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Contingent Instrumental and Intrinsic Support:

Exploring Regime Support in Asia

Abstract

This study presents a contextual explanation of regime support by arguing that although an individual's instrumental economic calculation and intrinsic democratic value are important predictors of political support, the extent to which they matter is contingent on the nature of the regime, as defined primarily by democracy. Using data drawn from the second wave of the Asia Barometer (ABS), we find that economic perceptions are less important for regime support in democratic countries than they are in authoritarian countries, and an affection for democracy makes people more critical of the political system in authoritarian countries than in democratic countries.

Keywords: regime support, economic perceptions, democratic values, multilevel analysis, democratic stability

To survive and exercise power effectively, any regime, whether democratic or authoritarian, must induce a sufficient level of popular support. A comparison of the sources of political support under different regime settings provides a valuable perspective on a series of critical questions, ranging from authoritarian resilience to democratic consolidation (Dalton 2004; Diamond 2011; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013; Rose et al. 2011). Earlier studies of regime support identify two types sources at the individual level — a performance-based instrumental calculation and an affection-driven value commitment. In particular, the perceptions of government economic performance and value orientations toward democracy are two key factors that have been intensively researched in the literature. It is argued that whether regime support is instrumentally or intrinsically driven is of critical importance to the stability and viability of the regime (Easton 1975; Brancati 2014; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013; Rose et al. 2011). However, as yet there is little consensus as to when and under what conditions political support is likely to be economic- or value-driven (e.g., Booth and Seligson 2009; Norris 1999b). Moreover, most studies focus separately either on democracies (Dalton and Anderson 2011; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013) or autocracies (Chen 2004; Lewis-Beck et al. 2014; Lü 2014; Rose et al. 2011), shedding little light on how popular support varies across regime types.

In this study we intend to fill this gap in the literature and present a contextual explanation for the sources of regime support by synthesizing insights from studies of individual perceptions and values with studies focusing on macro factors such as regime attributes. We argue that although individuals' instrumental economic calculations and intrinsic political values are important predictors of political support, the extent to which they matter is contingent upon the nature of the regime, as

defined primarily by democracy. That is, regime support is shaped by both micro mechanisms (i.e., economic calculations and value commitments) and macro contexts in which these micro mechanisms are embedded. Specifically, we hypothesize that people in democracies are less likely than those in authoritarian countries to support a political system based on economic concerns. In contrast, citizens in democracies are more likely than citizens in autocracies to support a political system based on their affective identification with democratic values.

Drawing on data collected from the second wave of the Asia Barometer (ABS) surveys (2005-2008), we explore how Asian publics from different regime contexts weigh between economic benefits and political goods. Employing Bayesian multilevel analyses we find that the overall regime context strongly affects the manifestation of people's instrumental and intrinsic support. Public support in Asian societies is more sensitive to economic perceptions in autocracies than it is in democracies, and people's democratic affections make them less critical of the political system in democracies than in autocracies.

This study extends the literature by highlighting the contextual contingency of political support. It thus bridges the micro explanations of regime support and the macro theories of democratic transition and consolidation (Haggard and Kaufman forthcoming). Increasingly, scholars have recognized that the Third Wave gave rise to many "median regimes" as labeled by Rose and Mishler (2002), or what Levitsky and Way (2010) called "competitive authoritarian regimes." Moreover, some revert to dictatorship after only a brief democratic period (Sovlik 2015). Whereas most current studies focus on macro structural (e.g., economic development) and institutional factors (e.g., parliamentarism), this study highlights the important, yet understudied role of attitudinal changes.

By focusing on the ways in which popular support is contingent upon the varying regime context, this study provides an integrative perspective to understand the separate research enterprises on political support and regime change.

From a political perspective, a discussion on the interplay between correlates at the individual level and the regime setting at the country level is particularly important in the Asian context. For example, in the region's resilient authoritarian regimes, like Singapore, China, and Vietnam, the ostensibly high levels of regime support, despite decades of rapid economic development that have successfully boosted regime legitimacy, rest on a fragile basis and are highly vulnerable to periodic economic downturns and the rise of democratically minded citizens. This contrasts sharply with the essential strength of democratic polities during periods of economic duress and the emergence of critical citizens (e.g., Mongolia). The contextual contingency of regime support thus suggests that the seemingly idiosyncratic popular support is epiphenomenal on the more fundamental socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes in the region.

Instrumental and Intrinsic Sources of Regime Support

Conventional approaches to regime support focus primarily on correlates at the individual level. It has been argued that an individual's support for a regime rests mainly on two attitudinal bases — instrumental calculations and intrinsic values (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Easton 1975; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013; Norris 1999a; Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2011). To examine their relative salience, empirical studies focus on comparing the most direct form of instrumental consideration (i.e., economic orientation) on the one hand, and adherence to democratic principles on the other (e.g.,

Bratton et al. 2005; Chu et al. 2008; Dalton 1999, 2004; Lagos 2003; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013; Przeworski et al. 1996; Rose et al. 2011).¹ In a nutshell, ordinary citizens may comply with a regime either because it “pays” in terms of improving living standards or because it conforms to their inherent political values.

However, until now there is still no scholarly consensus with regard to the relative importance of the two sources of political support in different regimes. For instance, Dalton (2004) concludes “beliefs matter more” after a systematic examination of political support in advanced industrial democracies. It is the societal value changes (i.e., the diffusion of post-materialism), rather than economic performance, that explain the declining political support in these countries. More recently, Conroy-Krutz and Kerr (2015) note that citizens’ adherence to democratic values strongly predicts their support for democracy as regime in developing and transitional countries like Uganda. On the other hand, however, Svobik’s studies (2013; 2015) emphasize the importance of the economic performance in securing support for new democracies. He finds that the public’s dissatisfaction with economic well-beings often depletes their support for democracy as a political system. Given the mixed evidence on the relative salience of the economic and value bases of political support, many scholars suggest that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reach any broad generalization across national boundaries (Booth and Seligson 2009; Rose et al. 2011).

¹ It should be noted that economic orientation is merely a subset of materialist concerns, which in turn are a subset of instrumental consideration. In other words, instrumental consideration encompasses many non-materialistic and non-economic concerns.

In addition to factors at the individual level, scholars have also explored the *direct* impacts of contextual factors (Wells and Krieckhaus 2006; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013). Hellwig and Samuel (2008), for example, reveal that popular support for democratic government is strongly affected by the fundamental institutional differences between democratic regimes, that is, the separation of government branches. Using experimental methods, Dickson et al. (2015) confirms that different institutional designs do shape individuals' evaluation of authority legitimacy. Other studies also reveal that macro-level factors like party competition (Hellwig 2012), openness to world economy (Alcañiz and Hellwig 2011), and ethnic composition (Belge and Karakoç 2015) exert direct and significant impacts on individuals' political support.

These individual- and contextual-level studies, though providing important insights about sources of regime support, are limited in two ways. First, the indirect impacts of contextual factors have been understudied (Dalton and Anderson 2011). In addition to direct influences, contextual factors can also exert strong *indirect* impacts by moderating the effects of individual psychologies like economic orientation and democratic value. Second, with a focus mainly on democratic societies, few studies have examined how sources of regime vary across different regime types. This study attempts to advance current studies by treating the regime type as a contextual factor and focusing on the ways in which the regime context moderates the relationship between regime support and individual covariates. It thus not only reveals more complex effect of macro institutional factors but also extend the existing understanding of political support to a wide range of regimes in a systematic way. Particularly, we stress the importance of democracy as a regime type in shaping the effect of both instrumental economic calculations and intrinsic democratic values on regime

support across countries.

The Contextual Contingency of Instrumental and Intrinsic Explanations

Among various system attributes, the supply of democratic institutions has been regarded as one of the most important macro-level explanatory factors (Booth and Seligson 2009; Lewis-Beck et al. 2013; Hellwig and Samuel 2008). According to institutional theories, the democratic level of a particular regime should be positively associated with the people's support for the regime. But the effect of democracy on regime support seems not to be as direct as presumed. For instance, after testing this hypothesis across 69 countries, Rose, Mishler, and Munro (2011) find that whether or not a regime is democratic bears no significant association with how it is evaluated by its citizens.

We argue this seemingly puzzling result has a lot to do with the unnoticed interactive nature of the effect of regime type on regime support. Regime support varies not only because of variations in the regime context or in the people's different economic perceptions and democratic commitments, but depending on the regime context, individuals tend to value economic and political goods differently. That is, under different regime settings, the same changes to an individual's economic well-being or democratic values are not likely to have identical impacts on their regime support. For this reason, instead of focusing solely on the absolute effects of the levels of economic considerations and democratic values, we should also pay attention to how their impacts vary depending on the regime setting. We therefore synthesize arguments from previous studies to offer an integrative framework of regime support as follows (see Figure 1).

[Figure 1 is about here.]

The sign in the boxes indicates the direction of the effect of economic perceptions and democratic values on regime support, and double signs indicate stronger effects in that direction. One way to understand this context contingency involves a two-stage logic (Anderson and Singer 2008). The first stage at the individual level serves as the direct causal mechanism connecting economic evaluations and democratic commitments to regime support; the second stage explains to what extent democratic institutions may alter the magnitude of the two kinds of support. In the following, we proceed with this two-stage logic for instrumental economic support and intrinsic democratic support.

Contextually Moderated Economic Support

Economic perceptions are the most immediate explanation for political support. As noted by Easton (1975) and later in the literature of economic vote (Lewis-Beck 2013), governments are first and foremost instrumentally evaluated by their citizens. A government's continuous failure to improve its citizens' economic well-being is likely to significantly undermine the citizens' support for the regime. Empirical studies of political support conducted in both democratic (Hetherington 1998; Przeworski et al. 1996) and non-democratic countries (Chen 2004; Lewis-Beck et al. 2014; Lü 2014; Rose et al. 2011) have confirmed that individuals tend to positively relate their evaluations of economic conditions to regime support. Therefore, we form our first-stage hypothesis on instrumental economic support as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 1A: Individuals with more positive economic perceptions are more likely to be oriented positively toward a regime.

The *impact* of economic perceptions on regime support, however, is not uniform across different

regimes. We argue that the positive impact of instrumental support is *significantly and negatively* moderated by the regime's supply of democratic institutions. This is because the very design of democratic institutions makes economic success or failure less attributable to the regime. In democracies with institutionalized competition, effective electoral procedures, and resultant office alteration, the incumbent governments or particular politicians, and not the overall political system, are likely to be held accountable for economic performance (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Conroy-Krutz and Kerr 2015).

On the other hand, economic accountability in authoritarian countries is more closely associated with the regime. A key characteristic of authoritarian regimes is the natural fusion of the ruling elites and the regime. When considering economic performance, citizens in non-democracies can hardly distinguish between the incumbents and the regime, and thus they readily attribute their economic well-being to the malignancy or benignancy of the regime (Brancati 2014). Thus, authoritarian regimes, though they may enjoy all the benefits entailed by economic growth, are also likely to take full responsibility for any economic downturns. In sum, when evaluating a regime, economic perceptions are likely to matter more for people who live in authoritarian regimes and less for those living in democracies. Therefore, we hypothesize the second-stage logic of instrumental support as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 1B: As the regime supply of democratic institutions increases, the positive impact of economic perceptions on regime support will decrease.

Contextually Moderated Intrinsic Support

Internalized values “provide a context within which ... the political structure and related norms may

themselves be tested for their legitimacy” (Easton 1965, 289). These intrinsic values determine the benchmark against which individuals evaluate the regime in general and the political institutions in particular. Therefore, in authoritarian regimes, those who strongly believe in democratic values are unlikely to regard authoritarian rule as legitimate. Yet, democratically minded citizens in democracies do not necessarily support their regimes while they surely prefer a democracy to an autocracy. Dalton (2004, 109) finds that the declining political support in these societies has a lot to do with the citizens’ rising democratic aspirations: “[W]hat is changing is ... citizen expectations of what democracy should achieve. Postmaterialists have higher democratic ideals, and it is of this higher standard that contemporary politicians and political institutions fall short.” In short, higher democratic ideals make the public more critical of the actual operations and practices of democratic systems. Hence, the first-stage hypothesis of intrinsic support can be stated as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 2A: Individuals with stronger democratic aspirations are less likely to be oriented positively toward the regime.

The *impact* of democratic aspirations also varies depending on the regime setting. We argue that the negative impact of democratic aspirations on regime support is *significantly* and *negatively* moderated by the regime supply of democratic institutions. Since the institutional context serves to organize and constrain one’s experience and to allow one to develop attitudes regarding the working of the system, stable political systems tend to have cultures and institutions that are congruent with citizens’ demand for a certain type of regime. Authoritarian-minded people in non-democracies therefore are more supportive of the governing regime than those in democracies; as a corollary, democratic-minded people in non-democracies are more critical than their counterparts in

democracies. Carlin and Mosely's (2015) recent study shows that true democrats attach greater importance to democratic procedures and are less tolerant of activities like vote-buying.

Accordingly, the second-stage hypothesis of intrinsic support can be stated as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 2B: As the regime supply of democratic institutions increases, the negative impact of democratic aspirations on regime support will decrease.

Data and Measurement

To examine the moderating role of regime context in conditioning people's instrumental economic and intrinsic value support, this study focuses on Asia, a relatively understudied region in the literature. A study of East Asian societies contributes to comparative studies of political support for a number of reasons. First, the debate over whether popular support is economy-driven or democracy-driven is particularly marked in Asia (Chu et al. 2008; Lewis-Beck et al. 2014). In contrast to its global acceptance, liberal democracy is openly rejected by many East and Southeast Asian government officials based on their economic success (Thompson 2001). Moreover, Asian publics seem to be "*contingent* democrats for the very reason that they are *consistent* defenders of their material interests" (Bellin 2000, 179, italics in original). This raises the question of whether the orientations of East Asian publics are so instrumentally driven that the development of democratic institutions becomes incongruent (Chu et al. 2008). "The current body of evidence on East Asian political culture," however, "is incomplete and often limited to single nation studies" (Dalton and Shin 2006, 4).

Second, and relatedly, "Asian exceptionalism" has constantly confused global patterns of

sociopolitical development (Fukuyama 1997). After the third wave of democratization, on the one hand, the region contained not only the most-likely cases of democratic transition and consolidation, for instance in South Korea or Taiwan, but also the least-likely successful cases, for instance in Mongolia (Fish 1998). However, the Asian authoritarian states seem to be the most resilient in the world, particularly after the recent Arab Spring. Countries like China and Vietnam still enjoy considerable levels of popular support, and they remain unexpectedly stable. This mixed pattern in one single region makes it important that we examine the public basis in different regimes and investigate the actual contribution of the institutional supply of democracy for regime stability in both authoritarian and democratic polities in East Asia.

Finally, the countries in East Asia are substantially different from one another with regard to contextual-level factors, such as institutional supplies of democracy, levels of economic development, and pace of economic growth. These large variations in contextual factors provide a perfect pool for examining the moderating effects of system-level factors.

This study uses a compiled dataset in which the individual-level data are drawn from the second wave of the ABS.² This wave of the ABS carried out a comparative survey of citizens' attitudes toward politics and democracy in thirteen Asian polities. In each of the surveyed polity, a country-wide face-to-face survey was conducted using standardized survey methodology and instruments.

Dependent Variable: Regime Support

² Information about ABS is available from <<http://www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/surveys/>>.

Regime support in this study is derived from two widely used questions: (1) “Whatever its faults may be, our form of government is still the best for us,” and (2) “You can generally trust the people who run our government to do what is right.” Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a 4-point scale, from (1) “strongly disagree” to (4) “strongly agree.” We averaged the responses to these two items to capture a collective profile of the respondents’ regime support. First, both reliability and correlation checks indicate a reliable composite index. Second, we also conducted Mokken scale analysis (MSA) to ensure the validity of our latent construct (for details about MSA see Section C in Supplementary Information). In essence, MSA is a nonparametric extension of the Guttman scaling and is particularly useful in exploring ordered and cumulative scales (van Schuur 2011). Finally, we used each of the two items separately as dependent variables as a robustness check. This helps to minimize the possible influence of the operationalization, and thus ensures that our results are not artificially driven by the choice of composite method.

[Figure 2 is about here.]

To detect the magnitude of country-level variations, we contrast the actual country averages of regime support with simulated means. As presented Figure 2(a), the bars represent each country’s average regime support sorted from highest to lowest, and the lines represent the expected distribution if there were no country-level attributes associated with the data. The sharp contrast between the simulated (i.e., the lines) and the actual average regime support (i.e., the bars) suggests country-level factors have a strong impact on people’s regime support in Asia.

However, as revealed in Figure 2(b), responses to these questions demonstrate interesting yet puzzling patterns. The discrepancy between popular political support and the regime supply of

democratic institutions, as stressed by Rose, Mishler, and Munro (2011), appears to be particularly sharp in Asia. The regime supply of democratic institutions is negatively correlated with public support. A majority of respondents in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan reported a relatively low level of regime support, which is consistent with findings from established democracies in other regions (Dalton 2004). In contrast, although observers often assume that authoritarian regimes like China and Vietnam lack popular support, they each have been able to maintain relatively high levels of political support. Moreover, countries like Mongolia, though without a potent democracy, have been able to maintain a very high level of regime support.

Explanatory Variables at the Individual Level

To understand the sources of regime support at the individual level, we focus on people's instrumental calculations of material benefits and normative commitments to democratic norms and values. In this study, we employ a standard definition of economic orientation, i.e., the respondents' evaluation of the economic situation in the household. In the ABS, one's perceptions of the economic situation are gauged in three ways: the retrospective ("How would you compare the current economic conditions of your family with those of several years ago?"), the present ("As for your own family, how do you rate your economic situation today?"), and the prospective ("What do you think the economic situation of your family will be in a few years from now?"). Due to limited space, we only present results based on the retrospective evaluation. To ensure that our analysis is not biased by the choice of measurements, we also analyzed the effects of the other two measurements on regime support (for details see Section D in Supplementary Information).

Democracy is essentially a contested concept. Moreover, given the global acceptance of the

ideal, direct questions regarding a democratic commitment are likely to produce socially desirable answers (Chu et al. 2008; Mishler and Rose 2001). With these caveats in mind, we turn to questions that make no explicit reference to democracy but are critical to the emergence and flourishing of democracy. Specifically, we chose to measure one's democratic values based on a battery of six questions that ask about the respondents' agreement with *democratic procedures* (“We should abolish parliament and elections and have a strong leader to make decisions,” “The army should be brought in to govern the country,” “When the country faces difficult circumstance, it is acceptable for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation,” “Government leaders are like the head of a family; we should follow all their decisions,” “When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch,” “If the government is constantly checked by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.”) Although these items do not exhaust all democratic procedures, together they provide a clear conceptual anchoring and hence they serve as a good test of the popular democratic commitment across the East Asian societies.

Given its contested nature, we used both MSA and factor analysis to explore Asian public's latent understanding of democracy, and two findings have emerged (for details see Section B and C in Supplementary Information). First, both MSA and factor analysis provide a unidimensional solution, that is, a single latent construct of democratic value. The congruence suggests that even under different sociopolitical settings, the Asian public share certain common understandings about the key principles of democracy. Second, MSA and factor analysis differ on the specific items that should be preserved. While factor analysis incorporates all the six items, MSA preserves only the

first two items. By removing the other four items, MSA helps reveal the core of democratic value that could be masked by a “catch-all” factor. Specifically, the results of MSA suggest that ordinary people across Asian societies tended to treat strong legislative branch and civilian government as the core principles of democracy. The result is surprisingly consistent with recent aggregate-level findings that most democratic breakdowns can be attributed to presidential takeovers and military coups (Svolik 2015). To test our hypotheses in a more rigorous manner, we employ both the “catch-all” index and the “core” Mokken scale in the subsequent analysis.

Explanatory Variables at the Country Level

In this paper we mainly presented results based on the popular dataset on democracy, “Democracy and Dictators” (DD), to test our hypotheses. DD is a dichotomous measurement of democracy updated from the political and economic database compiled by Przeworski et al (2000). It categorizes a polity as a democracy if the executive is elected via the legislature or if the legislature is directly elected, if there is more than one political party, or if there is an alternation of executive power. By capturing the essential characteristics of democracy, DD has been one of the most widely used measures of democracy.³

We further control for a variety of factors that have been found in previous studies to predict

³ To ensure that our analytical results are not driven by the choice of a particular measurement of democracy, we also conducted analysis based on another two measures of democracy, Freedom House (FH), and the “Unified Democracy Score” (UDS).

regime support. At the individual level, in addition to one's economic calculations and democratic beliefs, we include socio-demographic factors (i.e., gender, age, education, urban residence, marriage status, internal political efficacy, and interpersonal trust).⁴ At the country level, we control for two other contextual factors (i.e., GDP per capita and the economic growth rate).

Analysis and Results

To test our hypotheses, we employ multilevel analysis. Compared to no-pooling (e.g., country-based) and traditional pooling analysis, multilevel analysis not only allows for a more accurate estimation of the direct effects of both the individual and contextual correlates, but also examines cross-level interactions between key contextual factors and individual factors. Multilevel models have thus become increasingly popular in comparative political research. However, a common problem in their application is that most comparative survey datasets contain a relatively small number of countries. This may cause biased maximum likelihood (ML) estimations in a frequentist framework, leading to a proposal for various rules of thumb about the minimum number of countries.⁵

In this study, we adopt several strategies to address this issue. First, rather than relying on the frequentist ML estimation, we use the Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) Bayesian multilevel

⁴ See Table A.1 in Supplementary Information for the summary statistics.

⁵ A recent comprehensive review suggests that the recommendation ranges from 8 to 30, 50, or even 100. See Stegmueller (2013, 2).

model to test our hypotheses. Unlike the ML estimation, the Bayesian estimation does not make strong assumptions about the sampling distribution and thus it is much less biased when there are a small number of macro units. Specifically, the Bayesian confidence intervals (i.e., credible intervals) simply provides the “posterior (i.e., after looking at the data) probability that the coefficient lies in that interval” (Stegmueller, 2013, 3). In this process, no hypothetical sampling distribution is assumed. Stegmueller’s (2013) further comparison reveals that Bayesian estimation is not only less biased but it is also more rigorous and conservative than the ML estimation.⁶ Second, to further avoid any potential bias, we first include only one macro variable (i.e., the primary variable — democracy) and its interaction term with only one of the two key micro explanatory variables (i.e., economic perceptions and democratic values) in each set of analyses. This minimizes consumption of the degree of freedom at the aggregate level. We then present analytical results based on models with interaction terms for democracy and two micro independent variables and in tandem include more aggregate variables. Finally, to ensure the robustness of our analyses, we test the hypotheses by varying the measurement of the dependent variable (i.e., regime support), for the key explanatory variable at the aggregate level (i.e., democracy), and for the independent variable at the individual level (i.e., economic evaluation and democratic values).⁷ Together, we

⁶ We use the MLwiN from within STATA and the package R2MLwiN in R for the estimation.

More details about the MCMC estimation and the estimation procedures are available upon request.

⁷ For more detailed results of Bayesian multilevel analyses, please see Section D of Supplementary Information.

believe a combination of these strategies produces a rigorous empirical test for our hypotheses.

[Table 1 is about here.]

Table 1 presents the results of our first set of analyses using the retrospective economic evaluation and the “catch-all” measurement of democratic values (i.e., the index based on factor analysis).⁸

Model 1 includes only one cross-level effect (i.e., the interaction term between regime type and economic perception), and two findings stand out. First, after controlling for regime type, both economic perception and democratic value exert strong impacts on regime support, which confirm our two first-stage Hypotheses 1A and 2A. Second, a significant and negative cross-level effect between economic perception and regime type indicates that economic perception is less related to the level of regime support in democratic countries, and thus it confirms the second-stage hypothesis 1B. Although people in both types of regimes base their support on economic perceptions, people in democratic countries are less likely to do so than their counterparts in authoritarian countries.

Model 2 then focuses on the other cross-level effect, the interaction between regime type and democratic value (Hypothesis 2B). First, as expected in Hypotheses 1A and 2A, effects of economic perception and democratic value are both significant and consistent. Second, the interaction term between democratic value and democracy is positive, indicating a stronger positive effect of democratic values on regime support in democratic countries. In both types of regimes,

⁸ Due to limited space, we do not present the estimated results of controls at the individual level.

For detailed results and additional robustness analyses, please see Section D in Supplementary Information.

the effect of democratic values is negative. But the same level of democratic values is associated with a higher level of regime support in democratic countries than it is in authoritarian countries. The results thus strongly confirm our hypothesis about the contingent effect of democratic value.

We further test the two cross-level effects jointly in Model 3. At the individual level, consistent with Models 1 and 2, the results strongly corroborate Hypotheses 1A and 2A that people's economic orientation and political value fundamentally shape their support for the ruling regime. As for their contextual contingency (i.e., Hypotheses 1B and 2B), the two significant cross-level effects suggest the impacts of both economic orientation and political value are strongly shaped by the regime type. While economic perceptions are less important for regime support in democracies, and adherence to democratic principles makes people more critical of the political system in authoritarian.

[Figure 3 is about here.]

To provide more meaningful interpretations to the varying effects of the two primary independent variables, Figure 3 plots the marginal effect of economic perception (Figure 3[a]) and the effect of democratic value (Figure 3[b]), respectively, based on Model 3. It should be noted that the marginal effects plotted here are all within the value ranges of DD measures of democracy, that is, between 0 and 1.⁹ With respect to economic perception, first we see that their effect on regime support is statistically significant and positive in both types of countries. Those who have been better off under any regime hold more favorable attitudes toward that regime. Second, the positive association between regime support and one's economic evaluation decreases with higher levels of

⁹ See Table A.1 in Supplementary Information for the summary statistics of DD and FH.

democracy. For instance, in Figure 3[a] while the estimated coefficient of instrumental calculation is 0.07 for countries like China and Vietnam (i.e., $DD = 0$), the same coefficient for Japan and Mongolia ($DD = 1$) is about 0.045. In other words, people in democratic countries are less likely to judge the regime based on their instrumental rationality.

In contrast, democratic value always has a statistically significant and negative effect on regime support in both democratic and authoritarian countries (Figure 3[b]). This shows that people who hold a higher level of democratic values are more critical of the ruling regime, regardless of the type of regime. It also shows that the detrimental effect of democratic values on regime support is much stronger in authoritarian countries than it is in democratic countries. As revealed in Figure 3[b], while the estimated coefficient of democratic aspiration is -0.42 for autocracies ($DD = 0$), the same coefficient for democracies ($DD = 1$) is about -0.34. Although people who hold high levels of democratic values are still critical of democratic polities, they are less so than people who live under authoritarian regimes where the political institutions are fundamentally in conflict with their intrinsic values.¹⁰

Model 4 includes two more variables at the country level: GDP per capita and the growth rate of GDP per capita. The patterns of the regression results, again, conform to what we have obtained in the previous analyses. It should be noted that economic growth is strongly associated with higher levels of regime support, which is consistent with many recent findings that economic crisis strongly

¹⁰ For more marginal plots based on different model specifications, see Section D of Supplementary Information.

predicts regime transition, both democratic transition (Tang et al. forthcoming) and authoritarian reversal (Svolik 2015). Models 5 and 6 check the robustness by regressing the two components of the regime support index separately on the same set of independent, interactive, and control variables. The general pattern in the results is similar to that yielded by analyses using the composite index of regime support, except for the statistical insignificance of one of the four interaction terms.¹¹

[Table 2 is about here.]

Using the Mokken scale of democratic value, Table 2 tests the hypotheses against the “core” democratic value of Asian public (i.e., strong legislative branch and civilian government). From Model 7 to 10, we carry out similar analyses based on the model specifications of Model 1 to 4. Across the four models based on the Mokken scale, the effects of economic perception and democratic value are consistently significant, which strongly corroborate Hypotheses 1A and 2A. More important, as we have expected in Hypotheses 1B and 2B, the coefficients of both interaction terms are statistically significant but in opposite directions, which is consistent with the findings in Table 1.

It should be noted that, as reveal in Figure 2[b], the downward relationship between democracy and averaged regime support at the country-level can be highly sensitive to the particular sample of surveyed countries. If respondents of Korea were removed, the country-level relationship between

¹¹ In Section D of Support Information, we include more robustness analyses by using different measures of economic orientation (i.e., present and prospect). We also use the Freedom House index and the UDS as alternative measurements of democracy, and the results are consistent.

democracy and averaged regime support could be a U-shaped one. And if Vietnam were left out, the best fit line would be horizontal, which implies no the country-level relationship. To address the potential biases introduced by these high-leverage cases, Models 11 and 12 test our hypotheses by removing Korea and Vietnam respectively. The results of two models are highly consistent with our previous analyses.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study presents an integrative perspective to understand instrumental and intrinsic support by emphasizing their contextual contingency. Our arguments and findings suggest that although both economic perceptions and democratic values strongly affect regime support, the magnitude of their impacts is contingent upon the macro contexts, particularly the regime setting. Specifically, an economic calculation is found to be less important for regime support in democratic countries than it is in authoritarian countries, and a democratic affection makes people more critical of the political system in authoritarian countries than in democratic countries.

The contextual contingency of regime support suggested in this study not only opens new avenues for theorizing about the formation of regime support, but it also provides a different perspective with respect to some puzzling issues in the literature on political support as well as regime transition in general. First, it helps account for the seemingly inconsistent findings regarding the relative importance of instrumental and intrinsic support. The reason these two types of support vary across national borders is that they carry different weights under different regimes. Studies based upon a single country or a pooled global sample may conceal the variation in the

relationship of interest.

Second, by exploring the moderating effect of regime type, this study uncovers the contribution of a democratic political system to political support. Given the discrepancy between the regime setting and popular political support in East Asia, as well as in other parts of the world, many have raised doubts about the relevance of democracy for regime support. This study suggests that democracy might not directly boost regime support. But it might do so indirectly by altering how the people weigh between economic and political goods. In a more democratic regime, people tend to attach less importance to economic gains and they tend to be less critical of the regime, and hence a democracy is more stable and viable when confronted with periodic economic downturns and the emergence of critical citizens.

Our findings also have important implications for scholarly understanding about regime transition. As revealed in this study, to maintain popular support authoritarian rulers must avoid economic slowdowns since public attitudes are highly sensitive to the economic performance of the regime. When an economic crisis occurs, political transition may become possible since a large population of disaffected citizens is likely to trigger a collapse of the uneasy coalition between the political elites and other social forces (Tang et al. forthcoming; Yap 2011). But even if the government is able to maintain growth, economic development engenders societal changes that will eventually raise public aspirations for democratic values. An increased democratic orientation, as suggested by this study, will seriously undermine public support for an authoritarian regime. Without political liberalization, therefore, the basis for public support for the regime cannot be effectively secured. As for new democracies, the findings from this study imply that as long as

there is continuous improvement in “democratic goods,” the negative effects of periodic economic hardships tend to be moderated. This is consistent with findings that well-institutionalized political competition stabilizes new democracies (Wright 2008; Fung 2011).

It should be noted that we do not intend to generalize the findings of this Asian sample to the rest of world. Nonetheless, we do believe that the findings from this study and their implications can contribute to our understanding of the central question about the complex sources of regime support. As an effort to explore underlying sources of regime support in Asia, this study is inevitably limited in its revealing of the complex nature and sources of support. Particularly, we find our theorization and operationalization of key political attitudes are still far from being adequate. Factor analysis and MSA in this study, though both provide a unidimensional solution, differ on specific survey items should be regarded as democratic value. More studies are thus called for to improve our survey instruments in the cross-national settings (Alemán and Woods forthcoming).

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Table 1. *Bayesian Multilevel Estimate and Posterior Deviation of Regime Support in East Asia*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5 Support1	Model 6 Support2
Economic perception	0.07** [0.01]	0.06** [0.01]	0.07** [0.01]	0.07** [0.01]	0.06** [0.01]	0.08** [0.01]
Democratic value	-0.39** [0.01]	-0.43** [0.02]	-0.44** [0.02]	-0.44** [0.02]	-0.36** [0.02]	-0.54** [0.02]
<i>Country-level effects</i>						
Democracy	-0.13 [0.19]	-0.42** [0.19]	-0.40* [0.21]	-0.16 [0.18]	-0.31† [0.19]	-0.53* [0.26]
GDP per capita (log)				0.002 [0.05]		
GDP growth				0.10* [0.05]		
<i>Cross-level effects</i>						
Economic perception*	-0.02* [0.01]		-0.02** [0.01]	-0.02** [0.01]	-0.02* [0.01]	-0.02* [0.01]
Democracy		0.08** [0.03]	0.07** [0.02]	0.07** [0.02]	0.02 [0.03]	0.13** [0.03]
Democratic value*						
Democracy						
<i>Controls (individual level)</i>						
Omitted						

Note: Entries are Bayesian multilevel coefficients (i.e., the average effects) and corresponding posterior deviations (in brackets). ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, and † $p < 0.1$. Datasets include 19,788 respondents in 13 polities.

Table 2. *Bayesian Multilevel Analysis based the Mokken Scale*

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11 No KOR	Mode 12 No VNM
Economic perception	0.05** [0.01]	0.04** [0.004]	0.05** [0.005]	0.05** [0.005]	0.05** [0.005]	0.05** [0.01]
Democratic value	-0.02** [0.003]	-0.02** [0.003]	-0.03** [0.003]	-0.03** [0.003]	-0.03** [0.003]	-0.03** [0.003]
<i>Country-level effects</i>						
Democracy	-0.14 [0.10]	-0.22* [0.09]	-0.18† [0.10]	-0.05 [0.09]	-0.15 [0.10]	-0.15 [0.10]
GDP per capita (log)				-0.02 [0.02]		
GDP growth				0.06* [0.02]		
<i>Cross-level effects</i>						
Economic perception*	-0.02* [0.01]		-0.02* [0.01]	-0.02* [0.01]	-0.02* [0.01]	-0.02* [0.01]
Democracy		0.01** [0.003]	0.01** [0.003]	0.01** [0.003]	0.01** [0.003]	0.01** [0.003]
Democratic value*						
Democracy						
<i>Controls (individual level)</i>						
Omitted						

Note: Entries are Bayesian multilevel coefficients (i.e., the average effects) and corresponding posterior deviations (in brackets). ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, and † $p < 0.1$. Datasets include 19,788 respondents in 13 polities.

		Aggregate	
		<i>Autocracy</i>	<i>Democracy</i>
Individual	<i>Economic perception</i>	++	+
	<i>Democratic value</i>	--	-

Figure 1. The Expected Context-Contingency of Regime Support

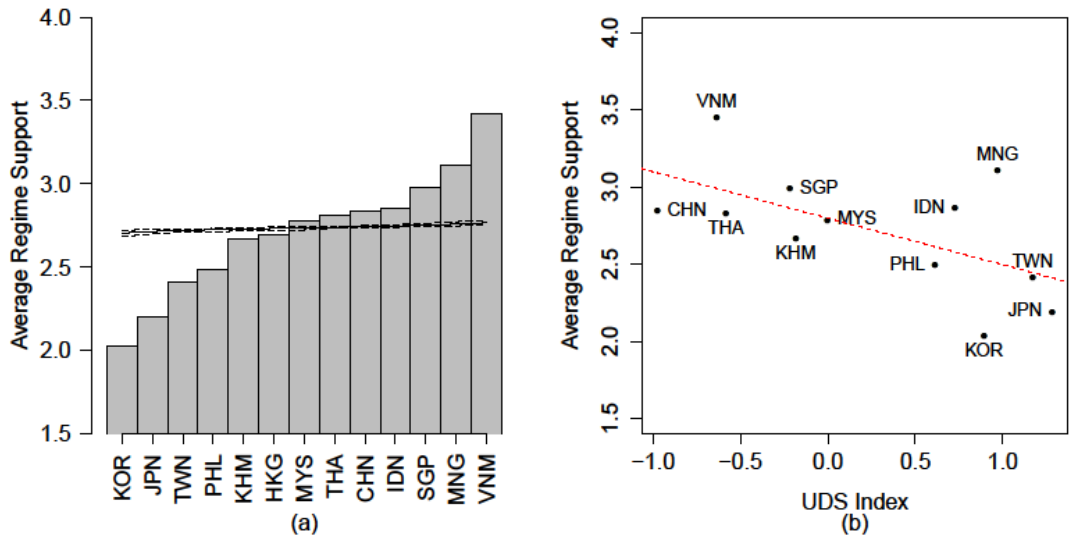


Figure 2. Regime Support in East Asia

Note: The solid line in (a) represents a random distribution where 13 pseudo polities were created 100 times and the sorted values were averaged across 1,000 iterations. The dotted lines represent the upper and lower 95% confidence interval estimates. In (b), UDS refers to the “Unified Democracy Scores” (Pemstein et al. 2010).

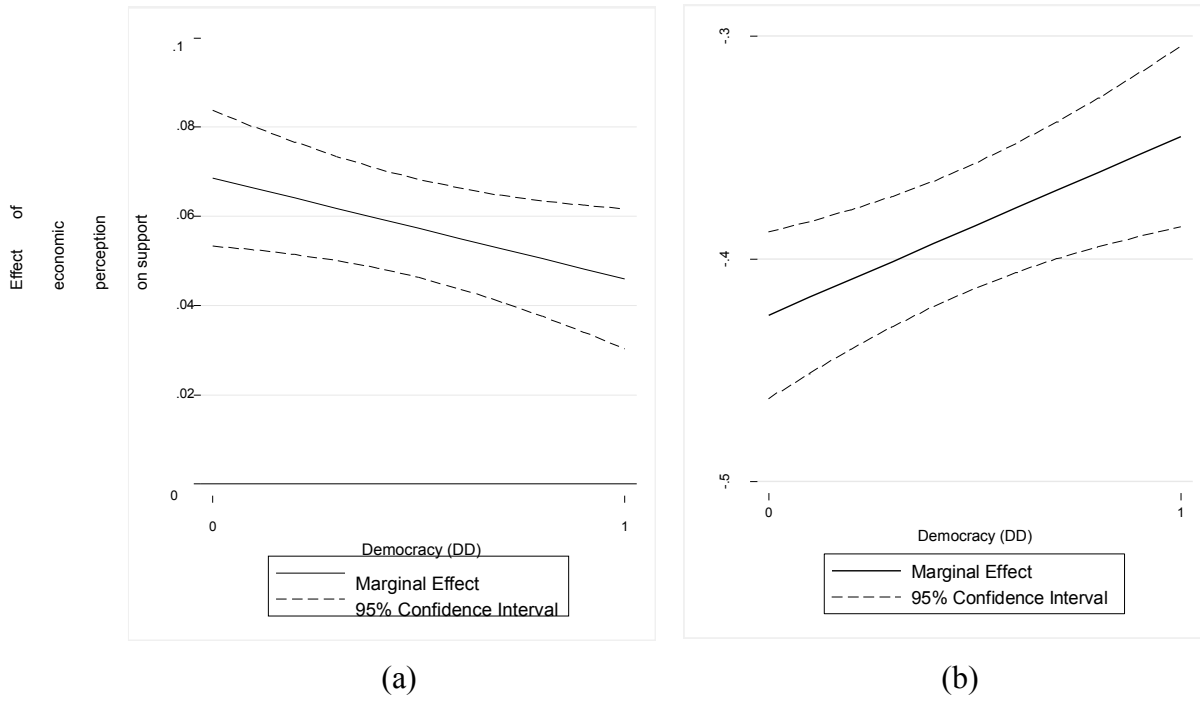


Figure 3. The Marginal Effects of Economic Perceptions and Democratic Values