What are “Asian Values”?

The rapid industrialization and development of the East Asian region has brought the international political arena to attention regarding an accurate and fair assessment of democratic values of this region. Despite the close proximity of these countries; the ethnic distribution, diverse political history, and economic development vary. These diversities call for a conceptual scheme that measures a broad spectrum of forms of democracies.

One measure of democracy, Polity IV is the most appealing democratic measure that accounts for the different manifestations of democracy that appear in the region. It is difficult to measure democracy since many nations rhetorically embrace the notion of democracy whilst being non-democratic. Polity IV consists of six components: regulation of executive recruitment, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, executive constraints, regulation of participation, competitiveness of participation. These components “record key qualities of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority, and political competition” (Polity IV Project). The scoring system ranges from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy), a total of 21-point scale. This measure differentiates nations between an institutionalized democracy or an institutionalized autocracy. While democracy and autocracy may seem like extremes *prima facie*, their fundamental elements may overlap and cause be deceiving. For example, the consideration of whether or not fair elections are being carried out.

Example of disparities in the definition of democracy in a Mongolian study:

* Despite the process of democratic consolidation there remain significant areas of concern about the fullness of Mongolian democracy, particularly in areas such as the right to health, problems with corruption, poverty and unemployment, and other social and economic rights limitations that impinge on the full exercise of civil and political rights.
* 1.3.7  There are problems with access to and administration of justice, where patterns of corruption have undermined due process, and unreasonable conditions of pre-trial detention and the use of the death penalty in secret limit the notion of a full protection of civil rights.
* 1.3.8  The semi-presidential institutional design has provided the opportunity for power sharing and political accommodation, but elections have been dominated by the success of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP), which has tended to control the parliament and the presidency, while constitutional amendments have undermined horizontal accountability by allowing MPs to serve simultaneously as cabinet members.
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Another coding system, that of the Political Regime Change system, is one that would not fare in the East Asian region due to the arbitrary restrictions that come into conflict with the diverse forms of democratic types. The PRC coding scheme depicts that a nation is only qualified as a democracy if the following four conditions are met: the presence of an elected executive and legislative, a government that has not restricted non-violent oppositions, a government that doesn’t restrict opposition or criticism in media, and that the government does not use violence or arrest powers to curb opposition. In Hong Kong, during the non-violent protest against Basic Article 23, which had provisions to censor criticisms against the government, there were many restrictions to the route and procedures of the protest. Is that considered as a curb or not? These arbitrary measures will not be sufficient in providing a framework for assessing the different democratic-regime types.