

## Democracy in South Korea, 2012

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### I. The results of the survey

#### 1. Democracy Index of South Korea in 2012

The analysis of the surveyed data reveals that Democracy Index in South Korea is 4.78, which is lower than 4.93 in 2011. With the further itemized comparison of Democracy Indices in politics, economy and civil society, it can be said that the index in politics is 5.57, which is the highest one among three areas, the civil society index indicates 4.91, and the lowest one is the economy area with 3.87.

<Figure 1> Liberalization Index and Equalization Index by area

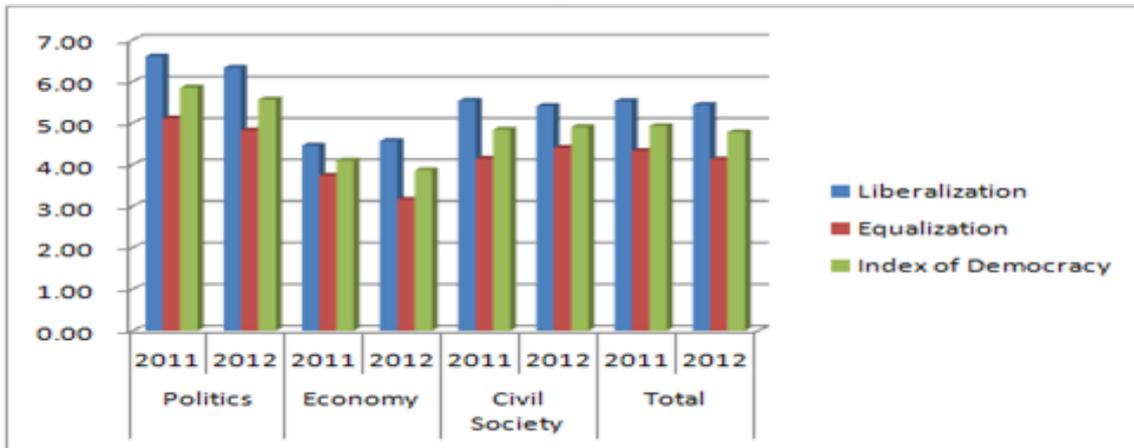
	Politics	Economy	Civil Society	Total
Liberalization	6.33	4.57	5.41	5.44
Equalization	4.82	3.16	4.40	4.13
Index of Democracy	5.57	3.87	4.91	4.78

Also, it is found that in all the three areas Liberalization Index(5.44p) having the attributes of autonomy and competition was more advanced than Equalization index(4.13p) having the attributes of pluralization and solidarity. Namely, it means that the realization of equalization as one of the core principles of democracy in South Korea is delayed. In particular, the lowest point in Equalization is shown in the economy area. This reflects the degrading phenomenon of the economic bipolarization in South Korea. Comparing with the result of 2011, the 2012 democracy index in the areas of politics and economy relatively decreased while the 2012 one in the area of civil society slightly increases from 4.84 to 4.91. Moreover, the indices of Liberalization and Equalization in the area of politics show lower points than ones in 2011. The Liberalization and Equalization indices were 6.60 and 5.11 each in 2011 however, those are 6.33 and 4.82 each in 2012.

The level of the guarantee of the civil participation reduced from 8.22 in 2011 to 7.11 in 2012, and the permission for the political opposition did 0.34 between 2011 and 2012. Moreover, the levels of the rule under the laws and the electoral fairness show relatively lower scores than the previous year. In the case of the Equalization index, participation system and the degree of participation significantly decreased from 7.00 in 2011 to 4.44 in 2012.

The fact of the downturn in indices of the public credibility of the current democratic institution clearly reflects the general backlash trend of the South Korean democracy.

<Figure 2> Liberalization Index and Equalization Index by area (2011 and 2012)



The area which earned the lowest evaluation in Liberalization and Equalization was the one of economy. In economy, the index of Liberalization increased from 4.46 in 2011 to 4.57 in 2012. The reduction tendency is noticeably revealed in economic monopolization and economic inequality which are the items of pluralization. As it shown, scores in all items of pluralization decreased comparing with the ones in the previous year. In particular, the interviewees answered that inequality of income and asset deeply worsened in one year. In terms of solidarity, the influence of social security system and trade unions was weakened more than 2011.

Different to the area of economy, the civil society area has lower scores in the level of liberalization than one in the previous year, and little bit higher ones in the level of equalization. In the case of liberalization, the interference of government organizations and private companies on society has been increased while the influence and activity of the voluntary associations has been weakened and the level of the social tolerance reduced. The level of equalization has risen over its all items except in the inequality of information.

<Figure 3> The mean values of the low attributes by each area

	Liberalization		Equalization	
	Autonomy	Competition	Pluralization	Solidarity
Politics	6.97	5.69	4.72	4.91
Economy	5.25	3.89	2.58	3.75
Civil Society	4.94	5.89	4.50	4.30
Mean	5.72	5.15	3.93	4.32

<Figure 4> shows the mean values of the attributes which constitute the principles by area. As shown in the scores of constituents in each area, autonomy constituting the principle of

liberalization earned the highest evaluation. Also, competition earns the highest evaluation in the area of politics and civil society, except for the area of economy. The reason why the area of economy has low competition is that it has a low evaluation in transparency and fairness of corporate management and liabilities of government and business. That is, even after the democratization, they are still dependent upon the authoritative practices in the past while the democratic rules for the management are ignored with unhealthy links between business and politics.

As pluralization and solidarity which constitute equalization are compared with each other, they both earned lower evaluations than the average points (5.0p) in all items. This means negatively the maintenance of the monopoly character of political power.

Pluralization and solidarity which constitute equalization in the area of economy recorded 2.58 and 3.75 respectively. What is significant is that the items of pluralization, which question the levels of economic monopolization and inequality has radically declined from 3.76 in 2011 to 2.58 in 2012. This means that only within the last year the economic inequality of South Korea strengthened.

The distinct characters in the area of civil society can be described as the weakening of pluralization and the strengthening of solidarity in 2012. This means the inequality in the area of civil society has been worsened as much as it's done in the one of economy although the affirmative actions, citizens' participation in NGOs, and society's influence on the policy-making process have been improved in 2012.

## **2. Types of responses and characteristics by each area**

### 1) The area of politics

The analytic focus is why some key items of politics in 2012 have decreased significantly comparing with the ones in 2011. In the level of autonomy, the item which results the drop of the score is 'Q4: Permission for political opposition results the dropped score'. In 2011 and 2012, the Lee Myung-bak government mobilized its state repressive apparatuses to oppress and control the nationwide protests and anti-campaigns on the construction of the Jeju naval base, the enforcement of the KORUS FTA, and the 4 River Restoration Project. This series of the negative political gestures of the Lee government was reflected in that score of Q4.

In competition, the item which dropped the score from 2011 is 'the Expansion of the universal suffrage'. Interestingly, this item took the highest score (8.22) among all items in the area of politics in the 2011 survey, however it recorded 7.11 point in 2012. The backsliding in the awareness on universal suffrage points out the political consequence of Lee Myung-bak's statecraft which generally ignored major public opinions and common senses. Its authoritarian tendency within the democratic institutions has been criticized as it resulted in the restraint of the citizens' basic rights including the universal suffrage.

In the equalization, the level of pluralization reduced especially in ‘political representation’, which is related to the representative role of the parliamentary system in terms of pluralization. It scored 3.89 in 2012. It means that the parliament failed to represent various social groups and tended to represent specific and privileged social groups in South Korea. This failure is strongly linked to the problem of the current election system for the formation of the parliament in South Korea. In South Korea, the general election system is ‘the mixed member majoritarian system’. This election system institutionally guarantees the bigger the portion of the seats in the parliament allocated by for the majoritarian system than the one by the proportional system. This leads to the systematical failure of the appropriate representation of various social cleavage groups’ interests and demands, and to the downfall of the public trust over the parliament in South Korea.

The item in the level of solidarity which has radically dropped comparing with the last year is ‘the degree of participation’. In 2011, its score was 7.00, but it decreased into 4.44 in 2012. This is clearly related to the degradation in the permission of the political opposition under Lee Myung-bak government.

In conclusion, the South Korean democracy shows democracy with weak political representation and accountability although R. Dahl’s political democracy is operating with the political participation and fair election. This tends to proliferate the deepening of the political distrust.

<Figure 4> The comparison between 2011 and 2012 in the area of politics

I. Politics						
			Item	Question	2011	2012
Principle	Liberalization	Autonomy	▷ The level of the performance of state violence	1. How well do you think the citizens are protected from the violence wielded by government agencies in your country?	6.56	6.89
			▷ Civil Rights	2. How well do you think the citizens' freedom is protected in your country?	7.22	7.33
			▷ Freedom to organize and act in political groups	3 How much do you think the freedom of assembly and activities of political groups (parties and quasi-political organizations) are protected in your country?	7.11	7.44
			▷ Permission for political opposition	<b>4. How much do you think the opposition movements to the government or governing groups and the governing ideology are allowed in your</b>	<b>6.56</b>	<b>6.22</b>

			<i>country?</i>		
Eq uali zati on	Competition	▷ The Expansion of the universal suffrage	<b>5. How well do you think suffrage of the citizens is protected in your country?</b>	8.22	7.11
		▷ Efficiency of the state	6. How well do you think all government agencies implement government policies in your country?	4.33	5.00
		▷ The presence of the non-elected hereditary power	7. How much do you think non-elected groups account for the political power in your country?	4.00	3.78
		▷ The rule under the laws	<b>8. How well do you think the rule of law is established in your country?</b>	5.33	5.22
		▷ Electoral Fairness	<b>9. How fairly do you think elections are conducted in your country?</b>	7.78	7.67
		▷ Transparency	10. How transparent do you think the operations of government agencies are in your country?	5.33	5.33
	Pluralization	▷ Independence and checks and balances between state power apparatuses	11. How well do you think government agencies maintain checks and balance?	5.11	5.11
		▷ Dispersion of political power in the parliament	12. How well do you think the power within the legislature is distributed in your country?	4.78	5.00
		▷ Political representation	<b>13. How well do you think the Parliament or the legislature represent various social groups in your country?</b>	4.78	3.89
		▷ Democratization of state institutions	14. How fairly and rationally do you think government agencies are being implemented in your country?	4.78	4.89
	Solidarity	▷ Participation system and degree of participation	<b>15. How actively do you think citizens are participating in elections and other political decision making processes in your country?</b>	7.00	4.44
▷ Affirmative action		16. How well do you think affirmative actions are established and implemented in	4.33	4.44	

			your country?		
		▷ The public credibility of the current democratic institution	17. How much do you think the public trust the government?	4.00	4.67
			<b>18. How much do you think the public trust the Parliament / Legislature?</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>3.78</b>
			<b>19. How much do you think the public trust Democracy?</b>	<b>7.33</b>	<b>7.22</b>

## 2) The area of Economy

According to the results of survey, the area of economy earned the lowest evaluation. Democracy Index in the area of economy was 3.87, which declined from 4.10 in 2011. The level of liberalization achieves relatively high score comparing with the score in 2011, however, the level of equalization dramatically reduced.

In terms of autonomy, the item of ‘autonomy of the decision making in the policy of the international political economy’ scores 5.22 with 0.67 drop from 2011. This shows the actual impact of the government’s strong FTA policy oriented by the neoliberal economy policy. The dropped score in the item of economic fairness in competition indicates the unfair competition between companies – between big companies and mid-small companies, big marts and traditional local markets/small shopkeepers.

All items of pluralization in the level of equalization record relatively low scores. Economic monopolization, local inequality, inequality in income, asset and employment score lower than ones in the previous year. In particular, inequality in income and asset critically worsened. This fact reflects the structural degradation of the total inequality and of social bipolarization in South Korea.

The solidarity in economy scores 3.75 overall, which slightly increased from 2011. The score of the social security system declined due to the result of Lee Myung-bak government’s pro-economic growth policy. The activity of trade unions and its influence on the government’s policy-making process tend to weaken annually. The reasons of the weakening of the trade union’s activity can be found in many ways but there are huge debates on the ways of the restoration of the trade unions and their role in the democratization process in South Korea.

The low index scores in the area of economy in general promote the social demands on the economic democratization in the South Korean society and the latter is suggested for the key task of the next South Korean government.

<Figure 5> The comparison between 2011 and 2012 in the area of economy

II. Economy						
			Item	Question	2011	2012
Principle	Liberalization	Autonomy	▷ Freedom/Autonomy of Economic Activities without political intervention	1. How much influence do you think the political power / elite have on the operation of private companies in your country?	4.78	5.22
			▷ Protection of basic labor rights	2. How well do you think labor rights are established in your country?	4.33	4.89
				3. How well do you think the prohibition of forced labor and child labor is observed in your country?	5.78	5.67
			▷ Autonomy of the decision making in the policy of the international political economy	<b>4. How independent do you think decision making processes of the central government is from foreign countries and/or foreign capital in your country?</b>	<b>5.89</b>	<b>5.22</b>
	Competition		▷ Economic Transparency	5. How transparent do you think the corporate operations are in your country?	4.22	4.33
			▷ Economic Fairness	<b>6. How fair do you think the competition between companies is in your country?</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.44</b>
			▷ Government's Accountability	7. How much effort do you think the government is exerting to protect and guarantee labor rights in your country?	3.56	4.11
			▷ Corporate's Accountability	8. How well do you think private companies protect / guarantee labor rights in your country?	3.44	3.67
	Equalization	Pluralization	▷ Economic monopoly	<b>9. How much do you think the economy is dominated by certain groups in your country?</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>2.78</b>
			▷ Regional Inequality	<b>10. How serious do you think the economic disparities / inequality are between regions in your country?</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>3.22</b>
			▷ Inequality of Income	<b>11. How serious do you think the income disparity is in your country?</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>2.11</b>

		▷ Inequality of Asset	<i>12. How serious do you think the asset disparity is in your country?</i>	3.00	1.89
		▷ Inequality of employment	<i>13. How serious do you think discrimination is in the labor market in your country?</i>	3.78	2.89
	Solidarity	▷ The Social Security System	<i>14. How well do you think support systems for the poor are working in your country?</i>	4.56	4.22
			15. How well do you think the social insurance programs are operated in your country?	4.89	5.22
		▷ The Activity of Trade Unions	16. How well organized do you think labor unions are in your country?	3.11	3.33
			<i>17. How much influence do you think labor unions have</i>	4.00	3.67
			18. How much do you think labor unions participate in the	2.11	2.11
		▷ Corporate Watch	19. How well do you think public monitoring is carried	3.44	3.89
		▷ Awareness of reducing inequality	<i>20. How enthusiastic do you think the general public is</i>	3.88	3.78

### 3) The area of Civil Society

In the area of civil society, autonomy and competition of citizens earned a relatively high score whereas the evaluation on plurality and solidarity was low. Comparing with the previous year, the overall score of liberalization which has two components of autonomy and competition declined while the equalization of pluralization and solidarity increased its score.

In terms of autonomy, some scores show that autonomy of civil society is gradually influenced by the state intervention and market force, and the level of tolerance over different languages, culture, religions in the South Korean society is being decreased. In terms of competition, NGOs' influence on the South Korean society is weakening and they fail to represent different values and demands in the society.

It is important to notice the changed level of pluralization in equalization of civil society. In particular, the score of inequality of culture and information in 2012 significantly reduced to 4.22 with 2.89 drop from the previous year. This concerns the wide gap of information among citizens who are using the SNS technology despite the latter's dramatic development.

The all items of solidarity in civil society increase overall.

&lt;Figure 6&gt; The comparison between 2011 and 2012 in the area of civil society

III. Civil Society						
		Item	Question	2011	2012	
Pr in ci pl e	Liber alizat ion	Autonomy	▷ Autonomy of society from state intervention	1. How free do you think citizens' social activities are from the government interference in your country?	4.33	5.00
				<b>2. How much influence do you think government organizations have on society in your country?</b>	<b>6.11</b>	<b>4.11</b>
			▷ Autonomy of society from the market	<b>3. How much do you think private companies have influence on society in your country?</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>3.56</b>
			▷ Autonomy of social member (basic needs and basic human development level)	4. How much do you think citizens' basic needs are met in your country?	5.67	5.89
				5. Aside from the basic needs stated in question no. 4, how much do you think special care is provided for vulnerable people or minorities, such as children, women, people with disabilities, and immigrants in your country?	4.11	4.67
				6. How much do you think citizens are provided with education opportunities in your country?	5.78	6.67
			▷ Tolerance	<b>7. How much do you think citizens respect different cultures, religions, languages, races, nations and ideas in your country?</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>4.67</b>
		Competition	▷ Capability of voluntary association	<b>8. How much influence do you think NGOs have on society in your country?</b>	<b>5.56</b>	<b>5.33</b>
			▷ Public good of voluntary association	9. How well do you think NGOs represent public interest in your country?	6.56	6.56
			▷ Transparency of voluntary association	10. Do you think NGOs are democratically operating in your country?	5.22	6.11

		▷ Diversity of voluntary associations	<i>11. Do you think NGOs well represent different values and demands of society in your country?</i>	5.78	5.56
Equal izatio n	Pluralization	▷ Inequality of public spheres	12. Do you think the media is fair and just in your country?	2.75	3.78
		▷ Inequality of culture and information	<i>13. How wide do you think the information gap between citizens is in your country?</i>	7.22	4.33
		▷ Inequality of interest relations	14. Do you think citizens have equal access to cultural facilities and activities in your country?	4.67	5.11
		▷ Inequality of Power	15. How equally do you think power is distributed	4.11	4.78
	Solidarity	▷ Institutional guarantee of diversity and affirmative actions	16. Do you think affirmative actions are well established and operated in your country?	3.11	3.89
		▷ Participation and support of social groups	17. How actively do you think citizens are participating in NGO activities in your country?	3.89	4.00
		▷ Governance of the State and Civil Society	18. How much influence do you think NGOs have on government's policy making processes in your country?	3.78	5.00

## II. Conclusion

The general characteristics of the South Korean democracy in 2012 can be described as 1) the strengthening of the principle of liberalization and the loosening of the principle of equalization, 2) institutionalization of procedural democracy and strong demand on the realization of substantive democracy, 3) the relative immaturity of internalization and habituation of democracy in economy and civil society, 4) the character of 'restricted democracy' which shows the democratic process and norms are still not accepted as the only game in our conditions, but as one of different political options in South Korea.