

***Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific: Evidence from Indonesia, Korea, The Philippines, and Thailand.* Edited by Giovanna Maria Dora Dore, Jae H. Ku and Karl Jackson. Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Hardcover: 281pp.**

Incomplete Democracies in the Asia-Pacific emerges from a decade-long project by a team of scholars at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), John Hopkins University. This book is based on a 2011 survey of citizen attitudes and behaviours in four democratic states in Asia: Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand. A brief historical glimpse reveals different paths among these four states: Indonesia's nascent post-war democracy was derailed for decades under Soeharto's authoritarian regime; Thailand's tumultuous relationship with democracy has resulted in nineteen coups since 1932; the Republic of Korea equivocated between democracy and authoritarianism until the military was finally eliminated from politics in the late 1980s; and the state with the longest democratic history in Southeast Asia, the Philippines, was ruled by a dictatorship from 1972–86. While each of these four countries attempted to develop democratic government, democratization was not easy for any of them. Why democracies work in some areas, but not in these nations, is a major concentration in this volume.

The main focus of this book's eight chapters is that democracy remains immature. The survey results reveal that positive evaluations of democracy do not necessarily produce greater demand for democratic forms of accountability. Moreover, survey respondents who support democracy also retain positive views of authoritarianism. In other words, although the understanding of participatory politics is high in these four states, many citizens still consider authoritarianism a viable governance model. For example, in Chapter 2 Giovanna Dore reveals that although a large majority of Indonesians express support for democracy, less than 17 per cent can be considered "strong democrats". Moreover, a large proportion of respondents in all four countries expressed satisfaction with authoritarian or dictatorial leaders, including Soeharto in Indonesia and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. This reaffirms that people in these countries still consider authoritarianism a feasible government.

Although this book is a rich thought-provoking volume, how the authors determined political knowledge and democratic attitudes among citizens of these four countries is still obscure. The authors use respondents' answers to questions about political facts as a measure of citizens' political knowledge. However, the authors failed to consider the background information or knowledge necessary for respondents to make correct decisions, according to the authors, in the survey. For example, Indonesian voters were asked to decide which of their political institutions is the most important. The correct answer, according to the author, is the president. Only 52 per cent of respondents gave the correct answer. The rest of the respondents marked other institutions such as the legislative, the judiciary, local government and political parties. This creates a concern that the criteria the authors use might be biased. Indonesian citizens may have divergent knowledge and information in order to choose their correct answer. People who live in rural areas, for example, might view the local government as more important than the president.

In another example, the authors tested whether or not respondents understood the meaning of democracy. The survey asked which of the following countries in Asia are democratic states: India, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, the Philippines, Singapore and South Korea. The authors divided the responses into two categories: "knowledgeable" and "incorrect and do not know". The book indicates that the correct answers are India, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea. However, if the survey respondents mark that Thailand or Singapore is not a democratic state, is this necessarily the wrong answer? Thailand has gone through many military coups and was frequently ruled by a military government. On the other hand, in the case of Singapore, the country is ranked low in the level of democracy by many international organizations. If survey respondents have different political knowledge on democracy in particular countries, how can they respond correctly to the survey question? The authors, therefore, may need to provide a sharp definition of democratic cognitive skills before undertaking such a valuable project to measure common citizens' attitudes towards democracy.

Aside from this methodology, *Incomplete Democracies* is a data-driven book that is a welcome addition to the growing literature on political behaviour and public attitudes in Asian countries. This book will also be useful for readers interested in comparing

how democracy developed on the ground in different democratic states in Asia. In addition, the findings of this book will benefit scholars who are specialists in the politics of Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines and who wish to enhance their understanding of the political knowledge among ordinary Asian citizens on democratization.

PUNCHADA SIRIVUNNABOOD is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Thailand. Postal address: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Phutthamonthon 4, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand; email: punchada.sir@mahidol.ac.th.