

Reaction to the Findings of the 2011 ADI Pilot Test and the Preliminary Findings of the 2012 ADI Survey

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I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for this opportunity to share my comments on their presentations. Let me start with some overall comments. In any exercise of this kind, much of the clarification has to do with the kinds of concepts we use. If the concepts we use are not clear, no amount of indexing will be very useful. There has to be a consistency between the kinds of concepts we use and our attempts at measuring or indexing.

Let us start with the concept of democracy. The whole exercise seeks to explain, directly or indirectly, the concept of democracy and democratic consolidation, or address what in the literature is sometimes referred to as the problem of improving the quality of democracy. Conceptually, I think CADI needs to clarify precisely what it means by democracy, as pointed out earlier by Professor Miranda. There is an extensive literature and long debates about these concepts—contentions about whether to use the procedural definition of democracy or a more substantive one. Reading your papers and listening to the presentations, it is clear that you seek an understanding of democracy that goes beyond a simply procedural definition. But it would be more satisfactory if you can clarify what we might consider to be the common attributes of a democratic political system.

Let us focus on the four countries included in the study. From your presentations, you all assume that these four countries (South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines) are now democratic political systems. However, in our book, *Chasing the Wind: Assessing Philippine Democracy* (Miranda et al. 2011), we argue that at this stage we cannot strictly call the Philippine political system a democracy. At best, it is

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democratizing—it is not yet a full democracy. In fact, one common description of the Philippines is that it is an “oligarchic democracy.” Is that not an oxymoron? If it is an “oligarchic democracy,” is there a democracy at all? Why don’t we just call it an oligarchy for that matter? All of these are reflections of the need to clarify a very basic conceptual issue. What is a democratic political system? Can we agree on its key attributes? Is it different conceptually from democratization? These are some of the things that we would like to see in the final output of the group.

More closely related to the exercise of indexing is the concept of democratic consolidation. Again, I believe that the unstated assumption of all these indexing exercises is that we want to have a sense of how consolidated these democratic systems are—assuming that to begin with, of course, they are indeed democracies. All of these exercises in indexing will be much clearer if we are given a sense of what sort of scores would be considered to be reflective of a democratically consolidated system. When you come out with a final output, it would be useful if you can agree on what kinds of scores might constitute something that would qualify as a democratically consolidated system. Thus, using your index ratings would you consider a country with an overall index of 5.0 or 6.0 as democratically consolidated, for instance? Why or why not?

Another issue about indexing, of course, is weighting. At the moment you do not have a system of weighting for your indicators. I am not sure whether you will go into that exercise, but again, that is something you might want to look into. For instance, should you give a greater weight to the de-monopolization processes that are taking place within the political sphere as against the economic sphere or the civil society sphere? Are these issues that you would like to address in your final output?

Some of you also have done tests of correlations and significance on your variables. I think two countries have done that—Indonesia and the Philippines. But it seems that there is no common agreement whether or not to use these tests. What stands out from the four country exercises so far is that the process of de-monopolization, to use your concept, has taken place most impressively in the sphere of politics. Thus, one of the questions you might also want to pursue is whether there is any causal relationship between the level of democratic consolidation in the political sphere with those of the two other spheres. Or you might even raise a more interesting question: where is the direction of the causality, if there is such causality? Is it democratization that is facilitating the process of de-monopolization? Or is it the other way around? You might want to pursue some of these questions.

Another general comment on the methodology for all the country studies would be the choice of respondents. Again, there is no uniformity on this question. As you have rightly pointed out, the question of defining and choosing experts itself is already quite a problem. How do you choose experts? The four teams have adopted different responses to this question. The Philippine team, apparently, is now in the process of seriously evaluating its earlier classification of experts as selected mainly on the basis of their ideological affiliation: a left-center-right continuum. This premise assumes that one's ideological affiliation is a fairly stable and coherent one but in reality, one can have a range of ideological positions on different kinds of issues. I was also struck by our Malaysian colleagues' basis for their choice of respondents. It appears to be a very subjective and a very limited pool, not to mention what I think is an over-representation of the Chinese experts, given the demographic composition of Malaysia.

I hope that in the final report you can also provide a clear, more up-to-date contextualization of the indexing process, i.e., clarifying the political and the social context by which a reader will be able to make more sense out of the figures. Some of you are already doing that but you might want to relate it more directly to the indexing system. For instance, why is it that in comparing two years, say 2011 and 2012, you have in the case of two countries a decrease in the index of democracy? What were the most important political factors, both internal and external, that might have contributed to this? Or if there has been a significant increase in the democracy index, the reader would also be interested in understanding the context for these developments.

For instance, in Indonesia, the context there might be significantly related to some reforms initiated by President Yudhoyono's administration. It would be interesting if you can point out if there have been any significant policy initiatives or institutional changes that might have taken place to affect these indices.

The Korean situation has always fascinated me because historically, Korea, together with Japan, was one of the very few cases which defied the projections of some well-established economic studies. Recall the famous Kuznets curve that basically said that when a country is experiencing rapid economic growth, that growth will inevitably be accompanied by the worsening of income inequality in the earlier years of growth. But even during the period of the dictatorship, the Korean experience belied such an analysis. Significant economic growth took place under the military dictatorship but income inequalities were addressed by major institutional reforms, for instance, the successful land reform program. Based on your studies, you said that in the last two years, the progress in your political index has not been accompanied

by an increase in your economic index. Again, we want to understand the context for this. Part of the explanation perhaps would be the impact of the economic crisis, especially after 2008, and the subsequent institutional reforms.

In Malaysia, political contestation has also become more robust with the emergence of a vibrant opposition under the leadership of Anwar Ibrahim. It would be interesting to find out whether or not these recent developments would significantly affect your democracy indices.

These are some of the comments that I would like to share with you. As you can see, my biggest concern has to do with conceptual issues as I pointed out in the first part of my commentary. Thank you very much.