The Public Support for Democratization in Korea: A Multi-Dimensional Approach*

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In every region of the world these days, countless numbers of ordinary citizens are demanding the transformation of their political systems into democracies. With the dramatic collapse of the Berlin Wall and the widespread removal of barbed wire, democracy is rapidly becoming an officially acceptable goal in many countries of the Second and Third Worlds (Barnes, 1990; Bohlen, 1990; Bunce, 1990; Fukuyama, 1989; Rustow, 1990; UNESCO, 1990).

As documented in the large volume of the empirical literature, the creation of a stable and fully democratic state depends on a variety of conditions and forces, including class structure, culture, economy, political history, and international environment (Barber and Watson, 1989; Bermeo, 1990; Dahl, 1961; Diamond, Lipset, and Linz, 1986; Huntington, 1984; Lijphart, 1984; Linz and Stephen, 1978; Lipset, 1981; Moore Jr., 1961; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Powell, 1982; Rustow, 1990; Seligson and Muller, 1987; Weiner, 1987). Of those conditions and forces, the quality of the mass citizenry is known to be the ultimate determinant of struggles for democracy. Although all other conditions can facilitate or hinder the process of democratization, it is the ordinary people in the countries undergoing such change that will eventually determine whether or not viable democracies will be established and maintained there (Dahl, 1989: 262; Gershman, 1988: 25; Gibson, Dutch, and Tedin, 1990: 3; Inglehart, 1990: 24; Marcus, 1988: 27). As Dalton (1988) simply puts it, "popular support is essential for democracies to survive" (p. 229).

To create and sustain a viable democracy in a country, its citizenry

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have to demonstrate more than a passion for the idea of democracy. Between people's passion for democracy as a political ideal and their abilities at democratic politics there always exists a tremendous gap. There is also a wide span between their democratic political aspirations and their actual behavior as citizens of a democratic state. As Inglehart (1990) observes, "a long-term commitment to democratic institutions among the public is also required in order to sustain democracy when conditions are dire" (p. 24).

The gap between the ideal and reality of democratic politics explains why so many countries in the Third World have failed to remain cosistently democratic for a substantial period of time (Linz, 1990; Linz and Stephen, 1978; Needler, 1987; Roberts, 1990; Wesson, 1982). This is also the reason why many of the newly democratizing countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the world are likely to falter repeatedly on their road to democracy and why only a few will achieve a successful transition to it. Their problems of democratization and their prospects, therefore, can be assessed meaningfully only with an adequate understanding of the exact nature of their public support for the transformation of authoritarian rule into democratic politics.

To facilitate such an understanding, this paper explores the notion of mass support for democratization in the context of a newly democratizing country. To this end, the paper will first make a brief review of previous empirical research on the subject. Then it will propose a multidimensional model for a comprehensive assessment of public support for democratization. This will be followed by an empirical testing of the model with a set of national sample survey data recently collected from a country that has been undergoing transition to democracy following two decades of harsh authoritarian rule.

Conceptualization

There is a general agreement among political scientists that public support for a political system is essential to its survival and growth (Almond and Verba, 1963; Boynton and Loewenberg, 1973; Dahl, 1961; Easton, 1975, 1976; Muller, 1970; Sartori, 1987; Walke, 1971). Empirical research on the dynamics of system support, however, has not advanced much since David Easton (1965) introduced the concept of diffuse support more than two decades ago.

As recent empirical research on diffuse political support reveals (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Finkle, Muller, and Seligson, 1988; Kornberg and Clarke, 1983; Muller and Jukam, 1976; Muller, Jukam and Seligson, 1982), this concept refers to a state of mind — a deep-seated set of attitudes which was socialized early in life and is relatively impervious to change. It is, therefore, too static to investigate the dynamics of system support, especially with regard to the structural transformation of a political system.

Empirical research on democratic system support, on the other hand, has been concerned mostly with either levels of public satisfaction with or amounts of confidence or pride in the performance of the existing democracies in the West (Almond and Verba, 1963; Dalton, 1988; Harmel and Robertson, 1980; Seligson, 1983; Weil, 1989). As a result, little has been known about the different kinds or qualities of mass support for democracy in those countries. Much less known is varieties of mass support for the democratization of authoritarian political systems in other parts of the world.(1)

In this study, support for democratization is considered to be a set of generalized attitudes toward the democratic transformation of authoritarian politics. Specifically it is composed of four distinctive dimensions: (1) evaluation; (2) affect; (3) cognition; and (4) behavioral disposition. First, it is an orientation of evaluation or judgment that democracy constitutes a better alternative to the existing political order. Second, as an evaluative orientation, it is based on varying levels of knowledge and information about democracy as an alternative form of political order. Third, as an evaluative orientation, it is also based on varying levels of affect for democracy as the preferred political order. Finally, it embodies a behavioral disposition that can vary a great deal, from mere acceptance of democratic politics to complete commitment or active involvement in it.

Support for democratization, as conceptualized here, refers to a dynamic phenomenon with multiple properties which shift not only in quantity but also in quality. Its shifting configurations, therefore, cannot be ex-

(1) Several teams of political scientists have recently launched major collaborative research projects on democratization in the Soviet Union and other East European countries (Barnes, 1990; Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1990; Gibson, Dutch, and Tedin, 1990; Inglehart and Siemienska, 1990). These projects, like those conducted in Western Europe and North America, have focused on levels, distributions, or sources of public support for democratization.

amined adequately by merely estimating the extent to which the mass public favors democracy over authoritarian rule. Nor can they be understood meaningfully by merely measuring changes in the extent to which democracy is considered a feasible alternative.

A favorable orientation toward democratization will not be able to endure unless it is based on the firm belief that democracy will do better for the people than any other accessible form of government (Dahl, 1989: 262). This is the reason why Diamond, Lipset, and Linz (1986) argue that a nation is more likely to develop and sustain a democratic government if its mass public perceives the government to be efficacious and effective (see also, Almond and Verba, 1963; Huntington, 1969; Seligson and Muller, 1987).

Moreover, as Sartori (1987: 88) suggests, a favorable orientation toward the democratic transition means very little unless it is based on politically relevant facts about democracy. According to Almond and Verba (1963), "democratic competence is closely related to having valid information about political issues and processes, and to the ability to use information in the analysis of issues and the devising of influence strategies" (p. 95).

A favorable orientation toward democratization by itself is of no or little import if it lacks the disposition or willingness to engage in direct action. Choosing or projecting democracy as a preferable alternative model of rule alone does not even guarantee the disintegration of an authoritarian regime, not to mention the construction or consolidation of a democratic state. In the real world of politics, political preferences matter only if and when they are translated into specific demands and actions.

In the Second and Third Worlds where the winds of freedom have begun to blow, democratization represents only one of the many preferred alternatives for national development. Moreover, it is often in serious conflict with other preferred development alternatives (Haggard, 1990; Huntington and Nelson, 1976). Democratization can, therefore, be translated into a national development program of paramount importance and urgency only when there is a concomitant willingness to get involved in acts of reform.

The conceptual framework proposed here is broader than what has been proposed in prior empirical research on public attitudes toward democracy. Over the past two decades, political scientists have conducted considerable research on the subject in the United States and elsewhere

(Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1990; Gibson, 1989; Gibson, Dutch, and Tedin, 1990; McClosky and Brill, 1985; McDonough, Barnes, and Pina, 1986; Muller, Seligson, and Turan, 1987; Prothro and Gregg, 1960; Rochon and Mitchell, 1989; Shin and Kim, 1989; Shin, Chey, and Kim, 1989; Sniderman, 1975; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, 1982; Sullivan, Shamir, Walsh, and Roberts, 1985). Much of their research, however, has focused on levels of public commitment to the fundamental democratic principles of majority rule and minority rights or the procedural norms of mass participation and political tolerance. A more comprehensive and balanced assessment of public support for democratization, however, requires that all four distinctive dimensions of its properties be considered together.

How much do members of the mass public really know about democracy as a political system when they express their preference for it? How much are they attached to it when they project it as a preferable alternative to authoritarian rule? Do they prefer to live in a democracy solely because they believe that it is the best form of political system? Or do they do so mainly because they are discontented with authoritarian rule? What do they mean when they say that they are committed to domocratization? These questions concerning the qualitative characteristics of democratic support have largely been overlooked in the public opinion research pursued earlier.

Measurement

The evaluation of democracy as a better alternative to the existing political order is the most essential of four dimensions of support for democratization. To measure this evaluative dimension of the concept, respondents were asked two separate questions. Are they in favor of the further democratization of their authoritarian rule? Are they always in favor of a democracy over a dictatorship? (See Appendix A for actual wording of these and other questions.) Those who where unconditional in expressing their desire for the transformation of their political system into a democracy are classified as supporters of democratization. Others are classified as its opponents.

To measure behavioral disposition to the actual task of democratization, respondents were asked to judge the priority of a set of six policy goals for their state. Included in this set were the two key goals of democratization: (1) reflecting more people's views in policymaking; and (3) pro-

tecting the freedom of the press. Those who considered these democratization goals as the two most important for their state are classified as the committed to democratization. Other respondents are classified as the uncommitted.

To measure the cognitive characteristics of democratic support, a set of two questions was asked. Specifically, respondents were asked two separate questions, one delaing with the form of government in which they were living and to the other dealing with their preferred form of government. Those who identified the existing form of government correctly and who were able to articulate their preferred governmental form are considered the informed while others are considered the uninformed.

Another set of two questions was asked to determine whether or not respondents had already become disaffected from the process of democratization. Specifically they were asked to rate the efficacy and effectiveness of their democratically-elected government. Those who rated both domains positively were categorized as the "allegiant" while the rest are grouped as the "disaffected."

The four dimensional measures of evaluative, behaviorial, cognitive, and affective characteristics may be considered together to discern the six major distinctive types of orientations toward democratization. The types include: (1) uninformed opponents; (2) informed oppenents; (3) uninformed supporters; (4) informed, disaffected supporters; (5) informed, allegiant, uncommitted supporters; and (6) informed, allegiant, committed supporters.(2)

This typology of democratic orientations makes it possible to identify two *qualitatively* different types of democratic opponents in the mass public. Uninformed opponents are those who refuse to support democratization with little or no knowledge of how democracy compares with the existing or other forms of government. Informed opponents, in contrast, have such knowledge, but refuse to choose democracy as a better alternative to what they already have.

In the same mass public four *qualitatively* different types of democratic

(2) In an attempt to validate this typology, we correlated it with the percentage of respondents who actually expressed much concern over the outcomes of the democratic reform measures implemented. As expected, a majority (58.3 percent) in informed, allegiant, committed supporters were found to be concerned with those outcomes. They were followed by informed allegiant, uncommitted supporters (41.9%), informed disaffected supporters (35.0%), uninformed supporters (26.4%), informed opponents (24.6%), and uninformed opponents (17.9%) in that order.

supporters can also be identified. Uninformed supporters choose democracy as a better alternative without knowing much about it. Informed, disaffected supporters, on the other hand, are knowledgeable as well as supportive of democratic politics in general, and yet they are extremely skeptical of the democratization drive in progress. Informed, allegiant, uncommitted supporters are passively involved in the process of democratization, although they support it with a great deal of knowledge and enthusiasm. Finally, there are informed, allegiant, committed supporters who are fully and actively involved in the democratization drive.

Empirical Findings

The proposed model of public support for democratization was examined with a set of natioanl sample survey data collected from South Korea, a country which has formally been undergoing transition to democracy for more than two years now. During the months of October and November, 1988, the Institute of Social Sciences at Seoul National University conducted personal interviews with a national sample of 2,007 adults. Males accounted for 58.1 percent of the sample, the figure which matches exactly the one reported in the 1985 Population and Housing Census by the Republic of Korea Economic Planning Board. The proportions of respondents with a high school and college education, however, were found to be greater than those figures reported in the same Census.[3]

Univariate analysis was performed on this survey data in order to estimate the levels and types of support for democratization among the Korean mass public. Results of this analysis is reported in Table 1.

Specifically, the table reports the distribution of the Korean people across the six types of democratic orientations discussed above. The first type is that of uninformed opposition toward democratization. One-tenth (10.1 percent) of the sample is found to oppose it without much knowledge of what their existing and perferred types of government are. The second type is informed opposition. Another one-tenth (9.5 percent) is

(3) This sampling problem could be corrected by a weighting procedure. The procedure, however, was not employed because it would merely favor or strengthen the major substantive conclusion of the present analysis that the current and future problems of democratization in South Korea have more to do with the *kind* of mass support than the *amount* of such support.

Table 1. A Variety of Democratic Orientations Among the Korean Mass Public

Types	%	(N)
I. Opponents		
1. Uninformed opponents	10.1	(203)
2. Informed opponents	9.5	(191)
II. Supporters		
3. Uninformed	28.6	(574)
4. Informed, disaffected	31.7	(636)
5. Informed, allegiant, uncommitted	12.9	(258)
6. Informed, allegiant, committed	1.8	(38)
III. Did not answer	5.3	(107)
(N)	100.0	(2,007)

found to oppose the further democratization of Korean politics, although fully informed about it. The third type is uninformed support for democratization. Slightly over two-sevenths (28.6 percent) express support for it without much knowledge about it. The fourth type is informed disaffected support. More than three in ten (31.7 percent) are informed and supportive of democratization, but are disaffected from it. The fifth type is informed, allegiant, but uncommitted support. Nearly one in eight (12.9 percent) is informed and attached emotionally to democratic reforms, but not strongly committed to it. The sixth, final type is that of informed, allegiant, committed support. Fewer than one in fifty (1.8 percent) of the sample is fully informed, emotionally attached to democratization, and also strongly committed to it.

Discussion

What inferences can be reached on the basis of these findings presented above? Substantively, it is reasonable to argue that the problems of and prospects for democratization in newly democratizing countries, especially those with a long tradition of politcal authoritarianism, have a great deal more to do with the *kind* of mass support behind it than the *amount* of such support.

While an overwhelming majority (75.0 percent) of the Korean mass public, for example, express unconditional preference for democratization, as many as three out of seven (38.1 percent) democratization supporters

are either ignorant or largely uninformed about the structure of democratic politics. Nearly three out of seven (42.3 percent) supporters do not hold much affection for it; they are critical about what the process has accomplished, and/or they are skeptical about its future. Moreover, more than a sixth (17.2 percent) of these democratization supporters are not strongly committed to it. Of those Koreans who believe that more democracy always is needed for their country to become a better place to live, a tiny minority (2.4 percent) are willing to support the democratic movement fully.

More importantly, the same findings suggest that the proposed model of democratic support can serve as a conceptual tool for evaluating and even assisting the mass movements currently unfolding in newly democratizing countries of the Second and Third Worlds. The model composed of four dimensions can facilitate a more meaningful evaluation of those movements than a variety of uni-dimensional models currently available from the existing literature (Harmel and Robertson, 1986; Schmitt, 1983; Weil, 1989).

By analyzing the relationships among the cognitive, affective, and behavioral qualities of democratic citizenship, the multi-dimensional model can portray a fuller picture of the psychological and political circumstances in which democratization occurs. Specifically, the model distinguishes the *informed* from the *uninformed* of democratization supporters and opponents by mapping the cognitive state of their minds. Moreover, it differentiates the *disaffected* from the *allegiant* among informed supporters. It also differentiates the *uncommitted* from the *committed* of those informed allegiant supporters.

Moreover, the proposed model will be of some value to the development of "strategies available to those who seek a democratic revolution" (Weiner, 1987: 863). The model, when administered at successive points in democratization, will generate information about the shifting relationships among three — affective, behavioral, and cognitive — qualities of democratic citizenship. This information can be used to address the normative question of what specific quality of democratic support is most *lacking* among the mass citizenry of newly democratizing countries at each historical stage of their struggle for democracy. The same information can also be used to address the dynamic question of what specific quality of democratic support is *lagging* in their journey to democracy.

The research reported here, therefore, can be viewed to offer a basis

for developing a normative, dynamic theory of democratization which can serve to explore the proper role of the mass public. This type of democratic theory is yet to be developed in order to deepen our knowledge of participatory transformations in the political process of regime change (Eckstein, 1988). Unlike any other political rules, "democracy cannot be foisted upon an unwilling people" (Griffith, Plamenatz, and Pennock, 1956: 129). Yet, as the authoritative four-volume work *Transition from Authoritarian Rules* indicates, theoretical research on democratization to date has been concerned exclusively with the role of elites or "exemplary individuals" (Bermeo, 1990: 361; see also Hagley and Burton, 1989).

Appendix A

Measures of Support for Democratization

A. Evaluation

1. How much more democracy do you think is needed for our country in order to make it a better place to live?
   (1) More democracy is needed for the country.
   (2) The current level of democracy is best for the country.
   (3) Less democracy is needed for the country.
   Recoded as a dichotomy by assigning a value of "0" to the response categories 2 and 3 and a value of "1" to the category of 1.
2. How much does it matter whether our political system is a democracy or a dictatorship?
   (1) There are times when a dictatorship is needed for our country.
   (2) Under any circumstances, a dictatorship should not be the form of our government.
   (3) Don't know.

B. Knowledge

1. What type of political system is ours?
   (1) Presidential system
   (2) Cabinet system
   (3) Mixed system
   (4) Others
   (5) Don't know
   Recoded as a dichotomy by assigning a value of "0" to the response

categories of (2), (4), and (5), and a value of "1" to those of (1) and (3).

2. What type of political system is most suitable for our country?
   (1) Presidential system
   (2) Cabinet system
   (3) Mixed system
   (4) Others
   (5) Don't know
   Recoded as a dichotomy by assigning a value of "0" to the response category of (5) and a value of "1" to those of (1) through (4).

C. Affect

1. How many people do you think have benefited from the various democratic reforms implemented over the past eight months?
   (1) Many
   (2) Some
   (3) Few
   (4) None
   Recoded: (0) few and none; (1) many and some.
2. Do you think that a democratic government can handle the various problems — inflation, labor disputes, ideological conflict etc. — which our country has faced since the Summer Olympics?
   (1) Can handle those problems
   (2) Cannot handle them
   (3) Don't know
   Recoded: (0) cannot handle and don't know; (1) can handle.

D. Behavioral Disposition

Listed below are six national goals. Select the two goals which you personally consider most important for the state.

(1) Maintaining law and order
(2) Reflecting more people's views in policymaking
(3) Fighting rising prices
(4) Protecting the freedom of the press
(5) Maintaining a high level of economic growth
(6) Strengthening national security posture

Recoded as a dichotomy by assigning a value of "0" to the categories (1), (3) (5), and (6), and a value of "1" to those of (2) and (4).

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