

An Empirical Study of the Types of Democratic Processes Citizens Really Want :

The case of South Korea*

Ganghoon Kim

(Wonkwang University)

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· **Keywords** : democratic process, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, representative democracy, political regionalism, South Korea's policy toward North Korea

【ABSTRACT】

Many scholars have argued that South Korea is one of the most successful democracies in Asia. However, the average South Korean citizen often complains about the current operation of their government. Citizens sometimes express dissatisfaction and discontent with their government and politicians. This study explores whether ordinary Koreans are really dissatisfied with the government, politicians and their democratic process and what governmental processes ordinary Koreans really want. To examine these concerns, I conducted nationwide survey, containing a large random sample (n= 599) gathered in South Korea. The empirical findings show that a large majority of ordinary citizens in South Korea are dissatisfied with the government, politicians, and their democratic system. According to the survey, most people have a preference for a pure direct

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democracy rather than any other type of democratic process such as deliberative or representative. Additionally, South Korea policy (especially the Sunshine policy) and policy-making process toward North Korea and regionalism are the main factors that affect types of democratic process that ordinary Koreans really prefer.

I . Introduction

South Korean citizens often complain about the current operation of their government. They sometimes express dissatisfaction and discontent with their government and politicians.¹⁾ Conventional description insists that the trends and causes of declining political trust and satisfaction derive from policy and outcome matters.²⁾ On the other hand, arguing that outcome matters may have been neither plentiful nor conclusive in supporting the common negative perception of ordinary people toward government and politicians, some scholars insist that public dissatisfaction with government and politicians is a reflection of the performance of politicians, governmental institutions, and elected officials.³⁾

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- 1) Sung Ho Im, "Political Trust and Representative Process for Key Factors of Governance: Comparative Analysis between South Korea and the US," *Journal of Legislative Studies* 12-1 (2006), pp. 195-222. Jong S. Jun and Tae Y. Kim, "Distrust as a Hindrance to Democratic Government in South Korea," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 10 (2002), pp. 1-16. Doh Chull Shin, Chong-Min Park, and Jiho Jang, "Assessing the Shifting Qualities of Democratic Citizenship: The Case of South Korea," *Democratization* 12-2 (2005), pp. 202-22. For example, with the Korean Democracy Barometer surveys conducted during the 1996-2001 period (January 1996, May 1997, October 1998, November 1999, and March and April 2001), Shin and his colleagues concluded that the Korean people are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the performance of their government. Especially, a large majority of ordinary Koreans, ranging from 57 percent in 1999 to 87 percent in 1997, said that they are dissatisfied with government performance, criticizing a malfunctioning government.
 - 2) Robert Z. Lawrence, "Is It Really the Economy, Stupid?" in Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King (eds.), *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Introduction: The Decline of Confidence in Government," in Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King (eds.), *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). For example, Nye (1997) argues that "people may be properly unhappy with poor social outcomes even though the quality of government outputs does not change."
 - 3) Carolyn L. Funk, "Process Performance: Public Reaction to Legislative Policy Debates," in John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (eds.), *What Is It about Government That American Dislike?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001). John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government*

If the process is a good predictor influencing ordinary people's political attitudes and behaviors toward government and politicians, what government processes do ordinary people want? Which of the alternative models of democracy (i.e., deliberative, participatory, or representative) would people prefer? People's dissatisfaction with government might be due to their not having enough say in the government, in which case they would prefer participatory or deliberative democracy.⁴⁾ Or people might want a representative democracy in which representatives make decisions based on the people's wishes or on what they think is in the people's best interest.⁵⁾

Considering democratic process matters (i.e., different types of democratic process), several questions become relevant: To what extent are ordinary people satisfied with government and politicians? Do people really want to participate in the policy-making process? Do people only want to consider and discuss political issues and then let politicians decide on the issues? Do people want politicians to carefully consider and decide all political issues in operating their government? Most important, what factors affect people's preference of a certain type of democratic process?⁶⁾

The main purpose of this article is not so much to find a particular solution to the political problems in South Korea, but to provide deeper insights as to what types of processes people want if the process is important for understanding people's dissatisfaction and discontent with government and politicians.

The following section examines what people would want concerning government processes by focusing on four different democratic process types (i.e., pure direct, direct, representative, or deliberative democracy). The third section examines to what extent the two factors (South Korean's policy and policy-making process toward North Korea and regionalism) relate to different types of democratic process, and several

Should Work (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). With results from focus groups and a national survey in the United States, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse stress that ordinary people dislike and are discontented with government due to politicians who are selfish in the process of policy making and who give less consideration to ordinary people's interest. Im (2006).

4) Ian Budge, *The New Challenge of Direct Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996). Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit (eds.), *The Good Policy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Todd Donovan and Jeffrey A. Karp, "Popular Support for Direct Democracy," *Party Politics* 12-5 (2006), pp. 671-88.

5) Today, most democracies in general adopt the representative democratic process. Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 4.

6) In this article, I selected two major issues (i.e., South Korea's policy process toward North Korea and political regionalism) as policy variables in that these two factors, historically and practically, might well heavily influence South Koreans' dissatisfaction with government and their preferences for an alternative form of democracy.

variables (i.e., political system, approval of various parts of the government, and political participation and activities) are tested to see whether these variables are statistically related to the type of democratic process ordinary people prefer. The fourth section briefly describes the research design, including a simple model. The fifth section addresses the data analysis, based on the results of a survey administered in South Korea. The final section summarizes the results and discusses the significance of this study.

II. Four Governing Processes

If political process is important for understanding people's dissatisfaction and discontent with government, a fundamental task of this study is to explore what types of processes people want by comparing the merits and demerits of each process. Different types of governmental process demand different levels and types of input from ordinary people and from political leaders. Figure 1 indicates four governing processes and possible reforms, based on the democratic governmental systems (i.e., representative, pure direct, direct, and deliberative democracy).

Figure 1. Categories of Democratic Procedures, with Examples⁷⁾

		Pre-decision People	Consideration by Elites
Decision by	People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town hall meeting and juries • Navajo democracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballot measures (initiatives and referenda) • Teledemocracy
	Elites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer groups • Policy juries • Deliberative opinion polls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard representative government

1. Elites Consider, People Decide

The first governing process discussed is direct democracy, in which preliminary discussion and consideration on policy is conducted by elites but the final decision will

⁷⁾ Figure adopted from John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 164.

be controlled by ordinary people. The referendum process and initiatives are good examples of direct democracy. Moreover, the expanding use of direct democracy substantially reflects a wish to provide citizens with more opportunities to be involved in the political process since 1970 in many established democracies.⁸⁾ However, some political elites are deeply skeptical about direct democracy, arguing that it could promote majority tyranny at the expense of the interests of minorities.⁹⁾

2. Elites Consider, Elites Decide

The second governing process is representative government, in which elites not only consider political proposals but also decide on them by themselves. Today, most democracies in general adopt this system. However, many political scholars remain skeptical. A crucial condition of democracy is a requirement of diversity of opinions; but because consideration and decisions are made by elites, it is hard to expect ordinary people to voice their interests and opinions in policy and the policy-making process. For example, elected representative political institutions promote political alienation and reduce people's participation in the political process.¹⁰⁾

3. People Consider, Elites Decide

The third governing process is deliberative democracy, in which the people consider political proposals and elites decide on them. A main proposition of this procedure is that the system would be improved if people were more involved. Though elected officials have powers and responsibilities for making final decisions on policies, scholars expect that elected officials would be informed by rich and sustained deliberations on the part of ordinary people.¹¹⁾ Many scholars, however, are convinced that ordinary people in the United States rarely know what the policies are, often are misinformed, or have changeable attitudes toward government and policies.¹²⁾

8) Donovan and Karp (2006), p. 672. Additionally, at present in the United States many scholars find that the initiative process allows ordinary people to control state policy programs and check on the influence of special interests. Many countries, especially in Western Europe, allow initiatives and use referendums as well.

9) Manabu Saeki, "Direct Democracy Paradox: State Fiscal Policies in the U.S. and the Threat of Direct Initiatives," *Review of Policy Research* 23-4 (2006), pp. 915-25.

10) Steven L. Schweizer, "Participation, Workplace Democracy, and the Problem of Representative Government," *Polity* 27-3 (1995), p. 367.

11) Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), pp. 166-67.

12) Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David Apter (ed.), *In*

4. People Consider, People Decide

The fourth governing process is a pure direct democracy, in which elites do not need to be involved in policies and the policy-making process.¹³⁾ A good example of this process is the New England town hall meeting. Many scholars insist that town hall government is the purest form of democracy in that the meeting maximizes citizen participation, allows ordinary voters to hold administrative officers directly accountable, provides psychological benefits for attendees, and performs citizen education and community-building functions.¹⁴⁾ Conversely, some scholars and politicians have criticized town hall government: this law-making institution is not the purest form of democracy; the town hall meeting often is dominated by special interest groups; the town hall meeting could function successfully only in small rural towns; and so on.¹⁵⁾

The two-by-two figure indicated merits and demerits of the various types of democracy depending on the role people play in considering various proposals and then in selecting which proposals to adopt.¹⁶⁾ Regarding the different types of governmental processes, it can be insisted that “making good decisions, perceiving the system as legitimate, and helping the people in society be happy are fundamental tasks in a successful democratic governmental system.”¹⁷⁾ Although the extent to which any democracy attempts to accomplish these three tasks can always be improved and every effort should be made to do so, it is important to understand what ordinary people really support concerning certain governmental processes. In turn, the next section discusses factors causing ordinary people’s negative views toward government and politicians and variables predicting their preference type of democratic process in South Korea.

Ideology and Discontent (New York: Free Press, 1964); Michael X. Delli-Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich, “Misinformation and the Currency of Citizenship,” *Journal of Politics* 62 (August, 2000), pp. 790–816.

13) Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), pp. 168–69.

14) Lawrence A. Lowell, *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1921).

15) Joseph F. Zimmerman, *The New England Town Meeting: Democracy in Action* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999), pp. 5–9.

16) Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), p. 238.

17) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

III. The Determinants of Different Types of Democratic Process

What I have tried to do so far is to look at different types of political processes in order to investigate what governmental processes the people of South Korea really prefer. If the people of South Korea prefer representative, deliberative, or participatory democracy, then the most important task is to explore what factors predict ordinary people's process preference. Therefore, I include two policy variables (i.e., policy and the policy making process toward North Korea and regionalism) that might well heavily influence South Koreans' dissatisfaction with government and their preferences for an alternative form of democracy.

In particular, South Korea's North Korea policy has long been wrapped up in ideological, regional, and partisan fissures within South Korean society.¹⁸⁾ Regionalism, another notable feature of South Korean politics, remains a powerful force in shaping voter identity and behavior and has had enormous influence in driving South Korea's political debates and conflicts among politicians.¹⁹⁾ If ordinary South Koreans are disappointed by government and politicians because they believe that the government and politicians failed to obtain much result toward North Korea under representative democracy, I propose the following hypothesis: *the more ordinary South Koreans are disappointed by government policy and the policy making process toward North Korea, the more likely South Koreans will have a preference for either participatory or*

18) Hoare, in the article, offers that the Grand National Party (GNP) blamed the Sunshine policy for most South Koreans having lost patience with North Korea, arguing that Kim Jong-il had continued on with his nuclear weapons program financed largely with South Korean aid during the past ten years the Sunshine policy had been in place. Jim Hoare, "Does the Sun Still Shine? The Republic of Korea's Policy of Engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *Asian Affairs* 36-1 (2008), p. 81. Norman D. Levin and Yong-Sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Politics toward North Korea* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002).

19) According to Lipset, "the poorer the country, the greater the emphasis on nepotism—support of kin, friends, and same regional people." And he argues that "this in turn reduces the opportunity to develop the efficient bureaucracy which a modern democratic state requires." S. M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 52. Man Heum Kim, "Political Cleavage, Party Politics and Regionalism," *Korean Political Science Association* 28-2 (1987), pp. 51-67; Moon Jo Kim, "The Formation of Korean Regionalism and Its Characters," in Korean Association of Sociology (ed.), *Regionalism and Regional Conflicts in Korea* (Seoul: Seognwonsa, 1990), pp. 153-66; Keedon Kwon, "Regionalism in South Korea: Its Origins and Role in Her Democratization," *Politics and Society* 32-4 (2004), pp. 545-74; Seok Nam Moon, "The Historical Background of Regional Gaps," in Korean Association of Sociology (ed.), *Regionalism and Regional Conflicts in Korea* (Seoul: Seognwonsa, 1990), pp. 34-44; Woojin Moon, "Decomposition of Regional Voting in South Korea: Ideological Conflicts and Regional Interests," *Party Politics* 11-5 (2005), pp. 579-99.

deliberative democracy. If ordinary people regard political regionalism as a crucial factor to gain their regional interests under representative democracy, the following hypothesis can be proposed: *the more ordinary South Koreans are interested in political regionalism, the more likely they are to have a preference for representative democracy*.

I include understanding public attitudes toward the overall political system, because an individual's perception of the political system impacts on preference for a certain type of democracy.²⁰⁾ If ordinary people are dissatisfied with government structures, the current public policies, government operations, and current political system, they might be more inclined to support alternative type of democracy. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis: *the more people are dissatisfied and discontented with the overall political system, the more likely they are to prefer participatory democracy*.

I include public approval or disapproval of governmental institutions, because popular approval of government is driven by process concerns rather than policy concern. Moreover, ordinary people's approval or disapproval of government is significantly related to their desire for certain democratic processes.²¹⁾ Therefore, I offer the following hypotheses: *1) the more people approve of the actual working of government, the more likely they are to support representative democratic process; 2) the more people disapprove of the actual working of government, the more like they will support participatory democratic process*.

Citizens' political participation and activities are at the heart of democratic theory and at the heart of the democratic political formula. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force.²²⁾ Many political scholars regard citizen involvement in politics as a fundamental function of democratic process. In that context, it can be argued that diverse ways of political participation are the important factors that determine the types of political process. Regarding this argument, the following hypotheses can be proposed: *1) the more ordinary Koreans support participatory democratic process, the more they are interested in public activities; 2) the more ordinary Koreans support the representative democracy, the more they are disinterested in public activities*.

To test these hypotheses regarding the relationship between each factor and different types of democratic process, the next section briefly discusses the research design, procedures and sampling methods, including a simple model.

20) Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002).

21) Ibid.

22) Russell J. Dalton, *The Good Citizens: How a Younger Generation Is Reshaping American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008).

IV. Research Design, Procedures, and a Simple Model

In order to find respondents, there are several sampling methods such as nonprobability sampling methods (e.g., purposive sample, volunteer subjects, and others) and probability sampling methods (e.g., simple random sample, stratified sample, and so on). This study uses Internet sampling method, which is one probability sampling method, in order to increase validity and reliability.²³⁾

“MBIZON,” a public opinion census agency in South Korea, was used to find survey respondents. Data were collected from surveys of South Koreans 20 years of age and older (i.e., voting age), and data gathering took 11 days (i.e., on March 21 to 31, 2009). The total number of participants was 599. The survey is based on sampling at the individual level with selection based on categories of age, sex, and geographic regions (i.e., residents of Seoul and Gyeonggi Province, Chungcheong Provinces, Gangwon Province, Jeolla Provinces, Jeju Province and Gyeongsang Provinces). The procedure for choosing the sample is as follows: respondents for the survey were chosen by means of random selection. In order to find respondents, “MBIZON” sent e-mail surveys to randomly chosen people who are on panels of the MBIZON or member of one of the large websites, such as daum.net or yahoo.co.kr, and they asked them to voluntarily participate in the survey. Those who agreed to participate in the Internet survey, MBIZON sent a questionnaire to each respondent.

The survey also includes questions on different types of democratic process (i.e., pure direct, direct, deliberative, and representative), two factors (i.e., South Korea policy and policy-making process toward North Korea and regionalism), other relevant variables (e.g., public attitudes toward the overall political system, approval of various parts of the government, and political participation and activities), and demographic variables (e.g., education, income, gender, and others).

23) However, there are advantages and disadvantages of Internet surveys. For example, if respondents have problems with survey questions, Internet surveys cannot offer explanation on them. To solve this concern, I conducted a pilot survey with 11 students to ensure questions would be understood properly. Additionally, it can be argued that online research is considered to have less representative sampling than other research methods, considering biased research participation and distorted research results. However, as the population of Internet user grows, online research through the Internet is on the rise. Therefore, representative sampling is not main concern in this study. Regarding biased research participation and distorted research results, I directly contacted to MBIZON in order to solve these concerns. According to MBIZON, they are able to technically filter age groups in order to reduce biased distribution of age in the Internet survey. Therefore, it can be said that biased research participation can be minimized. Distorted research results can be avoided as well.

The simple model is as follows:

$$Y_k = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + \dots + b_iX_i + E.$$

The b s are respective regression coefficients. The rest is as follows: Y_1 = representative democracy, Y_2 = deliberative democracy, Y_3 = direct democracy, and Y_4 = pure direct democracy; X_1 = South Korea's policy (especially the Sunshine policy) toward North Korea, X_2 = Regionalism, X_3 = Negative view of disagreement, X_4 = Approval of various parts (i.e., the government, the local government, the Constitutional Court, president, Congress) of the government, X_5 = attitude toward government, X_6 = political knowledge, X_7 = political participation and activities, X_8 = income, X_9 = age, X_{10} = geographical area, X_{11} = education, and X_{12} = gender.

V. Data Analysis and Discussion

1. South Koreans' Attitudes toward Their Democratic System

As bits of reference suggested earlier, ordinary Koreans appear to be dissatisfied with their government and politicians. But are they really dissatisfied? Several measures (i.e., public attitudes toward the overall political system and approval of various parts of the government) are examined in order to investigate whether or not South Koreans are truly dissatisfied and lack faith in their democracy.

1) Public attitudes toward the overall political system

Though many scholars and people believe that South Korea is one of the most successful third-wave democracies in Asia, little is known about how ordinary people perceive the overall political system and their democracy. This section focuses on public attitudes toward the overall political system in South Korea. Table 1 indicates public attitudes toward the overall political system of South Korea.

Table 1. Public Attitudes toward the Overall Political System

Answers	Questions ²⁴⁾			
	Governmental Structure	Public Policy	Government Operation	Political System
Strongly agree	5.7% (34)	1.5% (9)	3.8% (23)	1.0% (6)
Agree	38.1% (228)	25.5% (153)	36.1% (216)	18.5% (111)
Disagree	48.4% (290)	48.7% (292)	43.7% (262)	50.6% (303)
Strongly disagree	7.8% (47)	24.2% (145)	16.4% (98)	29.9% (179)

Source: the democratic process survey, MBIZON

As expected, a large number of the respondents believe that the governmental structures, the current public policies, and the current political system are far from their interests and needs. For example, when respondents were asked about the current political system, 80.5 percent of the respondents, as expected, said the current political system does a poor job representing the interests of all Koreans. Although ordinary people are unable to do away with the current political system themselves, they are dissatisfied with it.

2) Approval of various parts of the government

If process matters are significantly related to ordinary people’s dissatisfaction and discontent with government and politicians in their democracy, is the people’s approval or disapproval of government dependent upon how the government makes decisions with the broader democratic structure? If yes, to what extent do ordinary Koreans show a dislike of the National Assembly rather than the president due to the National Assembly’s more visible decision-making procedures? Drawing on a national sample survey recently conducted in South Korea, the present inquiry addresses this concern in an attempt to evaluate both the process matters that affect ordinary Koreans’ perceptions of government and politicians and the degree of their approval of various

24) Governmental structure: Our basic governmental structures are the best and should not be changed in a major way; Public policy: I am generally satisfied with the public policies the government has produced lately; Government operation: Our government would work best if it were run like a business; Political system: the current political system does a good job of representing the interests of all Koreans, regardless of socioeconomic status and gender.

parts of the government. Table 2 provides the percentage of ordinary Koreans regarding approval of various parts of the government.

Table 2. Approval of Various Parts of the Government

Answers	Questions ²⁵⁾				
	The Government	The Local Government	The Constitutional Court	The President	The National Assembly
Strongly agree	1.3% (8)	0.7% (4)	2.7% (16)	2.3% (14)	3.0% (18)
Agree	37.7% (226)	34.2% (205)	41.1% (246)	33.4% (200)	49.4% (296)
Disagree	56.4% (338)	59.4% (356)	51.8% (310)	57.6% (345)	44.1% (264)
Strongly disagree	4.5% (27)	5.7% (34)	4.5% (27)	6.7% (40)	3.5% (21)

Source: the democratic process survey, MBIZON

As Table 2 indicates, a large majority of the respondents did not approve of various parts of the government. For instance, nearly 61 percent of the respondents did not approve of the government. Contrary to my expectation, 52.4 percent of the respondents approved of the way the National Assembly has been handling their job lately. The National Assembly has consistently been the most favored institution of government.

These empirical findings are somewhat different from a previous study in the United States. According to Hibbing and Theiss–Morse, for example, 72 percent of respondents approved of the way that the Supreme Court has been handling their job lately, 70 percent of respondents approved of the way that state government has been handling their job lately, and 52 percent of the respondents approved of the way the Congress has been handling their job lately. Regarding this finding, they argue that “the Supreme Court has consistently been the most favored institution of government, and Congress the least,” because debates and compromises among the justices are not exposed to the public.²⁶⁾ Although, there is some degree of public willingness to approve of some specific institutions, a majority of the people offer approval of the overall political system. By

25) The government: the government has been handling their job lately; The local government: the local government has been handling their job lately; The Constitutional Court: the Constitutional Court has been handling their job lately; The president: the president has been handling his/her job lately; The National Assembly: the National Assembly has been handling their job lately.

26) Hibbing and Theiss–Morse (2002), p. 99.

comparing the two different findings between the United States and South Korea, it can be argued that visual institutional processes to South Korea do not affect the public's willingness to give more approval on some institutions than others. Moreover, it seems likely that South Koreans are more dissatisfied with government and politicians than Americans are.

Overall, by looking at two measures of the overall political system and approval of various parts of the government, it can be suggested that there is a consistent tendency that most ordinary Koreans are dissatisfied with government and their democratic system.

2. Types of Democratic Process that People Want

I have argued that a majority of respondents take an airy attitude toward government and their democratic system. I have not yet shown, however, what types of democratic process ordinary Koreans prefer, if they believe governmental procedures do not match their own preferred procedures. Therefore, I examine types of democratic processes that ordinary Koreans really prefer. This section also descriptively examines independent variables that might predict type of democracy, discussing why I am including the independent variables. Finally, I examine the relationship between dependent variables (i.e., types of democratic processes) and each independent variable.

1) Different types of democratic processes

There is no doubt that all democracies, regardless whether they are consolidated or consolidating democracies, cannot be expected to develop and improve their performance without their citizens' constant support and involvement.²⁷⁾ Nevertheless, a large majority of ordinary Koreans are dissatisfied and discontented with government and democratic procedures because they believe government and democratic procedures do not carefully deal with what citizens really want. Regarding this concern, what needs to be determined is to find out whether or not ordinary Koreans really want to become deeply involved in governmental procedures. For example, ordinary people who support elected officials who have attained office by winning contested elections prefer representative democracy, because they believe elected officials and government might represent their interests and concerns. On the other hand, others who do not support elected officials and government and do not like the growth of big government prefer a

27) Dalton (2008).

participatory democracy, because they believe more popular control over government spending and greater citizen involvement are necessary for effective political outcomes and procedures.

To address this point, respondents were asked two questions that get at the different types of democratic processes that ordinary Koreans might want: 1) if the Korean people carefully considered and discussed all political issues instead of relying on politicians to do this, the country would be a lot better off; and 2) if the Korean people decided all political issues directly in operating their government instead of relying on politicians, the country would be a lot better off.²⁸⁾ Table 3 shows a prevalence of different types of democratic processes.

Table 3. Prevalence of Different Types of Democratic Process

Types of Democratic Process	Number	Percent of all Respondents
Pure direct democracy	344	57.4%
Direct democracy	32	5.3%
Deliberative democracy	156	26.0%
Representative democracy	67	11.2%
Total	599	100%

Source: the democratic process survey. MBIZON

Table 3 shows that 57.4 percent and 5.3 percent of the respondents said they prefer pure direct democracy or direct democracy respectively. In other words, a large number of respondents (62.7 percent) want to be involved in policies and policy-making process instead of relying on politicians. Of the different types of democratic process, 26 percent (156) of the respondents prefer a deliberative democracy. Interestingly, only 11.2 percent (67) of the respondents support a representative democracy.

28) To determine the different types of democratic processes that ordinary Koreans want, negative response (strongly disagree and disagree) and positive responses (agree and strongly agree) were combined into four categories: 1) if a person answers both questions "strongly agree or agree," it can be said that he/she is a supporter of pure direct democracy; 2) if a person answers both questions "disagree or strongly disagree," it can be said that he/she is a supporter of representative democracy; 3) if a person answers the first question "disagree or strongly disagree" and the second question "strongly agree or agree," it can be said that he/she may hold direct democracy beliefs; and 4) if a person answers the first question "strongly agree or agree" and the second question "disagree or strongly disagree," it can be said that he/she may hold deliberative democracy beliefs.

2) South Korea’s policy toward North Korea and regionalism

Understanding public attitudes toward South Korea’s policy toward North Korea and regionalism are important because politics is affected by these two major issues and these two factors can influence political divisions that may not be observable in any other country. Specifically, continuous debate, conflict, and compromise with policy and policy-making process toward North Korea and political regionalism may have an impact on individuals’ negative attitudes toward government and politicians. Furthermore, it can be inferred that these two factors may be related to people’s preference for a certain type of democratic process. Table 4 shows public attitude toward South Korea’s policy toward North Korea.²⁹⁾

Table 4. Public Attitudes toward South Korea’s Policy toward North Korea

Answers	SK’s policy toward NK	SK’s Sunshine policy toward NK	Criticizing the Sunshine policy	Failure of the Sunshine policy	Elected officials’ debate about NK	Politicians’ compromise
Strongly agree	1% (6)	12% (72)	5.3% (32)	11.4% (68)	10.5% (63)	8% (48)
Agree	26.7% (160)	39.1% (247)	43.4% (260)	44.4% (266)	59.4% (356)	55.4% (332)
Disagree	55.9% (335)	41.2% (234)	42.1% (252)	35.7% (214)	26.9% (161)	34.1% (204)
Strongly disagree	16.4% (98)	7.7% (46)	9.2% (55)	8.5% (51)	3.2% (19)	2.5% (15)
Total	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)

Source: the democratic process survey. MBIZON

When respondents were asked about South Korea’s policy toward North Korea, 72.3 percent of the respondents said they are dissatisfied with South Korea’s policy toward North Korea. When respondents were asked about the Sunshine policy toward North

29) To explore public attitudes toward South Korea’s policy toward North Korea, I asked several questions: 1) You are satisfied with South Korea’s policy toward North Korea; 2) You are satisfied with the Sunshine policy toward North Korea; 3) When people criticize the Sunshine Policy, you feel uneasy and uncomfortable; 4) The Sunshine policy failed to bring about any meaningful changes in North Korean politics; 5) When elected officials debate about North Korea, you feel uneasy, uncomfortable, and even angry; and 6) There are too many compromises among politicians when discussing and debating the policy toward North Korea.

Korea, there are no considerably distinctive differences, 51.1 percent of the respondents said they are satisfied with the Sunshine policy. However, 48.9 percent of the respondents did not support the Sunshine policy. 48.7 percent of the respondents said that when people criticize the policy, they feel uneasy and uncomfortable. 55.8 percent of the respondents expressed that the Sunshine policy failed to bring about any meaningful changes in North Korean policies. 69.9 percent of the respondents said that when elected officials debate about North Korea, they feel uneasy, uncomfortable, and even angry. Finally, when respondents were asked if there are too many political compromises among politicians when discussing and debating the policy toward North Korea, 63.4 percent of the respondents said “yes.”

Many studies provide evidence that people believe that regionalism tends to undermine democracy in South Korea. Specifically, ordinary Koreans believe that political regionalism produced by elected officials reveals a critical flaw in Korea’s democracy today. Regarding the problem of regionalism, to what extent does the regionalism in South Korea lead ordinary Koreans to be dissatisfied with and distrustful of government and politicians? Table 5 shows ordinary Koreans’ attitude toward regionalism in South Korea, regarding policy and process matters.

Table 5. Public Attitudes toward Regionalism in South Korea

Answers	Questions ³⁰⁾				
	Negative view of regionalism	Political regionalism	The GNP and regionalism	The UDP and regionalism	Political debate and regionalism
Strongly agree	22.2% (133)	33.6% (201)	17.7% (106)	14% (84)	27.5% (165)
Agree	57.1% (342)	56.1% (336)	54.9% (329)	52.8% (316)	59.1% (354)
Disagree	18.5% (111)	9% (54)	24.4% (146)	30.1% (180)	11.7% (70)
Strongly disagree	2.2 % (13)	1.3% (8)	3% (18)	3.2% (19)	1.7% (10)
Total	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)	100% (599)

Source: the democratic process survey, MBIZON

30) Negative view of regionalism: regionalism is a barrier to reviving the nation’s democratic development and stable society; Political regionalism: politicians tend to favor one region over another and manipulate regional biases for their political gain; The GNP and regionalism: The GNP is more willing to work for the people living in the Gyeongsang Provinces than the people living in the Jeolla Provinces; The UDP and regionalism: The UDP

In the first question, a large majority of the respondents (79.3 percent) recognizes regionalism as a barrier to reviving the nation's democratic development and stability. As expected, a large number of the respondents (89.7 percent) said politicians tend to favor one region over another and manipulate regional biases for their political gain. When asked if the GDP is more willing to work for the people living in the Gyeongsang Provinces than the people living in the Jeolla Provinces, 72.6 percent of the respondents agreed. With somewhat the same question that if the UDP is more willing to work for the people living in the Jeolla Provinces than the people living in the Gyeongsang Provinces, 66.8 percent of the respondents agreed. When asked a final question "if the GNP and the UDP debate on a certain issue, you feel uneasy and uncomfortable," 86.6 percent of the respondents said yes. In general, a large majority of the respondents recognize regionalism as a crucial barrier to reviving the nation's democratic development and stable society.

3) Binary logistic analysis of types of democracy

This section explores the connections, if any, between types of democratic processes and the independent variables. For example, to what extent do those who negatively evaluate regionalism support pure direct democracy? Or, to what extent do those who are disappointed by government policy and policy-making process toward North Korea prefer either participatory or deliberative democracy? Binary logistic analysis is employed to address these questions.

In binary logistic analysis, two policy variables (i.e., policy and the policy-making process toward North Korea and regionalism) are included. I include understanding public attitudes toward the overall political system, because individuals' perception of the political system impacts on preference for a certain type of democracy. Public approval or disapproval of governmental institutions is a good predictor in examining types of democratic processes. Citizens' political participation and activities is also a good predictor in determining what type of democratic processes people prefer.

Concerning individuals' preference for democratic process, I examine what factors and variables are statistically related to individuals' preference on types of democratic process.

is more willing to work for the people living in the Jeolla Provinces than the people living in the Gyeongsang Provinces; Political debate and regionalism: when the GNP and the UDP debate on a certain issue, you feel uneasy and uncomfortable.

Table 6. Binary Logistic Analysis of Different Types of Democratic Process

Variable	PDD ³¹⁾	DLD ³²⁾	RD ³³⁾
Gender	0.445**	-0.2	-0.6*
Age	-0.014	0.043	0.09
Policy toward NK	-0.074	-0.09	0.283
Sunshine policy	0.198	0.278	-1.13**
Process toward NK	0.255	-0.38**	0.033
Regionalism	0.583**	0.38	-1.9***
The government	0.232	-0.017	-0.157
The local government	0.019	0.177	-0.5
The Constitutional Court	0.144	-0.213	0.02
The president	-0.142	-0.155	0.46
The National Assembly	-0.215	0.186	0.08
Negative view of disagreement	0.433**	-0.3	-0.49
Political knowledge	0.122	0.1	-0.05
Attitudes toward government 1	0.157	-0.35**	0.27
Attitudes toward government 2	-0.246	0.4**	-0.08
Attitudes toward government 3	-0.163	-0.1	0.17
Attitudes toward government 4	-0.044	-0.12	0.25
Voting	-0.03	-0.23	-0.22
E-contacting	0.527**	-0.666**	0.05
Contacting	0.566*	-0.57*	-0.06
Community action	-0.138	-0.1	0.054
Protest	-0.051	0.24	-0.75
Education	0.04	-0.03	-0.045
Income	0.003	0.01	-0.02
N	344	156	67
Constant	-4.72***	-0.162	7.0***
Chi-square	61.44***	37.05**	83.76***

Source: the democratic process survey, MBIZON

Note: *** indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level

** indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level

* indicates statistical significance at the 0.1 level

31) PDD indicates pure direct democracy.

32) DLD indicates deliberative democracy.

33) RD indicates representative democracy.

Table 6 shows the results of binary logistic analysis with regard to the relationships between the dependent variables³⁴⁾ (i.e., pure direct, deliberative, and representative democratic process) and each independent variable. First, in pure direct democracy, gender, regionalism, negative view of disagreement, e-contacting, and contacting are statistically significant. In particular, gender has a strong effect with a coefficient of .403. The positive coefficient indicates that female respondents support the pure direct democracy, but less so the male respondents.

Regionalism is statistically significant, having a coefficient of .49. Most respondents who dislike regionalism like pure direct democracy. A negative view of disagreement at 0.1 level is statistically significant. Given an effect with a coefficient of .403, most respondents who feel uneasy and uncomfortable when people argue about political issues prefer the pure direct democracy.

Lastly, another interesting outcome is that e-contacting and contacting is statistically significant at 0.01 level. Those who support pure direct democracy have used the Internet (e.g., e-mail, UCC and blog) to try to inform or persuade other people about a political issue and have personally contacted a local or national government official about a need, problem or issue. Contrary to my expectation, none of the variables related to North Korea is statistically significant. Moreover, several independent variables such as public attitudes toward overall political system, political knowledge, approval of government, and other demographic variables (e.g., education, age, and income) are not statistically significant.

For the deliberative democracy type of process, several interesting outcomes can be observed. South Korea's policy-making process toward North Korea is statistically significant at 0.1 level. Unlike the pure direct democracy, two independent variables (basic governmental structures and public policies) both at 0.01 and 0.05 level in attitudes toward government are statistically significant.

Basic governmental structures have an effect with a coefficient of $-.32$. Because the coefficient is negative, it can be interpreted that those who are dissatisfied with basic governmental structures support the deliberative democratic process. Additionally, evaluation of the public policies the government has produced lately has an effect with a coefficient of .44. Those who are satisfied with the current public policies prefer the deliberative democracy rather than other types of democratic processes.

Moreover, public activities (i.e., e-contacting and contacting) are also significant. Because the coefficients of e-contacting ($-.625$) and contacting ($-.562$) are negative, it

34) In this analysis I took out direct democratic process due to such a small number of respondents (32) supporting this type of democratic process.

can be interpreted that respondents who do not actively participate in public activities, especially e-contacting and contacting, prefer the deliberative democratic process. Given a crucial principle of deliberative democracy, this statistical result is illogical as to why those who support deliberative democratic process are less willing to be involved in public activities. Despite the fact that most respondents who prefer a deliberative democratic process believe the process of deliberation is important because it allows citizens to engage among themselves in an exchange of ideas and views on political matters, to reshape and solidify their preferences, and to reduce the number of alternatives before making a decision about a certain issue, they are in doubt about how much their voices influence policy and the policy-making process. That is why it can be carefully concluded that they like the deliberative democratic process.

For representative democracy, several interesting outcomes can be observed also. Gender has an effect with a coefficient of $-.6$. The Sunshine policy has a strong effect with a coefficient of -1.13 . The negative coefficient implies that those who do not support the Sunshine policy have a preference for representative democratic process. Regionalism at 0.01 level is statistically significant. As well, the regionalism has a strong effect with a coefficient of -1.9 . Because the coefficient is negative, it can be interpreted that those who positively evaluate regionalism have a preference for a representative democratic process. Additionally, the final independent variables such as political system, negative view of disagreement, or political activities are not statistically significant.

In hypothesis testing, the first hypothesis that “ordinary Koreans who are disappointed by government policy-making process toward North Korea will have a preference for either participatory or deliberative democracy” is supported. Especially, those who are disappointed by government policy-making process toward North Korea support deliberative democracy. Given that deliberative democracy emphasizes rational dialogue and consensus formation among individuals,³⁵⁾ most people who support the deliberative democracy believe government and politicians should be wary of debating and discussing policy-making process toward North Korea. They also expect that rational dialogue and consensus decision making lead to a proper outcome.

The second hypothesis that “ordinary Koreans who are concerned about political regionalism prefer direct democracy” is also supported. Most people believe that political regionalism refers to political antagonism among regions. They also believe Korean

35) Manjusha Gupte and Robert V. Bartlett, “Necessary Preconditions for Deliberative Environmental Democracy? Challenging the Modernity Bias of Current Theory,” *Global Environmental Politics* 7-3 (2007), p. 95.

democracy will be aggravated by political regionalism. This finding provides a somewhat interesting point that people believe direct democracy may reduce political regionalism in South Korea. Conversely, those who positively evaluate regionalism support the representative democracy. They believe that political regionalism is not the main factor leading to regional economic gaps and political antagonisms among elected officials and others.

The third hypothesis about relationship between the public attitudes toward the overall political system and types of democratic process is not supported. Likewise, the fourth hypothesis that those who disapprove of the actual workings of government support participatory democracy is not supported. Rather, the null hypothesis, that there is no relationship between approval of various parts of the government and types of democratic process, is supported.

The final hypothesis that those who support the participatory democratic process are interested in public activities is supported. People who support direct democracy believe that all citizens should participate equally in public decision making and should exercise relatively equal amount of influence in the political system. As well, they suppose that public participation will lead to the strengthening of South Korea political system. In a nutshell, South Korea's policies, especially the Sunshine policy, and policy making process toward North Korea and regionalism are the main factors that determine types of democratic process that ordinary Koreans really prefer.

VI. Significance of the Study

As mentioned above, why do ordinary people in South Korea complain about the current operation of their government and sometimes express dissatisfaction and discontent with their government and politicians? In recent decades, both policy and process matters have increasingly been questioned, in light of the public's negative attitude toward government and politicians and regarding what it is that the people really prefer.

From different standpoints, conventional wisdom stresses policy as the cause for ordinary people's dissatisfaction with and distrust of government and politicians. On the other hand, some scholars insist that the dissatisfaction with and distrust of government and politicians are a reflection of the process performance of politicians and government. People care deeply about process matters instead of policy matters because process concerns, for example, can help us better understand dissatisfaction with and

distrust of government and politicians.³⁶⁾

Process concerns are able to explain the variation in people's perception of government and politicians in South Korea. Additionally, understanding people's process preferences helps solve several issues, including why ordinary Koreans are dissatisfied with government and politicians, why they want to be directly involved in policy and the policy-making process, or why they believe the government is not responsive to their interests and wishes. To investigate what people would want concerning the democratic process, I not only theoretically examined four different types of processes (i.e., representative, deliberative, direct, and pure direct democracy), but also I empirically tested what type of democratic processes ordinary Koreans really prefer. These questions regarding the types of democratic processes and factors influencing South Koreans' preference for type of democracy occupy a central place in this article.

First, I focus on whether South Koreans are dissatisfied with their democracy by asking respondents about some important points (i.e., the overall political system and approval of various parts of the government). These empirical findings support the previous evidence that a large majority of ordinary citizens are dissatisfied with the government, public policies, and the current political system.³⁷⁾ Moreover, most ordinary Koreans are dissatisfied with their democratic system. For example, a large majority of people said the current political system does not do a good job representing the interests of all Koreans. Additionally, most people are dissatisfied with the current political system, requesting a major change of the system in South Korea.

Based on the two measures (i.e., the overall political system and approval of various parts of the government), I argue that most people are dissatisfied with their democracy. If this finding is true, what kind of democracy do they want? I locate my work within the context of the types of democratic process. Building normatively on Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's notion of democratic procedures, I empirically investigated what types of democratic process people really want. Based on the democratic process survey, I observed several interesting findings. First of all, most respondents (57.4 percent) have a preference for a pure direct democracy rather than other types of democratic process. Surprisingly, only a small number of respondents (11.2 percent) prefer representative democracy. This finding suggests that most people want to engage in direct and wide-scale action in politics and policy making, in order to effect political outcomes and procedures.³⁸⁾ In other words, they believe that government and elected

36) Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), pp. 13-14.

37) Jun and Kim (2002); Shin et al. (2005).

38) Donovan and Karp (2006).

officials might not represent their interests and concerns.

Why do most people prefer the pure direct democracy rather than other type of democracy and what variables influence ordinary people's preference for a certain type of democracy? Regarding these concerns, I examine two factors that not only have an impact on an individual's negative attitudes toward government and politicians but also might affect people's preference for a certain type of democratic process. Conventional wisdom has continuously criticized cultural and political regionalism and South Korea's policy and the policy-making process toward North Korea. Many scholars have argued that these two features have led ordinary Koreans to experience dissatisfaction with and distrust of government and politicians.³⁹⁾ Regarding this concern, I investigate whether they are really dissatisfied with government and politicians with regard to those two features. Using a nationwide survey, my empirical findings support the previous studies that the two issues heavily influence ordinary Koreans' negative view of government and politicians.

However, past studies did not support whether the two factors are significantly related to people's preference for a certain type of democratic process in South Korea. Using binary logistic analysis, I examine the relationship. The binary logistic analysis clearly shows that political regionalism is a major cause of public disaffection and drives ordinary Koreans support for direct democracy. Additionally, government policy-making process toward North Korea is also a good predictor in determining people's preference for deliberative democracy. This finding suggests that sufficient discussion and consideration among elected officials and people with regard to a certain issue (e.g., the Sunshine policy) could lead to people being happier with government. In a nutshell, most people have recognized the two features, South Korea's policy and policy-making process toward North Korea and regionalism, as obstacles to the evolving democracy in South Korea. Additionally, public activities such as e-contacting and contacting are good predictors that determine direct democracy in South Korea. By now I have argued that South Koreans are unhappy with their democracy and empirical findings show that they widely prefer direct democracy.

The most important contribution of this study is that it applied a theory of democracy to a nation that is in transition. Positive gains of South Korea in the past have allowed us to take a complex look at democracy instead of examining it on a simplistic level. Instead of just success or failure, I looked at democracy from the perspective of those experiencing it as citizens. Despite the dissatisfaction of citizens about their democracy,

39) Kim (1990) and Kwon (2004).

they do not hate the government as a whole. The South Korean government can be a success and a disappointment at the same time. Only by asking the types of questions asked in this article—what type of democracy do the people want and what role are they willing to play in that democracy—can democracy truly exist. In that light, this article helps to move the study of South Korean democracy onto more solid ground. Because people were willing to answer the questions of this study, there is hope that these important questions about democracy can hopefully be addressed—if people will agree to discuss them.

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