



*Working Paper on Exploring Societal Resilience*

# Democratic Development and Social Resilience in the Asia Pacific

**David Arase**

May 2024

## Abstract

Western theorists have long suggested that economic development transforms society in complex ways that will inevitably transition traditional autocracies into modern democracies. But this postulate may not accord with the politically diverse outcomes that we see in Asia after some five decades of peaceful economic development. In this working paper, we propose a new framework of “social resilience” that combines four social characteristics expected to support democratic regime resilience and progressive development over time. We divide 18 Asian regimes into four types and tabulate their social resilience profiles. A comparison reveals that Asia’s most successful democracies display strength in all social resilience parameters, as we supposed might be the case. The single best predictor of democratic success among our four social resilience parameters was not level of economic development, but civil society development, which generally corresponds with regime type on the autocracy–democracy spectrum.<sup>1</sup> These results may thus offer new insights into the social requisites of democracy and, together with historical and institutional factors, help explain the actual record of democratic development in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

While most European countries embraced electoral democracy and the rule of law in the post–Cold War era of economic globalization, autocracy remains the predominant regime type in Asia, according to the 2023 V-Dem annual report.<sup>1</sup> Among the 18 Asian country cases discussed in the main part of this article, only three are deemed liberal democracies, and only two are electoral democracies (which have flawed elections and rule of law practices). To investigate why Asia has lagged behind in democratic development despite its exceptional record of economic progress from the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 up to the present, we develop a concept of social resilience, which is a combination of social characteristics expected to support democratic regime success and development. We tabulate and compare social resilience profiles across our 18 cases to see whether a fuller understanding of societal characteristics may help to explain the disappointing state of democracy in Asia today.

---

David Arase is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Asia-Pacific Resilience and Innovation (CAPRI) and a Resident Professor of International Politics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Hopkins-Nanjing Center in Nanjing, China.

<sup>1</sup> In another article we used more sophisticated statistical techniques to create a composite index of social resilience and analyze the variation of social resilience between the four regime types to identify statistically significant correlations. That analysis supported the basic findings in this nontechnical discussion. See David Arase, “The Critical Link Between Democratic and Social Resilience,” *Global Asia* 19, 1 (March 2024), [www.globalasia.org/latest-issue.php](http://www.globalasia.org/latest-issue.php).

<sup>2</sup> This paper stems from a project that focused on East Asia but decided to include India. To add consideration of the rest of South Asia, we provide a short discussion in the Appendix.

## Traditional ideas about social development and democratic state formation

Much has been written about the “social requisites” of democratic state institutions. Karl Marx famously linked the emergence of “bourgeois democracy” to the rise of capitalism, driven by new productive forces and class relations. Lipset and others suggested that as societies develop economically, they undergo social transformations that will lead to democratization but in stages.<sup>2</sup> Przeworski argued that while rising per capita GDP per se may not be the cause of democratization, a certain threshold of higher per capita income is required for a sustainable transition from autocracy to democracy.<sup>3</sup> Moore concluded that the character and interests of the social classes that ally to form a dominant social coalition explain regime outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Gershchenkron, citing the case of Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution, argued that societies characterized by economic and social backwardness are susceptible to promises of a revolutionary transformation with quick economic development and more social justice.<sup>5</sup> This view of late-developing societies may help to explain the appeal of communism in impoverished, colonized, or semicolonized Asian nations after WWII. In Asia, communist movements put “backward” China, North Korea, and Vietnam on this path and then sought to spread this vision to neighboring countries.

The US offered an alternative vision of economic and social development based on national self-determination, democracy and human rights, and market economics under international legal norms as codified by multilateral institutions such as the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions. Post-WWII decolonization under these auspices led to what Samuel Huntington called a “second wave” of democratization from 1945 that began to ebb in the early 1960s. However, with continuing economic and social development, a new third wave of democratic transitions was triggered in the 1970s by democratic transition in southern Europe. Democracy spread in the 1980s to Latin America and East Asia, whence it moved into Central and Eastern Europe as the Cold War ended.<sup>6</sup>

By 1991, Samuel Huntington was concerned that this third wave may have peaked, possibly marking a reverse tide of democracy or some cultural limit to its spread. For example, he worried that “new forms of authoritarianism could emerge in wealthy, information-dominated, technology-based societies.”<sup>7</sup> Huntington also pessimistically observed in 1997, “At this point ... it is necessary to introduce the cultural element. Modern democracy is a product of Western civilization.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, others, such as Diamond, predicted a “fourth wave” of democratization in the new millennium driven by the ongoing rapid economic development in East Asia.<sup>9</sup>

The influence of Asia’s traditional cultural legacies on its political development bears a brief discussion here. Confucianism is considered by many to be undemocratic or antidemocratic because of its emphasis on social hierarchy and authority and the duty of the individual to obey strict social obligations.<sup>10</sup> However, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are among the world’s most advanced liberal democracies and commercially driven economies—in spite of their strong Confucian cultural roots. Moreover, the party-state regimes of China, North Korea, and Vietnam abandoned feudal Confucian values and institutions to turn in a completely different direction. They fully embraced “Western,” internationalist, and radically “egalitarian” Marxist–Leninist–Stalinist thought and institutions. Today, they are the last examples of Soviet-era communist party-state regimes. These divergent examples of political development from a common root of premodern Confucian social order challenge simplistic narratives of cultural determinism that simply do not explain actual political outcomes.

A parallel debate concerns the compatibility of Islam with democracy.<sup>11</sup> Yet we see that Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim society, and Malaysia have stable elected parliamentary governments. These examples underscore how one must also consider the impact of historical forces, leadership choices, endogenous social factors, exogenous actors, and black swan events on individual regime development from 1945.

## Characterizing democratic regimes and distinguishing between state and society

Dahl's concept of polyarchy stipulates the institutional structure, leadership selection, lawmaking procedures, and legal norms that characterize liberal democratic state institutions.<sup>12</sup> The criteria he sets are useful in differentiating democratic political institutions from the society being governed.<sup>13</sup> This analytical separation of state and society enables us to investigate whether or how societies of a certain type may be associated with democratic or autocratic states.

V-Dem, a major annual survey of the global state of democracy, most closely operationalizes Dahl's polyarchy criteria to identify state regime types.<sup>14</sup> It evaluates how free and fair elections are in each country and it measures judicial independence, protection of individual rights, and institutional checks against the exercise of arbitrary executive state power. It then classifies regimes into the following four types:

1. *Liberal democracy* (requirements of *electoral democracy* are met; judicial and legislative constraints on the executive, along with the protection of civil liberties and equality before the law)
2. *Electoral democracy* (multiparty elections for the executive are free and fair; satisfactory degrees of suffrage, freedom of expression, freedom of association)
3. *Electoral autocracy* (multiparty elections for the executive exist; insufficient levels of fundamental requisites, such as freedom of expression and association, and free and fair elections)
4. *Closed autocracy* (no multiparty elections for the executive; absence of fundamental democratic components, such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free and fair elections)<sup>15</sup>

## Defining and explaining social resilience

Social resilience refers to a society's capacity to deal with unexpected needs, risks, and challenges without fracturing along socioeconomic cleavages into warring tribes or experiencing institutional breakdowns. Following Merton's functionalist theory of society and Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, society enables the survival, reproduction, socialization, and productive life of its population.<sup>16</sup> Institutions manage essential functions that permit stable family and community life, economic development, general social welfare, stable political order, and the achievement of collective goals, allowing individuals to pursue employment, material comfort, fellowship, cultural expression, and self-esteem. The highest purpose of society is self-actualization, or the fullest development of individual and collective potential. A resilient society makes the task of reaching political consensus easier and facilitates the achievement of collective goals under state guidance.

In the proposed framework, social resilience includes parameters or factors that one may reasonably assume would contribute to democratic regime success and conversely, if absent, could lead to social dysfunction that would impede democratic success and development:

1. *Basic welfare*. This entails having access to basic health and education services, general law and order, basic infrastructure services, and social protection against unemployment, aging-related problems, and disasters. Poor material living standards could sharpen distributional conflict and make basic welfare provision more difficult while rich material living standards could ameliorate these problems and ease the task of democratic governance.
2. *Social cohesion*. The members of a developing industrial or postindustrial society are unavoidably stratified and individuated as they assume increasingly specialized roles in an expanding

division of labor. For society to remain cohesive and functional as its members become more diverse with respect to status, role, identity, and self-interest, social solidarity must be maintained, usually via collective values, norms, and identity imparted during socialization; social and cultural interaction that reinforces social solidarity and trust; and legal discipline. Complicating factors could include racial, ethnic, and religious diversity; high economic or social class inequality; or even openness to malign exogenous influences.<sup>17</sup>

3. *Human investment.* Social resilience requires investment that deepens human capital and human development. Human capital refers to investment in the education, training, and health of the workforce. It enhances the productivity of individuals, institutions, and society.<sup>18</sup> Human development goes further than human capital to include “expanding the richness of life, rather than simply the richness of the economy. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people.”<sup>19</sup> It considers productivity not as an end in itself, but as one of several means, including environmental sustainability and gender equality, to better the quality of lives of all individuals. This kind of investment helps a society to improve itself, adapt to unanticipated adversity, and find innovative answers to evolving needs.
4. *Civil society.* Civil society is a public space for free and open communication, debate, cooperation, and innovation based on a lawful right to free expression, association, and due process for all citizens. It permits individual fellowship and self-expression and allows for achievement and self-actualization. Interest groups or civil society organizations (CSOs) naturally proliferate in this space and play an indispensable role in formulating social preferences and holding corporate and state authorities democratically accountable. According to the World Bank, “CSOs include nongovernmental organizations, community groups, labor unions, indigenous peoples movements, faith-based organizations, professional associations, foundations, think tanks, charitable organizations, and other not-for-profit organizations.”<sup>20</sup> The World Economic Forum notes that “When mobilized, civil society - sometimes called the “third sector” (after government and commerce) - has the power to influence the actions of elected policy-makers and businesses.”<sup>21</sup> Civil society thus may be critically important to maintaining and improving democratic governance.

## How individual factors combine to produce social resilience

We believe these four parameters work synergistically to facilitate democratic regime success and development. This sets us apart from traditional modernization theory that grew from Lipset’s assertion and drew on the historical experience of the democratic West. In this view, “modernization” proxied by measures of economic development produces democracy.<sup>22</sup> Przeworski’s observation that democratic transitions do not last in societies with limited experience in economic development seems to support this view.<sup>23</sup>

However, Acemoglu et al. compared a large number of countries and found that no significant global relationship between changes in income and changes in democracy in the past century. To explain the persistent divergence, they suggest that “societies may embark on divergent political-economic development paths, some leading to relative prosperity and democracy, others to relative poverty and dictatorship,” and that “differences in European colonization strategies have been a major determinant of the divergent development paths of colonial societies.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, they turn to idiosyncratic historical and institutional country-level factors to explain why a historical era of modernization with rising income levels has not caused a corresponding global convergence toward democracy.

Today, few believe in a deterministic relationship between economic development and democratic development, but there is no consensus on how to explain democratic success and failure. Our view is that a country’s economic growth *in combination with* social development, social cohesion, and civil society development—what we call “social resilience”—may yield fresh insight into the record of democratic development under various regime types in Asia.

For example, a society experiencing successful economic development without commensurate civil society development may lack the ability to freely communicate, self-educate, self-organize, and demand a democratically accountable government that one might expect from citizens in a society with rising living standards. This points to the possibility that successful economic development alone may be insufficient for democratic development and that economic development under autocracy may be used strategically to develop repressive state capabilities that circumscribe civil society development precisely to limit dissent and perpetuate stable authoritarian rule.<sup>25</sup> This separate consideration of how countries combine economic growth, regime type, and civil society development raises the possibility that, for example, a poorer society with good civil society development may achieve better democracy than a richer one with repressed civil society development.

Social cohesion is distinct from material living standards and civil society development. It is the sense of unity or solidarity among citizens and is registered by their willingness to work together for the common good. It is hard to observe directly but may be indicated by the relative absence of racial, ethnic, caste, religious, and income conflicts that create abiding societal cleavages that can threaten social order when sudden adversity imposes general hardship and distress.<sup>26</sup> Without social cohesion, divergent values, norms, and material interests may create deep social cleavages and frustrate efforts to arrive at a democratic consensus when dealing with societal contradictions.<sup>27</sup> Social cohesion alone may aid democratic development, but we believe it may work more effectively in combination with positive economic and civil society development.

Thus, in our view, a democratically optimal combination of social resilience factors would be high basic welfare, high social cohesion (proxied by low measures of inequality and ethnic differences), high social or human development, and strong civil society development (see Table 1 for indicators). In this optimal case, each factor reinforces the others in advancing democratic development. A less-than-optimal social resilience profile would therefore imply less democratic progress.

We turn now to divide Asian countries into regime types on an autocracy versus democracy scale and compare their respective social resilience profiles to see whether high social resilience characterizes highly democratic regimes; whether civil society development is more strongly associated with democratic development than material welfare indicators; and whether social resilience associates with constitutional dictatorships and constitutional democracies differently.

## Social resilience and regime type: three hypotheses

Based on the discussion above, we formulate hypotheses on the relationship between regime types and social resilience. To test these hypotheses, we rely on reputable data sources that use objective indicators to differentiate regime types and measure societal characteristics to operationalize our comparison of regime types and their social resilience profiles (see Table 1).

**Hypothesis 1:** High social resilience (i.e., above-average scores across all four parameters) is associated with successful democratic regime development. Do successful democracies, and only they, have highly resilient societies? If not, then our hypothesized association of high social development with high democratic development is unsupported by the evidence. If so, then social resilience may indeed play a key role in democratic regime success and democratic progress over time.

**Hypothesis 2:** Our discussion suggests that civil society development may be the most crucial aspect of social resilience that drives democratic development forward. Therefore, we suppose that civil society development may be the one social resilience factor most closely associated with democratic regime development.

**Hypothesis 3:** Weak social resilience is associated with democratic fragility and reversals. This is the obverse of the proposition that strong social resilience should facilitate democratic regime success and development. We use Table 1 to compare social resilience scores and regime type, and in later discussion

we use historical data to identify the weakest and most fragile democracies to see whether they have weak social resilience.

## Comparing regime type and associated social resilience profiles

In Table 1, we use the comprehensive V-Dem 2023 report on the state of democracy to group our sample of Asian countries into the V-Dem regime categories: Liberal Democracy; Electoral Democracy; Electoral Autocracy; and Closed Autocracy. We then compare the four regime types with respect to their social resilience indicators to see whether or how their resilience profiles may distinguish or characterize these regime types.<sup>3</sup> We limited the number of social resilience indicators to simplify tabulation and comparison to check whether or not the results support our hypotheses and related discussion.

**Table 1. Summary of Regime Type versus Income Level, Basic Welfare, Social Cohesion, Social Development, and Civil Society Indicators for 18 Asian Regimes**

Country	Regime Type (according to V-Dem Institute 2023) <sup>a</sup>	Per capita GDP	Basic welfare provision	Social cohesion		UNDP HDI score <sup>f</sup>	Civil society <sup>g</sup>
		Income group <sup>b</sup>	Basic welfare <sup>c</sup>	Gini index <sup>d</sup>	Ethnic diversity <sup>e</sup>		
Japan	Liberal Democracy	HIC	0.90	32.9	0.01	0.925	0.59
South Korea	Liberal Democracy	HIC	0.87	31.7	0.00	0.925	0.67
Taiwan	Liberal Democracy	HIC	0.85	31.5	0.27	0.926 <sup>*k</sup>	0.81
Indonesia	Electoral Democracy	LMIC	0.56	39.1	0.74	0.705	0.71
Mongolia	Electoral Democracy	LMIC	0.61	36.0	0.37	0.739	0.54
Singapore	Electoral Autocracy	HIC	0.86	40.2	0.39	0.939	0.40
India	Electoral Autocracy	LMIC	0.49	51.4	0.42	0.633	0.5
Malaysia	Electoral Autocracy	UMIC	0.69	40.9	0.59	0.803	0.47
Philippines	Electoral Autocracy	LMIC	0.54	42.1	0.24	0.699	0.60
Cambodia	Electoral Autocracy	LMIC	0.51	34.6	0.21	0.593	0.25
Thailand	Closed Autocracy	UMIC	0.68	37.2	0.63	0.8	0.40
Myanmar	Closed Autocracy	LMIC	0.46	34.5	0.51	0.585	0.22

<sup>3</sup> In the case of social cohesion direct measurement can be methodologically problematic and so we use readily available indicators of social division (income inequality and ethnic differences) to indicate distance from social harmony and solidarity.

Hong Kong	Closed Autocracy	HIC	0.86 <sup>*i</sup>	40.1	0.06	0.952	0.46 <sup>*m</sup>
Vietnam	Closed Autocracy	LMIC	0.61	36.4	0.24	0.703	0.44
Laos	Closed Autocracy	LMIC	0.47	40.4	0.51	0.607	0.27
China	Closed Autocracy	UMIC	0.73	43.5	0.15	0.768	0.34
North Korea	Closed Autocracy	LMIC	0.62	16.6 <sup>*j</sup>	0.04	0.766 <sup>*l</sup>	0.02
Brunei	Closed Autocracy <sup>*h</sup>	HIC	0.86 <sup>*i</sup>	28.1	0.54	0.829	0.2520 <sup>*n</sup>

Abbreviations: LMIC: Lower-middle-income country, UMIC: Upper-middle-income country, HIC: High-income country.

Color coding: High Income – Upper Middle Income – Lower Middle Income

#### Notes:

<sup>a</sup> Regime type is defined in “Defiance in the Face of Autocratization: Democracy Report 2023,” University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute). (2023): 12, available at <https://v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/>.

<sup>b</sup> Income group is categorized based on the World Bank Group country classification in the 2024 fiscal year, see details at <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

<sup>c</sup> Basic Welfare denotes the extent to which the material and social supports of democracy (e.g., nutrition, healthcare, and education) are available. The provision of basic welfare is measured using several standard observable human development indicators. See “About the GSoD Indices,” available at <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-gsod-indices> and data from “Global State of Democracy 2022: Forging Social Contracts in a Time of Discontent,” available at <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsod-report-2022>.

<sup>d</sup> The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. See the World Income Inequality Database, available at <https://www.wider.unu.edu/project/world-income-inequality-database-wiid>.

<sup>e</sup> Ethnic diversity is measured using the ethnic fractionalization variable computed by Alesina et al. (2003), reflecting the probability of two randomly selected individuals from a population belonging to different groups. See Alesina, Alberto, Arnaud Devleeschauwer, William Easterly, Sergio Kurlat, and Romain Wacziarg. “Fractionalization.” *Journal of Economic Growth* 8 (2003): 155-194.

<sup>f</sup> Investment in people is measured using the United Nations Development Program Human Development Index in 2021, available at <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>.

<sup>g</sup> The measurement of civil society relies on six indicators. Three of these are V-Dem indicators based on expert surveys that consider the extent to which the legal and political context supports CSOs and activities. GSoD has added measures of the strength of interest groups and social capital from the BTI Transformation Index and the infrastructurally-focused e-Participation Index from the UN. See “About the GSoD Indices,” available at <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-gsod-indices>, and the data from “Global State of Democracy 2022: Forging Social Contracts in a Time of Discontent,” available at <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/gsod-report-2022>.

<sup>h</sup> Brunei is an absolute monarchy in which the sultan exercises executive power, see “Brunei” in *Freedom in the World 2023* country report, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/brunei/freedom-world/2023>.

<sup>i</sup> Data for Hong Kong and Brunei are unavailable for this parameter in the GSoD Indices. Indicators of GDP per capita measured in local currency are used here to provide an estimation of the overall level of basic social welfare provision of for these two territories, for which they have a similar level as that of Singapore. Thus, the values for these two territories are replicated with those of Singapore. See “GDP per capita, current local currency,” World Development Indicators database, World Bank, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

<sup>j</sup> As the data for North Korea are unavailable from the World Income Inequality Database, an estimation based on Kim (2022) is the input used in the table, see Kim, Dawool. “Assessing regional economy in North Korea using nighttime light.” *Asia and the Global Economy* 2, no. 3 (2022): 100046.

<sup>k</sup> Data for Taiwan is not included in the UNDP Human Development Index reports. It has instead been obtained through from National Statistics, R.O.C. (Taiwan), which uses UNDP methodology, available at [https://eng.stat.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=2561&s=223917](https://eng.stat.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=2561&s=223917).

<sup>l</sup> The most recent available data for North Korea in the United Nations Human Development Index is from 1995, see “Human Development Report 1998” UNDP, available at <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1998encompletenostatspdf.pdf>.

<sup>m</sup> Because Hong Kong is not included in the GSoD Indices, we cited “Civil society participation index” indicator for Hong Kong from “V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13” Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project for Hong Kong, available at <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds23..>

<sup>n</sup> Because Brunei is not included in the GSoD Indices, we referred to the “Associational and Organizational Rights” indicator for Brunei in the *Freedom in the World 2023* country report, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/brunei/freedom-world/2023..> The report gave Brunei’s associational and organizational rights a score of 1/4, which we converted into 0.25 on a scale between 0 and 1.

## Discussion of Table 1

What is anomalous about democratic development in Asia is that despite five decades of rapid economic growth and development that followed the end of the Vietnam War in 1975—a growth era dubbed the East Asian Economic Miracle by the World Bank in 1993—only three of our 18 Asian countries have developed into liberal democracies (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), and 13 remain autocracies according to V-Dem. Moreover, three of these autocracies (Singapore, Hong Kong, and Brunei) have higher per capita incomes than the three liberal democracies. This belies the notion that economic development will produce corresponding democratic development. Therefore, we identify and include additional social factors in our concept of social resilience that will support successful democratic development.

### High social resilience and advanced democratic development

Are Asia’s most successful democracies socially resilient? Table 1 indicates that the three Asian liberal democracies—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—have consistently high-ranking social resilience indicators. If we identify the top six countries for each of our six individual indicators, Japan and South Korea rank in the top six countries in all indicators, and Taiwan reaches the top six in all but the social diversity indicator. Individually and as a group, these liberal democracies rank the highest in social resilience. The next most frequently appearing countries are Hong Kong and Brunei (4 of 6 indicators) and Singapore (3 of 6 indicators). These three have higher per capita incomes than the liberal democracies but have lower social resilience profiles and are autocracies.

This pairing of fully developed social resilience with liberal democratic regimes—and only liberal democratic ones—supports our intuition that high social resilience may accompany high democratic development because robust resilience eases the task of governance for democratic regimes, especially in times when less resilient societies could fall into critical dysfunction that overwhelms the capacity of



state institutions to manage. Over time, social resilience may sustain a higher level of regime success and generate impetus for more democratically accountable governance.

### Is higher income associated with more democracy?

There are six high-income countries (HICs) in Table 1. Still, half are liberal democracies (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), and the other half (Singapore, Hong Kong, and Brunei) are electoral or closed autocracies. The three autocracies averaged US\$50,993 in per capita income in 2022—36.6% more than the average per capita income of the three democracies (US\$37,332).<sup>28</sup> This belies the notion that, as a rule, successful economic development leads to democracy.

Meanwhile, all three upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) remain V-Dem autocracies (Malaysia, Thailand, and China) even after decades of economic success.

The entire lower middle-income country (LMIC) group has two electoral democracies, three electoral autocracies, and four closed autocracies. If we assign a numerical democracy score of zero to closed autocracies, one to electoral autocracies, and two to electoral democracies, the average democracy score of the poorer LMICs would be 0.78, more than double the richer UMICs' score of 0.333. Higher economic development alone does not produce more democratic outcomes in Asia.

#### *Civil society and democratic development*

A robust civil society will demand a democratically accountable government and thus may be a social requisite of democratic development. Regarding the six HICs, liberal democratic Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have an average civil society score of 0.69, whereas richer but autocratic Brunei, Hong Kong, and Singapore have an average civil society score of only 0.37. The 86.5% higher civil society score of the liberal democracies may help to explain the divergence in political development despite decades of similarly successful economic development.

The two electoral democracies in Table 1 (Indonesia and Mongolia) are both LMICs with income below the average of our 18-country sample. This begs the question of what in their social resilience profiles might contribute to this above-average level of democratic development. The average civil society score for all 18 countries is 0.44. Both Indonesia (0.71) and Mongolia (0.54) exceed this number to produce an electoral democracy average of 0.62, which is 42% above the 18-country average. Perhaps this difference has contributed to their above-average democratic performance.

Communist party-state autocracies with constitutions that enshrine the dictatorship principle have an average civil society score of 0.27. Noncommunist autocracies in Table 1 with national constitutions committed to the democratic principle of popularly elected government but regimes that may not always live up to constitutional standards (i.e., Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) have an average civil society score of 0.41, which is 52% higher than the score 0.27 for communist autocracies but slightly lower than the 18-country average.

If we arrange the above-mentioned groupings in descending order by democratic development, we find a corresponding cascade of civil society scores: Liberal Democracy—0.69; Electoral Democracy—0.62; noncommunist Electoral Autocracy—0.41; Communist Autocracy—0.27. This is the only social resilience indicator that ranks regime types according to their actual democratic performance. Thus, if any single indicator predicts democratic development, it may be civil society rather than average per capita income.

#### *Low social resilience and regime fragility*

As a side note, we will draw a distinction between constitutional dictatorships (communist party-state dictatorships and traditional monarchies) and constitutional democracies (in which constitutional principles and values are democratic, whether or not leaders respect them in practice). Constitutional democracies can fall under provisional military regimes, as is the case in Myanmar and Thailand. V-Dem

classifies such cases as closed autocracies. But unlike constitutional dictatorships, provisional military juntas merely suspend their democratic constitutions. There is a popular expectation for and a legal obligation to return to elected civilian government. In principle, such countries remain democracies, whereas constitutional dictatorships in principle admit no institutional pathway or legal possibility of democracy. For this reason, in discussing “fragile democracies,” we include constitutional democracies that come under provisional military rule. Our question is whether especially weak social resilience might be a key risk factor in democratic fragility.<sup>4</sup>

To identify countries with the lowest overall social resilience profiles, we identified the six weakest scorers in each of the six indicators in Table 1. If countries were tied in the number of times they registered in this group, we compared indicator scores to rank them. The results were as follows: Laos (6), Myanmar (5), Cambodia (4), India (4), Philippines (4), North Korea (2). We ask whether or how weak social resilience corresponds with regime fragility.

According to V-Dem data covering 2010–2022, only four regimes—all constitutional democracies—changed their democracy status: India (once), the Philippines (twice), Myanmar (twice), and Thailand (three times).<sup>29</sup> No constitutional autocracies saw any change; thus, this group is uniformly locked into closed autocracy status. The weak social resilience of India, the Philippines, and Myanmar places them among the changing countries, but what about Thailand, which has average overall social resilience but three changes? Thailand has the lowest civil society development among the V-Dem democracies, as well as an exceptional history of frequent military overthrows of elected civilian governments to take into account.

Cambodia is among our six least resilient societies, but V-Dem recorded no change of regime type. Does this signify regime stability in Cambodia? If we use a finer-grained scale of regime measurement, the Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit repeatedly downgraded Cambodia’s democracy rating from 2014 to 2021 starting from 4.78 and ending with 2.90, which indicates political fragility.

This is suggestive evidence that weak social resilience in constitutional democracies may be associated with regime fragility. Those who wish to strengthen fragile democracies may thus want to focus on strengthening social resilience, especially civil society development.

## History, institutions, critical junctures, exogenous factors, and Asia’s democratic development

Generally speaking, governance in Asia transitioned from traditional dynastic authority to modern republican bureaucratic state authority during the Cold War era of decolonization (1945–60). The two world wars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century constituted a critical juncture that set the stage for this transition. WWI began the destruction of a world historical era dominated by great European empires governed by dynastic authority. WWII completed this process and ushered in an era of decolonization that saw the principle of national self-determination and modern republican nation-state governance principles enshrined in the United Nations. But post-WWII Cold War competition between Soviet-backed Marxist–Leninist communism and US-led democratic capitalism led new nations to choose between competing images of the modern state: the totalitarian party-state and planned economy model promoted by the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in Asia versus the liberal

---

<sup>4</sup> Neither constitutional autocracies (monarchies and communist party-states) nor constitutional democracies that fall to military coups hold popular elections. However, we see a qualitative difference between constitutional dictatorships and constitutional democracies under provisional military rule. Democracies that fall to military coups typically come under “provisional government” that pledges to “restore democracy” and resume electoral politics and civilian rule as society has come to expect. There is no expectation, nor is there a constitutional principle that says “closed autocracy” (rule by unelected leaders) is a normal, permanent form of government. Instead, constitutional principles and popular expectations require a return to a popularly elected government.

democratic, free market model championed by the US and its allies. Thus, the decolonization process led to a Cold War division in Asia and elsewhere based on whether newly independent nations adopted constitutional orders based on communist or democratic principles.

## How the Cold War bifurcated Asia

US Cold War allies Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, South Vietnam, and Thailand adopted constitutions providing for democratic self-government; so did the former British colonies India, Burma (today Myanmar), Malaysia, and Singapore, and the former Dutch colony Indonesia. South Vietnam was absorbed by communist North Vietnam in 1975; Burma (today Myanmar) discarded its original 1947 constitution and adopted a new constitution based on a principle of socialist-military dictatorship in 1974 but returned to democratic principles under a new constitution in 2008. In practice, however, most of Myanmar's years from 1962 to 2012 were spent under military rule.

Traditional monarchies continued post-WWII in Brunei, Laos, and Cambodia. However, in 1974, Laos and Cambodia fell to the Vietnam-backed Pathet Lao and the PRC-backed Khmer Rouge communist insurgencies, respectively. Vietnam "liberated" and occupied Cambodia in 1978 until Cambodia was reconstituted as a constitutional democracy under UN supervision in 1991. Today, only Brunei remains a traditional monarchy.

Communist movements aided by the Soviet Union succeeded in establishing communist states in mainland China, North Vietnam, and North Korea. In the mid-1970s, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and South Vietnam (taken over by North Vietnam) joined this group of communist dictatorships, but Cambodia and Myanmar were reconstituted as electoral democracies in 1991 and 2008, respectively as noted above.

After achieving independence and choosing between communist or democratic governance principles after 1945, Asia's newly established nations weathered wars, armed insurgencies, ethnic conflicts, and elite infighting as they worked to build modern national identities, societies, and economies and consolidate state institutions with assistance from the Soviet Union and China or the US and its Western allies.<sup>30</sup>

During the Cold War, the communist and Western powers nurtured their respective Asian client states to keep them upright and walking on their respective paths to modernity. Once stabilized, modern Asian states, whether communist or democratic, would strive to survive and develop along institutionalized lines until they encounter a war, revolution, or dysfunction that causes collapse. The logic works as follows.

Depending on its constitutional principle of governance, the modern state establishes acceptable pathways of development that support and enhance the capacity of existing institutions, and it will punish deviation from approved pathways of change, thus limiting the scope of historical and social change, at least until great historical developments cause institutional crisis and replacement that in retrospect are understood to be critical junctures. This insight into the nature of social change led Tilly, a great scholar on the origins and development of the modern state, to observe that, "...social processes are path dependent. That is why history matters."<sup>31</sup> Change remains incremental unless and until there appears an exogenous crisis or challenge that marks the culmination of an historical era. Existing institutions are overwhelmed by the challenge and must either accept radical structural reform that keeps society minimally satisfied or simply be swept away to be replaced by an alternative arrangement created by exogenous factors.<sup>32</sup>

Today, more than three decades after the Cold War ended, all four Asian communist autocracies that existed in 1989 live on. Meanwhile, every communist regime outside Asia (except Cuba in Latin America) has disappeared with the Cold War. This begs the question, why?

## Why Asia's Cold War bifurcation continues today

Any kind of political regime would risk everything if it could maintain a grip on power and see a sustainable path to survival. To understand why no European communist regime including Soviet Russia survived the crisis that ended the Cold War, one may recall that Cold War democratic capitalist Europe developed strong regional institutions, including NATO and the EU, that gave highly desirable “public goods” (more accurately called club benefits) to their members. After the Cold War, the US and its European allies agreed to permit communist republics in Central and Eastern Europe, including those in the former Soviet Union, to join these Transatlantic and European regional institutions and enjoy full membership benefits—but only if they began monitored reform programs to meet clearly defined democracy, good governance, market economy, and rule of law membership standards. These substantial security and economic growth benefits and the assistance for institutional reform on offer gave European communist regimes and their societies confidence in a better future on an institutionally backed path to a postcommunist future that swept aside those bitter-enders who would perpetuate a failed communist order.

The absence of a strong democratic Asian security and economic community offering club membership benefits and real prospects for postcommunist prosperity left Asia's communist regimes with the choice of institutional collapse followed by years of political mayhem and economic hardship or soldiering on with institutions designed to preserve social control and stability but lacking capacity to participate in the rising prosperity of post-Cold War economic globalization.

As this scenario came into focus after the 1989 Tiananmen Square events, the US decided to permit the PRC to integrate into the US-dominated Bretton Woods and Asia-Pacific liberal trade orders without requiring the political, legal, or administrative reforms required of European communist regimes after the Cold War. This policy ended up providing China and other communist regimes with a path toward rising incomes and regime survival. China and Vietnam cleverly used this opportunity to introduce market reforms that preserved and strengthened their core Leninist party-state institutions. Under the banner of reform and opening they derived performance legitimacy from rising living standards and appropriated economic surplus to develop core regime capacities for social control and stability maintenance. They developed techniques to accelerate capital accumulation while suppressing civil society development. Less successful communist and formerly communist regimes in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and North Korea have come to depend on the PRC for varying degrees of political and economic support for survival. Thus, the institutional continuity of these communist regimes perpetuates a Cold War divide that exists in no other region today.

## Conclusion

Contemporary Asian regimes were established at similarly low levels of development at roughly the same time in the early Cold War years. The post-WWII era of regime creation divided Asia between communist and democratic regimes, and the perpetuation of this division may be explained by the continuity of country-level institutional factors despite changing historical and geopolitical circumstances. We continue to live with Asian Cold War political divisions, which belie the notion that the late 20<sup>th</sup> century East Asian miracle of economic development would, of itself, produce political convergence toward liberal democracy.

## Why are so few Asian constitutional democracies liberal democracies today?

Based on our discussion of social resilience, we may say that, among the 13 constitutional democracies in our sample, the ones with comprehensive social resilience have developed progressively over time into liberal democracies (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan). Constitutional democracies with weak civil society development but otherwise strong social indicators (e.g., Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia) can boast high incomes and regime stability, but all fall well short of liberal democratic governance standards. Constitutional democracies with below-average social resilience profiles but above-average

civil society scores (e.g., India, Mongolia, Indonesia, and the Philippines) exceed democratic development expectations based on measures of material social welfare. Civil society development thus may be the social resilience component that most strongly correlates with degree of democratic development.

Among the constitutional autocracies, China and Vietnam display outstanding stability and economic growth based not on civic engagement with state institutions and outward economic openness but on stability maintenance and accelerated capital accumulation designed to enhance the totalitarian rule of the party-state. The social resilience profile displayed by these nondemocratic regimes has the lowest level of civil society development. This may be convenient for stability maintenance achieved through repression. Rising material social welfare may not produce “democratic legitimacy,” but it may produce “performance legitimacy” that perpetuates regime stability and success.

To explain the roots of the bifurcated state of political development in Asia, besides social resilience, we point to the importance of history and path-dependent institutional development in Asia. Postcolonial elites with close ties to the liberal West wrote constitutions that aspired to democracy after achieving independence. The regimes they established by and large retain a democratic orientation today. Those with strong social resilience have been able to achieve liberal democracy, and those with checkered or weak social resilience profiles confront obstacles to full democratic development.

Postcolonial elites inspired by the success of the Soviet Union adopted the party-state dictatorship model of governance. Facing a crisis of legitimacy after the Cultural Revolution, the PRC began an incremental reform and opening-up strategy designed to preserve core party-state institutions and capabilities while selectively engaging with the liberal rules-based order to achieve its modernization agenda. Aided by post-Cold War US policy, the PRC has developed into a global power that now claims world predominance as its historical destiny and offers Chinese socialism as a model of governance and development that surpasses open markets, free trade, and liberal democracy under the rule of law. Thus, the PRC has moved to extend its autocratic rule over Hong Kong and Taiwan and continues to support fellow communist regimes in North Korea, Vietnam, and Laos. And it is willing to aid other autocracies that fall afoul of Western democracy and human rights sanctions (e.g., military juntas in Thailand and Myanmar).

To conclude, the competing visions of nation-state modernity that clashed during the Cold War, the path-dependent nature of endogenous historical and social change, the influence of social resilience, and the continuing importance of exogenous geopolitical and geoeconomic influences may help to explain the record of democratic regime development in Asia after some 70 years of exceptional regional economic progress.

## Appendix. South Asian regimes and social resilience, 2022

	V-Dem Regime	Income group	Per capita income <sup>33</sup>	Basic welfare <sup>34</sup>	Gini <sup>35</sup>	Ethnic diversity <sup>36</sup>	HDI <sup>37</sup>	Civil Society <sup>38</sup>
Bhutan	E. Dem	LMIC	3290	0.543	.28	.605	.681	.504
Maldives	E. Dem	UMIC	10880	0.721	.29	n.a.	.762	.505
Nepal	E. Dem	LMIC	1340	0.513	.58 <sup>39</sup>	.663	.601	.581
Pakistan	E. Dem	LMIC	1560	0.385	.30	.710	.540	.558
Sri Lanka	E. Dem	LMIC	3610	0.704	.38	.415	.780	.423
Bangladesh	E. Autc	LMIC	2820	0.523	.33	.045	.670	.480
India	E. Autc	LMIC	2390	0.500	.33	.418	.644	.504

South Asia is quite different than East Asia with respect to the variance of regime type (only two V-Dem types) and social resilience indicators (without the extreme score variation seen in East Asia). Also, South Asia differs significantly from East Asia with respect to their ancient root civilization and more recent historical experiences of colonialization, decolonization, and Cold War conflict. Unlike East Asia, no communist regimes emerged from the decolonization process, and only one exogenous power, Great Britain, shaped the colonial and postcolonial experiences of South Asia, whereas several diverse and competing imperial powers shaped the colonial and postcolonial experiences of East Asia. Under Britain's influence, all South Asian regimes have chosen to constitute themselves as democracies. All gained independence with similar socioeconomic conditions and followed similar economic development models. These similarities may explain their similar social resilience profiles. Nevertheless, the regime type and social resilience data that South Asia presents does not contradict and mostly supports key points in the main paper discussion.

Briefly speaking, unlike in East Asia, we see no cases of Cold War constitutional democracies evolving from limited democracy to liberal democracy<sup>5</sup> nor do we see cases of high resilience across all social indicators. The South Asian data thus does not contradict our supposition that liberal democracies associate with robust social resilience profiles, and it accords with our view based on Table 1 data that weaker social resilience profiles are consistent with less developed constitutional democracies (i.e., V-Dem electoral democracy and electoral autocracy regime status).

We found no evidence to support the notion that sustained economic development and higher income guarantees democracy in Table 1. Three of six East Asian HICs were electoral or closed autocracies. But we did find data to suggest that poorer countries can do better than richer ones with respect to democracy. East Asia's two electoral democracies were LMICs. South Asian data reinforces these findings. All South Asian regimes are electoral despite 86% of them being LMICs, and only two regimes are electoral autocracies. Lower income is no barrier to democracy.

---

<sup>5</sup> Bhutan was a traditional monarchy until 2008 when the king decreed a turn to British-style constitutional monarchy and instantly transitioned to ED. After that V-Dem records one year of liberal democracy status in 2021.

Looking at Table 1, we supposed that civil society development may be most closely associated with democratic regime development. In South Asia, the evidence is not so clear. We lack the polar cases of liberal democracy and communist dictatorships of East Asia. Their average civil society scores were 0.69 and 0.27, respectively. Excluding India in Table 1, intermediate cases of electoral democracy and electoral autocracy averaged 0.63 and 0.43, respectively. In South Asia, we see electoral democracy average 0.51 and electoral autocracy 0.49, which is inside the bounds set by East Asia. The scores seem fairly consistent with East Asia.

Based on Table 1, we also supposed that weak social resilience may be associated with regime fragility. Using the V-Dem annual regime reports from 2010 to 2022, we see that Bhutan changed twice (from electoral democracy to liberal democracy and back to electoral democracy); India changed once (from electoral democracy to electoral autocracy); Maldives twice (from electoral democracy to electoral autocracy and back to electoral democracy); Nepal twice (from electoral democracy to electoral autocracy and back to electoral democracy); Sri Lanka once (from electoral autocracy to electoral democracy). With evenly moderate social resilience profiles, most South Asian countries showed limited back-and-forth between electoral autocracy and electoral democracy, but no frequent changes or transitions to autocracy as seen in East Asia. Thus, consistently moderate scores across all social indicators including civil society development seems to associate with regimes stably positioned on the borderline between rigged and reasonably free elections.

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Evie Papada et al., "Defiance in the Face of Autocratization. Democracy Report 2023," University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), 2023, [https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem\\_democracyreport2023\\_lowres.pdf](https://www.v-dem.net/documents/29/v-dem_democracyreport2023_lowres.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 69–105; Gabriel A. Almond, *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, ed. Gabriel A. Almond and James Smoot Coleman (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1960).
- <sup>3</sup> Adam Przeworski et al., "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy* 7 (1996): 3–36; Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49 (1997):155–83; Adam Przeworski, et al., *Democracy and Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- <sup>4</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).
- <sup>5</sup> Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).
- <sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series, Vol 4) (University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).
- <sup>7</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (1991): 12–34.
- <sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 4 (1997): 3–12.
- <sup>9</sup> Larry Jay Diamond, "Is the Third Wave Over?" *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 20–37.
- <sup>10</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Confucianism and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (1995): 20–33.
- <sup>11</sup> John O Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 170–8.
- <sup>12</sup> Robert Alan Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
- <sup>13</sup> Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, 233.
- <sup>14</sup> Evie Papada et al., "Democracy Report 2023."
- <sup>15</sup> Evie Papada et al., "Democracy Report 2023."
- <sup>16</sup> Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Rev. & enl. Ed. (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1957); Abraham Harold Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper, 1954).
- <sup>17</sup> Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, "A Full-Spectrum Response to Sharp Power: The Vulnerabilities and Strengths of Open Societies," National Endowment for Democracy, June 2021, <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/A-Full-Spectrum-Response-to-Sharp-Power-The-Vulnerabilities-and-Strengths-of-Open-Societies-Walker-Ludwig-June-2021.pdf>; OECD (2021), Fostering Economic Resilience In A World Of Open And Integrated Markets: Risks, Vulnerabilities And Areas For Policy Action, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/OECD-G7-Report-Fostering-Economic-Resilience-in-a-World-of-Open-and-Integrated-Markets.pdf>.



- 
- <sup>18</sup> Gary S. Becker, "Human Capital," Econlib, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/HumanCapital.html>.
- <sup>19</sup> HDRO Outreach, "What Is Human Development?," Human Development Reports, February 19, 2015, <https://hdr.undp.org/content/what-human-development>.
- <sup>20</sup> "Civil Society Policy Forum," World Bank, April 2017, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2017/04/21/civil-society-policy-forum>.
- <sup>21</sup> Adam Jezard, "Who and What is 'Civil Society?'," World Economic Forum, April 23, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/what-is-civil-society/>.
- <sup>22</sup> Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," p. 80.
- <sup>23</sup> Przeworski et al. (1996); Przeworski et al. (1997).
- <sup>24</sup> Daron Acemoglu et al., "Income and Democracy," *American Economic Review* 98, no. 3 (May 1, 2008): 808–42, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.98.3.808>.
- <sup>25</sup> Minxin Pei, *The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China*, Harvard University Press, 2024.
- <sup>26</sup> Roberto Cuellar, "Social cohesion and democracy," *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (2009).
- <sup>27</sup> Julia Leininger and Armin von Schiller, "About the Need for a Public Debate About Social Cohesion and Democracy," German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), April 28, 2021, <https://www.idos-research.de/en/the-current-column/article/about-the-need-for-a-public-debate-about-social-cohesion-and-democracy/>.
- <sup>28</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022.
- <sup>29</sup> Evie Papada et al., "Democracy Report 2023."
- <sup>30</sup> Jan S Prybyla, "Soviet and Chinese Economic Aid to North Vietnam," *The China Quarterly (London)* 27, no. 27 (1966): 84–100; James Meernik, Eric L Krueger, and Steven C. Poe, "Testing Models of U.S. Foreign Policy: Foreign Aid during and after the Cold War," *The Journal of Politics* 60, no. 1 (1998): 63–85; James Lee, "Foreign Aid, Development, and US Strategic Interests in the Cold War," *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2022).
- <sup>31</sup> Charles Tilly, "Future History," *Theory and Society* 17, no. 5 (1988): 703–12.
- <sup>32</sup> Paul A David, "Why Are Institutions the 'Carriers of History'? Path Dependence and the Evolution of Conventions, Organizations and Institutions," *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 5, no. 2 (1994): 205–20.
- <sup>33</sup> "GNI Per Capita, Atlas Method (Current US\$)," World Bank Open Data, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>.
- <sup>34</sup> "About the GSoD Indices," International IDEA, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-gsod-indices>.
- <sup>35</sup> "Data Page: Income Inequality: Gini Coefficient," Our World in Data, Data adapted from World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/gini-coefficient-world-bank-marimekko?country=BGD~BTN~IND~MDV~NPL~PAK~LKA>.

---

<sup>36</sup> Alberto Alesina et al., "Fractionalization," *Journal of Economic Growth* 8 (2003): 155–94.

<sup>37</sup> "Country Insights | Human Development Reports," Human Development Reports, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>.

<sup>38</sup> International IDEA, "About the GSoD Indices."

<sup>39</sup> Mahotsav Pradhan, "Examining the Dynamics of Wealth and Income Inequality in Nepal," Nepal Economic Forum, January 31, 2024, <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/examining-the-dynamics-of-wealth-and-income-inequality-in-nepal/#:~:text=The%20income%20Gini%20coefficient%20then,extreme%20wealth%20concentration%20in%20Nepal>.