



Article

Delegative democratic attitudes: Theory and evidence from the Asian barometer survey

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the factors influencing whether individuals have delegative democratic attitudes (i.e. supporting strong executive power with little oversight from the legislature). Roughly up to 50% of voters in East Asia have delegative democratic attitudes, which are known to undermine democratic governance in new democracies. Understanding delegative democratic attitudes is thus closely linked to the question of why delegative democracy persists. Our theoretical analysis suggests that delegative democratic attitudes are associated with low support for democracy, a perception of the strong influence of interest groups on policy, and trust in a national leader who can counter the power of interest groups. Using Asian Barometer Survey data from East Asian countries, 2001–2011, we confirm the hypotheses. Our findings imply that transforming a delegative democracy into a consolidated democracy requires promoting support for democracy and preventing interest group dominance over public policy.

Keywords

Delegative democracy, support for democracy, interest group politics, Asianbarometer survey

Introduction

Delegative democracy—a variant of the democratic regime—operates under a general principle that elected presidents govern their countries as they see fit, and their decrees substitute for legislation as the main source of policy (O'Donnell, 1994). Prevalent in developing democracies, delegative democratic attitudes do not support the legislature and judiciary because these institutions are unnecessary

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impediments to the authority that has been delegated to the presidents and their governments (Larkins, 1998; Walker, 2009).

Because delegative democratic attitudes undermine democratic governance, understanding voters' attitudes on delegative democracy is closely linked to the question of why delegative democracy emerges and persists. Delegative democratic attitudes differ from (1) authoritarian attitudes, because delegative persons delegate the full authority to the president in free elections and from (2) liberal democratic attitudes, because delegative persons subordinate checks and balances to the policy preferences of the elected president (Larkins, 1998; O'Donnell, 1994). For instance, in a study of three Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Nicaragua), Walker (2009) found that delegative democratic persons are more likely to use presidential performance as a yardstick for evaluating the legislature and judiciary than are liberal democratic persons. Because delegative democratic attitudes do not rigorously evaluate the legislature or judiciary, delegative persons tend to support these two institutions more than liberal persons.

Delegative democratic attitudes are often reinforced by deep socioeconomic crises inherited from previous authoritarian regimes (Kubicek, 1994; O'Donnell, 1994).¹ If a majority of voters share delegative democratic attitudes about the proper exercise of political authority, delegative democracy could become a dominant form of governance. For instance, delegative democracy in Argentina emerged when the voters demanded a strong president amid the economic crisis of the late 1980s. This allowed President Menem to exercise unchecked authority by issuing decrees of necessity and urgency that replaced congressional action (Larkins, 1998). In addition, the judiciary, often siding with the government, was instrumental in weakening the separation of powers during the 1989–1996 period.

Similarly, voters in East Asian countries that experienced authoritarian regimes until recent years are more likely to support delegative democracy if economic situations deteriorate. Note that delegative democratic attitudes are known to impede the consolidation of democratic governance in new democracies. More specifically, a high level of support for unrestrained executive power—while contributing to the stability of the regime—reduces the horizontal institutional accountability that is necessary to consolidate democratic governance (Walker, 2009). Accordingly, examining delegative democratic attitudes in East Asia can give us a clue as to why many East Asian countries have yet to become fully consolidated democracies.

Previous studies have focused on the nature of delegative democracy and their effects on democratic governance (e.g. Larkins, 1998; O'Donnell, 1994; Walker, 2009). With a few exceptions, however, previous research has not examined the question of which individuals (or countries) have delegative democratic tendencies. Using the World Values Survey data drawn from nine Latin America countries, Gronke and Levitt (2005) examined individual-level variables for delegative attitudes, including, for instance, support for democracy and socioeconomic status.² In a study of 11 Latin American countries from 1980 to 2010, González (2014) found that the probability of having a delegative democracy decreases with support for democracy and confidence in politicians. These studies, however, do not provide the theoretical mechanism connecting individual attitudes toward politics and democracy to the delegative democratic attitudes.

Although most studies have focused on delegative democracy in Latin America, some recent studies have examined delegative democratic tendencies in other regions. For instance, despite having a parliamentary regime with proportional representation, contemporary Turkey, under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, shows the distinctive patterns of delegative democracy, including “unchecked powers legitimized through a crisis-driven narrative and clientelism” (Taş, 2015). Other studies have noted that elected leaders in post-communist countries (e.g. President Yeltsin in Russia, President Kravchuk in the Ukraine) used their democratic legitimacy as an excuse for authoritarian behavior, undermining the consolidation of democratic governance

(Kubicek, 1994; Tsygankov, 1998). No previous study has provided systematic work on delegative democratic attitudes in non-Latin American countries.

This paper builds on the literature by examining the factors influencing whether individuals have delegative democratic attitudes. We first provide a theoretical model that explains individual tendency to support delegative democracy. In spirit, our model is related to the literature that has examined the effects that interest groups have in influencing public policy (e.g. Baron, 1994; Chamon and Kaplan, 2013; Denzau and Munger, 1986; Grossman and Helpman, 1996; Holcombe and Boudreaux, 2015; Tanzi and Davoodi, 1997). In these studies, legislators provide policy services to special interests in exchange for campaign contributions (or even bribes) to the extent that voters are less than fully informed about the policy issue (or about the legislators' activities).³ For example, local government zoning provides opportunities for rent-seeking by construction interests (Kyriacou et al., 2015).

Thus, some voters may favor unrestrained leaders, unchecked by the legislature, who can counter the power of interest groups that control the legislature (Chong and Gradstein, 2008; Walker, 2009). Our theoretical model suggests that delegative democratic attitudes are associated with low support for democracy, a perception of the strong influence of interest groups on policy outcomes, and high trust in the national government. Previous research has suggested that support for democracy would lead people to support democratic values (including institutional checks and balances), and that voters who support checks and balances are less likely to support delegation of full authority to the president (González, 2014; Gronke and Levitt, 2005; Walker, 2009). (In our theoretical model, voters incur implicit costs of supporting the leader with unchecked authority.) Note also that delegative democratic tendencies are often unleashed by deep social and economic predicaments that generate a strong sense of urgency (O'Donnell, 1994). To delegative voters, solving such a crisis would require a strong leader who is insulated from the political pressures of political parties and interest groups, because politicians who sell out to special interests are seen as slowing necessary reform measures (Kubicek, 1994). Thus, delegative voters have a higher level of confidence in the president and his national government (including the team of well-qualified experts) who would save the country by restraining the power of special interests.

To test the hypotheses suggested by the model of delegative democratic attitude, we use Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) data for the 2001–2011 period from over 20,000 respondents across 10 East Asian countries: Cambodia; Indonesia; Japan; South Korea; Malaysia; Mongolia; Philippines; Singapore; Taiwan; and Thailand. Our dataset contains detailed questions on individual attitudes toward politics and economic policies, and it provides more direct and diverse measures of delegative democratic attitudes than previous studies.⁴ We measure delegative democratic attitudes using responses to the questions, including: (1) "If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things;" (2) "We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things;" (3) "The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if they have to ignore the established procedure;" and (4) "When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation." On average, about 50%, 24%, 35%, and 40% of respondents have delegative democratic attitudes based on items (1) through (4), respectively.⁵

Our empirical methodology uses an ordered probit model to identify the characteristics of voters who support delegative democracy. The empirical results of this paper confirm that individuals with delegative democratic attitudes tend to: (1) have low support for democracy; (2) perceive great policy influence of interest groups; and (3) trust the national government. Delegative democratic individuals are also less likely to contact legislative representatives to deal with problems concerning government policies or officials.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 explains the model that identifies the determinants of delegative democratic attitudes. In Section 3, we describe the data sources, explain our empirical strategy, and present the results. Section 4 concludes and discusses policy implications.

Model of delegative democratic attitudes

The intuition behind the model in this section is simple. If local representatives sell out to special interests rather than serving their voters, some of the voters may want to delegate the full authority to the president, unchecked by the legislature.

Consider a legislator who serves various interest groups by providing a composite of public policies x . She does so with probability $p > 0$. Thus, with probability $1 - p$, the legislator provides policy composite y favored by her voters (i.e. geographic constituency).⁶ The idea is that politicians sell out to interest groups but are constrained by the preferences of the voters (Denzau and Munger, 1986; Grossman and Helpman, 1996; Prat, 2002).

Let a voter i receive $u_i(x)$ from the policy services to the interest groups and $u_i(y)$ from the services to the geographic constituency. Thus, voter i gains expected utility $p \cdot u_i(x) + (1 - p) \cdot u_i(y)$. We assume that $u_i(y) > u_i(x)$. Normally we expect that $u_i(x) > 0$ because interest groups tend to fund legislators whose geographic constituencies are in favor of a policy (Denzau and Munger, 1986). It is possible, however, that $u_i(x) < 0$ if voter i is opposed to the policy x .

Against the legislative outcomes, voter i may support delegative democracies, in which the president's decrees replace the legislator's activities as the source of public policy (Larkins, 1998; O'Donnell, 1994; Walker, 2009). The president (and the national government) reduces the probability of interest group dominance over policy, say, from p to $q (< p)$. This allows voter i to capture a higher level of expected utility $q \cdot u_i(x) + (1 - q) \cdot u_i(y)$, but incurs the implicit cost λ_i of supporting the leader with unchecked authority. As λ_i increases, the voter assigns a higher value to democracy (e.g. checks and balances).⁷

Thus, voter i rationally prefers delegative democratic outcomes to legislative outcomes if and only if

$$p \cdot u_i(x) + (1 - p) \cdot u_i(y) < q \cdot u_i(x) + (1 - q) \cdot u_i(y) - \lambda_i + \delta_i \quad (1)$$

where δ_i denotes the non-policy bias of voter i in favor of the president, including an evaluation of the leader's personalities, competency, and reputation for keeping promises (Tridimas and Winer, 2005).

To more clearly see the delegative attitudes, we rearrange (1)

$$\delta_i + (p - q) \cdot [u_i(y) - u_i(x)] > \lambda_i \quad (2)$$

The left-hand side of inequality (2) consists of two terms: the non-policy preference for the leader δ_i , and the net gain in expected utility from policy under delegative democracy (i.e. the increase in the likelihood of having policy y , or $p - q$, multiplied by the extent to which the voter prefers policy y to x , or $u_i(y) - u_i(x)$). For a voter with delegative attitude, these two terms combined must be greater than her support for democracy λ_i on the right-hand side.⁸

To illustrate the comparative statistics predictions of the model, we assume that the distribution of δ_i is uniform on $[0, \delta_i^{\max}]$. From (2), the probability F that voter i supports delegative democracy is given by

$$\begin{aligned}
 F &= \text{prob}\{\delta_i > \lambda_i - (p - q) \cdot [u_i(y) - u_i(x)]\} \\
 &= 1 - \frac{1}{\delta_i^{\max}} \cdot \{\lambda_i - (p - q) \cdot [u_i(y) - u_i(x)]\}
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{3}$$

Equation (3) indicates that, given $u_i(y) - u_i(x)$, voter i 's attitude toward delegative democracy is to take the reduced form $F = F(\bar{\lambda}_i, p^+ - q)$, where each argument influences i 's decision to support the unrestrained leader. Specifically, a voter with a higher level of support for democracy (i.e. higher λ_i) is less likely to support delegative democracy, other things equal. This is consistent with Walker (2009), who found that a majority of individuals who support democracy tend to express a liberal democratic attitude rather than a delegative attitude.

On the contrary, an increase in $(p - q)$ increases the tendency of a voter to support delegative democracy. Note that the difference between p and q reflects the voter's political information about the extent to which: (1) interest groups dominate government policies (i.e. higher p); and (2) the president restrains the power of interest groups (i.e. lower q).

Holding q constant, for instance, greater perceived policy influence of interest groups (higher p) increases the support for delegative democracy. Voters with higher p are also likely to have low confidence in their local representatives because they sell out to special interests. Note that, by contrast, liberal democratic persons are less likely to ascribe the performance of their representative to interest groups (Booth and Seligson, 2005; Walker, 2009).

Similarly, holding p constant, a delegative voter expects a larger reduction in interest group influence (lower q). This implies that delegative persons have a higher level of confidence in the president (and the national government) who can counter the power of interest groups over the representatives.

Thus, we have the following hypotheses

$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{\partial F}{\partial \text{ support for democracy}} &< 0 \\
 \frac{\partial F}{\partial \text{ interest group influence}} &> 0 \\
 \frac{\partial F}{\partial \text{ trust in government}} &> 0
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{4}$$

In summary, our simple model identifies distinctive characteristics of delegative democratic individuals, including low support for democracy, a perception of strong interest group influence, and high trust in national government. Our empirical analysis in the next section confirms these hypotheses.

Estimation evidence

Estimation strategy

Empirical model and data description. To provide empirical evidence for the hypotheses suggested by our theory, we estimate the following equation.

$$y_i^* = D_i' \beta + X_{ict}' \gamma + \varepsilon_i,
 \tag{5}$$

where subscripts i , c , and t denote the individual, country, and year, respectively. The latent variable y_i^* represents i 's tendency to support delegative democracy. D_i is the vector of the main determinants of delegative democratic attitudes, including individual i 's tendency to support democracy (-); perception of interest group influence (+); trust in the national government (+); and confidence in local representatives with respect to government policies (-), with the predicted signs of β in parentheses.

The vector X_{ict} represents a set of control variables including age, gender, education level, employment status, marital status, subjective social economic status, tendency to obey authority, tendency to trust others, perceived level of corruption, real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, country dummy, and time dummy. Vector ε_i is the error term.

We use the data from the ABS conducted in 2001–2003, 2005–2008, and 2010–2011. The ABS conducts a comparative survey of citizens (15 years or older) for their attitudes and opinion about politics and democracy as well as their socioeconomic and demographic information.⁹ The dataset covers >50,000 respondents from 13 East Asian countries (or regions): Cambodia; China; Hong Kong; Indonesia; Japan; South Korea; Malaysia; Mongolia; Philippines; Singapore; Taiwan; Thailand; and Vietnam.¹⁰ Because we examine citizens' attitudes toward political institutions in the democratic setting, we restrict the sample countries to either emerging or established democracies based on Polity IV; that is, we exclude China, Hong Kong, and Vietnam. In addition, because this paper focuses on voters' attitudes toward delegative democracy, we limit our sample to the respondents over voting age and exclude those who did not vote in the most recent election.¹¹ Our sample includes about 20,000 respondents.

Delegative democratic attitudes, y_i^* , are measured using the following questions in the ABS:

- Question 1: "If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things."
- Question 2: "We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things."
- Question 3: "The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if they have to ignore the established procedure."
- Question 4: "When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation."

The dependent variables have integer values with the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; and 4 = strongly agree. Table 1 presents the shares of respondents who either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" to the four questions by country and interview year. On average, about 50%, 24%, 35%, and 40% of respondents in our sample countries had delegative democratic attitudes based on Questions 1 through 4, respectively. This shows that delegative attitudes are widespread in Asian democracies. Note that Question 2 may also refer to an authoritarian attitude because delegative persons delegate the authority to the president in free elections. Question 4 reflects the idea that delegative attitudes are more common in times of crisis (O'Donnell, 1994; Weyland, 1996).

We measure the main characteristics of the delegative democratic individuals D_i by using the following questions:

- democratic: "To what extent would you want our country to be democratic now?" 1. Complete dictatorship – 10. Complete democracy;
- powerfew: "The nation is run by a powerful few and ordinary citizens cannot do much about it." 1. Strongly disagree – 4. Strongly agree;

Table 1. Delegative democratic attitudes across countries and interview years (weighted) (%).

Country	Interview year	Dep 1	Dep 2	Dep 3	Dep 4
Japan	2003	37.9	13.2	31.9	29.1
	2007	36.9	16.8	48.4	47.7
	2011	36.1	14.5	–	30.0
South Korea	2003	46.1	16.3	23.8	27.1
	2006	36.8	12.0	20.5	22.2
	2011	36.8	17.3	–	27.0
Mongolia	2006	60.0	64.1	48.9	52.5
	2010	54.5	55.3	–	35.1
Philippines	2002	49.4	31.9	38.6	38.2
	2006	55.3	38.0	46.3	45.0
	2010	63.8	33.0	–	34.3
Taiwan	2001	70.4	20.8	16.2	23.2
	2006	63.3	18.4	11.9	15.3
	2010	58.7	15.9	–	27.6
Thailand	2002	52.5	22.6	56.6	61.7
	2006	52.4	24.0	50.9	65.5
	2010	45.2	24.4	–	58.7
Indonesia	2006	37.3	10.0	12.4	15.7
	2011	38.1	15.1	–	35.7
Singapore	2005	50.7	8.9	53.6	70.2
	2011	46.5	9.9	–	50.1
Cambodia	2011	52.6	20.8	–	46.5
Malaysia	2007	57.5	32.6	33.8	46.8
	2011	48.8	34.7	–	43.6

Notes: Delegative democratic attitudes are defined as the shares of respondents who either “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” with the following measures. Dep 1: If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things. Dep 2: We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things. Dep 3: The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if they have to ignore the established procedure. Dep 4: When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.

- Olson: “Could you identify the three most important organizations or formal groups you belong to?” Share of respondents (in the same age cohort) who belong to the Olson-type organizations;
- trustgov: “How much trust do you have in the national government?” 1. None at all – 4. A great deal;
- contact: “In the past three years, have you never, once, or more than once contacted elected officials or legislative representative because of personal, family, or neighborhood problems, or problems with government officials and policies?” Never = 0, once = 1, more than once = 2.

These variables are measures of the support for democracy (democratic), the level of perceived interest group influence (powerfew and Olson), the trust in national government (trustgov), and the confidence in local representatives (contact). Because powerfew and Olson are available for selected periods, we report the results in separate regressions. Olson measures the extent to which voters perceive the influence of special interest groups among their age peers. Among the Olson-type

organizations are political parties, labor unions, farmer unions, professional organizations, and business associations.¹² These rent-seeking organizations can impose disproportionate costs on society by lobbying for inefficient government policies, such as legal barriers to entry and tax breaks (Olson (1982) quoted from Knack and Keefer (1997)). Note also that contact indirectly captures the confidence in local representatives.¹³

Other control variables reflect previous research on delegative attitudes and democratic support (e.g. Gronke and Levitt, 2005; Walker, 2009). The variables include age (age), gender (male), education level (college), employment status (unemp), marital status (married), subjective social status (social), and real GDP per capita (GDP per capita_c).¹⁴ We also include country fixed effects to control for the time-invariant country-level characteristics. All the variables described in this subsection are summarized in Table 2.

Identification. In estimating equation (5), we use the ordered probit estimator that reflects the ordinal nature of our dependent variables. An ordered probit estimator fully uses the ranking information of the scaled dependent variables, such as intermediate values between strong agreement and strong disagreement. We use robust standard errors clustered by country because random disturbances are potentially correlated within countries. In addition, to obtain representative results, we use information on the weight in the survey in implementing the ordered probit.

In identifying the variables of interest, we need to consider potential endogeneity problems caused by omitted variables because an individual tendency to support delegative democracy is potentially related to unobserved individual characteristics. However, because the ABS is not a panel dataset, we are unable to control for unobserved time-invariant characteristics (by using a panel approach). Instead, we include three attitudinal variables that are most relevant to an individual tendency to support delegative democracy: authoritarian tendency; tendency to trust others; and perceived corruption.

The authoritarian tendency (auth) is measured by the responses to “Even if parents’ demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.” If a respondent tends to obey authority, then it affects not only the tendency to support the strong leader but the tendency to support democracy (democratic).

The tendency to trust others (most) is measured by the responses to “Generally speaking, would you say most people can be trusted?” and the perceived level of corruption (witness) is measured by the response to “Have you or anyone you know personally witnessed an act of corruption or bribe-taking by a politician or government official in the past year?” Trust and perceived corruption are potentially associated with both the tendency to support delegative democracy and trust in government (trustgov).

Less critical than the omitted variable bias, there is a potential problem of reverse causality. For instance, if a voter with delegative democratic attitude is less likely to support democracy, the result might be a downward bias in the estimates. Because we focus on multiple factors of delegative voters, it is not feasible to find a valid set of instrumental variables, which potentially limits our results.

Estimation results

Table 3 reports the ordered probit results. The dependent variable is the response to Question 1: “If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.” The estimated coefficients in column (1) of Table 3 imply that support for democracy (democratic) has a negative and significant association with the probability of supporting delegative democracy. Thus, consistent with our hypotheses, voters who support democratic values (i.e. checks and balances) are less likely to support delegation of the full authority to the president.

Table 2. Summary statistics (weighted).

Variable	Description	Mean	Standard deviation
Dep 1	If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.	2.46	0.83
Dep 2	We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.	1.96	0.88
Dep 3	The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if have to ignore the established procedure.	2.21	0.87
Dep 4	When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.	2.22	0.90
democratic	To what extent would you want our country to be democratic now? 1. Complete dictatorship – 10. Complete democracy.	8.39	1.84
powerfew	The nation is run by a powerful few and ordinary citizens cannot do much about it. 1. Strongly disagree – 4. Strongly agree	2.62	0.89
Olson	Share of respondents (in the same age cohort) who belong to the Olson-type organizations.	0.25	0.19
contact	In the past three years, have you never, once, or more than once done the following because of personal, family, or neighborhood problems, or problems with government officials and policies? Contacted elected officials or legislative representative. Never = 0; once = 1; more than once = 2	0.24	0.61
trust in government	How much trust do you have in the national government? None at all = 1; not very much = 2; quite a lot of trust = 3; a great deal = 4	2.47	0.82
unemp	Unemployed = 1	0.31	0.46
college	Bachelor's degree = 1	0.16	0.36
married	Married = 1	0.84	0.37
social	Subjective social status Lowest status = 1, ..., highest status = 5	2.86	0.91
age	Calculated by using the birth year.	44.43	14.52
gender	Male = 1	0.49	0.50
most	Generally speaking, would you say "most people can be trusted" or "that you must be very careful in dealing with people?"	0.26	0.44
auth	Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask. None at all = 1; not very much = 2; quite a lot of trust = 3; a great deal = 4	2.37	0.90
witness	Have you or anyone you know personally witnessed an act of corruption or bribe-taking by a politician or government official in the past year? Witnessed=1	0.23	0.42
ln (GDP per capita)	Gross domestic product per capita in natural logs	-0.20	2.21

In addition, trust in national government (*trustgov*) has a robust positive effect on the tendency to support delegative democracy. On the contrary, respondents who contacted elected representatives more than once (*contact2*) are less likely to support delegative democracy. Contacting elected representatives just once (*contact1*) is not significantly related to the support for delegative democracy, however. This simply means that direct lobbying is more effective when voters have an

Table 3. Determinants of delegative democratic attitudes. Dependent variable: If the government is constantly checked (i.e. monitored and supervised) by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
	Dependent var.	Marginal effects			
		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
democratic	-0.00924** (0.00446)	0.00184** (0.000877)	0.00184** (0.000896)	-0.00220** (0.00110)	-0.00149** (0.000678)
trust gov	0.0947*** (0.0230)	-0.0189*** (0.00457)	-0.0189*** (0.00512)	0.0225*** (0.00620)	0.0153*** (0.00351)
contact1	0.0420 (0.0299)	-0.00821 (0.00587)	-0.00855 (0.00622)	0.00982 (0.00716)	0.00694 (0.00493)
contact2	-0.0580** (0.0287)	0.0119* (0.00642)	0.0112** (0.00530)	-0.0140** (0.00687)	-0.00905* (0.00483)
auth	0.0886*** (0.0219)	-0.0177*** (0.00367)	-0.0176*** (0.00526)	0.0210*** (0.00604)	0.0143*** (0.00297)
most	-0.0782*** (0.0215)	0.0160*** (0.00529)	0.0152*** (0.00402)	-0.0189*** (0.00554)	-0.0123*** (0.00378)
witness	0.0304 (0.0393)	-0.00601 (0.00793)	-0.00610 (0.00779)	0.00717 (0.00898)	0.00495 (0.00673)
unemp	-0.00271 (0.0198)	0.000542 (0.00398)	0.000540 (0.00391)	-0.000645 (0.00469)	-0.000437 (0.00320)
college	-0.225*** (0.0579)	0.0489*** (0.0138)	0.0403*** (0.0113)	-0.0563*** (0.0166)	-0.0329*** (0.00831)
married	0.00175 (0.0193)	-0.000349 (0.00386)	-0.000348 (0.00384)	0.000416 (0.00459)	0.000282 (0.00311)
agea	-0.00503 (0.00508)	0.00100 (0.00102)	0.00100 (0.00101)	-0.00119 (0.00121)	-0.000811 (0.000809)
agea2	5.69e-05 (5.30e-05)	-1.14e-05 (1.05e-05)	-1.13e-05 (1.06e-05)	1.35e-05 (1.27e-05)	9.17e-06 (8.36e-06)
male	-0.0850*** (0.0181)	0.0169*** (0.00383)	0.0169*** (0.00441)	-0.0201*** (0.00512)	-0.0137*** (0.00311)
ln (GDP per capita)	-0.558** (0.227)	0.111** (0.0537)	0.111** (0.0438)	-0.133** (0.0543)	-0.0900** (0.0434)
Obs.	19,900	19,900	19,900	19,900	19,900

Notes: All columns include country and year dummies. For brevity, subjective social status variables are not reported. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

ongoing relationship with local politicians, and such voters would not delegate the authority to the president. Thus, delegative persons are more likely to trust the president and the national government who restrain the power of special interests and less likely to have confidence in (i.e. less likely to contact) elected representatives who sell out to special interests.

Among the control variables, authoritarian tendency (auth) has a positive association with the tendency to support delegative democracy, whereas trust in others (most) is negatively associated with delegative democratic attitudes. The authoritarian tendency is most relevant in East Asia,

where Confucian values emphasize obedience to authority. In addition, male gender, college education, and real GDP per capita (at the country level) have a robust negative effect on delegative attitudes. Note that college education implies greater political knowledge, which is associated with less support for delegative democracy. This is consistent with the finding that people with higher education are less likely to link their support for the legislature to their support for the president (Walker, 2009). The coefficients on other control variables are statistically insignificant.

Columns 2 through 5 of Table 3 show the marginal effects of voter characteristics on the probability of choosing each class of the dependent variable y^* : strongly disagree; somewhat disagree; somewhat agree; and strongly agree. The marginal effect analysis shows that the estimated coefficients on the variables of interest in column 1 are not driven by the impact of voter characteristics for any one class, such as the probability of choosing “strongly agree.”

In terms of the magnitude of the effects, evaluated at the mean, a change in support for democracy from complete dictatorship to complete democracy reduces the probability of choosing “somewhat agree” with delegative democracy by about 2.2% points. On the contrary, an increase in trust in national government from “not very much” to “quite a lot” increases the probability of choosing “somewhat agree” with delegative democracy by 2.3% points. In addition, contacting legislative representatives more than once reduces the probability of choosing “somewhat agree” with delegative democracy by 1.4% points. Note for comparison that having a college degree reduces the probability of somewhat agreeing with delegative democracy by 5.7% points. Given that obtaining a college education requires substantial costs, the effects of the three variables of interest (democratic, trustgov, and contact2) on delegative democracy are not trivial.

Probit results in Table 3 show the determinants of just one measure of delegative democratic attitudes. In Panels A through C of Table 4, we report ordered probit results using three alternative dependent variables: Questions 2 through 4. Throughout the panels, the coefficients (and marginal effects) of democratic, trustgov, and contact2 have expected signs and are statistically significant in most cases.

In Tables 3 and 4, we measure delegative democratic attitudes by four separate questions, each of which captures one-dimension of delegative attitudes. If delegative democratic attitudes are multi-dimensional, we could use an additive index constructed from the four questions as the dependent variable. However, Cronbach’s alpha (with a scale reliability coefficient <0.5) indicates that the four questions do not have internal consistency. In any case, we found qualitatively similar results when we used an additive index of the four questions (not reported).

In Table 5, we add the measures of perceived interest group influence on policy, powerfew (Panel A) and Olson (Panel B), as explanatory variables for delegative attitudes. Note that powerfew and Olson are available for wave 1 (2001–2003) and for waves 2 and 3 (2005–2008 and 2010–2011), respectively. In Panel A, voters who believe that the nation is run by powerful interest groups (i.e. higher powerfew) are more likely to support delegative democracy. Similarly, in Panel B, a larger membership in rent-seeking organizations (i.e. higher Olson) increases the tendency to support delegative democracy. These results show that voters who believe that their elected representatives serve special interests are more likely to delegate full authority to the president. For instance, supporters of delegative democracy claim that social and economic reforms cannot be properly adopted in pluralist, representative democracy, which is too influenced by special interests and public opinion (Kubicek, 1994). Thus, we confirm that the perception of interest group control over local representatives significantly influences delegative democratic attitudes.

Table 6 shows ordered probit results using a subsample. Types of regime potentially influence voters’ attitudes toward delegative democracy to the extent that the adoption of regime is a political decision that reflects voters’ preferences. For instance, delegative persons in democratic regimes

Table 4. Alternative measures of delegative democratic attitudes.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
	Dependent var.	Marginal effects			
		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Panel A. dep.: We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.					
democratic	-0.0589*** (0.0111)	0.0214*** (0.00406)	-0.00400*** (0.000837)	-0.0110*** (0.00235)	-0.00636*** (0.00148)
trust gov	0.0356 (0.0241)	-0.0129 (0.00861)	0.00242 (0.00169)	0.00664 (0.00465)	0.00385 (0.00237)
contact1	0.00672 (0.0534)	-0.00243 (0.0193)	0.000448 (0.00350)	0.00125 (0.00998)	0.000729 (0.00582)
contact2	-0.0739*** (0.0226)	0.0271*** (0.00807)	-0.00585** (0.00230)	-0.0136*** (0.00438)	-0.00760*** (0.00189)
Obs.	20,490	20,490	20,490	20,490	20,490
Panel B. dep.: The most important thing for political leaders is to accomplish their goals even if they have to ignore the established procedure.					
democratic	-0.0201 (0.0150)	0.00558 (0.00406)	0.00175 (0.00144)	-0.00479 (0.00375)	-0.00254 (0.00176)
trust gov	0.131*** (0.0203)	-0.0362*** (0.00521)	-0.0114*** (0.00318)	0.0311*** (0.00585)	0.0165*** (0.00319)
contact1	0.0294 (0.0501)	-0.00804 (0.0136)	-0.00270 (0.00490)	0.00696 (0.0121)	0.00378 (0.00647)
contact2	-0.0373** (0.0168)	0.0105** (0.00436)	0.00302* (0.00170)	-0.00888* (0.00458)	-0.00460*** (0.00149)
Obs.	11,491	11,491	11,491	11,491	11,491
Panel C. dep.: When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law.					
democratic	-0.0152*** (0.00574)	0.00455*** (0.00156)	0.00119* (0.000619)	-0.00362** (0.00150)	-0.00212*** (0.000695)
trust gov	0.0805*** (0.0160)	-0.0241*** (0.00468)	-0.00629*** (0.00206)	0.0192*** (0.00445)	0.0112*** (0.00236)
contact1	-0.0424 (0.0328)	0.0129 (0.00995)	0.00303 (0.00233)	-0.0101 (0.00796)	-0.00575 (0.00431)
contact2	-0.0372** (0.0181)	0.0113* (0.00602)	0.00271*** (0.00105)	-0.00889** (0.00417)	-0.00507* (0.00286)
Obs.	20,152	20,152	20,152	20,152	20,152

Notes: Coefficients on other explanatory variables are not reported. All columns include country and year dummies. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

may respond differently to determinant variables than delegative persons in anocratic regimes (which conceptually lies between autocracies and democracies).

Panels A through C in Table 6 thus limit the countries to democracies. This leads to the exclusion of the countries that Polity IV classifies as anocracies: Singapore; Malaysia; Cambodia; and

Table 5. Effect of interest group influence on delegative attitudes.

Variables	Dep 1	Dep 2	Dep 3	Dep 4
Panel A. Interest group influence is powerfew				
democratic	-0.000534 (0.0210)	-0.0900*** (0.0193)	-0.0491*** (0.0101)	-0.0401*** (0.0152)
trust gov	0.0779*** (0.0292)	0.100*** (0.0375)	0.165*** (0.0338)	0.0674** (0.0293)
contact1	0.00366 (0.0754)	0.0620 (0.152)	0.121 (0.106)	0.0616 (0.0540)
contact2	-0.0170 (0.0418)	-0.0591 (0.0636)	-0.0856 (0.0783)	0.0429 (0.131)
powerfew	0.129** (0.0605)	0.0665* (0.0376)	0.0845*** (0.0358)	0.0559 (0.0475)
Obs.	4,207	4,263	4,219	4,256
Panel B. Interest group influence is Olson				
democratic	-0.0102** (0.00421)	-0.0533*** (0.0102)	-0.00917 (0.0189)	-0.0102 (0.00697)
trust gov	0.0993*** (0.0238)	0.0207 (0.0234)	0.114*** (0.0315)	0.0848*** (0.0183)
contact1	0.0471 (0.0295)	-0.00263 (0.0419)	0.00423 (0.0312)	-0.0579* (0.0349)
contact2	-0.0530* (0.0291)	-0.0735*** (0.0206)	-0.0330* (0.0191)	-0.0495* (0.0290)
Olson	0.0471 (0.152)	0.120* (0.0682)	0.629** (0.276)	0.379*** (0.0647)
Obs.	15,666	16,196	7,245	15,868

Notes: Coefficients on other explanatory variables are not reported. All columns include country and year dummies. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

Thailand (2010–2011). For instance, comparative economics literature often treats Singapore and Malaysia as soft authoritarianism, a political system in which “a combination of formal and informal mechanisms secure the dominance of the ruling group” (Kesselman et al., 2013: 340). Throughout the panels, coefficients on all of the main determinants (democratic, trustgov, contact2, powerfew, and Olson) have expected signs and are statistically significant in most cases.

Another important distinction is the type of political system, such as presidential and parliamentary system. Political systems potentially matter because delegative democratic attitudes are typically associated with delegating authority to the president and the national government. In general, a presidential–congressional system produces more separation of powers, which enables voters to discipline politicians, than does a parliamentary system (Persson et al., 2000). For instance, executives in a presidential system are more independent of the legislature because they are directly elected by the voters, whereas executives in a parliamentary system depend on support by a majority coalition in the legislature.

Table 7 shows estimation results for the two political systems: presidential system (Panel A) and parliamentary system (Panel B).¹⁵ Note that, in both panels, the coefficients of the main determinants (democratic, trustgov, contact2, and powerfew) are similar in terms of signs and statistical significance. This is consistent with the observation that, although delegative democracies are

Table 6. Determinants of delegative attitudes in democratic regimes.

Variables	Dep 1	Dep 2	Dep 3	Dep 4
Panel A.				
democratic	-0.00656 (0.00544)	-0.0637*** (0.0125)	-0.0181 (0.0168)	-0.0187*** (0.00462)
trust gov	0.0984*** (0.0269)	0.0498** (0.0254)	0.141*** (0.0190)	0.0669*** (0.0137)
contact1	0.0317 (0.0283)	0.0119 (0.0628)	0.0244 (0.0586)	-0.0414 (0.0319)
contact2	-0.0609* (0.0359)	-0.0786** (0.0354)	-0.0417** (0.0203)	-0.0464** (0.0201)
Obs.	16,668	17,135	10,337	16,902
Panel B. Adding powerfew (Wave 1)				
powerfew	0.129** (0.0605)	0.0665* (0.0376)	0.0845** (0.0358)	0.0559 (0.0475)
Obs.	4,207	4,263	4,219	4,256
Panel C. Adding Olson membership (Waves 2 and 3)				
Olson	0.138 (0.170)	0.191*** (0.0682)	0.691** (0.316)	0.369*** (0.130)
Obs.	12,434	12,841	6,091	12,618

Notes: Coefficients on other explanatory variables are not reported. All columns include country and year dummies. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

often associated with presidentialism, many parliamentary regimes display the distinctive features of delegative democracies (e.g. Taş, 2015).

In addition, in some presidential systems, the president is not allowed to seek re-election, which potentially weakens the president's ability to exercise unchecked authority. It is also possible that the president (for instance, President Menem in Argentina) may attempt to remove the constitutional ban against presidential re-election. In the process, democratic legitimacy of the president may decrease. We found, however, that the results are qualitatively similar between the countries that allow re-election and the countries that do not (not reported).

Although results are not reported here, we have limited the sample: (1) to the period before the 2008 financial crisis; (2) to the countries in which no executives held the office for >10 years; and (3) to the countries with proportional electoral systems.

Economic crisis often unleashes delegative propensities because voters demand a strong president who promises to save the country (O'Donnell, 1994). In good economic times, on the other hand, voters are content with current institutional checks and balances (Gronke and Levitt, 2005).

Delegative leaders often hold long-term office (e.g. President Menem held office from 1989 to 1999). A rapid turnover of governments potentially implies the perception that executives are not able to counter the power of interest groups over the legislature.

Compared to majoritarian electoral systems, proportional representation does not easily allow one party to secure an absolute majority in the legislature. Proportional representation thus limits electoral competition between parties over swing voters in the marginal districts, leading to *less* redistributive transfers to powerful interest groups (see Persson and Tabellini, 1999). That is,

Table 7. Determinants of delegative attitudes in different political systems.

Variables	Dep 1	Dep 2	Dep 3	Dep 4
Panel A. Presidential systems				
democratic	-0.00124 (0.00335)	-0.0523*** (0.0125)	-0.0106 (0.0202)	-0.0216*** (0.00379)
trust gov	0.0915** (0.0385)	0.0576 (0.0384)	0.144*** (0.0221)	0.0749*** (0.0202)
contact2	-0.0215 (0.0382)	-0.0430 (0.0556)	-0.0155 (0.0354)	0.00354 (0.0230)
Obs.	11,313	11,550	6,895	11,440
powerfew	0.165*** (0.0378)	0.118*** (0.0111)	0.0404 (0.0499)	0.0634 (0.0468)
Obs.	2,355	2,361	2,363	2,361
Panel B. Parliamentary systems.				
democratic	-0.0183*** (0.00382)	-0.0656*** (0.0165)	-0.0368*** (0.00786)	-0.00663 (0.00994)
trust gov	0.104*** (0.0266)	0.0118 (0.0351)	0.113** (0.0564)	0.0952*** (0.0260)
contact2	-0.0690* (0.0378)	-0.0873*** (0.0264)	-0.0438** (0.0175)	-0.0491** (0.0195)
Obs.	8,587	8,940	4,596	8,712
powerfew	0.0906 (0.105)	0.0189 (0.0435)	0.117** (0.0523)	0.0525 (0.0924)
Obs.	1,852	1,902	1,856	1,895

Notes: Presidential systems include: South Korea; Mongolia; Philippines; Taiwan; and Indonesia. Parliamentary systems include: Japan; Thailand; Singapore; Malaysia; and Cambodia. Coefficients on other explanatory variables are not reported. All columns include country and year dummies. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$.

proportional representation implies weaker interest group influence over policy outcomes, which could mean less delegative democratic attitudes. We use the Database of Political Institutions to select seven countries with proportional representation: Japan; South Korea; Mongolia (2010); Philippines; Taiwan; Indonesia; and Cambodia. In these countries, some representatives are elected based on the percentage of votes received by their party. Note, however, that this measure does not say whether proportional representation governs the majority of legislative seats. For instance, the South Korean electoral system carries a proportional component but the number of seats is relatively small (about 16%).

In all three specifications, variables of interest have expected signs and are statistically significant in most cases (the results are available upon request).

Concluding remarks

The existing literature has mainly focused on the nature and consequences of delegative democracy. Yet the literature on what influences delegative democratic attitudes has been lagging behind. This paper examined the determinants of delegative democratic attitudes that support strong executive power unchecked by the legislature. We make two main contributions to the literature. First,

we provide the theoretical mechanism connecting individual attitudes toward politics and democracy to delegative democratic attitudes. Our theoretical model identifies several factors influencing delegative democratic attitudes: support for democracy; the perception of interest group influence on policy outcomes; and trust in the national government.

Second, using the ABS data from East Asian countries, 2001–2011, we confirm the hypotheses that delegative democratic individuals are less likely to support democracy and contact legislative representatives, and more likely to perceive interest group dominance and trust the national government. Our results are robust to alternative measures of delegative attitudes and to alternative specifications, controlling for different regime types, political systems, and economic crisis.

A high level of support for unrestrained executive power is known to undermine horizontal institutional accountability, a necessary condition for consolidated democracies (Walker, 2009). The findings of this study imply that, holding constant the state of civil society development in specific states, reducing delegative democratic attitudes requires promoting support for democracy at the individual level and preventing interest group dominance over public policy.

Our study has several limitations that point to directions for future research. First, our theoretical model is a simplification of empirical reality. For instance, legislators' activities are reduced to either serving voters or interest groups by providing a composite of policy services. In practice, legislators provide a variety of policy services, which some voters may support and others oppose. We also do not distinguish between different types of interest groups, including, for instance, political parties, labor unions, and business association.

In addition, we maintain that voters are less than fully informed about the policy issues or about legislators' activities. The level of political information, however, depends on the transparency of the society and the freedom of the press. Our model also assumes that the leader and the national government restrain the influence of interest groups, which could be unrealistic in several countries included in the dataset. Future research could account explicitly for the assumptions about legislators' activities, types of interest groups, the role of political information, and the motives of the government.

Finally, our paper does not address the mechanisms connecting delegative democratic attitudes to the delegative democracy. A fruitful direction for future research would be to account for the issue of causal direction—that is, whether delegative attitudes cause delegative democracy or result from successful cases of delegative democratic governance.

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Notes

1. Note that, in delegative democracies, government policies are implemented relatively swiftly – because the president is isolated from most political institutions and organized interests – but often at the expense of gross mistakes (O'Donnell, 1994). This makes it even more difficult to solve the socioeconomic crisis.

2. The World Values Survey (WVS) provides a limited measure of delegative attitudes, however (Gronke and Levitt, 2005). The WVS asks respondents to rate “a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections” as a good or bad way of governing their country. This measure could be interpreted as an authoritarian attitude as well as a delegative attitude (Gronke and Levitt, 2005).
3. According to Denzau and Munger (1986), interest groups control vote-maximizing legislators by providing vote-producing campaign resources, but are constrained by the preferences of the voters – because interest groups seek out legislators whose geographic constituencies are in favor of a policy. The constraint may not bind, however, because voters are less than perfectly informed about the legislator’s activities in serving interest groups. Thus, the legislator is more likely to serve the general interest if voters are well-informed about the issue at hand.
4. To measure delegative attitudes, Walker (2009) used the share of respondents who prefer democracy and would give a blank check to a savior leader who solves the problem.
5. The measure refers to the percentage of respondents who either strongly agree or somewhat agree with the questions.
6. Examples of policy x are pork projects (such as defense contracts for a firm located in the district), subsidies and tariff protection, special provisions in legislation, and regulatory exceptions (Baron, 1994; Chamon and Kaplan, 2013). Policy y may include dealing with the bureaucracy on behalf of voters and other constituent services (Denzau and Munger, 1986). Note that p can be interpreted as the share of effort that the legislator allocates to producing policy x .
7. Note in our model that interest groups are unable to buy the national leader. O’Donnell (1994) argues that “the president isolates himself from most political institutions and organized interests.”
8. Note that in some developing democracies, non-policy factors (i.e. δ_i and λ_i) may influence voters’ attitudes toward delegative democracy more than policy factors (i.e. $p - q$).
9. In each of the 13 countries, a national research team administers a country-wide face-to-face survey and compiles the micro-level data under a common research framework and with standardized survey instruments as well as research methodology.
10. Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia were included in 2005–2008 and 2010–2012.
11. We also exclude respondents over age 80 because they represent only 1.5% of the sample and are less likely to be politically opinionated.
12. Olson-type organizations also include producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, alumni associations, candidate support organizations, can associations, hometown associations, and peer groups.
13. The Asian Barometer Survey does not provide a direct measure for the confidence in local representatives.
14. Real GDP per capita (in million 2005 national currency) is collected from Penn World Table 8.1 (Feenstra, R.C., Inklaar, R., and Timmer M.P. (2015). The next generation of the Penn World Table. *American Economic Review*, 105(10), 3150–3182, available for download at www.gdc.net/pwt). We use real GDP in national currency in order to capture voters’ perception of domestic economic situations because voters are exposed to news on economy in terms of domestic currency. In our specification, cross-country differences in income are mostly captured by country dummy variables. We also used real GDP per capita in 2005 US dollars but the main results remained unaffected.
15. We use the Database of Political Institutions 2012 (Beck et al., 2001) in order to classify countries according to: presidential or parliamentary system; proportional representation; and rapid turnover of governments.

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