

# Reaction to the ADI Pilot Studies: Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Korea

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The most promising aspect of this program is its contribution to the conceptualization of “Asian democracy.” Its demonopolization and equalization indices capture the characteristic of formally democratizing polities within an economic and social environment of severe equity problem. This is the situation of most democratizing Asian countries.

The paper on Indonesian democratization, for example, notes that the overall Asian Democracy Index of 4.99 points on a scale of 0-10 indicates “that developments and achievements are out of balance with the concept of propping up democracy in the ongoing process of transition.” Moreover, it states that “Indonesian democracy has been propped up by significant liberalization of politics, but this has been accompanied by low equalization in the economic sphere.” Further, the paper asserts “that the index findings appear to confirm various criticisms by experts regarding the oligarchy phenomenon—a serious issue that Indonesian democracy now faces.” Lastly, the paper expressed doubt about the claim of some studies “that Indonesian democracy has been consolidated.”

In the context of the potential of Consortium for the Asian Democracy Index (CADI) in contributing to the conceptualization of “Asian democracy,” it is regrettable that the paper about Philippine democratization sees no need to engage in this discussion. It states:

We have since abandoned any desire to contribute efforts if there is a distinctly “Asian” type of democracy; it is an unending debate that we can find no value in contributing to.

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The challenge in pursuing this task is formidable. But when successfully achieved, this effort of CADI would benefit similarly situated democratizing countries in the Third World.

The pessimism of the Philippine paper is not shared by the paper on South Korean democratization. The paper states:

This survey also brought to the attention some common characteristics of democracy in Asia. For example, though democratic exercises of free and fair elections are carried out regularly, economic inequality is an enduring problem. The ADI is significant thus for a generalization of the characteristic of Asian democracy by its accumulation of empirical data.

Closely related to the observation of the pilot studies that politics is liberalizing amid the glaring economic disparities is the need to understand the “oligarchy phenomenon.” South Korea’s economic disparities might not be as glaring as those in Indonesia and the Philippines, but it continues to experience the “enduring problem of economic inequality.” Hence, the Indonesian paper suggests that part of CADI’s future studies is to examine the “oligarchy phenomenon”—the monopolies, conglomerates, and chaebols.

In regard to the methodological issues, the self-criticisms of the pilot studies are instructive. The Indonesian paper acknowledges “the importance of looking at the relations between these sectors (political, economic, and civil society) in influencing the overall democracy index score.” The Consortium might like to consider perspectives, such as Seymour Martin Lipset’s, that emphasize the significance of the economic and social preconditions of a democratic polity.

The Korean paper observes the “1) difficulty in comparing democratic realities of countries with one another, and 2) the problem of how to tackle the huge differences between scores of respondents.” The paper’s preferred approach, which is accepted in all the other papers, is to hold “supplemental surveys” through the Delphi survey method. In addition, the Consortium should also consider clarifying its “level and rule of aggregation” (Munck 2009, cited in Miranda et al. 2011, 22) in dealing with these methodological concerns.

The Philippine paper discussed the issue of representativeness. The research team plans to “double the number of respondents.” It prescribes an ideal mix: “nine [left-left leaning] and nine [right-right leaning] respondents per field, with one L-L.L and one R-RL.” The team also plans to double non-Luzon respondents. While the issue of representativeness is important, a

prior problem needs to be tackled. The pilot studies use different classifications of respondents. The classes of respondents vary from “conservative-moderate-liberal,” “pro-government, independent, anti-government,” to “leftist-rightist.” The Consortium should rethink their varying classifications of respondents to avoid conceptual conflation or overstretching (Miranda et al. 2011).

In conclusion, we should not lose sight of the inspiration of the framers of CADI. As stated in the Philippine paper, they see “the undue concentration of politico-socioeconomic power” as the main obstacle to democratization. CADI is animated by the “war against authoritarianism waged on several fronts.” Indeed, this inspiration makes CADI partisans for democracy worthy of being supported by democrats all over the world.

## References

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- Munck, Gerardo L. 2009. *Measuring Democracy: A Bridge between Scholarship and Politics*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.