

JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

April 2015, Volume 26, Number 2 \$13.00



The Authoritarian Resurgence

Lilia Shevtsova on Russia ■ *Javier Corrales* on Venezuela
Abbas Milani/Alex Vatanka on Iran ■ *Frederic Wehrey* on Saudi Arabia

Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement

Michael C. Davis ■ *Victoria Tin-bor Hui*

The Freedom House Survey for 2014

Arch Puddington

Zoltan Barany on Transitions from Military Rule
Yun-han Chu & Bridget Welsh on East Asia's Millennials
Elisabete Azevedo-Harman on Mozambique
Pierre Englebert on Zimbabwe
Harley Balzer on Vladimir Putin

Transitional Justice and Its Discontents

Duncan McCargo

MILLENNIALS AND EAST ASIA'S DEMOCRATIC FUTURE

Yun-han Chu and Bridget Welsh

***Yun-han Chu** is a distinguished research fellow of the Institute of Political Science at Academia Sinica and professor of political science at National Taiwan University. **Bridget Welsh** is senior research associate at the Center for East Asia Democratic Studies of the National Taiwan University. The authors are currently working together (with Huang Kai-ping) on a book about democratic citizenship and youth in East Asia.*

In East Asia today, economic and political clout may still belong mainly to baby-boomers—the generation born between 1946 and 1964—but it is their offspring, the “millennials,” who will shape the region’s democratic prospects tomorrow. In some East Asian countries, young voters, defined here as under 30, have already made a decisive impact on the outcome of recent elections. And in 2014, student protesters in Taiwan and Hong Kong reconfigured the political landscape almost overnight with their stunning orchestration of crippling “occupy” movements and by saturating cyberspace with the rhetoric of civil disobedience.

East Asia’s millennials (born between the early 1980s and the 2000s) have little if any memory of the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in 1986 or the Tiananmen Square protests and the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989; even their memory of the 1997 Asian financial crisis is scant. This generation has instead been shaped by the trends and events of the last fifteen years—a rising China and declining United States, the mass commercialization of Asian pop culture, and the experience of rapid social change and vibrant economic growth. East Asian millennials have grown up during a period of economic success and burgeoning consumerism, with the region’s annual growth rates averaging above 5 percent. Young people in Asia now connect to one another via various social media, from Weibo to Twitter, often on their smartphones. Digital technology is deeply engrained in their everyday lives. They attend uni-

versity in larger numbers, live in cities, and are more connected to the world. They grew up with bounty and promise in an era of connectivity and globalization.

Whereas there have been numerous studies in the West about this generation, East Asia's millennials have received less scholarly attention. Do they share the civic-mindedness that is credited to millennials in the United States,¹ or are young people in East Asia more like their counterparts in the Middle East and southern Europe, driven to protest by angst and frustration?² Or are the region's youth defined by uniquely Asian traits, resulting from Asia's strong family ties, economic success, and rapid social transformation? Finally, are East Asian millennials' attitudes supportive of democracy and of constructive political participation that reinforces healthy political discourse and debate, or are they sources of discontent and disengagement?

Focusing on the sociopolitical environment that nurtured those voters who have come of age in the new millennium, we explore how this generation will shape the region's democratic future, highlighting the ways in which millennials differ from earlier generations (and among themselves) as well as their distinctive political predispositions. We base our analysis largely on data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS),³ in particular its third wave, conducted between 2010 and 2013 in thirteen countries and territories.

There is no disputing how important the young (under-30) generation is in Asia. The generation born after 1981 constitutes a large share of Asia's population.⁴ Numbering well over a billion, young people make up more than half of Asia's entire population. In East Asia, the share is just slightly smaller. In the thirteen East Asian societies covered by the ABS—Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam—those under the age of 30 account for roughly 47 percent of the overall population. Within East Asia, there are two distinct patterns. In Northeast Asia, with the exception of Mongolia, the population is rapidly aging due to low birth rates and, in some cases, strict family-planning policies. In Southeast Asia, the ranks of young people are swelling, creating a “youth bulge” with profound political implications. So the share of the population made up of young people in East Asia overall ranges from almost two-thirds, as in Cambodia and the Philippines, to less than a third, as in Japan and Taiwan.

While the share of young voters in East Asia varies considerably from country to country,⁵ they are an important group in terms of governance and public policy everywhere, although often for different reasons. In the more youthful societies of Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, for example, the sheer number of millennial voters—voters who are demanding education, jobs, housing, and public services—has created mounting pressures and challenges for political leaders. In the older

populations of Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, the younger generation, which has increasingly felt the pressure of widening income inequality, slower social mobility, and mounting public-sector debts, has a strong propensity to renegotiate rights, entitlements, and obligations with regard to older generations.

Politicians in most East Asian countries recognize millennial voters as a potent political force. Despite their lower turnout, young voters still accounted for at least a quarter of the popular votes in nine of the East Asian societies studied.⁶ As such, they play a decisive role not only in determining election outcomes but also in defining political life. Millennial voters have demonstrated their political power in recent elections across the region—bolstering the electoral fortunes of the opposition in general elections in the hybrid regimes of Cambodia (2013), Malaysia (2008 and 2013) and Singapore (2011) and helping to trigger a real power rotation in Indonesia in 2014 in the most competitive polls for that country's presidency since its democratic opening in 1998. Even in societies where youth make up a smaller share of the population, they have affected political outcomes—as in Taiwan, where young voters contributed to the record losses suffered by incumbents in the 2014 local elections, and in Japan, where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was reelected by a landslide that same year.

An Affluent and Internet-Savvy Cohort

East Asia's millennials have grown up in an age of rapid socioeconomic development, allowing them to become better educated, more urbanized, and more technologically connected. According to a 2011 UNESCO report on education, between 1999 and 2008 postsecondary enrollment rates in the region expanded more rapidly than anywhere else in the world.⁷ On average, East Asian youth have nearly a decade more schooling under their belts than their grandparents, giving them greater intellectual competence, more exposure to foreign news and ideas, and a better grasp of current affairs.

This generation is also much more likely than previous ones to live in urban areas. Over the last two decades in East Asia, scores of young people, with the help of improved transportation and communication, have flocked from the countryside to cities. In Northeast Asia, the overall level of urbanization jumped from 33.4 percent in 1990 to 54 percent in 2010, and in Southeast Asia, from 31.6 percent in 1990 to 44.5 percent in 2010.⁸ It is only in Cambodia and Indonesia that youth remain disproportionately rural. At the same time, many millennials have moved into the service sector and away from both industry and agriculture, thereby disrupting traditional means of political mobilization. Local political machines, patron-client networks, and trade

unions are less effective at capturing young voters who are geographically mobile, plugged in to new media, and embedded in social networks.

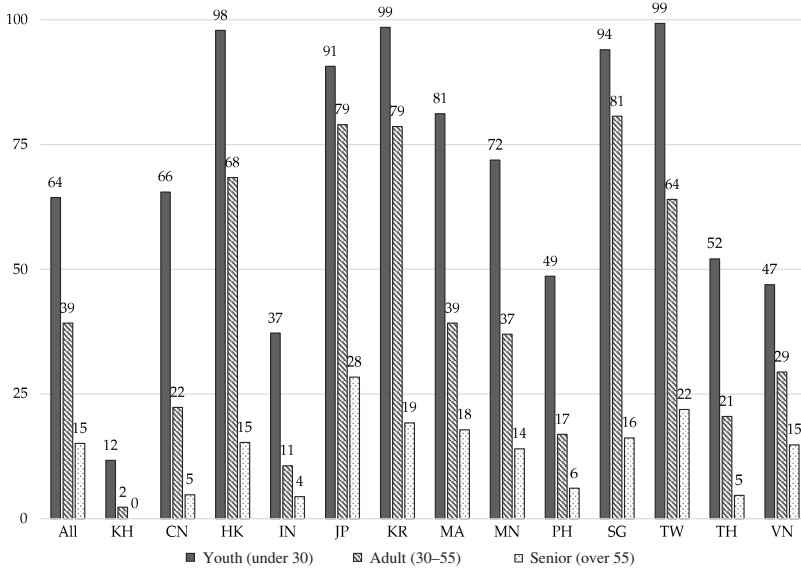
Indeed, East Asian millennials have had a markedly different experience with information and communication technologies than that of older Asians. A few decades ago, just a tiny share of the overall population used computers, and only a sliver of elites had access to the Internet. Today, East Asians of all generations are connecting with one another instantaneously via mobile devices on email, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Line, and WeChat. Young people, of course, are doing so at much higher rates. This is especially true in developing countries, where the technology gap between generations is much wider, according to data from the most recent wave of the Asian Barometer Survey. The ABS found that in developing countries such as Malaysia and Mongolia, Internet use among people under 30 is twice as high as among adults between the ages of 30 and 55, and four times as high as among adults (seniors) over 55.

At the same time, Internet use among young people in less-developed countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam lags behind that of their counterparts in the region's high-income countries. In the more developed economies of Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, for example, more than 90 percent of young people in 2012 said that they routinely went online. Mainland China leads the pack among the region's developing countries, with a great majority of the youth—a whopping 65 percent—reporting having used the Internet regularly in 2012. As Internet access becomes cheaper and more readily available, however, young people in East Asia's other developing countries are quickly catching up.

The prevalence of Internet usage has transformed how young people engage politically and fostered new forms of activism such as blogging and the forging of virtual social networks. The Internet is also changing the relationship between citizens and the state, in part through e-government and netizen networks. New forms of political engagement are reshaping the political landscape almost everywhere. In Malaysia and Singapore, the Internet has increased opportunities for the opposition and challenged the power of the state-controlled media. The diffusion of accounts of whistle-blowing in China or service complaints in Indonesia, for example, has increased pressure for good governance. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, social media have empowered young rebels to launch political protests on an unprecedented scale and with incredible velocity.

The explosion of netizen networks has severely compressed the amount of time that governments can take to respond to the demands of the moment. Millennials tend not to wait patiently until the next parliamentary session or fiscal year, much less the next election, for government action. The normal channels of vertical accountability around

FIGURE 1—INTERNET USAGE BY COHORT



Note: KH = Cambodia, CN = China, HK = Hong Kong, IN = Indonesia, JP = Japan, KR = Korea, MA = Malaysia, MN = Mongolia, PH = The Philippines, SG = Singapore, TW = Taiwan, TH = Thailand, VN = Vietnam.

Source: Asian Barometer, Third Wave Survey.

electoral cycles no longer suffice for addressing millennials’ concerns, expectations, and demands.

In most of East Asia except for Thailand, millennial voters came of age during an era of expanding individual freedoms and incremental political changes under stable political regimes. These young people have only a faint memory of the tidal wave of democratization that swept through the region during the late 1980s and 1990s, and know little of the harsh authoritarian years that came before, even in the authoritarian regimes of China and Vietnam. They are too young to have felt the euphoria and excitement that the older generations experienced when democracy was first dawning in many countries. In the hybrid regimes, they have yet to experience decisive moments of political change, given the long tenures of one-party rule.

Instead millennials have witnessed obstacles to expanding democracy. They have seen, for example, the meteoric rise of China, which has emerged as the principal architect of regional multilateral frameworks, created a more hospitable environment for other nondemocratic regimes, and exerted tremendous competitive pressures on all emerging democracies, which are facing the daunting challenges of sustaining economic vitality and controlling political corruption. As a result, millennials living in third-wave democracies tend to take the steady improvement in economic opportunities for granted and expect more out

of the political system than do older people, whose memories of harder times, both politically and economically, make them more likely to set lower benchmarks.

The Political Paradox of East Asia's Millennials

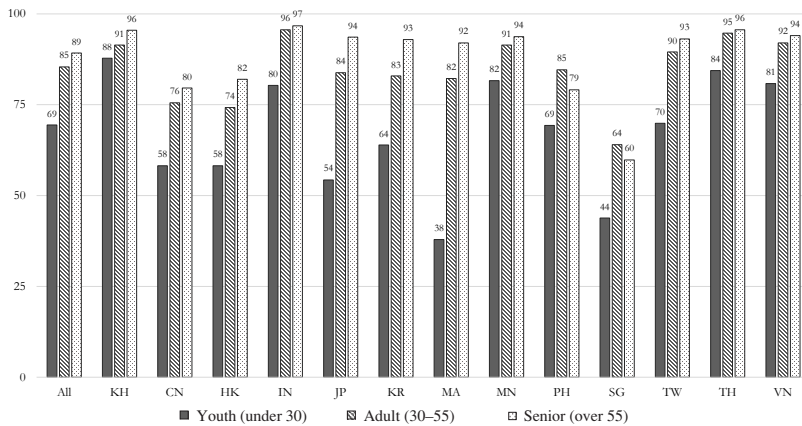
Political scientists have been studying generational differences in politics for a long time (though not through a specifically Asian lens), and generally paint the under-30 generation as either disengaged from politics, apathetic, self-interested, and “stupefied” by the Internet or, at the opposite extreme, as drivers of change. The former view comes from studies on political participation in the West that have found young people to be less involved in politics, from voting to other forms of participation, while the latter view focuses on student movements and shifting citizenship norms among young voters in the United States.⁹ In recent years, young people have played important roles in the political changes taking place in the Middle East, Southern Europe, and elsewhere. And the images of young demonstrators flooding the streets all over the world in revolt against political or economic conditions or in support of democratic transitions have captured wide media attention.

Drawing from the latest wave of the Asian Barometer, we find that millennials are both disengaged and engaged, depending on the political context. In general, they are behaviorally less engaged, cognitively more competent, and attitudinally more critical compared to earlier generations in East Asia. As economic opportunities and democratic space expand in the region and technological advances create more opportunities for youth to engage in politics, young people are becoming ever more critical in evaluating their political systems, focusing on things such as economic opportunity, social equity, and good governance.

In established democracies, young voters tend to go to the polls at lower rates than older voters, and the youth turnout rate has declined over time.¹⁰ Young people in the West are also less engaged politically and tend not to follow political news or discuss politics with family members, friends, and coworkers. The ABS finds that East Asian youth are equally disengaged from the electoral process. Young voters in every type of political regime in East Asia—democratic, hybrid, or authoritarian—vote significantly less often than other age cohorts. The youth turnout rate is generally 15 to 30 percent lower than that of older adults and senior citizens (see Figure 2). While older citizens might view voting as a civic duty, youth in the region do not. The generational difference in voting was most striking in Malaysia where only 38 percent of youth voted compared to 92 percent of seniors. Young Malaysians chose not to take part in the country's competitive elections.

According to ABS findings, East Asian millennials not only vote less, they are less psychologically engaged in politics overall than are older

FIGURE 2—ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION ACROSS AGE COHORTS



age cohorts. The ABS asked respondents if they are interested in politics, if they regularly follow political news through different media, and if they often discuss politics with family members, friends, and coworkers. The first question asked for a self-evaluation of political interest, whereas the second and third were about actual behavior driven by that psychological engagement. While 49 percent of youth in the thirteen societies surveyed indicated interest in politics and 61 percent regularly follow political news, only 6 percent discuss politics with people around them. Taken as a whole, these rates are lower than those of older age cohorts,¹¹ which seems to confirm the conventional wisdom that interest in politics increases with age.

The share of citizens older than 55 who follow political news is about 20 percentage points higher than that of younger people. According to life-cycle theory,¹² this dynamic reflects people's position in society: As they get older, have children, and become engaged members of society and the economy, their daily lives are more likely to be affected by government policies, thereby increasing their interest in politics. But the gap also stems from the ways in which young people connect to society. They are less likely, for example, to join formal organizations. Nonetheless, nearly half of all young people reported having an interest in politics and even more follow the news—sufficient evidence to rebut any assumption that East Asian youth are apathetic citizens.

What makes East Asia's millennials special as well as paradoxical is the glaring fact that they possess a much greater sense of political efficacy than do older generations despite being less active in formal channels of political participation. This finding flouts the conventional wisdom, which would have young people feeling less empowered as citizens—and therefore less motivated to participate in the political process—because they generally lack economic resources, social connections, and confidence in their engagement with politics.

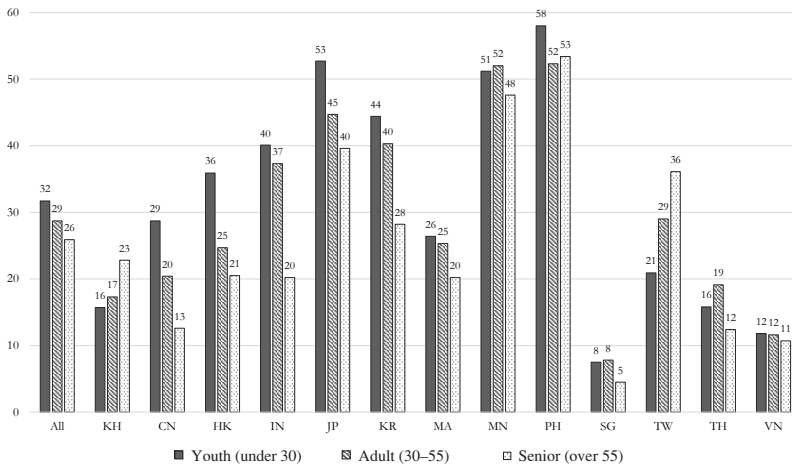
In order to assess respondents' sense of political efficacy, the ABS asked whether they agreed with the following three propositions: "I think I have the ability to participate in politics"; "sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on"; and "people like me don't have any influence over what the government does." The first two items ask for self-evaluations of respondents' sense of "internal political efficacy" or citizen empowerment, and the third reveals how respondents feel about their "external political efficacy"—that is, whether they think that they can influence the government by participating in politics.

Among young people in the societies surveyed, 47.5 percent reported feeling that they have the ability to participate in politics; 31.4 percent believing that they can understand politics; and 41.1 percent believing that they can influence politics. Compare this to only 42.8 and 34 percent of adults and seniors, respectively, who feel that they are able to participate in politics; 30.5 and 26.2 percent who believe that they understand politics; and 37.3 and 30.2 percent who believe they can influence politics, and this pattern holds up fairly consistently across the region. Young people in the region feel more empowered to participate in the political process, are more confident in their understanding of politics, and are more convinced that they can make a difference.

Why then, when the received wisdom tells us that a higher sense of political efficacy brings about higher levels of electoral participation and psychological involvement in politics, are young Asians not turning out at the polls or professing a greater interest in politics? Life-cycle theory does not provide a satisfactory explanation for this anomaly. There are three major reasons why East Asian millennials feel more politically empowered and effectual. First, they are better educated, which enhances cognitive competency in general. Second, in many but not all of these societies, they have access to infinite sources of information online and infinite opportunities to broadcast their voices and views in cyberspace.¹³ Third, millennials can quickly accumulate social capital, as they are typically embedded in numerous online social networks where they can connect at any moment with friends and other like-minded netizens. ABS findings show that, across the board in East Asia, young people outnumber their elders in participation in social networks.¹⁴ The Internet has been decisive in broadening social ties among young people.

Meanwhile, the formal channels of political participation of representative democracy look increasingly less appealing to millennials. These formal channels are neither timely nor cost-effective in the eyes of young people accustomed to airing their views and having their "voices heard" online every day. Perhaps the traditional battery of questions used to assess psychological involvement cannot fully capture the new forms of political engagement created by the digital revolution. Millennials do not just "discuss" politics face-to-face with people around

FIGURE 3—LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAY DEMOCRACY WORKS IN OUR COUNTRY



them; they share their thoughts with numerous, and often faceless, audiences. They do not simply “follow” news about politics; they ferret out any information they can from all conceivable sources whenever they are interested in something. Why join a political party or cast a ballot every four or five years when you can sign electronic petitions, participate in online opinion polls, push the feedback button after reading an article, email and tweet elected officials, or organize flash demonstrations at any time? So while millennials may, conventionally speaking, be disengaged, they are at the same time extremely socially engaged.

The ABS also confirms our prediction that Asia’s millennial voters are more critical and expect more out of their current political system than do older generations. The ABS asked respondents if they were “satisfied with the way democracy works in [their] country?” Figure 3 shows the share of each age cohort that answered “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” in each of the thirteen countries and territories. In most East Asian societies, the level of dissatisfaction was highest among the younger generation. In China and Indonesia, millennials were twice as likely to be disenchanted as seniors, who either endured the chaos of the Cultural Revolution or lived through the repressive Suharto regime. In Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines, the level of dissatisfaction registered by youth was also significantly higher than that of the adult and senior cohorts. Taiwan was the outlier, probably because the senior cohort is split by a partisan cleavage, leaving one group therein far less satisfied with democracy, while the younger generations are less divided.

What kind of changes might Asia’s millennials bring to their respective political systems? Will they become a significant prodemocracy force, pushing for further political liberalization and wider channels of popular accountability in countries under one-party authoritarian rule,

such as China and Vietnam? Will they agitate for a transition to full democracy in countries under competitive authoritarian regimes such as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore? Are they natural allies of liberal democracy, a constituency that will support the deepening of democratic reform and demand steady improvements in the quality of democratic governance in the region's emerging democracies, such as South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia?

To answer these questions, we need to combine our empirical findings with what we know about Asian millennials' political aspirations—in particular, what they expect from democracy, which in almost all Asian societies is considered to be the best form of government. The ABS investigated young people's understanding of democracy by posing a set of questions and asking respondents to choose from among four given statements the one that they considered to be most essential to democracy. The four statements related to social equity, norms and procedures, good governance, and freedom and liberty, respectively.¹⁵ Before answering, respondents were reminded that “many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy.”

Young respondents ranked “good governance” as most important, followed by “social equity,” “norms and procedures,” and, lastly, “freedom and liberty.”¹⁶ As Figure 4 shows, this pattern holds for most societies in the region.¹⁷ China, Vietnam, and Japan deviate slightly, finding “social equity” to be most important. Mongolia and the Philippines buck the regional trend, ranking “freedom and liberty” as most important. Cambodia is the only country where the youth ranked “norms and procedures” highest. By a margin of 58 to 42 percent, however, East Asian youth understand democracy more in terms of “social equity” and “good governance” than of “freedom and liberty” or “norms and procedures.”¹⁸

In short, the ABS data shown in Figure 4 suggest that Asian millennials value the outcomes of political systems more than their underlying normative principles. The results also show, however, that the overall trend is to view all four of these components as essential to democracy. This suggests that the choices of those under 30 are not mutually exclusive but rather are indicative of what they expect from democracy on the whole. ABS data also show that the socializing effect of democratic institutions on popular understandings of democracy is limited. Japanese youth, who were brought up in the only established democracy in Asia, are more inclined to conceive of democracy in terms of good governance and social equity than are young people who grew up under hybrid regimes such as Malaysia and Singapore. At the same time, despite the Chinese Communist Party's official propaganda and media censorship, Chinese millennials are just as likely as their counterparts in Asia's emerging democracies to identify norms and procedures as essential elements of democracy.

This sobering finding regarding the emphasis placed on results implies that it is not enough for the region's young democracies to provide

liberty and freedom, open political contestation, and free and fair elections; they must also deliver tangible outputs in terms of social equity and good governance in order to win over young voters. These are serious challenges given embedded corruption and rising economic inequalities. If a democracy fails at this, it risks losing legitimacy in the eyes of its young citizens. At the same time, millennials' growing political clout also poses a serious challenge to the resiliency of the region's entrenched authoritarian regimes. This generation expects not only the provision of law and order, basic necessities, and quality public services, but also cleaner, more transparent, and more responsive governments—and this will not happen without meaningful political reform.

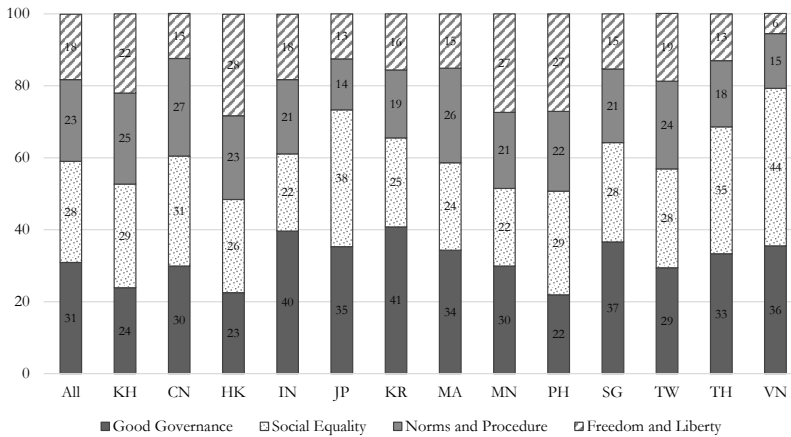
East Asia's Future Democrats

In recent years, millennials all over the world have been taking to the streets, stirred by their anger over injustices and inequality, which have been worsening due to the global financial crisis and high unemployment. Many have lost faith in the ability or desire of their governments and political systems to improve the situation. Feeling excluded from formal political processes, they have instead chosen to channel their anger and frustration through disruptive and sometimes even violent actions. Compared to the Middle East and Europe, East Asian economies have been more resilient and largely spared from economic contraction and high unemployment rates. Probably because of this, the region has seen only a few large-scale youth-led protests, notably in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

If, for the most part, East Asian millennials have yet to exercise their collective power on behalf of political reform, the potential remains for them to become agents of democratic change. They exhibit three promising characteristics of democratic citizens. First, contrary to popular belief, East Asian youth are not politically apathetic. Although many eschew traditional forms of political participation such as voting, campaigning, and joining political parties, they are more likely than their older cohorts to politically engage with others through informal political participation, social networks, and online media. Second, East Asian millennials tend to be well-educated, making them competent and confident in understanding politics and forming opinions, and they stay abreast of what is happening in government and politics. As a result, they also tend to have a higher sense of political empowerment compared to older generations. Third, millennials are just as committed as older cohorts to democracy. That support, however, is not unconditional. It is tied to their satisfaction with the output of the political system, and their expectations of quality governance and the provision of social equity are high—higher than those of older citizens. In short, East Asia's millennials have the makings of critical citizens.

Three general socioeconomic trends are shaping East Asian millen-

FIGURE 4—MEANING OF DEMOCRACY



nials' political orientation in ways that are conducive to incremental democratic change. First, they are economically more secure than their counterparts elsewhere in the world due to the region's economic dynamism and the social support provided by the family. For this reason, they are unlikely to embrace a radical political agenda *en masse* and less prone to take part in violent social movements or political protests. Second, rapid socioeconomic modernization has made Asian youth highly mobile, better informed, more worldly, and, as a result, highly demanding and more critical of government performance, especially as it pertains to economic opportunity and social equality. Third, for young people the Internet is now the key channel for spreading information, forging social networks, and mobilizing. As Internet accessibility and connectivity expand, the millennial generation will become a formidable agent of political change, as it places higher value on the rule of law, transparency, control of corruption, fairness, accountability, and government's overall responsiveness.

Most democracies in the region are facing the challenge of a growing disconnect between young people and conventional politics. Traditional mechanisms of mobilization and representation, with their informal community-based campaign organizations, hold little appeal for millennials. To entice these young voters, the political establishment must open up new political space and devise innovative ways to improve the responsiveness of the wider political system to the voices and concerns of youth.

East Asian millennials, more so than older citizens, are critical of government performance and insist on more timely governmental responses to their concerns and demands. At the same time, they have formidable potential to organize themselves in cyberspace and to shape the political and economic agenda. Thus the pressure is on for East Asian political leaders in both democratic and nondemocratic regimes to find

ways to engage with the millennial generation. It is imperative that governments upgrade and enhance e-government functionality so that officials at all levels have a versatile, efficient, and interactive online platform for citizens' input and feedback on government policies. But leaders cannot sit back and wait for pent-up frustrations to bubble to the surface; they must work proactively and continuously to identify millennials' needs, desires, and concerns, and then adjust policy priorities accordingly. If governments ignore this important group, they risk being taken by surprise at some point and incurring the wrath of a demanding and more organized youth.

NOTES

1. William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage, 2000). See also "Generational Differences in Young Adults' Life Goals, Concern for Others, and Civic Orientation, 1966–2009," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102 (May 2012): 1045–62. Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends, *Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends*, www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood.

2. See, for example, Annie Lowrey, "Europe's New Lost Generation," *Foreign Policy*, 13 July 2009, and a response by Derek Thompson, "Are Today's Youth Really a Lost Generation," *Atlantic*, 22 September 2011. See also Sarah Murray, "Youth Fights for Foothold in World of Change," *Financial Times*, 3 June 2013.

3. The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) represents the region's first collaborative initiative to develop a regional network of democracy studies based on surveying ordinary citizens. Between 2001 and 2013, the ABS conducted three rounds of comparative surveys in East Asia. Its first-round survey covered eight East Asian countries and territories—Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, and China. The scope of the second-round survey was broadened to include five more countries in the region—Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. All ABS data were collected through face-to-face interviews of randomly selected eligible voters in each participating country. The project's headquarters is cohosted by the Center for East Asia Democratic Studies at National Taiwan University and the Institute of Political Science of Academia Sinica. Interested readers can browse the project's website (www.asianbarometer.org) for methodological details. All the data presented in this article are based on the third-round survey, which was conducted between August 2010 and March 2013.

4. In most East Asian countries, the ABS Wave 3 was conducted in 2011, so we use 1981 as the cutoff birth year to identify voters under 30.

5. In the following analysis, the age boundary of millennial voters may vary from country to country due to differences in voting age, ranging from 17 years old in Indonesia to 21 years old in Malaysia and Singapore.

6. United Nations Development Programme, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia: Exploring Political Attitudes of East and South-East Asian Youth Through the Asian Barometer Survey* (Bangkok: UNDP, 2014), 7.

7. UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011: Regional Overview—East Asia and the Pacific* (Paris: UNESCO, 2011), 4, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001917/191719E.pdf>.

8. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ES-

CAP) Online Statistical Database, which can be accessed at www.unescap.org/stat/data/statdb/DataExplorer.aspx.

9. See Russell Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: CQ Press, 2008); on the first view, see Mark Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (New York: Tarcher, 2009). On the second, see Jack A. Goldstone, "The New Population Bomb: The Four Megatrends That Will Change the World," *Foreign Affairs* 89 (January–February 2010): 31–43; Jack A. Goldstone, Eric P. Kaufmann, and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *Political Demography: How Population Changes Are Reshaping International Security and National Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Michael Connery, *Youth to Power: How Today's Young Voters Are Building Tomorrow's Progressive Majority* (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2008).

10. James Sloam, "New Voice, Less Equal: The Civic and Political Engagement of Young People in the United States and Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (April 2014): 663–88.

11. UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia* (2014), 20–21.

12. Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and Jae-on Kim, "Political Participation and the Life Cycle," *Comparative Politics* 6 (April 1974): 319–40.

13. FT-Telefónica Global Millennials Survey also confirms this. See for example, Sarah Murray, "Transition: Technology Puts Power in the Hands of the Many" *Financial Times*, 5 June 2013, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/cb619b24-c848-11e2-8cb7-00144feab7de.htm?siteedition=intl#axzz3R2WaEVmA.

14. Our survey data show that throughout East Asia, greater numbers of youth had social networks than the older cohorts; see UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia* (2014), 27.

15. The "social equity" choices were: 1) Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor; 2) basic necessities, like food, clothes, and shelter, are provided for all; 3) government ensures job opportunities for all; and 4) people receive state aid if they are unemployed. The "norms and procedures" choices were: 1) People choose the government leaders in free and fair election; 2) the legislature has oversight over the government; 3) multiple parties compete fairly in the election; and 4) the court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power. The "good government" choices were: 1) Government does not waste any public money; 2) government provides people with quality public services; 3) government ensures law and order; and 4) politics is clean and free of corruption. The "freedom and liberty" choices were: 1) People are free to express their political views openly; 2) people are free to organize political groups; 3) Media is free to criticize the things government does; and 4) people have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations.

16. With four questions, each component has an equal chance of being placed the first, second, third, and last on the response grid. In this way, we neutralize the order effect.

17. The percentages shown here represent on average how likely a particular component is to be identified by young respondents in a given country as the most essential characteristic of democracy. The answers of "don't know" or "cannot choose" are not included in this analysis.

18. It is also worth noting that Asia's older generations' understanding of democracy also follows the same pattern. See Yun-han Chu, Min-hua Huang, and Jie Lu, "Understanding of Democracy in East Asian Societies," ABS Working Paper Series, No. 84 (2013), www.asianbarometer.org/newenglish/publications/workingpapers/no.84.pdf.