Confucian Legacies and the Meaning of Democracy in South Korea:
A Cultural Interpretation*

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Whether Confucianism is compatible with liberal democracy has been a topic of heated debate among scholars and politicians alike, but with little meticulous empirical analysis. The incompatibility thesis, represented by the Asian value argument, suggests that as a political culture Confucianism hinders the deepening of democracy in Confucian Asian countries. The compatibility or convergence thesis, in contrast, argues that Confucianism is compatible with, and even compensates for the shortcomings of liberal democracy. This article investigates the relationship between South Koreans' attachment to Confucian values and their attitudes towards a (non)democratic form of government. Unlike previous studies that treat Confucianism as a unitary value system, this article argues that Confucianism is multifaceted – its teachings on social hierarchy, morality, primacy of community, and social harmony – have different relationships with democratic and authoritarian values. This empirical analysis demonstrates that, at least in South Korea, certain Confucian values are compatible with democratic values of political participation and individual rights and liberty. In contrast to previous literature that focuses on institutional and performance variables as key variables that explain individual attachment to (non)democratic forms of government, this study illustrates that culture has consistent and long-lasting impacts on individual political orientations.

Key Words: Culture, Confucianism, Authoritarianism, Democracy, South Korea

Among new democracies, South Korea seems to be the most successful case of democratization and economic development. Three decades of democratic experience have brought four changes in power at 10-year intervals: conservative rule (1988-1998), progressive government (1998-2008), a conservative turn (2008-2017), and progressive government (2017 to present). Procedurally, South Korea has been a model of democratization and consolidation with peaceful transfers of power. On closer inspection, however, South Koreans seem dissatisfied with (or even disillusioned by) the performance of their democratic governments. Post-democratization politics in South Korea have suffered from a loss of confidence in government, shrinking individual rights and freedoms, a perception of political corruption, and widening political polarization. Procedurally, South Korea is a functioning consolidated democracy; substantively, it is still in a state of "democratic underdevelopment" (Shin 2015: 10).

The most widely held account of this democratic underdevelopment has been the role of Confucian legacies in shaping the cultural traits of many East Asian countries (Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzon 2011; Park and Shin 2006; Shin 2011). The (in)compatibility of Confucianism with democracy has been debated among scholars and politicians in East Asia. Numerous scholars claim that Western-style liberal democracy is incompatible with East Asian Confucianism and advocate an Asian-style democracy that prioritizes communitarian values and the welfare of the family and community (Neher 1994; Roy 1994; Woo-Cumings 1994; Zakaria and Lee 1994). Conversely, other scholars argue that Confucianism and Western-style liberal democracy are indeed compatible (Collins 2008; Hood 1998; Kim 1994; Ng 1997; Nuyen 2000). Confucianism's emphasis on community, social harmony, and emphasis on education is compatible with, or even compensates for some of the weaknesses of liberal democracy. In contrast to lively scholarly theoretical debate over the compatibility of Confucianism and liberal democracy, actual empirical tests have been scant (Kang 2010; Morlino, Dressel, and Pellizzo 2011; Shin 2011; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011).

This article investigates the relationship between South Koreans' attachment to Confucian values and their attitudes towards (non)democratic form of government and the meaning of democracy. The empirical analysis suggests that Confucianism does not have a *uniform* effect on the ways in which South Koreans perceive democratic or authoritarian forms of government. Unlike previous theoretical and political debates that treat Confucianism as a monolithic political value system, this article demonstrates that Confucian traditions have multi-faceted characteristics that have varying effects on citizens' attitudes towards democracy. In other words, each Confucian principles of social hierarchy, morality, primacy of community, and social harmony have a

distinctive influence on the ways in which they define democracy and evaluate and prefer (non)democratic systems. Ultimately, the focus should not be on whether or not a culture is compatible with a regime type; rather, it should investigate which component of a culture is prepared or socialized to accommodate the form of government.

The following section identifies the core elements of Confucianism as a political culture. The discussion delves into the debates over the (in)compatibility of Confucianism with liberal democracy. The remaining sections proffer data and measurements and empirical analysis. This article concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and political implications for South Korean democracy.

I. Core Elements of Confucianism

Not all Asian countries share Confucianism as their dominant cultural tradition. Even countries that have inherited the Confucian legacy have developed their own distinctive political cultures and political structures. As Fukuyama (1995) notes, in China, Confucianism emphasized the primacy of the family and led to a somewhat weaker political authority and national identity. In contrast, the Japanese version of Confucianism contributed to the establishment of the emperor's absolute authority and citizens' complete deference to the state and the group. While Confucianism contributed to establishing emperor-centered political system in China and Japan, Korea's Chosun dynasty had weak kings and emphasized the importance of education and high moral standards of bureaucratic scholar-officials, or *yangban* (Pye 1985: 216).

Despite these differences, Confucianism is the political philosophy and culture that many Asian societies share, so Asian values are often equated with Confucian values (Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzon 2011; Park and Shin 2006). This section identifies the four components of Confucianism as a political philosophy based on the Confucius teachings about the "three guidelines" (filial piety, humaneness, and ritual) and "five virtues" (benevolence, righteousness, proper rite, knowledge, and integrity). The four core elements of Confucianism have been most widely used in theoretical and empirical works (e.g., Ackerly 2005; Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzo 2011; Park and Shin, 2006; Pye 2006; Shin 2011; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011; Wei and Li 2013).

The first and most commonly discussed of these is a hierarchical social and political structure that underscores respect for authority (Chan 1999; Huntington 1996; Lee 1992; Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzo 2011; Nuyen 2000; Park and Shin 2006; Pye 2006; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011; Tai 1993). The hierarchical social structure is clearly reflected

in the three guidelines and five virtues of Confucianism. These values define the hierarchical relations between parents and children, between a husband and a wife, between a king and a subject, and between the elders and the young. The Confucian emphasis on filial piety and patriarchy results in a highly vertical society. As Confucian society considers the state as an expanded form of a family, loyalty to political leaders and the state is taken for granted, like filial piety (Kim 1997; Koh 1996; Murthy 2000). Moreover, a patriarchal society creates gender inequality; men control their families, society, and the government. Likewise, socio-political hierarchy dictates all individual, social, and political relationships in a Confucian society.

The second principle of Confucianism is morality. Like Plato's philosopher king, political leaders in a Confucian state are expected to possess knowledge, wisdom, and virtue. Confucian ethics extend the moral codes of individuals and families to social and political domains in which the subjects subordinates themselves to the ruler as a son does to his father. A true ruler is expected to rule the subjects through moral example and not by written laws and coercion. In a Confucian society, therefore, politics is extremely personalistic and only the most ethical elites are entrusted to govern. As a result, Confucianism stresses that the king should rule the people with benevolence, saying "If the people be led by laws, and if uniformity be sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid punishment, but have no sense of shame" (Legge 1966: 13). Therefore, benevolent and virtuous rule is perceived to be superior to rule by force and the threat of violence.

The third characteristic of Confucianism is the primacy of the community. While individuals are the basic unit of analysis in the Western liberal tradition, in a Confucian society the family and community are. In a Confucian society, individuals and their socio-political status are defined in relation to their family and community. The interests of the community, including the nation, are inseparable from and more important than the interests of the individual. Confucian societies in Asia emphasize "the group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights" (Huntington 1991a: 300).

While the importance of the community led to the primacy of the family in China, it strengthened the state- and emperor-centric system in Japan. Such differences aside, however, Confucian society prioritizes the group; individuals subordinate themselves to the greater social entity (family, community, or the state and the ruler). When the interest of individuals conflicts with that of the community, sacrificing the former for the latter is considered a virtue in a Confucian society.

The final major element of Confucianism is the pursuit of social harmony.

Harmonious relations constitute the essence of social interactions. In Confucian philosophy, social harmony does not mean sameness, a lack of diversity, or intolerance of difference; rather, harmonious relations presuppose differences among individuals. The Analects states that "The junzi harmonizes but does not seek sameness, whereas the petty person seeks sameness but does not harmonize" (Wei and Li 2013: 61). Confucian teaching about social harmony advocates peaceful coexistence and respect for different opinions. Social harmony entails the significance of ethical relationship in social relations in the sense that parties with different ideas and interests achieve harmony through exercise of benevolence, righteousness, and proper rite. Mencius (372-289 BCE) once suggested that, the harmony of the people is the most important element in human affairs: "good thing is not as good as being advantageously situated, and being advantageously situated is not as good as having harmonious people" (Li 2008: 426). Social harmony is a crucial in creating a "great unity" (*datong*) in which a society is egalitarian, moral, and peaceful. Social harmony is different from authoritarian rule that does not tolerate political and ideological differences.

II. Confucianism and Democracy: Competing Arguments

There are two conflicting themes in the argument over culture and democracy. One group of scholars emphasizes the deterministic and long-lasting impacts of culture on the socio-political features of a society (Huntington 1991a & 1991b; Pye 1985; Zakaria and Lee 1994). They suggest that cultures have substantial effects on the types and success or failure of democracy; certain cultures facilitate democracy, while others do not. Pye, for instance, argues that the East Asian culture limits the appeal of liberal democracy because of Confucian culture's "distaste for open criticism of authority, fear of upsetting the unity of the community, and knowledge that any violation of the community's rules of propriety will lead to ostracism" (Pye 1985: 341). For Pye, East Asia's construction of democracy will be a political regime incorporating some features that Westerners associate with an authoritarian form of government. In a similar context, Lee Kuan Yew champions a "paternalistic form of authoritarianism" that combines capitalism with an authoritarian political system that is appropriate to Confucian cultural traditions in East Asian countries (Fukuyama 1995: 24). Huntington even argues that ". . . traditional Confucianism was either undemocratic or antidemocratic . . .. Confucianism merged society and the state and provided no legitimacy for autonomous social institutions at the national level" (Huntington 1991b: 24). The deterministic

interpretation of culture maintains that culture determines a country's success or failure with democracy and that Confucian culture hinders democratization and its consolidation in East Asia.

Meanwhile, other scholars suggest that political cultures either transform or adapt to social changes. Almond and Verba (1963) argue that political culture both influences and is influenced by government structure and democratic performance and responds to historical experiences. More recently, Inglehart's (1997) study of modernization and post-materialism suggests that socio-economic development accompanies value changes and thus political cultures. While theories of modernization emphasize the role of socioeconomic modernization in the liberalization and secularization of traditional values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), post-materialist theory highlights value changes from materialism's emphasis on economic development to non-materialistic values such as the priority of self-actualization. In other words, although deeply embedded values remain intact, individuals are socialized into new cultural changes. In a similar context, institutional learning theory maintains that culture is updated and influenced by new socio-economic and political conditions (Anderson and Dodd 2005; Mishler and Rose 2002; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003).

In East Asian contexts, changes in economic development and the accompanying social changes will transform the traditional Confucian value systems. Interactions between socio-economic development and Confucian culture will transform East Asian societies and compel the old Confucian and new cultures to accommodate each other's value systems. Moreover, different cultures are expected to interact with each other to formulate new cultural components in a society. In South Korea, for instance, old Confucianism and newly imported Protestantism, as the most prominent religion, have often collided and accommodated with each other to constitute a distinct culture and value orientation. While Protestantism emphasizes nonhierarchical individuals and their responsibility before God, Confucianism prioritizes social hierarchy and family and community over individuals. On the other hand, the two converge on the importance of morality. Because of an existence of different cultures in the same society, it is difficult to make a clear-cut argument about the origin of a certain cultural value orientation.

In contrast to this lively theoretical debate, little empirical evidence has been presented. There is no consensus on the relationship between culture (especially Confucian) and the deepening of democracy in East Asian countries (Shin 2013; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011). Two conflicting arguments – incompatibility vs. compatibility/convergence – present the positive and negative impacts of Confucianism on democracy. The following

discussion delves into theoretical debate about (in)compatibility of Confucianism and democracy. It then conducts an empirical test in South Korea.

A. Incompatibility Theory

The incompatibility argument, or the Asian Value thesis, contends that Confucian traditions are not appropriate for democratic politics but are suitable for authoritarian rule (Chan 1999; Huntington 1991a, 1991b, 1996; He 2010; Kang 2006; Shin 2011). Indigenization theory, for example, supports the incompatibility hypothesis by emphasizing the resilience of traditional values against the universalization of Western liberal democracy (Huntington 1996: 21). The incompatibility argument is often used to justify authoritarian rule in Confucian societies by paying attention to the Confucian doctrines of social hierarchy, group primacy, and social harmony. These value orientations are considered contradictory to the critical attributes of democracy, political liberty, and equality (Huntington 1996; Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzo 2011; Pye 2006; O'Donnell 1994; Ackerly 2005; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011).

The incompatibility argument suggests that social hierarchy in Confucianism emphasizes loyalty or submission to a higher authority. In a hierarchical society, filial piety and loyalty to the state and the ruler are considered a moral obligation of the citizens. In return, political leaders are responsible for well-being of citizens, just as fathers are responsible for the welfare of their families. Obligation and the order between the rulers and the subordinates are more important than the liberty and rights of the citizens.

The patriarchal relationship illustrates another aspect of social stratification of a Confucian society, where women are considered inferior to men. Wives are required to obey husbands, mothers are expected to obey their sons, and women are excluded from education and politics. According to the incompatibility thesis, individuals' moral duty of compliance with higher authority makes it difficult for them to engage in political participation, and exclusion from political life results in social and political inequality (Chan 1999; Lee 1992; Tai 1993). Likewise, the Confucian emphasis on social hierarchy reinforces authoritarian political values by "emphasizing people's compliance with the heavenly mandate and hierarchical order (Kim 2001: 26).

Moreover, the Confucian tradition of group primacy or communitarianism emphasizes interpersonal relations and prioritizes the group over the individual. The basic unit of society is the collective; individual autonomy is not important in a Confucian society. The members of a collective society are expected to conform to social norms of cooperation. Individuals' sacrifice for the group, or altruism, is valued as a personal

virtue, and people who are perceived as self-seeking will become the subjects of social criticism. In this normative setting, individual liberty and self-actualization are held back or accomplished only when accompanied by collective aims such as economic development and political stability (Lee 2000; Morlino, Bressel, and Pelizzo 2011; Zakaria and Lee1994).

The last undemocratic element of Confucianism for the incompatibility view is the rule of morality (He 2010; Shin 2011; Spina, Shin, and Cha 2011). Confucian societies consider benevolent patrimonialism as a key criterion of good governance. In contrast to modern societies that are based on rational-legal institutions, traditional societies are personalistic and governed according to the moral standards of the ruler or the elites. The most important qualities expected from a political leader, therefore, are personal virtue and wisdom. Unlike written laws, morality does not have definitive criterion of "right" or "wrong." In other words, morality is arbitrary and contextual. It depends on individuals, times, and places within a society. Furthermore, as political leaders claim the "mandate of heaven," citizens are at the mercy of those leaders who set the ethical standards, which is far from the case in the formal-legal institutionalization of advanced democracies.

B. Compatibility/Convergence Theory

The proponents of the compatibility/convergence argument suggest that many aspects of Confucianism are consistent with democracy. In other words, Confucian values can adopt to social and political changes as traditional societies transform into modern or democratic ones. Moreover, Confucian values even compensate for shortcomings of Western liberal democracies that often minimize the importance of political equality but are obsessed with "rights-based individualism" (Kim 2014:179). They argue that Confucianism enhances the quality of democracy due to its emphasis on social hierarchy and harmony, benevolence, communality, and equal opportunity for education (Bell 2008; Chan 1999; de Barry 1991, 1998; Fetzer and Soper 2007; Nuyen 2000; Shin 2011).

Social hierarchy is a feature of Confucian that is most often cited as the one that justifies East Asia's authoritarian governments. However, hierarchical order contributes to social and political stability in times of drastic change. Furthermore, benevolent paternalism emphasizes vertical accountability, which many representative democracies fail to accomplish. Meanwhile, communitarianism or group primacy combined with benevolent paternalism softens the negative effect of individualism by offering collective welfare (Shin 2011). Confucian philosophy suggest that the fundamental task of government

is to enhance people's welfare, although it does not imply that the government must ensure that citizens have all the material necessities. Mencius once said, "Put in order the fields of the people, lighten their taxes, and the people can be made affluent" (Chan 2003:237). Mencius believes that government incompetence or the rulers' mismanagement of resources are the cause of citizens' poverty. Confucian scholars suggest that it is the government's responsibility to achieve well-being of the people, which is similar to the democratic principle of vertical accountability.

A Confucian sense of mutual responsibility prevents the atomization of society and promotes social connectedness and trust, which many scholars identify as a critical source of democracy and economic development. Putnam defines social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1995: 66). He suggests that the loss of confidence or trust in democracy results from a lack of social capital. Stratified and reciprocal responsibilities generate a strong bond between patrons and clients and between individuals, which may result in a higher social capital and greater political trust (Bell 2008; Chan 1999; de Barry 1998). The Confucian "great unity" and harmony do not limit individual freedom but foster diversity, tolerance, and a strong sense of community (Collins 2008; Nuyen 2000; Shin 2011). Harmony and unity within a community are achieved not by limiting individual liberty but by understanding and being considerate of diverse opinions. Such tolerance prevents social and political conflicts. Finally, Confucian emphasis on universal education provides individuals with equal opportunity for political participation and cultivates citizens who are critical of representative government but also strongly committed to democratic values (Norris 1999; Collins 2008). At the same time, as a way of realizing individual potential and socioeconomic equality, education is a means of individual social mobility.

The two sides emphasize the same principles of Confucianism but differ on whether the Confucian principles are compatible with democracy. In other words, the same custom has different facets, which can be either consistent or inconsistent with democratic values. This might explain the inconclusive empirical results on the effect of Confucian values on the quality of, and support for, democracy. Furthermore, a quantitative study of culture faces a fundamental problem: how to measure culture. As Confucian culture has many core values, measuring their features is critical in analyzing its effect on democracy. As Fetzer and Soper (2007) point out, due to measurement problems in empirical studies, some researchers (e.g., Chang, Chu, and Tsai 2005) use a composite measure of culture-related items while others (e.g., Park and Shin 2006) measure the characteristics of Asian values individually. This study chooses the latter strategy but includes four

core values of traditional Confucianism, not general Asian values. By identifying the most important Confucian values, this study specifies which ones are conducive to or hinder democracy. In addition, this article investigates the ways in which people with particular Confucian value orientations define a democracy and whether or not Confucianism is compatible with democracy and authoritarianism.

III. Data and Measurements

This study uses the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS, 4th Wave) to analyze the relationships between Confucian traditions and individual attitudes to democracy in South Korea. The survey was conducted between October and December 2015. While other public opinion surveys include democratic and authoritarian orientations and material/postmaterial values, they pay little attention to Asian or Confucian values. The ABS contains several items measuring Asian values as well as authoritarian and democratic values so that it serves the purpose of this study.

A. Variables

Concerning how specific Confucian values influence individual choice of an essential quality of a democracy, the ABS includes four sets of items on characteristics of a democracy. Each set offers four traits of democracy –democratic procedure, liberty, social equality, and good governance – and respondents choose one. Four dependent variables (four items from each category of four democratic dimensions) are selected: free and fair election from the norms and procedures dimension; freedom of expression from the freedom and liberty dimension; government aid for basic necessity from social equality dimension; quality public services from the good governance dimension. Each dependent variable is coded 1 if individuals choose that item as an essential quality of a democracy, otherwise 0.

In predicting democratic attitudes, five equations are modelled: (1) satisfaction with democracy; (2) effectiveness of democracy; (3) democracy as the best form of government; (4) preference for authoritarian regimes; and (5) support for a nondemocratic rule. Each dependent variable is defined in the note to Table 4.

Common groups of variables that explain the dependent variables are: Confucian values represented by social hierarchy, group primacy, social harmony, and morality; performance issue measured by individual evaluation of national economy; and

socialization factors such as gender, age groups, the level of education, and town size (rural vs. urban).

IV. Empirical Analysis

A. *Meaning of Democracy and Confucianism*

Table 1 presents the distribution of the way in which South Koreans define a

Table 1. *Meaning of Democracy*

Essential Characteristics of a Democracy	Percentage
Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (SQ)	19.17
People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. (NP)	*41.25*
Government does not waste any public money. (GG)	20.75
People are free to express their political views openly. (FL)	17.58
Other Answers*	1.25
Total Observations	1200
The legislature has oversight over the government. (NP)	12.17
Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. (SQ)	25.42
People are free to organize political groups. (FL)	17.75
Government provides people with quality public services. (GG)	*41.17*
Other Answers*	3.5
Total Observations	1200
Government ensures law and order. (GG)	*35.83*
Media is free to criticize the things government does. (FL)	30.42
Government ensures job opportunities for all. (SQ)	19.5
Multiple parties compete fairly in the election. (NP)	10.42
Other Answers*	3.83
Total Observations	1200
People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations. (FL)	17.92
Politics is clean and free of corruption. (GG)	*37.42*
The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power. (FL)	33.17
People receive state aid if they are unemployed. (SQ)	9.42
Other Answers*	2.08
Total Observations	1200

Note: 1. *"Other Answers" include "Do not understand the question"; "Can't choose"; and "Decline to answer."
2. NP stands democratic norms and procedure, FL for freedom and liberty, SQ for social equality, and GG for good governance.

democracy. Consistent with Park and Shin's findings (2006), South Koreans tend to recognize good governance as the essence of a democratic government. In other words, they believe that a democracy should be free from corruption and offer quality public services and stability ensuring law and order. The largest percentage of respondents, 41.25%, cite the holding of free and fair elections as an indispensable characteristic of a democracy. However, the smallest share of the respondents select other democratic norms and procedures (e.g., the separation of power). The definitions of democracy based on freedom and liberty are the second most popular choice. While democratic governments are more likely to provide good governance than non-democratic ones, ensuring political stability and quality public services is a common goal or role of any form of government. In sum, South Koreans understand democracy as a means of actualizing a better performing government not as an end in itself. Liberty over equality and the outcome-oriented choices may result from the experience of authoritarian governments that were economically successful but that suppressed freedom and liberty. As a whole, respondents in South Korea have a strong understanding of democracy as a political system that performs better than other types of political regime but have a rather weak commitment to certain democratic norms and values.

How do Confucian values shape South Koreans' definitions of a democracy? In this study, we examine how four Confucian values—social hierarchy, group primacy, social harmony, and morality—influence individual choice of essential characteristics of a democratic government. Table 2 presents specific items that measure each of the core Confucian traditions. Social hierarchy indicates vertical human relations represented by three guidelines and five virtues that define social relations between men and women and between superiors and subordinates. Four indicators cover those social relations. The measures of group primacy focus on prioritizing group over individual interests. The indicators of social harmony emphasize one aspect of harmony, limiting controversies and conflicts. As addressed, social harmony is less about suppressing different opinions than about treating everyone equally and tolerating differences. In this respect, the ABS is limited in operationalizing Confucian doctrines of social harmony in particular and, thus, it is important to be cautious about interpreting empirical outcomes. Finally, morality refers to personalistic and ethics-based rule, not to the rule of law. In other words, Confucianism emphasizes the wisdom and morality of a ruler so that ordinary citizens consider the decisions of the ruler as shrewd and serving the interest of the whole country. The average of each item suggests that South Koreans are inclined to be group-oriented and conflict-averse. The items for group primacy and social harmony generally score higher than those for social hierarchy and morality. This might

imply that the implementation and experience of democracy have changed people's attitudes towards authority. As the compatibility/convergence thesis illustrates, the three decades of democratic experience may have changed certain cultural traits and value orientations among citizens in South Korea. In other words, the democratic experience has weakened individuals' attachment to social hierarchy and rule by morality, but group primacy and social harmony remain strongly held principles among the citizens.

Table 2. *Confucian Values*

	Confucian Values	Mean (Std.)	Category Mean (Std.)
Social Hierarchy	Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.	2.410 (.739)	9.076 (1.983)
	Being a student, one should not question the authority of their teacher.	2.256 (.764)	
	If one could have only one child, it is more preferable to have a boy than a girl.	2.204 (.874)	
	Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should all follow their decisions.	2.219 (.767)	
Group Primacy	For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.	3.060 (.728)	8.024 (1.766)
	In a group, we should sacrifice our individual interest for the sake of the group's collective interest.	2.535 (.761)	
	For the sake of national interest, individual interest could be sacrificed.	2.433 (.806)	
Social Harmony	In a group, we should avoid open quarrel to preserve the harmony of the group.	2.604 (.768)	7.850 (1.833)
	Even if there is some disagreement with others, one should avoid the conflict.	2.677 (.777)	
	A person should not insist on his own opinion if his co-workers disagree with him.	2.571 (.754)	
Morality	When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.	2.070 (.800)	4.652 (1.234)
	If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.	2.586 (.806)	

Note: 1. Each item is on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 to 4.

Table 3 presents the results of multivariate regression analyses concerning how Confucian values affect South Koreans' conceptions of democracy. The general finding is that different Confucian principles have varying effects on the selection of essential characteristic of democracy. In the free and fair election model, only group primacy has a statistically significant effect. The more community-centered individuals are, the less likely they are to choose a free and fair election as a critical principle of a democracy. A higher attachment to other Confucian traditions has little effect. Concerning the freedom

of expression equation, the most hierarchically minded people tend not to choose freedom of expression; individuals who emphasize social harmony are more likely to identify freedom of expression as core element of a democracy. This implies that emphasis on social harmony does not subdue diverse voices; rather, it takes equality of expression and tolerance for granted in a democracy as the Confucian ideal of "great unity." In terms of social equality, the government aid model finds that hierarchically minded people believe that government should provide basic necessities. In a traditional Confucian society, a king is like a father and responsible for his people's welfare. However, those who avoid conflict consider government aid for necessities less important.

Finally, in the public service model, social hierarchy has a negative effect but social harmony has a positive effect. On the one hand, the more accepting people are of a hierarchical social system, the less likely they are to choose the provision of quality public services as an essential characteristic of a democracy. On the other hand, people who are conflict-averse have a higher probability to select the supply of good public services as a critical attribute of a democracy. In addition, those who prioritize groups or communities are more likely to opt for quality public services as a fundamental

Table 3. *Meaning of Democracy and Confucian Values*

	Free & fair election[1] (norms & procedure)	Freedom of expression[2] (freedom & liberty)	Government aid[3] (social equality)	Public service[4] (good governance)
Social hierarchy	.033	-.121**	.140***	-.110***
	(.038)	(.049)	(.044)	(.038)
Group primacy	-.108***	.077	-.039	.102**
	(.040)	(.053)	(.046)	(.041)
Social harmony	.012	.110**	-.168***	.118***
	(.039)	(.052)	(.045)	(.040)
Morality	.024	.015	.072	-.041
	(.054)	(.070)	(.061)	(.055)
Gender	-.014	-.120	-.019	.092
	(.125)	(.164)	(.142)	(.127)
Age	.003	-.001	-.010	.011**
	(.005)	(.007)	(.006)	(.006)
Education	.006	.190***	-.056	.039
	(.047)	(.066)	(.053)	(.047)
Rural vs. Urban	-.614***	-.292	-.143	-.216
	(.214)	(.292)	(.234)	(.208)
Constant	-.088	-3.311***	-.151	-1.685***
	(.607)	(.829)	(.682)	(.615)
Pseudo R^2	.010	.028	.021	.021
Log likelihood	-747.792	-498.863	-615.507	-725.260
N	1111	1111	1088	1088

*Significant at p<=.10 **Significant at p<=.05 ***Significant at p<=.01

Note: 1. People choose the government leaders in free and fair election. 2. People are free to express their political views openly. 3. Basic necessities, like food, clothes and shelter, are provided for all. 4. Government provides people with quality public services.

trait of a democracy. One of the more interesting findings is that the opposite tendency exists between the hierarchy-oriented and the harmonious in defining a democracy. This indicates that hierarchical social order and social harmony bring conflicting values to individual attitudes towards democracy, the former emphasizing vertical human relations and the latter horizontal ones. It is also noteworthy that accepting rule of morality has little effect on identifying the critical quality of a democracy.

B. Confucianism and Support for Democratic/Authoritarian Regimes

How do Confucian values influence individual attitudes towards democratic and nondemocratic forms of government? While previous literature focuses on government performance as the determining factor for regime support, few have taken culture seriously. In particular, popular support for authoritarian rule in East Asian countries has been attributed to Confucian culture, but few researchers have empirically examined the relationship between Confucianism and regime support (Fukuyama 1995; Fox 1997; Sin & Wells 2005; Park & Shin 2006; Shi & Lu 2010). This study analyzes whether and how various aspects of Confucian values affect citizens' support for democratic and nondemocratic regimes.

Given that different components of Confucianism have varying effects on the ways that individuals define a democracy, Table 4 shows that each Confucian tradition has a distinct effect on individuals' perceptions of different regime types. Similar to the relationships between Confucian traditions and the meaning of democracy, social hierarchy and harmony have contrasting effects here. As expected, for the hierarchy-oriented, a democracy is considered less effective in solving social problems and not the best form of government, although those are likely to be satisfied with how democracy works in their country. For them, nondemocratic forms of government (authoritarian or oligarchic) can be preferable to democratic ones under certain circumstances. Specifically, those who emphasize social hierarchy are 12% less likely to say democracy is the best form of government but 25% more likely to prefer authoritarian forms of government (see Appendix I for the table of odds ratios). Those who have a social hierarchy mindset have a weaker commitment to democracy and are willing to accept other nondemocratic forms of government if they perform better.

Social harmony works exactly the opposite: people who are less conflictual are more likely to have positive attitudes about democracy, and to dislike nondemocratic rule. The more harmonious are less satisfied with the way democracy works but are more likely to consider a democracy as efficient and best form of government. At the same

Table 4. *Confucianism and Support for Democratic and Authoritarian Regimes*

	Satisfaction with democracy[1] (Ordered Logistic)	Effectiveness of democracy[2] (Logistic)	Democracy as the best form of government[3] (Ordered Logistic)	Preference for authoritarian regimes[4] (Logistic)	Support for a nondemocratic rule[5] (Logistic)
Social hierarchy	.166***	-.144***	-.125***	.221***	.234***
	(.038)	(.047)	(.041)	(.043)	(.042)
Group primacy	.037	.069	.209***	-.104**	.088**
	(.040)	(.049)	(.044)	(.044)	(.044)
Social harmony	-.088**	.180***	.088**	-.226***	-.170***
	(.039)	(.048)	(.042)	(.044)	(.043)
Morality	.154***	-.074	-.129**	.178***	.169***
	(.054)	(.065)	(.059)	(.059)	(.058)
National Economy	.483***	.097	.090	.043	.238***
	(.082)	(.098)	(.088)	(.088)	(.088)
Gender (male=1)	.211*	.090	-.101	.199	.004
	(.124)	(.150)	(.135)	(.134)	(.135)
20s	-.439*	-.357	-.843***	.383	.459*
	(.236)	(.297)	(.259)	(.264)	(.258)
30s	-.200	-.268	-.766**	.614**	.349
	(.234)	(.298)	(.253)	(.262)	(.259)
40s	-.100	-.481*	-.575**	.581**	.472**
	(.212)	(.266)	(.231)	(.237)	(.232)
50s	-.182	-.555**	-.610***	.433*	.063
	(.202)	(.244)	(.218)	(.221)	(.220)
Education	-.083*	.162***	.237***	-.206***	-.128**
	(.048)	(.058)	(.052)	(.052)	(.051)
Rural vs. Urban	.568***	.923***	.769***	-.411*	-.173
	(.210)	(.295)	(.209)	(.229)	(.220)
Constant (Cut1)	-1.462	-.206	-2.551	.068	-2.630***
	(.519)	(.599)	(.591)	(.539)	(.550)
Cut2	1.222		-.266		
	(.508)		(.537)		
Cut3	4.730		3.573		
	(.532)		(.553)		
(Pseudo)R^2	.052	.042	.042	.062	.061
Log likelihood	-1041.558	-561.202	-883.420	-663.233	-670.139
N	1106	1060	1104	1094	1117

*Significant at p<=.10 **Significant at p<=.05 ***Significant at p<=.01

Note: 1. "Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government." 2. "Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society." 3. "Democracy may have its problem, but it is still the best form of government." 4. Either "under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one" or "for people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a nondemocratic regime." 5. Choose one of the following statements: (1) We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things; (2) only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office; (3) the army (military) should come in to govern the country; and (4) we should get rid of elections and parliaments and have experts make decisions on behalf of the people.

time, they neither prefer authoritarian types of regimes nor support nondemocratic rule. In particular, those who highlight the importance of social harmony are more likely to say that democracy is effective in solving social problems and is the best form of government by 20% and 10%, respectively, while they are 20% less likely to prefer

nondemocratic regimes. Emphasis on morality has similar effects with social hierarchy. In other words, individuals who accept governing by morality rather than by law are less likely to consider a democracy preferable to any other form of government and the best form of government; however, they are more inclined to accept alternative types of political system. The family- and community-oriented have mixed preferences for government types. For them, a democracy is not only the best form of government but also the most desirable. However, they are also more likely to recognize nondemocratic rules as alternatives. The group-oriented individuals are 23% more likely to choose democracy as the best form of government, while they have 9% higher tendency to support some types of authoritarian rule.

Not all Confucian values are either compatible or incompatible with democracy. On the one hand, the significance of social harmony in a Confucian society contributes to strengthening citizens' commitment to democratic norms and procedures and therefore it reinforces the legitimacy of a democracy. On the other hand, Confucian values of social hierarchy and rule of morality weaken citizens' beliefs in democracy and make them willing to accept other nondemocratic forms of government. Prioritizing groups over individuals produces contradictory results. These findings explain why previous studies on the relationship between Confucianism and democracy produce conflicting results and remain unsettled. The inconclusive results originate from the fact that previous research has treated Confucianism as a singular form of culture and failed to examine how diverse components of Confucianism affect citizens' attitudes towards democratic norms and values differently.

V. Conclusion

This article conducts an empirical analysis about whether and how Confucianism as a culture shapes citizens' attitudes towards democracy in South Korea. The decades-long discussion of the "Asian Value" thesis has remained theoretical, with few rigorous empirical studies. Most empirical analysis treats Confucianism as a monolithic form of culture and tests its relation to citizens' attachment to democracy. The empirical analysis in this article suggests that there is no such thing as a culture that is incompatible with a particular form of government. Rather, in the case of South Korea, a range of Confucian principles –hierarchy, social harmony, group primacy, and morality – has varying effects on individual attitudes to democracy and authoritarianism. South Korea has rich experiences of mass demonstrations both during the three decades of authoritarian rules

and in post-democratization politics, including the 2016-2017 candlelight protests that led to the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye. The South Korean experiences clearly illustrate that Confucian values of hierarchical social order and social harmony have not weakened citizens' desire for political participation and their attachment to democratic values. Furthermore, strong familism and communitarianism contribute to active political participation on the part of citizens who want to make a better country for the next generation.

As the compatibility/convergence thesis suggests, traditional values modify themselves by embracing changes. Each element of Confucianism rises to the surface depending on social and political contexts in addition to elite strategies. Similar to Leftwich and his colleagues' arguments (1996) that "politics and the character of the state" determine the quality of democracy or good governance, ongoing politics matters in deciding the nature of Confucianism in particular and of culture in general. The last thing to note is that culture is still and will remain relevant in the study of regime legitimacy and support, although few researchers have paid attention to it. Even after controlling for demographic or socializational and performance variables, Confucian characteristics have substantial effects on individual orientations towards democracy and nondemocracy. Much of the literature examines institutional and performance factors in explaining individual political attitudes and behaviors and treats culture as a remnant that explains the unexplained by socialization and system output factors. However, this study shows that culture is not a catch-all for all unsystematic explanations but rather has a sustaining and systematic effect on individual attitudes and behaviors towards politics and government.

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Appendix I.

Table 1. *The odds ratios for Confucian Values*

	Satisfaction with democracy[1]	Effectiveness of democracy	Democracy as the best form of government	Preference for authoritarian regimes	Support for a nondemocratic rule
Social Hierarchy	1.181*** (.045)	.866*** (.040)	.992*** (.036)	1.248*** (.053)	1.263*** (.053)
Group Primacy	1.037 (.041)	1.072 (.052)	1.233*** (.054)	.901** (.040)	1.092** (.048)
Social Harmony	.916** (.036)	1.197*** (.057)	1.093** (.046)	.798*** (.035)	.843*** (.037)
Morality	1.166*** (.063)	.928 (.060)	.879** (.052)	1.195*** (.070)	1.185*** (.069)

*Significant at p<=.10 **Significant at p<=.05 ***Significant at p<=.01
Note: The odds ratios are from the models in Table 4.