic legitimacy. This also indicates that there is a great deal of qualitative difference among the attitudes giving rise to democratic legitimacy.

(Table 3)

### **Levels of Democratic Legitimatization**

To what extent have the Korean people legitimized the current democratic Sixth Republic as a democracy? How deeply has democracy ingrained in the minds of the Korean people? To address these questions, we need to estimate the depth of democratic legitimatization among the Korean people by considering together the extent to which they have been attracted to democracy cognitively, affectively, and conatively.

To measure the overall depth, we summed the scores of the three 3-point dimensional scales tapping, respectively, democratic knowledge, affinity, and loyalty, and constructed a 7-point index of democratic legitimatization. The two extreme scores of 0 and 6 refer to views of democracy as completely illegitimate and completely legitimate, respectively. On this scale, the Korean people as a whole averaged 4.3, a score that is significantly higher than the midpoint of 3.0. But this score is lower than the midpoint of the scale's positive half (4.5). This mean score, therefore, suggests that the Korean people view democracy as more legitimate than illegitimate, yet with much room for greater legitimization to occur.

Figure 5 shows what proportion of the Korean people placed their current democratic system at each of the seven scale points. A minority of about one-quarter (24%) rated it as more illegitimate than legitimate, placing it below the scale midpoint, while a solid majority of three-fifths (61%) rated it as more legitimate than illegitimate.<sup>12</sup> Of these three-fifths, only a small minority of one-tenth (12%) rated it as fully legitimate, placing it at 6 and one-fifth (26%) rated it as mostly legitimate, placing it at 5. Only to this minority of less than two-fifths (38%) has democracy become, by and large, a legitimate system of government worth supporting and defending. With most Koreans, democratic legitimatization remains an unfinished task. This is one notable feature of democratic legitimatization in Korea.

(Figure 5)

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<sup>12</sup>22 percent did not answer all seven questions tapping democratic affinity, knowledge, and loyalty.

## **Patterns of Democratic Legitimatization**

Another notable feature concerns the patterns in which the Korean people legitimize democratic rule. Does their legitimization come in parallel waves covering all three dimensions with similar force, or does their legitimization come dimension by dimension? If dimension by dimension, does one dimension generally come first? Is one dimension more or less likely to remain pro-authoritarian or become pro-democratic? We now seek to address these questions and to ascertain the most and least prevailing patterns of democratic legitimatization. To this end, we first identified eight patterns by determining how many of the three dimensions—none, one, two, or all three— and which one of them register democratic support. Then we calculated and compared the percentages of KDB respondents falling into each pattern.

Table 4 shows eight different patterns of democratic legitimatization and the percentage falling into each pattern. The two extremes of these patterns both represent *parallel legitimatization*: complete legitimization on one end and no legitimization on the other. In the complete failure pattern, citizens are neither fully informed about democracy, nor are they unqualified in supporting and defending it against its alternatives. About one-tenth (11%) falls within this pattern. In the last pattern of complete legitimization, citizens are fully informed about democracy and unqualified in their affinity for and loyalty to it. An equally small minority (12%) falls into this pattern. Those engaged in these two parallel patterns of legitimatization constitute a small minority of less than one-quarter (23%). This indicates that these parallel patterns are less common than disparate patterns, in which the dimensions register different levels of pro-democratic attitudes.

(Table 4)

Of the six disparate patterns listed in Table 4, none constitutes even a substantial minority of one-fifth (20%). And yet each and every pattern represents at least about one-tenth (10%) or more. As with the two parallel patterns, there is no dominant pattern of *disparate democratic legitimatization*, although those placed in the pattern of attaining knowledge and affinity for democracy without becoming loyal to it are most numerous (16%). The absence of such a dominant pattern is another notable feature of democratic legitimatization among the Korean people.

## **The Distribution of Democratic Legitimacy**

The analyses of the KDB surveys presented above make it clear that all segments of the Korean population are not alike in legitimatizing their existing democratic system of government as a democracy. Some segments report seeing democracy as far more legitimate than do others. Which segments are the most and least likely to accord full legitimacy to the existing democratic regime? How evenly or unevenly are those who see democracy as fully legitimate distributed across the various segments of the population? These questions dealing with unevenness in citizen's views of the existing democratic regime's legitimacy are important because its deepening into a fully liberal democracy depends upon widespread legitimization; if particular population groups are resisting democratization, those pockets of resistance pose a bigger threat than disconnected individuals (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998; Shin 1999).

To explore these questions dealing with unevenness in democratic legitimization, we chose the following four demographic characteristics: age, education, income, and the region of residence to examine generational, socioeconomic, and regional gaps. We also chose three political variables, two of which deal, respectively, with support for the winning candidate in the 2007 presidential elections and support for his ruling party. By considering these two political variables, the third one measures overall support for the government. For each of these seven variables, Table 5 reports each demographic category's mean on the 7-point index tapping overall level of democratic legitimization and the percentage expressing full legitimacy.

(Table 5)

All seven variables are significantly associated with both measurements of democratic legitimacy, i.e. the mean and the percentage. While age is negatively associated with those ratings, education and income are positively associated with them. In legitimatizing the current regime as a democracy fully, young Koreans lead their older cohorts by 9 percentage points (22% vs. 13%), and rich Koreans lead their poor counterparts by the same margin (22% vs. 13%). Those with a college education are over three times more likely to embrace democracy wholeheartedly than those with little formal education (20% vs. 6%). In Korea,



there are considerable generational as well as socioeconomic gaps in democratic legitimatization.

Regionally, there is also a considerable gap. Residents of the Cholla region, the birthplace of former president Kim Dae Jung, for example, are over two to three times less likely to accord full legitimacy to democracy than are those of Seoul and all other regions (7% vs. 20%). A high level of inequality in legitimatizing the democratic regime is another notable feature of the democratization taking place among Korea's citizenry.

Politically, there is also a significant gap between supporters and opponents of the current government led by President Lee Myong Bak. Supporters of the opposition parties, including the Democratic Party, are more than one-third less likely to deem democracy a legitimate form of government than are supporters of the ruling Grand National Party (12% vs. 19%). Losers of the last presidential elections are also more than one-quarter less likely to deem democracy legitimate than are their winning counterparts (13% vs. 18%). When these pro- and anti-government postures are taken into account together, those who did not vote for the current president in 2007 and who currently do not support his ruling party are two times less likely to view democracy as a legitimate form of government than those who did vote for him and do support his party (11% vs. 21%).

This gap between the two most politically active groups of the Korean people suggests that many Koreans are yet to become capable of distinguishing democracy as a regime structure apart from authorities, occupants of government offices. As a result, they choose to support democracy itself only when the president and other democratically elected government officials run the government to their satisfaction. Their democratic regime support is directly tied to their perceptions of governmental performance. Such support, therefore, cannot be considered diffuse support, which David Easton denoted as a core component of democratic legitimacy. The inability of the Korean people to make the fundamental, conceptual distinction between the structure of a regime and the performance of the government suggests that their mode of legitimatizing democracy remains, by and large, rudimentary.

### **Democratic Experience and legitimatization**

Why do some Koreans legitimatize the existing regime as a democracy to a greater extent than other do? Does their personal experience of democratic political life promote them to legitimatize it? In a preliminary attempt to explore the sources of democratic

legitimatization among the Korean people from the perspective of democratic learning theory, we chose a set of three questions from the 2010 KDB survey. The first two questions were intended to determine whether the existing regime performs as a democratic system of government by the people and/or for the people. The third question was intended to assess the quality of its performance as a democracy.

Specifically, the first question asked respondents how strongly they would agree or disagree with the statement that “The government is ruled by the will of the people.” The second question asked them how strongly they would agree or disagree with the statement that “The government responds to the needs of the people”. The third question asked them to rate on a 10-point scale the extent they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the government was performing as a democracy. For each item, we first constructed a 3-point scale by collapsing responses to it into three levels: very positive, somewhat positive, and not positive. Then we constructed a 7-point index of overall democratic experience by summing up scores of all three 3-point scales. Finally we examined the relationship between the levels of democratic experience and democratic legitimatization.

When asked whether the government is run by the wills of the people, a minority of about one-quarter (27%) replied very positively (3%) or somewhat positively (24%). When asked whether it responds to their needs, a much larger minority of over two-fifths (44%) replied very positively (7%) or somewhat positively (37%). Significantly greater proportions rated it more positively in substantive terms than in procedural terms. This suggests that in the eyes of the Korean people, their current system of government is substantively more democratic than procedurally it is.

When asked to rate the quality of its performance as a democracy, however, a solid majority of two-thirds (66%) expressed more satisfaction than dissatisfaction, choosing a number above the midpoint (5.5) of the 10-point scale where scores of 1 and 10 indicate complete dissatisfaction and satisfaction, respectively. More surprisingly, a solid majority (57%) of those who perceived the current regime as working neither by the people nor for the people expressed satisfaction with its performance. Yet a small minority of less than one-fifth (18%) expressed a high level of satisfaction, choosing one of the three highest scale points (8, 9, and 10).

We now sum up into a 7-point index of overall democratic experience scores of the three newly created 3-point scales each of which taps a different aspect of democratic experience. On this index, the Korean population as a whole averaged 2.7, a score which is significantly lower than the midpoint (3.0) of the index. More notable is that a substantial minority of more

than one-fifth (22%) were placed at the lowest end of the index. These figures clearly indicate that Korean democracy is far from being a well-functioning democracy. For this reason, so many Koreans may not be willing to recognize the current regime as a democracy.

For each of the seven levels of overall democratic experience, Figure 6 shows the average level of democratic legitimization, which is also tapped on a 7-point scale. The most notable feature of the figure is that a high level of democratic experience is always accompanied by a higher level of democratic legitimization. Percentages expressing the full legitimacy of the current regime also increase over seven-fold from less than 6 percent to 43 percent. Such steady and sharp increases indicate that the quality and quantity of democratic political experience contribute significantly to the legitimization of democracy-in-practice. The more often people experience democratic politics and the more often they are satisfied with it, the more willing they are to embrace and defend the regime as a legitimate democracy. This finding confirms that democratic software and hardware are reciprocally linked with each other.

(Figure 6 here)

## **Summary and Conclusions**

All political systems, either democratic or authoritarian, can survive and thrive when all segments of their citizens endorse it as a legitimate system of government. Does each and every type of political system become legitimate when a large majority of the citizenry conceives of no alternative to it? Or do the constituents or properties of legitimacy vary from one type of political system to another? If they do, what distinguishes the legitimacy of democracy from that of non-democracy? Does the legitimization of democracy require more than the acceptance of democracy as the best possible form of government by a large majority of the citizenry? These are the topics of central concern in the study of political legitimacy.

In analyzing the legitimization of democratic rule among the Korean people, this paper has considered two important facts. First, being government by the people, democracy as a collective enterprise is structured and governed fundamentally differently from the way its alternatives are. Second, citizens of a democratic state can become fully democratic citizens only when they accurately understand these inter-regime differences in the structure and method of governance, and when they are also willing to take part in the political

process. Taking these important facts into account, we have considered that the legitimacy of democracy is qualitatively different from that of non-democracy, and it involves much more than citizens' unqualified embrace of democratic rule as the only political game worth playing.

Specifically, we have conceptualized the legitimacy of democracy as a multi-dimensional subjective phenomenon consisting of citizens' affinity, knowledge, and loyalty to democratic rule. We have also conceptualized its legitimization as a dynamic and evolutionary process in which these three components interact with each other in different degrees as well as in different patterns. These notions of democratic legitimacy and legitimization have enabled us to systematically address questions concerning their types, patterns, depth and distribution, which were not explored in earlier survey-based studies.

The univariate and bivariate analyses of the 2010 Korea Democracy Barometer surveys presented above reveal that the legitimization of democracy in the two-decade old Sixth Republic is miles wide but only inches deep. While nearly every Korean (99%) prefers to live in a democracy, a much smaller majority of about two-thirds (66%) believes that democracy is always preferable to any other form of government and just one-half (50%) has an accurate understanding of the regime change that took place more than two decades ago. A minority of two-fifths (41%) is firmly willing to protect the current democratic regime from any future political crisis, a finding that could encourage pro-authoritarian Koreans to push for a reversal to authoritarian rule. Only one in eight Koreans (12%) is a fully informed and firmly committed defender of democracy-in-practice.

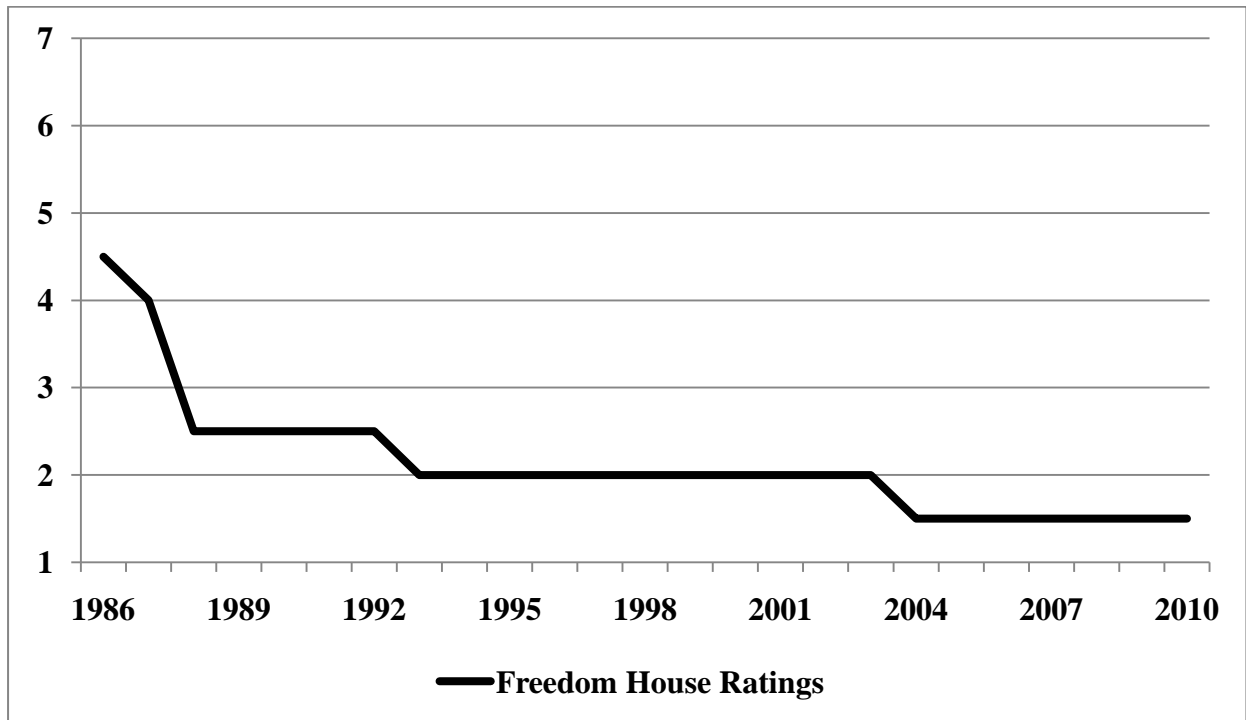
In Korea today, the majority of avowed democrats consists of supporters who are neither fully informed about nor fully committed to democracy. From this finding, it is clear that the legitimacy of Korean democracy is wide in breadth but shallow in depth. It is also clear that the Korean people tend to engage in democratic legitimization that is more superficial than profound, and more passive than active. In short, the cultural software of Korean democracy remains grossly incongruent with its institutional hardware. This incongruence makes it difficult for the most vigorous East Asian democracy to improve the quality of its democratic governance and become a fully consolidated liberal democracy.

In Korea today, moreover, those who have fully endorsed the legitimacy of democracy are not evenly distributed across all segments of the Korean population. Instead, they are heavily concentrated among young people, especially those with a college education and high income. More notably, they are concentrated among supporters of the government and the party in power. Such close linkages of democratic legitimization especially with

partisan politics indicate that the Korean people have yet to offer democracy a legitimacy that transcends their attitudes toward the current regime (Duch 1995; Huntington 1991).

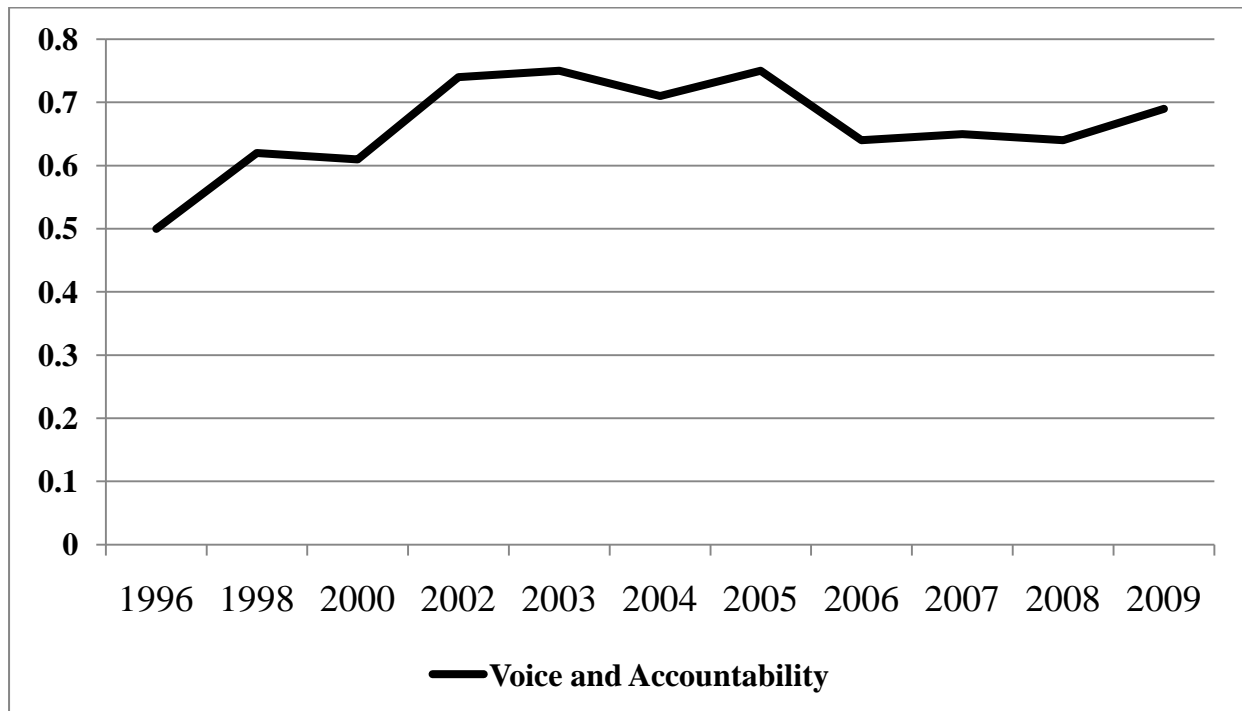
Finally, our findings raise a serious question concerning the validity of the increasingly popular claim that democracy is becoming a universal value (Diamond 2008; Sen 1999). There is no doubt that in every region of the world, an increasing number of people express support for democracy. The survey findings from Korea, the most advanced third-wave democracy in East Asia, however, strongly indicate that most of those avowed democrats in other regions are likely to be neither fully informed supporters of democracy nor committed defenders of it. Democracy will truly become a universal value only when all avowed democrats accurately understand what distinguishes democracy from its alternatives and when they are also willing to defend democracy against non-democratic regimes that push for establishment in the future.

**Figure 1. Changing Levels of Political Rights and Civil Liberties in Korea, 1986-2011(Freedom House)**



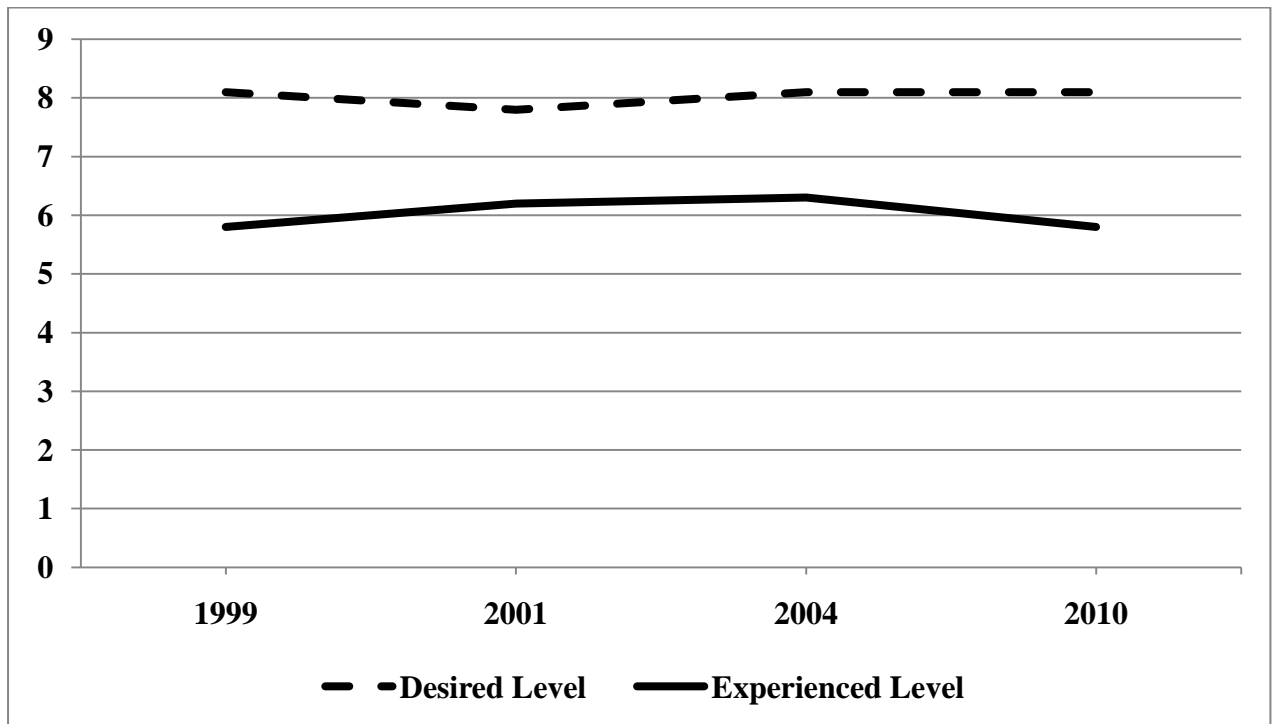
Source: Freedom House Ratings available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

**Figure 2. The Changing Qualities of Democratic Governance in Korea, 1996-2009**



Source: World Bank Governance Indicator available at <http://www.govindicators.org>.

Figures 3. The Desired and Experienced Levels of Democracy (KDB)



Source: Korea Barometer Survey 1999, 2001, 2004, 2010.



**Table 1. Regional Differences in Understanding Democracy (WVS)**

Region	Informed	Misinformed	Uninformed	Unaware
All	38.8%	47.8%		4.1%
West	59.4	34.2	4.7	1.8
Eastern Europe	40.3	40.0	14.9	4.8
South Asia	12.5	77.4	5.6	4.5
Middle East	16.2	65.7	11.2	6.9
East Asia	44.5	35.5	17.6	5.5
Latin America	33.2	53.7	8.7	4.4
Africa	20.8	65.3	8.2	5.8

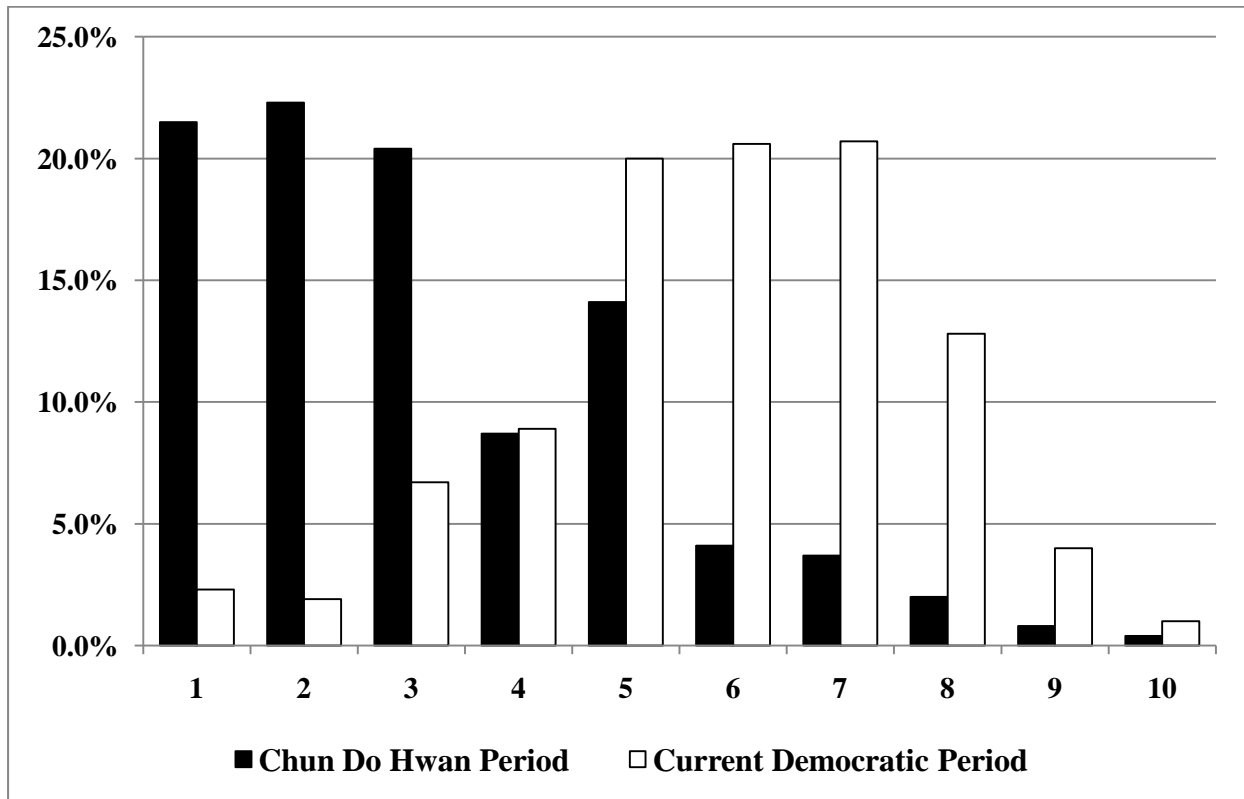
Source: World Values Survey V.

**Table 2. Dimensional Differences in the Legitimatization of Democratic Rule**

Levels	Dimensions		
	Knowledge	Affinity	Loyalty
Low	3.0%	8.1%	6.5%
Middle	44.2	33.1	41.8
High	50.1	43.8	40.7
No Answer	11.0	2.7	15.0

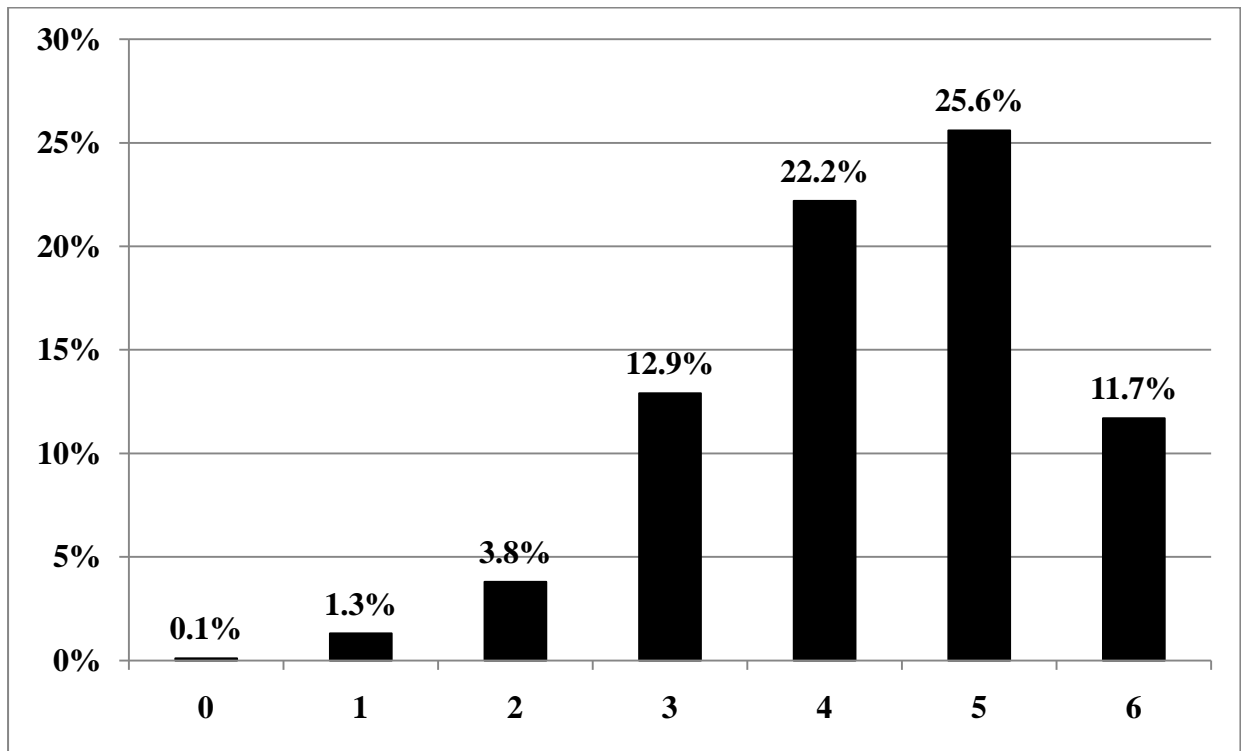
Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

**Figure 4. Perceptions of the Authoritarian Chun Do Hwan Period and the Current Democratic Period**



Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

**Figure 5. Overall Levels of Democratic Legitimatization**



Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

**Table 3. Types of Democratic Legitimization**

Types	Distribution
Uninformed Passive	7.3%
Uninformed Active	9.0
Informed Passive	12.4
Informed Active	11.7
(Others)	59.8

Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

**Table 4. Patterns of Democratic Legitimatization**

Patterns	Dimensions Fully Legitimatized	Percentage
1	None	11.3%
2	Knowledge	10.1
3	Affinity	7.3
4	Loyalty	10.2
5	Knowledge, Affinity	12.4
6	Knowledge, Loyalty	5.9
7	Affinity, Loyalty	9.0
8	Knowledge, Affinity, Loyalty	11.7

Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

**Table 5. Demographic Differences in the Legitimization of Democracy**

Demographics	Mean on a 7-point Scale	Percent Expressing Full Legitimacy
<b>Age</b>		
20s	4.32	18.3%
30s	4.42	17.4
40s	4.27	14.4
50s	4.30	14.2
60+	4.24	11.1
<b>Education</b>		
<High School	4.12	5.6
High School	4.29	14.8
Junior College	4.36	18.5
College	4.45	19.6
<b>Income</b>		
Lowest	4.29	12.4
Low	4.12	11.0
High	4.40	14.6
Highest	4.43	21.7
<b>Region</b>		
Seoul	4.38	15.7
Kyonggi-Kwangwon	4.51	20.4
Choongchung	4.17	13.7
Kyongsang	4.24	13.1
Cholla	4.07	6.8
<b>Electoral Support</b>		
Loser	4.23	13.0
Winner	4.48	18.3
<b>Partisan Support</b>		
Opposition Party	4.16	11.5
Ruling Party	4.45	19.2
<b>Overall</b>	<b>Government</b>	

**Support**

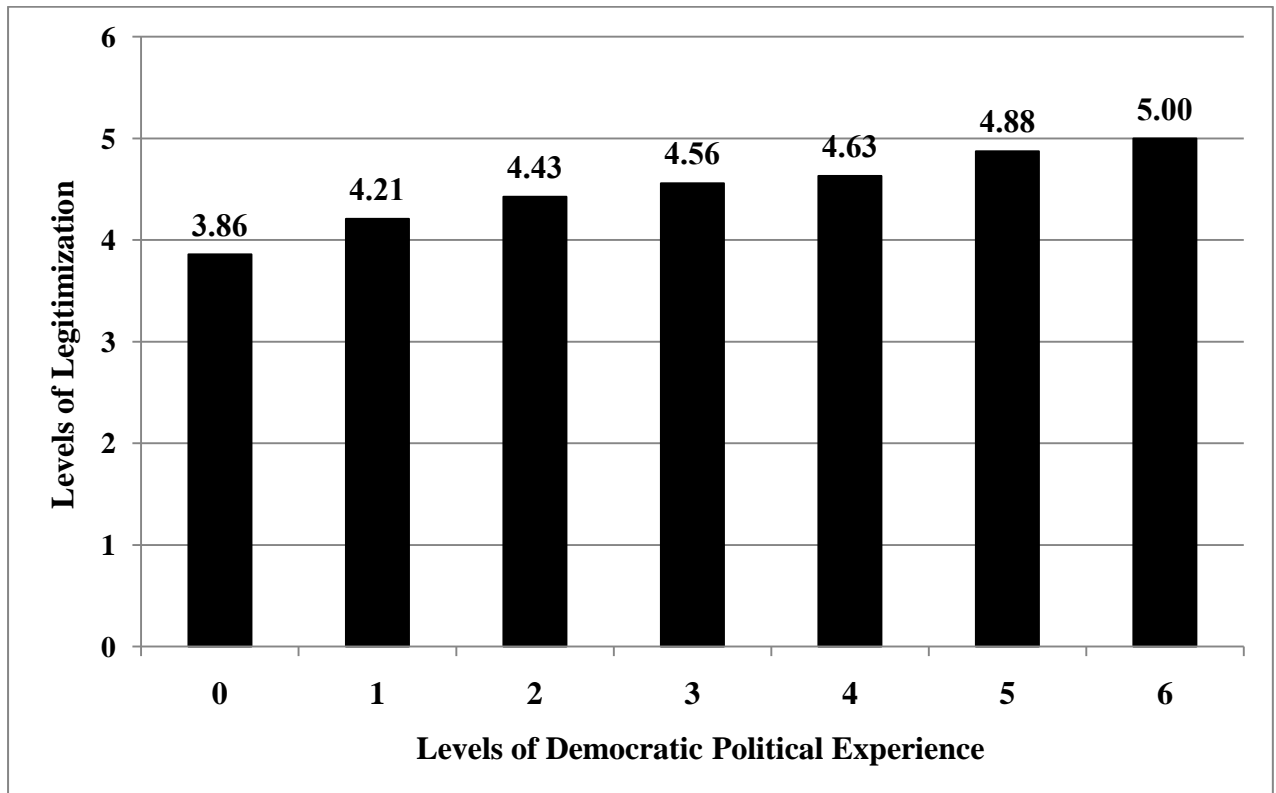
Low	4.16	11.5
Middle	4.44	16.7
High	4.55	20.6

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Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.



**Figure 6. The Legitimation of Democracy-in-practice by Levels of Democratic Political Experience**



Source: Korea Barometer Survey 2010.

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