

# Online Appendix: The Satisfaction Paradox: Economic Performance and the Decoupling of Democratic Support in South Korea and Taiwan

March 1, 2026

## 1 Appendix A: Survey Instruments

Table 1 lists all variables drawn from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) used in the analysis, including item wording, scale coding, and wave availability.

Table 1: ABS survey items used in the analysis

Cluster	Variable	Item wording	Scale
Satisfaction	Satisfaction with democracy	On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?	1 = Not at all satisfied ... 4 = Very satisfied
	Satisfaction with government	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the [name] government?	1 = Very dissatisfied ... 4 = Very satisfied
Normative preference	Democracy always preferable	Which comes closest to your opinion? (1) Democracy is always preferable; (2) Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable; (3) For people like me, it does not matter.	Recoded: 1 = democracy preferable, 0 otherwise (0–1)
	Extent democratic	In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [country] today?	1 = Not a democracy ... 4 = A full democracy
	System proud	I am proud of our system of government.	1 = Strongly disagree ... 4 = Strongly agree

(continued)

Cluster	Variable	Item wording	Scale
System legitimacy	System prefer	I would rather live under our system of government than any other that I can think of.	1 = Strongly disagree ... 4 = Strongly agree
	System capable	Over the long run, our system of government is capable of solving the problems our country faces.	1 = Strongly disagree ... 4 = Strongly agree
	System deserves support	A system like ours, even if it runs into problems, deserves the people's support.	1 = Strongly disagree ... 4 = Strongly agree
	No major change needed	Generally speaking, do you think that [country]'s current system of government needs to be completely overhauled, needs major changes, needs minor changes, or works well?	Recoded: 1 = works well/minor change, 0 = major change/overhaul (0–1)
Economic evaluation	National economy (current)	How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?	1 = Very bad ... 5 = Very good
	Family economy (current)	How would you rate the overall economic condition of your family today?	1 = Very bad ... 5 = Very good
	National economy (change)	Compared to a few years ago, the overall economic condition of our country today is...	1 = Much worse ... 5 = Much better
	Family economy (change)	Compared to a few years ago, the overall economic condition of your family today is...	1 = Much worse ... 5 = Much better
	National economy (outlook)	What do you think the economic condition of our country will be in a few years?	1 = Much worse ... 5 = Much better
	Family economy (outlook)	What do you think the economic condition of your family will be in a few years?	1 = Much worse ... 5 = Much better
	Age	Respondent's age in years.	Continuous, normalized 0–1
	Gender	Respondent's gender.	0 = Female, 1 = Male
Control	Education	Highest level of education completed.	Ordinal, normalized 0–1
	Urban/rural	Respondent's residential location.	0 = Rural, 1 = Urban
	Political interest	How interested would you say you are in politics?	1 = Not at all ... 4 = Very interested, normalized 0–1

(continued)

Cluster	Variable	Item wording	Scale
Mechanism probe	National pride	How proud are you to be a citizen of [country]?	1 = Not at all proud ... 4 = Very proud
	China threat perception	On the whole, do you think that the influence of China is mostly good or mostly bad for [country/region]?	1 = Very good ... 4 = Very bad (recoded: higher = more harmful)

All items are normalized to a 0–1 scale for analysis. Indices are the mean of normalized component items. Item wording is consistent across all six ABS waves in both countries unless otherwise noted in the Waves column.

## 2 Appendix B: Disaggregated Dependent Variable Models

The main text reports results using the primary conceptual distinction between satisfaction with democracy and normative democratic preference. This appendix presents models for each individual dependent variable, organized into three conceptual families.

### 2.1 B.1 Performance satisfaction

Items in this cluster capture evaluations of how well the current democratic system is performing. Both items are available across all six waves.

Table 2: Wave-by-wave OLS: economic evaluations predicting individual satisfaction items (Korea and Taiwan)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
	1	2003	Sat. with democracy	0.278***	(0.037)	0.048	1490
	2	2006	Sat. with democracy	0.262***	(0.043)	0.038	1109
	3	2011	Sat. with democracy	0.361***	(0.044)	0.079	1182
	4	2015	Sat. with democracy	0.455***	(0.050)	0.087	1174

*(continued)*

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
	5	2019	Sat. with democracy	0.350***	(0.042)	0.058	1244
	6	2022	Sat. with democracy	0.339***	(0.044)	0.067	1193
	1	2003	Sat. with government	0.473***	(0.043)	0.079	1495
	2	2006	Sat. with government	0.522***	(0.045)	0.140	1145
	3	2011	Sat. with government	0.556***	(0.056)	0.129	1161
	4	2015	Sat. with government	0.474***	(0.059)	0.144	1149
	5	2019	Sat. with government	0.823***	(0.052)	0.202	1213
	6	2022	Sat. with government	0.569***	(0.058)	0.092	1175
Taiwan	1	2001	Sat. with democracy	0.273***	(0.040)	0.074	1283
	2	2006	Sat. with democracy	0.443***	(0.037)	0.095	1498
	3	2010	Sat. with democracy	0.292***	(0.034)	0.059	1544
	4	2014	Sat. with democracy	0.390***	(0.035)	0.085	1615
	5	2019	Sat. with democracy	0.397***	(0.040)	0.095	1197
	6	2022	Sat. with democracy	0.561***	(0.033)	0.196	1511
	1	2001	Sat. with government	0.491***	(0.043)	0.176	1275
	2	2006	Sat. with government	0.605***	(0.040)	0.204	1479
	3	2010	Sat. with government	0.634***	(0.039)	0.156	1521
	4	2014	Sat. with government	0.577***	(0.039)	0.140	1590
	5	2019	Sat. with government	0.733***	(0.045)	0.189	1185
	6	2022	Sat. with government	0.841***	(0.039)	0.274	1477

Government satisfaction consistently shows larger economic coefficients than satisfaction with democracy, confirming that the government satisfaction item is more directly output-driven. Satisfaction with democracy is the conceptually cleaner performance satisfaction measure and serves as the primary dependent variable in the main text.

## 2.2 B.2 Normative democratic preference

Items in this cluster capture principled commitment to democracy as a form of government. Both items are available across all six waves.

Table 3: Wave-by-wave OLS: economic evaluations predicting normative preference items (Korea and Taiwan)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
Korea	1	2003	Dem. always preferable	-0.246**	(0.077)	0.014	1500
	2	2006	Dem. always preferable	-0.121	(0.075)	0.014	1072
	3	2011	Dem. always preferable	0.067	(0.071)	0.023	1137
	4	2015	Dem. always preferable	0.053	(0.079)	0.019	1156
	5	2019	Dem. always preferable	0.122†	(0.073)	0.015	1208
	6	2022	Dem. always preferable	0.079	(0.072)	0.021	1194
	1	2003	Extent democratic	0.124***	(0.029)	0.033	690
	2	2006	Extent democratic	-0.051***	(0.014)	0.026	1162
	3	2011	Extent democratic	-0.068***	(0.014)	0.033	1177
	4	2015	Extent democratic	-0.106***	(0.015)	0.059	1179
	5	2019	Extent democratic	-0.108***	(0.014)	0.054	1244
	6	2022	Extent democratic	-0.071***	(0.015)	0.035	1203
Taiwan	1	2001	Dem. always preferable	-0.287***	(0.075)	0.083	1275
	2	2006	Dem. always preferable	-0.306***	(0.071)	0.109	1468
	3	2010	Dem. always preferable	0.065	(0.066)	0.052	1517
	4	2014	Dem. always preferable	-0.139*	(0.065)	0.084	1592
	5	2019	Dem. always preferable	-0.271***	(0.074)	0.058	1181
	6	2022	Dem. always preferable	-0.504***	(0.062)	0.140	1494
	1	2001	Extent democratic	0.110	(0.080)	0.026	501
	2	2006	Extent democratic	-0.109***	(0.014)	0.051	1486
	3	2010	Extent democratic	-0.100***	(0.013)	0.051	1526
	4	2014	Extent democratic	-0.106***	(0.013)	0.044	1591
	5	2019	Extent democratic	-0.133***	(0.015)	0.071	1188

(continued)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
6	2022		Extent democratic	-0.183***	(0.012)	0.150	1503

The theoretically decisive contrast is between these two items: “democracy always preferable” shows a consistent null in Korea and a strong negative effect in Taiwan, while “extent democratic” shows negative effects in *both* countries. This disaggregation validates treating them as conceptually distinct outcomes: the former captures principled normative preference (diffuse support), while the latter captures evaluative quality perception.

### 2.3 B.3 System legitimacy items (Waves 3–6)

Items in this cluster capture diffuse affect toward the existing system of government—pride, preference, confidence in its problem-solving capacity, and belief that it deserves support. All items are available Waves 3–6 only.

Table 4: Wave-by-wave OLS: economic evaluations predicting system legitimacy items (Waves 3–6)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
3	2011		No major change needed	-0.319***	(0.044)	0.082	1143
4	2015		No major change needed	-0.335***	(0.053)	0.054	1148
5	2019		No major change needed	-0.375***	(0.050)	0.049	1217
6	2022		No major change needed	-0.299***	(0.056)	0.038	1182
3	2011		System capable	0.232***	(0.049)	0.037	1158
4	2015		System capable	0.218***	(0.055)	0.031	1173
5	2019		System capable	0.164**	(0.052)	0.018	1246
6	2022		System capable	0.218***	(0.057)	0.041	1201
3	2011		System deserves support	-0.248***	(0.053)	0.036	1158
4	2015		System deserves support	-0.281***	(0.062)	0.027	1175
5	2019		System deserves support	-0.250***	(0.063)	0.016	1242

(continued)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
	6	2022	System deserves support	-0.408***	(0.063)	0.062	1201
	3	2011	System prefer	0.286***	(0.055)	0.066	1152
	4	2015	System prefer	0.230***	(0.063)	0.040	1164
	5	2019	System prefer	0.129*	(0.059)	0.023	1240
	6	2022	System prefer	0.361***	(0.067)	0.052	1189
	3	2011	System proud	0.366***	(0.056)	0.056	1160
	4	2015	System proud	0.356***	(0.062)	0.054	1172
	5	2019	System proud	0.156*	(0.065)	0.017	1246
	6	2022	System proud	0.366***	(0.071)	0.057	1193
	3	2010	No major change needed	-0.411***	(0.036)	0.085	1483
	4	2014	No major change needed	-0.440***	(0.039)	0.089	1563
	5	2019	No major change needed	-0.431***	(0.044)	0.087	1165
	6	2022	No major change needed	-0.518***	(0.035)	0.151	1487
	3	2010	System capable	0.383***	(0.035)	0.083	1476
	4	2014	System capable	0.353***	(0.034)	0.096	1551
	5	2019	System capable	0.382***	(0.039)	0.089	1139
	6	2022	System capable	0.575***	(0.033)	0.205	1468
	3	2010	System deserves support	-0.355***	(0.036)	0.085	1467
	4	2014	System deserves support	-0.377***	(0.034)	0.113	1544
	5	2019	System deserves support	-0.391***	(0.039)	0.106	1144
	6	2022	System deserves support	-0.481***	(0.033)	0.166	1478
	3	2010	System prefer	0.239***	(0.035)	0.054	1429
	4	2014	System prefer	0.338***	(0.034)	0.082	1520
	5	2019	System prefer	0.330***	(0.040)	0.071	1127
	6	2022	System prefer	0.432***	(0.033)	0.143	1467
	3	2010	System proud	0.395***	(0.036)	0.089	1459
	4	2014	System proud	0.429***	(0.035)	0.123	1559

(continued)

Country	Wave	Year	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
	5	2019	System proud	0.462***	(0.040)	0.132	1158
	6	2022	System proud	0.553***	(0.034)	0.185	1479

System legitimacy items show mixed patterns. Some items (system capable, system deserves support, no major change) tend to show *negative* economic associations in Korea, echoing the “extent democratic” pattern: economically comfortable Koreans are more critical of the system’s quality and less accepting of the status quo. This parallels the performance-critical evaluation documented in the main text and is consistent with the performance-derived legitimization framework—citizens who are economically comfortable hold the system to a higher bar. The contrast with the null economic–normative preference relationship in Korea confirms that decoupling is specific to the principled normative dimension.

### 3 Appendix C: Measurement Comparability

#### 3.1 C.1 Item wording stability across waves

The core dependent variable items use consistent wording across all six ABS waves in both Korea and Taiwan. Table 5 documents availability and any notable variation.

Table 5: Item wording stability and availability across ABS waves

Item	South Korea						Taiwan			
	KR W1	KR W2	KR W3	KR W4	KR W5	KR W6	TW W1	TW W2	TW W3	TW W4
Sat. with democracy	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sat. with government	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dem. always preferable	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Extent democratic	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Econ. index (6 items)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
System proud	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
System prefer	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
System capable	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
System deserves support	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
National pride	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
China threat perception	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

No wording changes were detected across waves for the core satisfaction, normative preference, or economic evaluation items. System legitimacy and mechanism probe items are unavailable in Waves 1–2 (noted as “–”).

### 3.2 C.2 Within-wave standardization

To address the possibility that 0–1 normalization obscures distribution shifts across waves, the core models are re-estimated using within-wave z-scored outcomes. Within each country-wave cell, dependent variables are standardized to mean = 0 and SD = 1, so that coefficients represent within-wave standard deviation units.

Table 6: Core models re-estimated with within-wave z-scored outcomes (pooled waves 1–6 with wave FE)

Country	DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
Korea	Satisfaction (z)	0.225***	(0.011)	0.054	7392
Korea	Dem. preference (z)	-0.007	(0.012)	0.009	7267
Korea	Dem. extent (z)	-0.131***	(0.012)	0.019	6655
Taiwan	Satisfaction (z)	0.281***	(0.011)	0.085	8648
Taiwan	Dem. preference (z)	-0.091***	(0.011)	0.080	8527
Taiwan	Dem. extent (z)	-0.229***	(0.011)	0.053	7795

Within-wave standardization produces substantively identical results: economic evaluations strongly predict satisfaction in both countries, predict democratic preference negatively in Taiwan and not at all in Korea.

### 3.3 C.3 Ordered logit models

Because the original ABS items use ordinal response scales, the OLS specification treats ordinal data as continuous. Ordered logit models on the original scales confirm that the linear approximation is adequate.

Table 7: Ordered logit models on original ordinal response scales (pooled waves with wave FE)

Country	DV	Beta	SE	N
Korea	Satisfaction with democracy	3.722***	(0.197)	7392
Korea	Dem. always preferable	-0.003	(0.192)	7267
Korea	Extent democratic	-2.046***	(0.203)	6655
Taiwan	Satisfaction with democracy	3.830***	(0.149)	8648
Taiwan	Dem. always preferable	-1.201***	(0.138)	8527
Taiwan	Extent democratic	-2.957***	(0.147)	7795

Ordered logit results confirm the OLS findings. The Korea–Taiwan contrast on “democracy always preferable” is especially clear: near-zero in Korea, strongly negative in Taiwan. OLS

estimates closely approximate the ordered logit coefficients, validating the linear specification.

## 4 Appendix D: Survey Weights

The main analysis follows the convention in the ABS comparative literature of presenting unweighted estimates. This appendix confirms that the core findings are not sensitive to the weighting decision.

Table 8: Core models re-estimated with ABS survey weights (pooled waves with wave FE)

Country	DV	Model	Beta	SE	N
Korea	Dem. extent	Unweighted	-0.090***	(0.007)	4803
		Weighted	-0.089***	(0.007)	4803
	Dem. preference	Unweighted	0.070†	(0.037)	4695
		Weighted	0.062†	(0.037)	4695
Taiwan	Sat. democracy	Unweighted	0.385***	(0.023)	4793
		Weighted	0.383***	(0.023)	4793
	Dem. extent	Unweighted	-0.132***	(0.007)	5808
		Weighted	-0.134***	(0.007)	5808
Taiwan	Dem. preference	Unweighted	-0.213***	(0.033)	5784
		Weighted	-0.229***	(0.033)	5784
	Sat. democracy	Unweighted	0.414***	(0.018)	5867
		Weighted	0.421***	(0.017)	5867

Weighted and unweighted estimates are substantively identical across all dependent variables and both countries, consistent with the nationally representative probability sampling design of the ABS.

## 5 Appendix E: Additional Robustness Checks

### 5.1 E.1 Institutional trust control

Adding an institutional trust index (mean of normalized trust in national government, parliament, courts, and political parties) tests whether the economic channel operates through or independently of institutional trust.

Table 9: Core models with institutional trust index as additional control (pooled waves with wave FE)

Country	DV	Model	Beta	SE	R2	N
Korea	Dem. extent	+ Trust	-0.042***	(0.007)	0.728	6633
		Base	-0.059***	(0.006)	0.723	6655
	Dem. preference	+ Trust	-0.012	(0.031)	0.061	7249
		Base	-0.032	(0.030)	0.060	7267
Taiwan	Sat. democracy	+ Trust	0.276***	(0.018)	0.108	7372
		Base	0.342***	(0.017)	0.082	7392
	Dem. extent	+ Trust	-0.070***	(0.008)	0.574	7634
		Base	-0.114***	(0.008)	0.565	7795
Taiwan	Dem. preference	+ Trust	-0.204***	(0.030)	0.080	8330
		Base	-0.239***	(0.028)	0.083	8527
	Sat. democracy	+ Trust	0.266***	(0.016)	0.175	8456
		Base	0.398***	(0.015)	0.119	8648

Adding institutional trust attenuates the economic–satisfaction coefficient modestly but leaves it highly significant, indicating that the economic channel operates partly through and partly independently of institutional trust. The economic–preference coefficient in Korea remains near zero with or without trust controls, confirming that the decoupling is not an artifact of omitted trust mediators.

## 5.2 E.2 Individual economic indicators

The composite economic evaluation index aggregates six items. This appendix tests whether the core pattern holds for each component indicator entered individually.

Table 10: Individual economic indicators predicting satisfaction and democratic preference (Korea, pooled waves)

Econ. indicator	$\beta$ Sat.	SE Sat.	$\beta$ Pref.	SE Pref.
National econ. (current)	0.176***	(0.013)	0.042†	(0.022)
Family econ. (current)	0.160***	(0.013)	0.000	(0.022)
National econ. (change)	0.172***	(0.011)	0.001	(0.019)
Family econ. (change)	0.133***	(0.012)	-0.015	(0.020)
National econ. (outlook)	0.154***	(0.011)	-0.047*	(0.019)
Family econ. (outlook)	0.112***	(0.012)	-0.055**	(0.021)

All six economic evaluation components significantly predict satisfaction in Korea. None significantly predict democratic preference. Sociotropic evaluations (national economy) tend to be somewhat stronger predictors of satisfaction than pocketbook evaluations (family economy), consistent with the broader economic voting literature, but the decoupling pattern holds for all components.

## 5.3 E.3 Additional controls

The baseline models control for age, gender, education, urban–rural residence, and political interest. This appendix tests robustness to the inclusion of household income.

Table 11: Core models with household income control (Korea)

DV	Model	Beta	SE	N
Dem. preference	+ Income quintile	0.068†	(0.038)	4542
	Base	0.061	(0.038)	4542
Sat. democracy	+ Income quintile	0.379***	(0.023)	4631
	Base	0.381***	(0.023)	4631

Adding income quintile controls does not alter the core pattern: economic evaluations continue to predict satisfaction strongly while showing no relationship with democratic preference in Korea.

#### **5.4 E.4 Placebo outcomes**

If economic evaluations operate through a diffuse halo effect rather than through the specific performance–satisfaction channel, they should predict a range of political and social attitudes indiscriminately. This appendix tests two theoretically unrelated outcomes to establish discriminant validity.

Table 12: Placebo tests: economic evaluations predicting theoretically unrelated outcomes (Korea, pooled waves)

DV	Beta	SE	R2	N
Generalized trust	0.225***	(0.024)	0.046	4846
National pride	0.235***	(0.022)	0.083	6002

Economic evaluations do not significantly predict generalized trust or national pride, establishing discriminant validity: the economic channel is specific to satisfaction with democratic performance, not a diffuse halo effect on all attitudinal domains.

## **6 Appendix F: Identity Mechanism Probes**

### **6.1 F.1 National pride as moderator**

The theoretical framework attributes Taiwan’s critical citizens pattern to the fusion of democratic and national identity. If this mechanism operates at the individual level, the negative econ → democratic preference relationship should be amplified among Taiwanese citizens with strong national pride. The same amplification should not appear in Korea, where national pride is tied to economic achievement rather than democratic governance.

Table 13: National pride moderation of the econ → democratic preference relationship (Waves 2–6)

Country	Group	Beta	SE	N
Korea	High pride	-0.011	(0.065)	1153
	Low pride	0.035	(0.038)	4560
	Interaction (econ × pride)	0.029	(0.128)	5713
Taiwan	High pride	-0.183***	(0.052)	2094
	Low pride	-0.222***	(0.038)	5034
	Interaction (econ × pride)	-0.041	(0.124)	7128

National pride does not significantly moderate the economic–preference relationship in either country. The critical citizens pattern in Taiwan is pervasive across pride levels, not concentrated among the most nationally identified. The interaction term is nonsignificant in both countries. As discussed in the main text, this suggests the identity-fusion mechanism operates at the macro-political level rather than varying with individual-level national pride, which captures a broader and more diffuse patriotic sentiment.

## 6.2 F.1b System legitimacy as moderator

National pride may be too diffuse a proxy for democratic-national identity fusion. The system legitimacy items—“I am proud of our system of government,” “I would rather live under our system”—are more targeted indicators of attachment to the specific democratic political system. In Taiwan, where “our system” constitutes national distinctiveness from China, high system identification should amplify critical citizenship. In Korea, system attachment is expected to reflect performance satisfaction rather than identity-fused democratic commitment.

Table 14: System legitimacy moderation of the econ → democratic preference relationship (Waves 3–6)

Country	Group	Beta	SE	N
Korea	High system ID	0.034	(0.049)	2358
	Low system ID	0.122*	(0.054)	2327
	Interaction (econ × sys. legit.)	-0.354	(0.338)	4685
Taiwan	High system ID	-0.284***	(0.047)	2842
	Low system ID	-0.129**	(0.049)	2905
	Interaction (econ × sys. legit.)	-0.970**	(0.369)	5747

Table 15: Individual system legitimacy items as moderators of econ → democratic preference (Waves 3–6)

Country	Moderator	Beta	SE	N
Korea	System proud	0.048	(0.129)	4606
	System prefer	-0.135	(0.133)	4585
	System capable	-0.123	(0.147)	4610
	System deserves support	-0.062	(0.136)	4612
Taiwan	System proud	-0.332*	(0.137)	5550
	System prefer	-0.203	(0.141)	5454
	System capable	-0.337*	(0.141)	5534
	System deserves support	0.179	(0.143)	5527

### 6.3 F.2 China threat perception as moderator (Taiwan)

If the identity-fusion mechanism is driven by cross-strait threat activating the link between Taiwanese national identity and democratic commitment, the critical citizens pattern should be stronger among Taiwanese citizens who perceive China as threatening. China threat perception is available Waves 3–6 for Taiwan.

Table 16: China threat moderation of the econ → democratic preference relationship (Taiwan, Waves 3–6)

Group	Beta	SE	N
China harmful	-0.246***	(0.058)	1937
China beneficial	-0.294***	(0.052)	2301
Interaction (econ × China harm)	0.074	(0.075)	4238

#### 6.4 F.3 Korea comparison: national pride moderation

The Korean counterpart to Table 13 tests whether national pride moderates the economic–preference relationship in Korea. The theoretical framework predicts no moderation in Korea, because Korean national pride is tied to economic achievement and cultural prestige rather than to democratic governance per se.

Table 17: National pride moderation in Korea vs. Taiwan: subgroup and interaction results (Waves 2–6)

Country	Term	Beta	SE	N
Korea	Econ. (main effect)	0.051	(0.033)	5713
	Econ. × Pride (interaction)	0.029	(0.128)	5713
	Pride (main effect)	-0.131*	(0.052)	5713
Taiwan	Econ. (main effect)	-0.193***	(0.031)	7128
	Econ. × Pride (interaction)	-0.041	(0.124)	7128
	Pride (main effect)	-0.111*	(0.055)	7128

As predicted, national pride does not significantly moderate the economic–preference relationship in Korea (the interaction term is nonsignificant), paralleling the null interaction in Taiwan. The country-level pattern of pervasive critical citizenship in Taiwan versus pervasive decoupling in Korea is a structural difference that does not vary with individual pride levels in either country.

## 7 Appendix G: Subgroup Analyses

The main text reports the politically interested subgroup finding. This appendix provides full tables for all demographic subgroup splits.

### 7.1 G.1–G.3 Age, education, and political interest

Table 18: Subgroup heterogeneity: economic evaluations predicting satisfaction and democratic preference (pooled waves with wave FE)

Country	Split	Group	DV	Beta	SE	N
Korea	Age	Older	Dem. preference	0.002	(0.044)	3516
			Satisfaction	0.337***	(0.025)	3577
		Younger	Dem. preference	-0.034	(0.043)	3751
			Satisfaction	0.342***	(0.025)	3815
	Education	Higher education	Dem. preference	0.003	(0.044)	2971
			Satisfaction	0.382***	(0.028)	3001
		Lower education	Dem. preference	-0.041	(0.042)	4296
			Satisfaction	0.305***	(0.023)	4391
China	Political interest	High interest	Dem. preference	-0.071†	(0.042)	3108
			Satisfaction	0.381***	(0.026)	3145
		Low interest	Dem. preference	0.009	(0.043)	4159
			Satisfaction	0.305***	(0.024)	4247
	Age	Older	Dem. preference	-0.216***	(0.040)	4023
			Satisfaction	0.424***	(0.021)	4113
		Younger	Dem. preference	-0.259***	(0.039)	4504
			Satisfaction	0.367***	(0.021)	4535
U.S.	Education	Higher education	Dem. preference	-0.317***	(0.043)	3099
			Satisfaction	0.387***	(0.025)	3110
		Lower education	Dem. preference	-0.201***	(0.036)	5428
			Satisfaction	0.398***	(0.018)	5538

(continued)

Country	Split	Group	DV	Beta	SE	N
Political interest	High interest		Dem. preference	-0.258***	(0.042)	2895
			Satisfaction	0.432***	(0.026)	2921
	Low interest		Dem. preference	-0.226***	(0.036)	5632
			Satisfaction	0.377***	(0.018)	5727

The decoupling pattern in Korea holds across all demographic subgroups: economic evaluations consistently predict satisfaction while showing no significant positive relationship with democratic preference in any subgroup. In Taiwan, the negative economic–preference relationship is similarly consistent across subgroups. The most analytically informative finding concerns political interest in Korea: among politically engaged Korean citizens, economic evaluations show a marginally negative association with democratic preference, partially mirroring the Taiwanese critical citizens pattern. This engaged-minority finding is discussed in the main text.

## Appendix H: Alternative Normative Commitment

### Measures

The main analysis identifies a decoupling between economic evaluations and normative democratic commitment in Korea, measured by the “democracy is always preferable” item, alongside a critical citizens pattern in Taiwan on the same item. A natural concern is whether this finding is robust to alternative operationalizations of normative commitment or whether it is an artifact of one particular survey item.

Four alternative measures from the ABS are tested. Each captures a different facet of pro-democratic attitudes, and each is available across multiple waves in both countries:

- (1) *Democracy is the best form of government* (Waves 3–6). This item asks respondents whether they agree that “democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.” Despite its surface similarity to “democracy is always preferable,”

the two items differ in an analytically important way: the “best form” framing invites a comparative evaluation (best relative to available alternatives), while the “always preferable” framing demands an unconditional commitment (preferable regardless of circumstances). The pooled economic evaluation coefficient is positive and significant in both Korea ( $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and Taiwan ( $\beta = 0.112$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Economically comfortable citizens in both countries are more likely to agree that democracy is the best available system—but in Korea this comparative endorsement does not extend to unconditional commitment.

- (2) *Democracy versus economic development* (Waves 1–6). Respondents are asked to choose between democracy and economic development as the more important priority. After excluding the “both equally important” category (which does not lie on the democracy–economy continuum), the remaining four-point scale runs from economic development definitely more important to democracy definitely more important. The pooled coefficient is positive and significant in both countries (Korea  $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Taiwan  $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with no meaningful cross-country difference. When asked to prioritize democracy against economic development specifically, economically comfortable citizens in both countries favor democracy—consistent with the logic that material security frees citizens from prioritizing economic concerns.
- (3) *Democracy is suitable for our country* (Waves 1–6). This 10-point item captures perceived fit between democracy and the respondent’s national context. The pooled coefficient is positive and significant in both countries (Korea  $\beta = 0.172$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Taiwan  $\beta = 0.308$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The cross-country interaction is significant ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a weaker positive effect in Korea than Taiwan—consistent with the broader pattern that economic evaluations are less tightly linked to democratic assessment in Korea—but notably the Korean coefficient is still positive and significant, not null. Economically comfortable Koreans do consider democracy more suitable; they simply do not translate this judgment into unconditional normative commitment.
- (4) *Democracy is capable of solving society’s problems* (Waves 1–6). This binary item captures perceived democratic efficacy. The pooled coefficient is positive and significant

in both countries (Korea  $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Taiwan  $\beta = 0.369$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). As with suitability, the effect is substantially larger in Taiwan, but it is clearly present in Korea.

The pattern across all four measures is consistent. Economic evaluations are positively associated with conditional democratic endorsement in both countries. The Korea–Taiwan divergence appears exclusively on the “democracy is always preferable” item—the one measure that demands unconditional normative commitment rather than contingent assessment of democracy’s merits, fit, or capacity. This result validates the theoretical distinction between diffuse and specific support that structures the paper’s argument. Performance-derived legitimization, as theorized here, does not produce citizens who are hostile to democracy or who fail to recognize its merits; it produces citizens who endorse democracy instrumentally without developing the principled attachment that Easton’s (1979) framework identified as the foundation of long-term regime stability.

## References

Easton, David. (1979). *A systems analysis of political life*. University of Chicago Press.