

# Exploring Protest Potential in East Asian Democracies

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This article attempts to explain the determinants of unconventional political participation (i.e., peaceful political protest) in East Asian democracies in the 1990s. While a vast literature has addressed political protest in Western democracies, there is a dearth of empirical analysis on protest politics in new democracies. To begin to fill this gap, this study tests competing models of political protest in three East Asian democracies – Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The protest models include *socioeconomic status*, *dissatisfaction*, *cognitive skills*, and *values change* approaches that were traditionally applied to Western democracies. This study analyzes the data relating to unconventional political participation from the third *World Values Survey* in 1995-97. Inferences are estimated using OLS regression. The results support three of four approaches: the *socioeconomic status*, the *cognitive skill*, and the *values change* approaches. Thus, despite the divergence of political cultures, institutions, and histories between the Western democracies and East Asian democracies, there do seem to be some striking commonalities in terms of factors that prompt their citizens to engage in political protest activities.

Like conventional forms of participation, unconventional forms of participation (e.g., protests, demonstrations, boycotts, political strikes, occupations, street blockades, etc) are an essential part of the democratic process (Dalton, 1988). The history of new democracies is marked by repeated episodes of political protest - a more familiar name of unconventional political participation - and vigorous political dissent by the people. Perhaps the most graphic illustrations of political protest were the democratic revolution that spread through Eastern Europe and the “people power” protests in the Philippines, South Africa, and other new democratizing countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s. When the people are blocked from exercising political influence through legitimate participation channels, protest politics stands as an option. Labor union and peasant protests are an established part of contemporary politics in the new democracies as well as advanced industrial democracies. Furthermore, the new democracies continue to experience at least modest levels of protest over various political, economic, and social issues.

Despite the historical roots of unconventional action, many political experts expected protest politics to fade with the spreading affluence of industrial and democratic societies. Yet, the frequency of protest and other conventional political activities apparently has increased. Cross-national comparison also finds that protest levels are higher in more affluent nations (Powell, 1986). These trends have led some analysts to argue that a new style of protest is becoming a regular form of political action in democratic societies.

Political protest, as elite-challenging attitudes of mass publics, is necessary to stimulate democratic reform in new democracies as well as advanced industrial democracies (Flanagan & Lee, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to solve the puzzle of what encourages people to participate in, or feel they may participate in, “direct” methods of expressing their political views and objectives through the use of demonstrations of various kinds. These demonstrations make take the specific form of boycotts, strikes, invasions of property – referred to as political protest; unconventional political participation; or unorthodox political behavior. For this purpose, this article evaluates unconventional political participation in three East Asian democracies: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. This study finds whether the pattern of unconventional participation in three democracies is similar to the pattern in Western democracies or not.

This article addresses not only democratization of the three East Asian democracies, but also theoretical issues of political protest activities. This article first looks over various approaches of political protest behavior. After reviewing previous research on political protest, this article discusses data resources and methodology that it uses to analyze the puzzle of what encourages people to participate in these countries. This research may help confirm or falsify individual level approaches of the origins of political protest behavior.

## PROTEST AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Three East Asian democracies – Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan – are the setting for this study. They share various similarities in social and political culture like Buddhism, Taoism, and most notably Confucianism. Confucianism emphasized the group over the individual, authority over liberty, and responsibilities over rights. In political terms, Confucianism places the highest value on order, stability, and discipline within a framework of hierarchical authority. Therefore, many analysts have concluded that the Asian culture, Confucianism in particular, presents something of a barrier to the spread and consolidation of liberal democracy (Mayer, 2000). Often grouped together as very similar, three East Asian countries are not as similar in their political institutions and paths of democratization as many suppose.

Japan: Japan is well known the world over for its economic prowess and high-quality exports. Since World War II, Japan has also been a country of almost unique political stability. One party ruled for nearly four decades; during that time politics was predictable, and extremely rapid social change was accommodated without major political disruptions. Japan has a parliamentary system of government with a competitive multiparty system. The Prime Minister is the chief of government and selected by legislature. Although there was a period of uncertainty and instability in the 1990s, characterized by the rise and fall of political parties new and old, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is still the center of Japanese politics.

Although Japan may appear politically conservative and quiescent, it is not entirely free of political controversies and protests. The constitutionality of rearmament and the Self-Defense Forces is one such issue; the constitutionality of official visits by government leaders, particularly cabinet members, to the Yasukuni Shrine is another. Public and elite opinion is so sharply and irreconcilably divided on both issues that they have been taken off the government's political agenda.

Most citizen protests are nonviolent and legal in recent years, but Japan is also not free from violent conflicts. Most such conflicts involve extremist groups from either the left or the right who try to get their way by intimidating and occasionally attacking their opponents. One end of the political spectrum is the student and youth groups known as the new left, including the Central Core, Revolutionary Marxists, and the Fourth International. These groups have attacked symbols of authority in capitalist Japan, ranging from LDP headquarters and residences of members of the royal family to airports and nuclear power stations. Their strength and effectiveness, however, have sharply declined in recent years,

yielding to growing public hostility toward their extremist views and violence tactics and to their own internal conflicts (Kesselman et al., 2000).

On the other hand, the groups on the extreme right in Japan are far more numerous and better organized. There are about eight hundred rightist groups. More are vehemently chauvinist and anticommunist group concerned – often more ostensibly than genuinely – about the future of the Japanese nation and its imperial tradition. Members of these groups have been involved in a series of shooting incidents targeting, for example, the mayor of Nagasaki City in 1990 for his remarks on the late Emperor Hirohito's responsibility for the last war; a former prime minister in 1994 for his remarks on the aggressive nature of Japan's role in the World War II; and the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) headquarters in 1995 for the party's support of proposed antiwar resolution by the Diet (Kesselman et al., 2000).

South Korea: Unlike Japan, South Korea has the presidential form of government. As the chief of government, the President of South Korea is currently elected by direct popular vote for a single five-year term. As a legislature, the National Assembly is a unicameral body and its members are elected to a four-year term in single-seat constituencies. Since the establishment of its republican system in 1948, South Korea has been minimally democratic until the late 1980s. In South Korea, for example, the period from 1948 to 1987 was dominated by three autocratic presidents such as Syngman Rhee, Park Chung Hee, and Chun Doo Hwan.

Government elites that have been intolerant of organized opposition and the country have operated until the late 1980s. Groups (mainly students or labor) that protested against government policy had been ruthlessly suppressed at the time. The absence of legitimate channels of opposition resulted in frequent demonstrations and riots, prompting violent government responses to maintain order (Mayer, 2000).

The history of new democracies is often marked by repeated episodes of political protest and vigorous political dissent by the people. Perhaps one of the most graphic illustrations of political protest in new democracies was the "people power" protests in South Korea in the late of 1980s. South Korea's democratic transition began in 1987 when violent student-led protests rocked the country after Chun Doo Hwan picked another army general, Roh Tae Woo, as his successor. Chun stated his intent to serve only a single term from the outset and eventually allowed direct presidential elections in 1988 under pressure from widespread popular demonstrations.

The process of democratization that began in 1987 made South Korean society more open, diverse, and decentralized than it had ever been before. The mass

media were freed from government restrictions, thousands of political prisoners were released from prison, and long-suppressed labor unions were permitted to organize for better wages and improved working conditions. However, the process also triggered explosions of long-suppressed issues and resulted in frequent demonstrations in the 1990s. The protests and demonstrations led students, labors, and the leftist groups focused mainly on Korean reunification, national security act, labor law, and relations with the United States whereas most Japanese protests in recent years focus on peace, war, and pollution.

Taiwan: Like South Korea, Taiwan has used a presidential system of government since the Nationalists fled China after losing the civil war to Mao Zedong. Taiwan was under martial law from 1949 to 1987 by Chiang Kai-shek and his son, Chiang Ching-kuo. Until the early of 1990s, Taiwan was also ruled by a single-dominant party (KMT: Nationalist Party), and the presidents of Taiwan were elected by the National Assembly.

Taiwan held its first truly competitive election for the legislature in 1992, more than fifty years since its last competitive election held in 1949. Moreover, Chen Shui-bien, the presidential candidate from an opposite party (DPP: Democratic Progressive Party) was elected by the popular vote in 2000. In recent years, the President of the Taiwan has been elected by direct popular vote for a four-year term on the same ticket as the Vice-President. As a legislature, the Legislative Yuan is a unicameral body and serves a three-year term. Prior to 1986, opposite parties were not allowed to compete for public office in Taiwan. Since then, over 74 parties were reported to have been formed. However, only three parties were of measurable significance at the balloting in the recent elections.

Compared to Japanese and Korean cases, the citizens of Taiwan have been more docile, in part because of the extraordinarily strict constraints on behavior that have been implemented as law. The government imposed martial law in 1949, which served the purposes of prohibiting the formation of new political parties, outlawing labor strikes and other collective actions, and imposing censorship on the mass media. However, economic growth and related social changes in Taiwan had contributed to the gradual emergence of a civil society (Mayer, 2000). In the 1970s, the second generation of Taiwanese politicians began to join force with segments of the urban middle class and challenged the KMT through participating in local and national elections. The authority of the governing party was weakened further with the surfacing of urban social movements in the 1980s, and by 1986 diplomatic setbacks as well as mounting social and political protests emboldened opposition politicians to defy the

KMT by declaring the formation of DPP. Instead of cracking down, the government acquiesced grudgingly and announced that the 37-year-old martial law would be rescinded the following year. Since then, most citizen protests have mainly focused on democratization and relations with China. Nevertheless, students and workers in Taiwan had played only a marginal role in the transition to democracy (Chu, 1996; Wright, 1999).

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

Scholars explain political protest behavior basically in two ways. The first looks at differences between nations, while the second looks within nations. The former approach favors the identification of system-level characteristics, usually labeled *institutional*, to account for variation of political protest behavior from one nation to the next. Data analysis, then, is focused on aggregates and the dependent variable is the level of political protest behavior from country to country. There is a dynamic literature inspired by such an approach (Verba et al., 1978; Glass et al., 1984; Grofman & Lijphart, 1986; Powell, 1986; Jackman, 1987; Dalton, 1988).

This system-level approach is useful for sorting out cross-national differences. However, it is less useful in accounting for differences within a nation because the institutional factors identified are mostly constants for any one country. For instance, the electoral system of a nation generally applies to all citizens equally. Therefore, when the interest is within nations, researchers tend to seek individual-level characteristics, usually called *socio-psychological*. The data analysis, then, is focused on surveys of individuals and the dependent variable is conceived of as the likelihood that an individual would participate in political protest activities. A common example here is the effect of socioeconomic status standing on political protest behavior. The literature on this approach is also large and long standing (Campbell et al., 1960; Lipset, 1960; Verba et al., 1978; Barnes et al., 1979; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Marsh, 1990). Both approaches contribute importantly to an understanding of political protest behavior.

Extensive prior research on political protest behavior has suggested various models. They were assembled into a string of “micro-theories” of the origins of political activity. These ideas can usefully be summarized under four approaches: the *socioeconomic status* model; the *cognitive skills* model; the *value change* model; and the *dissatisfaction* model.

Socioeconomic Status Model: This model is often called “the baseline model” or “social structure model.” Political sociology has long established that an individual’s age, gender, income, occupation,

education, religion, and marital status have a profound effect on their political behavior. If political behavior were randomly distributed among all kinds and classes of people, there would be no social background model. In such a situation, all the explanation of political behavior would have to be sought in people's minds. Only beliefs, feelings, values and attitudes and their responses to specific events would account for their behavior. This, however, is unlikely.

This model, borrowed with grateful acknowledgement from Verba and Nie's study of political participation in America, refers to the social location of political participation (Verba & Nie, 1972). What social characteristics (i.e., age, gender, income, education, religion, occupational class, etc.) tend to be associated with higher or lower rate of political participation? Verba and Nie, as well as others before them (Lipset, 1960), found that higher social and economic status eases the entry of the more advantaged members of society into regular political involvement. They share a social identity with existing political elites. Most importantly, they (rather than manual workers) have the education and training that lower the costs to them of learning the basic skills of politics. They also have different expectations of the political system. Middle-class values stress individual competence. For them the search for political redress places a premium on individual action. In contrast, manual workers tend more to look to existing organizations like political parties and labor unions for a collective expression of political ambitions (Marsh, 1990).

In general, the finding from previous research is that older, male, middle-class, married, higher education, and higher income people are more likely to participate. This model is true at least for conventional political involvement. Is it also true for political protest potential? The same theoretical forces may be operating on conventional and unconventional participation for socioeconomic status variables except age. Previous research shows that young people rather than older people are more likely to participate in political protest activities (Inglehart, 1977; Dalton 1996). The demands upon time and energy imposed by demonstrations, occupations, and so on are most easily met by the young. More than that, young people are said naturally to be given to elite-challenging behavior. To test the socioeconomic status model, this study includes four measures: age, gender, social class, and occupation.

Cognitive Skills Model: This model begins with an assumption that people choose political actions differently because they think and feel about politics differently. By "think" and "feel," I mean the distinction that psychologists make between the cognitive aspects of mental life and the affective or

evaluative aspects. That is to say, the distinction that is made between people's knowledge and understanding of political matters on the one hand and their political values, desires and feelings-for-and-against on the other. Both are important in determining the way people choose their preferred means of political action.

The cognitive skills (or mobilization) model holds that the increasing levels of political sophistication and information that many citizens now have are leading them to a more active citizen's role (Inglehart, 1977; Shively, 1979; Dalton, 1988). When citizens are more cognitively mobilized (as measured by such things as educational attainment, frequency of political discussion, or perceived degree of influence over others), they tend to participate more. In addition, people are more likely to participate in political activities when they experienced politicization from partisan or interest group attachment (Verba et al., 1978; Powell, 1986).

Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) have recently labeled this model as the *Civic Voluntarism Model* (CVM). Unlike the socioeconomic status model, which stresses the importance of individual citizens' political predispositions or socioeconomic status, the CVM emphasizes their involvement in non-political voluntary associations as the basic foundation of political participation. In a nutshell, the model holds that such civic engagements promote political participation indirectly by not only predisposing people to politics, but also providing a variety of valuable opportunities, resources, and skills.

In the Western European context, the attachments of ideological extremes and religious organizations seem especially important (Rose & Urwin, 1969; Klingemann & Inglehart, 1975; Lewis-Beck, 1989). Those having an understanding of political matters at an ideological level could function consistently in political life. In particular, an understanding that included an appreciation of the main left-right, liberal-conservative dimension of democratic politics was the essential equipment of any recruit to political activity. Strong evidence from survey research tended to support this view. To test the cognitive skills model, this study includes three related measures: political discussion, union attachments, and Left-Right self-placement.

Value Change Model (Materialism-Postmaterialism): Value change ideas are concerned with people's basic political values – those needs and goals they think society should aim to achieve before all others. Indeed, under the influence of growing political awareness, a commitment to a set of political values is formed. This set of values will then suggest political action. Most important, one set of values will direct the holder towards an appropriate style of political action, other sets of values towards others. The importance of these

ideas to the understanding of mass politics has long been recognized. Karl Marx, who is still given too little credit for his creative use of the subjective aspects of political ideology and consciousness, paid particular attention to the set of political values that people held. He saw what he called the false consciousness of the workers – their acceptance of bourgeois values and goals – as a major obstacle to the kind of political mobilization necessary for revolutionary action. For this reason, modern Marxists took a close interest in the protest movements of the 1960s in the Western democracies (Marsh, 1990, Reed, 2005).

New political values in the Western democracies were surfacing elsewhere and found their most enthusiastic reception among the young middle class. The New Left was new in the sense that it embraced ideas that had little to do with the established Left-wing orthodoxies of industrial class conflict. The disciplined view of a workers' movement under determined leadership gave way to demands for freedom of expression, creativity, and mass participation in decision-making in the community at every level. This movement was said to be a product of the growth of post-materialist values. The rapidly growing economic security of Western economies had been expected to put an end to vigorous political conflict. Instead it had spawned a new basis for conflict.

The postwar generations had grown up relatively free of the urgent problems of physical and economic security that had beset their parents. To them, the class-based economic system of Western party systems seemed increasingly redundant. They had been freed instead to develop what the psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) called "higher order" needs of "belongingness" and creative expression. There grew up among the younger generations significantly larger and larger minorities of people who placed these higher order goals before those of security and economic growth. They did so, at least, in terms of the political goals they thought their country should aim for. Their discovery by political science owes everything to the work of Ronald Inglehart (1977) who labeled these individuals as *postmaterialists*. They, it seems, were in the vanguard of the new politics. The growth of political protest actions in the 1960s was traceable to their efforts to introduce new political goals onto the national agenda. They demanded things like racial and sexual equality, environmental improvement and, more than anything, new democratic forms of political participation and self-determination in community life. These were things the existing political systems, Right or Left, were not accustomed to providing. A postmaterialist view was by definition elite-challenging and the means to demand such goals led naturally to protest methods. This study includes one measure of materialist-postmaterialist self-placement to testify to the value change model.

Dissatisfaction Model: The dissatisfaction approach implies that political dissatisfaction and alienation should be major predictors of protest. Scholars have proposed various indicators of relative deprivation in empirical research. As used in the literature, relative deprivation is a very abstract concept, which could have many dimensions and any number of attitudinal and behavioral referents, including cognitions, beliefs, and attitudes with past, present, and future time orientations. In contrast with theoretical treatments, operationalization of the concept in research tends to be narrow and unidimensional, with researchers adhering to a "one concept-one indicator" strategy (Gurney & Tierney, 1982).

Muller (1972, p. 936) employs "welfare gratification-deprivation" as an operational indicator of relative deprivation. It is based on four categories of value concerns that are selected as referents for the measures of relative deprivation: career satisfaction, economic well-being, satisfactoriness of living conditions, and children's welfare. His empirical research shows that there is only a weak relationship between dissatisfaction and protest for political activists in the last 1960s (Muller, 1972). Norris's indicator of relative deprivation is somewhat similar with Muller's in a sense that both employ citizens' attitudes toward government policies. Indeed, Norris (1999) uses policy dissatisfaction as an indicator of relative deprivation: policy dissatisfaction increases the likelihood of participation in protest activities.

Barnes, et al., (1979) employ "personal dissatisfaction" and "political dissatisfaction" as the operational indicators of relative deprivation. For the measurements of personal dissatisfaction they use people's material dissatisfaction and life dissatisfaction. On the other hand, for the indicators of political dissatisfaction they measure people's evaluation of government performance and policy dissatisfaction. Their empirical research shows that there are relatively weak relationships between dissatisfaction and protest for political activists in the advanced industrial democracies: Netherlands, Britain, United States, Germany, and Austria (Barnes, et al., 1979).

Dalton (2002) employs "political satisfaction" (satisfaction with the government's performance) as an indicator of relative deprivation. He states that the relative deprivation approach "implies that political dissatisfaction and alienation should be major predictors of protest" (p. 66). The results of his empirical analysis of unconventional forms of political participation in the advanced industrial democracies show that "dissatisfied citizens are only slightly more willing to protest than those who are satisfied with the government's performance" (p. 67). Yet, Dalton (2002, p. 66) concludes that "unconventional political activity should be more common among lower-status

individuals, minorities, and other groups who have reasons to feel deprived or dissatisfied.”

### ANALYSIS OF PROTEST POTENTIAL

This study applies an individual-level analysis to test competing hypotheses about the determinants of protest potential in East Asian democracies. The data for both the dependent and independent variables are collected from the third wave of *World Values Surveys* (hereafter *WVS*) in 1995-1996. The *WVS* was coordinated by Inglehart. He also assembled and documented three-wave dataset (1981-1983; 1990-1993; 1995-1997) and 2000 *WVS*. The series is designed for a cross-national comparison of values and norms on a wide variety of topics and to monitor changes in values and attitudes across the globe.

The 1995-1997 study is the third wave of the *WVS* and includes more than 60 surveys, representing a majority of the world’s population. Broad topics covered were work, personal finances, the economy, politics, allocation of resources, contemporary social issues, technology and its impact on society, and traditional values. Respondents’ opinions of various forms of political action, the most important aims for their countries, and confidence in various civil and governmental institutions were also solicited. In addition, demographic information includes respondent’s age, gender, occupation, income, education, religion, political party and union membership, and left-right political self-placement. In each of the countries surveyed, approximately 1,000 persons aged 18 and over in mass publics were interviewed. All interviews are carried out face-to-face at homes in each country. The third wave of the *WVS* was conducted during the democratization period in the East Asian democracies, especially South Korea and Taiwan.

Dependent Variable (Protest Potential): The dependent variable measures the propensity to engage in political protest. Respondents were asked whether they have actually participated in any of the political protest activities, whether they might do it, or would never, under any circumstances. The political protest items in the *WVS* propose a series of protest activities ranging from low forms of involvement to highly demanding forms of protest. The protest activities are, by ascending order of involvement, are (1) signing a petition; (2) joining in boycotts; (3) attending lawful demonstrations; (4) joining unofficial strikes; and (5) occupying buildings or factories. Respondents were asked to answer whether they did or might do each of these things. They were given a choice of responses from 1 to 3, where (1) is coded as “have done”; (2) is coded as “might do”; and (3) is coded as “would never do.”

**TABLE 1. Protest Potential in East Asian Democracies (N)**

Protest Activities	Yes*	No**	Total
Signing a petition	67.0 % ( 2515 )	33.0 % ( 1240 )	100 % ( 3755 )
Joining in boycotts	53.6 % ( 2011 )	46.4 % ( 1744 )	100 % ( 3755 )
Attending lawful demonstrations	41.2 % (1547 )	58.8 % ( 2208 )	100 % ( 3755 )
Joining unofficial strikes	23.2 % ( 870 )	76.8 % ( 2885 )	100 % ( 3755 )
Occupying buildings or factories	12.0 % ( 452 )	88.0 % ( 3303 )	100 % ( 3755 )
Overall participation***	73.7 % ( 2767 )	26.3 % ( 988 )	100 % ( 3755 )

\* "have done" and "might do"

\*\* "would never do"

\*\*\* Participation in at least one of five types of political protests activities.

Source: 1995-1997 World Values Survey.

Following the work of previous researchers such as Marsh (1990), this study divides respondents’ replies to each item into only two categories: ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on the simple basis of whether or not they ever engage in unconventional participation. That is, the answer of (2) “might do” is included in the answer (1) “have done.” Because of the low frequencies found for those who have done a particular protest behavior, protest potential is often more a measure of a propensity to protest than an actual protest experience. Secondly, following the work of Dalton (1996), this study constructs an ordered variable with five categories. Thus, a respondent who has not done any of the five forms of protest/unconventional participation is coded as 0. Individuals who have engaged in at least one form of unconventional participation are coded as 1, those who report engaging in two forms of unconventional participation are coded as 2, and so forth, to a maximum of 5.

Previous research shows that political protest activities are cumulative. It means that “individuals active at any one threshold also generally participate in

**TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables under Study**

Variables	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Political Protest Potential	3,755	.74	.44	0	1
Age (6-categories)	3,755	2.99	1.41	1	6
Gender	3,751	.49	.50	0	1
Social class	2,956	2.94	.87	1	5
Occupation	3,651	7.28	3.85	1	13
Political discussion	3,729	1.80	.59	1	3
Union attachments	3,726	1.36	.59	1	3
Left-Right self-placement	3,371	5.89	2.01	1	10
Materialist/Postmaterialist self-placement	3,522	1.65	.61	1	3
Confidence in government	3,982	2.43	.72	1	4
Japan (dummy)	3,755	.28	.45	0	1
Taiwan (dummy)	3,755	.39	.49	0	1

**Source:** 1995-1997 World Values Survey.

milder forms of protest” (Marsh, 1990; Dalton, 1996). Table 1 supports this argument. Nearly three-fourths of all respondents (73.7 percent) generally favored at least one of five types of political protest activities, while over a quarter of the respondents (26.3 percent) expressed that they have no intention to participate in any type of political protest activities.

**Independent Variables:** This study encompasses a series of individual levels of analysis. It intends to investigate the determinants of unconventional forms of political protest in the East Asian democracies. The determinants are from the four approaches – socio-economic status, cognitive skills, value change, and dissatisfaction. Therefore, to test these four approaches, this study proposes nine predictors of unconventional political participation: age, gender, social class, occupation, political discussion, union attachments, Left-Right self-placement, Materialist/Postmaterialist self-placement, and confidence in government. The WVS includes several questions which represent these nine predictors.

Therefore, this study has nine individual level hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1 (age):** Younger individuals are more likely to participate in political protest activities than older individuals ( $\beta_1 < 0$ ).
- **Hypothesis 2 (gender):** Men are more likely to participate in political protest activities than women ( $\beta_2 > 0$ ).
- **Hypothesis 3 (social class):** *Individuals with a higher social status are likely to participate in political protest activities than other individuals ( $\beta_3 > 0$ ).*
- **Hypothesis 4 (occupation):** *Individuals with a higher occupational status are more likely to participate in political protest activities than other individuals ( $\beta_4 > 0$ ).*
- **Hypothesis 5 (political discussion):** *Individuals who have higher levels of political sophistication are more likely to participate in political protest activities than other individuals ( $\beta_5 > 0$ ).*
- **Hypothesis 6 (union attachments):** *Individuals attached to a labor union are more likely to participate in political protest activities than other individuals ( $\beta_6 > 0$ ).*

**TABLE 3. Cross-National Protest Potential**

Political Protest Activities	Country					
	Japan		South Korea		Taiwan	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Signing a petition	87.8 % (819)	12.2 % (114)	83.7 % (1025)	16.2 % (219)	49.3 % (671)	50.5 % (689)
Joining in boycotts	71.8 % (606)	28.2 % (238)	74.6 % (928)	25.4 % (318)	35.5 % (477)	64.5 % (865)
Attending in lawful demonstrations	48.5 % (397)	51.5 % (422)	51.4 % (639)	48.6 % (605)	37.7 % (511)	62.3 % (846)
Joining unofficial strikes	21.5 % (174)	78.5 % (635)	40.6 % (505)	59.4 % (736)	14.3 % (191)	85.7 % (1144)
Occupying buildings or factories	8.8 % (73)	91.2 % (761)	23.5 % (292)	76.5 % (950)	6.4 % (87)	93.6 % (1273)

Source: 1995-1997 World Values Survey

- **Hypothesis 7 (Left-Right self-placement):** *Leftists are more likely to participate in political protest activities than Rightists ( $\beta_7 < 0$ ).*
- **Hypothesis 8 (Materialist/Postmaterialist self-placement):** *Postmaterialists are more likely to participate in political protest activities than Materialists ( $\beta_8 > 0$ ).*
- **Hypothesis 9 (confidence in government):** *Individuals who have higher confidence levels about their government are less likely to participate in political protest activities than other individuals ( $\beta_9 < 0$ ).*

To estimate the effects of the independent variables on people's political protest potential, this study employs the method of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The model is shown below:

$$\text{Protest Potential (Unconventional Political Participation)} = \text{Age} + \text{Gender} + \text{Social Status} + \text{Occupational Status} + \text{Political Discussion} + \text{Union Attachment} + \text{Left-Right Placement} + \text{Materialist/Postmaterialist} + \text{Confidence in Government}$$

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the results of the paper's analysis. Table 3 shows the different levels of unconventional political participations in the three East Asian countries, while Table 4 summarizes the results of the multivariate regression analysis. The overall relationship between the 11 independent variables

(which included two dummy variables to control for country) and the dependent variable of political protest is reported as  $R = 0.43$  in the East Asian democracies. This study finds that 19 percent of the variance in political protests potential ( $R^2=0.19$ ) can be explained using these independent variables.

The coefficients for social status, occupational status, political discussion, Left-Right self-placement, and Materialist/Postmaterialist self-placement variables are positive and statistically significant. In contrast, the coefficients for gender, union attachment, and confidence in government variables are negative and insignificant.

The results of the analysis support the *socio-economic status* model. Readers should recall that this model states that people's socioeconomic status has a profound effect on their political behavior (Lipset, 1960; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980; Niemi & Weisberg, 1992). The results of the analysis also support the *cognitive skills* model, which states that as an individual's political orientation increases, so does his or her political participation. Although the coefficient for union attachments variable is negative, it is statistically insignificant. Furthermore, the results provide empirical support for the *postmaterialist* model, which asserts a linkage between values change and political participation. In contrast, the results of this analysis do not support the *dissatisfaction* model. The coefficient for the confidence in government variable is not only in an unexpected direction, but is also statistically insignificant. Finally, the coefficients of

**TABLE 4. Determinants of Protest Potential in East Asian Democracies**

Independent Variables	Coefficients (b)	Standard Error	T	Beta
<i>The Socioeconomic Status model</i>				
Age	-0.26***	0.01	-4.41	-0.09
Gender	- 0.16	0.02	-1.06	-0.02
Social class	0.37***	0.01	4.20	0.08
Occupation	0.07***	0.00	3.71	0.07
<i>The Cognitive Skills model</i>				
Political Discussion	0.15***	0.01	10.72	0.21
Union attachments	- 0.09	0.02	-0.58	-0.01
Left-Right self-placement	-0.13***	0.00	-3.38	-0.07
<i>The Value Model (Postmaterialism )</i>				
Materialist and Postmaterialist	0.25*	0.01	1.96	0.34
<i>The Dissatisfaction Model</i>				
Confidence in government	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
<i>Country dummy variable</i>				
Japan	0.10***	0.02	5.06	0.11
Taiwan	-0.24***	0.02	-12.04	-0.26
Constant ( $\alpha$ )	0.53***	0.57	9.20	
R	0.43			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.19			
F-ratio (11, 2441)	51.54			
Number of observations	3,755			

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  in two-tailed tests. South Korea is excluded from the country dummy variables.

**Note:** Figures are unstandardized coefficients with standard error shown in parentheses. Betas are standardized coefficients.

**Source:** 1995-1997 World Values Survey.

state dummy variables are statistically significant. Both of the coefficients are large, but signs are opposite. It means that there is cross-national difference on the political protest potential.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study had been to examine the determinants of political protest in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The results of the empirical analyses support three approaches: socioeconomic status, the

cognitive skills, and the value approaches. That is, the preceding analyses promote the following theoretical concepts: (1) people's socioeconomic status is associated with their political protest potential; (2) increasing levels of political orientation lead people to be more active citizens; and (3) a postmaterialist view leads people to participate more in political protest activities. Furthermore, this study inspires future research in three related areas.

The first implication of the findings has to do with using a combined or two-step model to study protest potential. Future researchers might therefore benefit from using a single “eclectic” model that combines features from the *baseline factors*, *cognitive skills*, *dissatisfaction*, and *value change* approaches. Indeed, value change, for instance, may be an intervening variable in the baseline factors and protest linkage; socioeconomic factors affect values, which, in turn leads to cognitive mobilization and the likelihood of protest. A two-step model can describe both the indirect and direct effects of explanatory variables on our dependent variables, political protest.

The second implication concerns the validity of ‘dissatisfaction’ or ‘relative deprivation’ measures. Like other previous studies, the WVS does not successfully measure the dimension of relative deprivation. The measures of dissatisfaction employed in the WVS are just proxy measures for the existence of relative deprivation. Thus, future research would hope for survey questions that are better suited to the task. We might need a series of questions that specifically capture aspects of relative deprivation or dissatisfaction.

The last implication is related to the purpose of this study. Because its main goal is to test four of the most discussed approaches to the study of protest potential at the individual level, the study excludes discussions about cross-national differences of protests in the East Asian democracies. Why are there differences of protests in East Asian democracies who share many similarities? Exploring cross-national variations of protests in the countries is relevant for further research.

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## APPENDIX: VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS

**a. Age (6-categories):** Respondents were asked to give their age at the time of the survey. The actual age ranges from 18 to 85. The age variable is categorized to six different levels: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and over 65, for interpretative purpose.

**b. Gender:** Respondents were asked to identify themselves as male or female. The gender variable is rescaled from 0 (female) to 1 (male) for interpretive purpose.

**c. Social class:** The respondent's social status was measured based on their response to the following question: "people sometimes describe themselves as belonging to the working class, the middle class, or the upper or lower class. Would you describe yourself as belonging to the \_\_\_?" Respondents were given a choice of responses from 1 to 5 – (1) "lower class"; (2) "working class"; (3) "lower middle class"; (4) "upper middle class"; and (5) "upper class". The higher the score, the higher an individual's social status.

**d. Occupation:** The variable is based on the following question: "In which profession/occupation do you or did you work? If more than one job, the main job? Respondents could then place themselves into one of thirteen possible categories: (1) "never had a job"; (2) "member of armed forces, security personnel"; (3) "agricultural worker"; (4) "farmer: has own farm"; (5) "unskilled manual worker"; (6) "semi-skilled manual worker"; (7) "skilled manual worker"; (8) "foreman and

supervisor"; (9) "non-manual office worker: non-supervisory"; (10) "supervisory office worker: supervises others"; (11) "professional worker lawyer, account, teacher, etc"; (12) "employer/manager of establishment with less than 10 employees"; and (13) "employer/manager of establishment with 10 or more employees". The higher the score, the higher an individual's occupational status.

**e. Political Discussion:** The frequency of respondents' political discussion was used to measure to their political orientation. Respondents were asked the following question: "when you get together with your friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally or never? The possible responses are (1) "never," (2) "occasionally," and (3) "frequently".

**f. Union attachments:** Respondents' labor union attachments were also used to measure to their political orientation. Respondents were asked the following question: ". . . could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of [labor union]." The possible responses are (1) not member, (2) inactive member, and (3) active member. The higher score, the stronger an individual's union attachment.

**g. Left-Right self-placement:** A self-placement scale was used to measure to respondents' political orientation. Respondents were asked the following question: "In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?" The possible responses ranged from (1) left to (10) right on the 10-point scale offered.

**h. Materialist/Postmaterialist self-placement:** For the variable, I use materialist/postmaterialist values (4-item index) created by Inglehart. This index is based on the respondent's first and second choice in the original four-item Materialist/Postmaterialist values battery. If both Materialist items are given high priority, the score is "1"; if both Postmaterialist items are given high priority, the score is "3"; and if one Materialist item and one Postmaterialist item are given high priority, the score is "2." If the respondent makes only one or no choices, the result is missing data.

**i. Confidence in government:** The respondent's confidence level in government was measured based on their response to the following question: ". . . could you tell me how much confidence you have in the [government]: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of

confidence, not very much confidence or not at all? The possible responses ranged from (1) 'great deal' to (4) 'not at all'. The higher score, the less confidence an individual has in his or her government.

**j. States (dummy):** The country code of respondents was included in this empirical test as a control variable. Table 3 indicates that the three states show difference levels of political protest potential. Taiwan shows relatively lower protest potential than the other two states do. Therefore, I include state variable to control impact of the variables on the dependent variable.