



Political Confidence and Its Effect on Democracy



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Introduction / Background

Public support for democracy is an important variable to measure the extent of a functioning society. The World Value Survey (WVS) is an encompassing database which provides information through cross-national surveys on people's trust, how people view various issues regarding government performance, level of confidence in political organizations, as well as other socioeconomic data. Specifically, questions measuring peoples' view on the Democratic Political System and the public's evaluations of the government creates a diverse database to measure confidence. In South Korea, data "found that the rule of law and vertical accountability are most lacking while freedom and competition least lacking in Korean democracy" (Park & Bae, 2008, pg.26). This conclusion was derived from the responses of the public's fulfillment in various government qualities. The public's opinions are one of the most essential measures of the legitimacy of democracy because their attitudes reflect on the performance and possible corruption in their government. This data helps to formulate a society's attitude towards democracy and shows distinctions between variables measuring the quality of democratic governance over multiple years. For example, a dataset from the V-dem project finds "a consistent downward trend across every dimension of democracy in South Korea over the past ten years" (Kim, 2016, pg.14). This association could help solve theories behind decreasing confidence in democracies and provide an explanation of how democracy has evolved in South Korea. Although there might be some confounding variables that could bias such a large database, these surveys allow researchers to obtain authentic information to find consistencies and develop comparisons measuring the performance of democracies and their effect on public support.

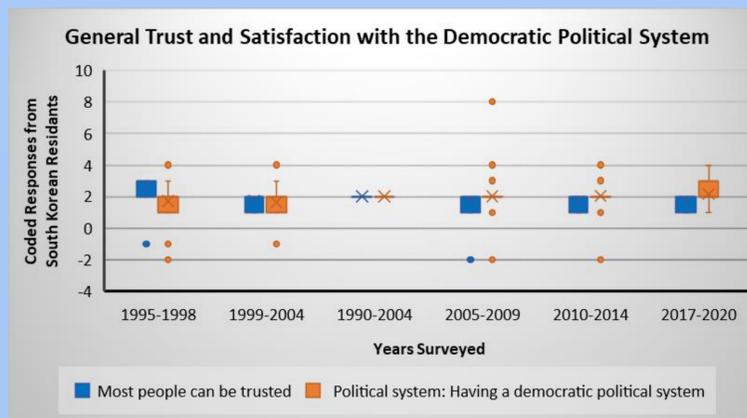
Abstract

Public confidence in democracy is on a consistent decline in East Asia. Specifically, South Korea seemed to have a successful transition from an authoritarian government to democracy in the late 1980s, but many are labeling South Korea as a flawed democracy in its current state. In this study, we are looking for some possible explanations for this conclusion through the relationship between 3 distinct variables: quality of government performance, confidence in government organization, and general trust of South Korean residents. Does government performance affect public confidence in democracy? Does the conduction of major government organizations affect public confidence in democracy? Do these variables provide evidence for South Korea's flawed democracy? To investigate these research questions, we will conduct a large-scale empirical investigation with the data from South Korea over a span of two decades (1995-2020). To operate this study, we will collect global-level data using cross-national surveys measuring people's trust, how people view various issues regarding government performance, and level of confidence in political organizations. After we obtain enough samples of data, Excel will organize these variables according to the date of collection, allowing us to analyze how these variables change and predict what factors influence these developments. Finally, we will transform the data in excel into a 5-number summary to examine our theoretical expectations. This research is ongoing, but we hope to prove that there is a direct correlation between political confidence and trust in the Democratic Political System.

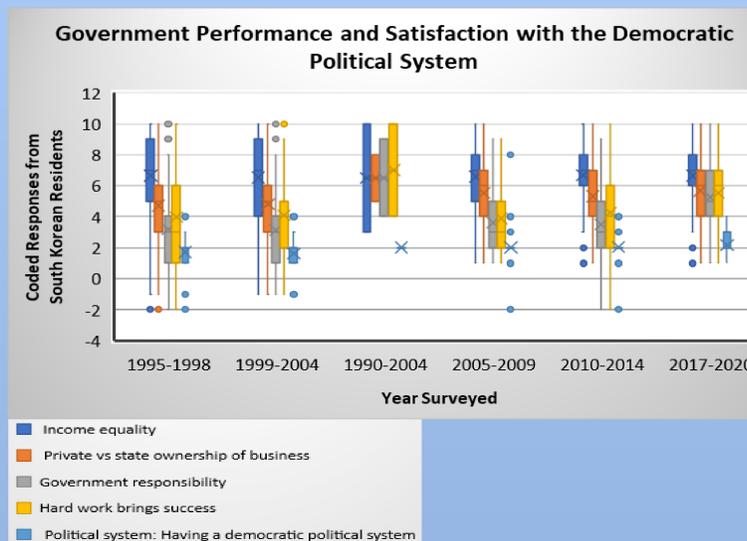
Methods

- Subjects / Sample Size: South Korean Residents (20 years or older), sample size (1200 respondents)
- Sampling Method: Cluster (Probabilities Proportional to Size Measure)
- Data Collection: Quantitative and qualitative data collected from the World Value Survey Database
- Data Analysis: Data cleansing, production of three Box & Whisker Plots, use of Data Analysis Tool to generate Summary Statistics for each set of Variables
- Conclusions: Generated Summary Statistics deriving conclusions off the Box & Whisker Plots to evaluate my hypotheses

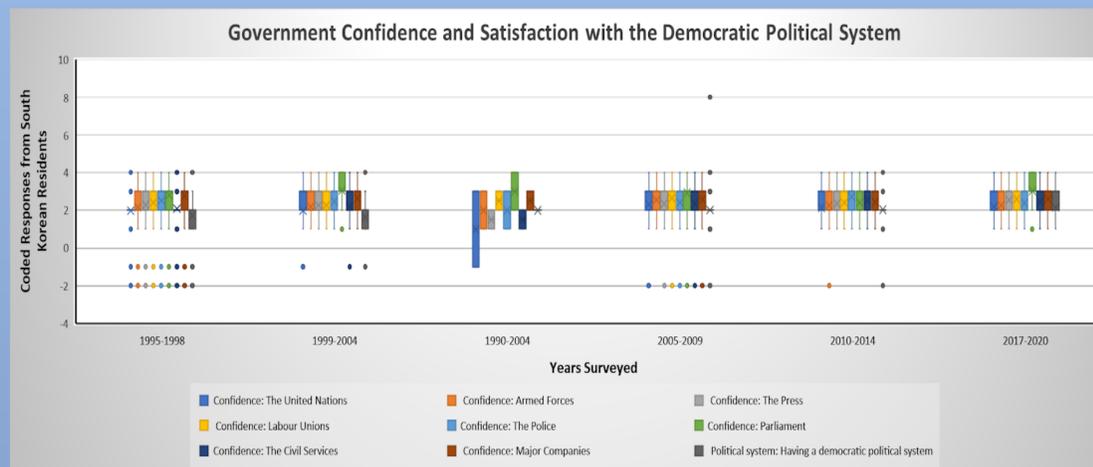
Results



- This graph shows an aggregation of responses from two survey questions
- "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"
- "Would you say having a democratic political system it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?"



- This graph shows an aggregation of responses from five survey questions with the coded responses closer to 10 seen as more democratic
- "Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right"



- This graph shows an aggregation of responses from eight survey questions with the coded responses closer to 10 seen as greater confidence
- "I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?"

Conclusion

These results suggest that there is an association between general trust and democracy in South Korea. Further analyses shows a direct correlation with Government Performance and views on Democracy. Starting from 2005, we see an increase in response value in both the qualities of Government Performance and Views on Democracy. Similarly with Government Confidence, as trust in political organizations start to decrease from 2005, the response values for both variables increases. Basically, the increase in response values indicate that the public is answering "fairly bad" for how they view the democratic political system and answering with low confidence in Government performance and political organizations. Although South Korea's gradually transitioned from an authoritarian style government to a democracy, the public's confidence in democracy seems to be declining. We hope to investigate more socioeconomic factors in the future as research indicates economic health as an influential factor for changes in Democracy.

References

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