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A Multilevel Analysis of Institutional Confidence in East Asia

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Contents

Acronyms

ABS	Asian Barometer Survey
ANES	American National Elections Studies
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CH	China
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ESS	European Social Survey
GBS	Global Barometer Survey
HK	Hong Kong
HLM	Hiearchical Linear Model
IN	Indonesia
JP	Japan
KH	Cambodia
KR	South Korea
MGCFA	Multi-group Confirmatory Factor Analysis
MI	Measurement Invariance
ML	Maximum Likelihood
MM	Myanmar
MN	Mongolia
MY	Malaysia
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PH	Philippines
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SG	Singapore
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean square Residual
TH	Thailand
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
TW	Taiwan
ULS	Unweighted Least Squares
WLS	Weighted Least Squares
WVS	World Values Survey
VN	Vietnam

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Introduction

This dissertation consists in an empirical study of the relationship between democracy and political confidence in East Asia, a region of our globe that goes from Mongolia to Indonesia, as Northern and Southern limits, and from Myanmar to Japan, as Western and Eastern borders. The study of individuals' confidence in public institutions, often linked with the more general discussion about political legitimacy, arguably represents one of the most analysed and debated topics of political science. Nonetheless, the almost entirety of our knowledge about this relationship derives from theoretical discussion and empirical investigations about the impact, or potential impact, of citizens' confidence in institutions on democratic viability. Although during the last two decades a burgeoning number of studies about the the interplay between institutions and individuals' political confidence has been produced, studies investigating this relationship from the opposite perspective, namely *the extent to which democracy impacts on individual confidence in institutions*, has been seldom investigated.

Institutional studies of political confidence have been increasingly focusing on the extent to which the economic or political performance of state institutions and authorities, or other features of the political system, such as the fairness, responsiveness, and honesty of political process, affect citizens' confidence in institutions. In those few cases in which the essential features of a democratic system have been considered as potential antecedents of individual confidence in institutions these effects have been investigated in and across democratic regimes, especially in the European and North American contexts. As a consequence, what it is contended is that our knowledge of this relationship, and the largely positive view about said relationship, is to a large extent contingent on the contexts in which it has been studied. For this reason, this work steps out from the usual yard of normative debates and empirical studies about this topic, and focuses on East Asia, a region of our globe providing several opportunities (and challenges) to empirically investigate individual confidence in institutions and its interplay with political institutions.

East Asia nowadays represents one of the most heterogeneous regions of our world on a plethora of structural and systemic features. Among these, East Asia presents a remarkable variety of political systems, ranging from single-party autocratic regimes to pluralistic liberal-democracies, and including several types of 'hybrid' regimes, fitting in neither categories. Since the late 1990s and early 2000s data about individual attitudes and behavior across this variety of regimes have been collected, allowing scholars and researchers to reassess, and in some cases challenge, issues and assumptions about a long list of political phenomena, including political confidence. Indeed, while individual-level studies of political confidence in this region have shown that the dynamics generating different degrees of confidence across individuals overlap with those seen in other regions of our globe, descriptive studies of cross-national variations of political confidence in this region have shown that individual confidence in institutions, during the last two decades, has been invariably higher in non-democratic regimes as compared to democratic countries. Several hypotheses and arguments, although scarcely investigated, have been developed in order to explain these aggregate regularities. Some authors attempted to explain these variations following socio-deterministic theories about an increasing mismatch between individual basic orientations to politics and the reality of their political systems determined by socioeconomic modernization, that is the so-called 'critical citizens' theory, or enduring cultural traditions,

the so-called 'Asian Values' argument. Others have pointed their attention on differences in terms of (especially economic) performance of East Asian governments. Still others have called into question the reliability and validity of individual confidence measures in non-democratic settings. Few scholars have considered the idea that these differences may be related to structural characteristics of the political processes that differentiate democratic regimes from non-democratic ones. In this work, although accounting for alternative explanations both theoretically and empirically, this latter perspective is developed and investigated.

Building on arguments and evidence concerning the effects of political competition outputs (namely, election results) on individual-level variations of confidence in institutions, and relying on the renowned theoretical and analytical comparative framework developed by Robert Dahl (1971) in its seminal study on political participation and opposition, this thesis aims to investigate *how an essential characteristic of any political system, namely the extent to which a regime provides institutional guarantees for public contestation to a more or less broad share of its population, affects individuals' confidence in institutions*. In order to provide a rigorous, specific, but also comprehensive empirical assessment of this topic, this dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to a theoretical and conceptual discussion about the notion of political confidence and the main explanations of its origins, starting from which the broad research question inspiring this dissertation is presented. About the former topic, building on relatively recent theoretical and conceptual developments, what it is contended is that the notion of confidence is conceptually distinct to the notion of trust, and the former should be preferred to the latter in order to conceptualize the relationship between individuals and public institutions (Ch. 1, Sect. 1.2.1). Furthermore, the relationship between this notion and the related concepts of regime legitimacy and political support is critically assessed in order to define the peculiar nature of the individual attitude under investigation (Ch. 1, Sect. 1.2.2). The chapter, then, continues with a reassessments of the second topic mentioned above, namely a review of theories and explanations of political confidence, based on the ubiquitous categorization of theories of political phenomena distinguishing between culturalist and institutionalist arguments (Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3). Building on these two sections the chapter ends with a discussion concerning the scope of these explanations, and briefly reviewing the debate about the relationship between democracy and political confidence (Ch. 1, Sect. 1.4). In particular, what is claimed is that, while providing opposite and to some extent irreconcilable perspectives about the determinants of political confidence, current theories and explanations of this phenomenon lack arguments assessing the systemic impact of democracy on individual confidence in institutions, for both theoretical reasons and the already mentioned focus of theoretical discussions and empirical investigation on democratic settings, driving to a contingent understanding of the relationship between democracy and political confidence. What it is contended, thus, is that for assessing this issue a different analytical strategy is needed.

Chapter 2 is, thus, dedicated to developing the specific argument of this thesis (Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2), discussing the state of art of the empirical research dedicated to political confidence in East Asia, thus introducing the geopolitical context in which this work is situated (Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3), and finally presenting the research design adopted to investigate the main puzzle and related research questions of this research effort (Sect. 2.4). The first section (Sect. 2.2.1) clarifies which is *the notion of democracy*

adopted in this study, that consists in Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) notion of *polyarchy* and the theoretical and analytical framework that has been produced around this notion (e.g. Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Coppedge *et al.* 2008; Teorell *et al.* 2019). The section then continues (Sect. 2.2.2) with an explanation of why varying levels of democracy are interpreted as *variations of levels of public contestation*, one of the two dimensions informing the notion of democracy used in this work. The following pages are then dedicated to a discussion about why and how variations of institutional features and dimensions identified by the notion of democracy used in this thesis can be related to varying levels of individuals' confidence in institutions (Sect. 2.2.3). What it is contended is that variations of these attributes *shape the structure of incentives and constraints affecting individuals assessments of institutions and authorities trustworthiness*, and that higher degrees of public contestation are likely to produce both *positive* and *negative* incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions. The following section is then dedicated to the state of art of the study of political confidence in this region, that highlights the main findings and gaps about aggregate-level and individual-level studies of political confidence in this region. By doing so, in this section the East Asian context is presented and the opportunities and challenges given by the structural heterogeneity of this region are discussed, and the necessity of a study able to fill the the lack of contextual analyses of political confidence in this region is underlined. Then, Finally, the chapter ends presenting the specific research questions investigated in the following chapters and the research strategy employed to address these questions (Sect. 2.4.1), as well as the main individual-level and contextual-level data bases of this empirical study (Sect. 2.4.2).

The following three chapters of the thesis (Chs. 3, 4, and 5) consist in the three sets of empirical analyses used to address the research questions and the main hypothesis grounding this work. Chapter 3 presents a dimensionality analysis of political confidence in East Asia. What it is claimed is that in order to properly analyse the relationship between democracy and political confidence, what is needed is a prior assessment of whether East Asians confidence in institutions represent a single and general assessment of public institutions, or rather a multidimensional attitude (an assessment seldom performed in previous research). Consequently, this chapter, building on the ongoing debate about political confidence dimensionality in Europe (Ch. 3, Sect. 3.2), and after presenting the main expectations derived by translating this debate in investigates this issue through the means of exploratory and (multi-group) confirmatory factor analyses (EFA and CFA), applied to (almost) all the studies composing the first four rounds of the ABS (Ch. 3, Sect. 3.3). The main finding of this chapter is that, despite the crucial diversities of the countries included in this study on a series of structural factors potentially affecting the way in which East Asians organize their attitudes toward public institutions, a common factor structure of political confidence in this region can be found, and that this configuration consists in a two-dimensional conception distinguishing between confidence in political institutions (e.g. national governments and national assemblies) and confidence in implementative institutions (e.g. civil services and police forces).

Chapter 4 is then dedicated to an analysis of these two types of political confidence in the aggregate. In the first part of the chapter, a descriptive analysis of East Asians' confidence in both political and implementative institutions is provided (Ch. 4, Sect. 4.2). In this part the cross-national variations of political confidence already highlighted by previous research are presented, although in a broader picture, spanning across approximately fifteen years of evidence provided by the ABS data. The stable

differences between East Asian countries are then assessed through a bivariate and multivariate correlational analyses, performed in order to test alternative explanations of these cross-national patterns (Ch. 4, Sect. 4.4 and Sect. 4.5). What it is shown is that the selected indicator of political contestation levels consistently negatively correlates with the index dedicated to ABS respondents' political confidence, representing the best predictor of cross-national variations of aggregate levels of these attitudes, outperforming all the alternative explanations. What the chapter shows, however, is that the impact of contestation on aggregate levels of political confidence is much stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative ones.

Chapter 5 then represents the last empirical chapter of this dissertation, and presentes a multilevel analysis of political confidence, spanning across the second, third, and fourth rounds of the ABS, and providing an assessment of both individual-level and contextual-level determinants of political confidence, and their interplay. After providing hypotheses concerning the relationship between relevant individual-level antecedents of political confidence as identified by previous research, and expectations concerning the direct and indirect effect of the contextual variable of interest (Ch. 5, Sect. 5.2), a series of hierarchical linear regression models (HLMs) are performed in order to account for both individual-level and contextual-level variation of political confidence (Ch. 5, Sect. 5.4). What these models provide is, first, a reassessment of previous findings about the direct effect of political contestation on confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative institutions, partially confirming previous results, but also highlighting even more the different impact of political contestation on the two indices of political confidence, strong and statistically significant for average levels of confidence in political institutions, while much weaker and even not significant in affecting confidence in implementative ones. Second, the HLMs return a clear picture about the individual-level determinants of political confidence in this region, showing how institutional performance indicators represent the best individual-level predictors of confidence across all the contexts considered, and how their effects vary according to the type of political confidence taken into account. Third, these models show how the indirect effect of political contestation, considered as a moderating factor of the effect of some individual-level determinants, operates differently according to the type of political confidence considered, moderating the effect of individual-level variables when considering confidence in implementative institutions but not in the case of the other type investigated in this work. The chapter, hence, returns a rather puzzling scenario that is further discussed in the last section of this chapter (Ch. 5, Sect. 5.5). The dissertation, then, concludes with a reassessment of the main findings proposed in previous chapters, the limitations of the study, and the main implications for the empirical study of political confidence in East Asia and beyond.

1 The Notion of Political Confidence and its Main Explanations

1.1 Introduction

Political confidence is arguably one of the most studied and debated topics of the last five decades of empirical political research. At least since the crest of the behavioralist revolution, researches and discussions about individuals' confidence in political institutions have been linked to the fundamental theme of democratic viability, and have extensively dedicated to *the impact of these attitudes on democratic political systems*. Originally built on sociological and structural-functionalist conceptions of political systems and political processes considering citizens' evaluations of legitimacy and effectiveness as crucial factors for democratic regimes' stability and viability (Lipset 1959: 77-82; see also Almond and Verba 1963; for a critical assessment see Barry [1970] 1988: 63-74), the dominant understanding of citizens' institutional confidence has been that it represents a crucial resource for democratic political systems, fostering a plethora of benevolent implications for their political processes, such as: citizens' law compliance, the smooth implementation of governmental policies, links among representatives and represented, and so forth (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 1-9; see also, inter alia, Gamson 1968; Hetherington 1998, 2005; Mishler and Rose 1997, 2001; Nye 1997; Offe 1999; Tyler 1998). Some authors, from a normative point of view, have already challenged the idea that political confidence shall be always be considered as a sign of an healthy democratic society. In particular, what has been contested is that *high levels* of individual confidence in public institutions invariably represent a benevolent resource for democratic political systems. Some scholars argued that low levels of political confidence should be regarded as positive indicators for democratic politics, since they may signal the existence of a healthy skepticism among democratic citizens (e.g. Hardin 2002: 151-152; see also Hardin 1998, 1999, 2000). Others argued that neither too high nor too low levels of citizens' institutional confidence may be beneficial for democratic regimes (e.g. Gambetta 1988: 229-235; Mishler and Rose 1997: 418-421). Mostly, then, these critical assessments have been produced according to the analytical perspective mentioned at the outset of this introduction, namely the extent to which different levels of citizens' confidence in institutions affect democratic politics, and more broadly democratic viability. In this work, this critique is developed but flipping the aforementioned perspective, hence investigating *the extent to which levels of democracy affects citizens' political confidence*.

With the affirmation of institutional understandings of political attitudes and behavior, theories and empirical investigations of political confidence have started assuming a less socio-deterministic perspective, and the argument that political confidence shall be considered also, if not mostly, a product of the institutional environment in which individuals live has become increasingly shared among political confidence students. This approach to the study of political confidence has indeed produced a plethora of findings about how *institutional features* of contemporary democracies affect individuals' confidence in political institutions. Yet, the main claim of this dissertation is that we know very little about a more general issue, namely *the extent to which variations on levels of democracy affect individuals' confidence in state institutions*. The reasons why to date our knowledge about this issue has remained highly under-investigated are several and intertwined among each other. One reason lies in the fact that for decades socio-deterministic explanations of political confidence have dominated the discussion

about the relationship between democracy and political confidence, leading to spill rivers of ink about the extent to which political confidence might be a crucial resource for democratic political systems. The other main reason identified, however, consists in the fact that even studies assuming the opposite analytical perspective, namely the institutional one, have remained mostly confined to the study of political confidence variations *within and between democratic systems*, especially European and North American ones. As a consequence, our understanding of *how essential differences between democratic and non-democratic systems affect individuals' confidence in institutions* remains largely unexplored. This work aims to provide some insights about this topic, moving beyond the usual frame of analysis of political confidence studies (namely, the democratic one), and focusing on a specific geopolitical context of our world, namely East Asia[1], a context as ideal as challenging for investigating this topic, as explained in the following chapter of this thesis (see Ch. 2). This chapter is dedicated to develop and specify what it has been contended so far, as well as clarify theoretical and conceptual understandings of the phenomenon investigated in this study, namely individuals' confidence in public institutions.

1.2 The Notion of Political Confidence

Despite the extensive study of it, current literature still provides different, and to some extent contrasting, conceptualizations of this phenomenon, most of which bear important implications for our understanding of its causes and consequences. First, the large majority of studies addressing this specific attitude toward public institutions and authorities, labels it 'political trust'. Other theoretical and conceptual arguments, however, contend that the relationship between individual and institutions is radically different from those normally depicted by the notion of 'trust', usually referring to judgements of trustworthiness related to interpersonal relationships (namely, interpersonal trust), or judgements of trustworthiness of undefined others about undefined matters (namely, generalized social trust). Consequently, according to these arguments, we should conceptualize this particular relationship between individuals and institutions as one based on 'confidence' rather than 'trust', and in this study this perspective, as the few lines above show (see Sect. 1.2.1), is adopted. Second, an important share of studies dedicated to political confidence usually conflate it, implicitly or explicitly, with the notion of political legitimacy, or conceptualize it as influential to the conferral of legitimacy. This conception, despite criticisms, is by far the most diffused also in the literature concerning political confidence in East Asia, the geopolitical context in which this thesis is grounded (see Ch.2). Other scholars, on the contrary, claim that it should be conceived as a form of evaluation of incumbent authorities performance or an indicator of approval (or lack thereof) of the latter. Briefly reassessing a long-lasting debate about the renowned notion of political support, what it is claimed in the following pages (see Sect. 1.2.2) is that political confidence should be conceptualized as a form of political support that ontologically entails both diffuse political support (evaluative orientations about legitimacy) and specific political support (instrumental attitudes concerning institutions and authorities' performance), and that any assessment of the extent to which individuals' confidence in institutions entails these two

[1]In this work 'East Asia' refers to a region of our globe that goes from Mongolia to Indonesia, as Northern and Southern limits, and from Myanmar to Japan, as Western and Eastern borders. The list of national cases analysed in the following pages are presented in the following chapter (see Chapter 2, Sects. 2.3.1 and 2.5.2).

forms of support should be considered an empirical matter, rather than a theoretical one. This section then concludes with a summary of the discussion and its implications (see Sect. 1.2.3).

1.2.1 Confidence and Trust

Most of the works concerning individuals' expectations toward and evaluations of institutions legitimacy and effectiveness label this phenomenon as 'political trust'. Despite this widespread usage, however, so far we have labeled these individual attitudes as 'political' or 'institutional confidence'. The reason of this choice derives mostly by a relatively recent conceptual refinement (es. Hardin 2002: 151-172; Schnaudt 2019: 22-38; see also Luhmann 1988) that provides some solid theoretical and conceptual arguments in favor of a distinction between the notions of 'confidence' and 'trust', and in favor of the use of the former rather than the latter in depicting the phenomenon under investigation.
This argument derives, in first place, from a contrast between interpersonal relationships and those between individuals and institutions. Interpersonal trust is described as '*A (Ego) trusts (judges the trustworthiness of) B (Alter) with regard to X (some matter or behavior) in context Y at time t*' (cf. Bauer and Freitag 2018: 15-16), and can be easily reduced to a three-part relationship described by the sentence '*A trusts B to do X*' (Hardin 1993: 154; Hardin 2002: 9). In this perspective trust implies an action (Ego that forgoes control on some matter and grants it to Alter), and the risk connected to this choice (uncertainty deriving from the impossibility to fully predict Alter behavior), and thus it applies to horizontal relations between individuals. In this kind of relationships, mostly (but not only) built on iterated interactions between individuals, there is a clear interest at stake, and the relationship is based on the fact that Ego expects that Alter will behave in a certain way because Alter has reasons to take into account Ego interest in her actions, and in particular has interest in the continuation of the relationship (cf. Hardin 1999: 26; 2002: 4-9). As Hardin (2002: 4) succintly puts it:

> I trust you because I think it is in your interest to attend to my interests in the relevant matter. This is not merely to say that you and I have the same interests. Rather, it is to say that you have an interest in attending to my interests because, tipically, you want our relationship to continue. At minimum you may want our relationship to continue because it is economically beneficial to you [...] In richer cases, you may want our relationship to continue and not to be damaged by your failure to fulfill my trust because you value the relationship for many reasons, including non-material reasons.

If trust has to be conceptualized in this manner then there are few reasons for arguing that individuals' relationship with public institutions should be labeled with the same notion that characterizes interpersonal relationships. Indeed, many of the characteristics of the latter type of relationship do not apply when we turn our attention to the relationship between individuals and public institutions, that clearly differ starting from the basic facts that (a) Alter is not an individual, but rather an organization of individuals, and (b) the matter or behavior object of the relationship between Ego (citizen) and Alter (organization) is not anymore a concrete object, or an issue on which Ego forgoes its control

and grants it to Alter. These basic differences derive by the fact that the relationship between citizens and institutions is not anymore horizontal, but *vertical*. Citizens *cannot choose* to enter, or not enter, or exit their relationship with public institutions. They are from the outset in a relationship with institutions and authorities. Even in democratic settings, where individuals can withdraw from voting, or decide to 'vote the rascals out' from some institutions, they will be still affected by the actions of public institutions or authorities. Consequently, *there is no action by Ego in entering this relationship*. Moreover, there is *no risk*. There is still uncertainty about the fulfillment of individuals' expectations by public institutions, yet this uncertainty is not connected with the possibility to enter or exit this relationship, as in the case of interpersonal relationships (cf. Luhmann 1988: 97-99).

Finally, citizens' relationship with institutions, differently from relationships with other individuals, is fundamentally *indirect* and it lacks *information* about incentives and constraints that might foster institutions and authorities trustworthiness, and these aspects bear relevant consequences for the assessment of institutions and authorities' *predictability*. Most of times, interpersonal relationships based on trust are built through direct and iterated interactions between Ego and Alter (see Hardin 2002: 25). In this way Ego has fair possibilities to assess whether Alter takes into account Ego's interest in his behavior, and thus whether Alter has interest in maintaining a relationship with her. On the contrary, individuals' relationships with public institutions or authorities are not based on a direct and iterated interaction with all the *officials of a given organization*. Even in the cases of direct interactions between citizens' and institutional officials, these interactions are very rarely relevant for assessing whether or not an institution or authority will take into account citizens' interest in their actions. In other terms, in the vast majority of cases individuals cannot "know enough of the large number of individual role holders to claim to be confident of judging that these role holders have interests or the relevant moral commitments to do what would serve their clients' interests" (Hardin 2002: 156).

However, this crucial lack of information is not only related to institutions or authorities' officials, but also to *incentives and constraints* that rule institutions and authorities' behavior. In interpersonal relationships the *interests* at stake are clear, Ego and Alter usually have a rather clear idea about the *ends* of their relationship, and usually their relationship is also grounded on a relatively clear idea about which are the *means* to reach said ends. Also in cases in which Ego does not have enough information or knowledge to assess said means (say, relationships concerning medical care) there are institutional devices for assessing means to various ends, as well as other important aspects of trust relationships (e.g. competence). All these characteristics do not apply, or apply much less, when we turn to the relationship between citizens and institutions. The scale and complexity of modern and contemporary democracies (see Hardin 1993, 1999: 38-39, 2002: 155-159; see also Offe 1999: 61-62), but also the very structure and dynamics of democratic politics (see Hardin 1999: 32-38), pose enormous cognitive problems. It is very unlikely that the large majority of contemporary democratic citizenries has a fair account of institutions' structures, processes, functions, roles, that may impact on institutions' trustworthiness. Moreover, individuals' (Ego) interests on many issues that institutions deal with (namely, policies) might be simply not given. In some cases, especially when we deal with democratically elected institutions, also the interests of institutional actors (Alter) may be very hard to be identified, because of the complexity of the matter at hand, or other reasons determined by electoral strategies or tactics (say, do not frustrate expectations of a share of the electorate. see Hardin 2002: 169-170). Further-

more, even in cases in which there is enough information concerning the *ends* of the relevant actors, find out the most proper *means* toward a specific end can be assumed to be much more difficult as compared to what happens in interpersonal relationships, again because of objective difficulties given by the complexity of a specific issue, but also because of other dynamics related to electoral tactics or strategies. As a consequence, the *predictability* of institutions' behavior is substantially lower than the predictability of interpersonal relationships.

Clearly, this does not imply that, generally speaking, institutional actors *cannot* be predictable or trustworthy, and thus the notion of trust cannot apply to all the possible kinds of relationships between individuals and institutions. What can be argued, however, is that while predictability and trustworthiness assessments can be easier for some kind of institutions, namely *private* institutions, it can be much hard for other kinds of institutions, namely *public* and especially *political* institutions. For instance, institutional incentives and constraints regulating some *private* institutions' behavior create conditions that allow individuals', at least potentially, to fairly assess the trustworthiness and predictability of said institutions' behavior (see Hardin 2002: 51). In many cases individuals can also rely on institutional devices that allow to assess these institutions' competence on relevant matters, their reputation, as well as manage eventual problems related to conflicting interests or values between Ego-client and Alter-private institution (see Hardin 1999: 33-35). These conditions hardly apply when we look at the relationship between citizens and *public* institutions, especially those that are more affected by political conflict. As already mentioned in various passages, public institution tasks are on the average far more complex than those that many private institutions have to deal with. In many occasions is anything but straightforward to assess which will be the consequences of a given policy. Moreover, the political nature of both the issues and the institutions that have to deal with said issues are often a barrier for individuals' judgements of trustworthiness and predictability. Even on the most technical issues we may find competing judgements of supposedly independent-agencies that more often than not are likely to be informed by political interests (see Hardin 1999: 37-38). Hence, does it make any sense the analogy between interpersonal trust and individuals' confidence in (public) institutions once we account for these arguments?

In sum, the *directness*, *information*, and *predictability* characterizing interpersonal relationships can be hardly considered equal or even slightly similar to those that characterize individuals' relationships with state institutions. In the former case Ego (individual) have several means to assess whether or not Alter (individual) will attend its interest, thus judging its trustworthiness and predictability. In the latter case, at best, Ego can rely on "inductive expectations" (Hardin 1999: 38), generalizations about "what we think to be facts of [an institution] behavior or even only from the apparent results of its behavior" (Hardin 2002: 159).

The argument presented so far was essentially aimed to underline the relevant differences between interpersonal relationships based on trust and the relationship between citizens and public institutions. Nonetheless, the notion of confidence helps also to distinguish the relationship between individuals and institutions from another conception of trust, that is the notion of (generalized) *social trust*. Several distinct conceptualizations of this notion do exist. Some authors conceive this form of trust as a moralistic stance about everyone and everything (see Uslaner 2002, 2018), determined by early socialization experiences. Other authors, define it more in socio-psychological terms, as a sort or a faith in strangers

rooted in psychological dispositions such as misanthropy (Rosenberg 1956; see also Mansbridge 1999). Finally, other authors conceive it as a faith in the benevolence of the members our larger, say national, community (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). All these definitions differ, although overlapping on several points, but most importantly for this brief discussion, they fundamentally refer to a form of trust that has no clear Alter, and whose 'grammar' can be depicted with the sentence '*A trusts*' (cf. Uslaner 2002: 21-22; Uslaner 2018: 7). What this grammar implies, hence, is that this form of trust does not refer to a particular matter or behavior, and it is not based on the relationship with specific others, but it represents a judgement of trustworthiness about indistinct individuals and about indistinct matters. There is still debates upon whether or not this attitude should be defined as 'trust' and if indeed it concerns a stance about everyone and respect to everything (see Hardin 2002: 60-62), nonetheless, following the literature, in the following pages this attitude will still be labeled as 'trust' and the discussion about its more or less general referent will not be discussed furthermore. What the previous lines show, on the contrary, is that this attitude shares very little with the relationship between individuals and institutions, namely political confidence. It is true that political confidence may be conceived as a form of generalization that does not (necessarily) involve a very specific Alter. Yet, the object of political confidence is relatively clear, or at least identifiable in a rather precise fashion, namely public institutions, authorities, or their officials. Moreover, as explained in more detail in the following section, although individuals may ground their institutional confidence on some moral standards, or may reflect other deep-seated dispositions, political confidence *does not* equate to these standards or dispositions, even when considering the most socio-deterministic theories about its origins.

1.2.2 Confidence, Legitimacy and Political Support

The discussion above brings us, then, to the next topic to be addressed in order to clarify the meaning of the notion of political confidence, namely whether it represents an assessment of *regime legitimacy* or, rather, a more volatile attitude related to short-term evaluations. The discussion about this issue has been often recasted according to the renowned notion of *political support*, conceptualized by Easton (1965) more than five decades ago, and that basically distinguishes between *diffuse support*, namely evaluations "directed to basic aspects of the system" (1975: 437), and *specific support*, that is evaluations mostly concerned with "what the political authorities do and how they do it" (*Ibid.*)[2].
At the origins of its empirical study, citizens' confidence in institutions have been interpreted as an expression of *diffuse support*, or alternatively as individual conceptions of regime legitimacy (cf. Hetherington 1998; see also Stokes 1962), that is citizens' evaluations about whether or not a state is "rightfully holding and exercising political power" (Gilley 2006: 48), or an individual "assessment of the degree of congruence, or lack of it, between a given system of power and the beliefs, values and expectations that provide its justification" (Beetham 2013: 11)[3]. This interpretation of political confi-

[2]Basically, Easton (1975: 435) conceptualizes support as an "attitude by which a person orients himself to a (political) object either favorably or unfavorably, positively or negatively".

[3]Although the concept of legitimacy represents a broad and contested notion, among the two proposed above, the definition by Gilley appears the most specific. As the author explains (2006: 48-49), his definition contains all the substantive elements of the concept, namely (a) the role of citizens as relevant subjects of legitimacy, (b) the state and

dence as an expression of diffuse support, namely assessments about regime legitimacy, remains largely used in current literature (see, *inter alia*, Anderson and Tverdova 2003: 91-92; Chang and Chu 2006: 259-261; Hooghe 2011: 269; Mishler and Rose 2001: 30-33; Newton 2008: 243; see also Schnaudt 2019: 32-37). For instance, Hetherington conceives political confidence as "a basic evaluative orientation toward the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people's normative expectations" (1998: 791). By the same token, Miller and Listhaug define political confidence as a form of support that "reflects evaluations of whether or not political authorities and institutions are performing in accordance with the normative expectations held by the public" (Miller and Listhaug 1990: 358; see also Miller 1974b: 989). Similarities between these definitions and those concerning regime legitimacy provided before are evident.

Nonetheless, it also true that since its origins this conception of political confidence as (at least 'mostly') an expression of diffuse support has been deeply contested, as the seminal debate between Miller (1974a; 1974b) and Citrin (1974) shows, a discussion in which, roughly summarizing, Citrin (1974) contested Miller's (1974a; 1974b) interpretation of the dynamics of political confidence in the United States as a sign of legitimacy crisis of the American political system. An increasing number of studies, while maintaining that political confidence is to some extent linked to expectations linked to broad normative principles, have indeed shown that individual confidence in institutions is a form of *specific support*, because affected by a plethora of short-term and volatile evaluations of institutions and authorities' performance (see, *inter alia*, Abramson and Finifter 1981: 297–298; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Chang and Chu 2006; Citrin 1974: 975; Citrin and Luks 2001; Lipset and Schneider 1983: 375-376; Mishler and Rose 1997, 2001; Muller and Jukam 1977: 1562; Park 2017), if not by partisan stances and approval or disapproval for incumbent authorities (e.g. Anderson and Tverdova 2001, 2003; Anderson and LoTempio 2002: 347-350; Citrin and Stoker 2018: 51-55; Huang *et al.* 2013: 56-67). Nonetheless, we should refrain also from equating political confidence with these short-term evaluations of incumbent authorities, or purely instrumental judgements. Although not overlapping with the notion of regime legitimacy, individuals' confidence in institutions should still be conceived as an attitude linked to broader principles concerning the political regime or community, such as accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, honesty, solidarity, fairness and so forth (see Miller and Lishtaug 1990: 358; Offe 1999: 73-75; Sztompka 1999: 53; Tyler 2001: 215-217).

In order to disentangle and resolve the discussion above, some scholars, in particular Norris (1999b: 9-13) and Dalton (2005), reassessed the relatively vague conceptualization proposed by Easton, expanding the number of objects of citizens' assessments of political support, and distributing them on a continuum ranging from specific to diffuse support (see Norris 1999b: 11; Dalton 2004: 5-9). In this scheme, confidence in institutions and authorities has then found its place in a sort of middle-ground between forms of diffuse support (e.g. attitudes concerning the political community in large or regime principles) and forms of specific support (e.g. evaluations of political authorities' performance). Nonetheless these attempts, rather than resolve the dispute, introduced a fixity in the conceptualization of this phenomenon rightly criticized by other scholars. Indeed, although providing a theoretical foothold for less stark and one-sided understandings of political confidence (cf. Citrin and Luks 2001:

power it holds and exercise as the the relevant objects, (c) the nature of legitimacy as a continuum and not a discrete property, and (d) the normative underpinning of the concept based on the notion of political rightfulness, earlier developed by Beetham (1991).

11), these classifications have been criticized for assigning *a priori* degrees of diffuse-specific support to each political object (see Torcal and Montero 2006; see also Torcal and Moncagatta 2011). What critics contend is that *any* object of political support should be conceived as potentially entailing both diffuse and specific support. It is true that some forms of political support (e.g. assessments of regime principles) by definition may be conceptualized as entailing, to some extent, more diffuse support than others. Yet, what these scholars contend is that *any* object should be assumed to reflect diffuse and specific support. In other words, any form of political support should be seen as attitudes reflecting both expectations and evaluations concerning the *legitimacy* of political institutions, and the *effectiveness* of institutions in responding to individual needs and demands. Thus, the extent to which individual confidence in institutions or authorities reflects diffuse or specific support, should be considered an *empirical* issue, rather than a theoretical or conceptual one. This general approach is the one grounding the conception and the investigation of political confidence in this study.

In sum, the discussion presented above, returns a rather clear answer about the relationship between political confidence and political legitimacy, or alternatively its identity in the broader scheme political support conceptualizations. After more than four decades of theoretical debates and empirical assessments, it should be relatively clear that individual confidence in institutions should be conceived as a form of political support that is *ontologically mixed*, and that any attempt to attach to these attitudes monolithic and clear-cut conceptual referents is simply doomed to fail. Obviously, in recent literature, different 'accents' can still be found, with some authors conceiving political confidence more as an expression of diffuse support (e.g. Newton 2008: 243; Schnaudt 2019: 36-37) and others more prone to consider it mostly as a form of specific support (e.g. Citrin and Stoker 2018: 50). These are inevitable, and to some extent desirable, diversities, derived by different theoretical conceptions or research designs, that very likely will always accompany any theoretical discussion or empirical assessment of political confidence. Yet, it can be reasonably argued that this mixed nature of political confidence has become a widely accepted conception, assumed in this study as well.

1.2.3 Summary: Political Confidence as a Mixed Form of Political Support

In sum, previous sections pave the way to a conceptualization of political confidence, avoiding, on the one hand, the relatively widespread tendency in exploiting the conceptualization of interpersonal trust to describe confidence in institutions (e.g. Bauer and Freitag 2018; Citrin and Stoker 2018; Levi and Stoker 2000; van der Meer and Dekker 2011: 97), and the similarly widespread tendency in (almost) equating 'political confidence' and 'political legitimacy', on the other hand (e.g. Hetherington 1998: 791; Miller 1974b: 989; Miller and Listhaug 1990: 358).

First (Sect. 1.2.1), the discussion above, demonstrates that the notion of trust, either conceived looking at interpersonal relationships or conceived as a psychological disposition or a moralistic stance, hardly applies to the relationship between citizens and institutions (cf. Hardin 2002: 151). Citizens' relationship with institutions is *vertical* (not conditional on any entry or exit option), *indirect* and *inductive* (largely based on generalizations about the perceived behavior or qualities of some institutions or authorities), but *not generalized* (the concrete objects of this attitude are clearly identifiable). For these reasons the notion of confidence, conceptually distinct from the notion of trust (cf. Luhmann

1988: 97-99) should be preferred to the notion of trust in conceptualizing these specific individual attitudes toward public institutions and authorities.

Second (Sect. 1.2.2), the discussion above reviews some arguments concerning the nature of this vertical and indirect relationship between citizens and institutions. Political confidence *is a form of support*, namely an attitude by which individuals orient themselves positively or negatively toward a political object (cf. Easton 1975: 435). The *objects* of this attitudes are *public institutions*, institutions dedicated to the development and implementation of public policies, or more generally dealing with the authorative allocation of goods in a society (cf. Denters *et al.* 2007: 67-68; Easton 1965: 21; Gamson 1968: 1–19; Schnaudt 2019: 29-32). This specific form of support cannot be conflated with broad and generalized assessments of regime legitimacy, on the one hand, but also sheer evaluations of institutional performance, on the other. As a consequence, political confidence, as any other form of political support (cf. Torcal and Montero 2006: 8-10), but perhaps even more than other types of political support (see Abramson and Finifter 1981: 304-306), should be interpreted as an attitude reflecting expectations and evaluations informed by both evaluative and instrumental orientations (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 36), hence potentially encompassing evaluations about regime legitimacy, institutional and authorities' performance, and other typologies of expectations and evaluations.

This understanding of political confidence as a mixed form of political support has relevant consequences for the puzzle investigated in this work, that is the conditionality of individual confidence on different levels of democracy, and this issue will be further reassessed in the following pages of this work.

1.3 Theories and Explanations of Political Confidence

The argument presented in previous pages is the tip of almost five decades of research efforts following different theoretical perspectives, that produced a plethora of theories and explanations of political confidence. Indeed, as a recent overview of the literature claims, explanations for differences in political confidence "across individuals, contexts and time are protean" (Citrin and Stoker 2018: 56). Nonetheless, most of these explanations can be reconducted to a ubiquitous two-fold categorization of general approaches to the study of political behavior, namely the one that distinguishes between *culturalist* and *institutionalist* approaches[4]. These two approaches differ and can be contrasted on a number of issues, namely (a) how institutional arrangements are formed, (b) which institutional factors affect individual political attitudes and behavior, (c) how specific institutional factors affect individual political attitudes and behavior, (d) how different political attitudes influence each other and how they relates to individual political behavior (e) how individual political attitudes and behavior affect the institutional context. Moreover, within each approach, especially the culturalist one, different arguments concerning several of these points can be found.

This dissertation focuses on the determinants of individuals' confidence in institutions, not on its con-

[4]In this work the labels 'culturalist' or 'cultural' and 'institutionalist' or 'institutional' theories, approaches, or accounts are preferred to alternative ones. Barry ([1970] 1988) labels the former 'sociological' and the latter 'economic' theories. Eckstein (1988) label the former 'culturalist' and the latter 'rationalist' approaches. Similarly, Jackman and Miller (1996a, 1996b, 2004) tend to label the former approach 'culturalist' but tend to call the latter 'institutionalist'. All these labels are fundamentally synonymous and reflect differences in the specific features of these two explanations on which each author tends to focus.

sequences. Hence, differences between culturalist and institutionalist perspectives about whether and how individual attitudes and behavior affect individuals' context (e) are not discussed in the following pages. Rather, the following discussion addresses how these two approaches differently conceptualize the other issues mentioned few lines above. In particular, the following pages (Sect. 1.3.1) will be first dedicated to a discussion about how culturalist and institutionalist approaches differ in theorizing the impact of the environment on individual attitudes (points b and c), as well as the relationship among different individual attitudes (point d). Hence, in the following pages (Sect. 1.3.2, 1.3.3, and 1.3.4), building on these general but crucial diversities, the main differences between these two approaches in explaining individuals' confidence origins and antecedents are presented.

1.3.1 Basic Features of Culturalist and Institutionalist Arguments

The *culturalist* approach consists in a broad set of theories and arguments claiming that individual political attitudes and behavior consist in a by-product of, or are crucially affected by, deep-seated, long-lasting cultural attitudes or orientations, such as values, norms and beliefs, inherited by the socio-cultural environment in which individuals socialize, especially in the early stages of their life (see, inter alia, Eckstein 1988; Inglehart 1990: es. ch.1; Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 15-47; Jackman and Miller 2004: 4-13; see also Verba 1965). The *institutionalist* approach consists in another set of theories (cf. Ferejohn and Satz 1995: 81) based on the premise that "institutions —political, social, and economic— structure the distribution of incentives for individual action, and that individuals optimize in view of those constraints" (Jackman and Miller 1996: 655) or, in other words, that individuals, ordering their goals, values, tastes and strategies, choose from available alternatives determined by institutional constraints, so as to maximize their utility or satisfaction (cf. Jackman and Miller 2004: 15-21; see also Riker 1970: 172-174).

These two perspectives are thus grounded on two radically different answers to the fundamental question "How social order is possible?", the so-called 'Hobbesian question'(cf. Wrong 1961: 184). While culturalist accounts abide to a Parsonian solution (Parsons 1951) according to which social order is feasible because of the internalization of norms through socialization processes that in turn allows to satisfy both individual needs for the economy of action and the predictability of interaction (cf. Eckstein 1988: 791-792), istitutionalist accounts conceive social order as possible because of the existence of institutional incentives and constraints to individual action and assuming that individuals will optimize given said incentives and constraints (cf. Jackman and Miller 2004: 3). In other words, while culturalists consider restraints based on psychologically internalised norms as the crucial factors ordering human actions and interactions, institutionalists consider restraints based on social institutions' norms as the critical factors ordering human actions and interactions (cf. Barry [1970] 1988: 9-10).

As the basic arguments imply, the two approaches differ on a number of issues. The culturalist perspective provides a rather deterministic explanation of individual-level factors, that gives to general dispositions, or 'orientations', causal primacy in determining other individual attitudes or individual behavior (cf. Eckstein 1988). These dispositions, fixed in the early stages of individual life through socialization processes, are enduring, thus essentially independent from the context, especially the political one, in which individuals' live at a given point in time (cf. Eckstein 1988; Inglehart 1990;

Jackman and Miller 2004)[5]. As a consequence, the context 'that matters' in culturalist explanations is the socio-economic and/or cultural context in which individuals live the early stages of their life[6]. As a consequence, individual orientations and attitudes informing individual behavior are *exogenous* to the context in which individuals behave and express their attitude, or alternatively are exogenous to the incentives and constraints that individuals face when they reify their attitudes or behavior.

Institutionalist explanations provide a rather different understanding of individual attitudes and behavior. The latter are essentially determined by the institutional arrangements[7] in which the individuals live at a given point in time. Institutionalist argument do not deny the role of moral standards or norms or values, but essentially tend to consider them as given as *endogenous* to the social, economic or political institutional setting in which individuals behave at a given point in time, or that these attitudes are susceptible of individual updates given by late socialization or, broadly speaking, individual experiences. In other terms, they do not abide to a fixed 'funnel of causality' at the individual-level, but rather abide to a procedural conception of rationality that gives causal primacy to institutional features in determining a given attitudinal or behavioral output (cf. Jackman and Miller 2004: 15-21). These fundamental differences, as the following lines show, bear crucial consequences for the way in which these two perspectives conceptualize the determinants of political confidence.

1.3.2 Culturalist Explanations of Political Confidence

What the basic assumptions about individual attitudes and behavior of the culturalist approach imply is that individuals' confidence in institutions and authorities, at a given point in time, is to a large extent *exogenous* from individuals' context, especially the political-institutional one (cf. Mishler and Rose 2001: 31-37). Despite this common understanding of the causal mechanisms assumed to be the drivers of political confidence, however, different culturalist explanations of political confidence antecedents and dynamics can be identified.

Arguably the most renowned culturalist explanation of political confidence, and of its seemingly unstoppable decline and low levels in many democratic settings around the world[8], is the one proposed among the others by Dalton (1999, 2004, 2005), Klingemann (1999), Norris (1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 2011), and Welzel (Dalton and Welzel 2014), the so-called 'critical' or 'assertive citizens' thesis, that is rooted in the neo-modernization theory having in Inglehart its main theorist and proponent (es. Inglehart 1971, 1977, 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The neo-modernist argument consists in the thesis that socioeconomic modernization represents the main engine of an inter-generational cultural change. Socioeconomic modernization, relaxing existential constraints on people's actions, facilitating

[5]Indeed, some culturalist theories (e.g. Inglehart 1988; Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 15-47; Welzel 2006) contend that the very context in which individuals live, especially the political-institutional one, is fundamentally consequential to these general dispositions and their attitudinal and behavioral consequences at the individual-level.

[6]It must be noted, however, that other culturalist arguments give a more or less relevant explanatory power also to the cultural environment in which individuals live in, in other words claiming that not only dispositions 'internalized' during early-socialization but also contingent cultural norms affect individuals' behavior (see Shi 2015: 13-40).

[7]Institutionalist theories conceptualize a social institution as "a set of rules that structure social interactions in particular ways". These rules, then, to constitute an institutions "must be shared by the members of the relevant community or society" (Knight 1992: 2-3).

[8]The argument that political confidence has been characterized by a persistent downward trend during the last decades has been heavily criticized and even reconsidered by some of its proponents (e.g. Norris 2011). For an overview of this debate see Schnaudt (2019: 1-9), Torcal (2017: 421-429), and van der Meer (2017).

the satisfaction of basic needs, and turning the nature of everyday life from a source of pressures into a source of opportunities, gives rise to 'post-materialist' (Inglehart 1971, 1977, 1990) or 'self-expressive' or 'emancipative' values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel 2013), namely individual values stressing individual autonomy, voice, participation and distance from authority in the family, workplace and politics (cf. Dalton and Welzel 2014: 7-11; see also Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005)[9]. Consequently, advanced industrial societies have been characterized by an increasing number of (democratic) critical (Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999b; Norris 1999c) or assertive (Dalton and Welzel 2014b) citizens, producing new political demands, and leading toward a 'democratic deficit' (Norris 2011) that plunged confidence in institutions, especially 'hierarchical' institutions (Inglehart 1999), in those countries that have not been able to cope adequately with these new demands.

A second set of culturalist explanations of political confidence is the one related to those theories or arguments that see the impact of modernization less important than what neo-modernization advocates claim, often labeled as the '*cultural relativist*' position. The fundamental argument of culturalist scholars abiding to this position is that despite modernization processes traditional cultural traits are resilient, and maintain their influence on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, and broader political processes (e.g. Fukuyama 1995a; Huntington 1996; Putnam 1993). In the European and North American contexts arguably the most discussed and empirically assessed 'cultural relativist' theory is the social capital theory proposed by Putnam (1993, 2000). Differently, in the East Asian region, the specific geopolitical context in which this study is situated, the cultural relativist argument has mostly taken the form of the so-called 'Asian Values' argument (see, *inter alia*, Emmerson 1995; Jenco 2013; Kim 2010; Thompson 2000), namely the thesis that Asian people shares a distinctive set of norms (such as the primacy of the society on the individual, of harmony over contestation, of experts' ruling over democracy, the centrality of familiar ties and filial piety) at odds with Western liberal-democratic values (civil liberties, press freedom, political competition, and so forth) and Western individualism (see, *inter alia*, Fukuyama 1995a; Huntington 1996; Pye 1985; Scalapino 1989. For a counterview see Bell *et al.* 1995; de Bary 1998. See also Kausikan 1998.). More recently, this argument has been reformulated as the 'Confucian specificity' or 'Confucian values' thesis, that substantially represents a reassessment of the Asian Values thesis although not completely overlapping with it (see, *inter alia*, Bell and Hahm 2003; Shi 2015; Shin 2012)[10].

In sum, these two branches of culturalist theories hold contrasting claims about the resilience of traditional cultures and/or the effects of socioeconomic modernization. Nonetheless, as already specified at the outset, they essentially share the same socio-deterministic assumptions about individual-level mechanisms. As a consequence, during the last decades of debates about political confidence in the aggregate and at the individual-level, these two culturalist perspectives essentially focused on two topics: the impact of *social capital* on political confidence, and the effect of *authority orientations* on individuals' confidence in political institutions.

About the former, social capital, namely "features of social organization" (Putnam 1993: 167), rep-

[9]The argument has been several times reassessed, and appears repeatedly in Inglehart and Welzel's works. However, for a detailed summary about the theoretical argument concerning the effects of socioeconomic development see Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 22-31).

[10]Although most of the Confucian values arguments do not overlap with the Asian Values thesis, it is worth noting that the latter in its most renowned version, namely the one proposed by the founder of modern Singapore Lee Kuan Yew (Zakaria 1994) originally already built on notions and concepts derived by Confucianism.

resents a notion that includes different components, namely 'structural' such as social networs and 'cultural' ones such as norms and social trust. Although each of these components may be considered as elements excerting a independent effect on individuals' political confidence, arguably the most investigated relationship is the one between the latter component (*social trust*) and political confidence. As already discussed previously (see Sect. 1.2.1) this kind of trust refers to a sort of 'thin trust' in individuals we do not know or have not met before, or some sort of 'generalized other'. The ways in which scholars abiding to a culturalist perspective conceptualize the linkages between social trust and political confidence are various, but can be summarized in two general mechanisms: the first consists in an indirect effect of social trust on individual political confidence, the so-called 'rainmaker hypothesis'; the second, viceversa, consists in a direct effect at the individual-level of social trust on institutional confidence, that is the perspective of studies more related to the field of social-psychology.

The rainmaker hypothesis mechanism is an indirect, and to some extent contextual, one. The argument is, roughly summarizing, that social trust, informed by norms derived by enduring cultural traditions, bolsters individuals' associational life and networks within society. By doing so, social trust stimulates mutual obligations and reciprocity between individuals, and helps public institutions to perform better. As a consequence, social trust ends to spill over political confidence, affecting not only individuals involved in a vibrant associational life, but also other 'poorly connected' individuals not contributing to the production of social capital (see Putnam 1993: 90; Putnam *et al.* 2000: 26–27; see also, *inter alia*, Newton 2001; 2006; Newton and Norris 2000: 60-61). Thus, the relationship between social trust and political confidence should be empirically appreciated mostly at the aggregate-level of analysis (say, cross-national correlations) rather than individual-level analysis (cf. Zmerli *et al.* 2007: 37). Scholars that tend to consider social trust from a more socio-psychological perspective, depict this form of trust as an aspect of personality types, and banally put the relationship between this thin form of trust and political confidence at the psychological level. Because of their psychological make-up, some individuals are more inclined to cooperate with, help, and trust others, whereas others are more distrustful, cautious, pessimistic about social relationships. These basic psychological differences, then, are reflected on individuals confidence in institutions (Allport 1961; Cattell 1965; Rosenberg 1956. See also Gabriel 1995). Yet, these psychological differences are not a simple matter of genetic legacies, some these scholars claim, but are still, at least to some extent, cultural. This is the kind of 'moral trust' hypothesized for instance by Uslaner (2002), that conceptualizes trust as a matter of 'internalized' moral norms and beliefs during early socialization (Uslaner 2002: 17-20. See also Hardin 2000: 14, 174; Newton 2008: 249). As a consequence, social trust should be considered as a 'psycho-cultural' resource, that affects individuals' confidence in institutions essentially at the individual-level.

In sum, whether abiding to the social capital theory hypotheses or those outlined by the social-psychology literature, the theoretical expectations of cultural arguments is that social trust has a positive effect on individuals' confidence in institutions, and to some extent the two shall be considered as "different sides of the same coin" (Newton 1999: 179). Nonetheless, it should be noted that for a long period of time empirical evidence about the linkage between social trust and political confidence at the individual-level have been lacking (cf. Newton *et al* 2018: 44; Schnaudt 2019: 92; Zmerli *et al.* 2007: 37; see also, *inter alia*, Delhey and Newton 2003; Kaase 1999; Newton 1999; Newton and Norris 2000), and only (not particularly strong and straightforward) associations between social trust

and political confidence in the aggregated have been found (e.g. Delhey and Newton 2005; Newton 2001; Newton and Norris 2000; Rothstein and Stolle 2002). However, later research has found a robust connection between social trust and political confidence across Europe and the United States at the individual-level (see, *inter alia*, Denters *et al.* 2007; Freitag 2003; Glanville and Paxton 2007; Newton and Zmerli 2011; Rothstein and Stolle 2003; Zmerli and Newton 2008; Zmerli *et al.* 2007). These diversities in results have been mostly attributed to the introduction in some survey projects (e.g. the European Social Survey and the Citizen, Involvement, Democracy survey, and more recently the World Values Survey) of more refined measurements of both social trust and political confidence as compared to earlier operationalizations (cf. Citrin and Stoker 2018: 56; Newton *et al* 2018: 44; Schnaudt 2019: 92-93).

The second factor usually identified by culturalist approaches as an antecedent of political confidence are individual authority orientations. The analysis of individuals' orientations toward authority, in the private as well as public sphere, is one of the classic themes of culturalist studies (e.g. Eckstein 1966; Milgram 1974), and these orientations are key for both neo-modernists (e.g. Dalton and Welzel 2014b: 11; Nevitte 1996, 2014; Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 25-26) and cultural relativists (e.g. Huntington 1996: 238; Pye 1985; Shi 2015: 65-68), obviously with the former claiming that deference to authority (social and political) is declining because of the effects of socioeconomic modernization, and the latter claiming that traditional authority relations are persistent and can reproduce themselves also in modernized environments. The mechanism assumed in this case is essentially straightforward. Individuals internalize conceptions of social authority (e.g. conceptions of familiar hierarchy or hierarchies in other social domains such as school) in the early stages of their life. Since culturalist accounts contend that the link between deference to social authority (say, parents, or school teachers) and deference to political authority is seamless (e.g. Nevitte 1996, 2014; Shi 2015: 64-65), an argument that is often linked to Eckstein's theory of congruence (1966), then deference to social authority spills over deference to political authority, creating a sort of authoritarian syndrome. Given that the objects of individuals' deference are somehow overlapping with the objects in which individuals place their confidence, then individuals authority conceptions in turn spill over confidence in state institutions, with individuals having more authoritarian orientations and/or deference to the authority placing higher levels confidence in state institutions, and viceversa individuals characterized by a less deferential stance toward authority and/or more libertarian or reciprocal conceptions of authority placing lower levels of confidence in public institutions (see, *inter alia*, Dalton and Welzel 2014b; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Shi 2015: 16). What this socio-deterministic mechanism implies for empirical research, then, is that the association between authority orientations and political confidence should be gauged at both individual and aggregate levels of analysis. On this topic, research in East Asia, in which the discussion about the role of authority orientations represents a core issue of the debate between neo-modernist and cultural relativist perspectives, provides some evidence, as explained in the section of the next chapter dedicated to a review of the literature about political confidence research in this region (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.3).

In sum, culturalist explanations of political confidence, with the partial exception of Putnam's conception of social trust, are socio-deterministic arguments that conceive political confidence to a large extent a by-product of enduring attitudes or orientations, produced by socio-cultural factors affecting

individuals through early socialization processes, exogenous to the contingent institutional context in which individuals live at a given point in time (cf. Mishler and Rose 2001: 31)[11]. These conceptions, then, have a clear implication for our analyses of the relationship between democracy and political confidence. The latter, given its deep linkage with enduring and crucial orientations toward the society and political system assumed by culturalists as heavily affecting political systems stability or even existence (see, *inter alia*, Eckstein 1966; Inglehart 1988; Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 15-47; Welzel 2006; Welzel *et al.* 2003), should be considered as an attitude heavily affecting democratic viability. Yet, according to these theoretical perspectives, the former should not excert (almost) any effect on the latter. As a consequence, it appears improbable that these theories can offer arguments, or simply insights and cues about how democracy affects individual confidence in institutions.

1.3.3 Institutionalist Explanations: Political Confidence as Performance Evaluations

Institutional explanations of political confidence consist in theories that explain individual-level and, or aggregate-level variations of political confidence in terms of individuals' reactions to current or short-term contextual events or arrangements. In other words, political confidence is *endogenous* to the institutional context in which individuals' live (cf. Mishler and Rose 2001: 31-37; see also Torcal and Montero 2006; Rothstein and Stolle 2008). As a consequence, these arguments mostly consider individual confidence in institutions as an attitude affected by evaluations of institutional economic and political performance, as well as expectations about institutions performance or behavior determined by individual experiences. The most compelling, and arguably most studied, argument of institutional explanations concerning individuals' confidence in public institutions is the one related to the linkage between individual evaluations of and expectations about institutions *performance*. These institutional arguments clearly depict individual confidence in institutions as mostly an instrumental attitude, informed by the satisfaction perceived by individuals' in evaluating institutional outputs in light of their expectations about said outputs. The better the institutional performance the higher individuals' confidence in institutions.

There are two broad categories of institutional performance evaluations that are potentially determinant for individuals' confidence in institutions, namely those concerning *economic* performance and those concerning *political* performance. About the former, although state institutions are clearly not the sole responsible for the economic conditions of a country, state institutions, especially political ones (e.g. national governments or legislative bodies), do have a plethora of tools in order to influence (at least to some extent) economic growth, or fighting unemployment, control inflation. Then it is rather

[11]It must be underlined that the exogeneity of authority orientations and generalized social trust from institutions is far from being a shared and uncontested argument. With particular reference to the latter topic, more than few authors conceive social trust as *endogenous* to institutional settings. As Jackman and Miller put it, commenting on Coleman's (es. 1990) work on social capital, "the structure of the situation (i.e. the large long-term costs associated with a short-term breach of trust) creates incentives for individuals to be trustworthy" (1998: 53. See also Portes 1998). Following a somehow different tack, Freitag, Levi, Rothstein, Stolle, and others still endogenize social trust, but attaching more weight to the role of political institutions and processes, rather than voluntary associations and networks within society (see Freitang and Bühlmann 2009; Levi 1996; Rothstein and Stolle 2008. See also Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). By the same token, authority orientations, at least those concerning political institutions and authorities, rather than being a product of socio-cultural factors may be easily conceived as a product of the political system in which individuals' live (Mishler and Rose 1994; 2001; Shin 2015). For a full-scale critique to the argument that norms and values are exogenous to institutions see, *inter alia*, Jackman and Miller 2004.

straightforward to imagine that individuals' may place their confidence in institutions contingent on instrumental evaluations and expectations concerning the *performance* of public institutions. Indeed, previous research has invariably shown that individual expectations about and evaluations of economic performances, both individual-egocentric (see, *inter alia*, McAllister 1999: 199–200; Catterberg and Moren 2005: 44; Mishler and Rose 2001: 51-52; van der Meer 2010: 531; van der Meer and Dekker 2011: 105) and collective-sociotropic types (see, *inter alia*, Chang 2013: 85; Chang and Chu 2006: 266; Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62; Miller and Lishtaug 1999; Park 2017: 502; Wong *et al.* 2011: 271), are among the main drivers of individual confidence in institutions. Moreover, these studies have also shown that sociotropic attitudes (namely, those concerning the status of *national* economy) fare better as compared to egocentric ones (those concerning individuals *own* economic conditions), a result line with studies of economic voting (e.g. Duch and Stevenson 2008; Lewis-Beck 1988). However, not only economic performance but also *political* or *institutional performance* may explain individuals' confidence in institutions. As many studies concerning individual-level variations of political studies have proven, several aspects concerning how state institutions behave are considered important drivers of individual confidence in state institutions. The underlying argument is that as the provision of services, or the effectiveness of institutions in fighting crime and corruption, or the protection of civil rights increases then political confidence increases (see, *inter alia*, Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Chang 2013; Chang and Chu 2006; Catterberg and Moreno 2005; Denters *et al.* 2007; van der Meer and Dekker 2011; Wong *et al.* 2011).

Moreover, in addition to instrumental evaluations of the *output* of institutions and authorities' actions, a somewhat distinct institutional strand of research has also shown that how individuals perceive institutional procedural fairness or distributive justice (see Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 2002; Miller and Lishtaug 1999; Rohrschneider 2005; Tyler 2004; 2006) are crucial factors affecting individuals' expectations about and evaluations of institutions. What these studies show, in other words, is that how individuals' evaluate the *process* leading to specific outputs, and not only considerations about whether or not they will directly or indirectly benefit from these outputs, is crucial for individuals' confidence in public institutions.

In short, all these institutional arguments are essentially based on the following logic: (1) Institutions, at a given point in time, do perform in a certain manner on a certain issue, producing a specific output; (2) Individuals, on the basis of prior expectations, evaluate said institutional processes and/or outputs; (3) Individuals, then, perceive satisfaction or dissatisfaction; (4) Individuals' satisfaction or dissatisfaction, then, inform individuals attitudes toward public institutions, namely their confidence in institutions and authorities. This attitudinal model represent a standard model mostly developed in social-psychology and applied to studies of costumer satisfaction in public administration research (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 118; see Morgeson and Petrescu 2011; van Ryzin 2007), and brings us to an important point of institutional explanations of political confidence, that is that what mostly matters for individuals' confidence in institutions are their *perceptions* of institutional behavior or qualities, rather than the *actual* behavior of public institutions and authorities. Indeed, while it is plausible that macroeconomic performance affect political confidence, it is not straightforward how these should actually affect individual confidence in institutions. It is not clear *which* aspects of the economy may influence individuals' expectations and evaluations, if individuals have enough information to make ac-

curate judgments, which is the benchmark of which they base their evaluations (cf. van Erkel and van der Meer 2016: 179-180). Despite substantial variation in the results and indicators, however, studies have show that, first, individuals evaluations are often connected to indicators related to inflation, unemployment, the budget deficit and gross domestic product, second that citizens' perceptions of these trends indicators are often well-formed (Christensen *et al.* 2006; Duch and Stevenson 2008), and third that what matters in their judgement are longitudinal trends, rather than cross-national comparisons (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Dolan *et al.* 2009; van Erkel and van der Meer 2016). Nonetheless, with studies relying on aggregate level analyses mostly provide evidence of a significant effect of macroeconomic factors on average levels of political confidence (e.g. Anderson 2009; Mishler & Rose 2001; however see also McAllister 1999 who finds an inverse effect), other relying on more refined (multilevel) approaches provide mixed findings, with some studies showing no effects or only weak ones (e.g. Oskarsson 2010; Van der Meer 2010; van der Meer and Hakhverdian 2017) and others (e.g. Kotzian 2011; Taylor 2000; van Erkel and van der Meer 2016). However, from a theoretical point of view, and according to an institutional logic, not only macroeconomic factors, but also other contextual factors may affect individual confidence in institutions. And indeed, studies addressing the extent to which macro-level indicators concerning the quality of governance (Rothstein and Teorell 2008) affect political trust, have indeed found that individuals' living in countries characterized by institutions abiding to the rule of law, respecting human rights, granting electoral integrity, and mostly free from corruption do show higher levels of political confidence as compared to individuals living in countries faring worst on these topics (see Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Dahlberg and Holmberg 2014; Della Porta 2000; Norris 2011; van der Meer and Hakhverdian 2017).

In sum, what the institutional theories assessed so far claim is that the *output-side* and the *process* of the political system matter in determining individual political confidence. Individual expectations and evaluations about these factors are essential determinants of individuals' confidence in institutions but mostly when evaluated at the individual-level, namely when considering individual *perceptions* of said macroeconomic factors, or other institutional performance. Returning to the overarching question of these chapter, then, we could ask ourselves: what these theories tell us about the relationship between political confidence and democracy? What it is claimed here is that these theories give us a plethora of arguments and evidence to understand political confidence variation *across* democratic countries, but very few, if any, arguments to disentangle the extent to which a democratic system affects, overall, political confidence. Essentially, what these theories tell us, is that democratic political systems which perform better both economically and, generally speaking, politically, thus granting to individuals economic well-being, a secure environment, a fair and efficient public administration, and so forth, are likely to bolster their citizens' confidence in political institutions. However, are these arguments allowing us to say that the very existence of a democratic systems affects positively or negatively individuals' confidence in institutions? They are not, unless considering economic and political performances as *products of a democratic environment*. However, this would be a quite bold claim. Studies investigating this issue have already consistently shown that economic performance is not a prerogative of a democratic setting (see Kurzman *et al.* 2002; Przeworski and Limongi 1993), or to put it more straightly that democracy *does not* affect economic performance. East Asia has offered (e.g. the so-called 'Four Little Tigers' during the second half of the Twentieth century) and still offers (e.g. China)

compelling examples of non-democratic regimes achieving impressive economic results, and democratic countries (e.g. Japan) that have been struggling for decades on this issue. Thus, what it is possible to claim without risking of being contested, is that the existence of a democratic political process does not affect economic performance, and as a consequence arguments linking economic performance to political confidence tell us very little about whether or not democracy affects individuals' confidence in institutions. When turning to political performance, one may argue that these arguments provide some elements to claim that democracy affects individuals' confidence in institutions. Yet, this again would be possible *if* we assume that the quality of government is a prerogative of democratic political systems, or at least that it is influenced by the existence of a democratic process. Nonetheless, can we claim so? Democratic settings vary a lot in terms of quality of government, in terms of process fairness, impartiality, anti-corruption efforts and so forth. As Rothstein and Teorell clearly state:

> There is no straightforward relationship between democracy in the access to public power and impartiality in the exercise of public power. [...] Empirical research indicates that some democratization may at times be worse for impartiality than none. For example, some of the worst cases of corruption have appeared in newly democratized countries, such as Peru under its former president Fujimori [...]. Conversely, some undemocratic countries have shown impressive results in curbing corruption and establishing fairly impartial bureaucracies, prime examples being Hong Kong and Singapore [...]. (2008: 179)

In sum, what previous research about the relationship between institutional performance and political confidence tell us is that these factors are essential determinants of individuals' confidence in institutions, and that these factors are likely to explain variations *within and between political systems*. Nonetheless, these explanations refer to attributes of political systems that are not confined to democratic countries, as previous evidence shows (e.g. Root 1996. See also Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.2). As a consequence, if by democracy we refer to "an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter [1942] 2005: 269. see also Przeworski 1999), then explanations of political confidence based on institutional performance *cannot* be interpreted as theoretical arguments about the relationship between democracy and individuals' confidence in institutions.

1.3.4 Institutionalist Explanations: The Democratic Process and Political Confidence

Although representing the majority of the studies abiding to an institutionalist approach, analyses dedicated to the impact of institutional features on political confidence are not confined to arguments related to the impact of political systems' *outputs* on individuals' confidence in institutions. A relatively growing, but still minoritarian, strand of such studies has indeed taken a different tact have investigated how *features of the input-side of the political system* affect individual confidence in institutions.

A first group of studies consists in those based on the so-called 'winner effect' (Anderson and LoTempio 2002: 336) or 'winner–loser gap' (Anderson *et al.* 2005: 11), namely the idea that "although democracy

strives for equality in opportunity to participate in electoral contests, it also is unavoidably unequal in the outcomes it produces" and that the "experience of winning and losing and becoming part of the majority and minority leads people to adopt a lens through which they view political life" (Anderson *et al.* 2005: 3). As a consequence, what it is assumed is that democratic politics necessarily generates ambivalent attitudes towards authorities for the losers and positive attitudes on the part of the winners (cf. Anderson and LoTempio 2002: 336), and thus that the experience of being part of the minority or majority is likely to affect individuals' confidence in institutions, as well as other attitudes toward the political system (e.g. Anderson and Guillory 1997; Anderson *et al.* 2005; Curini *et al.* 2012). Previous research has invariably confirmed this argument providing evidence that, indeed, political confidence, especially for political instutions such as governments and national assemblies, is remarkably lower for those that have voted for losing parties or candidates as compared to those citizens' supporting with their ballots winning parties or candidates (see Listhaug 1995; Norris 1999c; Anderson and LoTempio 2002; Anderson and Tverdova 2001, 2003; Huang *et al.* 2013).

A second group of studies looking at the effects of the input-side of the political process on individuals' confidence in institutions consists in studies investigating how *meso-level* characteristics of the political system regulating political competition affect individual political confidence. The argument behind these studies is that the way in which institutional features regulate the translation of ballots in electoral outcomes (e.g. the way in which electoral systems determine a more or less proportional allocation of seats for a political assembly) or other political arrangements (e.g. the impact of electoral rules or other institutional features on government compositions) may excert an impact on how individuals' perceive the political domain, directly or moderating the winners-losers effect discussed few lines above. Nonetheless, several and contrasting arguments have been provided to hypothesize such direct or moderating effects. For instance, some studies have argued that proportional systems, being more inclusive with political minorities and producing less disproportional allocation of eats, may boost political trust. Others, however, have claimed that also the contrary holds true, because majoritarian systems may actually produce single-party or at least small-coalition governments, thus enhancing voters' possibility to held political actors accountable and 'vote the rascals out' from state institutions. Still others, have claimed that both claims may be right, and that mixed systems represent the more detrimental electoral arrangements for political trust. Findings have supported almost all the arguments presented above (see Anderson *et al.* 2005; Marien 2011; Norris 1999d; van der Meer 2017; see also Anderson and Guillory 1997). In sum, different arguments and findings do support the idea that institutional features of a democratic political system do excert an effect on individuals' confidence in institutions.

A third, tiny group of studies, finally, has directly investigated the impact of *macro-level* characteristics of the political system, related to the input-side of the political process, on individuals' confidence in institutions, and this group clearly represents the best environment in which one may hope to find answers to the question of whether or not democratic politics affects individual confidence in institutions. Arguably, among these studies, the most renowned consists in the one provided by Norris (1999c), already mentioned in previous passages when discussing arguments and analyses related to the winner-loser gap and the extent to which meso-level characteristic of democratic political systems may account for different levels of political confidence. This study provides evidence that the level

of democratization of a country, namely the extent to which a political system provides guarantees for civil liberties and political rights for its citizens, *does affect* individual confidence institutions, and according to this study the effect of an increasing level of democratization is a *positive* one. As a consequence, according to these results, we may assume that democratic politics *positively* affects individuals' confidence in institutions. However, such assumption would be rather questionable, at this stage of our discussion. First, the author does not provide a clear rationale concerning these regularities. In other words, it is not clear *why* democratic politics should bolster individuals' confidence in institutions[12]. However, despite the lack of clear arguments, there is a more compelling reason to avoid to rely on such argument, that is related to the *frame of analysis* that is adopted in this study. Indeed, the most striking feature of this work is that evidence about a positive relationship between democratization and political confidence is built upon results of analyses *solely dedicated democratic countries*. As a consequence, one may ask: Is this the proper framework of analysis of such issue? Can we, in other words, assess the extent to which democratic politics affects individuals' confidence in institutions only considering democratic countries as our framework of analysis? The are several reasons to do not believe so, starting from additional evidence that is possible to find in the literature. Indeed, studies moving beyond such frame, thus comparing average levels of political confidence *among countries characterized by varying levels of democracy*, return a picture totally different from the one provided by Norris.

Analysing cross-national variations of average levels of political confidence in East Asia, a region characterized by a striking variability in terms of regime types (see Ch.2, Sect. xxx), several studies (see Park 2017: 490-497; Shin 2012: 196-197 Tang *et al.* 2016; Wang *et al.* 2006: 141-144; Wang 2013: 2-5; Yang and Tang 2010) have invariabily shown that individuals living in regimes characterized by lower levels of democracy, especially those living in some of the most oppressive autocracies of the last decades, are characterized on the average by *higher* levels of confidence in their own political institutions as compared to citizens living in more democratic political systems. For instance, comparing aggregate levels of confidence in national governments, parliaments, political parties, civil services, and armed forces among the nations of the Pacific Rim, Wang and colleagues have found that in 2001 more than 90% of the WVS Chinese respondents declared to have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot of confidence' in their national government, the National People's Congress, and the Chinese Communist Party (on the Chinese case see also Tang *et al.* 2016; Wang 2005; Yang and Tang 2010. For a counterview, see Li 2016). Striking numbers, followed by similar although lower percentages in other two non-democratic countries such as Vietnam and Singapore, and in stark contrast with those of young flawed democracies of the Philippines and Indonesia, and especially with those of East Asian fully-fledged democracies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, in which less than half of the respondents expressed confidence in their national political institutions (see Wang *et al.* 2006: 141-144; see also Wang 2005: 150-151). Analysing the third round of the ABS data (2010-2011), Wang confirmed these findings, showing that, approximately during the first two decades of the 21st century, institutions in undemocratic countries

[12]We may assume that the author, in hypothesizing such positive effect, may have been relying on a socio-determinist explanation (note that Norris is indeed among the proponents of the so-called 'critical citizens' argument. See Sect. 1.3.2), according to which since socioeconomic modernization has bolstered individuals demands for democracy *then* higher levels of democratization may meet these increasing demands, thus producing a beneficial effect for individuals' confidence in institutions. Yet, the author does not provide such argument, or alternative ones, and thus this hypothetical argument will be left in the realm of speculations.

invariably enjoyed higher levels of political confidence contrasted to those of democratic regimes (Wang 2013: 2-5). More recently, this pattern has been confirmed also by Park's comparison of the first three rounds of the ABS and four waves of the WVS (Park 2017: 490-497).

Clearly these patterns have generated several speculations by these authors, that in some cases have provided arguments that might be interpreted as statements about the relationship between varying levels of democracy and individuals' confidence in institutions. Shin, commenting on aforementioned differences across East Asian political systems, claims that "democracy, unlike its alternatives, allows citizens to become critical of their government officials when those officials fail to meet their preferences. [...] In contrast, citizens of authoritarian regimes are not allowed to access critical information about the misconduct of their government officials; nor are they allowed to criticize misbehaving officials. Consequently, they are expected to remain more trusting than critical of their governmental leaders." (Shin 2012: 196-197). Thus, according to Shin, the key factor determining differences in political confidence levels between democratic and undemocratic countries, are related to *differences in accessing alternative sources of information about political institutions and authorities* between individuals' living in different political systems.

Wang, still commenting on other evidence concerning cross-national differences of average levels of political confidence in East Asia, contends that to understand such differences one should focus on two alternative factors. First, changes in mass-publics orientations toward the political system determined by socioeconomic modernization as posited by culturalist explanations of political confidence, or, second, the role played by elections in democracies (cf. Wang 2013: 8-9). Clearly, while the first argument, as already explained (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.2), can hardly be used to articulate an hypothesis about how institutional arrangements affect political confidence, the second is in line with such aim. About this perspective, Wang contends that, (a) "electoral politics serves to bring political institutions closer to individual citizens, and demystify government power and government institutions", (b) "elections, especially elections in newly democratized societies, tend to be plagued by their low quality, resulting in citizens' disliking political parties and elected politicians and offices", (c) "in democracies when governance quality is in question [...] citizens are prone to directing their discontent and discontents to the political parties and elected politicians or offices [...] In non-democracies, by contrast, the national institutions and leaders are insulated from direct public assessment through elections." (cf. Wang 2013: 8). Among these three arguments, the second one (b) appears to be the lesser convincing and consistent. It is absolutely reasonable to hypothesize that differences concerning the 'quality' of elections (say, their fairness) might affect individuals' confidence in state institutions. Yet, describing the *low quality* of elections as a *defining feature* of electoral politics appears, at best, debatable. The other two statements proposed by the author appear somewhat more compelling, but can be essentially pooled together, since the argument presented in these two statements are to some extent complementary. Indeed what these statements suggest is that electoral politics brings institutions and authorities *closer to* citizens. As a consequence, electoral politics allows individuals' to formulate judgements about institutions and authorities *trustworthiness*. On the contrary, lower degrees of electoral competition (or, in extreme conditions, their total absence) insulate national institutions and authorities from individuals' assessments. Thus, following Wang's logic, individuals' in autocratic countries cannot access crucial information to proper judge institutions and authorities, and thus they are somehow compelled to have

confidence in their own institutions. In short, these two arguments (a and c) seem to hinge on the idea that the varying levels of electoral politics are related to variations in individuals' possibility to access *crucial information on which build expectations and evaluations about institutions*. Thus, Wang and Shin's arguments appear, at least to some extent, overlapping.

These arguments appear reasonable, and highlight institutional factors that may indeed explain differences in political confidence across different political settings. However, what it can be argued is that they lack a formulation of *why* increasing information about public institutions should lead individuals to have a lower level of political confidence as compared to individuals' living in non-democratic countries. Moreover, it is just a matter of information? Or there may be additional characteristics of democratic politics that create incentives for individuals' to lose their confidence in public institutions? In sum, the sole studies that have stepped out from the usual framework of analysis of political confidence and that have been looking at variations across political systems characterized by relevant diversities in levels of democracy, on the one hand do not offer very compelling evidence since relying on descriptive statistics without exploring whether or not these aggregate regularities do indeed hold once accounting for other factors, and on the other hand do not provide very refined arguments about why varying levels of democracy should affect individuals' confidence in institutions. Yet, they allow to argue the following: *that our understanding of the relationship between democratic politics and political confidence might be contingent on the contexts in which this relationship has been mostly speculated, discussed and empirically analysed*. As a consequence, what is needed is, first, a clearer specification of the properties and mechanisms, related to varying levels of democracy, that might affect individuals' confidence in institutions and, second, a research design able to step out from the most diffuse analytical framework used to discuss and investigate the relationship between democracy and political confidence, topics that are going to be developed in the following chapter of this dissertation (Ch. 2) and that are further discussed in the following section of the current one.

1.4 Conclusions: The Missing Argument

The discussion presented in this first chapter aimed to clarify some theoretical and conceptual issues about the notion and the theories explaining individuals' confidence in public institutions. Individual political confidence, it has been argued, consists in a relationship very different from relationships between individuals, and it represents a mixed form of political support, oriented toward institutions and authorities concerned with the authoritative allocation of values in a society, informed by expectations about and evaluations of institutions and authorities legitimacy and effectiveness (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 37). As stated at the outset of this chapter, the large majority of the studies addressing the relationship between democracy and political confidence consider this form of political support as decisive for the viability of democratic systems. Yet, what we know about the influence of democracy on political confidence? In order to proper discuss this issue, two broad families of explanations of the origins of political confidence, the culturalist and the institutionalist one, have been reviewed in their fundamental assumptions and main arguments.

After presenting the main culturalist theories and arguments about the origins of political confidence, what it has been argued is that said arguments are of little use to investigate whether or not, and per-

haps to what extent different levels of democracy affects individuals' political confidence. Culturalist arguments are, by definition, socio-deterministic arguments. What these theories imply is that individuals' attitudes and behavior are mostly informed by deep-seated, long-lasting, general orientations fixed in early stages of individuals life. Consequently, the impact of institutional characteristics on individuals' attitudes and behavior is of secondary importance. What comes from this understanding, then, is that searching for hints and insights from these arguments about the way in which democracy might affect individuals' confidence in institutions is, by a large extent, an hopeless enterprise.

On the contrary, institutionalist arguments, given their very basic assumption about the impact of institutions on individuals' attitudes and behavior, have been considered at the outset the family of approaches in which arguments about the influence of democracy on political confidence might be found. However, what institutionalist theories return about this topic is anything but straightforward. Two typologies of institutionalist arguments have been analysed, namely (a) perspectives concerning the impact of institutional performance on individuals' confidence in institutions, and (b) arguments about the effect of political competition and the institutions regulating it on individual institutional confidence. What it has been contended it has while the first typology of arguments hardly qualifies for being the likely place in which we may disentangle our puzzle, the second represents the best candidate to offer valuable hints to hypothesize whether or not democracy affects individual confidence in institutions.

About the first set of institutionalist arguments, namely those that focus on how the *output-side* of the political system affects confidence in public institutions (see Sect. 1.3.3), what it has been argued is that although economic performance and political performance appear to be crucial factors affecting said attitudes, their effect can be hardly conceived as an indication of whether or not different levels of democracy affect individual confidence. For considering the impact of these factors as evidence about the relationship between democracy and political confidence it should be assumed that quality of government and government effectiveness in providing economic well-being are strongly related to different levels of democracy. What it has been contended, however, is that such assumption is rather difficult to be defended. Indeed, as previous research and discussions show, there is huge variations across democratic settings in terms of capacity to produce valued social outcomes, whether looking at economic ones (see Kurzman *et al.* 2002; Przeworski and Limongi 1993) or political ones (see Rothstein and Teorell 2008: 178-180). In other terms, high economic and political performance are by no means prerogatives of a democratic political settings, hence evidence about the impact of these factors on individual political confidence tell us little or almost nothing about the impact of democracy on individual confidence in institutions.

What it has been explicitly and implicitly argued, then, is that to assess whether and how democracy affects individuals' confidence in institutions we should look at institutional explanations that focus on the relationship between the *input-side* of political systems and political confidence, and thus works about this relationship have been discussed (see Sect. 1.3.4). However, these works offer only a limited answer to the overarching question of this chapter and of this dissertation in general.

Literature concerning different levels of confidence between electoral winners and losers, and studies about the direct or moderating effect of institutional rules leading to electoral outcomes (e.g. electoral rules), have provided relatively strong evidence that these aspects of a democratic political environment

do determine different levels of political confidence within and between democratic political systems. However, what it has been contended while discussing these arguments and related studies, is that these works and the evidence they provide essentially explain effects of democratic politics *in and across democratic settings*, but in doing so they actually do not provide answers on how democracy affects individual confidence in institutions, or in other words whether and how *different levels of democracy* do excert an impact on political confidence.

As a consequence, a third, very limited, strand of literature, directly investigating the extent to which different levels of democratization affect individual confidence in institutions has been considered. Yet, what this set of studies and argument returns is an intriguing but shaky picture. According to a renowned comparative study of political support (Norris 1999c) individuals' confidence in institutions appears to be affected, and more specifically *positively* affected, by different levels of democratization. Nonetheless, this evidence has been considered anything but compelling given the fact that this finding has been produced considering *only democratic countries*. When turning to studies going beyond this frame of analysis evidence about different levels of political confidence *across regime types* have been found, but almost relatively scarce arguments, and even less compelling empirical analyses, have been developed in order to explain and investigate whether or not these differences are attributable to different levels of democracy. Indeed, studies analysing cross-national differences of aggregate levels of political confidence in East Asia have invariably shown that political confidence in countries characterized by lower democratic standards is *higher* than those seen in more democratic political systems, and when providing arguments concerning the potential impact of varying levels of democracy on individuals' confidence in institutions have mostly identified in different levels of freedom of expression and access to information the potential causes of varying levels of political confidence. However, what it has been argued is that, first, these studies lack articulated arguments about why varying levels of democracy, or varying levels of properties related to democracy, should be considered as determinants of individuals' political confidence, and, second, they do not provide compelling empirical evidence, since relying on descriptive statistics without exploring whether or not aggregate variations of political confidence can be actually related to variations of said institutional properties once accounting for other factors. In sum, existing theoretical discussions and empirical evidence do not provide, to date, any straightforward and clear-cut answer about how *different levels of democracy* might affect individuals' confidence in institutions, and this lack of answers has been mostly attributed to the fact that our knowledge of the relationship between democratic politics and political confidence is, by a large extent, *conditional on the geopolitical contexts in which it has been mostly studied*. Hence, what it is needed is, first, a clear specification of which dimensions or properties of a political system might be interpreted as varying levels of democracy, second, why and how variations along these dimensions or properties might affect individuals' confidence in institutions, and finally a research strategy that steps out from the usual yard of normative debates and empirical studies about political confidence.

This step, however, brings in opportunities but also relevant and substantive challenges and issues, which deserve a thorough discussion. In particular, the comparison of attitudes gathered in political contexts characterized by such relevant differences in the opportunities offered to citizens to formulate and signify their preferences, related to differences in the level of political repression enhanced by the political systems that are compared, raises non-trivial issues about the validity of the analyses that are

proposed. In particular, as the levels of political repression grow, inevitably the odds that individuals might not express their true attitudes grows as well. Thus, these issues are extensively discussed in the following pages (see Ch.2, es. Sect. 2.3.2) and then analysed (es. Ch.3). Nonetheless, what is contended is that said challenges come along with great opportunities to investigate the fundamental relationship between democracy and political confidence, that is the topic of the following chapter of this thesis.

2 Expectations, Context, and Research Strategy

2.1 Introduction

The first chapter ends with the following claim: our understanding of the relationship between democracy and political confidence has been mostly informed by discussions and analyses developed considering democratic environments. As a consequence, our knowledge about the relationship between political confidence and democracy might be considered contingent of the on theoretical arguments and empirical evidence developed looking at said relationship in democratic settings, and this fact leaves substantially open the question about whether or not and to what extent individuals' confidence in institutions is actually affected by variations in levels of democracy.

What it has been contended, then, is that *if* what has to be investigated is the impact of different levels of democracy on individuals' confidence in institutions *then* we need to clearly identify the institutional features of a political system whose variations can be considered variations in levels of democracy and specify why and how said variations might affect individual political confidence. The first section of this chapter (Sect. 2.2) aims to clarify these two topics.

What it has been furthermore argued is that in order to properly investigate such topic it is needed to move beyond the usual frame in which political confidence has been analysed, namely across democratic settings. For this reason this study focuses on a specific geopolitical context of our globe, namely East Asia, a region characterized by high variability on institutional features interpretable as variations of levels of democracy, as well as a high heterogeneity on other structural features related to existing explanation of political confidence, as depicted in the previous chapter (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3). Thus, in the following section of this chapter (Sect. 2.3) the existing evidence concerning political confidence in the East Asian region is critically reassessed, and then, building on this review and other issues outlined previously, the section deals with the opportunities and challenges that these region poses for the assessment of whether and how political confidence is affected by varying levels of democracy. The chapter then concludes presenting the research strategy developed in order to investigate this issue (Sect. 2.4).

2.2 The Impact of Democracy on Political Confidence: Conceptualization and Expectations

The discussion presented so far has clearly highlighted that whether and how different levels of democracy affect individuals' confidence in institutions represents a topic that has been seldom addressed. Mostly, previous theoretical discussions and empirical research have focused on how the latter might affect the former. When reversing the perspective, previous studies have mostly addressed how other institutional dimensions or aggregate-level factors affect individual political confidence. When the impact of democratic politics or defining dimensions of a democratic political system have been investigated, this has been mostly done looking at individual-level variations of confidence in institutions within or across systems characterized by high democratic standards. In those few cases in which variations in levels of democracy have been related to variations of individual political confidence, pre-

vious studies have done it seldom clarifying which dimensions related to varying levels of democracy and which mechanisms affected by variations on said dimensions might affect individuals' confidence in institutions. Consequently, this section is dedicated to, first, the identification of which dimensions of a political system are to be investigated in order to find answers to the overarching question of this thesis and, second, the formulation of general expectations about the relationship between the selected dimensions and individuals' confidence in institutions.

Thus, the next pages (Sect. 2.2.1) first clarify which is *the notion of democracy* adopted in this study, that consists in Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) notion of *polyarchy* and the theoretical and analytical framework that has been produced around this notion (e.g. Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Coppedge *et al.* 2008; Teorell *et al.* 2019). The section then continues (Sect. 2.2.2) with an explanation of why varying levels of democracy are interpreted as *variations of levels of public contestation*, one of the two dimensions informing the notion of democracy used in this work. The following pages are then dedicated to a discussion about why and how variations of institutional features and dimensions identified by the notion of democracy used in this thesis can be related to varying levels of individuals' confidence in institutions (Sect. 2.2.3). What it is contended is that variations of these attributes *shape the structure of incentives and constraints affecting individuals assessments of institutions and authorities trustworthiness*, and that higher degrees of public contestation are likely to produce both *positive* and *negative* incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions. The section then concludes with a summary of the discussion, paving the way for the following one, dedicated to the presentation of the geopolitical context of this work, and the resources and gaps of the literature about the phenomenon under investigation as studied in this specific context (see Sect. 2.3).

2.2.1 Democracy as an Attribute of a Political System: A Minimalist Conception

In this study the term 'democracy' does not refer to a political system in its entirety, but rather refers to a *property* of a political system. As already mentioned several times in previous pages, the overarching question of this research effort is whether and how different *levels* of democracy affect individuals' confidence in institutions. As a consequence, *if* what has to be investigated is the impact of variations of democracy on individuals' confidence in institutions *then* democracy cannot be conceptualized as a political system *per se*, but rather as an attribute of *any* political system. Another implication of this conceptualization, then, is that democracy should be conceived as *a continouos* property, or at minimum a matter of degree, but not as a dichotomous property. The discussion about whether democracy should be conceived as *an object* or as *a property*, and thus measured in *dichotomous* or *continuous* terms, is an heated one, that has been already extensively discussed (for an overview see Collier and Adcock 1999). Some authors claim that political systems can be broken down in specific dimensions, and that some of these dimensions refer to the extent to which a political system can be considered more or less democratic. As a consequence, democracy is treated as a *property*, and thus in continuous terms. Such perspective is succintly summarized by Bollen and Jackman's claim that "democracy is always a matter of degree" (1989: 618), a perspective rather diffused among political science scholars, especially those dedicated to the quantitative study of political system and political phenomena in general (see, *inter alia*, Coppedge and Reinicke 1990; Coppedge *et al.* 2008; Hadenius

and Teorell 2005; Teorell *et al.* 2019). Other scholars, however, claim that regimes should be conceived as "bounded whole[s]" (Sartori 1987: 184), thus as *objects* whose properties are interdependent, and that cannot be broken into dimensions that vary independently. As a consequence, according to this perspective, discussing about varying levels of democracy, or claiming that some political systems are more or less democratic than others does not make much sense, and actually may be rather misleading. Such perspective is succintly summarized by Alvarez and colleagues claim that countries "cannot be half-democratic" (Alvarez *et al.* 1996: 21; see also, *inter alia*, Geddes 1999; Linz [1975] 2000: 184-185; Sartori 1987: 182-185; Przeworski and Limongi 1997).

After more than two decades of debate, what seems relatively clear is that "any effort to choose between these two strategies by reference to the 'inherent' or 'essential' nature of democracy appears to be a dead end" (Hadenius and Teorell 2005: 91). In common parlance, we often refer to political systems as 'democracies', thus democracy as an object, but at the same time we often discuss about the extent to which a specific political system is democratic, hence considering democracy as a property of a political system. Abiding to a perspective or the other is largely dependent on the specific research questions of a study, that in turn is related to the *analytical perspective* chosen by a scholar in order to investigate a specific topic or issue. As the discussion presented in the previous chapter (es. Sect. 1.3) and the overarching question of this study suggest, this study abides to an approach to comparative analyses that substitutes "names of variables for the names of social systems" (Przeworski and Teune [1970] 1982: 8). As a consequence, what it is assumed is that social and, more specifically, political systems can be broken in dimensions or institutional properties and that comparisons are to be realised according to the selected properties or dimensions. Abiding to this analytical perspective does not imply a straightforward choice between a dichotomous approach and a continuous or graded approach for the conceptualization and investigation of a given institutional property or dimension. Yet, in this study it is shared Dahl's (1989: 316), Hadenius and Teorell's (2005: 91), and others (e.g. Bollen and Jackman 1989) claim that *if* the democracy *can* be treated as a property, *then* a dichotomous conceptualization would produce a blatant loss of information, that derives by the plain fact that countries below threshold for full democracy are of extraordinary variety.

Once clarified the fundamental approach to the study of political systems adopted in this study, and thus clarified the assumption that democracy *can* be treated as a property of a political system that refers to specific institutional features of a political system, then what needs to be specified is which institutional features are going to be considered as indicators of varying levels of democracy, that is a further specification of the conception of democracy that is adopted in this study.

To identify aforementioned institutional features this study relies on Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) notion of *polyarchy*, namely a political systems substantially popularized and liberalized (cf. Dahl 1971: 8. See also Dahl 1998: 84-99), based on six[13] institutional guarantees (Dahl 1998: 85-86): elected officials;

[13]In Dahl's (1971) earlier work the institutional guarantees on which each political system can be compared were eight: freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to vote, broad eligibility for public office, the right to compete for support and votes, the availability of alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, and the dependence of public policies on citizens' preferences (cf. Dahl 1971: 3. See also Coppedge *et al.* 2008). In more recent formulations, Dahl reduced these guarantees to seven (Dahl 1989), and then the six listed above. What changes between the most recent version (Dahl 1998: 85-86) and the original (Dahl 1971: 1-16) is that the guarantee of 'broad eligibility for public office' disappears because substantially captured by the guarantee concerning suffrage, and the 'the dependence of public policies on citizens' preferences' guarantee also disappears because representing a summary of the others (cf. Teorell *et al.* 2019: 75). Despite these changes, however, Dahl's theory has remained substantially unchanged in its fundamental

free, fair, and frequent elections; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; inclusive citizenship. Hence, in this study a specific *minimalist* conception of democracy is adopted, and this choice is grounded on both theoretical arguments and other arguments related to the specific aims of this study.

The first reason why a minimalist conception is adopted is because said conceptions represent a rather solid theoretical and conceptual anchorage. As Hadenius and Teorell (2005: 89) put it "while there is today a fairly broad consensus on the basic criteria of democracy, there is considerable confusion and disagreement, involving deep normative divisions, about the specification of democracy's qualitative criteria". In other words, minimalist conceptions have the advantage as compared to '*maximalist*' or '*strong*' conceptions of democracy, such as Barber's (1984) notion of participatory democracy or Elster's (1998) notion of deliberative democracy, to identify the *basic* features that characterize variations in levels of democracy across political systems, as identified by the vast majority of democracy students (cf. Hadenius and Teorell 2005: 88-89; Teorell *et al.* 2019: 75-76; see also Pennock 1979; Sartori 1987).

The second reason why a minimalist conception is adopted is that this perspective *allows to rule out endogeneity* about the relationship between political confidence and public contestation. Indeed, if we leave out from the discussion earlier speculations equating political confidence with diffuse support and its supposed dramatic impacts on democratic stability, most of the studies that speculate or address empirically the impact of political confidence on democracy do actually address this relationship essentially looking at the impact of the former on important aspects related to the *quality* of democratic systems or aspects such as institutional effectiveness (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 1-9) rather their essential characteristics, as summarized by the minimalist conception discussed few lines above. Moreover, even adopting a more deterministic view on the effects of political confidence on democratic viability and stability (claims suffering a substantial lack of empirical evidence) such supposed effects on the key properties of a democratic system should be gauged in the long-term, rather than in the short-term. In other words, it appears rather difficult to defend the claim that variations of political confidence might produce few years later variations of the basic institutional guarantees of a political system, such as the right to vote or freedom of expression. Thus, adopting a minimalist conception of democracy in a study that mostly focuses on cross-national variations in a relatively short historical period, rules out at the outset almost any risk of endogeneity between the dependent variable of this study (political confidence) and its main independent variable (democracy).

The reason why *this specific* minimalist conception is adopted is because Dahl's (1971, 1998) conceptualization is considered grounded on more compelling arguments as compared to the available alternatives, in particular Schumpeter's conceptualization ([1942] 2005). Indeed, minimalist definitions of democracy (including Dahl's ones) are often equated with the renowned Schumpeterian definition of democracy as "an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter [1942] 2005: 269). This conceptualization, however, may be arguably considered *too much minimalist*. Indeed several authors have noticed that said conception, that excludes from the basic features of the systemic property labeled 'democracy' guarantees such as freedom of expression, or the availability of alternative sources of information, but also an explicit reference to the extension of suffrage (cf. Teorell

features.

et al. 2019: 75) may be a biased notion of democracy. As Sartori (1987: 86) rightly claims, voting has a prevoting background, thus "while we must not downgrade the importance of elections, we cannot isolate the electoral event from the whole circuit of the opinion-forming process". Diamond (2002: 21) even more explicitly contends that an electoral (read 'minimalist') conception of democracy "requires not only free, fair, and competitive elections, but also the freedoms that make them truly meaningful". Thus, exploiting Teorell and colleagues' (2019: 75) words, what is argued is that even election-centered (minimalist) notions of democracy "need to take into account these non-electoral aspects".
In sum, the discussion presented in the last few pages aimed to clarify the notion of democracy adopted in this study, and thus the meaning of the overarching question of this dissertation, namely whether and how variations in levels of democracy affect individuals' confidence in institutions. In this thesis democracy is intended, first, as *a property of a political system* and, second, in a *minimalist* fashion that equates with Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) notion of polyarchy, hence referring to a specific set of *fundamental* or *basic* attributes of this systemic property, namely those referring to the electoral process and civil and political liberties that make such process a meaningful one. Thus, in this dissertation varying levels of democracy might be essentially interpreted as variations to the extent to which a political system provides to its citizens said institutional guarantees.
Nonetheless, as the title of this dissertation suggests, varying levels of democracy are interpreted in a somewhat narrower fashion, that is *essentially* as variations of levels of *public contestation* that a political system grants to its own citizens. The reasons underlying this specific interpretation, still based on the theoretical framework provided by Dahl (1971) and additional speculations, are the topic of the following pages of this section.

2.2.2 Variations of Democracy as Variations of Public Contestation

According to Dahl's (1971) original formulation, the set of institutional guarantees related to the notion of polyarchy, and that inform the broader theoretical and analytical framework proposed by the author, were intended as *indicators of two underlying dimensions* on which any modern political system could be placed, and that the author's defined as the dimensions of *contestation* and *inclusiveness*, with the former referring to the extent to which individuals "have unimpaired opportunities: 1. To formulate their preferences; 2. To signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the governmentby individual and collective action; 3. To have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government" (Dahl 1971: 2), and the latter referring to "the proportion of the population entitled to participate on a more or less equal plane in controlling and contesting the conduct of the government" (Dahl 1971: 4). According to the author, these two dimensions, although related, were to be intended as two *independent* dimensions (cf. Dahl 1971: 1-8; see also Coppedge *et al.* 2008: 633), and it could be assumed a logical correspondence between the institutional guarantees and either of, or both, these two dimensions. Despite the fact that in the author's more recent works (Dahl 1989, 1998) the reference to these two dimensions has become more blurred, and despite the fact that most of current studies that explicitly abide to Dahl's analytical framework do not distinguish between these two dimensions, in a relatively recent study Coppedge and colleagues (2008) have reassessed Dahl's theoretical claim and provided fairly strong evidence that the distinction between these two dimensions can be empirically

assessed (see Coppedge *et al.* 2008: 635-645).

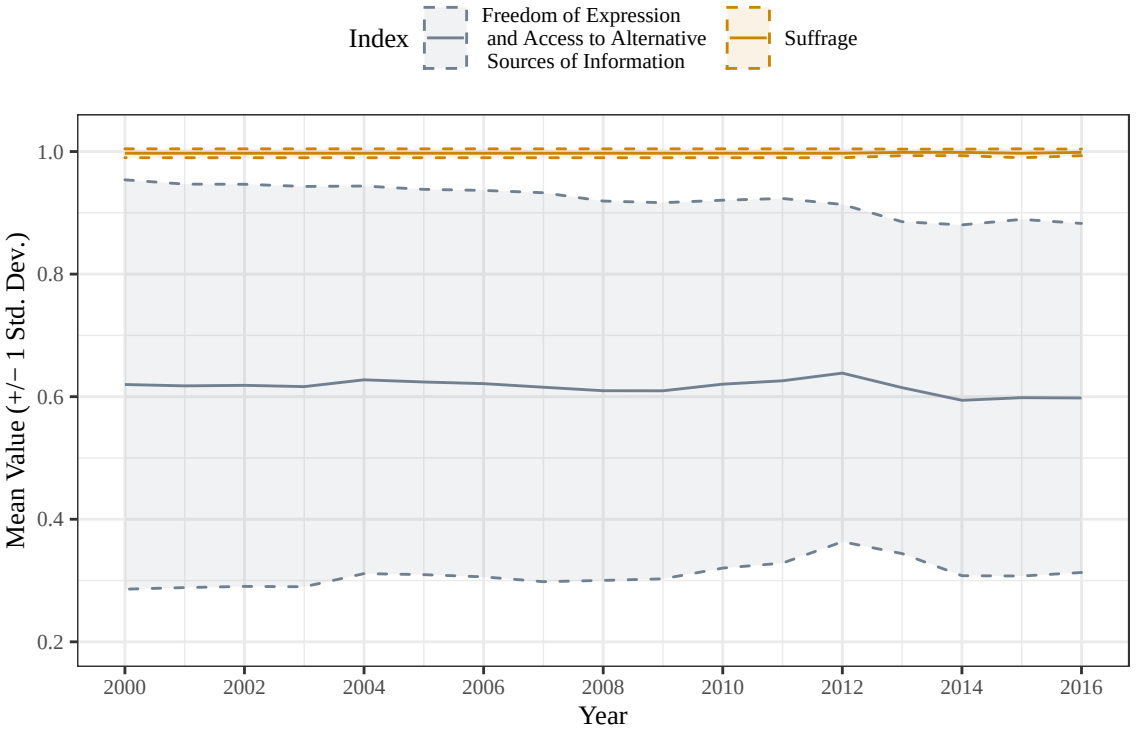
This study focuses on how variations of one of said dimensions, namely the dimension of *public contestation*, do affect variations of political confidence, and the reasons leading to investigate the role played by this factor are both theoretical and empirical. The theoretical argument is linked to expectations about the role played by varying levels of public contestation in shaping varying levels of political confidence, the topic discussed in the following section (Sect. 2.2.3). Thus, the reader might bear some patience in order to fully understand such argument. Nonetheless, the key theoretical claim leading to choose the contestation dimension instead of the inclusiveness one is that the former represents the crucial factor that might affect individuals' confidence in public institutions.

This is not to say that the extent to which a political system allows a smaller or larger share of citizens to express their preferences by voting can be considered free from consequences on citizens' confidence in political institutions. What is claimed, however, is that *the impact of political inclusiveness on individuals' confidence in institutions is dependent on the extent to which a political system fosters or constraints individual opportunities to formulate and signify preferences*, because the latter factors are expected to impact on individual mechanisms affecting expectations and evaluations of institutions and authorities, that in turn are reflected in individuals' confidence in public institutions. Consequently, the contestation dimension appears to be the more crucial the inclusiveness one, and for this reason this study focuses on the relationship between the former and political confidence.

In addition to aforementioned theoretical claim, empirical arguments lead to focus on the public contestation dimension. Nowadays, at least in the in the specific geopolitical context and historical period taken into consideration in this thesis (namely, East Asia during the first sixteen years of the 21st century), variations of democracy should be intended substantially as *variations of public contestation*. Almost five decades ago, Dahl (1971) in its work on participation and opposition already noted that "one of the most striking changes during this century has been the virtual disappearance of an outright denial of the legitimacy of popular participation in government [...] Even the most repressive dictators usually pay some lip service today to the legitimate right of the people to participate in the government, that is, to participate in 'governing' though not in public contestation" (Dahl 1971: 5). Indeed, in the 19th century, and still during the very early 20th, universal suffrage was still a matter of debate. Autocratic systems could rely on forms of legitimization other than political inclusiveness. In contemporary political systems, however, suffrage has become a guarantee that almost no political system can legitimately curb, a part from (actual or not) situations of emergency.

Especially in the last two decades, the 'democratic-procedural' source of legitimization, or alternatively the "pretense of democratic legitimacy" (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017: 7), along with performance-based legitimacy, has become a *prominent* one for almost all the contemporary autocratic or anocratic regimes populating our globe (cf. Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017: 10). As highlighted by Schedler (2002: 36), allowing for universal suffrage autocracies and other kinds of non-democratic regimes "try to obtain at least a semblance of democratic legitimacy, hoping to satisfy external as well as internal actors. At the same time, by placing those elections under tight authoritarian controls they try to cement their continued hold on power." Translated in Dahlian (1971) terms, this 'democratic legitimacy' of non-democratic regimes is essentially achieved with high levels of inclusiveness, while curbing (totally or substantially) the actual opportunities for public contestation. In other terms, in contem-

Figure 2.1: Suffrage, Freedom of Expression and Access to Alternative Sources of Information in Contemporary East Asia.



Notes: Lines are mean values. Bands represent mean values ± one standard deviation.

porary non-democratic regimes more often than not *the entire adult population is entitled of the right to vote*, and other forms of participation (say, party membership, or associational membership) are essentially allowed. *What is not free is the translation of this participation in contestation.* Citizens' of these countries *cannot* vote for candidates that are not defined by the incumbent authorities. Citizens' *cannot* freely organize themselves in associations, let alone political parties, if not previously approved and heavily scrutinized by regime's authorities. And this claim can be supported by a great amount of empirical evidence, especially when looking at contemporary East Asia.

Some of the most oppressive autocracies of contemporary world, such as China or Vietnam (for the Chinese case see Kim 2019; for the Vietnamese case see Croissant and Lorenz 2018: 384-385), are characterized by institutional guarantees concerning the right to vote[14], and this holds true even when considering 'hybrid' regimes (Diamond 2002; see also, *inter alia*, Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010; Marshall and Gurr 2018; Schedler 2006; Zakaria 1997), namely political systems that fall short of being democratic but are not fully autocratic as well, such as Cambodia or Singapore (Croissant and Lorenz 2018: 50-53, 268-272).

This fact is summarized by Figure 2.1. What this figure shows are the variations of the Variety of Democracy (V-Dem; see Coppedge *et al.* 2019a) indicators of freedom of expression and access to

[14]Note that in the Chinese case, however, suffrage is universal, but only for lower levels of government. Then, elected officials vote for higher levels officials. Moreover this system is coupled with sortition, consultation, and delibartion methods, that has lead some commentators to talk about a system based on 'political meritocracy'; see Bell 2018. On the Chinese system see also Heilmann 2017.

alternative sources of information[15] and of the breadth of suffrage, in East Asia[16] in the historical period considered in this work (2000-2016). What Figure 2.1 shows is that while the indicator of freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of information varies considerably, the indicator concerning the breadth of suffrage granted in East Asia is substantially *invariant* and characterized by *high values* (namely, the right to vote is officially granted to the entire or almost entire adult population of the countries considered).

In sum, on the basis of theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, what can be argued is that, the inclusiveness of contemporary political systems, especially if narrowly considered as individuals' right to vote (that is, moreover, the most straightforward interpretation of Dahl's notion of 'inclusiveness'. cf. Dahl 1971: 5-16, but also following pages), has become substantially *high and invariant. What greatly varies across political systems is the extent to which individuals' inclusion can be signified in real contestation, in real political competition, in a real struggle for influencing authorities political decisions*[17]. Thus, what can be argued is that varying levels of democracy in contemporary political systems can essentially be interpreted as *variations in levels of public contestation*, and hereinafter for this reason (and also for avoiding terminological and conceptual confusion) the main puzzle of this thesis will be restated according to this intepretation. Once clarified that varying levels of 'democracy' are going to be interpreted as variations of public contestation (Dahl 1971: 5), then the last step of the current discussion is dedicated to the formulation of expectations about *whether and how said variations can be related to variations of individuals confidence in institutions*, that is the topic of the following pages of this section.

2.2.3 Expectations about the Impact of Contestation on Political Confidence

The expectation that varying levels of public contestation *do affect* individuals' confidence in institution is a rather straightforward one. In the previous chapter it has been conceived political confidence as a form of mixed support, namely an attitude that reflects regime legitimacy assessments and more volatile and instrumental attitudes determined by short-term events and experiences (see Ch.1 Sect. 1.2). Evidence provided by existing studies concerning the effect of electoral politics *within and across democratic countries* (e.g. Anderson and Tverdova 2001, 2003; Anderson and LoTempio 2002: 347-350; Citrin and Stoker 2018: 51-55; Huang *et al.* 2013: 56-67; Norris 1999d; Park 2017) show that individuals' confidence in institutions is affected by individual-level determinants that are specifically related to the electoral process (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.4). In other terms, what these studies show is that political confidence *reflects* partisan stances or the experience of being, after a specific electoral

[15] Although theoretically separated in Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) formulation, Teorell and colleagues' (2019) claim that the guarantees of freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of information can be summarized by a single indicator, because logically interrelated and empirically indistinguishable (see Teorell *et al.* 2019: 80-81). In this thesis, Teorell and colleagues' argument is shared.

[16] The countries considered as part of East Asia are those covered by the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) project. Thus, the list of the countries or territories that have been used to produce the values shown in Figure 2.1 are the following: Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

[17] A fact that leaves us wonder whether it would be more appropriate to label many of said political systems as '*inclusive authoritarian*' rather than '*competitive authoritarian*' regimes, as proposed by some authors (es. Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010). Other authors, however, abide to a labeling underlyining the rather broad electoral inclusiveness but limited public contestation of many 'hybrid' regimes (for an overview, see Diamond 2002).

turn, among the electoral winners or losers. In short, in political systems mostly characterized by high levels of public contestation the institutions that characterize the notion of public contestation do produce individual-level variations of confidence in public institutions. Thus what can be argued without many risks of being contested is that variations of public contestation *do shape* individual perceptions of institutions' behavior, thus of their perceived predictability and trustworthiness, hence individual political confidence.

However, *how* said variations do affect individuals' confidence in public institutions? In order to properly speculate about the relationship between these two factors the discussion first addresses the possible mechanisms informing the *direct* effects of contestation on political confidence, and then the possible *moderators* of said effects.

About the sheer relationship between these two factors, there are reasons for speculating that varying levels of public contestation might produce both *positive* and *negative* incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions. The discussion starts from the latter and then returns on the former.

As already discussed previously (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3.4 and 1.3.5) scholars witnessing varying average levels of political confidence across East Asian political systems (see Park 2017: 490-497; Shin 2012: 196-197 Tang *et al.* 2016; Wang *et al.* 2006: 141-144; Wang 2013: 2-5; Yang and Tang 2010) have essentially argued that increasing freedom of expression and access to alternative source of information are likely to produce *increasing possibilities for individuals' to criticize institutions and authorities' behavior*, and this may explain why autocratic countries' average levels of political confidence are higher as compared to those of a democratic countries. In other words, the fact that individuals' do enjoy increasing freedoms (of expression, or of association) increases the possibility that individuals' might formulate criticisms by making them increasingly legitimate and tolerated. In systems in which access to sources of information others than governmental ones is granted and exstensive citizens are likely to face both the good and the bad sides of institutions' behavior. In political systems in which information is controlled, or repressed, by authorities individuals do suffer a lack of information about institutions and authorities' actual behavior, likely coupled with a stream of positive information about their own institutions and authorities. Thus, according to the point of view of the aforementioned author, these mechanisms are likely to produce negative incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions.

The argument, at a first sight, appears fairly solid. Nonetheless, at a closer look, it can be argued that it misses another mechanisms, arguably a deeper one, that is produced by increasing levels of public contestation. As a matter of fact, individual and collective interests are often conflicting. Increasing civil liberties (freedom of expression and freedom of association) inevitably bring interests to coalesce and confront each other. At the same time increasing tolerance and legitimacy of said interests allows them to potentially enter the political sphere. These two interrelated mechanisms, then, are likely to produce a series of consequences that might produce negative incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions. The first consequence that these mechanisms are likely to produce is an increasing level of *actual*, but mostly *perceived*, *political conflict*, and this fact in turn is likely to produce negative incentives for individuals' confidence in public institutions. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002: 233) plainly put it "aside from pundits and academics, most people, quite understandably, do not enjoy the open conflict of interests that characterizes democratic politics". If we consider, moreover, that this open conflict and all the related strategies and tacticts that characterize party competition are likely

to affect also other institutions (mostly, mass media), or actors (such as policy experts; see Hardin 1999: 33-35), on which individuals' might rely in order to formulate expectations and evaluations about institutions, then most individuals' might find themselves before a cacophony hard to disentangle. As a consequence, said interrelated mechanisms, all of which can be considered as a function of increasing levels of public contestation, are likely to produce *negative* incentives for individuals' confidence in institutions.

Nonetheless, while the speculations provided above appear fairly reasonable and defensible, it is also true that said mechanisms may actually represent just one side of the coin. Indeed, it is possible to speculate that increasing levels of public contestation might also produce *positive* incentives for individuals' political confidence. For instance, while increasing freedom of expression and access to sources of information other than governmental ones, as argued few lines above, might produce a series of negative incentives by allowing individual criticisms, it is also true that increasing levels of said properties might produce positive incentives by fostering the actual and perceived transparency of the political process, a fact that in turn might boost regime legitimacy, thus increasing the likelihood of individuals' confidence in public institutions. Moreover, there are mechanisms more strictly related to party competition that may also produce positive incentives for individual political confidence. Governments in political systems characterized by high levels of contestation are always *pro-tempore* governments. Increasingly competitive, fair, and free elections are likely to provide to individuals' the hope that the next turn losers may stand a new chance of becoming winners (see O'Donnell 2007). Even in the case in which a more or less important share of population believes that public institutions are filled by rascals, the very same share of population, in a system characterized by competitive, free and fair elections, can expect that at a certain point in time they might be able to 'vote rascals out'. Furthermore, democratic politics is contingent on the consent of the majority (see Przeworski *et al.* 1999), thus, one might expect that democratic politics gives incentives to believe that institutions and authorities will, to some extent, follow the 'will of the people' (for similar arguments but dedicated to the impact of democracy on regime legitimacy see also Buchanan 2002; Goodwin-Gill 2006), thus bolstering the perceived responsiveness, and thus predictability and trustworthiness, of public institutions.

In short, speculations about what it may be the *direct* effect of varying levels of contestation on political confidence are mixed. Perhaps the list of arguments proposed few lines above might not be a complete one, and indeed each argument that has been discussed can be expanded, reversed, or contested. Yet, it can be argued that this list provides a rather clear picture of the puzzle that this dissertation aims to investigate, that is the *direct* relationship between public contestation and political confidence. As a consequence, the investigation has been realised *controls for* other relevant factors (aggregate and individual ones) that might directly affect political confidence variations, namely factors related to the existing explanations of political confidence as presented and discussed in the first chapter of this thesis (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3). In other terms, what has been investigated is, for istance, whether variations of public contestation do affect varying average levels of public confidence once accounting for variations of economic performance, or variations of socioeconomic development, or variations of relevant cultural dimensions that characterize the societies, countries or territories that are considered in this thesis.

However, this fundamental relationship is investigated also taking into account another issue that is implicit in the discussion presented above, namely whether or not public contestation is *conditional on*

the type of political confidence taken into account, that is whether or not the effect of public contestation is stronger or weaker when we differentiate between individuals' confidence in political institutions (e.g. national governments, national assemblies, and political parties) or individuals' confidence in implementative ones (e.g. courts, police, and civil services). Indeed, what it can be expected from the discussion above is that the potential effect of contestation on individuals' confidence in public institutions (whether positive or negative is not relevant) might be *stronger* for some institutions rather than others. National governments, assemblies, political parties, are all institutions that are *by definition* those that are primarily affected by variations of public contestation. Other institutions, such as police forces, courts, and civil services, are normally insulated by electoral politics, not only in systems in which contestation is curtailed or totally repressed, but also in systems in which contestation is totally allowed and legitimated. As a consequence, what can be expected is that individuals' confidence in the former set of institutions might be more affected by variations of public contestation as compared to the impact that these variations have on the latter set of institutions. Thus, the discussion above has to be re-tuned also taking into account this additional argument, that indeed informs the research strategy of this work (see Sect. 2.4).

Nevertheless, as stated at the outset of this discussion, the reader has to bear in mind that the fundamental relationship between contestation and political confidence that has been discussed might be affected by a series of other factors that might, more or less importantly, *moderate* the direct effect of contestation on individuals' confidence in public institutions. For instance, what can be speculated is that the effect of varying levels of public contestation on political confidence might be *contingent* on individuals' political involvement, partisanship, or political sophistication. If we hypothesize that increasing levels of public contestation are likely to mostly produce negative incentives for individuals' confidence in institutions, we may still hypothesize that increasing levels of political sophistication, or involvement, or partisanship might attenuate (or even reverse) the negative impact of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions, and viceversa decreasing levels of sophistication, involvement, or partisanship may actually exacerbate the (hypothesized) negative effect of contestation on individuals' political confidence. In other terms, we might hypothesize that citizens more involved in the political process, more sophisticated, more partisan, might be able to better tolerate and disentangle the inherently conflictual nature of the political process that characterizes democratic political systems, while on the other side citizens that lack said involvement, sophistication, or partisanship might suffer the open political conflict that democratic politics inevitably brings into the political sphere. Thus, the already complicated puzzle that characterizes the the direct relationship between contestation and political confidence might further be complicated by these, and additional, factors on which this relationship might be contingent.

Nonetheless, these (potentially) moderating factors *are not* investigated in this research. This decision is partially derived by the choice to maintain manageable the discussion and the following empirical analyses of this work. However, this choice derives also by the very research strategy for investigating the relationship between contestation levels and political confidence. As argued at the end of the previous chapter (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.4) and the outset of the current one (see Sect. 2.1), in order to properly investigate the fundamental relationship depicted few lines above what is needed is to move beyond the usual frame in which political confidence has been analysed (namely, across democratic

settings) and consider a set of political systems that maximize the variation of public contestation. In other terms, in order to fully understand the effect of public contestation on political confidence what is needed is a set of political systems spanning from autocratic or hegemonic systems to democratic or polyarchic ones, possibly considering all the intermediate cases that may lie between these two extremes of the public contestation dimension. Nonetheless, this very stategy, at the same time, *precludes* the possibility to investigate the possible moderating effect of, say, political involvement or partisanship on the relationship between public contestation and political confidence. How can be compared levels of political involvement between political systems in which this is by a large extent a *free choice*, thus "individual self-motion" (Sartori 1970: 1050) and systems in which this involvement is actually *mobilization*, namely a situation in which the individual is "being put into motion at the whim of persuasive-and more than persuasive-authorities" (*Ibid.*)? Even more importantly, how it is possible to investigate the moderating effect of different levels of partisanship when comparing political systems in which this individual characteristic relates to the identification or closeness to political parties freely competing for the government of the polity, and political systems in which there is only *one* political party, and in any case this characteristic is determined by totally different motivations, such as plain coercion or the need to obtain services that otherwise would not be obtained? In short, variations of contestation levels do not imply, or not solely imply, variations of these factors. Variations of contestation imply variations of the *quality* of many factors that might moderate the relationship between contestation and political confidence.

Consequently, although representing a clear limitation, in this study the potential moderating effect of these factors is not investigated. As already stated, and to summarize the discussion above, the analyses that are presented in the following chapters (Chs. 3, 4, and 5) are tuned for investigating the *direct* effect of contestation on political confidence, *controlling for* the direct effect of other factors that might produce variations of political confidence in institutions, and considering whether or not the nature, functions, and/or role of the institutions that are object individuals' expectations and evaluations moderate this fundamental relationship.

In order to pursue said research aims, then, this research effort focuses on a specific geopolitical context of our world, namely East Asia, and the next section of this chapter, thus, critically reviews the resources and gaps of the background literature about political confidence in this region of our globe, and by doing so introduces this context and its relevant attributes for the investigation proposed in this dissertation.

2.3 Research Context: East Asia and the Study of Political Confidence

Since the 2000s, in East Asia, with the development of national and cross-national survey projects aiming to investigate popular attitudes in democratic and (whenever feasible) in non-democratic countries (Heath *et al.* 2005; Mattes 2008; see also Shin 2007), a relatively extensive literature concerning the study of political confidence in this region, part of a broader literature on political support often characterized by a culturalist approach (see, *inter alia*, Chu *et al.* 2008; Chu and Huang 2010; Shi 2015; Shin 2012; Shin and Kim 2017; Wang and Tan 2006; Welzel 2012), has been produced. This literature presents some peculiar features that are relevant for the current study. The first characteristic of this

literature is that, despite the several attractive features of this region, the current literature about political confidence lacks almost *any* proper empirical assessment not only of how variations of public contestation affect individuals' confidence in institutions but of how political confidence is affected by aggregate- or contextual-level factors in general. As a consequence, considering the main aim of this dissertation, in the first pages of this section this issue is addressed, presenting also some arguments concerning the resources (Sect. 2.3.1) and challenges (Sect. 2.3.2) that the structural and systemic features of this broad region of our world offers for the investigation of political confidence as conceived in this study.

The second characteristic of East Asian studies concerning political confidence, in line with studies about other regions of the world, is a prominence of analyses dedicated to individual-level determinants of individuals' confidence in institutions (Sect. 2.3.3). This literature offers valuable insights, that indeed inform some of the following analyses presented in the following chapters (es. Ch. 5). Nonetheless, this literature is also characterized by a relevant gap, that is the absence of almost any assessment of political confidence dimensionality and measurement equivalence. This issue, then, is discussed and its relevance for the current study is explained.

The section, then, ends with a summary of the discussion presented in the previous pages, leading toward the presentation of the research strategy of the empirical analyses performed in this study (Sect. 2.3.4).

2.3.1 A Striking Lack of Contextual Analyses

In various passages of the previous discussion, it has been contended that East Asia heterogeneity offers several footholds to assess the relationship between democracy and political confidence. Nonetheless, previous comparative research about political confidence in this region has *rarely* exploited said opportunities, not only considering this specific relationship but also others linking aggregate or contextual factors and individual attitudes and/or behavior. The following pages depict this gap in the literature and offer an overview of East Asia, discussing the opportunities and the challenges given by the complexity of this region. Comparative literature about political confidence in East Asia is mostly composed by comparative analyses focusing on relatively few countries in single point in times. In most cases analyses are focused solely on democratic ones (e.g. Chang 2013; Chang and Chu 2006; Huang *et al.* 2013). Some comparative studies move beyond this frame of analysis, but further reducing the pool of countries analysed, selecting samples from societies considered comparable on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, or broadly intended cultural characteristics (e.g. Shi 2001; Shi 2015; Tang *et al.* 2016; Wong *et al.* 2009; Wong *et al.* 2011). As a consequence, to date, only a tiny minority of studies about political confidence in East Asia have been dedicated to slightly more than ten countries, including both democratic and non-democratic countries (e.g. Ikeda 2013; Park 2017; Wang *et al.* 2006; Wu and Wilkes 2018).

Given the relatively limited scope of previous research, the impact of contextual factors on political confidence has been seldom analysed. Mostly, as discussed in previous passages of this thesis (e.g. Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3.4), the possible impact of contextual factors on East Asians' confidence in institutions has been left to speculations developed observing aggregate-level descriptive statistics of said attitudes

Table 2.1: East Asia Sociodemographic Profile (2014-2016)

					Human Development			
Country/Territory	Year	Pop.	Urb.	EF	MA	LEB	NS	AYS	HDI
Cambodia	2015	15.71	22.2	0.158	24.5	64.14	22.2	3.68	0.566
China	2015	1367.48	55.5	0.190	36.8	75.41	5.4	7.95	0.742
Hong Kong	2016	7.17	100.0	0.132	44.0	82.90	5.4	11.38	0.931
Indonesia	2016	258.32	54.0	0.803	29.9	72.70	7.5	7.61	0.700
Japan	2016	126.70	91.5	0.019	46.9	85.00	0.1	11.60	0.910
Malaysia	2014	30.07	73.6	0.570	27.7	74.52	6.9	10.44	0.792
Mongolia	2014	2.95	68.2	0.315	27.1	69.98	4.3	9.20	0.733
Myanmar	2015	56.32	29.9	0.590	28.3	66.29	17.0	4.85	0.565
Philippines	2014	107.67	46.1	0.807	23.5	72.48	2.7	8.43	0.697
Singapore	2014	5.57	100.0	0.395	33.8	84.38	15.3	10.81	0.928
South Korea	2015	49.12	81.6	0.095	40.8	80.04	3.4	12.05	0.899
Taiwan	2014	23.36	76.5	0.373	39.2	79.84	2.4	11.09	0.882
Thailand	2014	67.74	46.9	0.352	36.2	74.18	3.4	7.99	0.739
Vietnam	2014	93.42	33.1	0.261	29.2	72.91	15.2	7.15	0.675

Notes: "Pop.": Total population (mln). "Urb.": Urban population (% of total population). "EF": Ethnic Fractionalization. "MA": Median age (years). "LEB": Life expectancy at birth (years). "NS": Percentage of 15 years old or older population non-schooled (%, 2010 est.). "AYS": 15 years old or older population average years of schooling (years, 2010 est.). "HDI": Humand development index. Data: Barro and Lee (2013); CIA (2020); Statistics and Information Network of the Republic of China (n.d.); United Nations (2019); World Bank (2019).

(e.g. Park 2017; Shin 2012: 196-197; Wang *et al.* 2006; Wang 2013). In those few cases in which the impact of contextual factors has been included in multivariate analyses this has been realised with all the limitations given by the scarcity of observations available (see Chang and Chu 2006; Ikeda 2013). As a consequence, to date, we are left with hypotheses and speculations about the impact of contextual factors on individuals' confidence in this region but almost no robust empirical analyses.

This gap, that may already represent one worth to be filled, is even more striking once considering the high variability of this region on several systemic and structural properties that can be considered as crucial ones for the investigation of political confidence, as well as other forms of political support and individual attitudes or behavior in general.

East Asia is an extremely heterogeneous and complex region, from any perspective one may look at it. From a sociodemographic point of view, this region comprises radically different societies. Contemporary East Asia indeed is composed by some of the most extensive and populated countries in the world (e.g. China and Indonesia), as well as small and crowded territories (e.g. Hong Kong and Singapore), or still huge and scarcely populated ones (e.g. Mongolia). It comprises some of the youngest populations of the globe (e.g. Cambodia) as well as some of the oldest (e.g. Japan). It includes both ethnically homogeneous countries (e.g. Japan) and highly fragmented ones (e.g. Indonesia). Crucial differences, moreover, remain in terms of educational levels, life expectancy, and other basic indicators of societal development as suggested by the statistics and indices presented in Table 2.1. These differences are clearly related to the different levels of economic development of these countries (see Table 2.2). Indeed, nowadays, Northeast Asia contains the second and the third world's biggest economies (China and Japan), two advanced industrial economies ranking among the top 25 of the globe (South Korea and Taiwan), and an emerging lower-middle income economy (Mongolia). Except the Mongolian case, this configuration is mostly the product of the well-known stunning economic development of some of these societies between the 1960s and the 1990s, the era of the so-called 'Four Little Tigers' or 'Four Little Dragons' (namely, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), and the product of the rampant economic development of China, started in the late 1970s, reaching its peak in the early 2000s, and relatively slowing down in the late 2010s. The development of Southeast Asia has been less straightforward and more complicated. Among the entire set of countries comprised in this part of the region, only Singapore has reached an advanced level of development. The remaining countries have followed different patterns mostly according to their membership to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Those countries belonging to this group and that are considered in this study (namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) generally have experienced significant economic development since the mid-1960s, with the exception of the Philippines, whose economy has grown at a substantially slower rate. Development has been extremely slow or nonexistent in the non-ASEAN countries of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, that can be still comprised among the poorest nations of the world (cf. Leinbach and Frederik 2018), although some relatively encouraging changes occurred starting from the mid-2010s. As a consequence, East Asia has been characterized by different economic performance during the last two decades. And said factors, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis (see Ch. 1, Sects. 1.3.2 and 1.3.3), may have played a role in determining the dynamics of individuals' political confidence in this region.

As in the case of socioeconomic characteristics and economic performance, contemporary East Asia

Table 2.2: East Asia Macroeconomic profile (2014-2016)

			GDP		Total GDP by sector		
Country/Territory	Year	Pop. (mln)	Total (mln)	Per capita	Agr. (%)	Ind. (%)	Ser. (%)
Cambodia	2015	15.71	$49.19	$3,139	26.58	27.68	39.83
China	2015	1367.48	$16,380.65	$12,002	8.39	40.84	50.77
Hong Kong	2016	7.17	$340.26	$47,043	0.08	7.48	89.53
Indonesia	2016	258.32	$2,681.14	$10,511	13.48	39.31	43.64
Japan	2016	126.70	$4,604.25	$36,452	1.21	28.98	69.42
Malaysia	2014	30.07	$628.28	$21,339	8.87	39.92	50.12
Mongolia	2014	2.95	$32.59	$11,035	13.34	31.50	45.82
Myanmar	2015	56.32	$318.66	$5,834	26.73	33.91	39.35
Philippines	2014	107.67	$693.53	$6,592	12.27	31.05	56.68
Singapore	2014	5.57	$373.57	$67,105	0.03	24.17	70.34
South Korea	2015	49.12	$1,801.65	$35,316	2.00	34.15	55.58
Taiwan	2014	23.36	$964.12	$41,609	1.85	35.57	62.57
Thailand	2014	67.74	$905.64	$13,587	10.09	36.76	53.15
Vietnam	2014	93.42	$507.19	$5,427	17.70	33.21	39.04

Notes: "Pop.": Total population. "Urb.": Urban population (% of tot. pop.). "GDP": Total GDP and per capita GDP adjusted for price changes over time (inflation) and price differences between countries – chained to 2011 U.S. dollar. "Total GDP by sector": Agriculture, industry, and services value added (% of GDP). Data: Bolt et al. (2018); World Bank (2019).

Table 2.3: East Asia Political Performance Profile (2014-2016)

Country/Territory	Year	CCE	GEE	PVE	RLE	RQE
Cambodia	2015	-1.118	-0.699	0.062	-0.978	-0.525
China	2015	-0.282	0.408	-0.550	-0.410	-0.289
Hong Kong	2016	1.562	1.842	0.751	1.723	2.154
Indonesia	2016	-0.399	0.008	-0.373	-0.345	-0.122
Japan	2016	1.525	1.822	0.983	1.421	1.428
Malaysia	2014	0.411	1.115	0.267	0.588	0.838
Mongolia	2014	-0.474	-0.436	0.792	-0.345	-0.271
Myanmar	2015	-0.836	-1.239	-1.165	-1.237	-1.222
Philippines	2014	-0.437	0.193	-0.714	-0.317	-0.037
Singapore	2014	2.071	2.183	1.186	1.825	2.233
South Korea	2015	0.374	1.013	0.161	0.932	1.113
Taiwan	2014	0.807	1.368	0.766	1.188	1.304
Thailand	2014	-0.450	0.338	-0.906	-0.191	0.273
Vietnam	2014	-0.436	-0.070	-0.022	-0.360	-0.588

Notes: "CCE": Control of corruption index; "GEE": Government effectiveness; "PVE": Political stability; "RLE": Rule of law; "RQE": Regulatory quality. Data: Kaufmann and Kraay (2016).

Table 2.4: East Asia Political Regimes (2014-2016)

		Polity IV				Freedom House				
Country/Territory	Year	ID	IA	Score	Cat.	CL	PR	Score	FH Cat.	D. Cat.
Cambodia	2015	3	1	2	Open Anocracy	5	6	5.5	Not free	HEA
China	2015	0	7	-7	Autocracy	6	7	6.5	Not free	CA
Hong Kong	2016	5	3	2	Open Anocracy	2	5	3.5	Partially free	EA
Indonesia	2016	9	0	9	Democracy	4	2	3.0	Partially free	ED
Japan	2016	10	0	10	Democracy	1	1	1.0	Free	LD
Malaysia	2014	6	1	5	Open Anocracy	4	4	4.0	Partially free	EA
Mongolia	2014	10	0	10	Democracy	2	1	1.5	Free	LD
Myanmar	2015	-88	-88	2	Open Anocracy	5	6	5.5	Not free	HEA
Philippines	2014	8	0	8	Democracy	3	3	3.0	Partially free	ED
Singapore	2014	2	4	-2	Closed Anocracy	4	4	4.0	Partially free	EA
South Korea	2015	8	0	8	Democracy	2	2	2.0	Free	LD
Taiwan	2014	10	0	10	Democracy	2	1	1.5	Free	LD
Thailand	2014	0	3	-3	Closed Anocracy	5	6	5.5	Not free	HEA
Vietnam	2015	0	7	-7	Autocracy	5	7	6.0	Not free	CA

Notes: In the Polity IV section: "IA" stands for institutionalized autocracy index; "ID" stands for institutionalized democracy index. In the Freedom House section: "CL" stands for civil liberties index; "PR" stands for political rights index; "FH Cat." stands for the original categorization proposed by Freedom House; "D. Cat." consists in the categorization proposed by Diamond (2002) based on Freedom House scores."CA": Closed Authoritarian; "EA": Electoral Authoritarian; "ED": Electoral Democracy; "HEA" Hegemonic Electoral Authoritarian; "LD" Liberal Democracy. Data: Diamond (2002); Freedom House (2018a, 2018b); Marshall et al. (2018).

offers a high diversity in terms of *political performance*. Table 2.3 shows how the region varies considerably in terms of almost any indicator included in the Worldwide Governance Indicators developed by Kaufmann and Kraay (2016). For instance, in terms of governmental control of corruption efforts' estimates, an index that considers a wide range of issues (from the frequency of 'additional payments to get things done' to endemic corruption at higher levels of the social and political system), some East Asian countries have been struggling in the recent past in curbing corruption (e.g. Cambodia or Myanmar) while others have been able to restrain said practices very effectively (e.g. Hong Kong, Japan, or Singapore). When looking at the 'political stability' index (namely, an estimate measuring the perceptions of the likelihood that a given government will be destabilized or overthrown by possibly unconstitutional and/or violent means, including domestic violence and terrorism), again, high variability characterizes the East Asian countries, with some of these faring badly (e.g. the Philippines or Thailand) and others characterized by much higher political stability (e.g. Japan, Mongolia, Singapore, or Taiwan). When looking at the performance of single countries across the indices provided by Kaufmann and Kraay (2016), what can be seen is that in the period considered few countries tend to perform badly (e.g. Myanmar) or oustandingly (e.g. Singapore) on all the indicators considered. Although political performances appear to do not be completely uncorrelated, however, high variability also characterizes how each country performs on different domains.

In sum, although providing just a glance of the structural or systemic characteristics of East Asian countries, the data presented so far (Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) show how this region is characterized

by a very high heterogeneity of aggregate or contextual factors (socioeconomic development, economic performance, political performance) that might be related to individual confidence in institutions according to the main current explanations of political confidence (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3).

Nonetheless, these are not the only dimensions on which East Asia vary exstensively. Even more importantly East Asia is characterized by a tremendous variability also considering this region levels of public contestation. Indeed, East Asia provides a great variety of political-institutional arrangements, starting from the very basic features of the political regimes that populate this region (see, *inter alia*, Croissant and Lorenz 2018; Kimura 2018; Reilly 2006; Woodall 2018). This wide and heterogeneous set of regimes is the product of the complex political changes that characterized this region at least starting from the second half of the 1980s. Indeed, six decades ago, with the sole exception of Japan, East Asia was essentially dominated by autocracies. Yet, mostly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, after sweeping Southern and Central Europe, and Southern and Central America, the so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991) reached its crest and landed on the Southeastern and Northeastern shores of this region. In 1986, the Filipino people's power movement ousted President Marcos from power. In 1987, South Koreans ended a three decades long military rule electing a new president in free and competitive elections. In the same year, with the uplifting of martial law, the liberalization of the Taiwanese political system reached a turning point, and after more than three decades of Kuomintang's authoritarian rule a political transition based on free and competitive elections started. In 1990 Mongolia, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, went through a bloodless transition from a one-party communist authoritarian regime to a democratic regime, determined by the cooperation of groups into and out of power. In 1992, mass demonstrations of Thai people forced a military junta to relinquish its power, leading to new elections and further democratic reforms in the following months. In sum, almost half of the autocracies of the region went through democratic transitions or substantive liberalizations of their political systems, and these events, as in other parts of the globe, led many to believe that humanity was going toward the end of history, namely the triumph of Western liberal democracy both as an ideal and a regime (e.g. Fukuyama 1989). However, it took a relatively short time before most of these opinions sobered. Scholars and commentators realized that this wave was neither universal nor linear in its evolution. Already in the mid-1990s some scholars and commentators warned that many authoritarian states remained in power, that some countries that experienced democratic transitions from authoritarian regimes may not move toward a democratic consolidation, remaining defective of some of the key attributes of a democracy, and could even revert into non-democratic regimes (e.g. Huntington 1996; O'Donnell 1996; Zakaria 1997).

After approximately twenty-five years from that discussion it appears evident that those warnings were substantially right. Nowadays East Asia represents a region containing almost all the possible contemporary forms of government ranging from authoritarian regimes to fully-fledged democracies, and one of its main characteristics is indeed the presence of many political regimes that fall short of being democratic but are not fully authoritarian as well (see, *inter alia*, Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010; Zakaria 1997)[18]. A plethora of labels have been proposed in order to identify these regimes, among which the relatively solid category of 'Competitive Authoritarianism' proposed

[18]Classic examples of hybrid regimes in East Asia are Cambodia or Singapore, regimes that allow a certain degree of electoral competition but that fundamentally prosecutes actual political challenges and contestation, and can rely on advantages built in institutional or electoral rules (see Kimura 2018: 29, 36; see also Diamond 2002: 29-33).

by Levitsky and Way (2002; 2010), but the debate is still ongoing and definitions are far from being widely accepted. Consequently, the table below (Table 2.4) has been build according to various categorization that is possible to find in the literature. Table 2.4 relies on three regime typologies: the one conceptualized by Marshall and Gurr (2018) and based on the Polity IV aggregate scores; the original taxonomy proposed by Freedom House (2018a, 2018b); a reviewed version of the categorization proposed by Diamond (2002)[19] mostly based on an aggregate measure built on the Freedom House civil liberties and political rights scores. Differences in the logic of Polity and Freedom House indices imply some discrepancies in the categorization of the regimes considered, especially those lying in the grey area between autocracies and democracies[20]. However, although built following relatively different logics, all these typologies reflect one of the structural dimensions of the notion of polyarchy proposed by Dahl (1971, 1989, 1998), namely the dimension of *public contestation*, already discussed in the previous section of this chapter (see Sect. 2.2).

Thus, in addition to other relevant domains, East Asia shows a *high variability on the levels of public contestation allowed by the political regimes that compose it*, and this clearly represents an opportunity, considering the main overarching research question of this thesis. Nonetheless, despite its objective attractiveness, the heterogeneity of East Asia presents some issues related to the *reliability and validity* of individual-level data (namely, the type of data employed in this thesis for most of the analyses), especially when considering data gathered in autocratic or more repressive anocratic regimes. And this topic deserves to be carefully discussed.

2.3.2 Opportunities and Challenges of East Asia's Structural Heterogeneity

Starting from late 1990s and early 2000s, mostly thanks to the efforts of comparative survey research projects such as the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) and the World Values Survey (WVS)[21], researchers around the world have been able to expand their analyses beyond the borders of democracies, in East Asia as in many other regions of the globe. This unprecedented availability of individual data has represented a valuable resource, but has also been welcome with ambivalent feelings. Some scholars and researchers, as soon as data from autocratic countries have become available, especially when realizing that average levels of political support (including political confidence) in single-party authoritarian regimes (such as China or Vietnam) were extremely high and much higher than those registered in democratic ones, have indeed questioned the *reliability and/or validity* of such measures.

[19] The review applied to Diamond's classification essentially consists in removing the category of 'ambiguous regimes' (2002: 26) and reproduce his classification avoiding the several qualitative evaluations that the author makes in building his typology, reason why some countries characterized by the same scores on the Freedom House indices fall into different categories (see Diamond 2002: 30-31). The reviewed categories have been operationalized as it follows: Democracy (FH $\leqslant 2$); Electoral Democracy ($2 <$ FH $\leqslant 3$); Electoral Authoritarian ($3 <$ FH $\leqslant 4.5$); Electoral Hegemonic Authoritarian ($4.5 <$ FH $\leqslant 5.5$); Authoritarian ($5.5 <$ FH $\leqslant 7$).

[20] An example of these discrepancies is the Cambodian case. While being classified as an 'Open Anocracy' in the typology built on the Polity data, thus an authoritarian regime in which a substantive degree of contestation for the opposition is allowed, when turning to the typology built on Freedom House scores the same country appears in the category of 'Hegemonic Electoral Authoritarian' regimes, countries in which "elections and other 'democratic' institutions are largely façades" (Diamond 2002: 26) but there is still some space for political opposition (cf. Diamond 2002: 25-27).

[21] In East Asia, the WVS and the ABS have become the main sources of cross-national individual-level data available for the study of political support in general (cf. Chu *et al.* 2008: 5-7). For a brief assessment of the different logics of these two survey projects see Mattes (2007: es. 120-121).

In particular, scholars have tried to understand to what extent respondents' attitudes as measured by survey projects in such countries could be, first, comparable, and, second, whether comparability might be hampered by the tendency of individuals in political repressive contexts to express their *true* attitudes. Clearly for a study that aims to compare attitudes across regimes characterized by such diverse levels of public contestation these issues deserves to be thoroughly discussed.

Some scholars, mostly focusing mostly on the Chinese context, claim that attitudes from non-democratic regimes are not comparable to those measured in democratic or, at least, non particularly repressive regimes. King and colleagues (King *et al.* 2004; King and Wand 2007) in their analysis of political efficacy, report that Chinese citizens are characterized by higher levels of political efficacy as compared to citizens in other contexts, such as the Mexican one, but that these differences are essentially related to differences in the way in which the same scale is used by the analysed Chinese, on the one hand, and Mexican respondents' attitudes, on the other hand. Thus, differences in political efficacy, according to these authors, should be related to differential item functioning (DIF) rather than real differences determined by the attitudes of the respondents' analysed, and this clearly poses rather relevant problems in straightforward comparisons of survey responses across such institutionally and culturally diverse contexts (see also Steinhardt 2012). Some authors move even further in hypothesizing which specific factors might produce comparability issues between survey responses gathered in non-democratic regimes and democratic ones, again with special reference to the Chinese case, when considering the former type of political contexts. He (2004) for instance has claimed that survey projects involving Western and Chinese academics are sistematically infiltrated by State Security Bureau agents, that all survey data are screened by said bureau, and that scholars involved in such projects know the real situation but do not confess because doing so would undermine their credibility. Less dramatically, other scholars have contended that respondents' attitudes in such countries might be affected by *political fear*, namely a widespread tendency among survey respondents in lying to interviewers to hide their true feelings about their regimes and avoid potential political persecution (see Rose 2007: 292; Park 2017: 490; Wang *et al.* 2006: 144-145). While the first contention listed above appears rather difficult to be verified, the second one appears to be more manageable to be discussed. Quite surprisingly, several authors have addressed the issue of what we may call the 'political fear bias' considering the Chinese case and overall what they have found out is that it appears *highly unlikely* that Chinese respondents' attitudes toward their own government (overall, very positive) may be biased by this factor. Shi (2015: 240-242) analysing data gathered in China in 1993 and 2002, has shown how his measures of political confidence and other survey items specifically conceived in order to capture respondents' political fear did not correlate, or correlated in the opposite direction they should if respondents' attitudes were biased by political fear. Analysing another study about Chinese attitudes toward their government realised in 2008, Tang and Zhang (2016: 17-18) have shown that the percentage of Chinese respondents declaring that they would support their own government even if it was in the wrong (46%) was lower as compared to a rather cospicuous set of democratic countries, but also *higher* than countries such as Austria, Denmark, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and (last but not least) United States. Moreover, the same authors, exploiting an experimental design developed by Kuklinski and colleagues to detect racial prejudice in the United States (see Kuklinski *et al.* 1997a, 1997b), have further shown that differences

between control and treatment samples about politically sensitive issues (say, openly criticizing the government, and witnessing corruption by officials) were marginal, and most of the differences between control and treatment groups were essentially related to social desirability effect determined by respondents' involvement in socially undesirable behavior, such as bribing government officials (see Tang and Zhang 2016: 134-151). Other authors have reached very similar conclusions, claiming that the effect of political fear on Chinese respondents' attitudes appears to be weak (see also Chen 2004; Ren 2009; Wang 2006).

In short, previous research has consistently shown that survey results from China can be trusted, at least considering the so-called 'political fear bias'. This may not rule out the possibility that such factor may be still be at work, and does not rule out the possibility that other factors (e.g. related to cultural differences, or survey characteristics) might affect the comparability of measures across the contexts considered. Moreover, as stated several times, most of the analyses have been realised considering the Chinese case, thus there is little evidence concerning respondents' attitudes behavior in other East Asian authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian regimes. Consequently, overall caution is needed in interpreting the following analyses. Nonetheless, the findings presented in this dissertation may offer some (collateral) answers to the issues discussed so far. In Chapter 3 a dimensionality analysis of political confidence across East Asian countries, namely an analysis about how East Asian respondents organize their attitudes toward a list of public institution and authorities, is presented, and the results of the empirical analyses that have been performed show that a common configuration of individual attitudes toward political institutions can be found, and that this configuration appears to be not sistematically related to the political contexts in which individuals' were living when interviewed. Nonetheless, the measurement equivalence assessment, that may offer some insights about the issue discussed so far, does not return a clear-cut result, or a result able to dissipate doubts about the 'political fear bias'. Nonetheless, Chapter 5 provides evidence that while East Asians' average levels of confidence in political institutions (namely, national governments and national assemblies) are affected by the extent to which their political systems allows (or represses) political contestation and opposition, the individual mechanisms informing their attitudes toward these institutions are striking similar, and do not seem to be moderated by this factor (see Ch. 5, Sects. 5.4 and 5.5). These findings, as further discussed in the following pages of this dissertation, may not be bullet-proof evidence against the 'political fear bias', yet they return an optimistic rather than pessimistic view about this issue.

As already mentioned at the outset of this section, East Asia's diversity on a wide rage of structural and systemic characteristics, represents an ideal context for investigating to what extent political confidence is affected by said features. From a general point of view this heterogeneity allows to move away from sheer comparisons of countries and embrace an approach that substitutes "names of variables for the names of social systems" (Przeworski and Teune [1970] 1982: 8), a perspective seldom applied by previous research about political confidence in this region, in which sheer comparisons among countries or, at best, among typologies of political systems, more or less anchored to specific criteria, have dominated the comparative study of political confidence in this region (see, *inter alia*, Ikeda 2013; Park 2017; Wang *et al.* 2006; Wang 2013). More specifically, the diversity of East Asia represents an opportunity for the study of political confidence because variability characterizes

substantially all the relevant factors affecting political confidence, as identified by previous research and theories and explanations of political confidence antecedents (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3). The radical differences characterizing the countries of this region in terms of socioeconomic modernization clearly offer several footholds to test the extent to which culturalist theories of political confidence (see Sect. 1.3.2) can account for variations of political confidence levels in the aggregate and across individuals. Similarly, significative differences across East Asian countries in terms of economic performance and quality of government represent ideal features to put under scrutiny to what extent variations in individuals' political confidence across and within East Asian societies can be explained by institutionalist theories claiming that (economic and political) performance evaluations are crucial determinants of individuals' confidence in institutions (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.4).

However, the most important feature of this region consists in the existing crucial differences among East Asian countries in terms of *public contestation levels*, that as summarized in the previous section (see Table 2.4) cover almost all the possible values between hegemonic and democratic (polyarchic) political systems. This variability precludes us to fully investigate the relationship between variations of public contestation and political confidence, as already discussed earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 2.2.3), by ruling out the possibility to take into account potential moderators of this relationship. However, East Asia heterogeneity still represents a great opportunity to test to what extent differences in levels of public contestation do affect individuals' confidence in institutions, thus providing crucial knowledge about the overarching puzzle of this thesis (see Sect. 2.2.3).

Nonetheless, as already at the outset of this discussion, this resource has been seldom exploited. The almost entirety of studies dedicated to political confidence in this region, except a couple of works (see Chang and Chu 2006; Ikeda 2013), have been dedicated to *individual-level* analyses, without any empirical assessment of wheter and to what extent contextual factors may influence, directly or indirectly, individuals' confidence in institutions. This literature clearly provides several interesting results, but also some shortcomings, and both have been considered in modeling this dissertation. The next pages, thus, reviews this literature and provides some comments about its resources and gaps, at least considering the aims of this work.

2.3.3 Evidence from Individual-level Research

Previous research has consistently shown that East Asians' confidence in public institutions follows a logic very similar to the one seen in other parts of the globe, and most of the comparative studies dealing with individual confidence in institutions in this region have reached a relatively stable consensus concerning a set of antecedents constantly associated with East Asian expectations toward and evaluations of public institutions and authorities. The following pages reassess this literature according to the distinction between culturalist and institutionalist as presented in the first chapter of this thesis (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3).

As in other regions of the world, *culturalist arguments* about political confidence determinants tend to cluster around two potential antecedents, namely (generalized) *social trust* and *authority orientations*. Mostly, culturalist arguments have found a relatively fertile terrain in single-case studies or comparative works involving few countries, providing some evidence about the impact of supposedly culturally

determined orientations. Nonetheless, these studies present radical diversities about the nature of the dispositions considered, and how these are then operationalized and employed in the empirical investigations, especially when considering individuals' conceptions of authority.

In its contribution to the neverending attempts of culturalist scholars to define a theory of 'political culture' able to go beyond the limits of the existing ones, Shi (2015) has shown how orientations considered as part of the Confucian cultural tradition (in particular, hierarchical conceptions of social authority or collectivist orientations) do excert an impact on individuals' confidence in institutions. While claiming that hierarchical conceptions of authority do excert a positive effect at the contextual level in China but not in Taiwan (cf. Shi 2015: 144), the author shows that these conceptions do actually excert a relatively stable positive effect on political confidence in both countries (see Shi 2015: 128, 142). Shi's measures of cultural orientations are explicitly built in order to *do not* include any survey item explicitly referring to political authorities (cf. Shi 2015: 65)[22], as a consequence what this study seems to suggest is that orientations toward *social* authority do excert an effect on individuals' confidence in institutions. In his analysis of institutional confidence in China, Zhai (2018) has reached similar, although not overlapping results. Zhai operationalization of value orientations follows a different logic from the one proposed by Shi, distinguishing these orientations according to the domain to which they refer (Zhai distinguishes among familiar, social, and political domains) but conflating attitudes tapping into different conceptual dimensions, such as conceptions of the authority, collectivist or individualistic conceptions of self-interest, and so forth (see Zhai 2018: 356). What the results of his empirical analyses show, then, is that value orientations concerning the familiar domain (such as filial piety, or the prioritization of family interests) do not excert a significant effect on institutional confidence, whereas attitudes concerning other social non-political environments (such as conceptions of authority in school, or conflict avoidance in the working place) and, less surprisingly, about the political sphere (e.g. paternalistic conceptions of political authority, or the prioritization of national interest over individuals' ones) do affect confidence in institutions (see Zhai 2018: 361). Moreover, in addition to the evidence provided by these limited-scope analyses, Ikeda (2013: 32) has shown that 'traditional social values' affect trust in national government beyond the Chinese or Taiwanese cases. In his analysis of eleven East Asian countries Ikeda, indeed, provides rather robust evidence that individuals' holding hierarchical conceptions of the familiar environment do indeed show higher levels of political confidence compared to individuals that conceive the familiar environment in more reciprocal terms[23], thus quite explicitly confirming Shi's claims about the impact of hierarchical or authoritarian conceptions of social authority on individual confidence in institutions. Moreover, Ikeda study offers also some evidence in support of more 'political-culturalist' and less socio-deterministic explanations,

[22]Actually, while this argument applies to Shi's measures of authority orientations, the argument is less defensible when moving to the second cultural dimension investigated by Shi, namely the one measuring allocentric-idiocentric or collectivist-individualist dispositions. Indeed the battery used by Shi *does* include an item measuring respondents' agreement with the following statement: '*The state is like a big machine and the individual is only a small cog and thus should have no independent status.*'. It is hard to argue that individuals' agreement with such a statement can be conceived as exogenous to the political environment in which individuals' live, and thus exogenous to other political attitudes, such as confidence in political institutions. See Shi (2015: 62-75).

[23]The author explains this finding in terms of a widespread and durable influence of the Confucian notion of 'authoritarian deliberation' on individuals' normative orientations (see Ikeda 2013: 31). Yet, it should be noticed that Ikeda analyses concern also countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand, all societies hardly considerable as characterized by a Confucian tradition (see Ikeda 2013: 24). As a consequence, it is hard to understand how such explanation can be defended.

showing that liberal-democratic values are negatively correlated with individuals confidence in national government.

When turning to the second factor often considered by socio-culturalist arguments as a key antecedent of political confidence, namely generalized social trust, previous research in East Asia provides a rather scarce and mixed evidence. While some studies seems to support the idea that social trust may be considered a crucial determinant of individual-level variations of political confidence, other studies claim that this may not be the case. For instance, Wong and colleagues (2009) study of political confidence in Taiwan and Hong Kong suggests that generalized social trust is essentially irrelevant for political confidence in both countries for any institution considered, except for individual variations of confidence in the legislature in Hong Kong, case in which social trust excerts a significant *negative* effect, blatantly at odds with theoretical claims about the positive relationship between social trust and political confidence (see Wong *et al.* 2009: 162, 165). Among empirical studies focusing on more than one or a couple of countries, Park's (2017) analyses show that generalized social trust is positively correlated with political confidence in only three out of ten countries considered in his study (South Korea, Indonesia, and Mongolia), and that this correlation greatly vary among these three societies (see Park 2017: 502). On the contrary, Huang and colleagues' (2013) find that overall social trust tend to sustain confidence in institutions, but also in their case evidencing a substantial variability of the effect of this variable across countries and institutions. In some countries (such as Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia and the Philippines) generalized trust appears to be a rather strong predictor of confidence institutions (cf. Huang *et al* 2013: 57, 59, 60, 62). Yet, while in some of these countries (Korea and Mongolia) the impact of social trust tend to crucially affect both political and implementative institutions, in others (e.g. the Philippines) the effect of generalized social trust is fundamentally confined to confidence in implementative institutions, while in others it appears to affect only political institutions. Overall, it is worth noting how the relationship between social trust and political confidence has received a relatively scarce and not particularly sophisticated attention in studies concerning East Asia. This represent a rather peculiar aspect of the study of political confidence in this region, especially when compared with studies dedicated to the United States and, in particular, Europe. Indeed, comparative studies analysing political confidence or related subjects in Western and Eastern Europe have often assumed the social capital paradigm as conceptualized by Putnam (1993, 2000) as the crucial socio-culturalist paradigm against which contrasting institutionalist standpoints (see, *inter alia*, Dalton 2004: 69-71; Denters *et al.* 2007: 71-72; Schnaudt 2019: 73-74; Torcal and Montero 2006: 10-14; Zmerli *et al.* 2007: 37-39). In the East Asian region this approach has been seldom embraced, probably because of the theoretical competition of socio-culturalist theories specifically related to the East Asian context, such as the Asian Values debate, or the discussion about the impact of Confucianism on the democratic development of East Asian societies (see Chapter 3, Sect. 3.2.1).

In short, individual-level analyses concerning or touching upon the impact of supposedly culturally determined attitudes is anything but straightforward. They offer some footholds for claiming that cultural orientations do indeed excert an impact on individuals' confidence in institutions, but these evidence vary according to the research design of the authors. On the contrary, *institutionalist explanations* have constantly found confirmation in the study of individual-level determinants of political confidence in East Asia.

The first, and perhaps less surprising, finding of previous research is that *individual economic evaluations* are among the most, if not *the most*, important predictor of individual political confidence in East Asia. In line with studies of economic voting (e.g. Duch and Stevenson 2008; Lewis-Beck 1988), empirical analyses of political confidence in East Asia have invariably found that *sociotropic* economic evaluations, namely evaluations of national economy status, are by far the best predictors of individuals' confidence in instituions in East Asia (see Chang 2013: 85; Chang and Chu 2006: 266, 268; Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62; Kim 2010: 806-807; Park 2017: 502; Wong *et al.* 2009: 162, 165; Wong *et al.* 2011: 271). There are some discrepancies concerning which of retrospective, prospective, or evaluations of the current state of the economy play the major role, since in many cases previous research employed very different indicators, according to the available data sources, and in some cases aggregating different measures in single indices blurring the distinction among these three kinds of sociotropic economic evaluations. Yet, in those few cases in which researchers maintained distict these three typologies of evaluations (e.g. Chang 2013: 85; Chang and Chu 2006: 266) scholars have shown that evaluations of the current state of the economy and prospective evaluations are the most salient predictors of institutional confidence, with retrospective evaluations normally excerting a more ambiguous effect (a result in contrast with Kornberg and Clarke 1992: 121). In a nutshell, despite this aspect, what most of the analyses mentioned so far suggest is that individual evaluations of the state of the economy can reasonably be considered among the most important predictors of political confidence in this region.
This evidence, then, brings us to another similarity between political confidence and economic voting empirical research, namely the relatively more ancillar role played by *egocentric* economic evaluations (cf. Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013: 369). To some extent in contrast with findings concerning other regions of the globe, East Asians assessment of their personal economic condition appears to be relatively non-decisive for the formulation of evaluations and expectations toward state institutions and authorities. For instance, in his analysis of ten East Asian societies, Park shows that individuals' household income assessment excerts a relevant effect on individuals' confidence in institutions only in one of the societies analysed, namely Singapore (see Park 2017: 502). Wong and colleagues, comparing Hongkongese and Taiwanese respondents' political confidence, have found that whereas evaluations of the economy tend to affect trust in national governments in both territories, experiences with unemployment do not excert any influence on individuals trust in institutions, with the sole (striking) exception of confidence in the judiciary, when looking at the Taiwanese case (see Wong *et al.* 2009: 162-165). Yet, it would be rather bold to claim that a deep understanding of how pocketbook evaluations affect individual political confidence in this region of the world has been reached. Contrary to studies concerning other regions of the world (e.g. Brehm and Rahn 1997: 1013; Catterberg and Moreno 2005: 44; McAllister 1999: 199-200; Mishler and Rose 2001: 51, 55; Schnaudt 2019: 117-156), in East Asia the extent to which these evaluations affect individual confidence in institutions, and how these evaluations impact on confidence in institutions is largely unexplored. However, according to literature, what it may be hypothesized is that indeed egocentric economic evaluations and pocketbook evaluations play a relatively less important role compared to the one played by sociotropic attitudes.
Nonetheless, a burgeoning strand of literature (see, *inter alia*, Dalton 2004: 63-67; Denters *et al.* 2007: 74; Schnaudt 2019: 127-133; see also Miller 1974a; van der Meer and Dekker 2011: 109; Zmerli *et al.* 2007; Zmerli 2013: 123–125) suggests that we should refrain to consider economic performance as the

sole performance on which individuals are likely to build their confidence in institutions. According to these scholars *political performance* assessments are likely to represent a decisive set of factors influencing the extent to which individuals' place their confidence in state institutions. For instance, the extent to which governments are effective in fighting crime or corruption, or in providing public services, or the extent to which state institutions are perceived as responsive to citizens' demands, are all aspects that can reasonably influence individuals' confidence in institutions, and previous research in East Asia as other regions of our globe has indeed provided some evidence about these topics.

A theme related to political performance that has received a relatively important attention in recent studies about individual-level determinants of political confidence in East Asia is the theme of corruption. Previous research has indeed provided quite solid evidence that perceived levels of corruption or evaluations of governmental anti-corruption efforts drive important variations in political confidence levels across individuals. Chang and Chu have shown that individuals that *perceive* their national government affected by corruption tend to have much less confidence in their institutions compared to those that perceive institutions and authorities as free from rascals (see Chang and Chu 2006: 266, 268). Huang and colleagues have shown that the more effective are perceived the efforts of political elites to fight corruption the higher individuals' confidence in institutions (Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62; see also Kim 2010: 806-807). However, in a more recent study Chang has provided evidence that *witnessed* corruption *does not* excert the same impact of perceived corruption on individuals' political confidence (see Chang 2013: 85), a finding that seems to suggest that *sociotropic* evaluations of political performance do appear to be more decisive as compared to direct experiences or egocentric ones.

About other factors related to political performance, again, evidence from East Asia mirror those seen in other regions of our globe. Comparing individual-level antecedents in Japan and South Korea, Kim (2010: 806-807) has furthermore provided evidence that as the perceived responsiveness of institutions decreases, the perceived quality of public services diminuishes, and institutions are not perceived as able to cope with crime, then also political confidence tends to diminuish, although variably in its relevance and magnitude according to the national-study and the institutions considered. Results from Shi's (2001) and Tang and colleagues' (2016) analyses show furthermore that government responsiveness, often labeled as external efficacy (see Balch 1974; Craig *et al.* 1990; van der Meer and Dekker 2011), represent a crucial indicator, at least in the Chinese and Taiwanese cases, according to their results.

Finally, a couple of studies (Huang *et al.* 2013; Park 2017) have returned evidence that political competition does affect individual confidence in democratic Asian countries. Nonetheless, along with their main findings, these studies offer also evidence that partially inspired the design of this research. Huang and colleagues (2013) have consistently shown that individuals' confidence in institutions in democratic East Asia is heavily affected by a 'partisan bias'. Overall, this study shows that citizens' identified with opposition parties or not identified with any particular party show invariably lower levels of institutional confidence as compared to those identified with incumbent ones (see Huang *et al.* 2013: 65), confirming, although not completely overlapping with, findings of the 'winners-losers effect' already discussed earlier (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.4). Thus this study returns additional individual-level evidence that might be seen as collaterally supporting some arguments about the relationship between varying levels of public contestation and variations of political confidence as exstensively discussed

earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 2.2.3).
However this work is key also for another reason: it represents one of the few studies about political confidence in East Asia adopting a *multi-dimensional conception of individuals' confidence in institutions*, in particular a two-dimensional one distinguishing between political institutions (top political offices, national governments, and national assemblies) and implementative institutions(courts, police forces, and civil services)[24], that the impact of partisanship is *stronger* for political institutions as compared to implementative ones (see Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62,65). This finding, thus, suggests that the impact of electoral politics may be *conditional* on the category of institutions considered when analysing individuals' institutional confidence, and it is further discussed in the remainder of this section.

2.3.4 Resources and Gaps

The review of the literature concerning political confidence research in East Asia returns a complex picture. On the one hand, as outlined in the first part of this section (Sect. 2.3.1), despite its highly valuable variability in terms of socio-structural and political-systemic features, this literature lacks any assessment of whether and how these features contribute to aggregate-level or individual-level variations of political confidence in this region. As a consequence, in this dissertation this gap is partially filled, given that most of these features are linked to alternative explanations of political confidence variations in this region, and thus will be included in the following empirical analyses.
On the other hand, previous research offers a plethora of findings about individual-level analyses that are a crucial resource for any assessment of political confidence in this region. What previous research about individual-level determinants of political confidence in this region suggests is that political confidence in East Asia is essentially explainable in *institutional* terms, and indeed some authors have been rather straightforward in claiming that rational-institutionalist arguments represent the best option to explain political confidence in East Asia (e.g. Wong *et al.* 2011: 274). East Asians mostly tend to reflect in their expectations about and evaluations of institutions and authorities behavior attitudes concerning (economic and political) their performance. Nevertheless, *culturalist* arguments have also found some footholds in previous studies, challenging purely institutional accounts of individual-level antecedents of political confidence. Considering the rather scattered nature of previous political confidence research, in the following analyses presented in this dissertation that include individual-level factors (see Ch. 5) the main determinants linked to these two approaches to the study of politcal confidence are carefully operationalized, and their impact is tested, in order to provide evidence about their relative relevance in explaining East Asians' confidence in institutions.
Nonetheless, this literature presents also another important characteristic, that is the *lack of assessments of political confidence dimensionality* in this region. Indeed, the vast majority of studies mentioned in previous pages essentially rely on operationalizations of political confidence at best theory

[24]The authors label the first set of institutions 'partisan' ones, and the second 'neutral' ones. However, the logic that underlie such labeling reflects the fact that this study focuses on democratic countries. As a consequence, national governments and national assemblies are considered 'partisan' given their reliance on electoral politics, while the remaining ones are considered 'neutral'. In this study another labeling is employed, for reasons exposed in the following chapter of this thesis (Ch. 3), however the set of institutions considered overlap, at least to some extent.

driven (e.g. Huang *et al.* 2013; Wu and Wilkes 2017), but mostly scarcely justified (e.g. Chang and Chu 2006; Chang 2013; Kim 2010; Park 2017; Tang *et al.* 2016). Only few empirical studies of this phenomenon, essentially dedicated to the Chinese and Taiwanese cases (see Shi 2015: 120, 140; Yang and Tang 2010: 418-420; Zhai 2018: 355, 2019: 8-9) rely on more or less robust assessments of whether individuals' confidence in institutions in this region can be conceived as a single, general attitude toward all state institutions, or whether individuals do actually formulate their attitudes toward different institutions according to role, functions, or characteristics of said institutions.

This gap is a relevant one, generally and for the specific aims of this dissertation. Overall, an increasing number empirical assessments of political confidence dimensionality in regions of the globe other than East Asia show that individuals' confidence in institutions should be actually considered a multi-dimensional rather than a one-dimensional construct (see Denters *et al.* 2007; Rothstein 2005; Rothstein and Stolle 2008; Schaap and Scheepers 2014; Schnaudt 2019; Schneider 2017). Moreover, and more importantly, some of these studies (e.g. Denters *et al.* 2007; Schnaudt 2019) show that once adopting the former perspective it is possible to appreciate that the impact of several individual-level factors vary according to the institutions or type of institutions considered, and as previously mentioned similar evidence can be found also in literature concerning political confidence in East Asia (e.g. Huang *et al.* 2013; Yang and Tang 2010). Thus, it may argued that the lack of empirical investigations of political confidence dimensionality spanning across more than few East Asian countries represents *per se* a gap worth to be filled.

Yet, as already stated, this gap may be crucial also when considering the overarching puzzle and related general expectation that are investigated in this dissertation. Indeed, as already discussed earlier (see Sect. 2.3.3) it appears reasonable to expect that the effect of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions might be, at least to some extent, *conditional on the function that a specific institution or class of institutions has in the political system*, and that increasing levels of contestation might affect more individuals' confidence in *political institutions* (namely, national governments, national assemblies and political parties) rather than confidence in *implementative institutions* (such as the police, the civil service, and the army).

Thus, the choice between a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional conceptualization for operationalizing political confidence might be crucial for the following investigations. As a consequence, an empirical assessment of the dimensionality of individuals' confidence in institutions across the region, coupled with a measurement invariance assessment, is key for our understanding of the role played by political contestation and inclusiveness in shaping political confidence. And this explains why an entire chapter of this thesis is fully dedicated to such empirical investigation (see Ch. 3).

In sum, the literature review presented in this section provides additional puzzles to be investigated in order to properly test the main, general expectation of this dissertation (see Sect. 2.2.3). Clearly said puzzles have partially influenced how the following analyses have been conceived, articulated, and performed. The conclusive section of this chapter, then, is dedicated to present the key features of the research strategy adopted: its research questions and design, and its main data basis.

2.4 Research Strategy

Previous pages return a series of puzzles, propositions and hypotheses that ground this empirical research effort. The overarching aim of this dissertation, as specified in the previous pages is to offer new insights about the relationship between public contestation (see Sect. 2.2), and individuals' confidence in public institutions. Some expectations about the impact of democracy, and in particular public contestation, have been provided (see Sect. 2.2.3). What has been contended is that variations of levels of public contestation and political inclusiveness shape individuals' incentives concerning their confidence in institutions. However, what it may be the effect of varying levels of contestation on individual political confidence is to some extent unpredictable at this stage of the discussion. There are reasons to believe that increasing levels of contestation migh produce positive incentives for individuals confidence in institutions, but there are other reasons also to believe that increasing levels of contestation might produce negative incentives for individual political confidence. Nonetheless, what it has been argued is that the effect of contestation on political confidence (whether positive or negative) may be more relevant for confidence in political institutions (national governments, national assemblies, political parties) as compared to implementative ones (courts, police and armed forces, civil services).
As argued at the end of the first chapter (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.4) and at the beginning of this one (see Sect. 2.1), in order to investigate said expectations and puzzles, this research steps out from the usual context of analysis of political confidence, namely democratic countries, and sets its focus on a region of our globe, East Asia, characterized by several structural and systemic features considered as ideal ones for this investigation. A review of previous research about political confidence in East Asia has been proposed (see Sect. 2.3), highlighting the results and gaps of existing studies, in particular (a) the almost total lack of contextual analyses of political confidence, and (b) the almost complete lack of dimensionality analysis, not to say measurement equivalence or invariance investigations, aimed to assess whether individuals' in this region conceive political confidence in a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional fashion, and to what extent measures of political confidence are comparable. The remainder of this chapter, thus, highlights the research strategy adopted to investigate all these issues, and in turn presents the specific research questions about which the following empirical analyses attempt to provide answers (Sect. 2.4.1), and the data basis on which the aforementioned analyses are performed (Sect. 2.4.2).

2.4.1 Research Questions and Design

The first two research questions of this dissertation derive from the general one in a rather straightforward manner, and can be formulated as follows:

> *RQ*1: *Does public contestation affect average levels of political confidence?*
> *RQ*2: *If so, which is the impact of public contestation on average levels of political confidence?*

These questions, thus, asks for an assessment of: (RQ1) the extent to which variations in levels of

contestation and inclusiveness across political systems, at given points in time, *correlate with* variations in average levels of political confidence, and (RQ2) whether said variations *correlate positively or negatively*. Thus, it calls for empirical analyses designed in order to gauge the *direct effect* of different levels of political competition allowed by different political systems on average levels of individuals' confidence in institutions in said political systems. As a consequence one chapter of this thesis (Ch. 4) is fully dedicated to investigate how different levels of political contestation in different political systems, at given points in time, correlate with average levels of political confidence, in absolute and relative terms (namely, other things being equal). This issue, then, is furthermore addressed in the following chapter (Ch. 5) with multivariate hierarchical regression analyses, in order to test whether aggregate-level correlations identified in the previous chapter do hold once accounting for individual-level antecedents of political confidence variation.

Nonetheless, this dissertation not only aims to offer an account of whether and how public contestation directly affects aggregate-level variations of political confidence, but also whether and the extent to which said contextual factor *indirectly affects* individuals' confidence in institutions, *moderating the impact of individual-level determinants of political confidence*. Indeed, it may be hypothesized that variations in levels of public contestation might affect not only individuals' confidence in institutions, but also the impact of other attitudes, especially *sociotropic* ones, namely orientations concerning key societal issues, such as attitudes about the condition of national economy or evaluations of governmental anti-corruption efforts. Since these very issues are topics on which invariably, across space and time, political competition hinges on, then it appears reasonable to expect that the way in which individuals' expectations and evaluations about said issues affect political confidence may be influenced by the extent to which a political system allows for public contestation. Then, the research questions related to this additional, general hypothesis have been formulated as follows:

> *RQ*3: *Does public contestation moderate the impact of individual-level determinants of political confidence?*
> *RQ*4: *If so, which is the moderation effect of public contestation on said determinants of political confidence?*

To address whether or not public contestation moderates the effect of individual-level determinants of political confidence, a method allowing for considering both individual-level and aggregate-level factors is needed, thus these two research questions are investigated in the fifth chapter of this dissertation (see Ch. 5) in which, as already mentioned few lines above, results of a series of hierarchical regression models are presented.

As discussed earlier in this chapter (see Sects. 2.2.3 and 2.3.4), however, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that effect of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions might be, at least to some extent, *conditional on the function that a specific institution or class of institutions has in the political system*. In other terms, what it is hypothesized is that the (direct and indirect) effects of political contestation might affect more individuals' confidence in *political institutions* (e.g. national governments, national assemblies and political parties) rather than confidence in *implementative institutions* (e.g. the police, the civil service, and the army). Although this issue might be analysed

just relying on theoretical propositions, assessing to what extent these propositions are reproduced by the data would clearly represent a relevant indication about the extent to which such propositions are defensible. Thus, also considering the lack of dimensionality analyses about East Asians' confidence in public institutions, in this dissertation is empirically assessed: (a) whether individuals' confidence in institutions in the countries composing this region represent a single and generalized attitude toward all state institutions or a multi-dimensional construct; (b) to what extent a common configuration can be found across (at least most of) East Asian countries; (c) whether differences in political confidence dimensionality can be reasonably related to differences in political contestation levels that characterize the political systems considered in the following analyses. It should be noted, moreover, that the third statement (c) may offer some insights about the discussion about the so-called 'political fear bias' already discussed earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 2.3.1). Indeed, in the cases in which it would be found out that East Asians' political confidence dimensionality is the same (at least in terms of its configuration) across all the region or, at least, differences in political confidence dimensionality cannot be related to variations of levels of political contestation, this finding would support claims about the marginal effect of political fear in biasing individuals' confidence in public institutions in autocratic and/or anocratic countries. The research questions related to these statements are the following:

> *RQ*5: *Which is the dimensionality of East Asians' confidence in institutions?*
> *RQ*6: *Can be found a common configuration of individual's confidence in institutions across the countries or territories compositng this region?*
> *RQ*7: *To what extent differences in political confidence dimensionality can be related to differences in terms of political contestation across East Asian political systems?*

The following chapter of this thesis (Ch. 3) is fully dedicated to offer some answers about these questions, and it does so providing the results of several coviarance structure analyses based on the common factor model, namely exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), both single-group and multi-group, allowing also for the assessment of measurement invariance of survey items used to gauge individuals' confidence in institutions.
As suggested by the passage above, the latter three research questions are addressed before the former four, and the reason behind this choice derives by the fact that the latter three are logically prior to the former four. In the case in which it should be found out that individuals' confidence in institutions in East Asia *does not* form a single latent construct, but is actually characterized by a multi-dimensional construct, the former research questions should be adapted accordingly. For instance, if a two-dimensional configuration of individuals' confidence in institutions distinguishing between confidence in political institutions and implementative institutions can be found across all the East Asian region, the first research questions should be duplicated and reworded as follows: "Does public contestation affect average levels of confidence in political institutions?"; "Does public contestation affect average levels of confidence in implementative institutions?". Furthermore, it would be possible to formulate questions concerning the extent to which public contestation affects more the former hypothesized type of political confidence rather than then second.
As already outlined above, it would be possible to simply rely on theoretical arguments about political

Table 2.5: Research Questions and Related Chapters

Research Question	**Chapter(s)**
Does public contestation affect average levels of political confidence? (RQ1)	4 and 5
If so, which is the impact of public contestation on average levels of political confidence? (RQ2)	4 and 5
Does public contestation moderate the impact of individual-level determinants of political confidence? (RQ3)	5
If so, which is the moderation effect of public contestation on said determinants of political confidence? (RQ4)	5
Which is the dimensionality of East Asians' confidence in institutions? (RQ5)	3
Can be found a common configuration of individual's confidence in institutions across the countries or territories composing this region? (RQ6)	3
To what extent differences in political confidence dimensionality can be related to East Asian political systems variability? (RQ7)	3

confidence dimensionality, and thus formulate the first four research questions accordingly. Nonetheless, given the decision to rely on such empirical assessments, and in order to avoid a proliferation of research questions, the first four research questions have been maintained in their general form.
The seven research questions presented above, and the chapters in which these are addressed, are summarized in Table 2.5. In order to investigate these research question a *comparative* and *contextual research design* has been adopted. The choice to rely on a *comparative* approach derives by the general aim of this research, that is to investigate *general* relationships, rather than idiosyncratic ones. In other terms, the main aim of this thesis is to investigate *regularities* about the phenomenon under investigation. Furthermore, the very puzzle inspiring this thesis (whether or not different levels of public contestation affect individuals' confidence in institutions) is based on a proposition about the relationship between a macro-level characteristic of a political system (public contestation) and micro-level phenomenon (individuals' confidence in institutions). This basic fact calls, then, for a contextual approach to the investigation of political confidence, namely an approach in which regularities are to be investigated trying to account for both individual-level and aggregate-level variability of the relevant factors informing the relationship under scrutiny. Finally, it should be noted that this contextual approach, although primarily determined by the specific aims of this empirical research effort, is based on a methodological perspective (the so-called 'individualistic paradigm'; see Goldthorpe 2015, es. Ch. 3), that although aimed to the investigation of empirical regularities is based on the awareness of the high degree of variability that exists in human social life.

2.4.2 Data Basis

Given the design sketched few lines above, the empirical analyses of this research are performed on a data basis constituted by both individual- and aggregate-level data. The *individual-level data* source consists the national surveys composing the first four waves of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), an applied research program on public opinion concerning political attitudes of East Asian citizens',

born from the "Political Culture and Political Participation in the Different Chinese Cultural Areas: A Comparative Study of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong" research project, and then becoming one of the main source of survey data of this region, along with the WVS (cf. Chu *et al.* 2008: 5-7. See also Mattes 2007).

From a methodological point of view, the ABS is based on a fixed research protocols that according to ABS team have been proven as practical methods for conducting cross-nation comparative surveys on citizens' attitudes and public opinion. The ABS samples aim to represent the totality of the adult, voting-age population in each country surveyed. In terms of sampling methods, the ABS studies' samples are based on stratified random sampling, and whether using census household lists or a multistage area approach the method for selecting sampling units is randomized. In trying to ensure cross-national comparability, a standard questionnaire containing a core module of identical or functionally equivalent questions is used, and wherever possible, theoretical concepts are measured with multiple items in order to enable testing for construct validity. Nonetheless, such methods are far from being sufficient in granting cross-national and/or cross-cultural comparability (cf. King *et al.* 2004; see also Chu *et al.* 2008: 8), and the ABS Studies analysed in this study do not rely on additional methods that might grant a higher degree of such comparability (such as anchoring vignettes; see King *et al.* 2004; King and Wand 2007)[25].

In terms of scope, the regional network of the ABS encompasses research teams from fourteen political systems (Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) that recently expanded to additional South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). In this work we focus on the first set of countries that defines the national cases included in the following empirical analyses. The four rounds of the ABS that have been considered are composed by 48 cross-sectional national studies, that have been harmonized creating a pooled dataset roughly spanning across the first fifteen years of the 21st century. The number of observations of each national study, and the total number of observations of the pooled dataset, are presented in the table below (Table 2.6). Although trying to include the totality of the samples included in all the following empirical analyses, some of the following empirical analyses rely on a narrower set of studies. In particular, as explained more in detail in the relative chapter (Ch. 5), the studies composing the first round of the ABS have been excluded due to missingness of key variables for the multivariate analyses including individual-level covariates. Nonetheless, to date this work offers the most comprehensive assessment of political confidence realized on ABS data.

The *aggregate-level data* used in the following analyses derive from several sources. The key political-institutional data from which derives the indicator of political contestation, the key contextual-level factor of the following analyses, is the Varieties of Democracy dataset (V-Dem, Coppedge *et al.* 2019a), a massive database consisting of a series of measures aiming to tap several dimensions of political systems based on factual informations and expert ratings (see Coppedge *et al.* 2019a, 2019b; Pemstein *et al.* 2019). Collateral data concerning political institutional variables are then derived by the renowned Polity IV (Marshall *et al.* 2018), and Freedom House (2018) projects.

The other main source of contextual-data used in the following analyses are the World Bank Gover-

[25] About the use of anchoring vignettes (e.g. King *et al.* 2004), Chu and colleagues (2008) justify their decision to do not adopt such approach for its costs in terms of questionnaire space, and for the difficulty to design anchoring vignettes free from cultural and institutional embeddedness themselves (see Chu *et al.* 2008: 37, n. 6).

Table 2.6: Individual-level Data Basis: Asian Barometer Survey

Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N	Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N
Cambodia	2008	2	1000	Myanmar	2015	4	1620
	2012	3	1200	Philippines	2002	1	1200
	2015	4	1200		2005	2	1200
China	2002	1	3183		2010	3	1200
	2007	2	5098		2015	4	1200
	2011	3	3473	Singapore	2006	2	1012
	2015	4	4068		2010	3	1000
Hong Kong	2001	1	811		2014	4	1039
	2007	2	849	South Korea	2003	1	1500
	2012	3	1177		2006	2	1212
	2016	4	1217		2011	3	1207
Indonesia	2006	2	1581		2015	4	1200
	2011	3	1530	Taiwan	2001	1	1415
	2016	4	1550		2006	2	1587
Japan	2003	1	1418		2010	3	1592
	2007	2	1067		2014	4	1657
	2010	3	1880	Thailand	2002	1	1546
	2016	4	1081		2006	2	1546
Malaysia	2007	2	1418		2010	3	1512
	2011	3	1214		2014	4	1199
	2014	4	1207	Vietnam	2006	2	1200
Mongolia	2003	1	1144		2010	3	1191
	2006	2	1211		2015	4	1200
	2010	3	1210				
	2014	4	1228	Pooled			72049

Notes: "N": Sample Size. "Wave": ABS round.

nance Indicators project (WBGI, Kaufmann and Kraay 2016), the Maddison Project (Inklaar *et al.* 2018). As suggested by its name, the first consists in a research dataset summarizing the views on the quality of governance based on of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms data (see Kaufmann *et al.* 2010). The second consists in an ongoing research project aimed at standardizing and updating the academic work in the field of historical national accounting and represents the main source of data concerning macroeconomic data related to economic growth (see Inklaar *et al.* 2018). Additional data sources are then those provided by the United Nations Development Program (2019).

3 The Dimensionality of Political Confidence in East Asia

3.1 Introduction

Does individuals' political confidence consist in a single, general attitude toward all the political institutions of their own country? Or, on the contrary, do they place their confidence in state institutions distinguishing among them? If so, how they organize their attidues? Moreover, to what extent the configuration of these attitudes is country-specific or related to other characteristics of the political regime? This chapter aims to answer to these research questions (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.5.1), proposing an analysis of political confidence dimensionality in East Asia.

First, a discussion concerning different conceptions of political confidence as developed mostly in the European context, and the main empirical findings of this strand of literature are presented (Sect. 3.2). Then, the chapter continues with a discussion about the operationalization of individuals' confidence in institutions in East Asia. the lack of dimensionality assessments in this region of the world, and the expectations concerning the following analyses (Sect. 3.3). Then data, methods, and the underlying logic of the following empirical analyses are presented and discussed (Sect. 3.4). The following section (Sect. 3.5) is then dedicated to the results of the exploratory and confirmatory analyses that have been performed, including an assessment of measurement invariance, an important tool not only for measurement purpose, but also for the discussion about the so-called 'political fear bias', as discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.2). Then the chapter concludes with a reassessesment of the results in the light of the expectations and general research questions related to this chapter, furthermore discussing the implications for the following chapters, and the study of political confidence, in this region and beyond (Sect. 3.6).

3.2 Conceptions of Political Confidence Dimensionality

Historically, in survey-based research, political confidence has been measured with different sets of items. Since the early 1960s in the American National Elections Studies (ANES) individual confidence in institutions has been measured with questions like "*Do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?*" or "*Is the government run by a few big interests looking out for themselves?*", or "*Are most politicians crooked?*". Yet, these questions, heavily criticized during the years, have mostly remained confined to the American case (cf. Marien 2011b; see also Citrin and Stoker 2018). In cross-national survey programs a relatively standardized operationalization has been achieved. Indeed, in survey projects like the World Value Survey (WVS), the European Social Survey (ESS), or the series of surveys composing the Global Barometer Survey (GBS), political confidence is usually measured through a battery of questions regarding several institutions, whose wording substantially overlaps with the one used by the WVS[26]:

[26]The question wording used by the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) is almost identical to the one used by the WVS, although asking for respondents 'trust' rather than 'confidence' in the set of institutions proposed (see Sect. 2.2.1). The ESS question wording slightly differs from those of the ABS and the WVS mostly because asking the respondents to define their level of confidence on a 11-points scale. The question wording of the ESS is at if follows: "*Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.*" (cf. Marien 2011b; Schnaudt 2019).

> I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?

The set of institutions on which these survey projects scrutinize respondents' attitudes normally spans across very diverse ones, such as national governments, parliaments, parties, politicians, courts, police, armed forces. In some cases this set also includes non-state institutions such as international organizations, mass-media, or non-governmental organizations. Given this rather long list of institutions and the related necessity to summarize informations, a normal praxis in political confidence studies has been to conflate respondents' scores about the institutions selected and, consequently, produce more general and fine-grained scales. Most of times this practice has been performed relying on conceptual or theoretical arguments, without any empirical assessment of whether or not individual attitudes toward specific institutions could be reasonably synthesized by one or more general constructs (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 40). This holds true especially when looking at the study of political confidence in East Asia, as explained in more detail in the following pages (see Sect. 2.1.2). Yet, approximately starting from the late 1990s and early 2000s, mostly in the European context, more attention has been dedicated to the empirical investigation of political confidence dimensionality. Two general conceptions nowadays confront each other on this issue, namely a *one-dimensional* and a *multi-dimensional* conception.

3.2.1 One-Dimensional Conceptions of Political Confidence

Scholars supporting a one-dimensional conception of political confidence conceive it as a single, general individual attitude. When formulating their expectations toward or evaluations of political institutions individuals do not distinguish between institutions and thus their attitudes toward several institutions should be considered as expression of a single latent construct (see Hooghe 2001; Hooghe and Zmerli 2011; Marien 2011; Mishler and Rose 1997; see also Newton *et al.* 2018: 40-41). The theoretical underpinnings of this conception are essentially culturalist ones (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3.1), and at a first sight, it may appear that this perspective informs two somewhat distinct arguments. Nonetheless, at a closer look, these arguments are actually based on the very same logic.

Some scholars argue that since political institutions behavior is determined by a general, overarching 'mode of conduct', individuals' political confidence reflects this generalized institutional behavior (Hooghe 2011: 274; Hooghe and Zmerly 2011: 4). This position is explicitly related to the original theoretical and analytical framework proposed by Almond and colleagues (e.g. Almond 1956: 396-397; Almond and Verba 1963: 13; Verba 1965: 514), contending that in each political system exists a set of cultural beliefs, values, or norms that crucially shapes the way in which all the relevant political actors, from the private citizen to state institutions, interpret political phenomena and how they interact with each other. As a consequence political confidence is conceived as a by-product of a sort of redundant, self-reinforcing system of beliefs, that spills out from both the subjects and the objects of political confidence.

The second set of arguments, that is closely related to the plainly socio-deterministic approaches from Inglehart and colleagues (1990; see also Inglehart and Welzel 2006), shares with the first the perspective that individual confidence in political institutions essentially reflects enduring and deep-seated

psychological traits or cultural orientations, fixed in the early stages of individuals' life (Newton and Norris 2000; Rosenber 1956)[27], however in this case the political context in which individuals' behave or formulate their attitudes is simply irrelevant in determining such behavior and attitudes.
Thus, the two arguments slightly differ on the role of the political context in which individuals' live[28] and additional ones[29], but these differences are marginal, and not particularly crucial for the matter at hand. The theoretical core of both arguments is the Parsonian (e.g. Parsons [1937] 1966; Parsons and Shils 1952) socio-deterministc understanding of social phenomena (see also Eckstein 1988), as already discussed in the first chapter of this thesis (see Ch.1, Sects. 1.3.1 and 1.3.2). Individuals formulate their expectations toward and evaluations of public institutions according to general and abstract orientations, or dispositions, that are culturally determined. As a consequence, individuals do not distinguish between institutions in formulating their attitudes.

3.2.2 Multi-Dimensional Conceptions of Political Confidence

Differently from the culturalist perspective, other scholars contend that political confidence should be best described as a *multi-dimensional* phenomenon. The theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this approach are radically different from those seen in the previous paragraph, and are fundamentally institutionalist ones, as already discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch.1, Sects. 1.3.1, 1.3.3, and 1.3.4). Thus, according to scholars abiding to an institutionalist understanding of political phenomena, individuals are able to distinguish among different institutions and they do so considering institutions and authorities' different roles or functions. Consequently, individuals elaborate different expectations toward and evaluations of single institutions or sets of institutions. The extent to which individuals are assumed to be able to distinguish different institutions, and the degree to which different institutions are considered distinct in their roles and functions lead, then, to two different perspectives on the multi-dimensionality of political confidence. Those scholars who tend to have a more atomistic conception of state institutions and/or consider individuals able to judge the trustworthiness of each single institutions avoid any generalization and contend that individual confidence toward each institutions should be analysed separately (e.g. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995; Richardson *et al.* 2001; Fisher *et al.* 2010, 2011). Other scholars, although agreeing that individual expectations and evaluations vary across institutions, assume that citizens to some extent still tend to generalize. The argument in this

[27] Another perspective may be the one that conceive political confidence itself as stable disposition determined by early political socialization. However, this perspective did not find particular support, and empirical evidence supporting this proposition are lacking (see Citrin and Stoker 2018: 56).

[28] Replying to the corrosive critiques by Barry ([1970] 1988) and others (e.g. Pateman 1980), Almond (1980: 29-30) and other authors (e.g. Lijphart 1980) claims that in *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) the impact of the 'political structure' was not excluded. Nonetheless, it may be argued that in Almond and Verba's (1963) perspective the role of the political context, that is anything but straightforward to interpret, is at best a redundant one, and that much more attention and explanatory power is given to the role played by individual attitudes, a perspective in line with early behavioralist accounts.

[29] For instance, according to Almond (1980: 29-30) *the Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) represented also a counter-argument against psycho-cultural approaches considering early (childhood) socialization a crucial process to understand individuals' political attitudes and behavior. The argument is somewhat debatable, since Almond and Verba seminal work actually provides footholds also to argue the contrary. In any case, it cna be argued without risk of being contested that the psycho-cultural or even psychoanalytical perspective that Almond (1980: 29-30) argues that him and Verba tried to avoid has returned in all its determinism after few decades (e.g. Eckstein 1988), in particular with the work of Inglehart and associates (e.g., *inter alia*, Dalton and Welzel 2014; Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

case is that some institutions have shared properties which are crucial for individuals' development of expectations and evaluations. Consequently, individuals' political confidence can be still synthsized by few dimensions, although not a single, overarching one. Between the two, the latter perspective is the one that arguably, also for practical reasons (e.g. the possibility to generalize empirical results), has found more support, and overall tends to take the form of a *two-dimensional* conception of political confidence that distinguish between 'partisan' and 'neutral' institutions (e.g. Rothstein 2005; Rothstein and Stolle 2008), or 'representative' and 'regulative' ones (e.g. Schnaudt 2019; see also Denters *et al.* 2007).

The rationale of this conception fundamentally lies on two related but not identical arguments. Among their many functions, institutions have essentially the power and the duty of developing and implementing public policies. These two functions have a series of implications, but overall we may synthesize that in two major implications. First, some institutions, or better the officials representing some institutions, are more frequently involved in citizens' daily lives (e.g. the civil service, or the police) hence the interaction between citizens and these institutions is more or less direct. On the contrary, other institutions (e.g. the national government, or political parties) are arguably much less involved in most people's daily issues, and mostly perceived indirectly, through other means, such as mass-media reports (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 42-43; see also Kumlin and Rothstein 2005; Newton 1999). Hence, different institutional functions imply different levels of 'proximity' between the subject and the object of political confidence, in turn affecting expectations and evaluations of the subject[30]. Yet, different institutional functions imply also that some institutions are by definition more partisan than others, at least in democratic regimes. National governments, national assemblies, and political parties are inherently partisan, conflictual, and are composed by definition (at least, in democratic regimes) by individuals with different political perspectives competing for citizens' votes. Other institutions, such as the legal system, the police and the armed forces, do not share this property with the former. Although they may be more or less influenced by political purposes, their they should behave impartially and fairly, following clear norms and guidelines, protecting the individual also from the possible abuses of other institutions. Consequently, individuals interact with the former set of institutions as 'citizen/voters', while they interact with the latter in terms of 'citizens/clients' (see Rothstein and Stolle 2008: 282-283), and in turn these differences imply different evaluations and expectations of individuals toward state institutions. The latter differences are the foundation of the labels proposed by Denters and colleagues (Denters *et al.* 2007), Rothstein and Stolle (2008), and Schnaudt (2019).

However, before moving to a review of existing empirical assessments of political confidence in regions of our globe other than East Asia, a clarification about the terminology employed in the following pages is needed. As mentioned before, previous studies label one type of political confidence (namely, the one oriented toward national governments, national assemblies, and political parties) as confidence in 'representative' or 'partisan' institutions. These labels are perfectly proper when analysing political confidence in democratic settings, but appear much less justifiable when investigating this phenomenon

[30]It is also true, however, that this may vary according to citizens' level of political sophistication, or political involvement. Individuals' less involved or sophisticated may perceive political institutions (e.g. national government and national assemblies) more distant as compared to more involved or more sophisticated ones. The question, however, is whether these differences in levels of sophistication or involvement can determine a different dimensionality of political confidence between less involved/sophisticated and more involved/sophisticated individuals.

across democratic and non-democratic political systems. While the distinction between institutions dedicated to the development of public policies and institutions dedicated to the implementation of said policies may still hold in undemocratic settings, it appears rather debatable that in such settings the former set of institutions can be labeled as 'representative' or 'partisan', given that these institutions are *by definition* not representative or partisan, at least in the sense used in democratic ones. As a consequence in this study when referring to confidence in institutions dedicated to the *development of public policies* the label 'confidence in *political* institutions' is used, whereas when referring to confidence in institutions dedicated to the *implementation of public policies* the label 'confidence in *implementative* institutions' is employed.

3.2.3 Empirical Evidence

Moving from theoretical and conceptual issues to empirical evidence, both perspectives, the one- and the two-dimensional, have been empirically investigated and received varying degrees of support. Performing a principal component analysis (PCA), Hooghe's (2010) empirical analyses suggest that individual confidence may form a single construct. Mishler and Rose (1997, 2001), performing a PCA in two studies, on two rather long lists of institutions, show that confidence in political institutions do actually load on the same component, thus forming a single construct. However, to date, the most robust findings supporting a one-dimensional conception of political confidence are to date those proposed by Marien (2011). Indeed, relying on the second, third and fourth waves of the ESS, and choosing a shorter set of items and a more robust methodology (single- and multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, respectively CFA and MGCFA), the author shows that individual confidence in parliament, political parties, politicians, courts, and police can be fairly accurately described by a one-dimensional model. Nonetheless, these results are anything but conclusive. For instance, taking a closer look to Hooghe's analyses mentioned few lines above what the results of the PCA shows is essentially that individual confidence in politicians and political parties highly correlates, and are highly related to items concerning the same topic, rather than providing evidence for a 'generalized' confidence across different institutions (Hooghe 2011: 272-273)[31]. A closer look to Marien's (2011) results also cast some doubts on whether a one-dimensional solution of the MGCFA would be the best one. Indeed, despite good levels of fit of the model proposed, the author detects an error correlation between the items tapping confidence in police and courts, thus suggesting the possibility to turn the model into a multidimensional one (see Marien 2011: cf. Schneider 2017: 966), an alternative suggested also by the fact that high percentages of variance of the items just mentioned is not explained by the model proposed by the author (cf. Schnaudt 2019: 47). In the end, the most robust empirical findings supporting a one-dimensional conception of political confidence, are those provided by Mishler and Rose concerning political confidence in nine Eastern European countries (1997, 2001). Yet, it shall be noticed that the component selection method used by the authors (namely, the so-called 'Kaiser criterion') has been heavily criticized by methodologists (e.g. Bandalos and Boehm-Kaufman 2009: 79-83), and indeed several alternatives to it have been proposed (see Sect. 2.2.3). This fact leaves the reader wonder how

[31]Moreover, it shall be noted that Fisher and colleagues, replying to Hooghe's critiques, claim that once applying different criterion concerning the number of factors and rotation methods the solution of the PCA would be different (see Fisher *et al.* 2011: 279).

the results would change once applying a different selection criteria. In sum, although supported by some evidence, empirical findings supposedly supporting one-dimensional conceptions, at a closer look, appear anything but compelling.

When turning to the empirical evidence supporting the two-dimensional conception of political confidence some of the flaws affecting previous analyses can be identified in these works as well, but to some extent the empirical evidence provided appears to be more robust. Rothstein and Stolle (2008), performing a PCA on a pooled dataset of 56 samples based on the third wave of the WVS, show that confidence in parliament, political parties, government and civil service load on a different construct of the one on which load army, police, and legal institutions (Rothstein and Stolle 2008: 282-287), echoing of a previous study dedicated to the analysis of the dimensionality of political confidence of Swedish citizens (Rothstein and Stolle 2003). Still, as in the case of Hooghe's (2011) analyses, the criterion chosen for the selection of the number of components remains unknown. Applying a sort of 'confirmatory logic', Schnaudt (2019) performs a PCA on four items of the first round of the ESS, including Western and Eastern European countries. Analysing the variance explained by a one-dimensional and a two-dimensional model the author shows that confidence in politicians, national parliaments, police, and legal system in 21 European countries are best explained by the latter model (Schnaudt 2019: 53-63). Yet, the most robust evidences are those offered by Schaap and Scheepers (2014) and Schneider (2017), that applying a MGCFA to two different datasets shows that two-dimensional models can achieve (partial) scalar invariance, thus allowing researchers, among the possible analyses to be performed, to compare items' mean-scores across samples. Indeed, testing a two-dimensional model distinguishing between trust in the police and the legal system on one factor, and confidence in parliament, politicians, and political parties on the other factor, Schaap and Scheepers show that scalar invariance for confidence in legal institutions can be achieved for 20 samples over the 27 available, and for 25 samples when looking at confidence in political institutions (Schaap and Scheepers 2014: 86-90). Similarly, performing a MGCFA on 35 national samples of the Life in Transition Survey II (LITS II) Schneider (2017) reaches partial metric and partial scalar invariance with three models reflecting the two-dimensional conception mentioned above for most of the samples available (Schneider 2017: 972-978). Moreover, partial scalar invariance is also achieved with a one-dimensional model built with items tapping into 'political' institutions, namely national government, parliament, political parties, and local government (Schneider 2017: 978-979).

3.2.4 Summarizing Theoretical Arguments and Empirical Evidence

In sum, one-dimensional and multi-dimensional conceptions of political confidence lie on radically different assumptions about the mechanisms leading to individual confidence toward institutions, and both rely on some empirical evidence. Yet, although both perspectives are taken into account and investigated in the following pages, it would be unfair to consider these perspectives equally plausible, at both theoretical and empirical levels. Despite the fact that one-dimensional conceptions of political confidence are essentially at odds with the conception of political confidence assumed in this study (see Chap.1, es. Sect. 1.2.1), both culturalist perspectives about a 'generalized' institutional trust rely on at least debatable assumptions. In particular, the culturalist perspective supported for instance by

Hooghe and Zmerli (Hooghe 2011; Hooghe and Zmerly 2011) is definitely the least compelling argument in favor of a one-dimensional conception of political confidence. Their reliance on a contended and vague notion as the one of 'political culture' is a sign of the weakness of the argument rather than its point of strength. The athors indeed do not provide *any* explanation of what they refer to with this notion, reflecting an enduring shortcoming of the political culture approach derived by Almond and Verba's work (1963; see also Verba 1965), namely the lack of specification of both the components of this supposedly overarching property of the political system and the mechanisms trough which this is supposed to govern the dynamics of a political system (see Lane 1992; Street 1994). Moreover, as shown above, the empirical evidence provided by supporters of a one-dimensional conception of political confidence are rather weak, especially when compared with the analyses provided by the advocates of a multi-dimensional conception. As a consequence, there are compelling theoretical and empirical arguments to hypothesize that 'institutions matter', and this fact bears important implications for building expectations concerning the dimensionality of political confidence in a geopolitical region like East Asia, as explained in the following section of this chapter.

3.3 Measuring Political Confidence in East Asia

The discussion about political confidence dimensionality in regions other than East Asia has become increasingly relevant and widely debated. On the contrary, in East Asia the issue has been seldom addressed. Excluding few single-case or comparative studies dedicated to a couple of countries (Shi 2015: 120, 140; Yang and Tang 2010: 418-420; Zhai 2018), empirical assessments of individuals' confidence in institutions dimensionality across the whole region has never been performed, a consequence of the relatively scarce attention to the issue at a theoretical or conceptual level, except few noteworthy cases (Huang *et al.* 2013; Shi 2015; Yang and Tang 2010). Consequently, East Asia not only lacks dimensionality analyses, but also any assessment of political confidence measurement equivalence, an assessment seldom realized in other regions of the world as well.
This section, thus, addresses two related issues, namely existing conceptualizations and operationalizations of political confidence dimensionality in the literature concerning East Asia (Sect. 3.3.1), and the results of the few dimensionality assessments realized in previous research (Sect. 3.3.2). The section ends presenting expectations and speculations about the following empirical analyses dedicated to the topic under investigation (Sect. 3.3.3).

3.3.1 Previous Research Operationalizations of Political Confidence in East Asia

Tendentially, the operationalization of political confidence in studies dedicated to East Asia conflate individuals' confidence in several institutions in single additive indices (e.g. Chang 2013; Chang and Chu 2006; Kim 2010; Park 2017; Tang *et al.* 2016), thus abiding to a one-dimensional conception of political confidence. However, most of times such operationalizations are based on very thin or almost non-existant justifications. Averaging individuals' political confidence across seven institutions (Chang and Chu 2006: 264), Chang and Chu justify their operationalization simply arguing that these institutions "are of greater political significance" (2006: 263; see also Chang 2013: 81). Park aver-

ages scores of individuals' political confidence in the national government and the national assembly, arguing that these two institutions consist in the "political branches of the government" (2017: 501). Rarely, some more compelling arguments can be found. For instance, in analysing political confidence in China, Wang (2005) builds a measure conflating Chinese respondents' confidence in the national government and the Chinese Communist Party, hence relying on the reasonable assumption that individuals confidence in these institutions can be merged because of the specific institutional setting of the Chinese regime in which state institutions and party organs heavily overlap (Wang 2005: 154). Other studies do not provide any rationale when constructing their measures of political confidence (e.g. Kim 2010; Tang *et al.* 2016). Rarely, a perspective distinguishing between institutions' characteristics has been adopted (e.g. Huang *et al* 2013: 54-56; Wu and Wilkes 2017), and in these cases more compelling rationales are normally provided. Huang and colleagues for instance operationalize political confidence reassessing the two-dimensional conception of Rothstein and Stolle (2008), thus discriminating between 'partisan' and 'neutral' institutions (see Huang *et al* 2013: 54-56). Wu and Wilkes (2017), building on Li's (2016) analyses about China, operationalize political confidence distinguishing between institutions at different levels of government, namely national and local ones. Others follow somewhat different logics, and in few cases rely on prior empirical assessments of individuals' confidence dimensionality (see Shi 2015: 120-140; Yang and Tang 2010: 418-420).

Perhaps most importantly, the latter group of studies, those abiding to a multi-dimensional conception of political confidence, show that individuals' confidence in different types of institutions are differently informed by individual-level determinants, thus suggesting that individuals' *do distinguish* between institutions. Most importantly for the current discussion, as already mentioned earlier in this thesis (see Sect. 2.4.3), Huang and colleagues have shown that partisan stance of individuals' have different impact according to the type of institutions considered (see Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62,65). Thus, there are theoretical reasons and empirical evidence to suspect that the operationalization of political confidence as a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional construct may bear crucial consequences for our understandig of the impact of political contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions. Moreover, the few existing assessments of political confidence dimensionality in this region seem to support this perspective. This evidence is thus briefly discussed in the following section.

3.3.2 Evidence about Political Confidence Dimensionality in East Asia

As already discussed in the previous chapter (see Sect. 2.4.4), the study of political confidence dimensionality in East Asia has been rarely performed, remaining confined to few single-case or comparative studies dedicated to a couple of countries (Shi 2015: 120, 140; Yang and Tang 2010: 418-420; Zhai 2018)[32]. Moreover, these studies, at a fist sight, seems to provide mixed evidence.

Zhai's analyses show that, in the Chinese context, individual confidence in the national government, in the National People's Congress, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese legal system heavily

[32]In his study of political confidence in China and Taiwan, Shi (2001) claims to have performed and exploratory factor analysis in order to ascertain the dimensionality of trust in these two countries presenting some fit statistics concerning these analyses (2001: 418, n. 19). Yet, his analyses fundamentally refers to individuals' trust in the national government, without making any reference to other institutions, through a battery of items essentially different from those employed by the studies mentioned in the following analyuses. Consequently author's findings are of little use for the following discussion.

load on a single component (2018: 355), thus supporting a one-dimensional conception of political confidence in this country. Differently from Zhai's findings, Yang and Tang's show that Chinese respondent's confidence in several institutions, comprising state or party-state ones and other civil institutions, is actually multidimensional, offering rather puzzling findings even just looking at the first two sets of institutions, with confidence in the National People's Congress loading on a different component of the national government, on which load also Chinese courts, but not other legal institutions such as public security forces (2010: 418-420). Shi's results about the Chinese case also show that individuals' confidence is multidimensional, however, in this case the author's distinction can be roughly considered between confidence in institutions, on the one hand, and confidence in institution *officials*, on the other hand (cf. Shi 2015: 120). When turning to the Taiwanese case, the logic used is similar, but not overlapping. The author distinguishes between confidence in 'state institutions' and 'confidence in partisan institutions/agents' (cf. Shi 2015: 140), thus again loosely distinguinshing between institutions toward which it is assumed that individuals' orient their confidence irrespective of the role played by officials and others in which individuals' confidence should be more driven by evaluations and expectations about officials' behavior. Thus, at least according to the results of aforementioned studies, both one-dimensional and multi-dimensional conceptions of political confidence seem to be supported by empirical evidence.

However, it could be argued that as in the case of studies concerning other regions of the globe (see Sect. 3.2.3), multi-dimensional conceptions appear to rely on more robust findings. Shi's (2015: 120, 140) and Yang and Tang (2010: 518) results, according to the authors, are based on Exploratory Factor Analysis, while Zhai's (2018: 355) on a Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Although the two techniques might yield very similar results, the two models *are not* the same. According to the methodological literature (see Bandalos and Boehm-Kaufman 2009: 62-71), the first one (EFA) should be preferred to the second one if the goal of the analyses is to assess the dimensionality of the observed variables under investigation, namely uncovering the latent constructs underlying said variables. The second one (PCA) is essentially a method for data reduction, thus should be preferred to the first one if the goal is to produce linear composites of the variables observed. As a consequence, what it could be argued is that the results provided by Shi (2015: 120, 140) and Yang and Tang (2010: 518) are based on a more proper analytical framework, and thus should be taken as more robust results than those provided by Zhai (2018). Nonetheless, caution is needed before completely rely on such argument. None of these studies provide statistics that may help the reader to interpret the obtained results, a part from factor loadings and the variance explained by the factors extracted[33]. Moreover, there is a widespread tendency to label analyses based on the PCA as 'exploratory factor analysis' in the literature, and the authors claiming to have performed EFA on their data do not offer additional explanations about the techniques employed.

A part from methodological reasons, we should be cautious in generalizing the result of these authors also because, as already highlighted, these studies concern just the Chinese case (Zhai 2018; Yang and Tang 2010) or just the Chinese and Taiwanese cases (Shi 2015).

In sum, despite their valuable findings, the dimensionality of political confidence in East Asia remains

[33] Actually, Zhai provides only the eigenvalues and variance explained by the first component extracted, without showing the component structure (see Zhai 2018: 355).

a topic largely unexplored. As a consequence, the following analyses have been produced following a mixed strategy, employing both exploratory and confirmatory techniques (see Sect. 3.4.3). However, building on the discussion presented so far, it appears still possible to produce some loosely intended expectations about what the following analyses may produce. And this topic is the one addressed in the following section of this chapter.

3.3.3 Expectations about Political Confidence Dimensionality in East Asia

The general issues to be discussed are (a) whether a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional structure of political confidence should be expected from the following analyses, (b) whether (at least) a common configuration should be expected across the whole region, and finally (c), if a common configuration holds across the studies considered, what it should be expected in terms of measurement invariance or, in alternative, equivalence.

As already extensively discussed in previous pages (see Sect. 3.2), according to culturalist conceptions of political confidence a one-dimensional configuration of individuals' confidence in institutions should be expected, whereas according to an institutionalist perspective it should be expected a multi-dimensional configuration. The essential argument of the former perspective is that individuals' perception of institutions' and institutional behavior is crucially informed by general orientations and dispositions about the political system as a whole, hence their attitudes toward public institutions and authorities should be observed indicators of a single latent construct. Differently, the main argument of institutionalist accounts is that individuals' should be able to differentiate their evaluations according to some attributes of public institutions or authorities, hence more than one construct underlying individuals' attitudes toward public institutions should be expected[34].

Culturalist assumptions about political confidence dimensionality appear at best debatable, and are clearly at odds with the conception of political confidence used in this study, that considers it as a mixed form of political support (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.2.2). If individuals' confidence in institutions has to be considered as, although partially, informed by short-term evaluations and expectations then arguing that individuals' confidence in (for instance) the national government and confidence in police forces should be expression of a single, generalized attitude does not appear as a particularly compelling argument.

Moreover, as already argued above, previous assessments of political confidence dimensionality in other regions of our globe (see Sect. 3.2.3) and the few that have been realised in the East Asian region support multi-dimensional perspectives, rather than one-dimensional ones. Consequently, there seems to be little support for claiming the existence of a single latent dimension of political confidence. What it should be expected is that, on the average, multidimensional models should perform better than

[34] Actually, when considering some political systems included in the following analyses, the existence of a single latent dimension underlying individuals' confidence in institutions may be expected also adopting an institutionalist perspective. For instance, it could be argued that individuals living in single-party authoritarian regimes (e.g. China and Vietnam) do formulate expectations toward (and evaluations of) their public institutions because the separation of powers in such countries is much more blurred (or simply absent) compared to democratic systems. Nonetheless, the few existing dimensionality analyses of political confidence in East Asia, as already discussed before (see Sect. 3.3.2), have shown that even in a communist single-party state as China individuals' confidence in in institutions cannot be summarized by a single latent orientation. Consequently, this argument appears not particularly compelling. See Shi (2015), as well as Yang and Tang (2010).

one-dimensional models, and this result should not systematically vary across the East Asian political systems considered in the following analyses.

Nonetheless, even considering the multi-dimensionality of political confidence as the most probable characteristic of East Asias' confidence in institutions, *which* configurations of the selected variables should be expected? Previous results do not provide a clear-cut answer about this topic, consequently the first step of the following analyses consists in an exploratory analysis, performed in order to provide some guidance for the following confirmatory analyses.

Nonetheless, the theoretical distinction between *political* and *implementative* institutions appears to be the most solid one to rely on. Moreover, it appears reasonable to expect that this configuration holds across different countries. In democratic, anocratic, and autocratic countries *political institutions* (e.g. national governments, national assemblies, and political parties) consist in the specific institutions dedicated to the *development* of public policies or, in Eastonian terms (1965: 24), those formulating decisions about the authoritative allocation of values, whereas *implementative institutions* (e.g. courts, police, civil services, armed forces) consist in those institutions dedicated to the *implementation* of public policies or, more generally, of the decisions of the former set of institutions. Thus, if we assume that individuals' do formulate their confidence toward institutions taking into account the *function* or the *role* played by said institutions in the political system, then we should expect that a distinction between confidence in *political* and *implementative* institutions should not systematically differ across the range of political systems that are included in the following analyses.

Some idiosyncratic results might be expected. In particular, specific institutions in specific political systems might do not fit into the distinction between the types of poolitical confidence that have been outlined few lines above. The reference here is to the armed forces that in some East Asian countries, especially in the southern part of this region, currently play (or played in the recent past) a crucial political role, while in other settings they have been characterized by a more neutral stance. As a consequence a two-dimensional configuration might fight poorly in countries such as Thailand or Myanmar. Moreover, specific political events might lead the general configuration identified to fit poorly in some specific studies. Nonetheless, as already stated before, what can be expected is that in most of the ABS studies analysed in the following analyses a two-dimensional configuration should be found. Finally, in terms of measurement invariance, at least configural invariance (namely, the same configuration of salient factor loadings is achieved in all the samples analysed) can be expected. What appears difficult to expect are metric and scalar invariance. Metric invariance implies that the intervals of the scale on which the latent constructs are measured are equal across the groups, namely a unit change in the measurement scale has the same meaning across the samples. Achieving it across studies conducted in different political system would represent an important step for measurements comparability, but not particularly strong evidence against the political fear bias, namely the idea that individuals' in autocratic or anocratic countries show higher confidence in institutions because hiding their true feelings toward their own institutions and authorities, as already discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.2). What would represent a rather strong argument against said bias would be achieving scalar invariance, namely the fact all the respondents of the studies considered that have the same values on the latent constructs have the same expected score on the observed indicators. Nonetheless, scalar invariance is a seldom achieved criterion (cf. Davidov *et al.* 2012: 559) especially

when comparing studies of countries characterized by very different structural or systemic characteristics (e.g. Schneider 2017: 979-981). As a consequence, although hoping for it, the achievement of this level of measurement invariance is definitely not expected.
In sum, expectations about the dimensionality analyses presented below can be summarized as follows: (a) overall, multi-dimensional factor analysis models should perform substantially better than one-dimensional ones; (b) the same configuration of salient factors should be achieved across (at least, most of) the studies analysed, and this configuration is expected to be two-dimensional, with a factor underlying items concerning individuals' confidence in political institutions (national governments, national assemblies, and political parties) and another factor underlying items tapping individuals' confidence in implementative institutiosn (courts, police, civil services, and armed forces); (c) consequently configural invariance should be achieved across (most of) the studies analysed, while stricter forms of measurement invariance, especially scalar invariance, are not expected to be achieved.

3.4 Data and Methods

3.4.1 ABS Operationalization of Political Confidence

The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) operationalization of institutional confidence consists in a battery of items concerning respondents' attitudes toward twelve institutions, namely: top political offices (presidents in presidential systems, and prime ministers in parliamentary ones), courts, national governments, political parties, national assemblies (parliaments, congresses, and the like), civil services, armed forces, the police, local governments, the armed forces, newspapers, the television, newspapers, the electoral commission, and NGOs. With the sole exception of the top political offices for the first round of the ABS, and other sample- or country-specific operationalizations, respondents' confidence toward these institutions has been scrutinized in all the countries of four rounds of the first four rounds of the ABS.
The battery scrutinizing individual confidence in institutions is based on a single question worded as it follows:

> I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust do you have in them? Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?

The question above, then, allows to analyse four aspects of the ABS operationalisation, namely: the question wording, the number of the response categories, and the nature of the lower end of the *continuum* assumed to be measured by these items.
About the question wording, as it is possible to read above, the question does not ask for respondents' *confidence* but rather respondents' *trust* in institutions. This may appear at odds with the conceptualization presented in the first chapter (Ch. 1, Sect. 1.2.1) in which it has been extensively contended that the notion of confidence shall be preferred to the notion of trust. Yet, this is not the case. While the notion of confidence allows to conceptualize the phenomenon under investigation in a more precise

manner, identifying some of its properties and consequently distinguishing it from interpersonal and generalized social trust, in the vernacular the two notions overlap. Very likely the analytical distinction between these two notions is "not a salient one for most citizens" (Schnaudt 2019: 51) and while "we may distinguish conceptually between trust and confidence, empirically the two are hardly separable." (van der Meer 2017: 4). In other words, what can be assumed is that if ABS items would be reworded using the term 'confidence' instead of 'trust' very likely we would not see any difference in the way respondents answer this question.

The second issue to be mentioned consists in the number of response categories of these items, and arguably it represents the most problematic issue of the ABS operationalization, mostly for its implications for the following empirical analyses. Four categories, ordinal items (also known as Likert-type items or simply Likert items) represent a relatively standard of surveys operationalisation of individual confidence in institutions. Indeed, the same number and wording of response categories is employed by the WVS, as mentioned few pages above (see Sect. 2.1.1). Moreover four-categories ordinal items represent one of the formats most widely used for other survey items, along with items with five or seven response categories. Exceptions to these response formats are more fine-grained measures, such as those employed by the European Social Survey (ESS) that in the case of survey items measuring political confidence, and other attitudes, employ eleven answer categories (see Citrin and Stoker 2018: 51; see also Newton *et al.* 2018: 44; Schnaudt 2019: 51). Despite their widespread usage, however, four-categories ordinal items bear some crucial consequences for empirical analyses based on them. First, some authors argue that more detailed answering options, or longer response scales, may improve the measurement of political confidence (e.g. Zmerli *et al.* 2007, pp. 46–50). However this issue represent a relatively minor one. Indeed, despite the reliability of these items in tapping individual political confidence toward single institutions, the limited number of categories represents a challenge because they may actually bias some empirical findings, such as those based on correlational analyses about the relationship between individual confidence and other variables (e.g. generalized social trust, see Newton *et al.* 2018: 44), or more importantly when performing covariance structure analyses, such as exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Since the latter analyses are the specific methods employed to address the dimensionality of political confidence in this chapter this issue is discussed more thoroughly in the following pages (see Sect. 3.4.3).

Finally, the last issue concerning the operationalization of ABS items tapping respondents' political confidence concerns the interpretation of the lower end of the dimension assumed to be measured by these items. While the highest response category may be easily interpreted as tapping into very high levels of confidence in institutions, whether the lowest category shall be interpreted as an indication of lack of confidence, or skepticism, or cynicism, or active distrust of political institutions remains unclear. This issue represent an ongoing issue about the measurement of political confidence (see Cook and Gronke 2005; Van de Walle and Six 2013: 161-163; see also Mishler and Rose 1997, pp. 421–424), and affects ABS measurements as well. Yet, in this study the lowest response category will be loosely interpreted as an indication of respondents' lack of confidence. Whether this should be interpreted as a symptom of skepticism or active distrust remain an open question that will not be addressed, and both these possible interpretations will be considered in interpreting the following findings.

In sum, the ABS operationalization of individual institutional confidence follows a rather standard

format. Nonetheless, this operationalization does carry some issues, at both the conceptual and empirical levels. Nonetheless, the most serious issues concern the number of response categories available. Indeed, the ordinal nature of these items, and in particular the few response categories, may crucially affect the empirical analyses performed, as explained more in detail in the following pages (see Sect. 3.4.3).

3.4.2 Variables selection

The basic set of survey items analysed in this chapter are eight four-categories Likert type items concerning ABS respondents' confidence in several political institutions, namely national governments, top political offices (head of the state in presidential systems and prime ministers in parliamentary ones), party systems, courts, civil services, police, and armed forces. Other items measuring individuals confidence in local governments, mass media —television and newspapers— and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not taken into consideration. The rationale behind this selection is based on two main reasons. First, the specific object of individual political confidence, as conceptualized in the first chapter (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.2.1), are institutions whose function is the development and implementation of public policies. This property clearly rules out the possibility to employ items concerning mass media or NGOs. Second, the specific focus of our analyses are *national* political institutions, and this choice leads to do not take into consideration the ABS item measuring individual confidence in local governments. This decision is more arbitrary than the first one, because local governments are indeed institutions dedicated to the development and/or implementation of public policies. Nonetheless, there are several reasons why these items have not been considered. First, there is a substantive vagueness concerning the empirical referents of this item in each country considered. Second, the main aims of this work is to explain cross-national differences of political confidence, and the theories and explanations of political confidence considered in this study are essentially tuned to explain individuals' confidence in national institutions. Consequently, most of the covariates of political confidence at the aggregate-level of analysis are essentially related to country-level ones, most of which cannot be disaggregate at lower levels of analysis. Finally, most of individual-level variables that may be linked to political confidence, at least considering the ABS set of items, are essentially variables aimed to measure individual attitudes about country-level issues —e.g. sociotropic evaluations of economic performances— or other attitudes more easily related to country-level phenomena —e.g. evaluative attitudes concerning the nature of political authority. These reasons do not completely rule out the possibility to include individuals' confidence in local governments in the following analyses. Yet, including this item would lead this work away from its specific aims, and it would require additional explanations and analyses, with relatively little gains. Consequently, in this study the basic set of items considered is the one presented above.

Nonetheless, in addition to the theoretically- or conceptually-driven selection presented above, the selection of the items for the following empirical analyses is also driven by data availability. Almost all the items mentioned above have been administered in the samples composing the four waves of the ABS. Nonetheless, despite few items missing in some samples, a relevant pattern of missingness is the one concerning the ABS item tapping individuals' confidence in the top political office (presidents or

Table 3.1: Dimenstionality Analysis Data Basis

Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N	Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N
Cambodia	2008	2	1000	Myanmar	2015	4	1620
	2012	3	1200	Philippines	2002	1	1200
	2015	4	1200		2005	2	1200
China	2002	1	3183		2010	3	1200
	2007	2	5098		2015	4	1200
	2011	3	3473	Singapore	2006	2	1012
Hong Kong	2007	2	849		2010	3	1000
	2012	3	1177		2014	4	1039
	2016	4	1217	South Korea	2003	1	1500
Indonesia	2006	2	1581		2006	2	1212
	2011	3	1530		2011	3	1207
	2016	4	1550		2015	4	1200
Japan	2003	1	1418	Taiwan	2001	1	1415
	2007	2	1067		2006	2	1587
	2010	3	1880		2010	3	1592
	2016	4	1081		2014	4	1657
Malaysia	2007	2	1418	Thailand	2002	1	1546
	2011	3	1214		2006	2	1546
	2014	4	1207		2010	3	1512
Mongolia	2003	1	1144		2014	4	1199
	2006	2	1211	Vietnam	2006	2	1200
	2010	3	1210		2010	3	1191
	2014	4	1228		2015	4	1200

Notes: "N": Sample Size. "Wave": ABS round.

prime ministers). This item is missing in all the samples of the first wave of the ABS (see Appendix A, Table A.2), and moreover is missing for all the Chinese samples. Hence, since one of the main aim of the following analyses is to investigate the dimensionality of political confidence maximizing the data at disposal, the latter survey item is not considered in the following pages, though descriptive statistics are provided in the appendix related to this chapter (see Appendix A). Consequently, the basic pool of items investigated in the following pages sums up to seven items, namely respondents' confidence in national goverments, national assemblies, political parties, civil services, courts, police, and armed forces. This full set has been admistered in 46 of the 48 samples composing the four waves of the ABS, as summarized by Table 3.2. The two missing samples are the Chinese one of 2015 (in which the question concerning confidence in the the party has not been asked) and the Hongkongese one of 2001 (in which the question concerning confidence in the police has not been asked).

3.4.3 Methods and Research Strategy

The aim of the following analyses is to uncover the latent constructs underlying the variables considered, and for this reason procedures based on the common factor model are used instead of other

procedures, based on other models and developed for different purposes (such as PCA)[35]. More specifically, the procedures employed to analyse political confidence dimensionality are exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Although both methods are based on the common factor model and may use similar estimation methods, the two models serve different purposes and present crucial differences. The main difference between these two models is that CFA consists in a method based on theory or prior research evidence, while EFA solutions are essentially data-driven. Whereas in EFA the researcher can only preselect few properties of the model (e.g. the number of factors to be retained), with CFA the researcher usually tests a much more parsimonious solution, specifying a number of characteristics of the model (cf. Brown 2015: 42-46). Hence, EFA allows to 'explore' data, given some properties of the model used, while CFA allows the researcher to test more concisely and precisely a theory or a specific hypotheses.

The basic differences between these two techniques are particularly useful to investigate political confidence dimensionality in East Asia. Indeed, as discussed above, despite the existence of theoretical arguments, to date almost no dimensionality analyses have been performed on this topic in this particular region, except few country-specific analyses. Hence, an approach based on both exploratory and confirmatory logic appears the most proper to deal with the phenomenon under investigation in this specific context. Thus, the empirical analyses performed have been conducted following a mixed strategy. First, an EFA has been performed in order to understand whether political confidence should be understood as a one- or multi-dimensional construct. Once defined the most likely dimensionality for the data, then these factor structures have been analysed, thus assessing to what extent EFA findings reflect or depart from the one- or multi-dimensional conceptions of political confidence discussed above (see Sect. 3.2). Building on EFA results and the just mentioned theoretical perspectives, then the analyses turn to CFA. More specifically, several CFA (or MGCFA) models, based on different hypotheses, have been tested in order to understand whether more parsimonious models can be generalized and to what extent measurement invariance can be achieved across the data at disposal. Turning to the specific characteristics of the models chosen, the EFA model used in the following analyses relies on the ordinal least squares (OLS) estimator with oblique rotation (oblimin), and one iteration of communalities. Given the ordinal nature of the items selected, correlation matrices are based on polychoric correlation. About CFA the analyses, both single-group and multi-group, have been based on the unweighted least squares (ULS) estimator[36]. As for EFA, latent factors correlation has not been constrained, both in the configural models and the constrained ones of the MGCFA. About the assessment of measurement invariance (Meredith 1993, Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998), the study relies on the three-steps strategy of MGCFA (Davidov *et al.* 2014), comparing the baseline (configural) model with more restricted models. The first criteria to assess measurement equivalence has been the assessment of the standard cutoff criteria among the models (Hu and Bentler 1999). The second criteria has been the assessment of the change of this fit indices between the configural models

[35]Although under many circumstances PCA may lead to similar results to those obtained by procedures based on the common factor model, such as EFA, the latter model is preferred since methodologically and philosophically more in line with the purposes of the following analyses. For a detailed discussion about the differences between component and common factor models, as well as a review of the methodological and philosophical debate concerning these two models, see Bandalos and Boehm-Kaufman (2009: 62-71).

[36]Several alternative estimators have been considered, both considering existing methodological studies (e.g. DiStefano and Morgan 2014; Forero *et al.* 2009) and preliminary empirical analyses.

and the constrained ones (Chen 2007).

Before addressing the results of the analyses, one issue concerning CFA models fit assessment needs to be discussed. In order to evaluate different CFA models researchers normally rely on a set of goodness-of-fit statistics that tend to vary across different research fields. Yet, approximately during the last three decades, thanks to an increasing number of simulation studies, this set of fit indices has reached a relatively stable configuration. Nowadays, at least in social sciences, the most used fit indices consist in two incremental fit indices, the Comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), one absolute fit index, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and a parsimony correction index, the already root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, cf. Brown 2015: 67-73). Although methodologists and simulation geeks never sleep, nowadays a relatively widespread consensus about the goodness-of-fit cutoff criteria for these indices has been reached. These indices have been extensively tested with analyses based on interval data and models using maximum likelihood (ML) estimators (for an overview see Brown 2015: 67-75). Nonetheless, few studies have been performed looking at the behavior of these indices in analyses based on ordinal data, and thus employing weighted least square (WLS) estimators. Thus, although taking as reference the goodness-of-fit evaluation methods developed analysing interval data (see, *inter alia*, Bentler 1990; Browne and Cudeck 1993; Chen 2007; Hu and Bentler 1999), CFA and MGCFA models goodness-of-fit will be carefully evaluated avoiding sharp verdicts and comparing the results of different criteria. The cutoff values for the point estimates of the selected fit indices are the following: RMSEA ≤ 0.08 is considered as a sign of adequate model fit, and RMSEA ≤ 0.05 as a sign of good model fit, values between 0.08-0.10 are considered as signs of mediocre fit, and values over 0.10 are strongly rejected (see Browne and Cudeck 1993); CFI and TLI values in the range 0.90-0.95 are sign of acceptable model fit (Bentler 1990), values over .95 are considered values of good model fit, and values below 0.9 are considered as signs of misfit (see Hu and Bentler 1999). Nonetheless, the estimator chosen for the CFA and MGCFA, namely the ULS, has proven to produce inflated fit indices for the CFI and TLI. Consequently, the comparisons of CFA and MGCFA models has been mostly based on RMSEA values. Moreover, although considered in many dimensionality studies, SRMR does not appear to perform well in CFA models based on categorical indicators, thus it has not been considered for model evaluation (see Yu 2002).

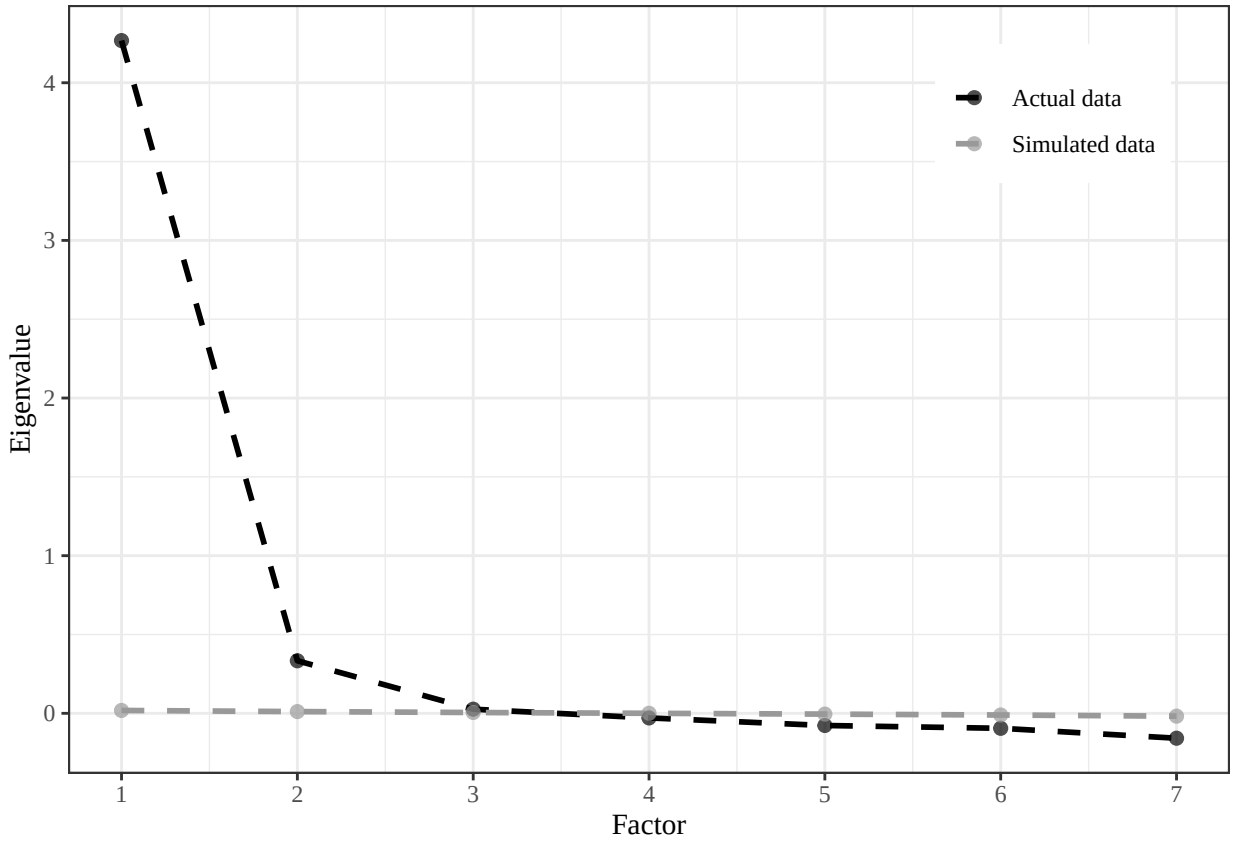
3.5 Results and Findings

3.5.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The following analyses have been dedicated to explore the dimensionality of seven ABS ordinal items, ranging from 1 ("None at all") to 4 ("Great deal of trust") [37]. These items measure ABS respondents' confidence in national goverments, national assemblies, political parties, civil services, courts, police, and armed forces. These survey items have been admistered in 46 of the 48 samples composing the four waves of the ABS, thus determining the general data pool on which the analyses have been performed. The exploratory analysis has been applied to a pooled dataset composed by the 46 national samples just

[37] The categories for samples of the first, third, and fourth round of the ABS have been reversed from the original coding, hence with higher categories indicating higher levels of confidence and lower categories lower levels of confidence. The second round of the ABS already employed a coding in line with the one specified above.

Figure 3.1: EFA Parallel Analysis.



mentioned. Although not particularly methodologically sound, but quite widespread in the political science field[38], this broad-brush analysis aims to check whether or not ABS data conform to or depart from the conceptions of political confidence discussed previously (see Sects. 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). More fine-grained and theory-driven analyses are left for the confirmatory analyses of the next paragraph.

One of the most crucial aspects, if not *the most* crucial, of EFA consists in determining the number of factors to be retained. The strategy to address this issue has been based on two criteria, namely the result of a parallel analysis (Horn 1956), and the evaluation of the value of two fit indices, namely the TLI and the RMSEA (for the cutoff values see Sect. 3.4.3). About the first criterion, this procedure consists in a comparison of eigenvalues obtained from sample data to eigenvalues one would expect to obtain from completely random data. The eigenvalues that would be expected from random data are then compared with the eigenvalues actually produced by the data, and the number of factors to retain is then the number of common factors with eigenvalues greater than the eigenvalues expected from random data. There is evidence that this procedure may underperform with big samples, thus suggesting more dimensions than those underlying the data. Consequently a stricter criterion for parallel analysis factor retention has been applied[39]. Nonetheless this solution may still not avoid

[38]For instance, in the renowned and already mentioned work by Rothstein and Stolle, in order to show the multi-dimensionality of political confidence, the authors perform a principal component analysis on 56 samples of the third wave of the WVS (2008: 285).

[39]The stricter procedure consists in comparing the 95% confidence interval of the random data with the eigenvalues

over-dimensionalisation. For this reason, the analyses have been accompanied by an evaluation of covariance matrix fit indices, such as the TLI and the RMSEA. The rationale of this approach is that the number of factors to be retained should be the one referred to the model that constitutes a substantial improvement in fit over a model with less factors, but for which a model with one more factor provides no substantial improvement (see Browne and Cudeck 1993).

The results about the number of factors to retain are mixed. The parallel analyses (Figure 3.1) suggests to retain three factors. Nonetheless, as the figure shows, the third factor appears on the brink of being rejected[40], and moreover the simulated data values are essentially flattened due to the high number of observations on which the analyses are based. In short, despite the parallel analysis suggested solution may be affected by over-dimensionalisation. Looking at the TLI and RMSEA values the situation remains substantially unsolved (see Table 1). Both the TLI and RMSEA values radically improve when moving from the one-dimensional model (Model 1) to the two-dimensional (Model 2). Nevertheless, while the TLI rises above the cutoff value of 0.95, the RMSEA value remains above the cutoff value of 0.08, both considering its point estimate (0.087) and the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval (0.084). Indeed, both the point estimate and the upper bound of the 95% confidence interval of the RMSEA fall below the cutoff value only with a three-factors solution (for which said RMSEA values are 0.072 and 0.077). Given these results, the solution adopted has been to fit three models requesting a one-dimensional, a two-dimensional, and a three-dimensional solution, as displayed in the table below (Table 1). Before commenting the factor structures of the EFA models, one relatively robust finding may be already commented, namely the substantial *rejection* of the one-dimensional model. In the parallel analysis (Table 3.2) a clear second factor stands out from the graph. Then, considering the fit indices of the one-factor solution, both TLI and RMSEA are well far away from acceptable-fit values.

The results concerning the factor structures tend to confirm the relative weakness of the one-dimensional solution. What the configuration of factor loadings and related statistics show is that one distinct dimension of political confidence does exist, namely a dimension concerning 'political' institutions, as defined earlier in this chapter (see Sects. 3.2.2 and 3.3.2).

produced by the actual data, rather than using the point estimates of random data. See Glorfeld (1995).

[40]The eigenvalue from the actual data is equal to 0.026 and the one determined by simulated data is equal to 0.005.

Table 3.2: EFA Models, Factor Structures, Correlations, and Fit

Factor Structure & Correlation*

	Model 1			Model 2				Model 3				
Variable	F1	Comm.	Uniq.	F1	F2	Comm.	Uniq.	F1	F2	F3	Comm.	Uniq.
National Government	**0.870**	0.756	0.244	**0.816**	0.099	0.790	0.210	**0.743**	0.069	0.125	0.775	0.225
National Assembly	**0.866**	0.750	0.250	**0.910**	0.004	0.834	0.166	**0.891**	0.031	0.005	0.839	0.161
Party System	**0.815**	0.665	0.335	**0.921**	-0.061	0.774	0.226	**0.922**	-0.036	-0.014	0.789	0.211
Civil Service	**0.684**	0.468	0.532	0.260	**0.492**	0.490	0.510	0.207	**0.476**	0.078	0.485	0.515
Courts	**0.735**	0.540	0.460	0.386	**0.407**	0.537	0.463	0.016	0.006	**0.984**	0.995	0.004
Police	**0.722**	0.522	0.478	-0.058	**0.929**	0.791	0.209	-0.077	**0.883**	0.057	0.752	0.248
Armed Forces	**0.753**	0.566	0.434	0.298	**0.529**	0.591	0.409	0.268	**0.627**	-0.067	0.629	0.371

Factor Correlation

1	0.705	F1
	1	F2

Factor Correlation

1	0.708	0.641	F1
	1	0.661	F2
		1	F3

Model Fit**

	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3			
Variance Accounted	F1	Total	F1	F2	Total	F1	F2	F3	Total
	61%	61%	42%	27%	69%	36%	23%	16%	75%
TLI	0.859		0.967			0.977			
RMSEA (95% c.i.)	0.179 (0.177 - 0.181)		0.087 (0.084 - 0.090)			0.072 (0.067 - 0.077)			

*Note: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Estimator: Ordinary least squares (OLS). Rotation: Oblimin. N. = 55'832. *Factor loadings ≥ 0.4 in bold. "F1": First factor. "F2": Second factor. "F3": Third factor. "Comm.": Communalities. "Uniq.": Uniquenesses. **TLI: Tucker-Levis fit index. RMSEA: Root mean square of error approximation fit index.*

In the first model ABS items tapping respondents' confidence in national governments, national assemblies, and party systems represent the variables with higher loadings on the single factor, and in the following models they keep strong loadings on the same factor. Yet, what the factor loadings patterns show is that a second dimension exists as well. However, the picture concerning this second dimension appears more nuanced. Indeed, although at a first sight the results of the second model may suggest the existence of a second latent dimension tapping 'implementative' institutions, when considering the magnitude of the loadings relevant differences can be identified. Confidence in police forces clearly loads on the second dimension. The second largest loading is then the one concerning confidence in the armed forces, whose value on the second factor however falls far behind the one concerning the police. By the same token, the item tapping respondents' confidence in the civil service clearly loads on the second factor, although with a relatively lower magnitude. However, the most striking result of this Model 2 consist in the values concerning individuals' confidence in courts. Confidence in courts does not uniquely loads on the second factor with others 'implementative' institutions, although reaching a value above the threshold selected for factor loadings (0.4). The loading of this item on the first factor (0.386) is slightly below the value obtained on the second factor (0.407). This unexpected behavior of the item tapping respondents' confidence in institutions becomes even more puzzling when turning to the three factors model where the item loading on the third, new factor is indeed the item tapping individuals' confidence in courts. In the three-dimensional model, indeed, the factor structure remains almost unchanged, with the sole exception of the latter item, characterized by a extremely high loading (0.984), almost on the brink of an offending estimate.

Overall, what these results suggest is that at least two dimensions of political confidence exist, in East asia. These attitudes toward different political institutions remains highly correlated, as the factor correlations show. Yet, according to EFA results, the main finding of this exploratory analysis is that East Asians *do distinguish* between institutions, and their confidence in political institutions *cannot* be conceived as a single, generalized attitude toward the political system. However, what these results suggest is also that while East Asians may have similar expectations toward national governments, national assemblies, and political parties, their confidence in other political institutions, concerned mostly with the implementation of public policies, is less monolithic. While confidence in police and armed forces, and to some extent also confidence in the civil service, is clearly distinct from confidence in governments, parliaments, and parties, the same does not apply when looking at respondents' confidence in the legal system. In particular, the results of the two-dimensional model suggest that East Asians confidence in courts tends to be related to confidence in 'political' institutions, and this leaves us wondering whether this should be considered a finding that reflects a general pattern across East Asian societies, or whether this result may be driven by the characteristics of political confidence in some countries. Indeed, what it may be hypothesized is that confidence in courts may be more related to confidence in political institutions in those countries where the separation of powers is lacking or totally absent, thus offuscating a sharper distinction between courts and political institutions in other countries. For instance, the Chinese courts system represents a clear example of an institutional setting in which the role of political institutions is *officially* intertwined with the functioning of legal institutions[41], a characteristic that applies to the Vietnamese case as well. However, the EFA does

[41]For instance, as Manion underlines, the functioning of the Chinese courts and criminal investigations system is indeed

not allow to solve this puzzle, and for this reason the following analyses, based on CFA, have been partially tuned to investigate it.

3.5.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

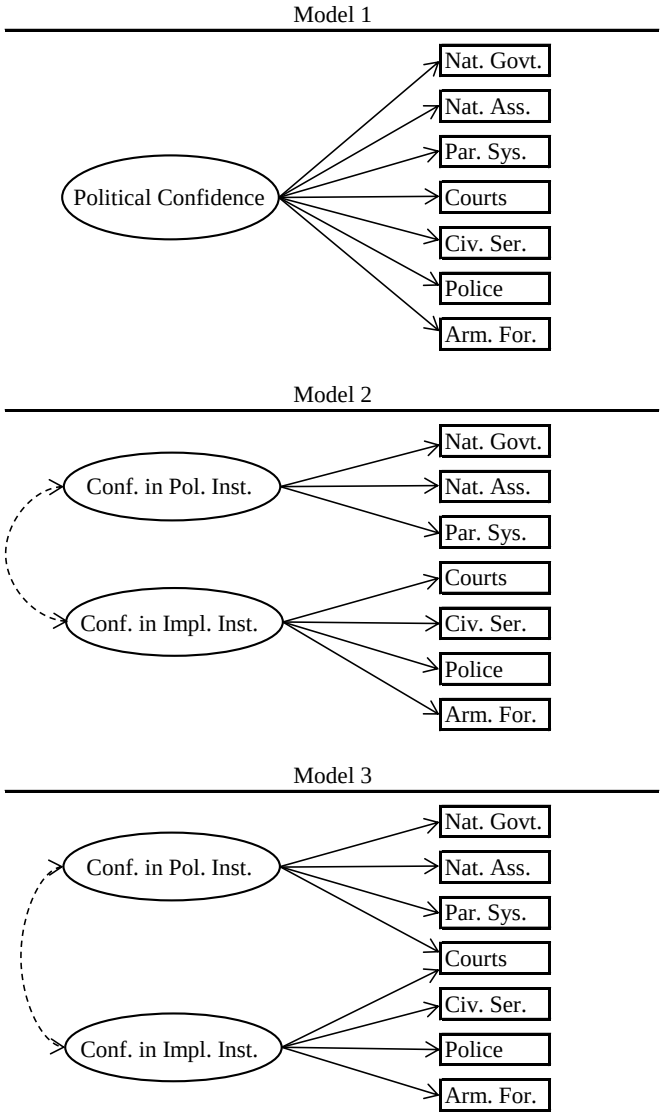
The analyses based on the CFA framework have been realized in two steps. The first consisted in fitting three CFA models in each ABS sample of the 46 constituting the data basis of this chapter (see Sect. 3.4.2). Then the fit indices of these models have been evaluated, thus determining the samples in which each model perfomed better, and the aggregate number of samples in which each model reached different levels of fit.

The second step has been then dedicated to a measurement invariance (MI) analysis based on a multi-group CFA (or MGCFA), aimed to determine to what extent the models used for the single-group analyses could express cross-national equivalent measurements of the selected variables.

The models that have been tested are displayed in Figure 3.2. The first model (Model 1) consists in the CFA specification of the one-dimensional conception of political confidence, in which all the ABS items considered load on a single latent dimension, thus reflecting the one-factor solution of the EFA. The second model (Model 2) consists in a model distinguishing between confidence in political and implementative institutions, with confidence in national governments, national assemblies, and political parties loading on the former latent dimension, and confidence in courts, civil service, police, and armed forces loading on the latter. Althoug theoretically driven, this structure has been modeled partially considering the second EFA solution. The following model has been built with a partially different logic. Indeed, the third (Model 3) mostly reflects the previous one, but it includes a cross-loading for the item measuring individual confidence in courts, inspired by the rather ambiguous behavior of this item in the two-factors EFA solution.

heavily influenced by the decisions of the procuratorates, judicial bodies overseeing criminal investigations, reviewing cases, and supervising court trials, whose role however is essentially driven by political motivations (see Manion 2015: 396-397).

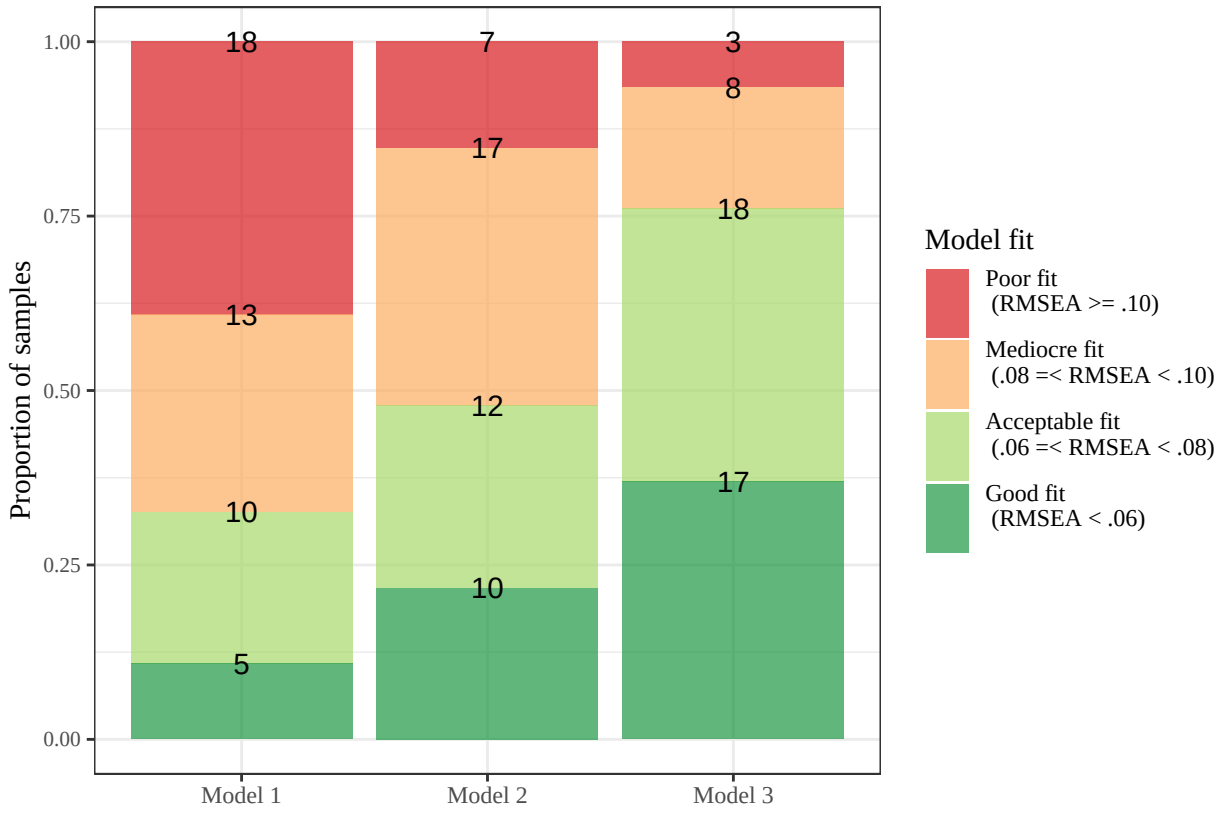
Figure 3.2: CFA Models (1 to 3)



Note: "Conf. in Pol. Inst.": Confidence in political institutions. "Conf. in Impl. Inst.": Confidence in implementative institutions. "Nat. Govt.": National government. "Nat. Ass.": National assembly. "Par. Sys.": Party system. "Civ. Ser.": Civil service. "Arm. For.": Armed forces.

As already mentioned at the outset of this section, in the first step of the confirmatory analyses these models have been applied to ABS study considered (see Sect. 3.4.2, Table 3.2). Then the goddness of fit of each model for each sample has been evaluated. Figure 3.3 shows the results of these analyses, namely *the number of samples* in which each model displays a good, or an acceptable, or a mediocre, or a poor level of fit, according to the RMSEA values[42]. At a first sight these results seems to reflect prior findings based on the EFA solutions. The first model, the one reflecting a one-dimensional conception of political confidence, reaches at least an acceptable level of fit in only tiny minority of the selected 46 ABS samples, that is in 15 samples, while reaching a mediocre level of fit in 13 samples, and showing a poor fit in 18 samples. Hence, this result provides additional evidence showing the weakness of one-dimensional conceptions of political confidence in summarizing citizens' confidence in institutions, at least in the East Asian context. Nonetheless, a clear-cut two-dimensional conception does not seem to represent a viable alternative. Indeed, Model 2, although performing better than the previous one, still fails to reach an acceptable level of fit in most of the samples considered, namely 22 samples. In the remaining ones (31 samples) this model at best reaches a mediocre level of fit. The scenery, however, becomes brighter once turning to the last model (Model 3). Indeed the hypothesis built on the EFA results concerning the ambiguous nature of confidence in courts seems to hold in most of East Asian countries. As Figure 3.3 shows, this model tend to perform at least in an acceptable fashion in most of the samples (namely, 35 samples).

Figure 3.3: Goodness of Fit of Three CFA Models across the ABS Studies



[42]The values considered are the average point estimates of the RMSEA of each model in each ABS sample

The first general finding of these analyses is that multi-dimensional models should be preferred to one-dimensional ones for modeling political confidence in East Asia. In some studies, a one-dimensional solution may fit the data as well, as discussed below. Yet, a two-dimensional model built allowing the item measuring confidence in courts to load on both latent constructs (namely, Model 3) seems to represent the best solution to synthesize East Asians political confidence, at least considering this set of survey items. Combining the count of samples displayed above with a look at *the specific samples* in which each model fits well offers us the possibility to make some further speculations. In particular it allows to roughly investigate some expectations made earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 3.3.2), namely whether and how differences concerning the extent to which a political system allows public contestation affects the dimensionality of political confidence.

Overall, there are no clear-cut patterns, as Table 3.3 shows. At a first sight, the first model seems to do not perform well in fully-fledged democracy (such as Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan). In countries characterized by such regime type the CFA models that perform better (see the 'Good fit' and 'Acceptable fit' categories in Table 3.3) are the second, and the third third model. And this partially holds true when considering an electoral democracy such as the Philippines. Nonetheless, other countries characterized by a substantial degree of electoral competitiveness and pluralism (such as Mongolia or to a lesser extent Indonesia) appear among the countries in which the first model fit at least in an acceptable way. Thus, the idea that a democratic institutional arrangement (that is, political systems characterized by high levels of political contestation in which the relationship between institutions is characterized by the separations of power) drives away from a one-dimensional conception of political confidence is not supported by the results of these analyses.

Then, turning to closed autocracies, such as China and Vietnam, the results are even more mixed. China does not appear even among the countries in which the the one-dimensional one fits reaching a borderline RMSEA value (namely, between 0.08 and 0.10). The chinese samples, indeed, appear in this category only considering the second and the third models. All the Vietnamese samples, on the contrary, appear among the samples in which the first model has a RMSEA value below 0.08. Consequently, considering again speculations about the impact of differences about essential dimensions of political system on the dimensionality of individual political confidence may be plainly rejected. When considering, finally, hybrid regimes characterized by more or less important degrees of political contestation and electoral competitiviness (such as Cambodia, Malaysia, or Singapore), the results are even more complicated. In sum, general regime characteristics do not seem to be decisive in determining individual confidence in institutions. Again, some patterns can be identified, but are far from being robust findings.

The second general and rather interesting finding derived by the results of the CFA is that the third model fits even in countries in which one may expect a different configuration of individual political confidence due to the role played by the military, as hypothesized earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 3.3.3). As already mentioned before, the role of the military is or it has been recently rather crucial for the political dynamics of more than few Southeast Asian countries. In Thailand the armed forces, even during the last two decades, more than once stepped into the political arena overthrowing democratically elected governments. In Indonesia the military represented until the late 1990s the backbone of Suharto's regime. Currently in Myanmar the armed forces can be reasonably considered the play-

Table 3.3: Samples in which CFA Models Reach a Mediocre, Acceptable, or Good Level of Fit

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Good fit (RMSEA < .06)	Cambodia (2012), Indonesia (2011), Malaysia (2007), Mongolia (2003), Myanmar (2015),	Cambodia (2008, 2012, 2015), Indonesia (2011), Malaysia (2007), Mongolia (2003, 2006, 2010), Myanmar (2015), Thailand (2002)	Cambodia (2008, 2012, 2015), Indonesia (2011), Malaysia (2007, 2011, 2014), Mongolia (2003, 2006, 2010), Myanmar (2015), Philippines (2002), Singapore (2006, 2010, 2014), Taiwan (2010), Thailand (2002)
Acceptable fit (.06 ≤ RMSEA < .08)	Cambodia (2008, 2015), Indonesia (2006), Malaysia (2011), Mongolia (2006, 2010), Philippines (2002), Vietnam (2006, 2010, 2015)	Indonesia (2006), Japan (2007, 2016), Malaysia (2011, 2014), Mongolia (2014), Philippines (2002), Vietnam (2006, 2010, 2015), Taiwan (2001) Thailand (2014), Vietnam (2006, 2010, 2015)	Indonesia (2006, 2016), Japan (2007, 2016), Mongolia (2014), Philippines (2010, 2014), South Korea (2003, 2006, 2011), Taiwan (2001, 2006, 2014), Thailand (2006, 2010, 2014), Vietnam (2010, 2015)
Mediocre fit (.08 ≤ RMSEA < .10)	Hong Kong (2012, 2016), Indonesia (2016), Japan (2007), Malaysia (2014), Mongolia (2014), Philippines (2010), Singapore (2006), Taiwan (2001, 2006, 2010), Thailand (2002, 2014)	China (2002, 2007, 2011), Hong Kong (2012, 2016), Indonesia (2016), Philippines (2010, 2014), South Korea (2003, 2011), Singapore (2006, 2010, 2014), Taiwan (2006, 2010, 2014), Thailand (2006)	China (2002, 2007, 2011), Hong Kong (2012, 2016), Philippines (2005), South Korea (2015), Vietnam (2006)

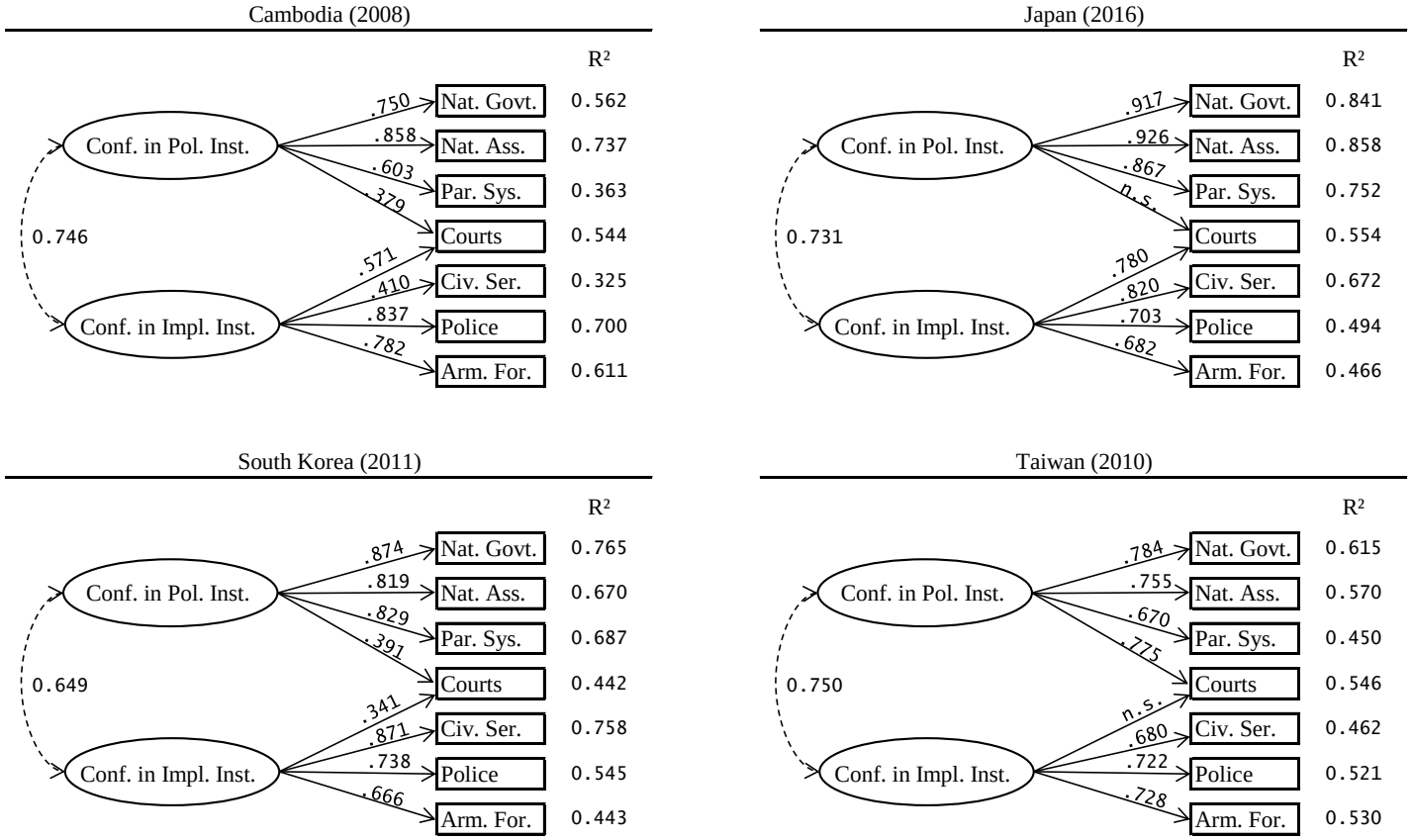
Note: Numbers in parentheses represent ABS surveys years.

makers of that political system. Given this key political role of the armed forces in these countries one may expect that individuals in these countries would build their expectations toward this institution partially in accordance with expectations they have toward, say, the national government, if not other 'partisan institutions'. Yet, this seems not to be the case (see Table 2). In these countries the latter two models, models in which confidence in the army loads on a distinct dimension from the one on which load other political institutions, fit fairly well, at least according to RMSEA values. Moreover, additional models not shown here have been tested in order to investigate this issue and all the models in which confidence in the armed forces loaded on the same latent construct of confidence in the national government showed borderline or even poor fit, or lower factor loadings than those characterizing respondents' confidence in the military in the models tested here. What this implies is that, despite the political their active role in some countries, expectations toward the armed forces tend to remain distinct from those that individuals form toward political institutions such as national governments, national assemblies, or political parties. The third general finding of the analyses presented here may be probably considered the most interesting one, at least along with the first. As already noted, the third model fits in an acceptable fashion, according to RMSEA values, in 13 of the 14 countries covered by the ABS rounds investigated in this study. The fact that this model is the best fitting ones suggests, then, that in East Asia expectations toward and evaluations of legal systems tend to be related not

only to those regarding other 'implementative' institutions (such as police, or the civil service) but also to those regarding 'political' institutions, such as political parties or national governments. At a first sight, this finding seems to plainly contradict theoretical conceptions of political confidence built in other regions of the world. Confidence toward the legal system, that in many institutional settings, especially democratic ones, should be arguably one of the most (if not *the most*) neutral institution of a democracy, are actually an expression, at least partially, of the individuals' confidence in political institutions.

At this point of the discourse, it should be noted that the fact that the item measuring respondents' confidence in courts is allowed to load on both latent constructs *does not imply* that this item should load equally on both dimensions. Consequently, in order to understand how this item actually behaves, the factor structure of Model 3, across those samples in which it reached at least an acceptable level of fit, has been investigated. And this investigation has produced a rather puzzling scenario, summarized by the figure below (Figure 3.4). This figure consists in the factor structure of Model 3 applied to four different ABS samples, namely the Cambodian sample of 2008, the Japanese of 2016, the South Korean of 2011, and the Taiwanese of 2010. In two cases the item measuring respondents' confidence in courts loads on both latent dimensions. In the model concerning the Korean sample it loads almost equally on both the latent dimension concerning confidence in 'partisan' institutions and the latent dimension concerning 'neutral' political confidence, although with low factor loadings (the standardized values for the two loadings are respectively equal to 0.391 and 0.341). In the Cambodian sample, then, this item tend to load more on the latent dimension measured by confidence in other neutral institutions (the standardized factor loading is equal to 0.571), although maintaining a significant, although weak, factor loading (0.379) on the other latent construct. A different picture is given, however, by the other two cases. In the Japanese model confidence in courts loads strongly on the latent construct concerning confidence in neutral institutions (0.780), while resulting not significant for the other latent construct. In the Taiwanese case, however, the opposite holds true. Taiwanese respondents' confidence in courts is clearly a reflection of confidence in 'partisan' institutions (standardized factor loadings equal to .775). Furthermore, it should be noted that this item loads even more on this dimension than the item measuring respondents' confidence in political parties (0.670). On the contrary, when looking at the factor loading concerning the second latent dimension the coefficient is not significant. Further analyses of factor structures reveal that the behavior of the item measuring respondents' confidence in courts, rather than reflect general patterns, is essentially country-specific, in some cases varying even across samples of the same country. In sum, despite the complexity and heterogeneity of this region looking at socio-economic, cultural, and institutional characteristics, a common configuration of political confidence in *most* of East Asian countries can be found, and this configuration is *two-dimensional*. Consequently the last empirical analyses of this chapter have been built in order to test to what extent this configuration holds at various levels of measurement invariance (or equivalence).

Figure 3.4: CFA Model 3 Factor Structure in Four ABS Studies



Note: Values concerning the arrows connecting the latent dimensions are factor correlations. The remaining path coefficients are standardized factor loadings. All coefficients are significant at p < .01 unless differently specified. "n.s.": Not significant. "Conf. in Pol. Inst.": Confidence in political institutions. "Conf. in Impl. Inst.": Confidence in implementative institutions. "Nat. Govt.": National government. "Nat. Ass.": National assembly. "Par. Sys.": Party system. "Civ. Ser.": Civil service. "Arm. For.": Armed forces.

3.5.3 Measurement Invariance Analysis

As already outlined earlier, the assessment of MI the study relies on the three-steps strategy of MGCFA (Davidov *et al.* 2014), comparing the baseline (*configural*) model with more restricted models, namely the *metric* and *scalar* models.

Configural equivalence is met when the same configuration of salient factor loadings is achieved in all the samples, substantively indicating that the dimensions identified can be understood in all the societies analyzed. The second step of measurement invariance (hereinafter, MI) analysis consists in constraining to equality the factor loadings across the samples, in order to check if *metric equivalence* is achieved. Achieving metric equivalence guarantees that the intervals of the scale on which the latent constructs are measured are equal across the groups - that is, a unit change in the measurement scale has the same meaning across the samples. The third and last step consists in verifying if *scalar equivalence* is achieved. Scalar equivalence is met when not only the factor loadings but also the intercepts are equal across the samples. This kind of equivalence means that all the mean differences in the observed variables are produced by mean differences in the latent constructs. Substantively, it implies that all the respondents of the samples that have the same values on the latent constructs have the same expected score in the observed indicators. If scalar equivalence is met, comparison of latent constructs scores among the samples can be made.

Hence, the MGCFA has been conducted following the default strategy found in the literature (Davidov *et al.* 2014, Meredith 1993, Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998), that consists in implementing cross-group constraints on measurement parameters and comparing more restricted models with less restricted ones. In addition to the configural, metric, and scalar invariance models, a partial metric invariance model has been tested. Given previous results about the different factor loadings of the item measuring confidence in courts in different samples, the factor loadings of this item on both latent constructs have been freed, in order to check whether or not this may produce substantial changes in the goodness of fit of the MGCFA models.

Model evaluation can be made in several ways, but the strategies adopted here are, first, the comparison of goodness of fit values among the four tested models (again, following the cutoff criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler 1999) and, second, the evaluation of the change of the goodness of fit indices used (Chen 2007), in this case only assessing the change in fit between the configural and the metric models, and between the metric and the scalar. Since the models have been fitted on large sample sizes the Chi square difference test assessing the extent of the degradation of model fit between different levels of invariance has not been used. The multi-group models have been applied to all the samples in which the third CFA model (Model 3) has reached at least an acceptable level of fit according to RMSEA values (34 samples)[43].

The results of MI analysis are displayed in Table 3.4. As expected, the configural model reaches acceptable fit statistics for configural invariance (CFI=0.992, TLI=0.986, RMSEA=0.06), thus confirming that the dimensions identified can be understood in all the societies analyzed. A rather unexpected

[43]The Vietnamese samples of 2015 has been dropped from the analyses because characterized by no observations in one of the response category of the variable concerning confidence in the national government, thus not allowing comparable analyses between this sample and the remaining ones, unless applying substantial changes for all the other samples (e.g. collapsing adjacent answer categories).

Table 3.4: Measurement Invariance Test for a Two-dimensional MGCFA Model

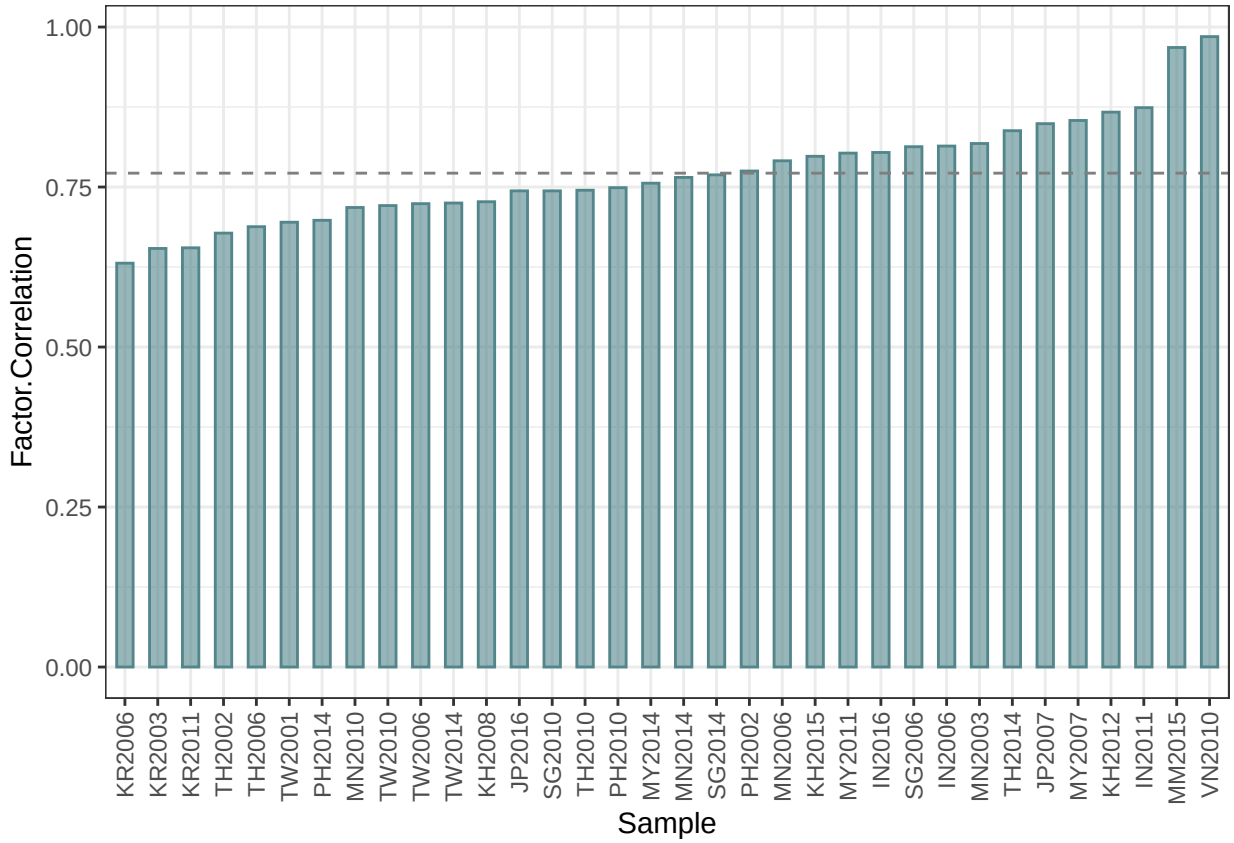
Model	Chi square	DF	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Fit Indices Value					
Configural	2013.652	408	0.992	0.986	0.060
Metric	3834.501	606	0.984	0.981	0.070
Partial Metric	3278.797	540	0.986	0.982	0.068
Scalar	25614.245	1002	0.877	0.912	0.150
Fit Indices Value Change					
Metric-Configural			-0.008	-0.005	0.010
Scalar-Metric			-0.107	-0.069	0.080

Note:
"DF": Degrees if freedom. "CFI": Comparative fit index. "TLI": Tucker-Lewis index. "RMSEA": Root mean square error of approximation.

result is the one regarding metric invariance. Given the ambivalent behavior of the item concerning respondents' confidence in courts across different samples, one would likely expect that a model that constraints all factor loadings may produce a rather important deterioration of fit indices, compared to the unconstrained model. Yet, the results suggest that this may not be the case. Indeed the fit statistics for configural invariance remain inside the intervals considered as an indication of an acceptable level of model fit (CFI=0.984, TLI=0.981, RMSEA=0.07), thus supporting metric invariance. Moreover, the change of both CFI and RMSEA is below the value considered as a sign of noninvariance[44] (the change of CFI between configural and metric models is equal to -0.008, while the change of RMSEA is equal to 0.01). An additional interesting finding is that the factor structure of the metric model is actually characterized by a factor loading of confidence in courts *higher* on the latent construct measured by items indicating respondents' confidence in national governments, assemblies and political parties, compared to the factor loading on the second latent construct. What this fact may substantially imply is anything but straightforward. Nonetheless, it may indicate that, overall, East Asians actually conceive courts as *partisan* rather than *neutral* institutions. But again, to properly investigate this issue other kind of analyses are needed, and we are compelled to leave this hypothesis unexplored. Returning to the MGCFA models, in addition to the metric one, what is worth noting is also the result of the partial-metric invariance test. As expected, the model fit is better than the sheer metric model (CFI=0.986, TLI=0.982, RMSEA=0.068). Yet, the improvement is minimal. Whether this result represents a substantial finding is hard to say. But it may suggest that, overall, cross-national differences in how confidence in courts affect the more general latent constructs are essentially negligible. Finally, as expected, the fit indices deteriorates substantially when moving fro the metric to the scalar model. The scalar invariance model is indeed characterized by very poor fit statistics (CFI=0.877, TLI=0.912, RMSEA=0.15) and the changes in fit statistics are all well above the values considered as signs of MI (the change of CFI between configural and metric models is equal to -0.107, while the change of RMSEA is equal to 0.08). This implies that comparison of latent constructs mean

[44]Chen (2007: 501) suggests the following: "For testing loading invariance, a change of ≥ -0.010 in CFI, supplemented by a change of $\geq .015$ in RMSEA [...] would indicate noninvariance; for testing intercept or residual invariance, a change of ≥ -0.010 in CFI, supplemented by a change of ≥ -0.015 in RMSEA [...] would indicate noninvariance."

Figure 3.5: Correlation between Latent Factors (MGCFA, Scalar Model)



scores among the samples should not be made.

In sum, what MI analysis show is that a two-dimensional conception of political confidence is widely shared in the East Asian region, despite substantial differences of the socio-economic, cultural, and political-institutional characteristics of the countries considered in this study. Some difference clearly persist, as shown for instance by Figure 3.5, showing the correlation between the latent factors estimated by the MGCFA scalar model. On the average, the correlation between the factor loadings remains relatively high (The mean value is equal to 0.772, and it is graphically represented by the horizontal dashed line in Figure 3.5). Yet, values vary importantly across the samples, going from the minimum value of 0.631 of the Korean sample of 2006 to a quite striking maximum value of 0.985 for the Vietnamese sample of 2010. Tendentially, samples with the lowest values appear to be those of liberal- or flawed-democratic countries, while those with higher values seems to be those related to hybrid or more or less entrenched authoritarian regimes. Nonetheless, as the figure shows, the distinction is not clear-cut, and substantive general interpretations of these results appear difficult to formulate. Despite these differences, however, it should be underlined again that reaching configural invariance, and metric invariance already represent substantial findings. East Asians *do conceive* political confidence in a very similar fashion. Expectations toward and evaluations of political institutions tend to be organized by individuals according to the partisan or neutral nature of the institutions toward which these expectations and evaluations are oriented, with an ambivalent role played by confidence in

the legal system, and this result is essentially in line with the results and findings of the single-group CFA analyses presented before. Moreover, reaching metric invariance implies also that changes in confidence toward specific partisan or neutral institutions bear same consequences in how the two general types of political confidence change. Nonetheless, as mentioned few lines above, scalar invariance has not been achieved, and this may represent a somehow problematic result. What this result implies is that respondents from different groups that have the same values on the latent constructs *do not* have the same expected score in the observed indicators, and viceversa that individuals from different groups that have the same values on the observed variables *do not* have the same score on the latent constructs. Given the reliance of political confidence studies (and empirical political research in general), in this region and beyond, on comparison of scores computed aggregating different survey items this may represent a rather complicated result to deal with. Yet, there are several reasons suggesting that we should not read this result too pessimistically. and these reasons and a general reassessment of the discussion and findings of the empirical analyses of this chapter are left for the conclusive remarks presented in the next section. Current methodological literature underlines that standard MI procedures (especially those assessing scalar of even stricter forms of MI) are essentially too strict (see Davidov *et al.* 2014; Davidov *et al.* 2018). For this reason, in recent years, new techniques based on Bayesian statistic aimed to establish *approximate* measurement invariance have been developed (see Muthén and Asparouhov 2012; Davidov *et al.* 2015; van de Schoot *et al.* 2013). Becoming more widespread, increasingly tested, and increasing the number of softwares supporting them, these techniques will likely become useful tools to reassess the results above, as well as analyses performed on samples from other regions of the world. In the meantime, what may be argued is that the analyses above are already a substantial improvement to the measurement of political confidence in East Asia and overall offer relatively robust grounds to avoid groundless measurements, and tune the latter on some empirical evidence. Based on these results, then, the analyses of the following chapter will rely on relatively flawed measures, but comparatively speaking among the most robust among those offered in the current literature about political confidence in East Asia.

3.6 Conclusions: A Multi-dimensional Construct

The main aims of the analyses presented in this chapter have been to (a) which is the dimensionality of political confidence in East Asia, (b) whether a common configuration of said attitudes can be found across the region, and (c) to what extent this configuration is conditional on differences related to variations in political contestation levels across the countries analysed or contingent on other features of the political systems included in the empirical analyses. These aims relate to the last three research questions (RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7) presented in the preceding chapter (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.5.1).
The main findings of this chapter are that (a) East Asians conceive political confidence (at least) in a two-dimensional fashion, distinguishing between institutions dedicated to the *development* of public policies (national governments, national assemblies, and political parties), and institutions dedicated to the *implementation* of public policies (courts, civil services, police, and armed forces), and (b) that this two-dimensional conception holds across most of the ABS studies for the preceding empirical analyses. Expectations about a possible impact of political contestation levels or other systemic features in

shaping political confidence dimensionality (c) have been substantially frustrated. General properties of the political regime in which individuals live seem to do not have any systematic effect on how individuals conceive political confidence. Moreover, CFA results clearly show also that individuals living in political regimes ruled or highly influenced by the military do not conceive this institution as a political one, but still tend to conceive it as a implementative one.

A totally unexpected finding of the empirical analyses conducted in this chapter is that East Asians confidence in courts may not fit exactly into the two-fold distinction of political confidence types discussed so far. EFA, and in particular CFA results have shown that East Asians confidence in courts may actually be an indicator of confidence in political institutions rather than in implementative institutions, a result that is in striking contrast with the widespread idea that these institutions shall be conceived by individuals as neutral ones. And this finding is even more striking if we consider that it holds regardless to the political regime in which respondents live.

Finally the measurement invariance (MI) analyses to understand to what extent the two-dimensional configuration found across most of the ABS studies could be compared across the countries under scrutiny, and these analyses have shown that although a strict (scalar) measurement invariance could not be achieved, the measurement model of political confidence tested holds quite well for the previous two, less strict levels. Not meeting scalar MI implies that differences in scores on the latent construct cannot be fully accounted by differences in the observed variables. In other terms, differences in political confidence levels on both constructs may be affected by unobserved factors. As a consequence, returning to our earlier discussion about the possible impact of the so-called 'political fear bias' in shaping individuals' confidence in institutions in repressive regimes (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.2), this result cannot help us to strongly reject the hypothesis that political fear might shape individuals' confidence in institutions in autocratic or the more repressive anocratic regimes. Nonetheless, it should be note that, first, scalar MI is a very hard criterion to be met, that often is not achieved even just comparing and analysing attitudes of individuals' living in very similar political systems (say, democracies). Second, as already outlined few lines above, CFA and MI analyses show quite clearly that a systematic effect on other aspects of political confidence dimensionality (say, on its configuration, or on the metric used by individuals to evaluate their institutions) does not exist. As a consequence, while we cannot reject that political fear may have an effect, on the other hand it is also true that there are no clear clues about its presence.

Overall, the empirical analyses of this chapter support the idea that political confidence *is not* a general, utterly encompassing, expectation toward the political system as a whole, but rather is a *multi-dimensional attitude* that may be reduced to some general constructs, that however are definitely more than one. Thus, the following analyses will be based on a distinction between two types of political confidence, namely individuals' confidence in *political* institutions and individuals' confidence in *implementative* institutions. As shown later in the following chapters this strategy has revelead to be a rather fruituous one when assessing the direct and indirect impact of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions (see Chs. 4 and 5). Finally, the empirical findings provided in this chapter represent a substantial improvement for the analysis of political confidence in East Asia, a topic that, to date, has been rather overlooked by scholars and academic investigating this phenomenon in this region of our globe.

4 Political Confidence in the Aggregate

4.1 Introduction

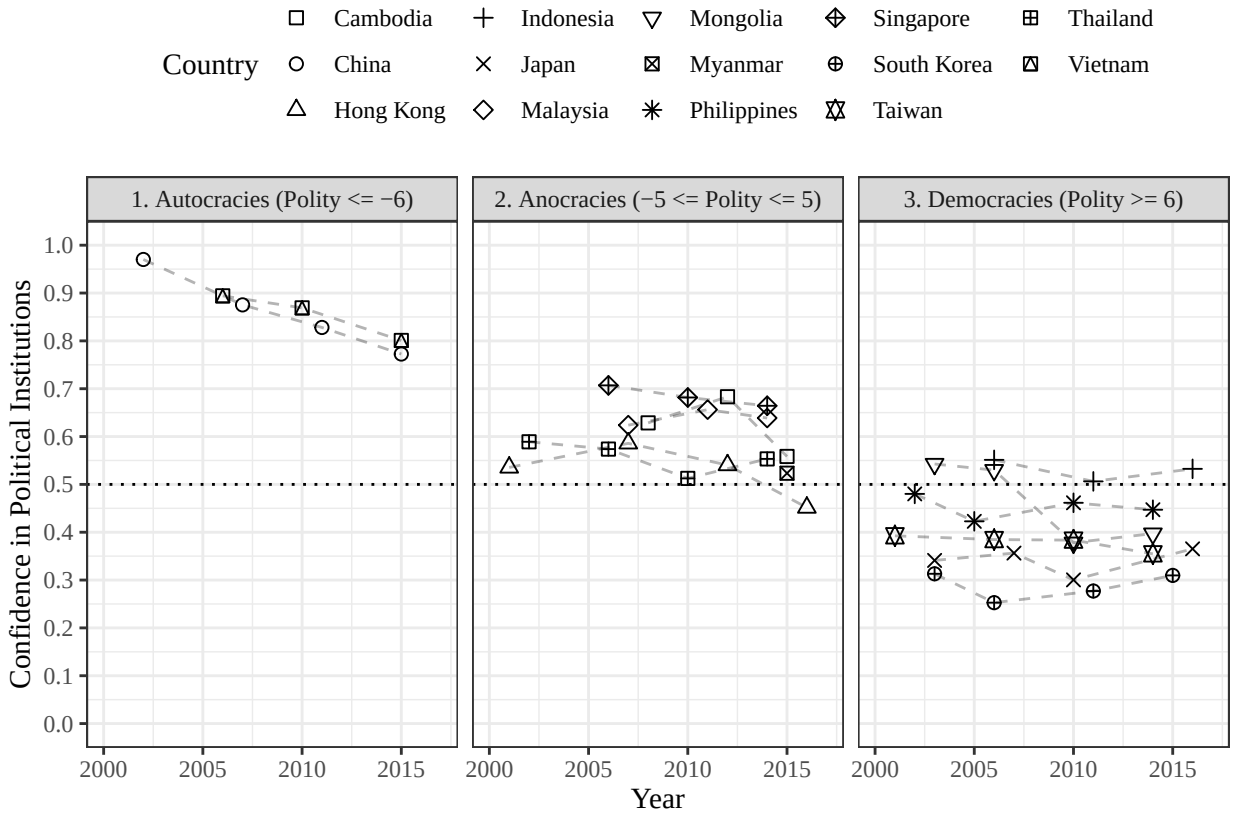
In Chapter 3 it has been shown how expectations toward and evaluations of national institutions in East Asia can be summarized by two general attitudes, one dedicated to political institutions such as national governments, national assemblies, and political parties, and one concerning implementative institutions, such as civil services, police, and armed forces. Building on these findings, this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of cross-national variations of aggregate levels of political confidence in East Asia, thus investigating to what extent these variations can be explained by variations in public contestation levels allowed by East Asian political systems (RQ4), and which is the impact of political contestation on average levels of individuals' confidence in institutions (RQ5. See Ch. 2, Sect. 2.5.1). In other words, this chapter will provide a first answer to the general hypothesis about the potential negative impact of increasing levels of political competitivenes on average levels of political confidence (see Ch. 2, es. Sect. 2.2.3). Moreover, building on the results of the preceding chapter (Ch. 3), the following correlation analysis provide evidence about the conditionality of this effect on the type of political confidence considered, namely whether or not political contestations differently affect confidence in political and implementative institutions.
Exploiting the results of the preceding analyses about political confidence dimensionality in East Asia (Ch. 3), the chapter starts with a descriptive assessment of average levels of confidence in political institutions and implementative institutions in this region during the historical period considered (Sect. 4.2.1). The chapter then continues presenting the expectations concerning the possible aggregate covariates of aforementioned types of political confidence (Sect. 4.2.2), epectations built on theoretical explanations of political confidence and existing arguments specifically related to such variations, as discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3, and Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.1). Then, methods and data used to investigate such variations are presented, along with a discussion concerning the operationalization of the main variables (Sect. 4.3). The chapter then continues with a discussion about the results and main findings related to of the bivariate and multivariate correlation analyses performed in order to assess to what extent variations of political contestation across ABS studies are independently related to variations of political confidence aggregate levels (Sect. 4.4). Finally, the implications of these findings for the following analyses, and other general implications for the study of political confidence in the East Asian region are discussed (Sect. 4.5).

4.2 Cross-national Variations of Political Confidence in East Asia

4.2.1 Patterns of Cross-national Differences

As already mentioned earlier in this dissertation (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.1), during the last two decades researchers and scholars analysing aggregate levels of political confidence in East Asia have found that individuals living in non-democratic regimes place higher confidence in their own institutions as compared to citizens living in democratic settings (see, *inter alia*, Park 2017: 490-497; Shin 2012: 196-197; Wang 2005: 150-151; Wang 2013: 2-5; Wang *et al.* 2006: 141-144). This scenery is summarized by

Figure 4.1: Confidence in Political Institutions by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology)

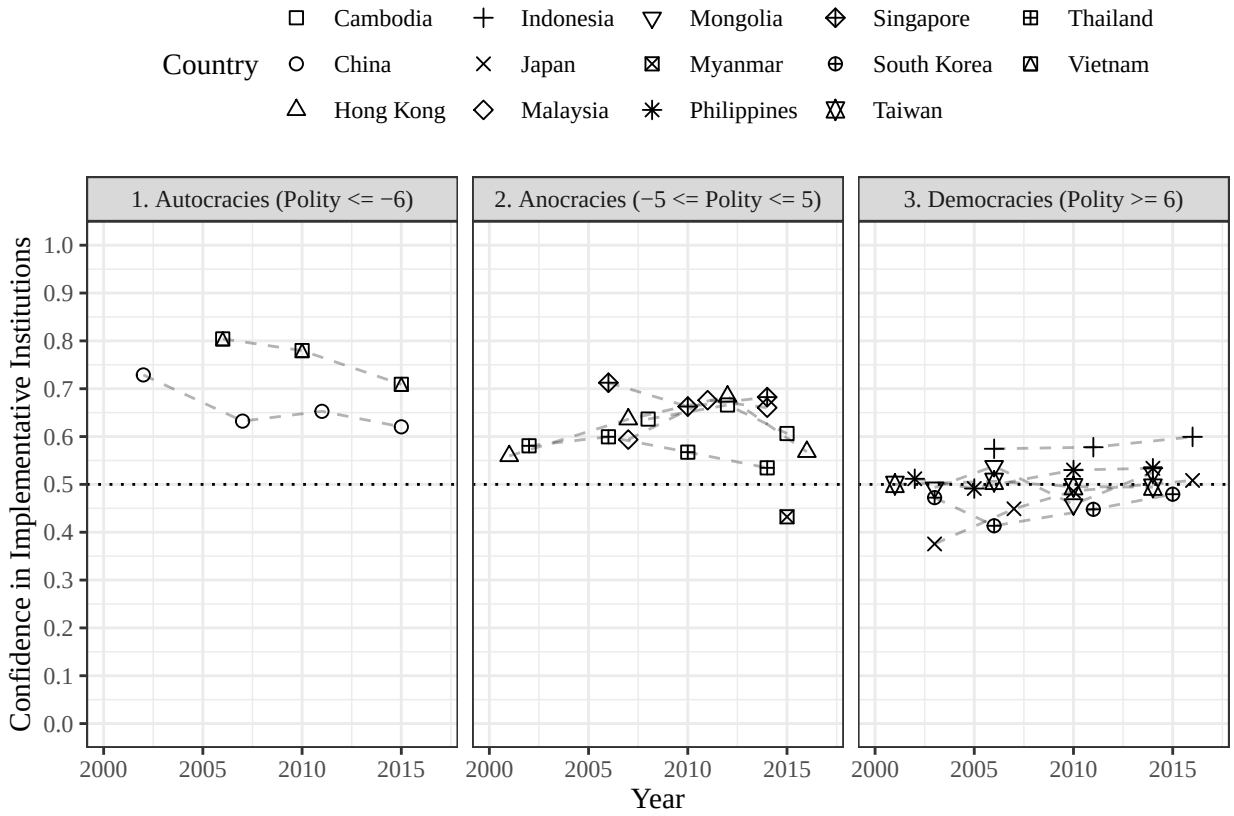


the figure below (Figure 4.1), which depicts ABS respondents' *confidence in political institutions* (national governments, national assemblies, and political parties), and that for clarity's sake split country averages according to the Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes[45] (see Marshall *et al.* 2018. See also Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.1). According to this index, a rather clear ranking appears. Political institutions enjoy the highest levels of confidence in single-party autocratic regimes, with scores followed by those concerning 'hybrid' regimes, especially anocratic or 'competitive authoritarian' regimes (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010) such as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The lowest scores, then, are those of democratic regimes, with values concerning electoral democracies such as Indonesia and the Philippines (and Mongolia until 2006) closer to the middle of the scale, and those concerning the three most advanced liberal-democracies of the region (and Mongolia after 2006) positioned at the bottom of the ranking. This finding is in line with those of the authors mentioned above, and although some disparities may occur when considering the aggregate scores of each institution composing this index, the results would essentially remain the same (see also Park 2017: 490-491)[46].

[45]Values are aggregate mean scores of an additive index based on ABS respondents' confidence in national governments and national assemblies, rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. Moreover, it must be noted that, given the vicious circle of civil governments and military coups that Thailand experienced during the historical period that has been considered, the four Thailandese observations should be split between the anocracies and democracies graph panels (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.1)). Yet, in order to make the figure more readable, the Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed in the anocratic regimes panel.

[46]The average aggregate scores for each institution and related graphs are available in the appendix linked to this chapter (Appendix B).

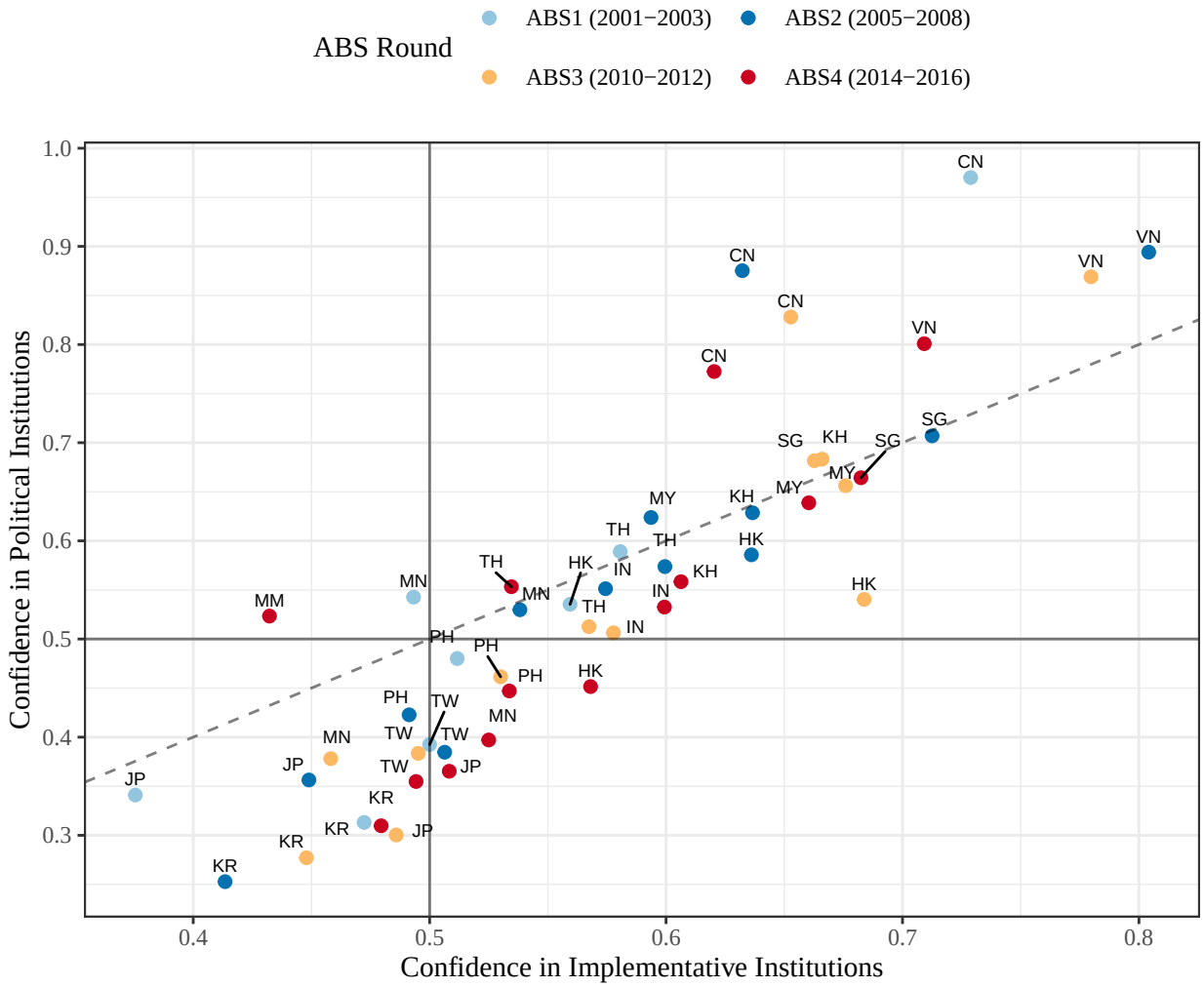
Figure 4.2: Confidence in Implementative Institutions by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology)



An additional rather intriguing finding of studies dealing with country-aggregate scores of political confidence is related to cross-national and within-country patterns about *confidence in implementative institutions*, such as the police or the civil service. Overall, diversities among regime types tend to remain similar to those characterizing confidence in political institutions, with implementative institutions enjoying higher levels of confidence in autocratic regimes, followed by anocratic ones, and finally followed by democratic regimes. Nonetheless, the landscape in this case appears less clear-cut. This relatively different picture is graphically summarized by Figure 4.2, which consists in ABS respondents' confidence in implementative institutions (police, civil service, and army), also in this case differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes[47]. In this case, contrary to the former type of political confidence, the distance between the aggregate scores of authoritarian or hybrid regimes and those concerning democratic regimes is less pronounced. More specifically, what changes between Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.1 is that confidence scores tend to rise in democratic and hybrid regimes, whereas those concerning autocracies sligthly decline. The most pronounced change between the two graphs is the one concerning democracies, whose confidence scores in the second figure tend to oscillate around the mid-score of the scale, with liberal-democracies reaching almost the same levels of

[47]Values are aggregate mean scores of an additive index based on ABS respondents' confidence in civil service and police forces, rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. Since the item measuring confidence in police forces has not been administered in the Hongkongese study of 2001, the score for Hong Kong in 2001 is based solely on respondents' confidence in their civil service. As for the previous graph, the four Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed in the anocratic regimes panel.

Figure 4.3: Confidence in Political and Implementative Institutions in East Asia



confidence of electoral democracies, although still tendentially remaining below the 0.5 score. Yet, as already underlined, even scores concerning anocratic regimes tend to rise, with the sole exception of Myanmar, whose score falls below the mid-level one. On the contrary, when looking at the first panel of Figure 4.2 it is possible to notice that, although remaining remarkably high, autocratic regimes' scores, on the average, are slightly lower than those seen in Figure 4.1.

A third pattern, then, appears when comparing studies according to the *relative levels of confidence in political and implementative institutions within each country*, that can be appreciated looking at the following figure (Figure 4.3)[48]. What the latter figure shows is that whereas implementative institutions in democratic settings tend to enojy higher levels of confidence compared to election-based institutions, in autocratic settings and in some cases in anocratic ones the former institutions enjoy *lower* levels of confidence compared to those reserved for political institutions (about the Chinese case see Li 2016; see also Wu and Wilkes 2018). Indeed, according to the indices employed to build the

[48] Country-specific figures showing aggregate levels of confidence in each institution are available in the appendix related to this chapter (Appendix B).

latter figures, the few points of the scatter plot above the diagonal line (representing the hypothetical points at which confidence in political institutions and implementative institutions are equal) are those concerning the four ABS Chinese samples, the three Vietnamese ones, two Thailandese studies (ABS1 and ABS4 studies), a Cambodian one (ABS3), a Singaporean one (ABS3), a Malaysian one (ABS2), and the Burmese one. The only study dedicated to a democratic country in which average levels of confidence political institutions are higher than average levels of confidence in implementative institutions is the first Mongolian study (ABS1). In all the other cases the countries considered are characterized by autocratic or anocratic regimes.

Until this point the discussion focused solely on cross-national differences, without considering the cross-temporal fluctuations that can be seen in the figures shown so far. This omission was intentional. The first, main reason of this omission is that to have a proper sense of cross-temporal variations more data across time are required. The data point available are far from being sufficient to talk about any 'trend'. Moreover, even trying to detect some sort of trends, the research would produce rather unsatisfactory results. Looking at the cross-temporal variations depicted by Figure 4.1, confidence in political institutions tends to fluctuate without showing any particular rationale, especially considering countries characterized by democratic and hybrid regimes. Some countries (such as Mongolia, among the democratic ones, or Cambodia, Thailand and Hong Kong, among the anocracies) seems to show an higher level of variability, and in some cases the causes lying behind these changes may be identified. For instance, the drop characterizing political confidence in Hong Kong between 2012 and 2016 could be considered, at least partially, as the aftermath of the 2014 decision of the Chinese Communist Party to reform the Hong Kong electoral system, essentially allowing Beijing to directly appoint the Chief Executive of the city, decision that generated the popular protests of the same year, known as the 'Umbrella movement'. By the same token, the drop concerning Thailand between 2006 and 2010 could be related to the increasing polarized and conflictual political situation between the several political creatures of Thaksin Shinawatra and the military-led camp since 2001 elections, that drove the country to the coup of 2006, and the anti-Thaksin constitutional reform of 2007. Yet, a part from idiosyncratic ones, cross-temporal fluctuations are anything but clear-cut.

When considering cross-temporal fluctuations of confidence in implementative institutions (Figure 4.2) also in this case traces of trends are far from evident. Again, some country-specific patterns can be identified, in some cases following similar fluctuations to those seen in the previous graph. For instance, also in this case the Hongkongese data points of 2012 and 2016 follow the same drop seen for confidence in political institutions, and the same seems to hold true also for the Thailandese case, although in the latter case the decline appears to be less important. When turning to democratic countries, a constant although not particularly strong decline characterizes Taiwanese data points, while in Japan it is possible to identify a remarkable growth of confidence in implementative institutions, seemingly not affected by the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami of 2011. Yet, as in the previous case, if we discount from our discussion some specific events that may have affected some specific institutions in specific countries (see Park 2017: 497-498) it appears difficult to claim that general cross-temporal patterns can be found[49].

[49]This claim is partially at odds with Park's ones. These diversities are partly a product of the fact that whereas the author looks at single institutions confidence scores in this study aggregate measures are employed. But differences in results are also driven by the fact that while in this study mean scores are employed,in his study Park uses mean scores

Only when considering the Chinese and the Vietnamese cases, a loosely intended trend seems to appear. Indeed, in both cases, levels of confidence toward national political institutions, and those concerning confidence in implementative institutions, decrease over time, although remaining still well above the scores of other countries, especially when contrasted with those of democratic ones. The reasons behind these trends may be several[50], and for sure it would be worth to investigate the sources of these. Yet, for the reasons already highlighted at the outset of the paragraph, and for the sake of clarity and conciseness, they are not the (specific) object of the following discussion and analyses.
In sum, descriptive analyses of political confidence average levels in East Asia during the first sixteen years of the 21st century have shown that one general pattern seems existing: political confidence aggregate levels across East Asia seems to be related to differences in public contestation levels across East Asia, and seems to be *negatively* correlated. As already noted, while considering confidence in political institutions the hypothesis seems more plausible (see Figure 4.1), in the case of confidence in implementative institutions the linkage between variations in public contestation levels and differences in individuals' confidence in (implementative) institutions is much less lineare (see Figure 4.2). Clearly, at this stage of the discussion, caution is needed. Before attributing cross-national variations to this factor additional analyses are needed. Alternative arguments related to existing theories do exist. The next section summarizes the discussion as presented earlier in this work (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3, and Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.1), identifying factors that may be related to cross-national differences in political confidence average levels, and presents some expectations, paving the way for the following empirical analyses.

4.2.2 The Impact of Political Contestation and Alternative Arguments

The main general expectation of this thesis is that increasing variations of public contestation do affect individuals' confidence in institutions by shaping the incentives that individuals' have for the formulation of their expectations and evaluations toward public institutions and authorities. Whether these variations should be positively or negatively correlated, however, is a matter open to debate (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.3). According to the descriptive analyses proposed earlier in this chapter it could be expected that aggregate-level variations of political confidence negatively correlate with variations in levels of political contestation, other things being equal. Nonetheless, the contrary may hold true, once controlling for other factors. Moreover, considering earlier speculations (see Ch. 2, Sects. 2.2.3 and 2.4.1), what can be fairly expected is that the effect of varying levels of public contestation (whether positive or nogative) should be stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative institutions.
In addition to expectations about the role of public contestation, additional expectations can be formu-

computed after aggregating together the two lower categories and upper two categories of ABS items measuring political confidence. By doing so, some fluctuations disappear in Park's analyses, especially when considering those about the Chinese and Vietnamese cases. See Park (2017: 488-498.)

[50] Wang (2013) tries to interpret these results in terms of an increasing number of 'critical citizens' (see Klingemann 1999; Norris 1999; see also Dalton 2004). Although this possibility cannot be discarded looking at the figure under scrutiny, it should be underlined that the Chinese and Vietnamese scores follow an almost identical decrease, despite the huge differences in terms of socioeconomic development between the two countries, and that in absolute terms those scores can be hardly interpreted as a sign of 'lack of confidence', let alone 'criticism'.

lated according to explanations provided by both institutional and culturalist theoretical standpoints (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3).

As already discussed in the first chapter of this thesis (se Chap. 1, Sect. 1.3.2), *culturalist* theories rely on the argument that individual political attitudes and behavior consist in a by-product of, or are crucially affected by, deep-seated, long-lasting dispositions or orientations inherited by the socio-cultural environment in which individuals socialize, especially in the early stages of their life (see, *inter alia*, Eckstein 1988; Inglehart 1990: es. ch.1; Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 15-47; Jackman and Miller 2004: 4-13). Since these theories, overall, assume a rather deterministic mechanism underlying individuals' attitudes and behavior, that sees in these general dispositions the main drive of more specific political attitudes or political behavior, the *aggregate-level variations of political confidence should be mostly related to aggregate-level variations of specific attitudes and/or orientations*, in particular *authority orientations* and *generalized social trust*. As already noted, culturalist scholars tend to disagree about which dynamics produce these factors, nonetheless they all posit *the same relationship* between aforementioned antecedents (authority orientations and social trust) and individuals' confidence in institutions. Indeed, both neo-modernist and cultural relativist perspectives claim that (a) the stronger individuals' deference toward the autority the higher their confidence in public institutions, and (b) the more individuals tend to trust others the higher their confidence in institutions (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.2). Another specification that has to be made is about the nature of authority orientations. Many culturalist students, given their plainly socio-deterministic explanations of human behavior, claim that orientations toward *social* authority should affect political attitudes (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3.2). To test wether this proposition holds true in the following analyses orientations to *social* authority and orientations more specifically related to *political* authority are operationalized with two distinct indicators. Hence, if culturalist claims hold true, what should be expected from the following analyses is that *aggregate-levels of generalized social trust and hierarchical conceptions of (social and political) authority positively correlate with individuals' confidence in institutions*, other things being equal. Nonetheless, to test said explanations of political confidence the following analyses consider also aggregate-level indicators of socioeconomic modernization in order to test whether culturalist claims, in particular neo-modernist ones, hold true. If neo-modernist arguments about the impact of modernization on political confidence are correct, then *levels of socioeconomic development should be negatively correlated with average levels of political confidence*.

When turning to *institutionalist theories* not related to public contestation levels (see Chap. 1, Sects. 1.3.3 and 1.3.4), the aggregate factors that may explain variations of aggregate levels of political confidence different from the argument presented at the outset, are those related to *performance-based* explanations. These explanations, especially those concerning *economic* performance, have proven to be more adequate in describing cross-temporal variations rather than cross-national ones (see Torcal 2017; see also van Erkel and van der Meer 2015). Nonetheless, cross-national differences in terms of economic and political performance are quite relevant across East Asia, thus what can be expected is that these differences play some role in determining cross-national variations of political confidence in this region. Hence, what can be expected is that *cross-national variations in terms of economic and political performance should be positively correlated with variations of average levels of political confidence*.

The next section of this chapter is dedicated, then, to the concrete specification and operationalization of this set of expectations, as well as to the presentation of the methods used for the following analyses.

4.3 Data and Methods

4.3.1 Methods

The following empirical analyses essentially consist in correlation analyses, both bivariate and multivariate, performed on aggregate-level measures derived by different sources, as explained in the following lines. Given the relatively few observations available at the aggregate level, namely the number of studies constituting the first four rounds of the ABS (48), these methods represent the only analytical tools that can be used to properly investigate the data, and additional details are provided in the sections dedicated to the results of said analyses.

4.3.2 Operationalization of Political Confidence

As in the descriptive analyses provided at the outset of this chapter (Sect. 4.2.1), political confidence measures consist in two indices measuring ABS respondents' confidence in political institutions (national governments and national assemblies), and confidence in implementative institutions (civil service and police forces)[51]. The scores of each respondent are formed by rescaling the individual scores on each item to fit into the interval [0,1] and then averaging these scores. Then, the aggregate average of said indices for each ABS study are computed[52]. The reason to rely on average individual scores of the items considered rather than the factor scores of the measurement models provided in the previous chapter (Ch. 3) derives mostly by the necessity to maximize the number of observations available. Relying on CFA or MGCFA results (see Ch. 3, Sects. 3.5.2 and 3.5.3) would produce a rather important loss of observations for the following empirical analyses. As seen in the previous chapter (see Ch. 3, sect. 3.5.3) the MGCFA model has been applied to 34 of the 48 studies composing the four waves of the ABS. Thus, relying on the linear predictions of this model would lead to a loss of approximately 30% of the already few observations (ABS studies) available, making the following analyses (especially multivariate ones) more complicated. Consequently, what has been decided it has been to do not employ the confirmatory analyses' linear predictions and rely on additive aggregate scores indices that in any case, following the results of the dimensionality analyses provided before (see Ch. 3, Sect. 3.5), can be considered valid and reliable indicators of the two types of political confidence identified in the previous chapter.

[51] For additional information about the ABS survey items measuring individual confidence in institutions see Chapter 2 (Sect. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) and related appendix (Appendix A).

[52] As already outlined above, since the item measuring confidence in political parties has not been administered in the Chinese study of 2015, for this specific study the score is based on Chinese respondents' confidence in their national government and national assembly. By the same token, since the item measuring confidence in police forces has not been administered in the Hongkongese study of 2001, the score for Hong Kong in 2001 is based solely on respondents' confidence in their civil service and armed forces.

4.3.3 Operationalization of Public Contestation

In order to investigate the impact of public contestation on aggregate levels of political confidence, three aggregate variables have been selected. The first one consists in an original measure developed aggregating two sub-components of the V-Dem electoral democracy index, explicitly inspired by Dahl's (1971, 1989, 1998) conceptualization of polyarchy (see Teorell *et al.* 2019), that are (a) the freedom of expression and alternative sources of information index, and (b) the freedom of association index. The former (a) aims to measure to what extent government respects press and media freedom, the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters at home and in the public sphere, as well as the freedom of academic and cultural expression (cf. Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 42), whereas the latter (b) aims to gauge the extent to which political parties are allowed to form and to participate in elections, and to what extent are civil society organizations able to form and to operate freely (Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 43). The reason why these two indices have been choosen is that they are primarily *indicators of the dimension of interest*, namely public contestation (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.2.2). The extent to which a political system allows for (a) freedom of expression and media freedom, as well as (b) freedom of association tells us little about the inclusiveness of a political system, while it provides essential information about the extent to which a system grants opportunities to formulate and signify individual preferences (see Coppedge *et al.* 2008: 633). Thus, the aforementioned indices have been aggregated in order to produce an original one[53] that can be considered *a valid and reliable indicator of public contestation levels and represents the key independent variable of this chapter.*

However, in addition to this indicator other two wide-spread indicators normally used in quantitative study of democracy, considered as indicators of public contestation levels (see Coppedge *et al.* 2008; see also Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.1) have been included, namely the aggregate score of the Polity IV Project (Marshall *et al.* 2018) and the aggregate score of Freedom House (Freedom House 2018a, 2018b).

The polity score is a procedural measure of democracy developed by the Polity IV project at the Center for Systemic Peace (see Marshall *et al.* 2018), focusing on institutions, and derived by the evaluation of a country in three areas, namely executive recruitment, constraints on the executive, and political participation. After each country has been categorized in terms of these components the latter are used to generate two scores through an weighted sum of the values obtained, namely a score concerning institutionalized democracy and another concerning institutionalized autocracy. Finally, the autocracy score is substracted from the democracy score, and the polity index, theoretically ranging from -10 to 10, is obtained, with higher values indicated higher levels of institutionalized democracy, and lower values indicating different levels of institutionalized autocracy. The third indicator considered in the following analyses is developed by Freedom House, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in the United States that since 1972 has published annual reports evaluating the extent of freedom around the world as an output of the political systems considered (see Freedom House 2018a, 2018b). The

[53]The index is formed following the logic used by the V-Dem project team for the electoral democracy index (see Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 39), that is by taking the average of, on the one hand, the weighted average of the two aforementioned indices (a and b) and, on the other hand, a multiplicative interaction between said indices. This aggregation allows for partial compensation in one component index for low values in the other, but also punishes political systems not strong in one of the two components. The two V-Dem indices, (a) freedom of expression and alternative sources of information (*v2x_freexp_altinf*) and freedom of association (*v2x_frassoc_thick*), are aggregated using this formula: $contestation = .5*(.5*v2x\_freexp\_altinf + .5*v2x\_frassoc\_thick) + .5*(v2x\_freexp\_altinf * v2x\_frassoc\_thick)$.

indicator has two dimensions: political rights and civil liberties. Each country is rated on both scales of political rights and civil liberties and usually the two indices are averaged. Since the the measures tend be high when political rights and civil liberties *are not* respected, then the measures have been inverted in order to have high values indicating high levels of freedom.
As already noted (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.1), although built following different logics, both indices have proven to be empirically correlated and essentially capturing Dahl's dimension of public contestation (see Coppedge *et al.* 2008), hence they are included in order to validate the results obtained with the first indicator, namely the original public contestation index discussed few lines above.

4.3.4 Operationalization of Culturalist Arguments

Culturalist arguments are operationalized using two variable types: aggregate individual-level survey data and other aggregate variables. Despite this represents the common way of dealing with the operationalization of such factors, few words are needed in order to explain the logic behind such operationalizations, in particular the former one.
Ideally, variables related to culturalist arguments should refer to *global properties*, that is characteristics of the collectives taken into consideration "which are not based on information about the properties of individual members" (Lazarsfeld and Menzel 1961: 428) of said collectives (in this study, each national context at specific points in time). If culture has to be considered as an overarching feature of a group of individuals, then it should be avoided to operationalize cultural factors with *analytical properties*, namely properties of collectives obtained aggregating individual characteristics (cf. Lazarsfeld and Menzel 1961: 427). Nonetheless, global properties of (political) cultures have been, at least so far, essentially a chimera. Objective difficulties in terms of precision and validity rise once trying to operationalize cultural norms or values through subjective assessments of (political) cultures, a method that already more than half a century ago raised criticisms toward national character studies and, in general, antropological studies of culture (see Leites 1948; Inkeles and Levinson 1969. See also Inkeles 1989). Culturalist scholars, in order to treat cultural factors in a more logical-positivist fashion, have then resorted on measures generated by aggregation of sample surveys' items (cf. Pye 1972: 291), and indeed, since the first quantitative, non-idiosyncratic and scientifically sound culturalist empirical study (Almond and Verba 1963) scholars have usually treated cultural factors as "the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation" (Almond and Verba 1963: 13. See also Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). However, by resorting to such method culturalist have essentially chosen to rely on analytical properties in order to describe global properties[54], and as already mentioned few lines above this raised and still raises concerns about the validity of such empirical strategy (see Pye 1972: 291-292; Shi 2015: 30-34). Since this issue is still far from being resolved and it has not been possible to find an alternative method, cultural factors (in particular, authority orientations) in this study are mostly operationalized following the standard operationalization of such properties, namely aggregating individual-level survey-based variables.

[54]Properties of collectives determined by the aggregation of individual members' characteristics may still be equated to global ones. Nonetheless, this equation would be possible only assuming that individual attitudes or orientations represent unbiased indicators of cultural factors, that appears an assumption rather difficult to defend even from a socio-deterministic perspective.

Measures concerning individual authority orientations are distinguished between *social and political orientations*, as argued earlier (see Sect. 4.2.2). Orientations toward social authority are operationalized with a single ABS item measuring individuals' positive attitudes toward a hierarchical conception of family relations, worded as follows:

- Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask

This four-categories Likert item ranging from 1 ("*Strongly disagree*") to 4 ("*Strongly agree*") represents the sole ABS item tapping such kind of orientations across the four rounds of the survey project. Sample-specific average scores have been computed and rescaled in order to fit into the interval [0,1], with higher values indicating samples in which most of the respondents do conceive family relations in a more hierarchical fashion, and lower values indicating samples in which most of the respondents conceive said relationships in a more reciprocal manner.
Furthermore, as already mentioned at the outset, orientations to authority have been also operationalized considering individuals' orientations toward *political* authority.

- Government leaders are like the head of a family, we should all follow their decisions
- The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society
- If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything

The measure that has been derived by these items consists in an subscale of an index used in other studies (see Chu and Huang 2010: 116) measuring ABS respondents' liberal-democratic attitudes. The original scale is composed by three distinct components, a first one tapping into individual orientations toward the political authority, a second one tapping into individual liberal or illiberal conceptions of the political process in terms of government checks and balances, and finally a third one tapping into attitudes toward intellectual and social pluralism. Considering our specific interest in individuals' authority orientations, three of the seven Likert items composing the original index have been selected and then the scores have been averaged and rescaled in order to fit into the interval [0,1]. Higher values indicate samples in which most of the respondents do conceive political authority in a more hierarchical manner, and lower values indicate samples in which most of the respondents conceive political authority in a more reciprocal fashion.
The third measure derived by an aggregation of ABS individual-level data consists in the one concerning *generalized social trust*. The sole ABS item tapping respondents' generalized trust across the first four ABS rounds is a dichotomous variable deriving by ABS respondents' answer to the following question:

- Generally speaking, would you say that "most people can be trusted" or "that you must be very careful in dealing with people"?

Also in this case, sample-specific average scores have been computed. Given the dichotomous nature of this variable, these scores represent the proportion of respondents' for each ABS study that agree

with the first statement, namely that most people can be trusted. In addition to these variables, then, two additional ones, derived from other sources than the ABS, have been considered. The first consists in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme. The HDI is a summary measure of average achievement in three dimensions of human development: health, knowledge and standard of living. The health dimension is assessed by life expectancy at birth, the education dimension is measured by mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and more and expected years of schooling for children of school entering age, the standard of living dimension is measured by the logarithm of gross national income (GNP) per capita. The scores for the three HDI dimension indices are then aggregated into a composite index using geometric mean (see UNDP 2019: 29-32)[55]. The second consists in a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita measure developed by the Maddison Project (Bolt *et al.* 2018), based on multiple benchmark comparisons of prices and incomes across countries. This measure can be understood as based on prices that are constant across countries but depend on the current year (see Bolt *et al.* 2018: 4-5). Since it is likely that the impact of modernization on political confidence may decrease as higher levels of socioeconomic development are achieved, the GDP per capita measure consists in the natural logarithm of the original measure provided by the Maddison Project. As the discussion above suggests, then, these two variables have been selected in order to capture to what extent different levels of socioeconomic modernization have an effect on aggregate levels of political confidence and test to what extent the hypothetical impact of orientations toward authority and social trust on aggregate levels of political confidence is related to levels of socioeconomic modernization.

4.3.5 Operationalization of Institutionalist Arguments

When turning to measures related to institutional explanations of aggregate levels of political confidence, two sets of variables are provided, namely sets concerning *economic performance* and measures concerning *political performance*. All the indicators presented below are theoretically and/or conceptually linked to institutionalist explanations of political confidence as discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch.1, Sects. 1.3.3 and 1.3.4).

The first set, namely the one related to *economic* performance, is composed by a single indicator, namely the average of the annual growth rate of GDP per capita of the year and the two years preceding each ABS study. The data basis on which this measure has been computed is the Maddison Project (Bolt *et al.* 2018).

The second set, namely the one related to *political* performance, is composed by various indicators. The first consist in the government effectiveness index of the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), a research dataset summarizing the views on the quality of governance based on of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms data (see Kaufmann and Kraay 2016; see also Kaufmann *et al.* 2010). This index aims to tap into *political performance*, since according to the authors this measure is meant to capture perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pres-

[55]Since Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign country by the United Nations (UN) and is not a member of the UN, Taiwan's government collected the island's statistics on its own, based on the methodogy used by the UNDP study. See SINROC (n.d.).

Table 4.1: Summary Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables' Point Estimates

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Conf. in Political Institutions	0.542	0.534	0.177	0.253	0.97
Conf. in Implementative Institutions	0.572	0.567	0.098	0.376	0.804
Independent Variables					
Orientations to Social Authority	0.467	0.448	0.088	0.303	0.753
Orientations to Political Authority	0.527	0.536	0.112	0.293	0.773
Generalized Social Trust	0.291	0.318	0.157	0.049	0.614
GDP per capita	$20,071	$11,438	$16,895	$2,197	$61,755
Human Development Index	0.756	0.736	0.12	0.521	0.931
Average Economic Growth	5%	4%	4%	-4%	18%
Government Effectiveness	0.565	0.373	0.921	-1.239	2.241
Control of Corruption	0.172	-0.297	0.987	-1.231	2.185
Laws Transparency and Enforcement	1.008	0.727	1.353	-1.708	3.157
Rigorous and Impartial P.A.	0.731	0.569	1.283	-2.122	2.665
Public Contestation Index	0.586	0.737	0.285	0.063	0.88
Polity IV Index	3.917	7	6.108	-7	10
Freedom House Index	4.417	4.5	1.776	1.5	7

Data: Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), rounds 1, 2, 3 and 4. Maddison Project (Bolt et al. 2018). Worldwide Governance Indicators (Kaufmann et al. 2016). Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2019). Freedom House (Freedom House 2018a, 2018b). Polity IV project (Marshall et al. 2018).

sures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies (cf. Kaufmann *et al.* 2010: 4). From the same dataset a second indicator of political performance has been chosen, namely the control of corruption index, meant to capture perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain (cf. Kaufmann *et al.* 2010: 4). In both cases, higher values indicated higher performance. Alongside the WGI indices other two indicators of political performance have been considered, namely two indices of the V-Dem (Coppedge *et al.* 2019b) dataset measuring the transparency and predictable enforcement of laws, and the rigor and impartiality of public administration. The first index (Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 162), as the name suggests, measures the extent to which the laws of a country or territory are clear, well publicized, coherent, stable, and enforced in a predictable manner. The second index (see Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 162-163), again quite clearly summarized by its name, "measures the extent to which public officials generally abide by the law and treat like cases alike, or conversely, the extent to which public administration is characterized by arbitrariness and biases" (Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 162).

Table **??** provides the summary statistics of the variables used in the following correlation analyses[56].

[56]For the point estimates of the indices related to confidence in political institutions and implementative institutions, and for the point estimates of the remaining variables see Appendix B

Table 4.2: Bivariate Correlations between Aggregate Levels of Confidence in Political and Implementative Institutions and a Set of Aggregate Variables

		Political Institutions			Implementative Institutions		
Predictor	N	r	Sig.	r2	r	Sig.	r2
Public Contestation Index	48	-0.889	***	0.790	-0.771	***	0.594
Polity IV Index	48	-0.852	***	0.725	-0.752	***	0.565
Freedom House Index	48	-0.859	***	0.738	-0.746	***	0.557
Orientations to Social Authority	48	0.128	ns	0.016	0.016	ns	0.000
Orientations to Political Authority	48	0.533	**	0.284	0.460	*	0.211
Generalized Social Trust	48	0.208	ns	0.043	0.197	ns	0.039
GDP per capita (log)	48	-0.417	ns	0.174	-0.236	ns	0.056
Human Development Index	48	-0.464	*	0.215	-0.259	ns	0.067
Average Economic Growth	48	0.408	*	0.167	0.288	ns	0.083
Government Effectiveness	48	-0.241	ns	0.058	-0.036	ns	0.001
Control of Corruption	48	-0.266	ns	0.071	-0.076	ns	0.006
Laws Transparency and Enforcement	48	-0.599	**	0.359	-0.460	*	0.211
Rigorous and Impartial P.A.	48	-0.569	*	0.324	-0.428	*	0.183

Note:
OLS bivariate regression coefficients with clustered errors at country/territory level. Significance testing determined by a t test with $m - 1$ degrees of freedom. "N" = Number of observations (ABS Studies). "r"= Pearson correlation coefficient. "Sig." = Significance. "r2" = Coefficient of determination. Significance: "ns" = Not significant; "." = p<0.1; "*" = p<0.05; "**" = p<0.01; "***" = p<0.001.

4.4 Results and Findings

4.4.1 Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Given the relatively low number of observations and the relatively high number of covariates, the first step of the empirical analyses has been an assessment of the correlation between the two aggregate measures of political confidence and each index discussed few lines above. The correlation coefficients are estimated with bivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with clustered standard errors by country. The results are showed in Table 4.2. The first finding derived by this table is that, irrespective of the indicator used, measures of public contestation are highly correlated with aggregate levels of political confidence, and this correlation is negative. All the coefficients are indeed statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. In other words, as the space for public contestation allowed by a political system becomes wider confidence in state institutions plunges. The effect is stronger for confidence in political institutions and weaker for confidence in implementative institutions, but in both cases the coefficients for these indicators are by far the strongest coefficients among the selected covariates. Moreover, the public contestation index, the Polity IV aggregate score, and the Freedom House index have the same sign and essentially the same magnitude. Thus, earlier speculations about variations of democracy as variations of public contestation (see Ch.2, see 2.2.2) seem to find support, and call for further analyses on the topic.

Turning to the other covariates included, the results concerning indicators related to culturalist explanations are mixed. Orientations toward social authority and measures of generalized social trust are not significant considering aggregate levels of both confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative institutions. The sole indicator that appears to be significantly and positively related to political confidence is the index concerning average levels of orientations to *political* authority. Thus, as the proportion of individuals conceiving political authority in a hierarchical fashion grows the average level of confidence in institutions' becomes higher. The effect of this predictoris stronger for average levels of confidence in political institutions as compared to average levels of confidence in implementative institutions, and in the first case the p-value is smaller ($p < 0.01$) as compared to the second one ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, the results concerning the remaining aggregate-level indicators related to culturalist explanations (in particolar neo-modernist ones, as argued before; see Sect. 4.2.2) are not particularly exciting as well. As Table 4.2 shows, the sole coefficient that is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) is the Human Development Index for confidence in political institutions, characterized by a negative sign. Thus, according to these results as the level of socioeconomic modernization grows, confidence in institutions declines, thus indirectly supporting neo-modernist claims about the detrimental effect of socioeconomic modernization on individuals' confidence in institution. Nonetheless, as already noted, this predictor represents the only one reaching statistical significance. The coefficients concerning the HDI for confidence in implementative institutions, as well as both coefficients concerning the the GDP per capita levels do not reach statistical significance.

When turning to indicators concerning economic and political performance the picture appears rather complicated. The average annual growth of GDP per capita is significant and positively correlated with confidence in political institutions, while not reaching statistical significance for confidence in implementative institutions although maintaining a positive sign. Hence, as the economic performance of a country or territory increases the aggregate levels of confidence in political institutions increase as well, and this is substantially in line with previous expectations (see Sect. 4.2.2). However, when turning to political performance indicators the results, at a first sight, are quite striking. First, both WGI indices (government effectiveness and control of corruption) are not significant. Coefficients concerning V-Dem indices about law transparency and predictability, and about public administration rigor and impartiality, on the contrary reach at least a mediocre statistical significance. However, and most importantly, the striking characteristic of these results is that coefficients of all these indices are *negative*, thus suggesting that as political performance increases average political confidence *declines*. Clearly, these results do not make any sense. The relationships summarized by these bivariate correlations are evidently spurious, and call for more refined empirical assessments based on a multivariate logic.

In sum, previous analyses seem, first, to confirm earlier speculations developed looking at the descriptive statistics provided at the outset of this chapter: *variations of public contestation levels are negatively and significantly related to variations of political confidence*. Previous results, thus, seems to support the idea that mechanisms related to increasing levels of contestation mostly produce *negative incentives* for individuals' confidence in institutions, in particular when considering confidence in political institutions. Results concerning alternative explanations of political confidence average levels, on the contrary, appear to be, at best, mixed. Before further elaborating on such findings, however,

more robust analyses are needed, in particular analyses able to consider the relative strength of said predictors once controlling for the direct effect of the others. Thus, multivariate correlation analyses have been performed, and the results of these analyses are presented in the following pages (Sect. 4.4.2).

4.4.2 Multivariate Analyses

Multivariate analyses have been performed in three steps relying on a set of OLS regression models with clustered standard errors at country/territory level. First, two baseline models have been built substantially replicating the bivariate correlations between the public contestation index and aggregate levels of confidence in political institutions (Table 4.3, Model 1a) and aggregate levels of confidence in implementative institutions (Table 4.5, Model 1b). Second, ten models for each dependent variable have been built[57], maintaining the public contestation as main predictor and, in turn, adding each of the independent variables employed in the bivariate correlation analyses as second predictors. Finally, building on the results of these models and further considerations, additional three models for each dependent variable have been produced[58], also in this case maintaining the public contestation index as main predictor and then, following a stepwise logic, adding one predictor for main argument concerning the antecedents of political confidence in the aggregate. The discussion starts considering the results of the models related to the first two steps, and then it turns to the results of the models of the third step, in both cases differentiating between results concerning confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative ones.

As the results provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show, the public contestation index consists in the strongest and most consistent predictor of average levels of confidence in political institutions. The standardized β coefficient of this variable is negative, statistically significant at least at $p < 0.01$, and it remains substantially unchanged across all the models provided in these two tables. When turning to the coefficients of the other predictors, the results are at best mixed. Among the coefficients of indices related to culturalist arguments only one, namely the one concerning orientations to political authority (Table 4.3, Model 3a), is barely significant ($p < 0.1$), whereas all the others do not reach statistical significance. Moreover, the magnitude of the sole statistically significant coefficient appears to be more than six times weaker than the β of the public contestation variable. When looking at the direct impact of variables related to institutionalist arguments, the only coefficient that appears to be statiscally significant, and positively correlated with average levels of confidence in political institutions, is the one of the average economic growth index (Table 4.4, Model 6a). This variable, according to the models considered so far, represent the second best predictor of confidence in political institutions, however its magnitude is almost five times weaker than the coefficient of the public contestation index. When turning to variables concerning *political* performance *none* of these appears to be significantly correlated with average levels of confidence in political institutions (see Table 4.4, Models 7a, 8a, 9a, 10a, and 11a).

[57]For confidence in political institutions: Table 4.3, Models from 2a to 6a; Table 4.4, Models from 7a to 11a. For confidence in implementative institutions: Table 4.5, Models from 2b to 6b, and Table 4.6, Models from 7b to 11b.

[58]For confidence in political institutions: Table 4.7 Models 12a, 13a, and 14a. For confidence in implementative institutions: Table 4.8 Models 12b, 13b, and 14b.

Table 4.3: The Relative Impact of Socio-cultural Factors on Aggregate Levels of Confidence in Political Institutions

	Confidence in Political Institutions					
	Model 1a	**Model 2a**	**Model 3a**	**Model 4a**	**Model 5a**	**Model 6a**
Public Contestation	−0.157***	−0.159***	−0.147***	−0.160***	−0.147***	−0.149***
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Social OTA		−0.008				
		(0.010)				
Political OTA			0.022*			
			(0.013)			
Social Trust				−0.008		
				(0.014)		
HDI					−0.027	
					(0.018)	
GDP per capita						−0.025
						(0.018)
Constant	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.790	0.792	0.801	0.792	0.810	0.809
Adj. R-squared	0.786	0.783	0.792	0.783	0.801	0.800

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country or territory level in parentheses).

Table 4.4: The Relative Impact of Performance Factors on Aggregate Levels of Confidence in Political Institutions

	Confidence in Political Institutions					
	Model 1a	**Model 7a**	**Model 8a**	**Model 9a**	**Model 10a**	**Model 11a**
Public Contestation	−0.157***	−0.149***	−0.155***	−0.156***	−0.153***	−0.154***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Average Economic Growth Rate		0.032***				
		(0.012)				
Government Effectiveness			−0.012			
			(0.015)			
Corruption Control				−0.004		
				(0.015)		
Laws Transparency and Enforcement					−0.007	
					(0.019)	
Rigorous and Impartial P.A.						−0.005
						(0.018)
Constant	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***	0.542***
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.790	0.821	0.795	0.791	0.791	0.791
Adj. R-squared	0.786	0.813	0.786	0.781	0.782	0.781

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country or territory level in parentheses).

Table 4.5: The Relative Impact of Socio-cultural Factors on Aggregate Levels of Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions					
	Model 1b	**Model 2b**	**Model 3b**	**Model 4b**	**Model 5b**	**Model 6b**
Public Contestation	−0.075***	−0.078***	−0.070***	−0.076***	−0.076***	−0.076***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Social OTA		−0.014				
		(0.013)				
Political OTA			0.010			
			(0.010)			
Social Trust				−0.002		
				(0.011)		
HDI					0.003	
					(0.013)	
GDP per capita						0.002
						(0.013)
Constant	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.594	0.613	0.602	0.595	0.595	0.594
Adj. R-squared	0.585	0.595	0.584	0.576	0.577	0.576

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country or territory level in parentheses).

Table 4.6: The Relative Impact of Performance Factors on Aggregate Levels of Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions					
	Model 1b	**Model 7b**	**Model 8b**	**Model 9b**	**Model 10b**	**Model 11b**
Public Contestation	−0.075***	−0.073***	−0.077***	−0.079***	−0.080***	−0.080***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Average Economic Growth Rate		0.008				
		(0.009)				
Government Effectiveness			0.012			
			(0.013)			
Corruption Control				0.014		
				(0.012)		
Laws Transparency and Enforcement					0.007	
					(0.015)	
Rigorous and Impartial P.A.						0.008
						(0.013)
Constant	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***	0.572***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
N	48	48	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.594	0.601	0.608	0.614	0.597	0.598
Adj. R-squared	0.585	0.583	0.590	0.596	0.579	0.580

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1

OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country or territory level in parentheses).

Table 4.7: Determinants of Confidence in Political Institutions in the Aggregate

	Confidence in Political Institutions			
	Model 1a	**Model 12a**	**Model 13a**	**Model 14a**
Public Contestation	-0.157^{***}	-0.147^{***}	-0.145^{***}	-0.129^{***}
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.015)
Human Development Index		−0.027	−0.015	-0.107^{***}
		(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.040)
Average Economic Growth Rate			0.026^{***}	0.025^{**}
			(0.009)	(0.012)
Government Effectiveness				0.091^{**}
				(0.038)
Constant	0.542^{***}	0.542^{***}	0.542^{***}	0.542^{***}
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)
N	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.790	0.810	0.826	0.857
Adj. R-squared	0.786	0.801	0.815	0.844

$^{***}p < .01$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{*}p < .1$
OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country/territory level in parentheses).

When moving to results concerning confidence in implementative institutions (Tables 4.5 and 4.6) the results can be mostly summarized with a single sentence: *none* of the predictors considered in these models appear to be significantly correlated with average levels of confidence in implementative institutions once controlling for public contestation levels, namely the sole statistically significant predictor of said type of political confidence. As in the case of bivariate correlations (see Table 4.2), the magnitude of the public contestation index coefficient is weaker than the one seen in the models concerning confidence in political institutions. Nonetheless, as already highlighted, this predictor represents the sole to be statistically significant considering this type of political confidence. Thus, the two first step of the multivariate analyses performed on aggregate data on the one hand seems to confirm the results concerning the detrimental direct effect of increasing levels of public contestation on political confidence seen with the bivariate analyses presented in the previous section (Sect. 4.4.1), whereas on the other hand they further complicate the already mixed results seen when looking at the impact of other aggregate predictors on the two types of political confidence considered. However, in order to further substantiate the results of previous analyses, two final sets of multivariate regression models have been applied to the data, selecting one predictor for each set of explanations of political confidence as discussed earlier in this thesis (see Ch.1, Sect. 1.3), plus the public contestation index. The results are shown in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. Looking at the latter multivariate models, the results corroborate previous ones about the strong, negative relationship between the public contestation measure adopted and both type of institutional confidence, whose values remain comparable with those seen in previous multivariate analyses. Yet, they offer also additional and rather interesting results. In particular, looking at the complete models proposed in Tables 4.7 (Model 14a) and 4.8 (Model 14b) it is possible to appreciate how some predictors turn to become statistically significant

Table 4.8: Determinants of Confidence in Implementative Institutions in the Aggregate

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions			
	Model 1b	**Model 12b**	**Model 13b**	**Model 14b**
Public Contestation	-0.075^{***}	-0.076^{***}	-0.075^{***}	-0.063^{***}
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Human Development Index		0.003	0.009	-0.061^{**}
		(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.027)
Average Economic Growth Rate			0.012	0.011
			(0.011)	(0.010)
Government Effectiveness				0.069^{***}
				(0.025)
Constant	0.572^{***}	0.572^{***}	0.572^{***}	0.572^{***}
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
N	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.594	0.595	0.607	0.666
Adj. R-squared	0.585	0.577	0.580	0.635

$^{***}p < .01$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{*}p < .1$
OLS regression. Values are standardized regression coefficients (clustered standard errors at country/territory level in parentheses).

and rather important in their magnitude. With reference to models concerning confidence in political institutions, the HDI coefficient (statiscally not significant for all the previous models considered) turns to be not only highly significant ($p < 0.01$) but also the second best (negative) predictor of confidence in political institutions. Even more interestingly, the government effectiveness index turns not only to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and rather important in its magnitude, but also *positively* correlated with aggregate levels of political confidence, thus reversing the rather improbable results seen in the bivariate correlation analyses (see Sect. 4.4.1). Finally, average economic growth rates' coefficient maintains the magnitude seen in previous models and its rather good statistical significance.

Nonetheless, perhaps the most interesting results appear to be those concerning the OLS models with aggregate levels of confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable. Also in this case, in the full model (Table 4.8, Model 14b), variables previously not significant reach statistical significance, with the exception of the average economic growth rate index. Differently from the model concerning confidence in political institutions, however, the public contestation index does not represent the strongest predictor among those reaching statistical significance. Indeed, the strongest, predictor of aggregate levels of confidence in implementative institutions, appears to be the WGI government effectiveness index, characterized by a (positive) magnitude slightly higher than the public contestation index. Moreover, the HDI coefficient appears to be also a relevant predictor of said type of confidence, reaching a magnitude almost equal to the public contestation index (although characterized by a larger error term). In sum, what the full models for both type of political confidence seem to tell us is that the role played by socioeconomic modernization and political performance (and, in the case of confidence in political institutions, also the role played by national economic performance) is actually much more relevant than what earlier analyses suggested. However, what these analyses suggest is also that the

role played by these factors can be gauged and appreciated *only* when considering varying levels of public contestation, that in any case (as earlier models also suggest) remain an *essential* predictor of varying levels of political confidence, *negatively* correlated with the latter. The implications of these findings as well additional issues are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

4.5 Conclusions: The Impact of Public Contestation on Political Confidence in the Aggregate

The empirical analyses provided in this chapter provide a first answer to the overarching puzzle of this thesis, namely whether and how variations of public contestation might affect individuals' confidence in institutions. According to the analyses provided in this chapter *cross-national variations of political confidence, in East Asia, are strongly associated with variations in levels of public contestation*, and the correlation between these two is a *negative* one. In all the empirical analyses that have been presented, the variable associated with this dimension is the strongest and most robust predictor of aggregate levels of confidence in both political institutions and implementative institutions. Moreover, the analyses further substantiate the importance of the distinction between confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative institutions discussed and analysed in the previous chapter of this thesis (Ch. 3). The impact of political contestation on the former type of political confidence is substantially *stronger* as compared to the effect that this variable appears to have, at least in the aggregate, on the latter type of individuals' institutional confidence. Nonetheless, the impact of variations of public contestation on levels of confidence in implementative institutions remains relevant.

Furthermore, the correlation analyses provided (see Sect.) do also show that the indicator chosen to summarize the public contestation measure excerts the same effect of other public contestation indicators (e.g. Freedom House and Polity IV) that previous analyses have shown to tap into Dahl's (1971) notion of public contestation. These results, provide additional evidence for claiming that 'variations of democracy' in East Asia are essentially variations of public contestation (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.2.2). The evidence provided above may not be the strongest to support such claim, yet they seem to support said argument.

The empirical results shown in the previous section, moreover, offer also some additional findings worth to be discussed. First, socio-culturalist explanations related to the distribution of mass attitudes theoretically linked to confidence in political institutions have found very scant, almost none, confirmation. Generalized social trust does not appear to be even marginally related to average levels of political confidence, a finding that plainly contradicts the (already weak and debatable) evidence provided by previous research about the relationship in the aggregate between said variables (e.g. Newton and Norris 2000). By the same token, measures logically related with aggregate levels of orientations toward *social* authority appear to be not even slightly correlated with political confidence levels. Orientations toward *political authority*, on the contrary, appear to be slightly correlated with both types of political confidence levels, but these correlations simply disappear once controlling for levels of public contestation. These findings, thus, return a rather grim picture for culturalist arguments that since Almond and Verba's (1963) work have been mostly concerned with aggregate patterns of political attitudes (cf. Jackman and Miller 2004: 8). The sole factor that appears to have a relevant impact of varying

levels of political confidence is socioeconomic modernization as captured by the Human Development Index (HDI). Nonetheless, the importance of such factor appears only once considering, first, varying levels of public contestation, and second variations in terms of political (and economic) performance. When turning to institutional arguments concerned with 'objective' measures of political performance also in this case findings are mixed. Quite surprisingly, in most of the analyses almost none of the measures related to institutional performance appear to be relevant in explaining average levels of political confidence in East Asia. The sole factor that appears to be a rather consistent predictor of varying levels of only one type of institutional confidence (confidence in political institutions) consists in the annual average economic growth rates index. Nonetheless, as in the case of culturalist arguments, once turning to multivariate models including more than one or two predictors, then the relevance of *political* performance (in the latter analyses, captured by the WBGI government effectiveness index) stems out. In sum, previous findings, and in particular those related to multivariate analyse, suggest that average levels of political confidence in East Asia do vary according to the variation of several factors. However, and most importantly, what these analyses suggest is that *only when considering varying levels of public contestation* the importance of other factors can be gauged and appreciated. Thus, the relevance of public contestation as a predictor of varying levels of political confidence is not only related to its direct, negative, impact on the latter, but also to its role in reveal the effect of other aggregate predictors. This finding, thus, calls for additional and more sophisticated analyses that may further disentangle the relationships among these factors.

Obviously, caution is needed in interpreting these results. First, caution is needed in generalizing these results beyond the context under investigation. Parallel analyses, not shown here, on other datasets (e.g. WVS) show that the regularities found in this study can still be found in other contexts but in a more nuanced fashion. Nonetheless, it should be also noted that other regions of the world do not offer such a variability in the data, once looking at all the dimensions considered (social, cultural, economic, institutional, political, and so on). Secondly, and most importantly, caution in reading these findings is needed because they represent aggregate regularities that do not account for individual-level variations. Below these regularities, individual-level mechanisms not captured by the previous analyses might be at work. Consequently, the following empirical chapter (Ch. 5) has been dedicated to test to what extent the aggregate regularities found in these chapter hold once taking into account individual-level variability, and moreover test whether the impact of public contestation on political confidence excerts not only a direct effect on variations of average levels of political confidence but also an *indirect effect* on other key attitudes informing individuals' confidence in institutions.

5 A Multilevel Analysis of Political Confidence

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter (Ch. 4) some strong findings supporting the argument of a detrimental direct effect of public contestation on average levels of individuals' confidence in institutions have been provided. According to the aggregate-level analyses that have been performed, the extent to which a political system allows for public contestation represents the main factor explaining cross-national variations of average levels of confidence in institutions (see Ch. 4, Sects. 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Moreover, the last chapter has also shown that the impact of this factor is conditional on the type of political confidence that have been identified with the dimensionality analyses of the third chapter of this dissertation, hence underlying the importance to distinguish between confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative institutions. Nonetheless, to what extent this direct effect holds once accounting for individual-level variability? Furthermore, to what extent does public contestation indirectly affects individuals' confidence in institutions? The general aims of this chapter, thus, are two: first, reassessing the evidence of Chapter 4, hence providing additional evidence about the first two research questions of this dissertation (RQs 1 and 2; see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.4.1); second, exploring whether and the extent to which contestation moderates the effect of (at least some of) individual-level determinants of political confidence (RQs 3 and 4; see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.4.1). In addition, the following empirical analyses provide an assessment of the direct impact of individual-level antecedents of political confidence once accounting for the direct effect of contextual variables. This somewhat collateral exploration represents an original contribution for the existing literature, since almost none of the previous analyses of political confidence in East Asia do investigate said relationships accounting for the effect of aggregate-level variables. The following pages are thus dedicated to present, first and foremost, expectations concerning the crucial issues just presented few lines above (5.2.1) and, second, hypotheses about the direct effect of some key individual-level attitudes on individuals' confidence in institutions (Sects. 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). In the following section (Sect. 5.3), then, data and methods employed to test said expectations and hypotheses are presented. In the following section (Sect. 5.4) the results of a series of hierachical linear regression models (HLMs) are presented and discussed. Finally, the last section (Sect. 5.5) provides a discussion of the the main findings of this chapter and their implications for the study of institutional confidence in East Asia.

5.2 Political Contestation and Individual-level Antecedents of Political Confidence

As already noted earlier in this thesis (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3), during the last two decades relative extensive literature concerning political confidence in East Asia has been produced. However, it has been also noticed that most of this literature does not provide evidence about contextual-level factors (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.1), while providing a plethora of findings about individual-level analyses that are a crucial resource for any assessment of this individual confidence in this region (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.3). As a consequence, while speculations about the direct and indirect impact of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions can only be presented as general expectations (Sect. 5.2.1),

arguments concerning the direct effect of some likely crucial individual-level antecedents of political confidence on the latter can be formulated in terms of more specific hypotheses (Sect. 5.2.2).
The reason why, in addition to expectations about the direct and indirect impact of contestation on political confidence, hypotheses concerning individual-level variables are presented is because by addressing said research questions this chapter offers also some evidence about the impact of individual-level attitudes affecting political confidence that go beyond some limits of the existing assessments of the individual-level determinants of political confidence.
Indeed, while existing studies about individual-level antecedents of political confidence in East Asia provide many insights about which individual-level factors might reasonably affect individuals' confidence in institutions, it is also true that this literature returns a rather scattered picture. This fragmentation is originated by three issues of the research designs employed by scholars addressing this topic during the last two decades. First, existing comparative analyses more often than not tend to exclude from their analyses data concerning non-democratic political systems; when considered, these systems tend to be analysed in single-case studies or, at best, with limited-scope comparisons. Consequently, the generalization of previous results beyond democratic countries appears somewhat complicated. Second, political confidence in East Asia has been mostly analysed at single point in times. As a consequence, we don't know to what extent the relative importance of the antecedents identified by previous research can be generalized despite cross-temporal variations. Third, we have little knowledge about whether or not individual-level determinants behave differently accordingly to the type of political confidence considered. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the extent to which said individual-level variables account for variations of individual confidence in institutions once taking into account the direct effect of crucial contextual variables has been seldom, or practically never, investigated.
To properly assess these three issues more granular analyses than those presented in this chapter should be performed. Nonetheless, what is argued here is that the evidence provided in this chapter can still provide some valuable insights about said issues.

5.2.1 Expectations about Direct and Indirect Effects of Public Contestation

Despite contrasting arguments about the direct impact of contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.2.3), in the previous chapter (see Ch.4, Sect. 4.4) it has been shown that the extent to which a political system allows a large share of the population to formulate and substantiate public contestation or, viceversa, the extent to which a regime represses the possibility of its citizens to do so, represent a decisive factor in order to explain cross-national variations in political confidence in East Asia, only slightly complemented by the effect of other contextual variables (such as average leves of economic growth). It has been also shown that this effect is more relevant for aggregate levels of confidence in political institutions as compared to aggregate levels of confidence in implementative institutions. As a consequence these findings allow to formulate a couple of fairly clear expectations, namely that (a) *the higher the level of political contestation allowed by a political system the lower the average levels of confidence in political institutions*, and (b) *the impact of contestation is stronger for average levels of confidence in political institutions as compared to average levels of*

confidence in implementative institutions.

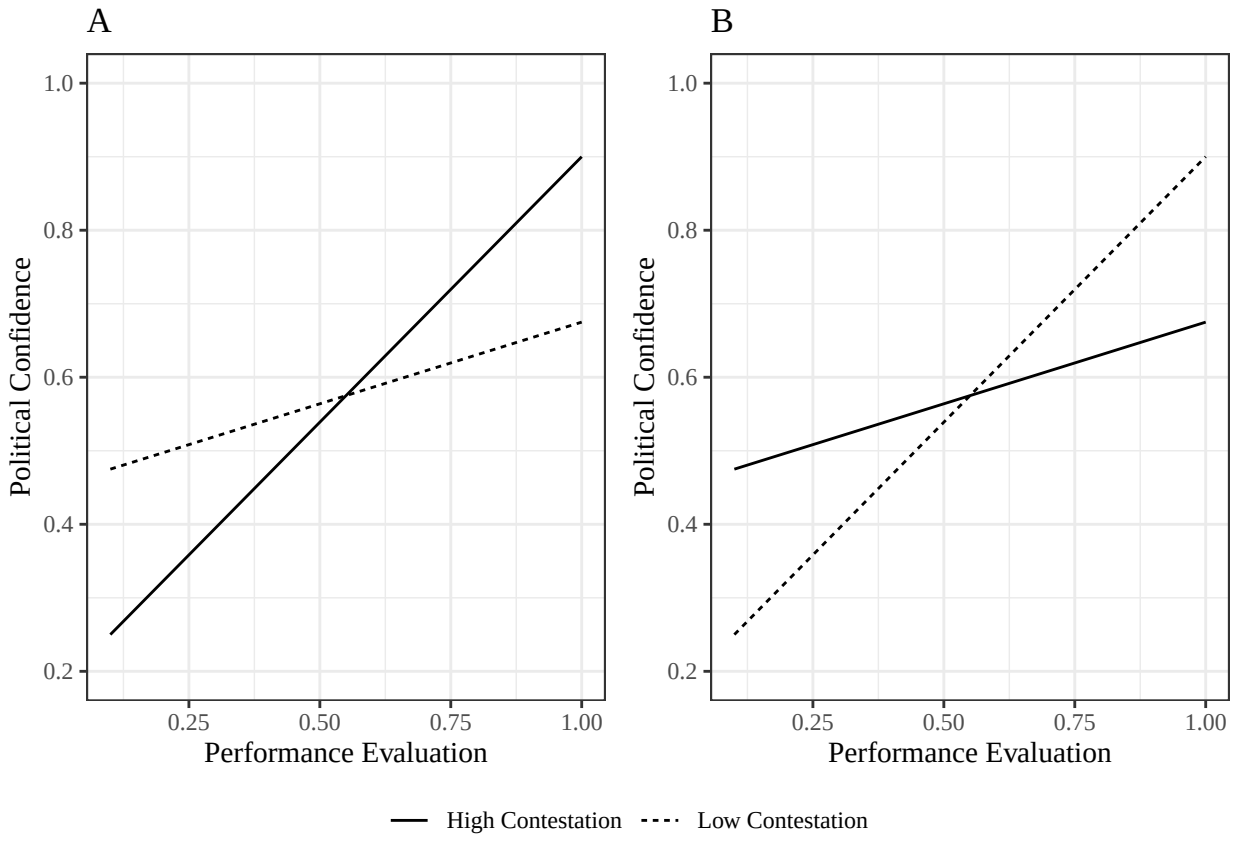
If previous research provides relatively scarce evidence about the *direct* effects of contextual variables on political confidence, previous theoretical considerations and empirical evidence about the potential *moderation* effect of contextual factors on individual-level variable are essentially non-existing. As a consequence, the only option left is trying to speculate whether and how public contestation might affect the way in which some individual-level factors inform individuals' confidence in institutions just relying on theoretical or conceptual arguments.

The extent to which a political system allows political contestation for a more or less large share of its population is a systemic feature. Hence, it may be assumed that this contextual characteristic should potentially affect the impact of a rather vast range of individual-level determinants of political confidence. Nonetheless, for clarity and conciseness' sake, and for avoiding 'data-fishing' on any possible micro-macro relationship associated with political confidence, the potential moderation of public contestation is discussed and empirically assessed looking at a limited set of individual-level variables, namely *individuals' expectations and evaluations about institutional performance.* The reason to focus on this specific set of attitudes is based on the assumption that whether or not an individual lives in a country where she can express her opinions, can associate with others in political or non-political organizations, can access independently and without any fear of repression governmental and non-governmental sources of information, can vote in free and fair elections in which credible political alternatives are available, are all factors that shape the way in which this hypothetical individual formulates attitudes about institutions' responsiveness to her needs, or the effectiveness of institutions in delivering valuable societal goods, such as economic well-being or low levels of corruption. For instance, it might be assumed that an individual living in a political system characterized by high levels of public contestation should regularly face contrasting narratives about the role of an incumbent authority in delivering economic growth or curbin corruption, while another hypothetical individual living in a low-contestation political system, on the contrary, should regularly face a redundant narrative concerning the performance of autocrats on these issues. If this assumption holds true, then it appears reasonable to expect that the way in which said performance assessments affect individuals' confidence in political institutions changes according to variations of contestation levels across political systems.

However, whereas an (indirect) effect can be expected, *how* different levels of public contestation might moderate the impact of said antecedents on political confidence is anything but straightforward. Indeed, on the one hand, there are reasons to believe that increasing levels of contestation might *positively* moderate the relationship between (economic and political) performance evaluations and political confidence. Yet, on the other hand, there are also reasons to expect that increasing levels of public contestation might *negatively* moderate said relationship. These two contrasting expectations are depicted by Figure 5.1, that will be used in the following lines to summarize the arguments underlying such expectations.

Increasing levels of public contestation might positively moderate the effect of economic and political performance assessments on political confidence for several reasons. For instance, increasing levels of contestation are related to increasing access to alternative sources of information about public institutions and authorities' behavior, thus more opportunities for individuals to assess institution and authorities performance. If this holds true, then, what can be expected is that as public contestation

Figure 5.1: Hypothetical Moderation Effects of Contestation on Political Confidence Antecedents



increases political confidence should become more sensitive to changes in economic or political performance assessments (cf. Shi 2001). Moreover, as public contestation increases, variations of political confidence might become more and more affected by the 'winner-loser effect' (Anderson and Tverdova 2001, 2003; Anderson and LoTempio 2002; Anderson et al. 2005; see also Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3.4), captured by variations of individuals' performance evaluations. Electoral winners can be expected to be characterized, on the average, by more positive evaluations of incumbent authorities' performance, as compared to electoral losers. Thus, what it might be expected is that as the political system becomes more competitive (that is, as public contestation increases) the 'winner-loser gap' should increasingly affect individuals' perfomance assessment, and in turn said variations should be reflected in variations of individuals' confidence in institutions. According to said arguments, and similar ones that might be formulated, the following analyses, thus, should produce a result similar to the one depicted by the left panel (Panel A) of Figure 5.1, in which varying levels of political confidence in political systems characterized by high levels of public contestation (the solid line) are more contingent on variations of performance evaluations as compared to varying levels of political confidence in low-contestation political systems (the dotted line).

However, alternative arguments might also lead toward an opposite expectation, name that increasing levels of public contestationg might negatively moderate the impact of performance evaluations on individuals' confidence in institutions.

For instance, it may be hypothesized that as possibilities of political contestation increase (that is, as

freedom of expression, freedom of organization, access to alternative sources of information becomes available to a larger share of population) responsibility attribution might become more complicated. In democratic countries free and independent media may offer several, often contrasting, reconstruction of the same events. Opposition parties and leaders may try to attribute economic performance failures to incumbent authorities. Incumbent authorities may try defending themselves accusing opposition parties. This rather conflictual and partisan environment, moreover, may sum up with citizens' partisan stances, thus affecting their expectations and evaluations on a plethora of topics and issues. In such hypothetical context it seems reasonable to assume, then, that responsibility attribution, whether positive or negative, may be less decisive in determining variations of individuals' confidence in institutions when compared to contexts in which such dynamics are hampered or almost totally absent. Indeed, in an autocratic or anocratic country, on the contrary, such mechanisms may be much less pronounced or even do not exist. In the end, in an autocracy and more hegemonic anocracies there is *one* authority or political elite that can be considered responsible for governmental performances. Individuals may still maintain, on the average, higher levels of confidence compared to democratic regimes because concrete political alternatives may simply do not exist or being perceived as not credible, or feasible at a given point in time. But all in all, what can be expected, according to this argument, is that individual-level variations may be more dramatic in low-contestation systems as compared to variations in political systems characterized by high levels of public contestation. This expectations is graphically summarized by Panel B in Figure 5.1, in which variations of political confidence in political systems characterized by low levels of political contestation (dotted line) are more affected by variations of performance evaluations as compared to variations of confidence in public institutions in political systems characterized by high levels of contestation (solid line).

It appears difficult to expect whether these two expectations should apply to both types of political confidence, namely confidence in political institutions and confidence in implementative ones. The arguments presented few lines above are mostly built considering confidence in political institutions. Moreover, the performance assessments considered in the following analyses are expected to be more relevant for said type of political confidence because of the specific characteristics of the ABS items considered to operationalize these evaluations (see Sect. 5.3.5). As a consequence, these expectations are expected to mostly apply to confidence political institutions rather than confidence in implementative institutions. Nonetheless, at this stage of the discussion the possibility that these mechanisms might apply also to confidence in implementative institutions cannot be ruled out.

5.2.2 Hypotheses about the Direct Effect of Economic and Political Performance Evaluations

As already noted at the outset of this section, in addition to an analysis of the direct and indirect impact of public contestation on individuals' confidence in both political and implementative institutions, this chapter has been conceived also to offer a generalization of the relationship between individual-level determinants of political confidence across East Asia. Although representing a somewhat collateral exploration, the following empirical analyses provide an assessment of said relationship once accounting for the direct effect of contextual variables, and this represents an original contribution for the existing

literature, since almost none of the previous analyses of political confidence in East Asia do investigate said relationships accounting for the effect of aggregate-level variables. Nonetheless, the extensive literature about the relationship between individual-level attitudes and political confidence allows to formulate a set of specific hypotheses rather than expectations that are presented in the following lines. The first set of hypotheses tested in the following empirical analyses concerns the impact of economic performance evaluations on political confidence, and take into consideration the differentiation between *sociotropic* and *egocentric* economic evaluations. First, what can be hypothesized without risking of being contradicted is a positive relationship between both kinds of economic performance assessments and confidence in public institutions. As individual evaluations of and expectations about national economy or their personal economic situations becomes more positive, the higher the political confidence of our hypothetical individual. Previous research in East Asia (e.g. Chang 2013: 85; Chang and Chu 2006: 266, 268; Huang *et al.* 2013: 57-62; Kim 2010: 806-807; Park 2017: 502; Wong *et al.* 2009: 162, 165; Wong *et al.* 2011: 271) and other regions of our globe (e.g. Brehm and Rahn 1997: 1013; Catterberg and Moreno 2005: 44; McAllister 1999: 199-200; Mishler and Rose 2001: 51, 55; Schnaudt 2019: 141, 143; van der Meer and Dekker 2011: 109) present rather encompassing evidence on this matter. Thus the first hypotheses concerning economic performance evaluations are formulated as follows:

> H_1: *The more positive individuals' sociotropic economic evaluations, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*
> H_2: *The more positive individuals' egocentric economic evaluations, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*

What might be further argued is that sociotropic evaluations are more relevant for individuals' political confidence than egocentric economic evaluations. It sounds reasonable to assume that evaluations of national economy should affect more individuals confidence in institutions that, rightly or wrongly, are considered the main responsible of the current economic circumstance, compared to pocketbook evaluations that individuals may also attribute to circumstances not necessarily related to the decisions and behavior of public institutions. Moreover, a part from these speculations, studies including both kinds of economic evaluations tend to agree that sociotropic evaluations do excert a stronger effect on political confidence than egocentric economic evaluations (e.g. McAllister 1999: 199; Park 2017: 502; Schnaudt 2019: 143, 147). Building on these assumptions and findings, what is hypothesized is that:

> H_3: *The impact of sociotropic economic evaluations on confidence in both political and implementative institutions is stronger than the impact of egocentric economic evaluations.*

Furthermore, what can be hypothesized is that the impact of economic performance evaluations and expectations, in particular sociotropic ones, may vary according to the type of political confidence considered in this thesis. While it appears logical to hypothesize that assessments of economic performances may heavily affect confidence in institutions by definition dedicated also to the development of public policies aiming to affect economic structures and dynamics, it is less straightforward to assume that expectations about and evaluations of economic performance should affect, at least by the

same extent, political confidence in implementative institutions, such as civil services or police forces. Some evidence about this matter do exist (e.g. Schnaudt 2019: 143), but given the already mentioned tendency of scholars to analyze political confidence with measures aggregating individuals' confidence in political and implementative institutions, this issue remains under-investigated, especially in East Asia. Consequently, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that:

> H_4: *The impact of sociotropic economic performance evaluations is stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.*
> H_5: *The impact of egocentric economic performance evaluations is stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.*

The second set of hypotheses tested in the empirical analyses showed below is about the impact of *political performance* evaluations on political confidence. As better explained in the following section, individual assessment of political performance are measured with survey items concerning (a) evaluations of *institutional responsiveness*, (b) evaluations about *governmental corruption control efforts*, and (c) the extent to which individuals feel safe in their onw city, town, or village, namely *security perceptions*. Also in this case, the relationship between these factors and political confidence is rather straightforward. It appears reasonable to hypothesize that that individuals believing in institutions capacity to respond to their demands (namely, external efficacy), curb corruption, and guarantee their safety, should express higher levels of confidence as compared to those that do not believe so.
Yet, as for economic performance assessments, the question is whether or not these evaluations should impact differently on individuals' confidence according to the types of confidence in institutions taken into consideration. In terms of institutional responsiveness, there are no theoretical compelling arguments to argue that individuals' perceptions of institutions capacity to respond to their demands should affect more their confidence in either political institutions or implementative institutions. Relying on sheer theoretical and conceptual arguments, it can be expected that these evaluations matter for both types of institutions in a very similar fashion. Nonetheless, as explained in the following pages (see Sect. 5.3.5) the specific ABS item used to operationalize institutional responsiveness specifically refers to *government* responsiveness. Thus, the specific wording of this item may lead individuals' to relate more these evaluations to confidence in political institutions rather than confidence in implementative ones.
About corruption control efforts, it is difficult to hypothesize whether these evaluations should impact more on confidence in political or implementative institutions. While the former institutions and authorities normally bear the ultimate political responsibility about corruption control efforts, the latter are normally those on the front line in fighting corruption. Thues, there are no compelling theoretical reasons to define this matter *a priori*. However, as in the case of institutional responsiveness evaluations, also in this case the specific ABS item used to operationalize corruption control efforts explicitly refers to *governmental efforts* (see Sect. 5.3.5). Thus, also in this case, the specific wording of the ABS item used to operationalize said evaluations may lead ABS respondents' to relate more these evaluations to confidence in political institutions rather than confidence in implementative ones.
Finally, when considering security perceptions it is relatively straightforward to hypothesize that these

assessments may impact more on individuals' confidence in institutions such as the civil service or the police (namely, those institutions whose function is more directly related to such societal issues), rather than political institutions (see Kotzian 2011: 40). Thus, the set of hypotheses concerning these antecedents can be written as follows:

> H_6: *The more positive individuals' evaluations of institutions responsiveness, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*
> H_7: *The more positive individuals' evaluations of corruption control efforts, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*
> H_8: *The more positive individuals' security perceptions, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*

> H_9: *The impact of individual perceptions of institutions responsiveness is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative institutions.*
> H_{10}: *The impact of individual perceptions of corruption control efforts is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative institutions.*
> H_{11}: *The impact of individual security perceptions is stronger for citizens' confidence in implementative institutions as compared to confidence in political institutions.*

5.2.3 Hypotheses about the Direct Effect of Political and Socio-cultural Orientations

The third set of hypotheses brings us away from institutional approaches and puts on the stage *culturalist* explanations of institutional confidence. As the discussion of the previous section suggests, and has discussed in the previous chapter, culturalist accounts tend to identify two main antecedents of political confidence, namely *authority orientations* and *social trust*. About the former, moreover, following the logic used in previous analyses (see Ch.4, Sect. 4.3.3), *social* and *political* authority orientations are considered separately. On theoretical basis, and considering previous research in this region (e.g. Huang *et al* 2013: 57-62; Ikeda 2013: 32; Shi 2015: 62-75; Zhai 2018: 361) it can be hypothesized a positive relationship between both kinds of authority orientations and social trust, on the one hand, and political confidence, on the other hand. In other words, we should expect, first, higher levels of political confidence as individual conceptions of social and political authority becomes more hierarchical, and, second, higher levels of political confidence as individuals show higher levels of generalized social trust. Moreover, given the more explicit reference to political institutions or authorities, we can expect a stronger impact of orientations toward political authority as compared to conceptions of social authority. Hence, these arguments are formulated in form of hypotheses as follows:

> H_{12}: *The more hierarchical individuals' conceptions of political authority, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*

H_{13}: *The more hierarchical individuals' conceptions of social authority, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*
H_{14}: *The higher individuals' generalized social trust, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.*

H_{15}: *The impact of political authority orientations on confidence in both political and implementative institutions is stronger as compared to the impact of social authority orientations.*

Furthermore, as underlined several times in this thesis, the individual-mechanisms assumed by socio-culturalist arguments are rather deterministic and conceive political confidence as crucially determined by culturally oriented attitudes or dispositions formed outside the institutional context in which individuals live at a given point in time. Consequently there are not many compelling theoretical reasons to assume that authority orientations or social trust should impact differently on the two typologies of confidence analysed in this work. One sole theoretical claim that could be considered is the one proposed by Inglehart (1999), contending that the political culture produced by socioeconomic modernizations, conducive to the rise of critical citizens characterized by anti-authoritarian values, may reduce support for 'hierarchical institutions', such as the military, or the government (see also Dalton 2004, Chap. 5). One of the measures employed in the following analyses (see Sect. xxx) incorporates individuals confidence in national governments, while the other does not include confidence in other 'hierarchical institutions'. Following Inglehart's and associates claims we can thus hypothesize that:

H_{16}: *The impact of political authority orientations is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.*
H_{17}: *The impact of social authority orientations is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.*
H_{18}: *The impact of generalized social trust is equal for citizens' confidence in political institutions and in implementative institutions.*

The eighteen hypotheses presented few lines above and in the previous pages (see Sect. 5.2.2) represent, thus, the set of hypotheses about the direct impact of individual-level attitudes and orientations on individuals' confidence in institutions.

5.3 Data and Methods

5.3.1 Methods

As in Chapter 4, the data exploited to perform the following empirical analyses are derived by different sources, most of which overlap with those used in the previous chapter (see Sect. 4.3). Nonetheless, as suggested by the discussion above, differently from Chapter 4 the analyses presented in this chapter are meant to deal with both individual-level and macro- or contextual-level variability, accounting for the hierarchical nature of the data (in this case, individuals nested in countries). Consequently, the

Table 5.1: Individual-level Data Basis: Hierarchical Linear Models

Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N	Country/Territory	Year	Wave	N
Cambodia	2008	2	1000	Myanmar	2015	4	1620
	2012	3	1200	Philippines	2005	2	1200
	2015	4	1200		2010	3	1200
China	2007	2	5098		2015	4	1200
	2015	4	4068	Singapore	2006	2	1012
Hong Kong	2007	2	849		2010	3	1000
	2012	3	1177		2014	4	1039
	2016	4	1217	South Korea	2011	3	1207
Indonesia	2006	2	1581		2015	4	1200
	2011	3	1530	Taiwan	2006	2	1587
	2016	4	1550		2010	3	1592
Japan	2007	2	1067		2014	4	1657
	2010	3	1880	Thailand	2006	2	1546
	2016	4	1081		2010	3	1512
Malaysia	2007	2	1418		2014	4	1199
	2011	3	1214	Vietnam	2006	2	1200
	2014	4	1207		2010	3	1191
Mongolia	2006	2	1211				
	2010	3	1210				
	2014	4	1228	Pooled			53947

Notes: "N": Sample Size. "Wave": ABS round.

approach used in this chapter is a multilevel one. More precisely, several hierarchical or multilevel linear regression models (hereinafter, HLMs or MLMs. For an overview of these statistical techniques see Gelman and Hill 2006; Hox *et al.* 2018; Nezlek 2011) have been employed in order to empirically assess the expectations and hypotheses discussed in the previous section of this chapter (see Sect. 5.2). Two types of HLMs have been employed. First, fixed effects HLMS have been employed in order to analyse (a) the direct effect of political contestation on political confidence once controlling for individual-level variables, and (b) the direct effect of individual-level variables once accounting for between-cluster variability. Second, mixed effects HLMs have been employed in order to analyse (c) the indirect effects of public contestation, namely the extent to which public contestation moderates the impact of some specific individual-level antecedents of political confidence (namely, economic and political performance assessments as discussed earlier in this chapter; see Sect. 5.2.1). Additional features of these models are provided in the following pages dedicated to the discussion of the empirical findings.

5.3.2 Individual-level Data Basis

About the data basis of the following analyses, the empirical analyses have been performed on a dataset characterized by a hierarchical nature, basically individuals nested in countries. The individual-level data source is again the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS). Differently from the previous chapters (see Chapter 3, Sect. 3.4, and Chapter 4, Sect. 4.3) in this chapter the dataset that has been used does not

include the first round of the ABS but only the second, the third, and the fourth ones. The reasons of this choice essentially rely on the differences characterizing the ABS studies across the four waves considered in this thesis. Whereas the questionnaires of the ABS of the third and fourth round are mostly overlapping for a large share of items, the items included in the first and second survey have been changed and, in some cases, reworded in a substantial way, and unfortunately these changes crucially affect some of the key variables selected for the following analyses. The most important changes, however, have been realised between the first and second round of the ABS, reason why the former has been excluded from the analyses in its totality. In addition, some key variables variables of the following analyses (e.g. corruption control efforts indicator) are completely missing in some of studies[59], further reducing the pool of individual-level datasets available. Thus, the following analyses are based on 37 samples of the 40 composing the second, third, and fourth rounds of the ABS, excluding the 2011 Chinese study, the 2006 Korean study, and the 2015 Vietnamese study (see Table 5.1).

5.3.3 Operationalization of Political Confidence

As in the previous chapter (see Ch. 4., Sect. 4.3.2), political confidence measures consist in two indices measuring ABS respondents' confidence in political institutions (national governments and national assemblies), and confidence in implementative institutions (civil service and police forces)[60]. These measures consist in two descrete additive indices ranging from 2 to 8, rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. Clearly, given the nature of the analyses performed (see Sect. 5.3.1), in this case individual scores have not been averaged at the ABS study-level. As already discussed in the previous chapter (see Ch. 4, Sect. 4.3.2), these items can be fairly considered valid and reliable indicators of the two types of political confidence identified in Chapter 3. Thus, the two dependent variables of the following analyses are individual-scores referring to *confidence in political institutions* and individual scores about *confidence in implementative institutions*.

5.3.4 Operationalization of Public Contestation and other Contextual-level Factors

The key *contextual-level independent variable* tested in the following empirical analyses refers to public contestation, and as in the previous chapter (see Ch.4, Sect. 4.3.3) this has been operationalized with an original measure developed aggregating two V-Dem indices, that are the freedom of expression and alternative sources of information index (Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 42), and the freedom of association index (Coppedge *et al.* 2019a: 43)[61]. In addition to this factor, three aggregate-level control variables are included in the following models.

The first consists in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (see UNDP 2019: 29-32), namely a summary measure of average achievement in three dimensions of human development (health, knowledge and standard of living). The second consists in the

[59]For instance, items tapping individual evaluations of corruption control efforts are completely missing in the ABS Chinese sample of 2011 and in the Vietnamese study of 2015.

[60]For additional information about the ABS survey items measuring individual confidence in institutions see Chapter 2 (Sect. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) and related appendix (Appendix A).

[61]For further details about the aggregation formula and the logic leading to it see Ch.4, Sect. 4.3.3, fn. 9.

average of the annual growth rate of GDP per capita of the year and the two years preceding each ABS study, computed on the Maddison Project (see Bolt *et al.* 2018) data. The third one consists in the World Governance Indicators' government effectiveness index (see Kaufmann *et al.* 2010: 4). These three factors, as already discussed in the previous chapter (Ch. 4, Sects. 4.3.4 and 4.3.5), are logically related to culturalist and institutionalist explanations of political confidence. Empirically, moreover, in the previous chapter it has been shown that said factors do excert an independent direct effect on political confidence average levels[62]. For these theoretical and empirical reasons, thus, these three variables have been included as control contextual variables in the following analyses.

5.3.5 Operationalization of Economic and Political Performance Evaluations

Turning to the *individual-level independent variables* included in the following analyses, *sociotropic* and *egocentric economic evaluations* have been operationalized exploiting two five-categories Likert items measuring ABS respondents' evaluations of the current state of national economy and of their household economic situation. The response categories available to ABS respondents' range from 1 ("*Very bad*") to 5 ("*Very good*"), and the question wordings of these two items are the following:

- *How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?*
- *As for your own family, how do you rate your economic situation today?*

The item wordings are rather straightforward, hence it seems plausible to assume that they represent reliable and valid measures of individual perceptions about the current state of the national economy status and individual pocketbook evaluations.
Individual *political performance assessments* are operationalized with three ABS items measuring (a) respondents' evaluations of *government responsiveness to citizens' demands*, (b) respondents' *evaluations of national governments' corruption control efforts*, and (c) respondents' *perceptions of safety*.
About the first measure, the ABS item measuring respondents' assessments of governmental responsiveness consists in a four-categories Likert item, ranging from 1 ("*Not responsive at all*") to 4 ("*Very responsive*")[63] whose question wording is the following:

- *How well do you think the government responds to what people want?*

The item wording seems to do not pose any particular issue in terms of clarity and specificity and it can be plausibly assumed that this item represents a reliable and valid measure of individuals' evaluations of government responsiveness.
About the second measure of political performance evaluations (b), the ABS item measuring individuals

[62] Actually, the annual average economic growth rate index does not excert a statistically significant effect on average levels of confidence in implementative institutions (see Ch.4, Sect. 4.4.2). Nonetheless, for simplicity and clarity sake, this factor has been included in the models concerning confidence in implementative institutions.

[63] The coding of this item values have been reversed from the original one. Thus as, explained above, higher values indicate positive evaluations, while lower values indicate negative evaluations of government responsiveness.

assessment of governmental efforts to tackle corruption consists in a four-categories Likert item, ranging from 1 ("*It is doing nothing*") to 4 ("*It is doing its best*")[64] and worded as follows:

- In your opinion, is the government working to crackdown corruption and root out bribes?

Also in this case the item wording is rather clear and specific, thus it can be assumed that this item represents a direct, reliable and valid measure of individuals' evaluations of governmental performance in fighting corruption.
Finally, about individuals' perfections of safety (c), the measure consists in another four-categories Likert item, ranging from 1 ("*Very unsafe*") to 4 ("*Very safe*")[65] and characterized by the question wording below:

- Generally speaking, how safe is living in this city/ town/ village – very safe, safe, unsafe or very unsafe?

Differently from previous ones, this item does not represent an explicit request for individuals assessments of institutional performances. Nonetheless, it may still be assumed to represent an indirect measure of institutional performance evaluations. One of the main tasks of public institutions is to maintain law and order, thus protecting citizens' security. Moreover, the item clearly refers to individuals' living area (whether a city, town, or village), thus allowing respondents to make an implicit connection between their own security and institutions' performance in this domain.

5.3.6 Operationalization of Political and Socio-cultural Orientations

When turning to items tapping into individuals' *authority orientations*, the operationalization of ABS items follows a scheme similar to the one employed in Chapter 4 (see Sect. 4.3). *Political authority orientations* operationalization has been realized consider the three items constituting the OTA index presented in Chapter 4, and measuring ABS respondents' positive attitudes toward nondemocratic practices and ideas, worded as follows:

- Government leaders are like the head of a family, we should all follow their decisions
- The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society
- If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything

These three items can be plausibly considered as items tapping into individuals' conceptions of political authority. The first item considers whether or not ABS respondents' agree with a paternalistic conception of political authority, in which citizens' should blindly support governmental decisions. The

[64] As for the previous item, coding of this item values have been reversed from the original one. Higher values indicate positive evaluations, while lower values indicate negative evaluations of government performance in this domain.
[65] Also in this case item values have been reversed from the original ABS coding.

second one measures individuals' agreement in granting the power of censorship to public institutions and authorities. The third one taps into a rather particular conception of authority, calling into question political leaders probity as a measure to determine the extent to which they should be allowed to excercise their power arbitrarily, but it can still be plausible to assume that the extent to which an individual agrees with this statement is a reliable and valid measure of a positive dispositions toward authoritarian conceptions and practices. Consequently, these three items have been combined to form an additive index of 'political authority orientations' ranging from 3 to 12 and then rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. When turning to *social authority orientations* operationalization, differently from the operationalization realized in the previous chapter (see Ch. 4, Sect. 4.3) two ABS items have been considered, one measuring individual positive attitudes toward a hierarchical conception of the school environment, and a second one measuring individuals' positive attitudes toward a hierarchical conception of family relations, especially between parents and sons. The two items, four-categories Likert type, ranging from 1 ("*Strongly disagree*") to 4 ("*Strongly agree*")[66], are worded as follows:

- *Being a student, one should not question the authority of their teacher*
- *Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask*

The selection of these two items partially follows the selection made in previous studies (e.g. Ikeda's 'paternalism' scale; see Ikeda 2013: 27), but it differ from these since it relies on the sole two items available across the second, third, and fourth round of the ABS. As the item wording suggest, these two item clearly ask respondents to offer a statement about their normative standpoints about realistic situations concerning authority relations outside of the political sphere, thus they can both be considered as reliable and valid indicators of individual conceptions of authority outside the political sphere. As for political authority orientations, these two items have been summed to compose an additive index ranging from 2 to 8, then rescaled to fito into the interval [0,1].
As in Chapter 4 (see Sect. 4.3), the only ABS item measuring individual *generalized social trust* consist in a dichotomous measure worded as follows:

- *Generally speaking, would you say that "Most people can be trusted" or that "you must be very careful in dealing with people"?*

The reliability and validity of this item, clearly inspired at the renowned item invented by Noelle-Neumann's in 1948 (cf. Zmerli *et al.* 2007: 38-39), has been tested during the last seven decades of empirical research about social trust, and has been extensively used in many cross-national studies other than the ABS (such as the WVS or the Eurobarometer surveys). There is some disagreement about whether this question represent a good item to measure respondents' trust in a not-specified, generalized 'other'. Nonetheless some studies (e.g. Uslaner 2002: 54) do show that this item actually taps into individuals' trust in strangers, and thus we rely on these findings in selecting this item as a valid measure of generalized social trust. Unfortunately, as already mentioned introducing this item, differently from the operationalization in the Citizen, Involvement, Democracy survey (see Zmerli *et*

[66] As for previous items, the coding has been reversed from the original ABS one.

al. 2007: 39) and the European Social Survey (see Schnaudt 2019: 99) using a scale ranging from 0 to 10, the ABS operationalization consists in a simple dichotomous variable. Moreover it represents the only variable tapping into this concept across the three survey rounds that have been considered. Other items measuring social trust partially inspired to the renowned Rosenberg's (1956) battery[67] are only available for the third and fourth round of the ABS study. As a consequence this is the only item tapping into social trust that has been considered. The reference category of this item consists in the second statement of the question wording ("*You must be very careful in dealing with people*"). Finally, what should be noted is that in addition to the covariates presented few lines above and in previous pages (Sect. 5.3.5), three socio-demographic control variables have been chosen, namely ABS respondents' age, sex, educational attainment, and subjective socioeconomic status (SES).

5.4 Results and Findings

5.4.1 Fixed Effect Hierarchical Models: The Direct Effect of Public Contestation and Individual-level Determinants

The first set of regression analyses, is presented in Tables 5.2 and 5.3, and consists in six two-level hierarchical linear regression models (HLM) estimating (a) the direct effect of public contestation on levels of political confidence (namely, the intercept of the models), and (b) the (fixed) direct effects of individual-level determinants of political confidence. Individual-level variables have been linearly transformed using a grand-mean centering, a standard procedure well suited to test the direct effect of higher-level variables on the dependent, lower-level one (see Enders and Tofighi 2007: 128-130; Hox *et al.* 2018: 48-52). Note that the effects of individual-level control variables (age, sex, educational attainment, and subjective socio-economic status) are not presented in Tables 5.2 and 5.3. Tables presenting all the predictors are available in the appendix related to this chapter (Appendix C).
About the first point (a) the regression models offer quite interesting results when comparing those about confidence in political institutions (Table 5.2) on the one hand, and those concerning confidence in implementative institutions (Table 5.3) on the other hand. Considering the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of models in Table 5.2 it is possible to appreciate how the addition of the public contestation variable brings the value from 0.232 to 0.068. What this values imply is that while 23.20% of the variation in the outcome of the first model (Model 1a) is attributable to differences between ABS samples, in the second one (Model 2a) the between-studies variation is equal to 6.83%. Moreover, what the third model (Model 3a) shows is that adding the three contextual control variables (namely, the HDI, the average economic growth rate and government effectiveness indices) produce only a slight improvement of the ICC value (Model 3a ICC value is equal to 0.053). The relevant impact of the public contestation variable and the less impressive ones of the remaining contextual variables, moreover, can be appreciated also considering the variation of the marginal and conditional R^2 statistics of

[67] Rosenberg's survey items battery, forming the so-called 'misanthropy scale' (see Rosenberg 1956: 690), adds to the item mentioned above other ones, and mostly from these items those that have been maintained in following empirical research are those measuring strangers' helpfulness and fairness (cf. Zmerli *et al.* 2007: 39). The ABS maintains only the item tapping into individual expectations about strangers' fairness and it is worded as follows: *Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?*.

Table 5.2: Hierarchical Regression Models for Confidence in Political Institutions

	Confidence in Political Institutions		
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a
Public Contestation Index		**−0.190*****	**−0.161*****
		(0.018)	(0.020)
Human Development Index			−0.095
			(0.052)
Average Economic Growth			**0.034***
			(0.017)
Government Effectiveness			0.088
			(0.046)
Sociotropic Economic Ev.	**0.086*****	**0.086*****	**0.086*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Economic Ev.	**0.014*****	**0.014*****	**0.014*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Government Responsiveness Ev.	**0.078*****	**0.078*****	**0.078*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Corruption Control Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.069*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Security Perception	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.051*****	**0.051*****	**0.051*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social OTA	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.025*****	**0.024*****	**0.025*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.555*****	**0.559*****	**0.558*****
	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.008)
ICC	0.232	0.068	0.053
Marginal R^2	0.219	0.463	0.477
Conditional R^2	0.400	0.500	0.505
AIC	−18682.595	−18732.524	−18735.971
BIC	−18546.609	−18588.038	−18565.988
Log Likelihood	9357.298	9383.262	9387.986
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.010	0.003	0.003
Var: Residual	0.035	0.035	0.035

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Fixed effects models based on maximum likelihood estimation. Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5.3: Hierarchical Regression Models for Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions		
	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b
Public Contestation Index		**−0.039***	−0.027
		(0.018)	(0.021)
Human Development Index			−0.069
			(0.054)
Average Economic Growth			0.006
			(0.017)
Government Effectiveness			0.093
			(0.049)
Sociotropic Economic Ev.	**0.063*****	**0.062*****	**0.062*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Economic Ev.	**0.018*****	**0.018*****	**0.018*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Government Responsiveness Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.069*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Corruption Control Ev.	**0.061*****	**0.061*****	**0.061*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Security Perception	**0.048*****	**0.048*****	**0.048*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.044*****	**0.044*****	**0.044*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Social OTA	**0.032*****	**0.032*****	**0.032*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.600*****	**0.601*****	**0.599*****
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
ICC	0.070	0.063	0.054
Marginal R^2	0.202	0.237	0.246
Conditional R^2	0.259	0.285	0.287
AIC	−15257.444	−15259.988	−15259.840
BIC	−15121.457	−15115.502	−15089.857
Log Likelihood	7644.722	7646.994	7649.920
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.003	0.003	0.002
Var: Residual	0.038	0.038	0.038

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Fixed effects models based on maximum likelihood estimation. Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

the first two models[68].

When turning to models having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable (Table 5.3), the results are substantially different. First, the model with only individual-level predictors (Model 1b) already presents a rather low ICC, indicating that only 7.04% of outcome variation can be attributed to differences between ABS samples. More importantly, once adding the public contestation variable the ICC statistic is reduced by only 0.0077 (from 0.07 in Model 1b to 0.063 in Model 2b). Furthermore, once adding the remaining three contextual-level variables the ICC value still improves marginally (from 0.063 in Model 2b to 0.054 in Model 3b), and said marginal changes of model fit can also be appreciated looking at the variation of the R^2 statistics.

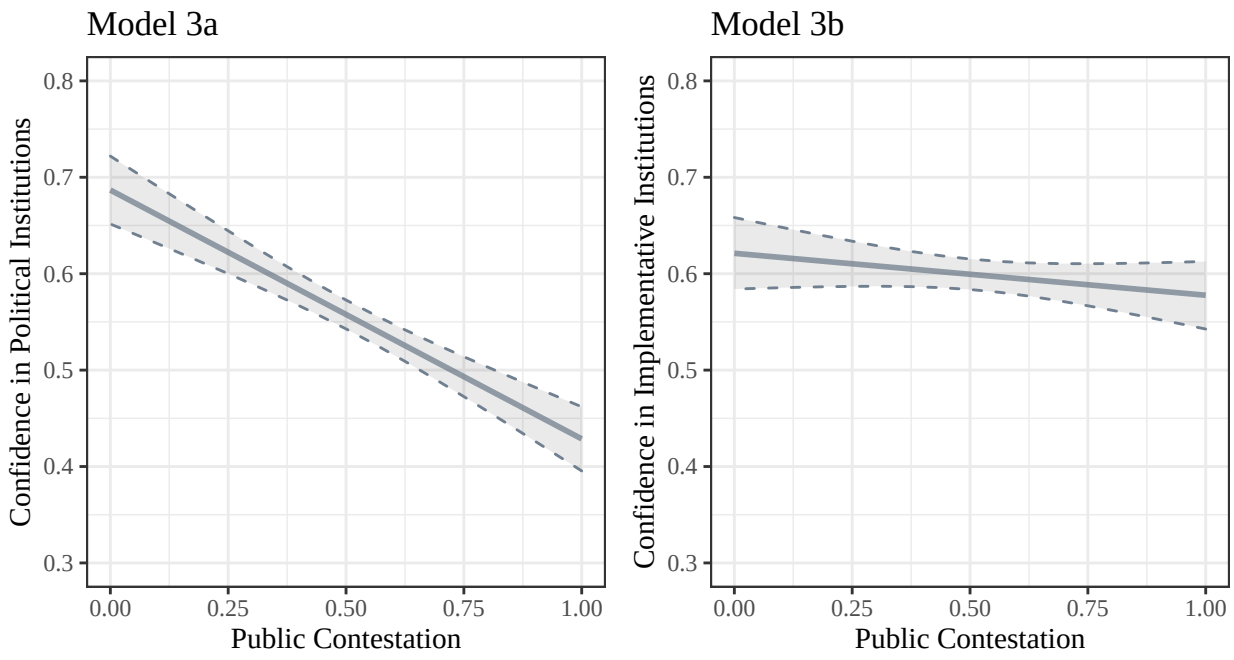
The substantial differences in the impact of contestation between models concerning confidence in political institutions (Table 5.2), and models concerning confidence in implementative institutions (Table 5.3), can also be gauged looking at the regression coefficient of the public contestation index. Indeed, the magnitude of the public contestation coefficient (negative and significant at $p < 0.001$) in Model 2a (Table 5.2) is more than four times the magnitude of the coefficient of the same variable (negative and significant at $p < 0.05$) in Model 2b (Table 5.3). Moreover, once introducing the remaining contextual-level variables the public contestation index coefficient in the third model concerning confidence in political institutions (Table 5.2, Model 3a) looses almost 15% of its magnitude, although remaining fairly strong, whereas in the third model concerning confidence in implementative institutions (Table 5.3, Model 3b) the coefficient becomes not only weaker but also looses its statistical significance. This radical difference in the behavior of the public contestation index in the latter two models (Models 3a and 3b) is reflected by the slopes of the linear predictions, showed in Figure 5.2.

Turning to point (b), namely the analysis of the *direct effect of individual-level determinants of political confidence*, while considering Tables 5.2 and 5.2, we can take in consideration the caterpillar plot represented in Figure 5.3 that depicts the standardized regression coefficients of the variables of interest, comparing the coefficients of Model 3a and Model 3b.

Starting from *economic performance assessments*, both sociotropic and egocentric economic evaluations have a positive impact on political confidence but their effect is rather different once compared among each other, with the impact of the former (sociotropic economic evaluations) varying also between the two models. Sociotropic economic evaluations are the best predictor for confidence in political institutions and the second best for confidence in implementative institutions (at least considering the point estimates). On the contrary egocentric economic expectations are the worst predictor among those considered for both models. Individuals' do evaluate institutions on the basis of assessments of societal conditions, rather than looking at their own ones, at least when considering economic issues. *Political performance evaluations* are among the best predictors of confidence for both types of political confidence. Citizens' evaluations of institutions' responsiveness is the second best predictor of confidence in political institutions, and the best predictor of confidence in implementative institutions (again, just considering the point estimates). Moreover, although slightly, the positive effect of institutions' responsiveness assessments is stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative institutions. Evaluations of governmental

[68]Marginal R^2 considers only the variance of the fixed effects, while conditional R^2 takes both the fixed and random effects into account (see Nakagawa and Schielzeth 2013).

Figure 5.2: Public Contestation Direct Effect.

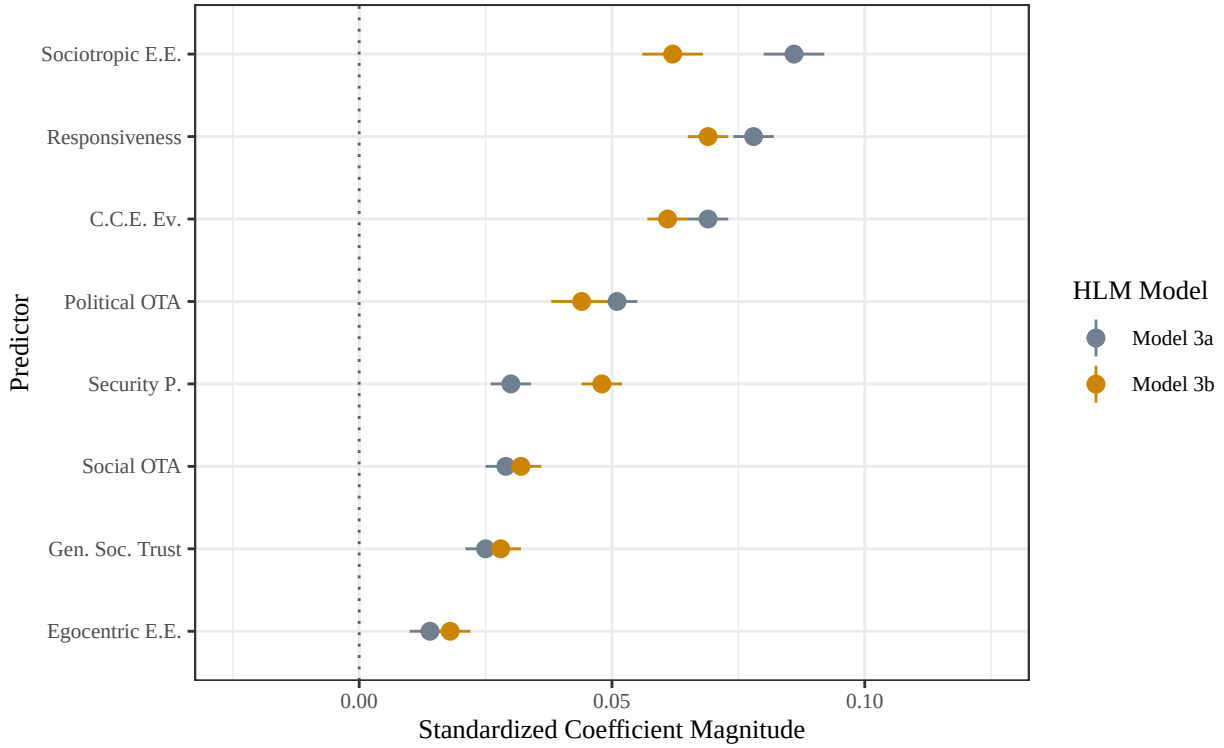


Notes: Lines are predicted values. Bands represent 95% confidence intervals.

corruption control efforts, then, are the third best predictor of confidence for both types of political confidence. Although slightly more relevant for confidence in confidence in political institutions considering only the coefficients' point estimates, the positive effect of this variable is actually similar for both types of political confidence once taking into account the 95% confidence intervals. Thus, the extent to which individuals positively evaluate institution and authorities efforts to fight corruption has the same impact on confidence in political and implementative institutions. Finally, citizens' perceptions of security are much more relevant for confidence in implementative institutions as compared to confidence in political ones. The coefficients in both models are positive, but in the model having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable (Model 3b in Table 5.3) the regression coefficient magnitude is almost two times the magnitude of the coefficient for the model having confidence in political institutions as dependent variable (Model 3a in Table 5.2).

When turning to *political orientations* and other *socio-cultural variables*, we can see how these individual-level determinants play a role, but a relatively less important one when compared to previous antecedents. All the coefficients related to these variables (political authority orientations, social authority orientations, and generalized social trust) are positive and statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. Moreover, the effect of all these variables is substantially the same between the two models considered, a fact clearly summarized by Figure 5.3. Nonetheless, important differences in the magnitude of these variables do exist. The stronger predictor in this set of individual-level variables is the less socio-deterministic, namely the one related to political authority orientations (Political OTA). This variabe, considering only the coefficient point estimates, represents the fourth best predictor of confidence in political institutions, and the fifth one of confidence in implementative institutions. However, social authority orientations (Social OTA) and generalized social trust are respectively the

Figure 5.3: Individual-level Determinats of Political confidence.



Notes: Dots are fixed effects standardized regression coefficients. Bands represent 95% confidence intervals.

third and second worst predictors of confidence in both political and implementative institutions. In other words, the extent to which individuals' conceive social authority in a more or less hierarchical fashion, or do trust undefined 'others' appear to be marginally relevant in explaining individual-level variations of political confidence in East Asia.

The results provided in this section and concerning (a) the direct effect of public contestation on levels of political confidence, and (b) the direct effect of individual-level determinants of political confidence on variations of both types of political confidence, can be summarized as follows.

First and foremost previous analyses confirm, although nuancing, the findings of the correlational analyses presented in Chapter 4 (see Sect. 4.4), and represent a clear confirmation of the expectations about the presented earlier in this chapter (see Sect. 5.2.1). Substantially, the results discussed above (see Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2) indicate that *political contestation is a key factor for explaining confidence in political institutions in East Asia.* Nonetheless, while maintining a statistically significant direct effect and somewhat improving the fit of the models, this factor appears *much less decisive in explaining variations of confidence in implementative institutions* (see Table 5.3 and Figure 5.2). In other words, while the difference in average levels of confidence in implementative institutions is mostly determined by differences *between individuals*, differences in average levels of confidence in political institutions *cannot* be properly explained without taking into consideration also the extent to which the level of public contestation allowed by a political system. This finding represent, then, a substantive one that will be further elaborated in the conclusive section of this chapter (see Sect. 5.5).

When turning to the results concerning the individual-level variables considered in previous models,

the results provided few lines above tend to confirm the hypotheses about the effect of said individual-level antecedents (see Sect. 5.2.2), and only in few cases the hypotheses presented earlier have been rejected, as summarized by Table 5.4. Mostly, the rejection affects hypotheses concerning the relative impact of some variables when considering confidence in political institutions, on the one hand, and confidence in implementative institutions, on the other hand. Nonetheless, hypotheses concerning the direction and significance of the effect of the variables considered are all confirmed.

Table 5.4: Summary of the Hypotheses Concerning the Impact of Individual-level Variables on Political Confidence

Hypothesis	✓/×
H_1: The more positive individuals' sociotropic economic evaluations, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative ones.	✓
H_2: The more positive individuals' egocentric economic evaluations, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative ones.	✓
H_3: The impact of sociotropic economic evaluations on confidence in both political and implementative institutions is stronger than the impact of egocentric economic evaluations.	✓
H_4: The impact of sociotropic economic performance evaluations is stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.	✓
H_5: The impact of egocentric economic performance evaluations is stronger for confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative institutions.	×
H_6: The more positive individuals' evaluations of institutions responsiveness, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_7: The more positive individuals' evaluations of corruption control efforts, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_8: The more positive individuals' security perceptions, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_9: The impact of individual perceptions of institutions responsiveness is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative ones.	✓
H_{10}: The impact of individual perceptions of corruption control efforts is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to confidence in implementative ones.	×
H_{11}: The impact of individual security perceptions is stronger for citizens' confidence in implementative institutions as compared to confidence in political ones.	✓
H_{12}: The more hierarchical individuals' conceptions of political authority, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_{13}: The more hierarchical individuals' conceptions of social authority, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_{14}: The higher individuals' generalized social trust, the higher their confidence in both political and implementative institutions.	✓
H_{15}: The impact of political authority orientations on confidence in both political and implementative institutions is stronger as compared to the impact of social authority orientations.	✓
H_{16}: The impact of political authority orientations is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative ones.	×
H_{17}: The impact of social authority orientations is stronger for citizens' confidence in political institutions as compared to implementative ones.	×
H_{18}: The impact of generalized social trust is equal for citizens' confidence in political institutions and in implementative institutions.	✓

"✓" indicates that the hypothesis is confirmed, whereas "×" indicates that the hypothesis is rejected.

5.4.2 Mixed Effects Hierarchical Models: The Indirect Impact of Public Contestation on Political Confidence

To investigate the extent to which public contestation moderates the impact of performance evaluations on political confidence (see Sect. 5.2.1) six HLMs have been built. In order to test the existence and nature of the said moderation effect each model is characterized by a cross-level interaction, namely an interaction between the public contestation variable and the three individual-level determinants of political confidence chosen, namely sociotropic economic evaluations, institutional responsiveness assessments, and evaluations of governmental corruption control efforts.

These regression models differ from previous ones on several respects. First, the individual-level variables interested by the cross-level interactions with the public contestation index have been group centered, and their group means have been introduced in the models. Moreover, the slope of said variables has been freed, thus contrary to previous ones these models are random intercept and random slopes models. Given the specific focus of these analyses, Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 show respectively the cross-level interactions, contextual-level fixed effects, individual-level fixed effects, and random effects for the three models concerning confidence in political institutions (Table 5.5, Models 4a, 5a, and 6a) and the three dedicated to confidence in implementative institutions (Table 5.6, Models 4b, 5b, 6b). The full HLM regression tables are available in the appendix related to this chapter (see Appendix C). The results are discussed starting from some collateral findings and then focusing on the main topic of this section.

Models concerning confidence in political institutions (Table 5.5) first show that indvidual-level fixed effects, also when freeing the slopes of individual-level variables, remain statiscally significant and substantially in line with the results of previous analyses, and this applies also to the individual-level fixed effects of the regression models concerning confidence in implementative institutions (Table 5.6).

A second rather interesting result concerns contextual-level fixed effects when introducing the group means of the variables interested by cross-level interactions. Introducing the average scores of sociotropic economic evaluations, evaluations of authorities responsiveness, of corruption control efforts evaluations heavily affect the coefficient of the public contestation index. Looking at models having confidence in political institutions as dependent variable, the introduction of the average levels of these three variables affects the magnitude of the public contestation index (as compared to Model 3a in Table 5.2). Looking at models having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable, the introduction of average levels of sociotropic economic evaluations does not particularly affect the public contestation index coefficient, that essentially remains statistically not significant. Moreover, only average levels of corruption control efforts evaluations seem to have a direct effect on the intercept of the model. Thus, what these results show is that average levels of these three variables heavily compete with the public contestation index when considering models having confidence in political institutions as dependent variable, while turn to be mostly not significant when considering models having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable. These results are further discussed in the remainder of this chapter (see Sect. 5.5).

Turning to the specific focus of this section, *namely the extent to which political contestation moderates the individual-level effect of the variables considered*, the results are rather striking and unexpected.

Table 5.5: The Moderation Effect of Contestation on the Impact of Performance Evaluations on Confidence in Political Institutions

	Political Institutions		
	Model 4a	Model 5a	Model 6a
Cross-level Interactions			
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. × Contestation	−0.007		
	(0.011)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. × Contestation		−0.005	
		(0.010)	
C.C.E. Ev. × EDI			−0.014
			(0.011)
Contextual-level Direct Effects			
Public Contestation	**−0.091*****	**−0.101*****	**−0.108*****
	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.022)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. (mean)	**0.146*****		
	(0.028)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. (mean)		**0.118*****	
		(0.028)	
C.C.E. Ev. (mean)			**0.094*****
			(0.019)
Individual-level Fixed Effects			
Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	**0.075*****	**0.086*****	**0.085*****
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Inst. Resp. Ev.	**0.077*****	**0.072*****	**0.077*****
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.002)
C.C.E. Ev.	**0.068*****	**0.068*****	**0.063*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Random Effects			
Var: Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	0.001		
Var: Inst. Resp. Ev.		0.001	
Var: C.C.E. Ev.			0.001

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Mixed effects models based on restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

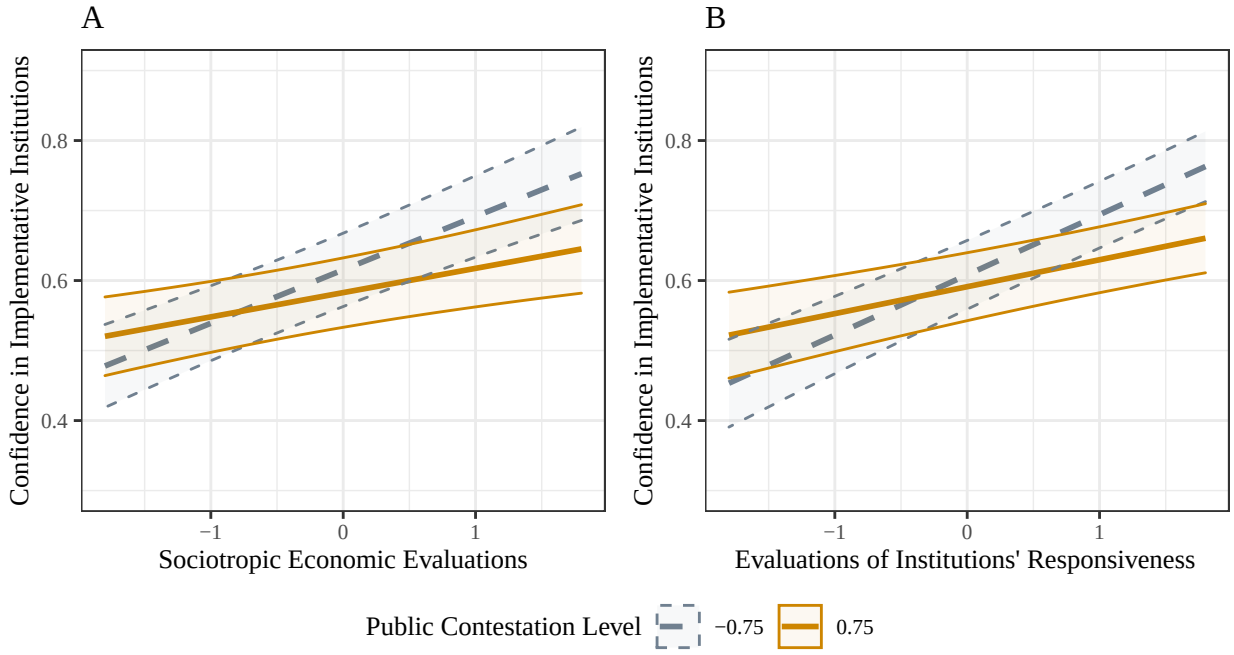
Table 5.6: The Moderation Effect of Contestation on the Impact of Performance Evaluations on Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Implementative Institutions		
	Model 4b	Model 5b	Model 6b
Cross-level Interactions			
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. × Contestation	**−0.028***		
	(0.011)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. × Contestation		**−0.032*****	
		(0.009)	
C.C.E. Ev. × Contestation			**−0.023***
			(0.009)
Contextual-level Direct Effects			
Public Contestation	−0.022	−0.011	0.013
	(0.033)	(0.031)	(0.027)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. (mean)	0.052		
	(0.036)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. (mean)		0.048	
		(0.032)	
C.C.E. Ev. (mean)			**0.071****
			(0.022)
Individual-level Fixed Effects			
Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	**0.055*****	**0.062*****	**0.062*****
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Inst. Resp. Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.062*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)
C.C.E. Ev.	**0.060*****	**0.060*****	**0.056*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Random Effects			
Var: Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	0.001		
Var: Inst. Resp. Ev.		0.000	
Var: C.C.E. Ev.			0.000

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Mixed effects models based on restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

Figure 5.4: The Moderation Effect of Public Contestation on the Impact of Performance Evaluations on Confidence in Implementative Institutions.



Notes: Lines are predictive effects for different levels of political contestation. Bands represent 95% confidence intervals.

On the one hand, all the cross-level interactions concerning models having confidence in political institutions as dependent variable (Models 4a, 5a, and 6a in Table 5.5) *are not statistically significant*. What these results imply is that differences in the effect of economic and political performance evaluations on individuals' confidence in institutions are not moderated by variations of public contestation levels. On the contrary, when considering models having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable (Models 4b, 5b, and 6b in Table 5.5) all the cross-level interactions that have been performed *are negative and statistically significant*. What this implies is that as levels of public contestation grow, the impact of individual performance evaluations decreases. Nonetheless, among the three interactions, the one concerning institutional responsiveness evaluations appears the most robust ($p < 0.001$), while the remaining ones are significant only at $p < 0.05$. The effect of these interactions and the implications of the differences in magnitude and significance of these coefficients are graphically summarized by Figure 5.4, that depicts the predicted values of confidence in implementative institutions, considering variations of sociotropic economic evaluations (Panel A) and institutions' responsiveness evaluations (Panel B), distinguishing in both cases between the predicted values in low-contestation and high-contestation political systems. What this figure shows is that variations of performance assessments are *more decisive* for variations of confidence in implementative institutions in political systems characterized by very low levels of public contestation (say, autocracies) as compared to the impact of varying levels of performance evaluations on confidence in implementative institutions in political systems characterized by high levels of public contestation.

In sum, this chapter returns a rather puzzling set of results when considering prior expectations about how public contestation might moderate the effect of performance evaluations on individuals' confi-

dence in institutions (see Sect. 5.2.1). The fact that the cross-level interactions performed are not statistically significant in models having confidence in political institutions as dependent variable (Table 5.5, Models 4a, 5a, and 6a) but only in the remaining models having confidence in implementative institutions as dependent variable (Table 5.5, Models 4b, 5b, and 6b) clearly calls for additional speculations that are presented in the remainder of this chapter.

5.5 Conclusions: The Complex Relationship between Public Contestation and Political Confidence

In this chapter have been presented the results of empirical analyses performed in order to address two main issues, namely (a) the extent to which the political contestation allowed by a political system affects average levels of political confidence once controlling for variations of individual-level and contextual-level variables, (b) the extent to which this systemic feature affects the impact of individual-level determinants of political confidence. The findings of the empirical analyses related to these points are firstly discussed. Then the section ends with a discussion of secondary or collateral findings provided by the analyses presented above.

About the first point (a), the results provided in this chapter (see Sect. 5.4.1) provides further evidence for the formulation of clear-cut answers concerning the first two research questions of this dissertation (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.4.1). Indeed, the results of the analyses performed in this chapter confirm the findings of the previous one (see Ch. 4, Sect. 4.4), although providing a more nuanced picture. Varying levels of public contestation do excert an independent direct effect on variations of average levels of political confidence, and this effect is negative. As a political system becomes more free, open, and politically competitive, individuals' confidence in institutions, on the average, *decreases*. Nonetheless, what previous results show even more clearly than the aggregate analyses provided in Chapter 4, is that varying levels of contestation are much more crucial for explaining variations of confidence in *political institutions* rather than confidence in *implementative institutions*. These results, thus, further substantiate earlier speculations (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.3) about the detrimental mechanisms for political confidence determined by increasing levels of public contestation. Increasing levels of contestation, according to the analyses provided in this chapter and in this dissertation in general, seems to mostly produce *negative* incentives for individuals' confidence in institutions, especially when considering confidence toward institutions by definition mostly affected by the consequences of increasing levels of public contestation (namely, national governments and national assemblies, and by inference also political parties).

About the second point (b), the results of the analyses that have been performed (see Sect. 5.4.2) frustrate earlier speculations about whether and how public contestation might moderate the effect of some key individual-level antecedents of political confidence (see Sect. 5.2.1), namely economic and political performance evaluations. Public contestation *does not* moderate the effect of said performance evaluations when considering confidence in political institutions. However, public contestation *does* moderate the effect of performance evaluations when considering confidence in implementative institutions, although not in a particularly decisive manner. About the latter point, what the results show is that as levels of public contestation grow, the effect of said individual-level determinants decreases.

Substantially this implies that variations of evaluations of institutions responsiveness in particular, but also sociotropic economic evaluations and evaluations of governmental efforts in curbing corruption, are *more* decisive for confidence in implementative institutions in autocratic or anocratic settings as compared to their relevance in democratic settings.

The mechanisms underlying the fact that public contestation moderates the effect of said individual-level determinants only when considering their impact on confidence in implementative institutions may be several. Yet, the most reasonable explanation, at least at this stage of the analyses, is that this may relate to differences in *the separation of functions and roles between political and implementative institutions* when comparing autocratic and democratic countries. The performance evaluations that have been analysed are indeed, as previous analyses have shown (see Sect. 5.4.1, Figure 5.3), somewhat more decisive for confidence in political institutions rather than confidence in implementative institutions. The fact that in low-contestation political systems the effect of said antecedents on confidence in implementative institutions is, at least to some extent, more similar to the effect that these antecedents exert on confidence in political institutions suggests that individuals' in these political systems seems to evaluate implementative institutions following a logic similar to the one used to evaluate political institutions, although still distinguishing between political and implementative institutions (as suggested by the results provided in Chapter 3). On the contrary, in political systems characterized by higher levels of public contestation, individuals' performance evaluations seems to exert a less crucial impact on confidence in implementative institutions as compared to the impact that the same performance evaluations exert on individuals' confidence in political institutions, and this fact might be related to a more clear-cut functional differentiation between political and implementative institutions in democratic countries. This explanation appears reasonable, but is definitely not conclusive and clearly calls for additional dimensionality analyses, perhaps to be integrated in a more comprehensive framework, able to take into account the effect also of other variables in shaping the dimensionality of political confidence (e.g. the structural equation modeling framework).

Finally, when turning to the collateral findings of this chapter, two issues are worth to be further discussed. First, the results of the individual-level variables seen in the fixed effects HLMs (see Sect. 5.4.1, Tables 5.2 and 5.2) return a rather clear landscape. *Performance assessments are the best individual-level predictors of political confidence in East Asia.* This holds true when considering sociotropic economic performance, but also when considering political performance evaluations, such as those concerning institutional responsiveness assessments, the effectiveness of corruption control efforts, and security perceptions, although in the latter case mostly when considering confidence in implementative institutions. On the contrary, attitudes or orientations related to culturalist arguments tend to be much less relevant. As already noted earlier the only variable that excerts a relatively strong effect is the one related to orientations toward *political* authority, namely the less socio-deterministic variable among those considered. Nonetheless, the results concerning social trust are still quite remarkable. Indeed, as already mentioned in other passages of this thesis, the effect of this variable on political confidence, at the individual-level, has been an issue on which several debates have been produced (see Citrin and Stoker 2018: 56; Newton *et al.* 2018: 40-45). The fact that a simple dichotomous variable is able to produce a positive, statistically significant result, can be still considered a rather interesting finding, that makes wonder how much the impact of this variable would change (and perhaps become

more important) once introducing more refined measurements. Results about individual-level determinants of political confidence in East Asia may not be the most compelling ones, given the nature of the models provided (namely, *fixed* effects HLM). However, parallel analyses (not shown here) performed employing mixed effects HLMs, in which the slope of each individual-level predictor has been freed, did not provide results substantially different from those shown above (Tables 5.2 and 5.3). Consequently, although maintaining a certain level of caution, findings about the individual-level direct effects of the predictors considered in the previous analyses can be considered a rather reliable summary of the main predictors of political confidence individual-level variations in East Asia. A summary that, as already noted in several passages of this chapter, represents an original assessment for studies of political confidence in East Asia given the almost total lack of analyses investigating the contribution of said antecedents once accounting for the impact of contextual factors on political confidence variations.
Second, the latter analyses provided in this chapter (see Sect. 5.4.2, Tables 5.5 and 5.6) have also shown that the fact that average levels of performance evaluations heavily compete with the public contestation index in affecting average levels of confidence in political institutions, and this result suggests that average levels of these performance evaluations might be *related to* the levels of political contestation allowed by a political system. What may be argued, then, is that the extent to which (on the average) individuals evaluate the economic and political performance of their institutions (that in turn affects average levels of confidence in political institutions) might be influenced by the extent to which these individuals live or not in a country that allows for political contestation. And this finding definitely opens the possibility to further analyses and research about how public contestation indirectly affects individuals' confidence in institutions, maybe through moderation analyses or other statistical tools.

Conclusions: Findings, Limits, and Perspectives for Future Research

Summary of Findings

Most of what we know about the relationship between democracy and individuals' confidence in institutions relates to the extent to which other individual attitudes affect this mixed form of political support (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.2) and it is contingent on the geopolitical context in which this relationship has been mostly investigated, namely the West European and North American democratic contexts. In the last two decades an increasing attention has been dedicated to the role played by contextual factors in affecting individual confidence in state institutions, yet previous research has essentially focused on how factors like socioeconomic modernization, or governmental performance (both economic and political) directly or indirectly affect individuals' expectations toward and evaluations of public institutions. Consequently, the issue of whether and the extent to which varying levels of the defining properties of a democratic system affect individuals' confidence in institutions has remained largely unexplored (see Ch. 1, es. Sect. 1.4).

The main aim of this research effort, thus, has been to investigate how variations of public contestation (Dahl 1971), namely the extent to which a political system provides institutional guarantees for individuals' civil and political liberties, as well as political competition (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.2), does affect variations of political confidence. For doing so this thesis steps out from the geopolitical context of analysis usually characterizing previous studies and focuses on East Asia, a region of our world whose complexity and variability on key structural and systemic properties, starting from the public contestation dimension, provides opportunities (but also challenges) for the study of how contextual factors affect, directly and indirectly, individuals' confidence in public institutions (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.3).

Mixed expectations about whether and how varying levels of public contestation might affect political confidence (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.3), as well as gaps in the existing literature concerning political confidence in East Asia (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3), have led to investigate a limited set of crucial questions: first, whether and how varying levels of public contestation directly affect individuals' confidence in institutions; second, whether and how varying levels of public contestation moderate the impact of relevant individual attitudes and orientations on individual political confidence; third, whether or not these effects are conditional on the institutions in which individuals' are more or less confident. Starting from the latter point, the empirical evidence presented in this work provides some answers to these research questions (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.4.1).

Given the almost complete lack of studies about this topic in East Asia, the first step of the empirical analyses (Ch. 3) has been dedicated to assess the dimensionality of East Asian citizens' confidence in institutions, namely: first, whether East Asians' political confidence represent a single, overarching attitude toward all public institutions, or whether it should be considered as a multi-dimensional construct (RQ 5); second, whether at least a common configuration of said attitudes can be found across the whole region (RQ 6); whether potential differences are explainable in terms of systemic or structural differences characterizing the cases considered (RQ 7). Moreover, in addition to these key questions, a measurement invariance analysis, namely an analysis to assess to what extent individuals' confidence in institutions measurement is equivalent across the region, has been conducted also to test

whether or not expectations and evaluations of the citizens' of some of the most oppressive regimes of contemporary world are equivalent to those of individuals' living in more liberalized political sytems. In light of the results provided by aforementioned analyses (see Ch. 3, Sect. 3.5) what can be argued is that: first, *East Asians' political confidence should be conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct rather than a one-dimensional one*; second, that *a two-dimensional configuration of individuals' confidence in institutions distinguishing between confidence in political institutions (national governments, national assemblies, and political parties) and implementative institutions (civil services, police, and armed forces) holds across the whole region*; third, that *differences across studies in terms of political confidence configuration do not clearly relate to varying levels of public contestation*, or other structural or systemic properties of the national contexts or territories considered in the analyses. In addition to these findings, what has been observed is that individuals' confidence in the legal system clearly does not fit into the distinction between the two types of political confidence hypothesized. The determinants of this specific finding have not been identified, nonetheless they seem to do not be related with varying levels of public contestation. About the measurement invariance assessment, only configural and metric equivalence of political confidence measurements has been achieved. The scalar equivalence criterion, namely the fact all the respondents of the studies considered that have the same values on the latent constructs have the same expected score on the observed indicators, has not been met. While this fact does not allow for conclusively rule out the possibility that the political fear bias might affect individuals' confidence in institutions in the autocratic and anocratic regimes considered in our analyses, the very fact that the same configuration of political confidence holds across most of the studies considered irrespective of the levels of public contestation allowed by the political contexts considered, that scalar invariance is a criterion hard to be met also in less demanding analyses, plus prior evidence of studies investigating said issue (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.2), allows to be fairly confident that the two types of political confidence identified are comparable across the political contexts in which it has been analysed.

The distinction between confidence in political and implementative institutions, then, has informed the following analyses, starting from the aggregate-level analyses performed in order to assess to what extent variations of public contestation do directly affect variations of average levels of political confidence across East Asia (RQs 1 and 2). Despite the mixed expectations concerning the direct impact of public contestation on political confidence (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2), the analyses return a rather clear-cut result (see Ch. 4, Sect. 4.4): variations of public contestation *do affect* average levels of political confidence and are *negatively* correlated. In other terms, what has been found, once accounting for other relevant factors that may directly affect political confidence aggregate variations, is that *as the levels of public contestation allowed by a political system increase, the average level of individuals' confidence in institutions decreases*. Moreover, as mentioned few lines above, the distinction between the two types of political confidence expected and identified by prior dimensionality analyses has been fruitous. The direct, negative impact of increasing levels of public contestation on average levels of confidence in political institutions has proven to be much stronger as compared to the impact of confidence in implementative institutions. The empirical evidence that have been presented, moreover, have proven that other explanations of political confidence (culturalist and alternative institutionalist ones; see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.3) are to some extent related to varying levels of public contestation. In other words, the

importance of factors concerning socioeconomic modernization and institutional performances do stem out only once taking into account variations of public contestation. Thus, what these analyses suggest is that public contestation represents a key variable not only for its direct effect on average levels of political confidence, but also in controlling the effect of other variables, seemingly intertwined with the former.

The rather striking results of the aggregate-level analyses have been, then, reassessed in the following chapter (Ch. 5) exploiting statistical methods able to take into account not only aggregate but also individual-level variations. The results of these analyses, on the one hand, have confirmed but, on the other hand, also nuanced the findings of the aggregate analyses (see Ch.5, Sect. 5.4.1). Indeed, according to the hierarchical regression models (HLMs) employed to determine whether the (direct) impact of public contestation on individuals' confidence in institutions could hold once taking into account also the main individual-level determinants of political confidence and other contextual factors have shown that *public contestation critically and negatively affects individuals' confidence in political institutions* but at the same time that this factor appears to be *marginally* or even *not relevant once considering confidence in implementative institutions* (RQs 1 and 2). At the same time empirical analyses aiming to determine the extent to which varying levels of political confidence moderate the impact of key individual-level attitudes on individuals' confidence in institutions have returned a rather puzzling result (see Ch. 5, Sect. 5.4.2). Indeed, according to the analyses that have been provided, varying levels of public contestation appear to *do not moderate* the impact of (economic and political) performance evaluations on individuals' confidence in political institutions, but *do moderate* the impact of said antecedents on individuals' confidence in implementative institutions, making the impact of said antecedents less relevant as the level of public contestation increases (RQ 3). These results may be related to several factors, and the interpretation that has been proposed may be partial (see Ch.5, Sect. 5.5). Nonetheless, what has been argued is that, on the one hand, although different levels of public contestation may inform different levels of confidence in political institutions, these variations do not affect the way in which variations of individual-level determinants (such performance evaluations or authority orientations) impact on political confidence because said determinants are specifically related to the responsibilities of political institutions, irrespective of the level of public contestation considered (namely, the fact a country is democratic, anocratic, or autocratic). On the other hand, as the levels of public contestation increases, some institutions (namely, implementative ones) becomes also insulated by party competition (that is, the separation of powers that characterizes any democratic system). Thus, in systems characterized by high levels of public contestation, individual-level determinants that crucially inform individuals' confidence in political institutions may become less relevant when looking at individuals' confidence in implementative institutions. On the contrary, in system characterized by low levels of public contestation, individual-level mechanisms informing individuals' confidence in both type of institutions may not be exactly the same (and thus, it may not be possible to consider political confidence as a one-dimensional construct), but they still may affect in a relevant fashion both types of political confidence. This chapter, moreover, provides additional or collateral evidence about the indirect effect of public contestation on political confidence that might inspire future research, and that are discussed in the following pages.

Limitations of the Study

The evidence presented in this dissertation provides some rather relevant evidence for re-evaluating the existing understanding of political confidence and its relationship with democracy, thus contributing to a key debate that accompanied scholars speculating about and empirically investigating political confidence during the last decades. Nonetheless, this study clearly presents some limitations that are to be considered in evaluating the evidence provided, most of which derive by sheer clarity and conciseness sake, but also by the very research strategy employed in this study.

The first limitation of this study relates to the issue of comparability of political confidence measures across the studies analysed, that partially overlaps with the already extensively discussed issue of the political fear bias (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.3.2), hence both issues are discussed together. As the dimensionality analyses presented in Chapter 3 show, strict measurement equivalence of political confidence measures across the selected ABS Studies has not been achieved (see Ch.3, Sect. 3.5.3), and thus this study falls into the rather broad set of comparative political studies in which comparability of measures remains at least dubious. This basic fact leads, then, to caution in the interpretation of the results. Partially this impossibility to achieve measurement invariance might be related to the methods employed for testing such issue, since measurement equivalence requirements appear to be too strict and very difficult to achieve even in less demanding comparative works in terms of cultural, structural or institutional variability of the contexts analysed (see Ch.3, Sect. 3.5.3). Nonetheless, such warning in interpreting the results provided deserves to be highlighted. Moreover, as already discussed, connected to this issue is the problem of the so-called political fear bias in non-democratic regimes that may be one factor generating the non-invariance of political confidence measures. The analyses provided cannot rule out the possibility that this factor might be at work, and as already discussed earlier (see Ch. 1, Sect. 1.4 and Ch. 2, Sect. 2.3.2) the very choice to compare individual attitudes gathered in regimes characterized by very diverse levels of public contestation increases the odds of the presence of such bias. Nonetheless, as already explained, relatively robust analyses have shown that even in one of the most repressive regimes of our globe (China) the presence of such bias might not be such decisive.

The second limitation of this study consists in the fact that it does not take into account cross-temporal variations. This limitation partially derives by the limited temporal extension and frequency of the cross-sectional individual data that have been considered. Yet, it also derives from the choice to limit the scope of the analyses provided. Indeed, providing an exhaustive understanding of how political confidence levels, in the aggregate and at the individual-level, vary across time would require different analyses that would lead the investigation away from its main focus.

The third general limitation of this study is that it focuses on the causes of political confidence but it completely ignores its consequences. Again, this limitation partially derives from the choice to limit the number of analyses provided in this study, that moreover might lead away from the main puzzle of this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is also caused by the very fact that the individual-level data available for the empirical analyses do not provide specific items in order to investigate potential attitudinal or behavioral consequences of political confidence.

The fourth limitation of this study is that the set of contextual factors alternative to public contestation that have been investigated is somewhat limited. In particular, how macroeconomic factors

might directly affect cross-national variations of political confidence has been only assessed taking into accout average variations of economic growth rates. This limitation derives mostly by the necessity to maintain the analyses clear and manageable, given the relatively low number of studies available for investigating the phenomena under scrutiny. Nonetheless, other contextual economic factors that might have an impact on varying levels of political confidence, such unemployement or inflation rates, could be taken into account, and this clearly represents a limit of this study.
The last important limitation of this work is that, as already discussed earlier (see Ch.2, Sect. 2.2.3), the evidence provided do not allow to assess whether relevant factors (at the individual and aggregate-level) might moderate the impact of contestation on political confidence. Individual-level variations of political involvement, or partisanship, or other structural and systemic characteristics not taken into account in this study might moderate the impact of public contestation, and maybe in a crucial way. This limitation, however, mostly derives by the research design that has been employed in this dissertation. Variations of contestation imply variations of the quality of many factors that might moderate the relationship between contestation and political confidence. It would not make much sense to compare levels of political involvement or partisanship between political systems in which these factors are by a large extent a *free choice* of individuals and systems in which said factors are (more or less importantly) a product of the coercion of the political system itself. And, at the aggregate-level, it can be argued that it would not make much sense to use variations concerning the deliberative (Elster 1998) or participatory (Barber 1984) nature of the political system when the systems considered greatly vary in terms of basic properties, such as individual liberties, political rights, and opportunities for political competition. Thus, while such limitation has to be underlined, on the other hand it may be argued that it appears a difficult one to overcome while maintining the research strategy adopted in this study.

Perspectives for Future Research

Several opportunities for future research can be derived by some features and limitations of this work. As already noted earlier, some collateral findings of this work put on the table issues that might be worth to be further investigated. The first consists in a comprehensive assessment of how individual-level determinants of political confidence vary in their dynamics across political systems, considering also the impact of different contextual factors. In the fifth chapter of this dissertation (es. Sect. 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) it has been show that the individual-level attitudes informing both types of political confidence follow a rather similar logic, and that, as already discussed, variations of the impact of some of these attitudes can only partially be explained by varying levels of public contestation. More granular analyses aiming of produce general findings rather than idiosyncratic ones (thus, going beyond single-case studies or limited scope comparisons), might offer a better understanding of the micro-level mechanisms informing individuals' confidence in institutions.
Moreover, Chapter 5 analyses (see Sect. 5.4.2) have provided some evidence that varying average levels of key individual-level determinants of political confidence might be related to variations of public contestation. As already argued at the outset of said chapter (see Ch. 5, Sect. 5.5), this collateral finding calls for investigations able to understand the extent to which variations of public contestation

inform variations of key attitudes or orientations that in turn affect variations of different types of political confidence. In short, what these findings, as well as others presented in this thesis call for is a research enterprise able to dinstangle the way in which variations of public contestation *moderate*, *are moderated*, or *mediated* by variations of individual-level attitudes. This may be realized realised relying on the type of data already used in this work, but it might be achieved by integrating these data with others.

For instance, another way in which the impact of public contestation on political confidence might be investigated could be offered by the integration of survey data with data derived by computational text analysis. Many mechanisms assumed to be related to varying levels of public contestation, for instance, refer to dynamics assumed to be produced by varying degrees of fredoom of speech and varying possibilities to access alternative sources of information (see Ch. 2, Sect. 2.2.3). Investigating with computational methods the relationship between varying levels of political confidence (in the aggregate and at the individual-level) and, for instance, the polarization of media contents in democratic settings, or propaganda efforts and different dynamics of censorship in autocratic and anocratic ones, or dynamics characterizing individual interactions on media platforms, might be a fruitful research perspective. East Asia, given its high complexity and heterogeneity also in terms of languages, presents some difficulties for developing such kind of investigations. Yet, as computational methods for text analysis will become increasingly able to handle such linguistic variability, research enterprises as those presented few lines above may become more feasible, and there are several reasons to believe that they might crucially contribute to our understanding of the factors informing varying levels of political confidence across and withing political systems of this region.

Finally, there are then additional topics worth to be investigated that relates specifically to the study of political confidence in East Asia. As already noted in several passages, this study represents an exception for most of the analyses about this region, especially when looking at the scarcity of dimensionality assessments of East Asians' confidence in institutions, at the simplicistic (and essentially misguiding) one-dimensional view of individuals' political confidence that has been often adopted in previous studies, and at the levels of analysis employed to investigate this topic in this geopolitical context. Possibilities to go beyond basic and fundamentally redundant analyses of East Asians' conceptions of political confidence are already available to researchers, and it is hoped that the evidence provided in this work will convince other researchers and scholars of the necessity to further investigate this issue, both in comparative and single case studies. Moreover, when looking at the level of analysis, this work provide rather solid evidence that context matters, and it might crucially matter for our understanding of the dynamics of different types of political confidence in this region. Furthermore, as the number of comparative studies will continue to accumulate individual-level data about East Asians' views about their own political institutions, cross-temporal studies will become analytically feasible as in other regions of our globe. Hence, the possibilities to explore the interplay between contextual and individual-level factors affecting variations of political confidence will grow, and it would be a great mistake do not grasp this opportunity.

A Contribution to a Long-lasting Debate

In conclusion, the answer that this research effort provides to the main puzzle inspiring it is an affirmative one: *varying levels of public contestation do affect individuals' confidence in institutions*, but also that *the impact of public contestation substantially vary in its magnitude and quality according to the type of political confidence taken into consideration.* What may argued, then, is that as public contestation grows, the inherently conflictual nature of democratic politics, and dynamics related to party competition, negatively affect (on the average) individuals' expectations about and evaluations of those institutions (by definition) mostly affected by variations of public contestation levels. Increasing civil liberties, political rights, and the prominence of electoral politics, appears to produce (at least, mostly) negative incentives for individuals' confidence in such kind of institutions. Viceversa, repression of freedom of speech, freedom of association, and substantial political competition seem to be powerful tools to protect public institutions and authorities from individuals' potentially critical evaluations and expectations.

In other words, the evidence and discussion provided in this work, with all their limitations, should be read as an explicit warning against the never ending rethoric about the 'crisis of democracy' that accompanies the study of political confidence at least since the 1970s. Low levels of political confidence do not appear to be a sign of such crisis, but rather an *inherent* feature of democratic systems related to the very basic dynamics that differentiate polyarchic democracies from other regimes.

The question is, then, whether or not this finding should represent something to worry about, that in turn depends on another long-lasting question: is political confidence a crucial resource for democratic viability? The answer to this question is anything but straighforward, but tendentially there are reasons to believe that it might be for some aspects of democratic governance, but not democracy stability in general. Invariably, previous research has shown that during the last decades low levels of political confidence have gone hand in hand with high levels of support for democracy. This diffuse support for democracy is definitely not free from contradictions (cf. Shin 2007), but it tells us that despite decades of low levels of political confidence in the almost entirety of democratic countries of contemporary world political confidence does not seem to have represented a crucial issue for the viability of democratic politics and its legitimacy in general. Moreover, levels of political confidence have fluctuated trendlessy without determining any particular systemic shock or improvements of democratic governance, in general (cf. Norris 2011; Schnaudt 2019; van der Meer 2017). At the same time, however, empirical assessments of the consequences of political confidence are still in their infancy (cf. van der Meer 2017), and the evidence already provided by previous research do not offer a clear-cut assessment of the specific consequences of this mixed form of political support (e.g. Schnaudt 2019). Thus, while we can be fairly confident that relatively low levels of political confidence do not appear to be decisive for the stability or viability of democracy, we actually have very little evidence about other mechanisms through which variations of political confidence might hinder the quality, effectiveness, or legitimacy of democratic governance.

Overall, the fundamental message that this thesis wants to deliver to those that will have the interest and the patience to read it is that the study of the relationship between democracy and political confidence, despite its longevity, is far from being completed. While some of its fundamental dynamics have

been exstensively investigated, many mechanisms informing (and informed by) individuals' confidence in institutions still remain largely unexplored, and further findings may radically change our understanding of it. The hope is that this dissertation will represent a contribution to such understanding. Finally, the contribution of this research might be synthetically understood exploiting a rather popular quote by Sir Winston Churchill, extrapolated from a lengthy intervention during a debate in the British House of Commons in 1911: "Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all other forms of that have been tried from time to time". To some extent, this thesis might be summarized as a contribution to understand why democratic, polyarchic regimes might appear to suffer crucial struggles, that in the end might be inevitable and not necessarily negative dynamics linked to their very qualities. Those qualities that make democracy the worst form of government, except all the other forms that have been tried so far.

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Appendix A

Table A.1: Descriptive statistics of confidence in National Governments and National Assemblies in East Asia

			National Government			National Assembly		
Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Cambodia	2008	1000	2.864	0.852	3	2.922	0.877	3
Cambodia	2012	1200	3.029	0.786	3	3.047	0.777	3
Cambodia	2015	1200	2.647	0.779	3	2.708	0.767	3
China	2002	3183	3.909	0.350	4	3.903	0.365	4
China	2007	5098	3.644	0.588	4	3.593	0.634	4
China	2011	3473	3.494	0.578	4	3.463	0.599	4
China	2015	4068	3.341	0.577	3	3.278	0.609	3
Hong Kong	2001	811	2.633	0.590	3	2.588	0.562	3
Hong Kong	2007	849	2.821	0.590	3	2.691	0.573	3
Hong Kong	2012	1177	2.671	0.809	3	2.562	0.654	3
Hong Kong	2016	1217	2.336	0.723	2	2.385	0.651	2
Indonesia	2006	1581	2.715	0.657	3	2.588	0.729	3
Indonesia	2011	1530	2.590	0.724	3	2.452	0.808	3
Indonesia	2016	1550	2.743	0.673	3	2.445	0.807	3
Japan	2003	1418	2.145	0.654	2	1.908	0.630	2
Japan	2007	1067	2.143	0.594	2	2.004	0.645	2
Japan	2010	1880	1.913	0.607	2	1.897	0.602	2
Japan	2016	1081	2.147	0.653	2	2.053	0.612	2
Malaysia	2007	1217	2.898	0.789	3	2.820	0.787	3
Malaysia	2011	1214	3.028	0.800	3	2.903	0.784	3
Malaysia	2014	1207	2.972	0.799	3	2.852	0.803	3
Mongolia	2003	1144	2.609	0.853	3	2.648	0.867	3
Mongolia	2006	1211	2.585	0.848	3	2.595	0.836	3
Mongolia	2010	1210	2.213	0.763	2	2.059	0.785	2
Mongolia	2014	1228	2.228	0.778	2	2.153	0.798	2
Myanmar	2015	1620	2.588	0.805	3	2.583	0.787	3
Philippines	2002	1200	2.488	0.836	2	2.393	0.796	2
Philippines	2005	1200	2.256	0.846	2	2.277	0.812	2
Philippines	2010	1200	2.400	0.864	2	2.366	0.854	2
Philippines	2014	1200	2.376	0.775	2	2.308	0.789	2
Singapore	2006	1012	3.184	0.603	3	3.052	0.622	3
Singapore	2010	1000	3.072	0.598	3	3.018	0.585	3
Singapore	2014	1039	3.030	0.703	3	2.945	0.719	3
South Korea	2003	1500	2.053	0.754	2	1.826	0.725	2
South Korea	2006	1212	1.862	0.657	2	1.654	0.615	2
South Korea	2011	1207	1.969	0.741	2	1.695	0.681	2
South Korea	2015	1200	2.139	0.732	2	1.717	0.710	2
Taiwan	2001	1415	2.400	0.691	2	1.959	0.725	2
Taiwan	2006	1587	2.327	0.694	2	1.982	0.707	2
Taiwan	2010	1592	2.294	0.659	2	2.007	0.679	2
Taiwan	2014	1657	2.164	0.662	2	1.975	0.664	2
Thailand	2002	1546	2.849	0.731	3	2.693	0.780	3

Table A.1: Descriptive statistics of confidence in National Governments and National Assemblies in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Thailand	2006	1546	2.719	0.768	3	2.712	0.686	3
Thailand	2010	1512	2.564	0.845	3	2.523	0.846	3
Thailand	2014	1199	2.709	0.768	3	2.607	0.778	3
Vietnam	2006	1200	3.684	0.509	4	3.673	0.537	4
Vietnam	2010	1191	3.621	0.577	4	3.580	0.619	4
Vietnam	2015	1200	3.387	0.699	4	3.408	0.685	4

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation.

Figure A.1: Distribution of Responses for Confidence in National Governments and National Assemblies in East Asia

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Party Systems and Top Political Offices in East Asia

			Party System			Top Political Office		
Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Cambodia	2008	1000	2.690	0.986	3	3.044	0.895	3
Cambodia	2012	1200	2.883	0.851	3	3.183	0.807	3
Cambodia	2015	1200	2.664	0.764	3	2.763	0.836	3
China	2002	3183	3.905	0.373	4			
China	2007	5098	3.615	0.627	4			
China	2011	3473	3.511	0.613	4			
China	2015	4068						
Hong Kong	2001	811	2.221	0.563	2			
Hong Kong	2007	849	2.292	0.627	2	2.825	0.499	3
Hong Kong	2012	1177	2.362	0.690	2	2.752	0.770	3
Hong Kong	2016	1217	2.250	0.632	2	2.357	0.683	2
Indonesia	2006	1581	2.324	0.776	2	2.872	0.663	3
Indonesia	2011	1530	2.304	0.823	2	2.810	0.665	3
Indonesia	2016	1550	2.292	0.815	2	2.979	0.659	3
Japan	2003	1418	1.840	0.610	2			
Japan	2007	1067	1.977	0.664	2	2.226	0.656	2
Japan	2010	1880	1.821	0.589	2	2.078	0.611	2
Japan	2016	1081	2.050	0.649	2	2.251	0.740	2
Malaysia	2007	1217	2.619	0.811	3	3.056	0.789	3
Malaysia	2011	1214	2.622	0.845	3	3.178	0.818	3
Malaysia	2014	1207	2.563	0.854	3	3.028	0.868	3
Mongolia	2003	1144	2.290	0.841	2			
Mongolia	2006	1211	2.223	0.848	2	2.645	0.898	3
Mongolia	2010	1210	1.797	0.761	2	2.416	0.831	2
Mongolia	2014	1228	1.947	0.777	2	2.513	0.876	3
Myanmar	2015	1620	2.565	0.739	3	2.752	0.800	3
Philippines	2002	1200	2.188	0.821	2			
Philippines	2005	1200	2.121	0.830	2	2.217	0.888	2
Philippines	2010	1200	2.216	0.820	2	2.179	0.918	2
Philippines	2014	1200	2.191	0.785	2	2.661	0.842	3
Singapore	2006	1012	2.809	0.638	3	3.247	0.598	3
Singapore	2010	1000	2.823	0.683	3	3.136	0.629	3
Singapore	2014	1039	2.776	0.754	3	2.971	0.746	3
South Korea	2003	1500	1.843	0.687	2			
South Korea	2006	1212	1.705	0.637	2	1.897	0.759	2
South Korea	2011	1207	1.776	0.664	2	2.221	0.796	2
South Korea	2015	1200	1.874	0.694	2	2.455	0.788	2
Taiwan	2001	1415	2.011	0.630	2			
Taiwan	2006	1587	1.984	0.657	2	2.159	0.797	2
Taiwan	2010	1592	1.941	0.657	2	2.288	0.758	2
Taiwan	2014	1657	1.864	0.641	2	2.079	0.745	2
Thailand	2002	1546	2.568	0.775	3			

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Party Systems and Top Political Offices in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Thailand	2006	1546	2.578	0.771	3	2.865	0.811	3
Thailand	2010	1512	2.310	0.829	2	2.703	0.885	3
Thailand	2014	1199	2.300	0.801	2	2.896	0.746	3
Vietnam	2006	1200	3.400	0.717	4	3.705	0.491	4
Vietnam	2010	1191	3.285	0.708	3			
Vietnam	2015	1200	3.066	0.703	3	3.435	0.659	4

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation.

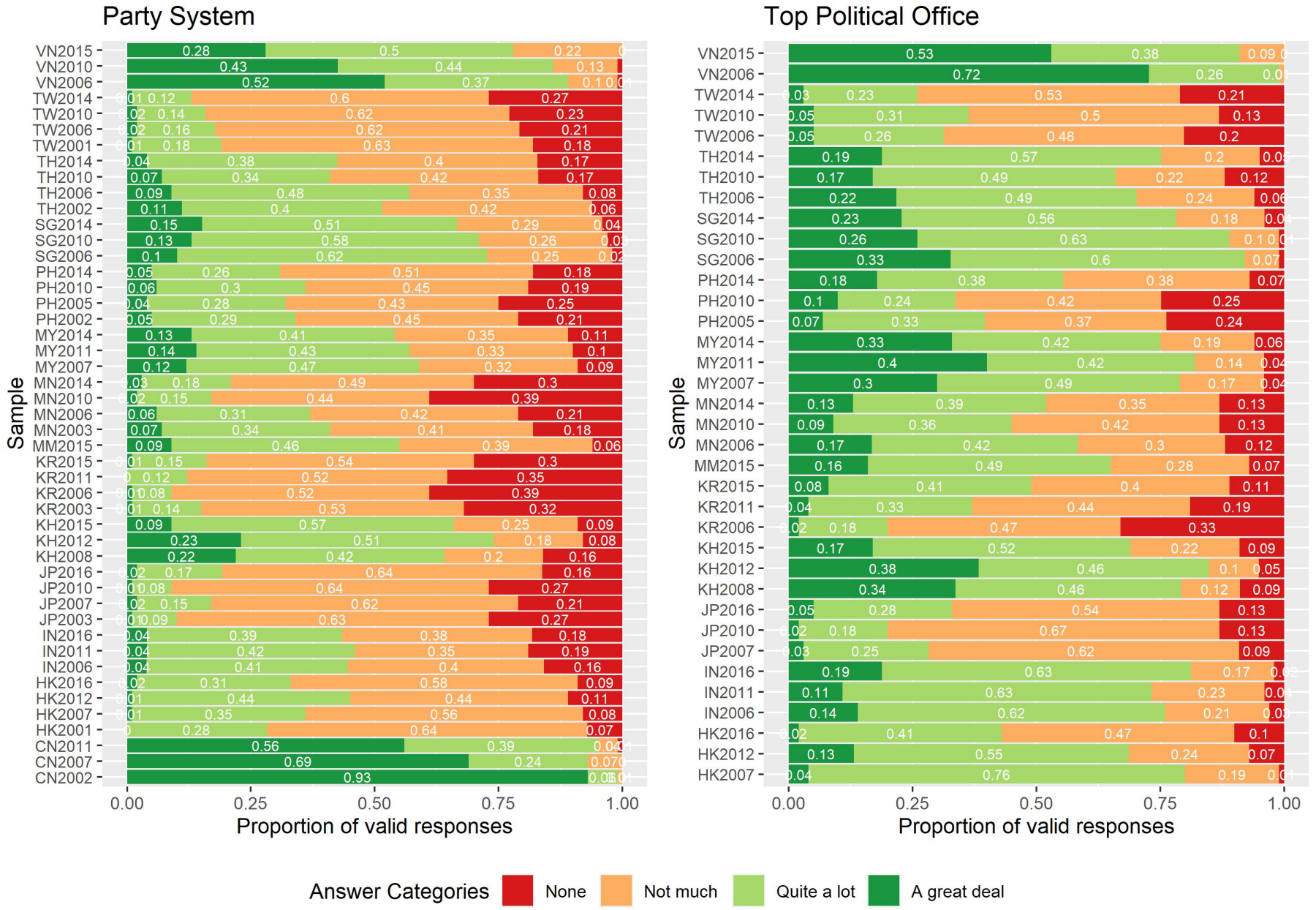

Figure A.2: Distribution of Responses for Confidence in Party Systems and Top Political Offices in East Asia

Table A.3: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Courts and Police Forces in East Asia

			Courts			Police		
Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Cambodia	2008	1000	2.406	1.008	3	2.700	0.957	3
Cambodia	2012	1200	2.651	0.971	3	2.865	0.912	3
Cambodia	2015	1200	2.355	0.852	2	2.678	0.822	3
China	2002	3183	3.299	0.936	4	3.291	0.953	4
China	2007	5098	3.128	0.807	3	3.067	0.834	3
China	2011	3473	3.079	0.653	3	3.120	0.687	3
China	2015	4068	3.021	0.655	3	3.034	0.664	3
Hong Kong	2001	811	2.868	0.484	3			
Hong Kong	2007	849	2.996	0.500	3	3.018	0.498	3
Hong Kong	2012	1177	3.073	0.552	3	3.130	0.625	3
Hong Kong	2016	1217	2.810	0.628	3	2.698	0.654	3
Indonesia	2006	1581	2.547	0.744	3	2.665	0.758	3
Indonesia	2011	1530	2.472	0.787	3	2.678	0.749	3
Indonesia	2016	1550	2.641	0.749	3	2.785	0.733	3
Japan	2003	1418	2.808	0.704	3	2.509	0.755	3
Japan	2007	1067	2.491	0.689	2	2.515	0.716	3
Japan	2010	1880	2.567	0.688	3	2.720	0.710	3
Japan	2016	1081	2.640	0.687	3	2.663	0.721	3
Malaysia	2007	1217	2.824	0.826	3	2.665	0.920	3
Malaysia	2011	1214	2.990	0.825	3	2.945	0.905	3
Malaysia	2014	1207	2.935	0.832	3	2.961	0.872	3
Mongolia	2003	1144	2.411	0.836	2	2.397	0.926	2
Mongolia	2006	1211	2.218	0.930	2	2.525	0.936	3
Mongolia	2010	1210	1.897	0.809	2	2.479	0.837	3
Mongolia	2014	1228	2.136	0.785	2	2.678	0.846	3
Myanmar	2015	1620	2.262	0.878	2	2.076	0.899	2
Philippines	2002	1200	2.531	0.871	2	2.433	0.881	2
Philippines	2005	1200	2.351	0.873	2	2.444	0.846	2
Philippines	2010	1200	2.402	0.901	2	2.603	0.908	3
Philippines	2014	1200	2.384	0.821	2	2.625	0.871	3
Singapore	2006	1012	3.208	0.605	3	3.191	0.599	3
Singapore	2010	1000	3.086	0.601	3	3.028	0.626	3
Singapore	2014	1039	3.085	0.661	3	3.077	0.703	3
South Korea	2003	1500	2.476	0.656	3	2.455	0.759	2
South Korea	2006	1212	2.103	0.699	2	2.328	0.730	2
South Korea	2011	1207	2.227	0.745	2	2.442	0.744	2
South Korea	2015	1200	2.332	0.721	2	2.513	0.713	3
Taiwan	2001	1415	2.483	0.696	2	2.436	0.723	2
Taiwan	2006	1587	2.261	0.718	2	2.479	0.724	2
Taiwan	2010	1592	2.223	0.723	2	2.464	0.731	2
Taiwan	2014	1657	2.137	0.703	2	2.557	0.714	3
Thailand	2002	1546	2.951	0.767	3	2.676	0.838	3

Table A.3: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Courts and Police Forces in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Thailand	2006	1546	2.940	0.672	3	2.738	0.775	3
Thailand	2010	1512	2.822	0.840	3	2.606	0.913	3
Thailand	2014	1199	2.942	0.775	3	2.509	0.905	3
Vietnam	2006	1200	3.389	0.751	4	3.462	0.709	4
Vietnam	2010	1191	3.289	0.735	3	3.393	0.715	4
Vietnam	2015	1200	3.297	0.709	3	3.235	0.743	3

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation.

Figure A.3: Distribution of Responses for Confidence in Courts and Police in East Asia

Table A.4: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Civil Service and Armed Forces in East Asia

			Civil Service			Armed Forces		
Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Cambodia	2008	1000	3.117	0.881	3	2.823	0.988	3
Cambodia	2012	1200	3.128	0.841	3	3.413	0.781	4
Cambodia	2015	1200	2.956	0.797	3	2.928	0.803	3
China	2002	3183	3.076	0.873	3	3.887	0.395	4
China	2007	5098	2.715	0.797	3	3.529	0.657	4
China	2011	3473	2.796	0.682	3	3.472	0.587	4
China	2015	4068	2.686	0.666	3	3.404	0.569	3
Hong Kong	2001	811	2.678	0.563	3	2.872	0.529	3
Hong Kong	2007	849	2.781	0.532	3	2.947	0.570	3
Hong Kong	2012	1177	2.941	0.556	3	2.997	0.768	3
Hong Kong	2016	1217	2.715	0.663	3	2.431	0.774	2
Indonesia	2006	1581	2.779	0.649	3	3.006	0.620	3
Indonesia	2011	1530	2.789	0.650	3	3.044	0.587	3
Indonesia	2016	1550	2.812	0.650	3	3.179	0.573	3
Japan	2003	1418	1.752	0.632	2	2.566	0.733	3
Japan	2007	1067	2.187	0.654	2	2.601	0.710	3
Japan	2010	1880	2.198	0.622	2	2.938	0.685	3
Japan	2016	1081	2.386	0.631	2	2.877	0.683	3
Malaysia	2007	1217	2.886	0.751	3	3.096	0.759	3
Malaysia	2011	1214	3.102	0.739	3	3.300	0.728	3
Malaysia	2014	1207	2.997	0.743	3	3.208	0.741	3
Mongolia	2003	1144	2.559	0.798	3	2.800	0.903	3
Mongolia	2006	1211	2.708	0.798	3	3.107	0.865	3
Mongolia	2010	1210	2.265	0.784	2	2.997	0.776	3
Mongolia	2014	1228	2.474	0.799	3	3.061	0.794	3
Myanmar	2015	1620	2.522	0.783	3	2.512	0.896	3
Philippines	2002	1200	2.637	0.820	3	2.583	0.893	3
Philippines	2005	1200	2.508	0.816	3	2.495	0.891	3
Philippines	2010	1200	2.578	0.815	3	2.659	0.923	3
Philippines	2014	1200	2.569	0.786	3	2.752	0.851	3
Singapore	2006	1012	3.079	0.612	3	3.185	0.616	3
Singapore	2010	1000	2.943	0.637	3	2.945	0.669	3
Singapore	2014	1039	3.014	0.699	3	3.039	0.691	3
South Korea	2003	1500	2.378	0.717	2	2.612	0.722	3
South Korea	2006	1212	2.144	0.708	2	2.429	0.752	2
South Korea	2011	1207	2.243	0.733	2	2.601	0.753	3
South Korea	2015	1200	2.364	0.681	2	2.466	0.714	2
Taiwan	2001	1415	2.578	0.634	3	2.752	0.703	3
Taiwan	2006	1587	2.565	0.641	3	2.632	0.726	3
Taiwan	2010	1592	2.508	0.669	3	2.459	0.755	2
Taiwan	2014	1657	2.410	0.691	2	2.380	0.752	2
Thailand	2002	1546	2.825	0.767	3	3.070	0.755	3

Table A.4: Descriptive Statistics of Confidence in Civil Service and Armed Forces in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Thailand	2006	1546	2.861	0.680	3	2.988	0.686	3
Thailand	2010	1512	2.788	0.822	3	2.887	0.900	3
Thailand	2014	1199	2.685	0.779	3	3.266	0.691	3
Vietnam	2006	1200	3.321	0.760	3	3.688	0.517	4
Vietnam	2010	1191	3.259	0.735	3	3.645	0.529	4
Vietnam	2015	1200	3.023	0.701	3	3.502	0.641	4

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation.

Figure A.4: Distribution of Responses for Confidence in Civil Services and Armed Forces in East Asia

Appendix B

Table B.1: Aggregate Mean Values of Political Confidence in National Institutions in East Asia

Country	Year	Nat.Govt.	Nat.Ass.	Par.Sys.	Courts	Civ.Ser.	Police	Arm.For.
Cambodia	2008	0.621	0.644	0.560	0.472	0.705	0.564	0.616
Cambodia	2012	0.679	0.683	0.627	0.560	0.718	0.627	0.808
Cambodia	2015	0.551	0.570	0.557	0.453	0.652	0.554	0.643
China	2002	0.971	0.968	0.970	0.780	0.709	0.777	0.965
China	2007	0.887	0.869	0.879	0.719	0.586	0.699	0.844
China	2011	0.831	0.818	0.836	0.698	0.602	0.709	0.823
Hong Kong	2007	0.618	0.570	0.444	0.670	0.599	0.679	0.650
Hong Kong	2012	0.580	0.535	0.485	0.713	0.656	0.738	0.677
Hong Kong	2016	0.447	0.462	0.425	0.595	0.566	0.550	0.473
Indonesia	2006	0.571	0.529	0.441	0.515	0.591	0.555	0.671
Indonesia	2011	0.527	0.485	0.439	0.496	0.596	0.560	0.679
Indonesia	2016	0.581	0.483	0.435	0.547	0.604	0.596	0.730
Japan	2003	0.386	0.306	0.279	0.600	0.257	0.506	0.517
Japan	2007	0.382	0.331	0.315	0.503	0.394	0.496	0.521
Japan	2010	0.302	0.296	0.272	0.523	0.399	0.571	0.643
Japan	2016	0.376	0.347	0.336	0.546	0.456	0.549	0.620
Malaysia	2007	0.649	0.621	0.545	0.625	0.648	0.578	0.712
Malaysia	2011	0.684	0.640	0.543	0.671	0.708	0.657	0.772
Malaysia	2014	0.664	0.620	0.523	0.654	0.672	0.663	0.740
Mongolia	2003	0.538	0.550	0.429	0.475	0.519	0.468	0.598
Mongolia	2006	0.527	0.533	0.404	0.401	0.566	0.509	0.700
Mongolia	2010	0.400	0.352	0.266	0.301	0.421	0.496	0.665
Mongolia	2014	0.408	0.383	0.320	0.382	0.491	0.558	0.679
Myanmar	2015	0.513	0.524	0.519	0.424	0.497	0.364	0.488
Philippines	2002	0.496	0.464	0.396	0.510	0.546	0.478	0.528
Philippines	2005	0.421	0.428	0.373	0.452	0.504	0.482	0.501
Philippines	2010	0.467	0.458	0.410	0.469	0.527	0.535	0.556
Philippines	2014	0.459	0.435	0.399	0.462	0.522	0.542	0.582
Singapore	2006	0.729	0.686	0.604	0.737	0.696	0.732	0.729
Singapore	2010	0.692	0.676	0.611	0.697	0.649	0.677	0.649
Singapore	2014	0.681	0.651	0.598	0.696	0.675	0.695	0.683
South Korea	2003	0.352	0.275	0.281	0.493	0.460	0.485	0.538
South Korea	2006	0.286	0.218	0.237	0.365	0.380	0.441	0.477
South Korea	2011	0.322	0.230	0.257	0.410	0.412	0.480	0.533
South Korea	2015	0.378	0.242	0.291	0.444	0.454	0.504	0.487
Taiwan	2001	0.457	0.321	0.327	0.492	0.516	0.471	0.578
Taiwan	2006	0.441	0.325	0.323	0.429	0.509	0.478	0.538
Taiwan	2010	0.438	0.339	0.310	0.415	0.492	0.479	0.481
Taiwan	2014	0.388	0.324	0.284	0.381	0.461	0.515	0.455
Thailand	2002	0.615	0.561	0.511	0.648	0.596	0.543	0.675
Thailand	2006	0.569	0.575	0.526	0.642	0.617	0.577	0.657

Table B.1: Aggregate Mean Values of Political Confidence in National Institutions in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	Nat.Govt.	Nat.Ass.	Par.Sys.	Courts	Civ.Ser.	Police	Arm.For.
Thailand	2010	0.514	0.514	0.441	0.604	0.589	0.532	0.617
Thailand	2014	0.575	0.544	0.444	0.657	0.566	0.514	0.762
Vietnam	2006	0.902	0.900	0.810	0.810	0.775	0.837	0.905
Vietnam	2010	0.879	0.873	0.772	0.762	0.753	0.807	0.889
Vietnam	2015	0.797	0.802	0.690	0.768	0.674	0.744	0.831

Note:
"Nat.Govt": National government. "Nat.Ass.": National assembly. "Par.Sys.": Party system. "Civ.Ser.": Civil service. "Arm.For.": Armed forces. Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS individual confidence in state institutions rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1].

Table B.2: Descriptive statistics of confidence in National Governments and National Assemblies in East Asia

			Political			Implementative		
Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Cambodia	2008	1000	0.607	0.242	0.667	0.629	0.248	0.667
Cambodia	2012	1200	0.666	0.212	0.667	0.713	0.212	0.778
Cambodia	2015	1200	0.558	0.214	0.556	0.620	0.218	0.667
China	2002	3183	0.971	0.098	1.000	0.808	0.196	0.889
China	2007	5098	0.876	0.182	1.000	0.704	0.208	0.667
China	2011	3473	0.833	0.181	0.889	0.711	0.174	0.667
China	2015	4068	0.773	0.183	0.667	0.683	0.164	0.667
Hong Kong	2001	811	0.488	0.144	0.444	0.596	0.146	0.667
Hong Kong	2007	849	0.532	0.149	0.556	0.642	0.138	0.667
Hong Kong	2012	1177	0.514	0.193	0.556	0.686	0.184	0.667
Hong Kong	2016	1217	0.439	0.185	0.444	0.535	0.195	0.556
Indonesia	2006	1581	0.514	0.191	0.556	0.606	0.175	0.667
Indonesia	2011	1530	0.482	0.218	0.556	0.612	0.170	0.667
Indonesia	2016	1550	0.498	0.215	0.556	0.642	0.168	0.667
Japan	2003	1418	0.318	0.182	0.333	0.427	0.182	0.444
Japan	2007	1067	0.343	0.180	0.333	0.477	0.186	0.444
Japan	2010	1880	0.290	0.172	0.333	0.540	0.176	0.556
Japan	2016	1081	0.357	0.186	0.333	0.546	0.182	0.556
Malaysia	2007	1217	0.599	0.222	0.667	0.638	0.221	0.667
Malaysia	2011	1214	0.620	0.218	0.667	0.708	0.215	0.667
Malaysia	2014	1207	0.601	0.223	0.667	0.688	0.214	0.667
Mongolia	2003	1144	0.506	0.200	0.556	0.530	0.203	0.556
Mongolia	2006	1211	0.490	0.208	0.444	0.592	0.210	0.556
Mongolia	2010	1210	0.341	0.199	0.333	0.528	0.190	0.556
Mongolia	2014	1228	0.370	0.207	0.333	0.579	0.198	0.556

Table B.2: Descriptive statistics of confidence in National Governments and National Assemblies in East Asia *(continued)*

Country	Year	N	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Myanmar	2015	1620	0.524	0.231	0.556	0.456	0.250	0.444
Philippines	2002	1200	0.452	0.224	0.444	0.517	0.236	0.556
Philippines	2005	1200	0.407	0.226	0.444	0.493	0.234	0.556
Philippines	2010	1200	0.442	0.227	0.444	0.539	0.238	0.556
Philippines	2014	1200	0.430	0.206	0.444	0.551	0.228	0.556
Singapore	2006	1012	0.672	0.171	0.667	0.718	0.178	0.667
Singapore	2010	1000	0.658	0.180	0.667	0.658	0.180	0.667
Singapore	2014	1039	0.641	0.211	0.667	0.682	0.203	0.667
South Korea	2003	1500	0.302	0.197	0.333	0.494	0.194	0.556
South Korea	2006	1212	0.247	0.178	0.333	0.434	0.201	0.444
South Korea	2011	1207	0.271	0.198	0.333	0.477	0.202	0.444
South Korea	2015	1200	0.304	0.195	0.333	0.483	0.194	0.444
Taiwan	2001	1415	0.371	0.170	0.333	0.526	0.171	0.556
Taiwan	2006	1587	0.363	0.178	0.333	0.516	0.185	0.556
Taiwan	2010	1592	0.359	0.175	0.333	0.491	0.190	0.444
Taiwan	2014	1657	0.331	0.178	0.333	0.481	0.197	0.444
Thailand	2002	1546	0.565	0.203	0.556	0.616	0.214	0.667
Thailand	2006	1546	0.558	0.213	0.667	0.622	0.198	0.667
Thailand	2010	1512	0.486	0.232	0.556	0.589	0.244	0.667
Thailand	2014	1199	0.516	0.225	0.556	0.610	0.203	0.667
Vietnam	2006	1200	0.865	0.167	0.889	0.837	0.180	0.889
Vietnam	2010	1191	0.834	0.176	0.889	0.816	0.179	0.889
Vietnam	2015	1200	0.763	0.182	0.778	0.750	0.175	0.778

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Political": Confidence in Political Institutions. "Implementative": Confidence in Implementative Institutions. Values are aggregate mean scores of two additive index based on individual confidence in national governments, national assemblies, and political parties, and confidence in civil service, police forces, and armed forces, both rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. The item measuring confidence in political parties has not been administered in the Chinese study of 2015, the score is based on confidence in their national government and national assembly. By the same token, since the item measuring confidence in police forces has not been administered in the Hongkongese study of 2001, the score for Hong Kong in 2001 is based solely on confidence in civil service and armed forces.

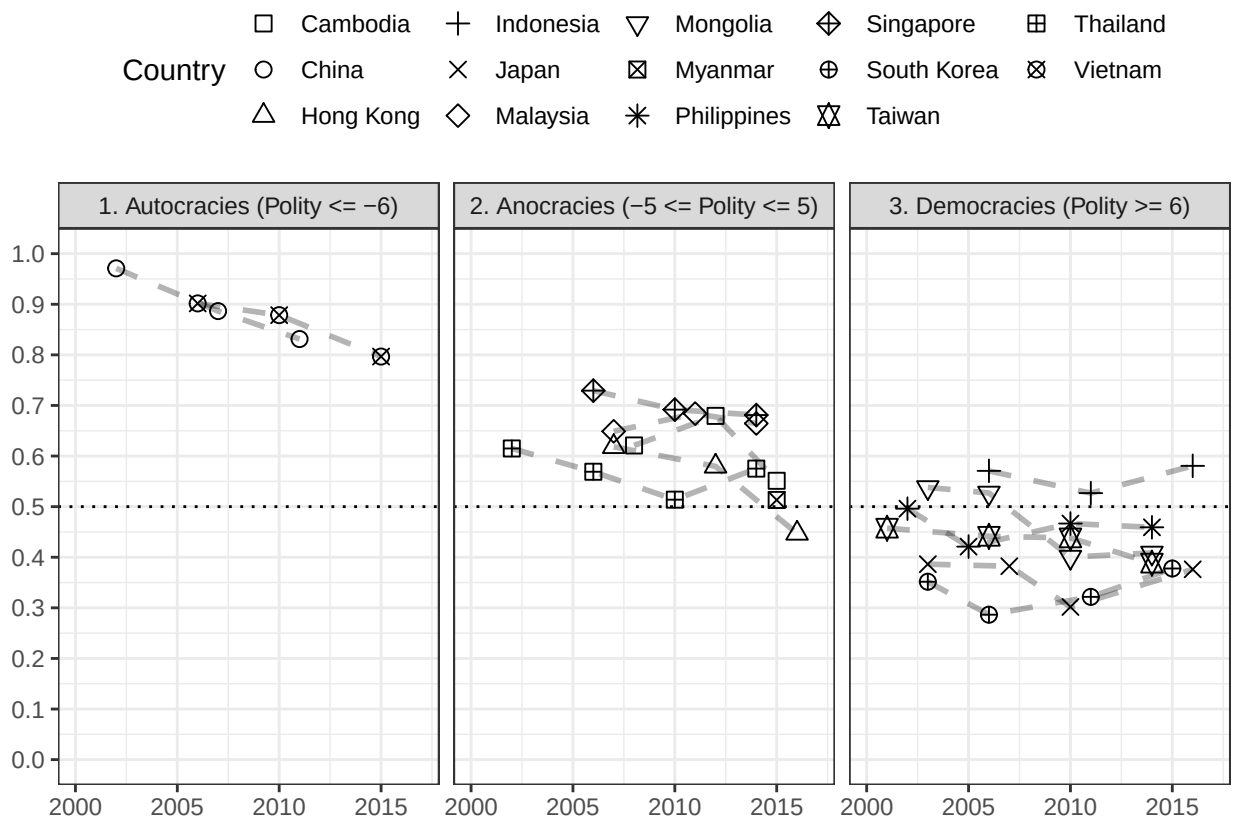

Figure B.1: Confidence in National Governments by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in national governments rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

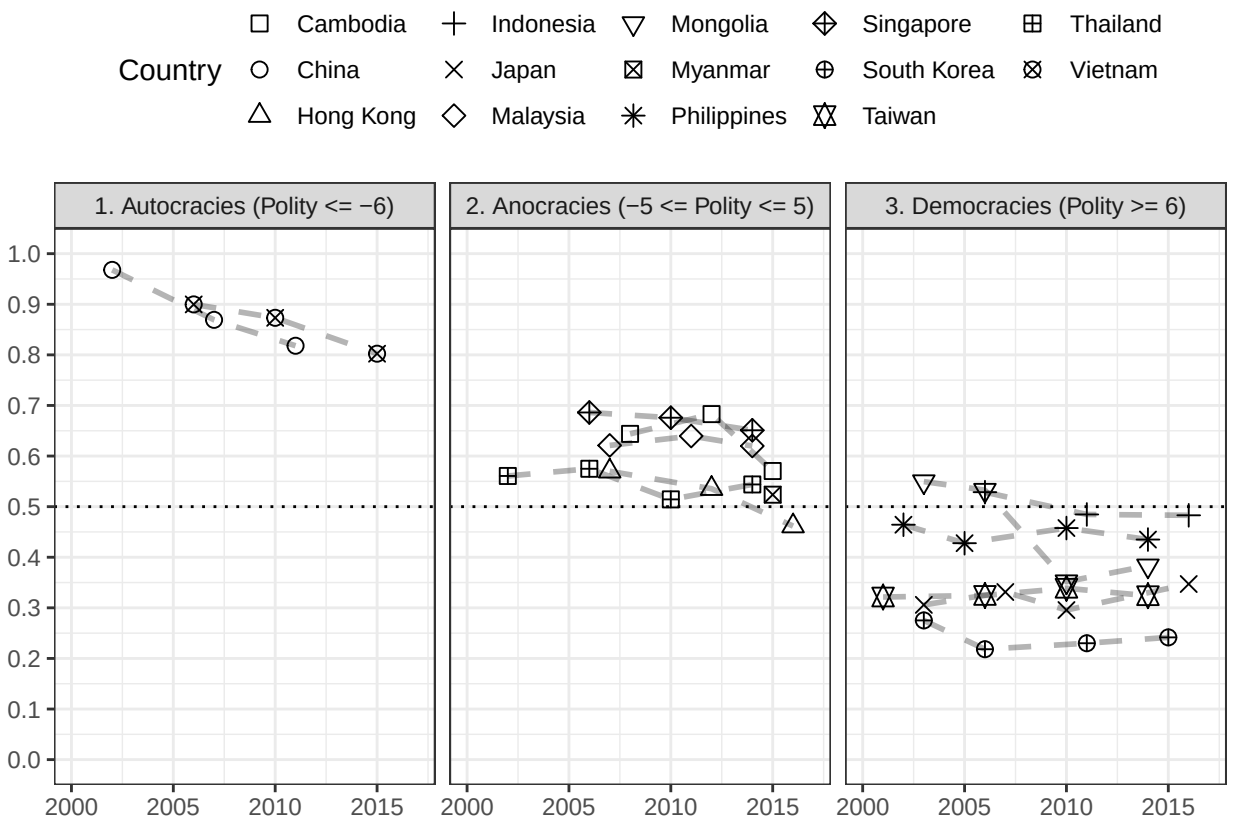

Figure B.2: Confidence in National Assemblies by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in national assemblies rescaled to fit into the interval [0,1]. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

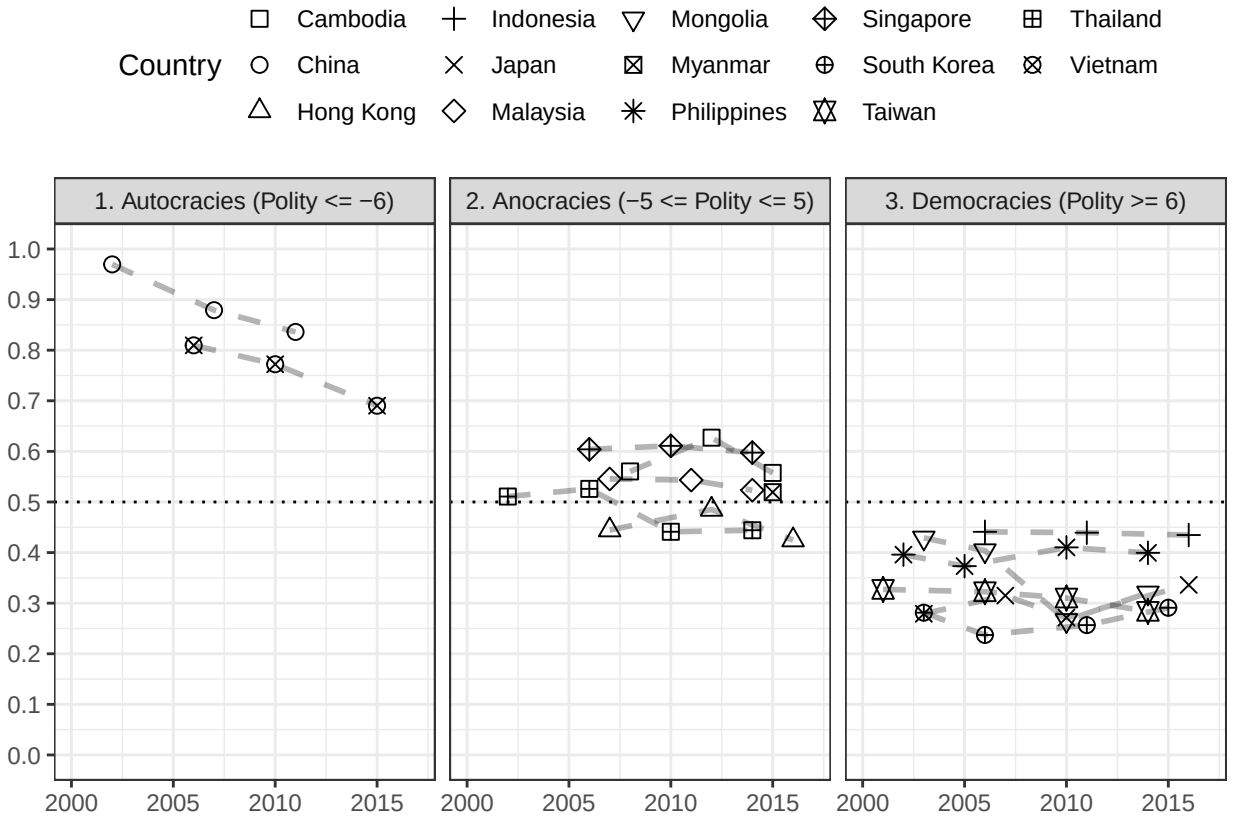

Figure B.3: Confidence in Political Parties by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in the party system to fit into the interval [0,1]. ABS respondents' attitudes for the Chinese 2015 study are missing. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

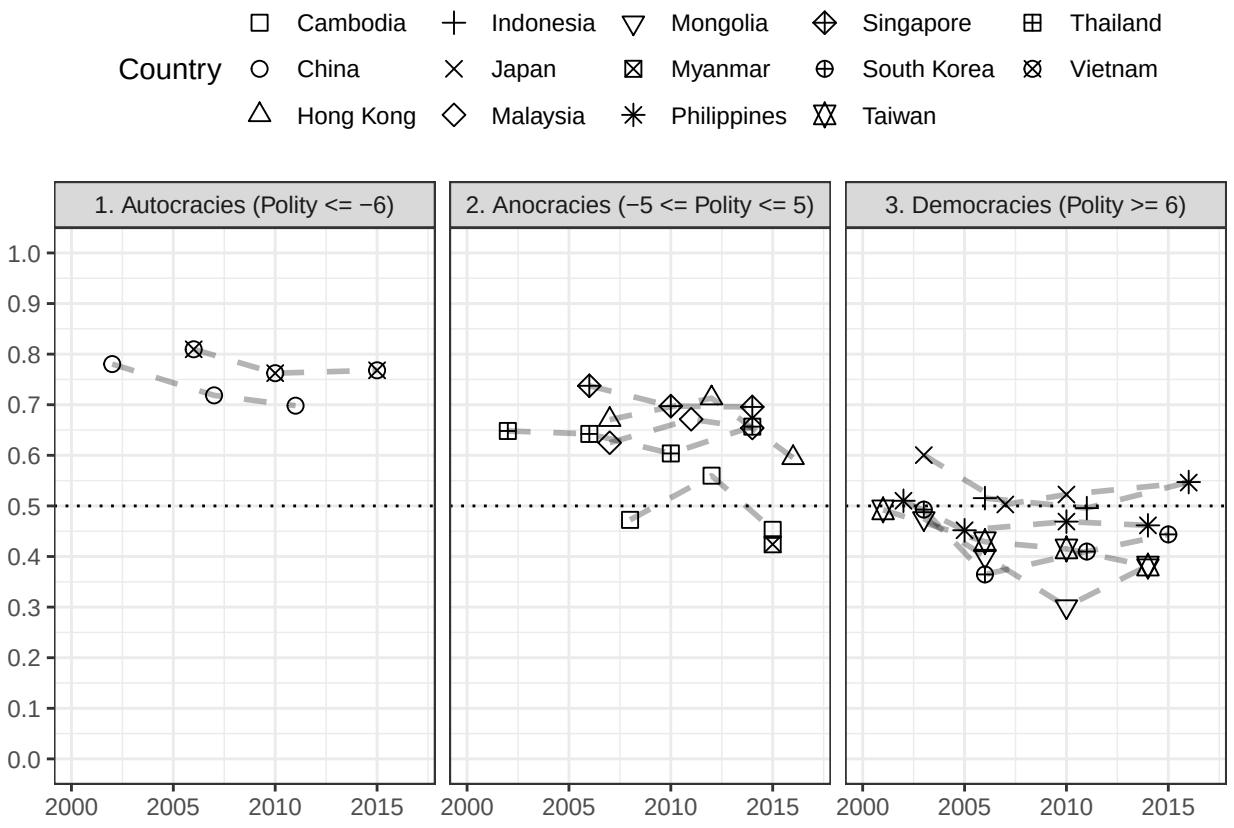

Figure B.4: Confidence in Courts by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in the legal system to fit into the interval [0,1]. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

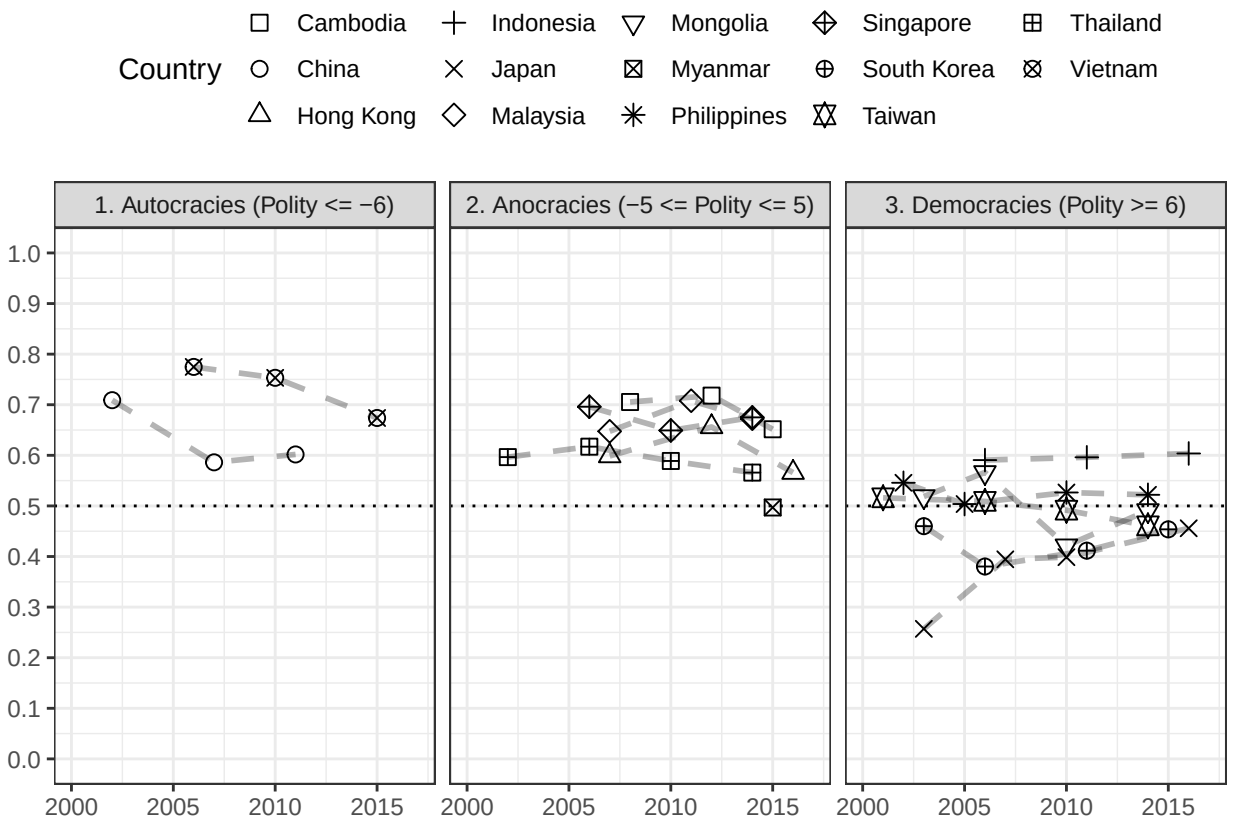

Figure B.5: Confidence in Civil Service by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in the civil service to fit into the interval [0,1]. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

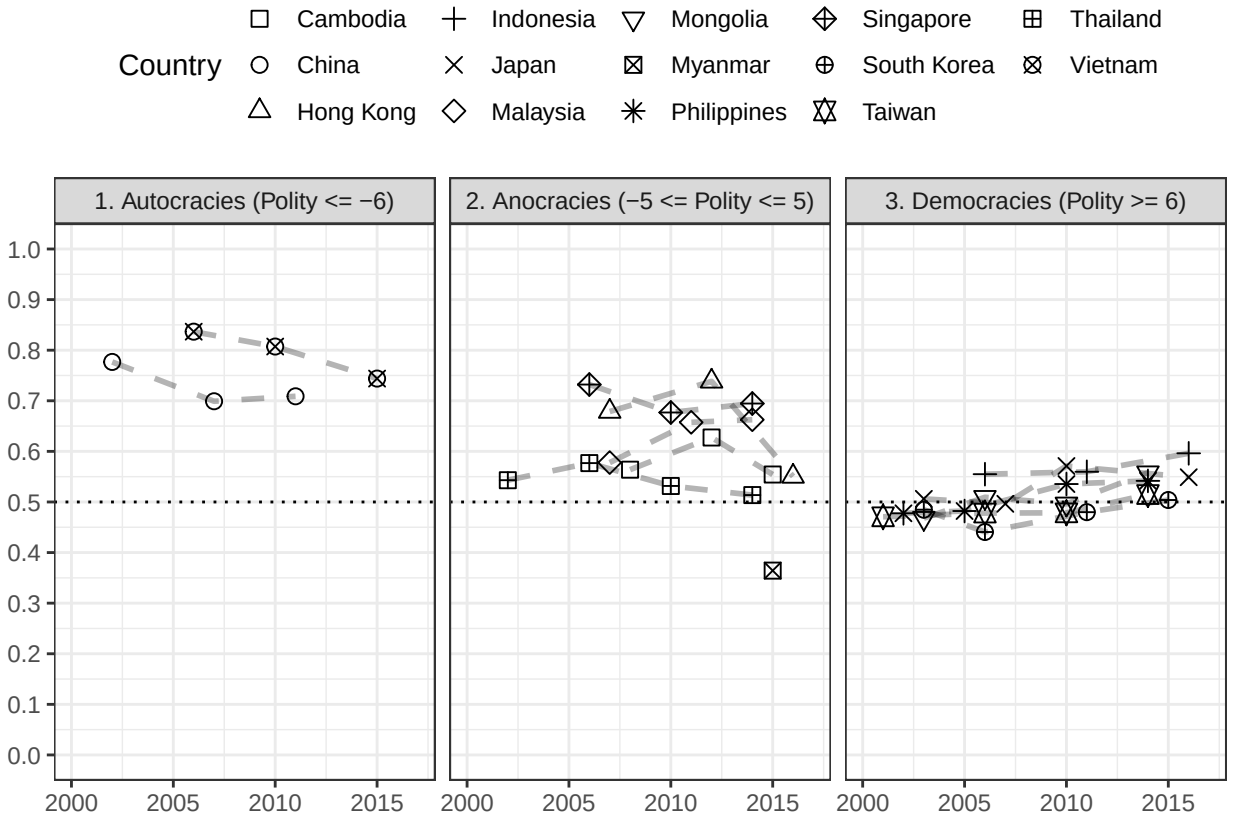

Figure B.6: Confidence in Police by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in the police forces to fit into the interval [0,1]. ABS respondents' attitudes for the Hongkongese study of 2001 are missing. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

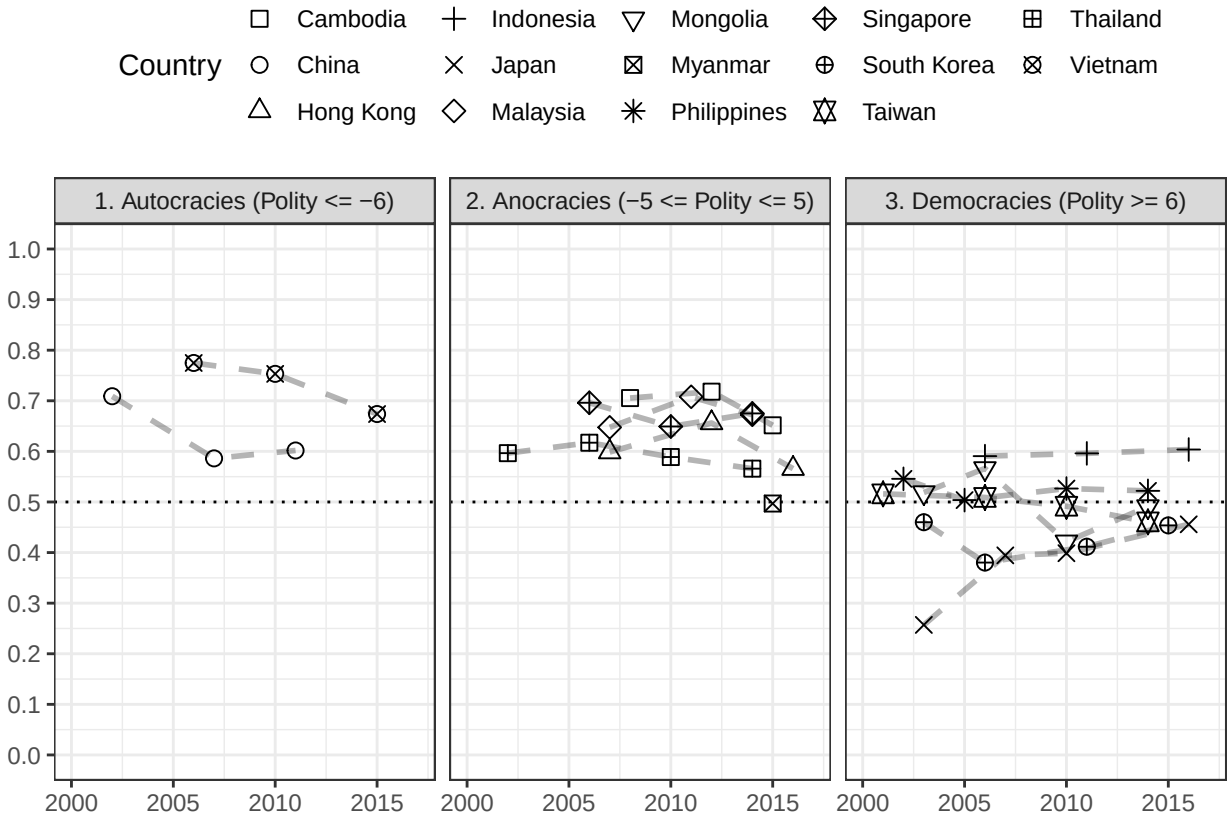

Figure B.7: Confidence in the Military by Regime Type (Polity IV Typology).

Values are aggregate mean scores of ABS respondents' confidence in the armed forces to fit into the interval [0,1]. ABS respondents' attitudes for the Chinese 2015 study are missing. Country-specific observations are differentiated according to Polity IV taxonomy of political regimes (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2018). Thailandese observations have been arbitrarily imposed to the anocratic regimes panel.

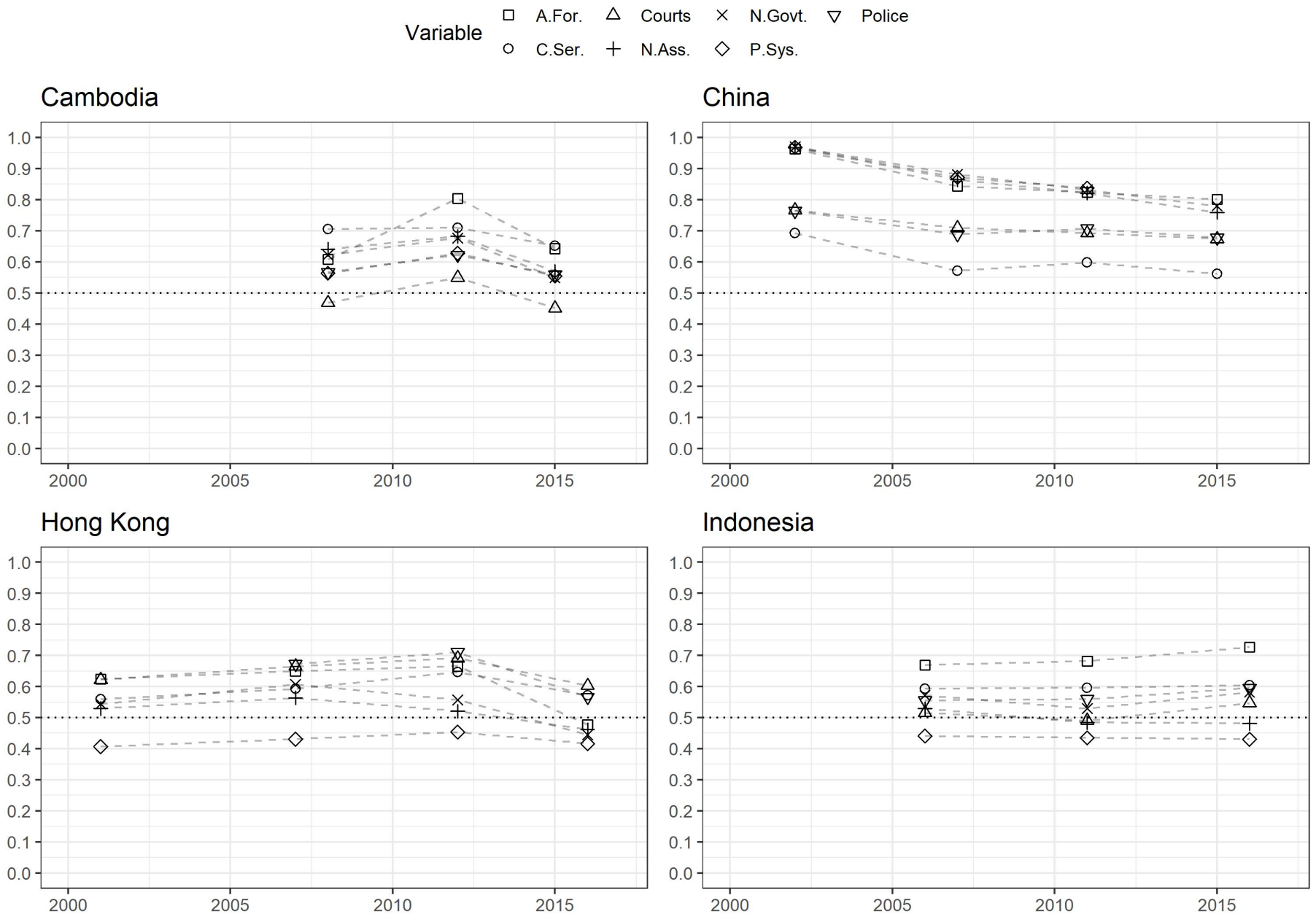

Figure B.8: Political Confidence across Institutions in Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, and Indonesia

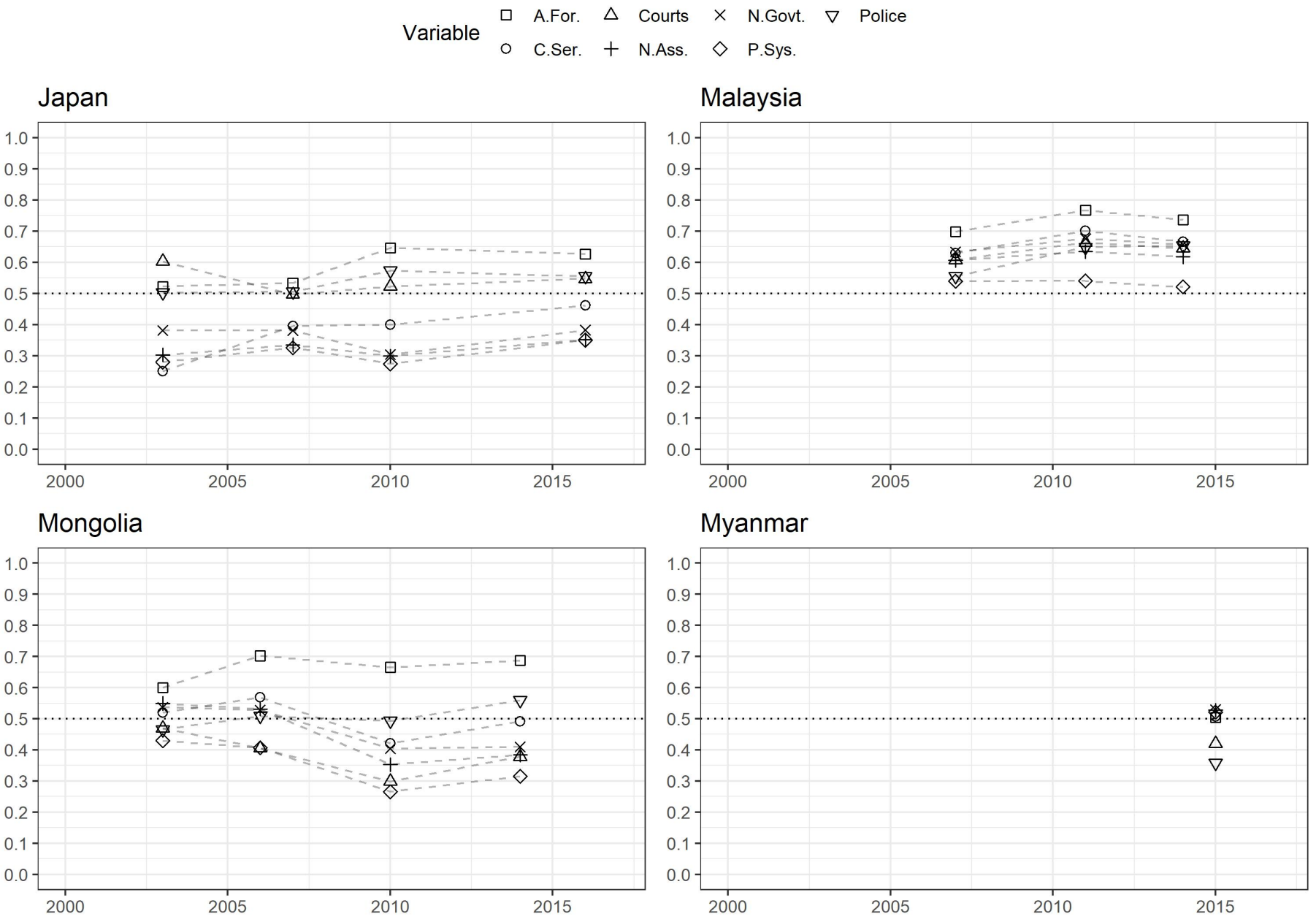

Figure B.9: Political Confidence across Institutions in Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Myanmar

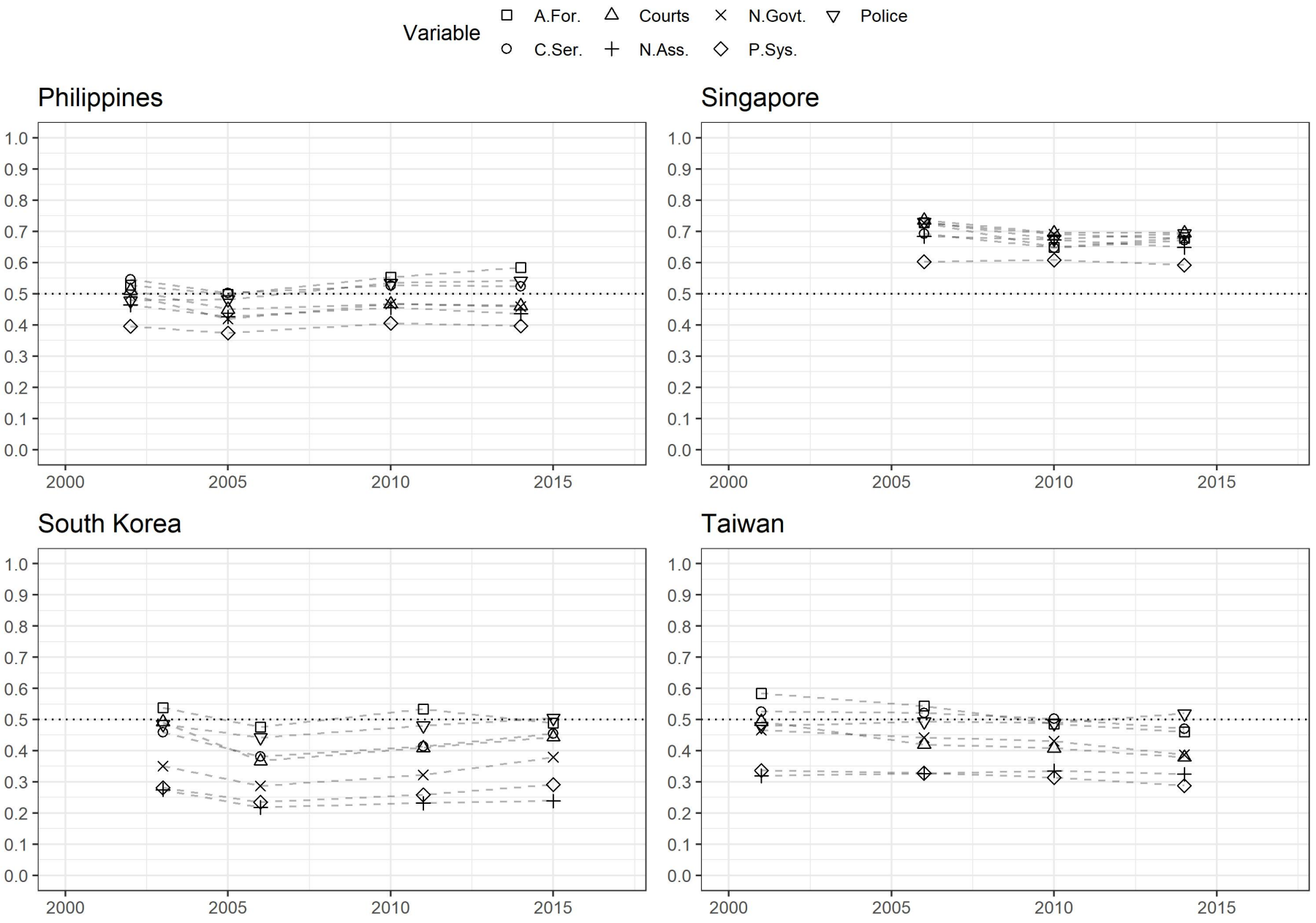

Figure B.10: Political Confidence across Institutions in the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan

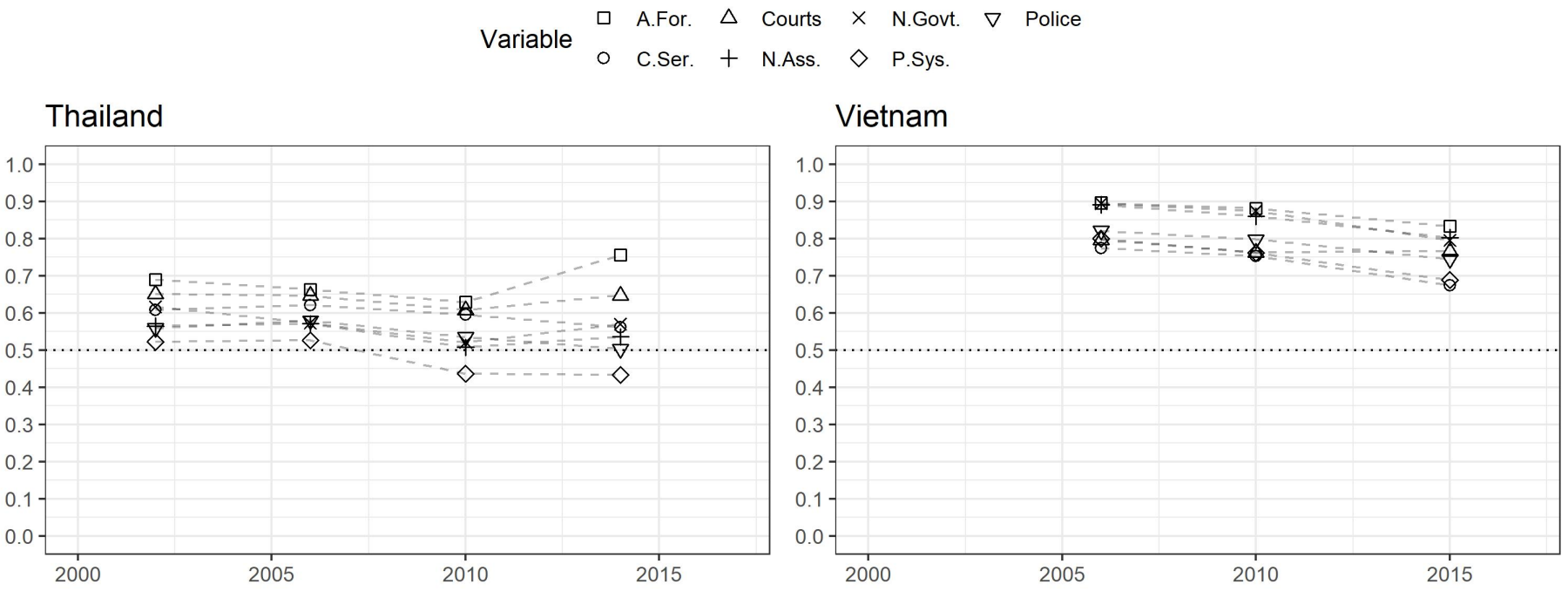

Figure B.11: Political Confidence across Institutions in Thailand and Vietnam

Table B.3: Point Estimates of Dependent and Independent Variables for Correlation Analyses in Chapter 3

Country	Year	CPI	CII	OSA	OPA	GST	CGDPpc	HDI	AEGR	GE	LTE	RIPA	PCON	Plty	FH
Cambodia	2008	0.629	0.637	0.533	0.773	0.074	2197	0.521	0.083	-0.989	-0.461	-1.079	0.424	2	2.5
Cambodia	2012	0.683	0.666	0.753	0.696	0.116	2496	0.548	0.052	-0.816	-0.589	-0.986	0.370	2	2.5
Cambodia	2015	0.558	0.606	0.655	0.657	0.141	2981	0.566	0.060	-0.699	-1.178	-1.203	0.325	2	2.5
China	2002	0.970	0.729	0.443	0.526	0.418	4400	0.610	0.084	-0.060	-0.399	-0.563	0.096	-7	1.5
China	2007	0.875	0.632	0.519	0.552	0.614	6937	0.670	0.102	0.183	-0.223	-0.566	0.090	-7	1.5
China	2011	0.828	0.653	0.459	0.526	0.536	9475	0.711	0.097	0.088	-0.320	-0.543	0.098	-7	1.5
China	2015	0.773	0.620	0.446	0.545	0.447	11708	0.742	0.041	0.408	-0.294	-0.474	0.063	-7	1.5
Hong Kong	2001	0.535	0.559	0.400	0.433	0.340	38153	0.835	0.048	1.356	2.738	2.585	0.788	2	4.0
Hong Kong	2007	0.586	0.636	0.389	0.438	0.323	49244	0.887	0.007	1.871	2.738	1.766	0.786	2	3.5
Hong Kong	2012	0.540	0.684	0.370	0.458	0.390	44532	0.911	0.016	1.835	2.241	1.662	0.752	2	3.5
Hong Kong	2016	0.452	0.568	0.423	0.384	0.550	46504	0.931	-0.040	1.842	1.507	1.200	0.697	2	3.5
Indonesia	2006	0.551	0.574	0.418	0.527	0.082	4067	0.643	0.081	-0.332	0.465	0.198	0.747	8	5.5
Indonesia	2011	0.506	0.578	0.530	0.534	0.340	7378	0.674	0.153	-0.259	0.163	0.359	0.735	8	5.5
Indonesia	2016	0.533	0.599	0.524	0.542	0.202	10099	0.700	0.038	0.008	1.221	0.609	0.785	9	5.0
Japan	2003	0.341	0.376	0.430	0.301	0.318	33215	0.865	0.003	1.218	3.157	2.338	0.872	10	6.5
Japan	2007	0.356	0.449	0.478	0.355	0.314	35572	0.880	0.016	1.448	3.157	2.338	0.875	10	6.5
Japan	2010	0.300	0.486	0.387	0.313	0.392	33798	0.885	-0.004	1.528	3.157	2.338	0.880	10	6.5
Japan	2016	0.365	0.508	0.322	0.293	0.317	36030	0.910	0.009	1.822	2.526	1.994	0.842	10	7.0
Malaysia	2007	0.624	0.594	0.471	0.564	0.049	15295	0.751	0.065	1.239	-0.224	-0.368	0.398	3	4.0
Malaysia	2011	0.656	0.676	0.539	0.566	0.091	17653	0.779	0.032	1.021	0.181	-0.368	0.381	6	4.0
Malaysia	2014	0.639	0.660	0.561	0.566	0.083	21152	0.792	0.033	1.115	-0.284	-0.159	0.367	5	4.0
Mongolia	2003	0.543	0.493	0.615	0.632	0.126	3295	0.622	0.093	-0.228	1.280	1.030	0.862	10	6.0
Mongolia	2006	0.530	0.538	0.392	0.731	0.106	4943	0.660	0.174	-0.484	1.276	1.002	0.861	10	6.0
Mongolia	2010	0.378	0.458	0.504	0.645	0.137	6723	0.697	0.046	-0.572	1.144	1.088	0.850	10	6.0
Mongolia	2014	0.397	0.525	0.482	0.629	0.219	11088	0.733	0.053	-0.436	0.437	0.719	0.836	10	6.5
Myanmar	2015	0.523	0.432	0.724	0.644	0.197	5493	0.565	0.087	-1.239	0.102	0.035	0.501	2	2.5

Table B.3: Point Estimates of Dependent and Independent Variables for Correlation Analyses in Chapter 3 *(continued)*

Country	Year	CPI	CII	OSA	OPA	GST	CGDPpc	HDI	AEGR	GE	LTE	RIPA	PCON	Plty	FH
Philippines	2002	0.480	0.512	0.303	0.527	0.088	4133	0.639	-0.002	-0.129	-0.018	-0.257	0.770	8	5.5
Philippines	2005	0.423	0.491	0.448	0.555	0.080	4197	0.656	0.012	-0.041	-0.086	-0.090	0.739	8	5.0
Philippines	2010	0.461	0.530	0.446	0.501	0.075	5033	0.672	0.052	0.002	0.337	0.126	0.781	8	5.0
Philippines	2014	0.447	0.534	0.534	0.535	0.083	6393	0.697	0.041	0.193	0.189	0.075	0.803	8	5.0
Singapore	2006	0.707	0.713	0.470	0.539	0.304	48335	0.872	0.180	2.212	1.965	2.262	0.337	-2	3.5
Singapore	2010	0.682	0.663	0.448	0.538	0.304	51138	0.909	0.016	2.241	1.965	2.262	0.333	-2	3.5
Singapore	2014	0.664	0.682	0.449	0.535	0.235	61755	0.928	0.030	2.183	1.965	2.262	0.319	-2	4.0
South Korea	2003	0.313	0.472	0.471	0.490	0.394	25246	0.839	0.043	0.924	2.589	2.665	0.864	8	6.0
South Korea	2006	0.253	0.413	0.458	0.482	0.326	28995	0.862	0.047	1.045	2.589	2.665	0.865	8	6.5
South Korea	2011	0.277	0.448	0.489	0.472	0.406	32325	0.888	0.020	1.253	2.589	1.469	0.788	8	6.5
South Korea	2015	0.310	0.479	0.470	0.461	0.356	34538	0.899	0.028	1.013	1.959	1.709	0.719	8	6.0
Taiwan	2001	0.393	0.500	0.386	0.412	0.407	31937	0.894	0.022	0.765	2.674	2.515	0.853	9	6.5
Taiwan	2006	0.385	0.506	0.411	0.403	0.344	36054	0.894	0.041	1.197	2.674	2.515	0.831	10	6.5
Taiwan	2010	0.383	0.495	0.433	0.372	0.379	34978	0.876	0.002	1.176	2.674	1.946	0.854	10	6.5
Taiwan	2014	0.355	0.494	0.420	0.352	0.451	39528	0.882	0.026	1.368	2.381	1.431	0.841	10	6.5
Thailand	2002	0.589	0.581	0.416	0.586	0.177	7120	0.665	0.042	0.310	0.103	0.286	0.647	9	5.5
Thailand	2006	0.574	0.600	0.508	0.555	0.462	9584	0.694	0.070	0.452	-0.183	-0.446	0.551	-5	2.5
Thailand	2010	0.513	0.567	0.389	0.577	0.272	11168	0.721	0.053	0.188	0.127	-0.315	0.500	4	3.5
Thailand	2014	0.553	0.535	0.420	0.543	0.351	13895	0.739	0.008	0.338	-1.708	-2.122	0.225	-3	2.5
Vietnam	2006	0.894	0.804	0.448	0.681	0.590	3218	0.624	0.074	-0.248	-0.464	-0.674	0.081	-7	2.0
Vietnam	2010	0.869	0.780	0.375	0.657	0.508	4004	0.653	0.055	-0.259	-0.464	-0.674	0.072	-7	2.0
Vietnam	2015	0.801	0.709	0.441	0.681	0.431	5427	0.680	0.053	0.068	0.988	0.528	0.088	-7	2.0

Note:
"CPI" = Confidence in Political Institutions. "CII" = Confidence in Implementative Institutions. "OSA" = Orientations toward Social Authority. "OPA" = Orientations toward Political Authority. "GST" = Generalized Social Trust. "CGDPpc" = GDP per capita. "HDI" = Human Development Index. "AEGR" = Average Economic Growth Rate. "GE" = Government Effectiveness. "LTE" = Law Transparency and Enforcement. "RIPA" = Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration. "PCON" = Public Contestation. "Plty" = Polity Index. "FH" = Freedom House score.

Appendix C

Table C.1: Sociotropic Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics (1)

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	3.180	0.815	3	1	5	1000	7
Cambodia	2012	3.335	0.821	3	1	5	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	3.124	0.804	3	1	5	1200	2
China	2007	4.045	0.710	4	1	5	5098	477
China	2015	3.625	0.996	4	1	5	4068	369
Hong Kong	2007	3.277	0.775	3	1	5	849	9
Hong Kong	2012	2.672	0.829	3	1	5	1177	32
Hong Kong	2016	2.652	0.764	3	1	5	1217	17
Indonesia	2006	2.852	0.911	3	1	5	1581	12
Indonesia	2011	2.854	0.851	3	1	5	1530	26
Indonesia	2016	2.861	0.837	3	1	5	1550	45
Japan	2007	2.584	0.890	3	1	5	1067	10
Japan	2010	1.807	0.736	2	1	5	1880	0
Japan	2016	2.675	0.840	3	1	5	1081	25
Malaysia	2007	3.274	0.925	3	1	5	1217	17
Malaysia	2011	3.440	0.839	3	1	5	1214	9
Malaysia	2014	3.200	0.908	3	1	5	1207	4
Mongolia	2006	2.945	0.719	3	1	5	1211	7
Mongolia	2010	2.627	0.730	3	1	5	1210	5
Mongolia	2014	2.673	0.784	3	1	5	1228	6
Myanmar	2015	3.102	0.768	3	1	5	1620	91
Philippines	2005	2.658	1.039	3	1	5	1200	19
Philippines	2010	2.830	1.018	3	1	5	1200	15
Philippines	2014	3.235	0.905	3	1	5	1200	7
Singapore	2006	3.447	0.777	4	1	5	1012	5
Singapore	2010	3.576	0.769	4	1	5	1000	7
Singapore	2014	3.872	0.749	4	1	5	1039	2
South Korea	2011	2.172	0.789	2	1	5	1207	0
South Korea	2015	2.256	0.753	2	1	5	1200	4
Taiwan	2006	2.530	0.996	2	1	5	1587	17
Taiwan	2010	2.369	0.992	2	1	5	1592	13
Taiwan	2014	2.433	0.977	2	1	5	1657	18
Thailand	2006	2.965	0.906	3	1	5	1546	40
Thailand	2010	2.755	0.829	3	1	5	1512	23
Thailand	2014	2.980	0.893	3	1	5	1199	11
Vietnam	2006	3.830	0.680	4	2	5	1200	29
Vietnam	2010	3.887	0.714	4	1	5	1191	35

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?".

Table C.2: Sociotropic Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics
(2)

Country	Year	Very bad	Bad	So and so	Good	Very good	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	21 (2.10%)	159 (15.90%)	467 (46.70%)	312 (31.20%)	34 (3.40%)	1000	7
Cambodia	2012	25 (2.08%)	123 (10.25%)	549 (45.75%)	431 (35.92%)	72 (6.00%)	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	18 (1.50%)	248 (20.67%)	520 (43.33%)	392 (32.67%)	20 (1.67%)	1200	2
China	2007	10 (0.20%)	193 (3.79%)	427 (8.38%)	2939 (57.65%)	1052 (20.64%)	5098	477
China	2015	74 (1.82%)	514 (12.64%)	804 (19.76%)	1641 (40.34%)	666 (16.37%)	4068	369
Hong Kong	2007	18 (2.12%)	96 (11.31%)	379 (44.64%)	329 (38.75%)	18 (2.12%)	849	9
Hong Kong	2012	84 (7.14%)	381 (32.37%)	515 (43.76%)	156 (13.25%)	9 (0.76%)	1177	32
Hong Kong	2016	53 (4.35%)	466 (38.29%)	534 (43.88%)	140 (11.50%)	7 (0.58%)	1217	17
Indonesia	2006	62 (3.92%)	574 (36.31%)	491 (31.06%)	418 (26.44%)	24 (1.52%)	1581	12
Indonesia	2011	75 (4.90%)	421 (27.52%)	680 (44.44%)	304 (19.87%)	24 (1.57%)	1530	26
Indonesia	2016	50 (3.23%)	471 (30.39%)	647 (41.74%)	312 (20.13%)	25 (1.61%)	1550	45
Japan	2007	109 (10.22%)	395 (37.02%)	388 (36.36%)	157 (14.71%)	8 (0.75%)	1067	10
Japan	2010	672 (35.74%)	946 (50.32%)	219 (11.65%)	38 (2.02%)	5 (0.27%)	1880	0
Japan	2016	79 (7.31%)	358 (33.12%)	450 (41.63%)	165 (15.26%)	4 (0.37%)	1081	25
Malaysia	2007	57 (4.68%)	140 (11.50%)	502 (41.25%)	419 (34.43%)	82 (6.74%)	1217	17
Malaysia	2011	19 (1.57%)	121 (9.97%)	473 (38.96%)	495 (40.77%)	97 (7.99%)	1214	9
Malaysia	2014	46 (3.81%)	185 (15.33%)	530 (43.91%)	366 (30.32%)	76 (6.30%)	1207	4
Mongolia	2006	26 (2.15%)	250 (20.64%)	710 (58.63%)	200 (16.52%)	18 (1.49%)	1211	7
Mongolia	2010	58 (4.79%)	447 (36.94%)	596 (49.26%)	95 (7.85%)	9 (0.74%)	1210	5
Mongolia	2014	79 (6.43%)	392 (31.92%)	613 (49.92%)	126 (10.26%)	12 (0.98%)	1228	6
Myanmar	2015	21 (1.30%)	308 (19.01%)	703 (43.40%)	488 (30.12%)	9 (0.56%)	1620	91
Philippines	2005	174 (14.50%)	349 (29.08%)	402 (33.50%)	219 (18.25%)	37 (3.08%)	1200	19
Philippines	2010	120 (10.00%)	322 (26.83%)	433 (36.08%)	260 (21.67%)	50 (4.17%)	1200	15
Philippines	2014	41 (3.42%)	193 (16.08%)	469 (39.08%)	425 (35.42%)	65 (5.42%)	1200	7
Singapore	2006	8 (0.79%)	103 (10.18%)	379 (37.45%)	465 (45.95%)	52 (5.14%)	1012	5
Singapore	2010	3 (0.30%)	81 (8.10%)	332 (33.20%)	495 (49.50%)	82 (8.20%)	1000	7
Singapore	2014	6 (0.58%)	22 (2.12%)	264 (25.41%)	552 (53.13%)	193 (18.58%)	1039	2
South Korea	2011	224 (18.56%)	615 (50.95%)	305 (25.27%)	62 (5.14%)	1 (0.08%)	1207	0
South Korea	2015	160 (13.33%)	633 (52.75%)	342 (28.50%)	59 (4.92%)	2 (0.17%)	1200	4

Table C.2: Sociotropic Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics
(2) *(continued)*

Country	Year	Very bad	Bad	So and so	Good	Very good	Obs.	Missing
Taiwan	2006	195 (12.29%)	719 (45.31%)	302 (19.03%)	337 (21.24%)	17 (1.07%)	1587	17
Taiwan	2010	279 (17.53%)	740 (46.48%)	271 (17.02%)	277 (17.40%)	12 (0.75%)	1592	13
Taiwan	2014	251 (15.15%)	745 (44.96%)	339 (20.46%)	291 (17.56%)	13 (0.78%)	1657	18
Thailand	2006	83 (5.37%)	373 (24.13%)	587 (37.97%)	440 (28.46%)	23 (1.49%)	1546	40
Thailand	2010	81 (5.36%)	469 (31.02%)	699 (46.23%)	214 (14.15%)	26 (1.72%)	1512	23
Thailand	2014	57 (4.75%)	274 (22.85%)	534 (44.54%)	282 (23.52%)	41 (3.42%)	1199	11
Vietnam	2006	0 (0.00%)	30 (2.50%)	297 (24.75%)	686 (57.17%)	158 (13.17%)	1200	29
Vietnam	2010	3 (0.25%)	15 (1.26%)	304 (25.52%)	622 (52.23%)	212 (17.80%)	1191	35

Note:
"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "How would you rate the overall economic condition of our country today?".

Table C.3: Egocentric Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics (1)

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	2.918	0.598	3	1	5	1000	1
Cambodia	2012	3.026	0.696	3	1	5	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	3.050	0.680	3	1	5	1200	0
China	2007	3.310	0.931	4	1	5	5098	44
China	2015	3.001	0.824	3	1	5	4068	46
Hong Kong	2007	3.030	0.651	3	1	5	849	7
Hong Kong	2012	2.879	0.666	3	1	5	1177	8
Hong Kong	2016	2.886	0.607	3	1	5	1217	46
Indonesia	2006	3.095	0.896	3	1	5	1581	7
Indonesia	2011	3.110	0.760	3	1	5	1530	6
Indonesia	2016	3.049	0.754	3	1	5	1550	6
Japan	2007	2.792	0.724	3	1	5	1067	3
Japan	2010	2.803	0.712	3	1	5	1880	0
Japan	2016	2.966	0.757	3	1	5	1081	7
Malaysia	2007	3.311	0.709	3	1	5	1217	3
Malaysia	2011	3.334	0.757	3	1	5	1214	4
Malaysia	2014	3.265	0.751	3	1	5	1207	3
Mongolia	2006	2.998	0.659	3	1	5	1211	1
Mongolia	2010	2.855	0.708	3	1	5	1210	0
Mongolia	2014	3.068	0.699	3	1	5	1228	2
Myanmar	2015	3.020	0.633	3	1	5	1620	1
Philippines	2005	3.228	0.980	3	1	5	1200	14
Philippines	2010	3.416	0.908	4	1	5	1200	3
Philippines	2014	3.486	0.853	4	1	5	1200	3
Singapore	2006	3.352	0.765	3	1	5	1012	6
Singapore	2010	3.416	0.696	3	1	5	1000	4
Singapore	2014	3.502	0.780	3	1	5	1039	3
South Korea	2011	2.530	0.739	3	1	5	1207	1
South Korea	2015	2.672	0.671	3	1	5	1200	1
Taiwan	2006	3.179	0.839	3	1	5	1587	9
Taiwan	2010	3.063	0.905	3	1	5	1592	8
Taiwan	2014	3.156	0.840	3	1	5	1657	4
Thailand	2006	3.018	0.649	3	1	5	1546	9
Thailand	2010	3.018	0.653	3	1	5	1512	14
Thailand	2014	3.051	0.673	3	1	5	1199	11
Vietnam	2006	3.356	0.647	3	1	5	1200	2
Vietnam	2010	3.370	0.678	3	1	5	1191	9

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording:"As for your own family, how do you rate the economic situation of your family today?".

Table C.4: Egocentric Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics
(2)

Country	Year	Very bad	Bad	So and so	Good	Very good	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	27 (2.70%)	137 (13.70%)	731 (73.10%)	99 (9.90%)	5 (0.50%)	1000	1
Cambodia	2012	33 (2.75%)	164 (13.67%)	754 (62.83%)	237 (19.75%)	12 (1.00%)	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	15 (1.25%)	201 (16.75%)	696 (58.00%)	285 (23.75%)	3 (0.25%)	1200	0
China	2007	187 (3.67%)	867 (17.01%)	1409 (27.64%)	2372 (46.53%)	219 (4.30%)	5098	44
China	2015	167 (4.11%)	743 (18.26%)	2149 (52.83%)	845 (20.77%)	118 (2.90%)	4068	46
Hong Kong	2007	18 (2.12%)	108 (12.72%)	551 (64.90%)	161 (18.96%)	4 (0.47%)	849	7
Hong Kong	2012	37 (3.14%)	225 (19.12%)	753 (63.98%)	151 (12.83%)	3 (0.25%)	1177	8
Hong Kong	2016	28 (2.30%)	203 (16.68%)	818 (67.21%)	119 (9.78%)	3 (0.25%)	1217	46
Indonesia	2006	43 (2.72%)	396 (25.05%)	541 (34.22%)	556 (35.17%)	38 (2.40%)	1581	7
Indonesia	2011	24 (1.57%)	267 (17.45%)	776 (50.72%)	431 (28.17%)	26 (1.70%)	1530	6
Indonesia	2016	21 (1.35%)	314 (20.26%)	803 (51.81%)	380 (24.52%)	26 (1.68%)	1550	6
Japan	2007	60 (5.62%)	225 (21.09%)	662 (62.04%)	110 (10.31%)	7 (0.66%)	1067	3
Japan	2010	86 (4.57%)	423 (22.50%)	1165 (61.97%)	188 (10.00%)	18 (0.96%)	1880	0
Japan	2016	50 (4.63%)	150 (13.88%)	686 (63.46%)	162 (14.99%)	26 (2.41%)	1081	7
Malaysia	2007	18 (1.48%)	66 (5.42%)	705 (57.93%)	370 (30.40%)	55 (4.52%)	1217	3
Malaysia	2011	14 (1.15%)	101 (8.32%)	631 (51.98%)	395 (32.54%)	69 (5.68%)	1214	4
Malaysia	2014	20 (1.66%)	104 (8.62%)	675 (55.92%)	347 (28.75%)	58 (4.81%)	1207	3
Mongolia	2006	16 (1.32%)	203 (16.76%)	772 (63.75%)	206 (17.01%)	13 (1.07%)	1211	1
Mongolia	2010	45 (3.72%)	258 (21.32%)	746 (61.65%)	150 (12.40%)	11 (0.91%)	1210	0
Mongolia	2014	19 (1.55%)	180 (14.66%)	750 (61.07%)	253 (20.60%)	24 (1.95%)	1228	2
Myanmar	2015	19 (1.17%)	246 (15.19%)	1042 (64.32%)	307 (18.95%)	5 (0.31%)	1620	1
Philippines	2005	72 (6.00%)	162 (13.50%)	462 (38.50%)	403 (33.58%)	87 (7.25%)	1200	14
Philippines	2010	31 (2.58%)	149 (12.42%)	414 (34.50%)	497 (41.42%)	106 (8.83%)	1200	3
Philippines	2014	20 (1.67%)	128 (10.67%)	397 (33.08%)	554 (46.17%)	98 (8.17%)	1200	3
Singapore	2006	11 (1.09%)	112 (11.07%)	429 (42.39%)	420 (41.50%)	34 (3.36%)	1012	6
Singapore	2010	5 (0.50%)	60 (6.00%)	492 (49.20%)	394 (39.40%)	45 (4.50%)	1000	4
Singapore	2014	9 (0.87%)	68 (6.54%)	443 (42.64%)	426 (41.00%)	90 (8.66%)	1039	3
South Korea	2011	101 (8.37%)	438 (36.29%)	599 (49.63%)	63 (5.22%)	5 (0.41%)	1207	1
South Korea	2015	49 (4.08%)	383 (31.92%)	680 (56.67%)	86 (7.17%)	1 (0.08%)	1200	1

Table C.4: Egocentric Economic Evaluation Descriptive Statistics
(2) *(continued)*

Country	Year	Very bad	Bad	So and so	Good	Very good	Obs.	Missing
Taiwan	2006	57 (3.59%)	251 (15.82%)	640 (40.33%)	613 (38.63%)	17 (1.07%)	1587	9
Taiwan	2010	89 (5.59%)	327 (20.54%)	571 (35.87%)	589 (37.00%)	8 (0.50%)	1592	8
Taiwan	2014	65 (3.92%)	267 (16.11%)	678 (40.92%)	631 (38.08%)	12 (0.72%)	1657	4
Thailand	2006	29 (1.88%)	208 (13.45%)	1021 (66.04%)	264 (17.08%)	15 (0.97%)	1546	9
Thailand	2010	21 (1.39%)	227 (15.01%)	970 (64.15%)	264 (17.46%)	16 (1.06%)	1512	14
Thailand	2014	22 (1.83%)	162 (13.51%)	749 (62.47%)	243 (20.27%)	12 (1.00%)	1199	11
Vietnam	2006	4 (0.33%)	54 (4.50%)	699 (58.25%)	394 (32.83%)	47 (3.92%)	1200	2
Vietnam	2010	1 (0.08%)	46 (3.86%)	735 (61.71%)	315 (26.45%)	85 (7.14%)	1191	9

Note:
"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording:"As for your own family, how do you rate the economic situation of your family today?".

Table C.5: Government Responsiveness Evaluations Descriptive Statistics (1)

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	1.556	0.768	2	0	3	1000	17
Cambodia	2012	1.562	0.696	2	0	3	1200	5
Cambodia	2015	1.278	0.716	1	0	3	1200	12
China	2007	2.164	0.652	2	0	3	5098	610
China	2015	1.718	0.643	2	0	3	4068	750
Hong Kong	2007	1.478	0.608	1	0	3	849	61
Hong Kong	2012	1.422	0.700	1	0	3	1177	94
Hong Kong	2016	1.165	0.737	1	0	3	1217	136
Indonesia	2006	1.467	0.641	1	0	3	1581	36
Indonesia	2011	1.445	0.653	1	0	3	1530	77
Indonesia	2016	1.521	0.629	2	0	3	1550	138
Japan	2007	1.276	0.592	1	0	3	1067	28
Japan	2010	1.271	0.612	1	0	3	1880	22
Japan	2016	1.308	0.629	1	0	3	1081	62
Malaysia	2007	1.662	0.720	2	0	3	1217	60
Malaysia	2011	1.801	0.723	2	0	3	1214	21
Malaysia	2014	1.705	0.717	2	0	3	1207	36
Mongolia	2006	1.187	0.634	1	0	3	1211	16
Mongolia	2010	0.935	0.632	1	0	3	1210	18
Mongolia	2014	1.068	0.671	1	0	3	1228	15
Myanmar	2015	1.428	0.888	1	0	3	1620	259
Philippines	2005	1.212	0.797	1	0	3	1200	27
Philippines	2010	1.407	0.792	1	0	3	1200	15
Philippines	2014	1.469	0.826	1	0	3	1200	1
Singapore	2006	1.759	0.624	2	0	3	1012	33
Singapore	2010	1.623	0.683	2	0	3	1000	22
Singapore	2014	1.724	0.629	2	0	3	1039	47
South Korea	2011	1.193	0.646	1	0	3	1207	44
South Korea	2015	1.230	0.628	1	0	3	1200	19
Taiwan	2006	1.289	0.690	1	0	3	1587	81
Taiwan	2010	1.320	0.688	1	0	3	1592	48
Taiwan	2014	1.163	0.679	1	0	3	1657	52
Thailand	2006	1.602	0.728	2	0	3	1546	180
Thailand	2010	1.371	0.718	1	0	3	1512	61
Thailand	2014	1.545	0.740	2	0	3	1199	109
Vietnam	2006	2.083	0.625	2	0	3	1200	78
Vietnam	2010	2.095	0.645	2	0	3	1191	102

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "How well do you think the government responds to what people want?".

Table C.6: Government Responsiveness Evaluations Descriptive Statistics (2)

Country	Year	Not Responsive	Not Very Responsive	Largely Responsive	Very Responsive	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	57 (5.70%)	433 (43.30%)	382 (38.20%)	111 (11.10%)	1000	17
Cambodia	2012	55 (4.58%)	501 (41.75%)	552 (46.00%)	87 (7.25%)	1200	5
Cambodia	2015	143 (11.92%)	614 (51.17%)	389 (32.42%)	42 (3.50%)	1200	12
China	2007	76 (1.49%)	416 (8.16%)	2690 (52.77%)	1306 (25.62%)	5098	610
China	2015	108 (2.65%)	960 (23.60%)	2009 (49.39%)	241 (5.92%)	4068	750
Hong Kong	2007	20 (2.36%)	398 (46.88%)	343 (40.40%)	27 (3.18%)	849	61
Hong Kong	2012	83 (7.05%)	510 (43.33%)	440 (37.38%)	50 (4.25%)	1177	94
Hong Kong	2016	189 (15.53%)	555 (45.60%)	307 (25.23%)	30 (2.47%)	1217	136
Indonesia	2006	59 (3.73%)	772 (48.83%)	648 (40.99%)	66 (4.17%)	1581	36
Indonesia	2011	63 (4.12%)	747 (48.82%)	576 (37.65%)	67 (4.38%)	1530	77
Indonesia	2016	46 (2.97%)	642 (41.42%)	667 (43.03%)	57 (3.68%)	1550	138
Japan	2007	73 (6.84%)	611 (57.26%)	350 (32.80%)	5 (0.47%)	1067	28
Japan	2010	153 (8.14%)	1059 (56.33%)	635 (33.78%)	11 (0.59%)	1880	22
Japan	2016	81 (7.49%)	555 (51.34%)	371 (34.32%)	12 (1.11%)	1081	62
Malaysia	2007	44 (3.62%)	429 (35.25%)	558 (45.85%)	126 (10.35%)	1217	60
Malaysia	2011	35 (2.88%)	349 (28.75%)	628 (51.73%)	181 (14.91%)	1214	21
Malaysia	2014	38 (3.15%)	410 (33.97%)	582 (48.22%)	141 (11.68%)	1207	36
Mongolia	2006	115 (9.50%)	775 (64.00%)	271 (22.38%)	34 (2.81%)	1211	16
Mongolia	2010	263 (21.74%)	759 (62.73%)	154 (12.73%)	16 (1.32%)	1210	18
Mongolia	2014	215 (17.51%)	721 (58.71%)	257 (20.93%)	20 (1.63%)	1228	15
Myanmar	2015	170 (10.49%)	637 (39.32%)	355 (21.91%)	199 (12.28%)	1620	259
Philippines	2005	209 (17.42%)	571 (47.58%)	328 (27.33%)	65 (5.42%)	1200	27
Philippines	2010	125 (10.42%)	556 (46.33%)	401 (33.42%)	103 (8.58%)	1200	15
Philippines	2014	98 (8.17%)	602 (50.17%)	338 (28.17%)	161 (13.42%)	1200	1
Singapore	2006	15 (1.48%)	292 (28.85%)	586 (57.91%)	86 (8.50%)	1012	33
Singapore	2010	64 (6.40%)	290 (29.00%)	575 (57.50%)	49 (4.90%)	1000	22
Singapore	2014	19 (1.83%)	314 (30.22%)	581 (55.92%)	78 (7.51%)	1039	47
South Korea	2011	143 (11.85%)	661 (54.76%)	350 (29.00%)	9 (0.75%)	1207	44
South Korea	2015	116 (9.67%)	689 (57.42%)	364 (30.33%)	12 (1.00%)	1200	19

Table C.6: Government Responsiveness Evaluations Descriptive Statistics (2) *(continued)*

Country	Year	Not Responsive	Not Very Responsive	Largely Responsive	Very Responsive	Obs.	Missing
Taiwan	2006	168 (10.59%)	771 (48.58%)	531 (33.46%)	36 (2.27%)	1587	81
Taiwan	2010	158 (9.92%)	773 (48.56%)	574 (36.06%)	39 (2.45%)	1592	48
Taiwan	2014	236 (14.24%)	896 (54.07%)	449 (27.10%)	24 (1.45%)	1657	52
Thailand	2006	53 (3.43%)	582 (37.65%)	586 (37.90%)	145 (9.38%)	1546	180
Thailand	2010	127 (8.40%)	736 (48.68%)	511 (33.80%)	77 (5.09%)	1512	61
Thailand	2014	59 (4.92%)	482 (40.20%)	445 (37.11%)	104 (8.67%)	1199	109
Vietnam	2006	5 (0.42%)	161 (13.42%)	692 (57.67%)	264 (22.00%)	1200	78
Vietnam	2010	12 (1.01%)	144 (12.09%)	662 (55.58%)	271 (22.75%)	1191	102

Note:

"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "How well do you think the government responds to what people want?".

Table C.7: Government Corruption Control Efforts Evaluations Descriptive Statistics (1)

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	2.567	0.790	3	1	4	1000	69
Cambodia	2012	2.698	0.781	3	1	4	1200	17
Cambodia	2015	2.485	0.783	3	1	4	1200	31
China	2007	2.996	0.698	3	1	4	5098	1106
China	2015	3.148	0.607	3	1	4	4068	555
Hong Kong	2007	3.346	0.568	3	1	4	849	55
Hong Kong	2012	3.205	0.592	3	1	4	1177	120
Hong Kong	2016	3.104	0.751	3	1	4	1217	140
Indonesia	2006	2.675	0.755	3	1	4	1581	93
Indonesia	2011	2.554	0.743	3	1	4	1530	151
Indonesia	2016	2.804	0.629	3	1	4	1550	173
Japan	2007	2.240	0.732	2	1	4	1067	63
Japan	2010	2.543	0.735	3	1	4	1880	9
Japan	2016	2.483	0.753	3	1	4	1081	71
Malaysia	2007	2.820	0.843	3	1	4	1217	45
Malaysia	2011	3.060	0.827	3	1	4	1214	37
Malaysia	2014	3.038	0.797	3	1	4	1207	35
Mongolia	2006	2.524	0.813	3	1	4	1211	22
Mongolia	2010	2.225	0.780	2	1	4	1210	37
Mongolia	2014	2.586	0.809	3	1	4	1228	36
Myanmar	2015	2.552	0.872	3	1	4	1620	295
Philippines	2005	2.157	0.915	2	1	4	1200	76
Philippines	2010	2.384	0.914	2	1	4	1200	18
Philippines	2014	2.779	0.845	3	1	4	1200	14
Singapore	2006	3.176	0.775	3	1	4	1012	114
Singapore	2010	3.426	0.609	3	1	4	1000	93
Singapore	2014	3.341	0.681	3	1	4	1039	85
South Korea	2011	2.456	0.717	3	1	4	1207	22
South Korea	2015	2.499	0.682	3	1	4	1200	10
Taiwan	2006	2.661	0.763	3	1	4	1587	99
Taiwan	2010	2.753	0.780	3	1	4	1592	68
Taiwan	2014	2.604	0.777	3	1	4	1657	58
Thailand	2006	2.826	0.843	3	1	4	1546	221
Thailand	2010	2.339	0.923	2	1	4	1512	230
Thailand	2014	3.089	0.806	3	1	4	1199	125
Vietnam	2006	3.288	0.733	3	1	4	1200	94
Vietnam	2010	3.325	0.712	3	1	4	1191	103

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "In your opinion, is the government working to crack down on corruption and root out bribery?".

Table C.8: Government Corruption Control Efforts Evaluations
Descriptive Statistics (2)

Country	Year	Doing nothing	It is not doing much	It is doing something	It is doing its best	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	99 (9.90%)	282 (28.20%)	473 (47.30%)	77 (7.70%)	1000	69
Cambodia	2012	84 (7.00%)	341 (28.42%)	606 (50.50%)	152 (12.67%)	1200	17
Cambodia	2015	131 (10.92%)	421 (35.08%)	536 (44.67%)	81 (6.75%)	1200	31
China	2007	123 (2.41%)	612 (12.00%)	2415 (47.37%)	842 (16.52%)	5098	1106
China	2015	51 (1.25%)	272 (6.69%)	2297 (56.47%)	893 (21.95%)	4068	555
Hong Kong	2007	4 (0.47%)	26 (3.06%)	455 (53.59%)	309 (36.40%)	849	55
Hong Kong	2012	8 (0.68%)	75 (6.37%)	666 (56.58%)	308 (26.17%)	1177	120
Hong Kong	2016	33 (2.71%)	154 (12.65%)	558 (45.85%)	332 (27.28%)	1217	140
Indonesia	2006	42 (2.66%)	618 (39.09%)	610 (38.58%)	218 (13.79%)	1581	93
Indonesia	2011	92 (6.01%)	549 (35.88%)	620 (40.52%)	118 (7.71%)	1530	151
Indonesia	2016	23 (1.48%)	365 (23.55%)	848 (54.71%)	141 (9.10%)	1550	173
Japan	2007	140 (13.12%)	520 (48.73%)	307 (28.77%)	37 (3.47%)	1067	63
Japan	2010	125 (6.65%)	753 (40.05%)	845 (44.95%)	148 (7.87%)	1880	9
Japan	2016	100 (9.25%)	382 (35.34%)	468 (43.29%)	60 (5.55%)	1081	71
Malaysia	2007	73 (6.00%)	322 (26.46%)	520 (42.73%)	257 (21.12%)	1217	45
Malaysia	2011	56 (4.61%)	201 (16.56%)	536 (44.15%)	384 (31.63%)	1214	37
Malaysia	2014	48 (3.98%)	207 (17.15%)	570 (47.22%)	347 (28.75%)	1207	35
Mongolia	2006	129 (10.65%)	423 (34.93%)	522 (43.10%)	115 (9.50%)	1211	22
Mongolia	2010	206 (17.02%)	545 (45.04%)	374 (30.91%)	48 (3.97%)	1210	37
Mongolia	2014	92 (7.49%)	462 (37.62%)	485 (39.50%)	153 (12.46%)	1228	36
Myanmar	2015	213 (13.15%)	293 (18.09%)	693 (42.78%)	126 (7.78%)	1620	295
Philippines	2005	315 (26.25%)	399 (33.25%)	329 (27.42%)	81 (6.75%)	1200	76
Philippines	2010	241 (20.08%)	358 (29.83%)	471 (39.25%)	112 (9.33%)	1200	18
Philippines	2014	111 (9.25%)	250 (20.83%)	615 (51.25%)	210 (17.50%)	1200	14
Singapore	2006	17 (1.68%)	153 (15.12%)	383 (37.85%)	345 (34.09%)	1012	114
Singapore	2010	6 (0.60%)	39 (3.90%)	425 (42.50%)	437 (43.70%)	1000	93
Singapore	2014	12 (1.15%)	78 (7.51%)	437 (42.06%)	427 (41.10%)	1039	85
South Korea	2011	105 (8.70%)	487 (40.35%)	541 (44.82%)	52 (4.31%)	1207	22
South Korea	2015	78 (6.50%)	490 (40.83%)	572 (47.67%)	50 (4.17%)	1200	10

Table C.8: Government Corruption Control Efforts Evaluations
Descriptive Statistics (2) *(continued)*

Country	Year	Doing nothing	It is not doing much	It is doing something	It is doing its best	Obs.	Missing
Taiwan	2006	141 (8.88%)	347 (21.87%)	875 (55.14%)	125 (7.88%)	1587	99
Taiwan	2010	134 (8.42%)	296 (18.59%)	906 (56.91%)	188 (11.81%)	1592	68
Taiwan	2014	177 (10.68%)	394 (23.78%)	914 (55.16%)	114 (6.88%)	1657	58
Thailand	2006	92 (5.95%)	330 (21.35%)	620 (40.10%)	283 (18.31%)	1546	221
Thailand	2010	278 (18.39%)	415 (27.45%)	465 (30.75%)	124 (8.20%)	1512	230
Thailand	2014	42 (3.50%)	179 (14.93%)	494 (41.20%)	359 (29.94%)	1199	125
Vietnam	2006	10 (0.83%)	153 (12.75%)	451 (37.58%)	492 (41.00%)	1200	94
Vietnam	2010	9 (0.76%)	129 (10.83%)	449 (37.70%)	501 (42.07%)	1191	103

Note:
"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "In your opinion, is the government working to crack down on corruption and root out bribery?".

Table C.9: Security Perceptions Descriptive Statistics (1)

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	2.074	0.644	2	0	3	1000	0
Cambodia	2012	2.064	0.701	2	0	3	1200	2
Cambodia	2015	1.912	0.663	2	0	3	1200	2
China	2007	1.982	0.543	2	0	3	5098	55
China	2015	1.992	0.588	2	0	3	4068	60
Hong Kong	2007	2.211	0.471	2	0	3	849	10
Hong Kong	2012	2.361	0.526	2	0	3	1177	10
Hong Kong	2016	2.065	0.532	2	0	3	1217	12
Indonesia	2006	2.146	0.518	2	0	3	1581	3
Indonesia	2011	2.124	0.504	2	0	3	1530	3
Indonesia	2016	2.097	0.508	2	0	3	1550	1
Japan	2007	2.051	0.479	2	0	3	1067	15
Japan	2010	2.036	0.611	2	0	3	1880	2
Japan	2016	2.115	0.610	2	0	3	1081	13
Malaysia	2007	2.031	0.659	2	0	3	1217	6
Malaysia	2011	2.199	0.653	2	0	3	1214	6
Malaysia	2014	2.106	0.605	2	0	3	1207	2
Mongolia	2006	1.680	0.594	2	0	3	1211	12
Mongolia	2010	1.555	0.678	2	0	3	1210	8
Mongolia	2014	1.741	0.648	2	0	3	1228	6
Myanmar	2015	2.341	0.712	2	0	3	1620	5
Philippines	2005	2.037	0.677	2	0	3	1200	26
Philippines	2010	1.972	0.752	2	0	3	1200	14
Philippines	2014	2.076	0.647	2	0	3	1200	10
Singapore	2006	2.223	0.543	2	0	3	1012	4
Singapore	2010	2.307	0.511	2	0	3	1000	5
Singapore	2014	2.414	0.561	2	0	3	1039	12
South Korea	2011	1.729	0.638	2	0	3	1207	20
South Korea	2015	1.895	0.505	2	0	3	1200	7
Taiwan	2006	2.118	0.644	2	0	3	1587	13
Taiwan	2010	2.164	0.663	2	0	3	1592	14
Taiwan	2014	2.240	0.596	2	0	3	1657	5
Thailand	2006	2.089	0.654	2	0	3	1546	13
Thailand	2010	1.982	0.694	2	0	3	1512	18
Thailand	2014	2.016	0.619	2	0	3	1199	31
Vietnam	2006	2.249	0.580	2	0	3	1200	3
Vietnam	2010	2.216	0.595	2	0	3	1191	31

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "Generally speaking, how safe is living in this city/town/village?".

Table C.10: Security Perceptions Descriptive Statistics (2)

Country	Year	Very unsafe	Unsafe	Safe	Very safe	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	12 (1.20%)	137 (13.70%)	616 (61.60%)	235 (23.50%)	1000	0
Cambodia	2012	19 (1.58%)	201 (16.75%)	662 (55.17%)	316 (26.33%)	1200	2
Cambodia	2015	18 (1.50%)	267 (22.25%)	716 (59.67%)	197 (16.42%)	1200	2
China	2007	61 (1.20%)	607 (11.91%)	3736 (73.28%)	639 (12.53%)	5098	55
China	2015	82 (2.02%)	464 (11.41%)	2868 (70.50%)	594 (14.60%)	4068	60
Hong Kong	2007	2 (0.24%)	17 (2.00%)	622 (73.26%)	198 (23.32%)	849	10
Hong Kong	2012	1 (0.08%)	24 (2.04%)	695 (59.05%)	447 (37.98%)	1177	10
Hong Kong	2016	14 (1.15%)	92 (7.56%)	901 (74.03%)	198 (16.27%)	1217	12
Indonesia	2006	9 (0.57%)	86 (5.44%)	1148 (72.61%)	335 (21.19%)	1581	3
Indonesia	2011	9 (0.59%)	84 (5.49%)	1142 (74.64%)	292 (19.08%)	1530	3
Indonesia	2016	13 (0.84%)	93 (6.00%)	1174 (75.74%)	269 (17.35%)	1550	1
Japan	2007	5 (0.47%)	80 (7.50%)	823 (77.13%)	144 (13.50%)	1067	15
Japan	2010	12 (0.64%)	282 (15.00%)	1211 (64.41%)	373 (19.84%)	1880	2
Japan	2016	8 (0.74%)	120 (11.10%)	681 (63.00%)	259 (23.96%)	1081	13
Malaysia	2007	29 (2.38%)	157 (12.90%)	772 (63.43%)	253 (20.79%)	1217	6
Malaysia	2011	11 (0.91%)	128 (10.54%)	679 (55.93%)	390 (32.13%)	1214	6
Malaysia	2014	10 (0.83%)	133 (11.02%)	781 (64.71%)	281 (23.28%)	1207	2
Mongolia	2006	31 (2.56%)	372 (30.72%)	746 (61.60%)	50 (4.13%)	1211	12
Mongolia	2010	66 (5.45%)	465 (38.43%)	609 (50.33%)	62 (5.12%)	1210	8
Mongolia	2014	42 (3.42%)	329 (26.79%)	754 (61.40%)	97 (7.90%)	1228	6
Myanmar	2015	46 (2.84%)	90 (5.56%)	747 (46.11%)	732 (45.19%)	1620	5
Philippines	2005	27 (2.25%)	167 (13.92%)	715 (59.58%)	265 (22.08%)	1200	26
Philippines	2010	48 (4.00%)	208 (17.33%)	659 (54.92%)	271 (22.58%)	1200	14
Philippines	2014	26 (2.17%)	129 (10.75%)	763 (63.58%)	272 (22.67%)	1200	10
Singapore	2006	3 (0.30%)	52 (5.14%)	670 (66.21%)	283 (27.96%)	1012	4
Singapore	2010	2 (0.20%)	18 (1.80%)	648 (64.80%)	327 (32.70%)	1000	5
Singapore	2014	5 (0.48%)	22 (2.12%)	543 (52.26%)	457 (43.98%)	1039	12
South Korea	2011	36 (2.98%)	338 (28.00%)	725 (60.07%)	88 (7.29%)	1207	20
South Korea	2015	8 (0.67%)	197 (16.42%)	900 (75.00%)	88 (7.33%)	1200	7
Taiwan	2006	29 (1.83%)	158 (9.96%)	986 (62.13%)	401 (25.27%)	1587	13

Table C.10: Security Perceptions Descriptive Statistics (2) *(continued)*

Country	Year	Very unsafe	Unsafe	Safe	Very safe	Obs.	Missing
Taiwan	2010	25 (1.57%)	163 (10.24%)	918 (57.66%)	472 (29.65%)	1592	14
Taiwan	2014	14 (0.84%)	100 (6.04%)	1013 (61.13%)	525 (31.68%)	1657	5
Thailand	2006	31 (2.01%)	172 (11.13%)	959 (62.03%)	371 (24.00%)	1546	13
Thailand	2010	31 (2.05%)	280 (18.52%)	868 (57.41%)	315 (20.83%)	1512	18
Thailand	2014	20 (1.67%)	154 (12.84%)	781 (65.14%)	213 (17.76%)	1199	31
Vietnam	2006	4 (0.33%)	77 (6.42%)	733 (61.08%)	383 (31.92%)	1200	3
Vietnam	2010	9 (0.76%)	80 (6.72%)	722 (60.62%)	349 (29.30%)	1191	31

Note:

"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "Generally speaking, how safe is living in this city/town/village?".

Table C.11: Orientations to Political Authority Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	0.773	0.177	0.778	0	1	1000	242
Cambodia	2012	0.696	0.199	0.667	0	1	1200	50
Cambodia	2015	0.657	0.176	0.667	0	1	1200	38
China	2007	0.552	0.128	0.556	0	1	5098	1842
China	2015	0.545	0.186	0.556	0	1	4068	923
Hong Kong	2007	0.438	0.151	0.444	0	1	849	147
Hong Kong	2012	0.458	0.223	0.444	0	1	1177	199
Hong Kong	2016	0.384	0.184	0.333	0	1	1217	215
Indonesia	2006	0.527	0.138	0.556	0	1	1581	160
Indonesia	2011	0.534	0.144	0.556	0	1	1530	269
Indonesia	2016	0.542	0.129	0.556	0	1	1550	348
Japan	2007	0.355	0.187	0.333	0	1	1067	189
Japan	2010	0.313	0.197	0.333	0	1	1880	123
Japan	2016	0.293	0.194	0.333	0	1	1081	161
Malaysia	2007	0.564	0.184	0.556	0	1	1217	92
Malaysia	2011	0.566	0.190	0.556	0	1	1214	64
Malaysia	2014	0.566	0.213	0.556	0	1	1207	52
Mongolia	2006	0.731	0.191	0.778	0	1	1211	78
Mongolia	2010	0.645	0.209	0.667	0	1	1210	55
Mongolia	2014	0.629	0.208	0.667	0	1	1228	60
Myanmar	2015	0.644	0.237	0.667	0	1	1620	242
Philippines	2005	0.555	0.221	0.556	0	1	1200	55
Philippines	2010	0.501	0.234	0.556	0	1	1200	25
Philippines	2014	0.535	0.215	0.556	0	1	1200	20
Singapore	2006	0.539	0.182	0.556	0	1	1012	62
Singapore	2010	0.538	0.182	0.556	0	1	1000	39
Singapore	2014	0.535	0.215	0.556	0	1	1039	91
South Korea	2011	0.472	0.186	0.444	0	1	1207	73
South Korea	2015	0.461	0.194	0.444	0	1	1200	36
Taiwan	2006	0.403	0.147	0.333	0	1	1587	155
Taiwan	2010	0.372	0.163	0.333	0	1	1592	122
Taiwan	2014	0.352	0.158	0.333	0	1	1657	118
Thailand	2006	0.555	0.187	0.556	0	1	1546	284
Thailand	2010	0.577	0.208	0.556	0	1	1512	198
Thailand	2014	0.543	0.226	0.556	0	1	1199	166
Vietnam	2006	0.681	0.177	0.667	0	1	1200	263
Vietnam	2010	0.657	0.195	0.667	0	1	1191	404

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.12: Orientations to Social Authority Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	0.527	0.339	0.500	0	1	1000	30
Cambodia	2012	0.728	0.261	0.833	0	1	1200	3
Cambodia	2015	0.642	0.261	0.667	0	1	1200	3
China	2007	0.545	0.158	0.500	0	1	5098	848
China	2015	0.481	0.180	0.500	0	1	4068	537
Hong Kong	2007	0.423	0.159	0.333	0	1	849	70
Hong Kong	2012	0.469	0.201	0.500	0	1	1177	156
Hong Kong	2016	0.421	0.183	0.333	0	1	1217	89
Indonesia	2006	0.421	0.217	0.333	0	1	1581	70
Indonesia	2011	0.605	0.192	0.667	0	1	1530	73
Indonesia	2016	0.616	0.199	0.667	0	1	1550	96
Japan	2007	0.503	0.216	0.500	0	1	1067	84
Japan	2010	0.433	0.190	0.500	0	1	1880	161
Japan	2016	0.344	0.210	0.333	0	1	1081	228
Malaysia	2007	0.501	0.230	0.500	0	1	1217	64
Malaysia	2011	0.551	0.245	0.500	0	1	1214	29
Malaysia	2014	0.588	0.267	0.667	0	1	1207	24
Mongolia	2006	0.444	0.284	0.500	0	1	1211	148
Mongolia	2010	0.501	0.269	0.500	0	1	1210	65
Mongolia	2014	0.493	0.266	0.500	0	1	1228	60
Myanmar	2015	0.681	0.304	0.667	0	1	1620	47
Philippines	2005	0.497	0.274	0.500	0	1	1200	37
Philippines	2010	0.503	0.268	0.500	0	1	1200	16
Philippines	2014	0.576	0.260	0.500	0	1	1200	23
Singapore	2006	0.476	0.220	0.500	0	1	1012	19
Singapore	2010	0.471	0.229	0.500	0	1	1000	33
Singapore	2014	0.466	0.244	0.500	0	1	1039	54
South Korea	2011	0.482	0.216	0.500	0	1	1207	46
South Korea	2015	0.444	0.201	0.500	0	1	1200	26
Taiwan	2006	0.432	0.172	0.333	0	1	1587	83
Taiwan	2010	0.440	0.190	0.500	0	1	1592	82
Taiwan	2014	0.432	0.184	0.333	0	1	1657	90
Thailand	2006	0.512	0.235	0.500	0	1	1546	139
Thailand	2010	0.469	0.267	0.500	0	1	1512	183
Thailand	2014	0.438	0.249	0.500	0	1	1199	118
Vietnam	2006	0.585	0.249	0.500	0	1	1200	51
Vietnam	2010	0.537	0.260	0.500	0	1	1191	194

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.13: Generalized Social Trust Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Careful in dealing with people	Most people can be trusted	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	924 (92.40%)	74 (7.40%)	1000	2
Cambodia	2012	1060 (88.33%)	139 (11.58%)	1200	1
Cambodia	2015	1029 (85.75%)	169 (14.08%)	1200	2
China	2007	1797 (35.25%)	2861 (56.12%)	5098	440
China	2015	2081 (51.16%)	1684 (41.40%)	4068	303
Hong Kong	2007	546 (64.31%)	261 (30.74%)	849	42
Hong Kong	2012	667 (56.67%)	427 (36.28%)	1177	83
Hong Kong	2016	509 (41.82%)	622 (51.11%)	1217	86
Indonesia	2006	1442 (91.21%)	129 (8.16%)	1581	10
Indonesia	2011	967 (63.20%)	499 (32.61%)	1530	64
Indonesia	2016	1211 (78.13%)	306 (19.74%)	1550	33
Japan	2007	720 (67.48%)	329 (30.83%)	1067	18
Japan	2010	1128 (60.00%)	728 (38.72%)	1880	24
Japan	2016	711 (65.77%)	330 (30.53%)	1081	40
Malaysia	2007	1124 (92.36%)	58 (4.77%)	1217	35
Malaysia	2011	1092 (89.95%)	109 (8.98%)	1214	13
Malaysia	2014	1100 (91.14%)	99 (8.20%)	1207	8
Mongolia	2006	1068 (88.19%)	127 (10.49%)	1211	16
Mongolia	2010	1031 (85.21%)	163 (13.47%)	1210	16
Mongolia	2014	937 (76.30%)	262 (21.34%)	1228	29
Myanmar	2015	1287 (79.44%)	316 (19.51%)	1620	17
Philippines	2005	1057 (88.08%)	92 (7.67%)	1200	51
Philippines	2010	1105 (92.08%)	89 (7.42%)	1200	6
Philippines	2014	1096 (91.33%)	99 (8.25%)	1200	5
Singapore	2006	692 (68.38%)	302 (29.84%)	1012	18
Singapore	2010	674 (67.40%)	294 (29.40%)	1000	32
Singapore	2014	756 (72.76%)	232 (22.33%)	1039	51
South Korea	2011	702 (58.16%)	479 (39.69%)	1207	26
South Korea	2015	754 (62.83%)	417 (34.75%)	1200	29
Taiwan	2006	995 (62.70%)	522 (32.89%)	1587	70
Taiwan	2010	977 (61.37%)	597 (37.50%)	1592	18
Taiwan	2014	894 (53.95%)	734 (44.30%)	1657	29
Thailand	2006	814 (52.65%)	698 (45.15%)	1546	34
Thailand	2010	1054 (69.71%)	393 (25.99%)	1512	65
Thailand	2014	712 (59.38%)	385 (32.11%)	1199	102
Vietnam	2006	477 (39.75%)	687 (57.25%)	1200	36
Vietnam	2010	515 (43.24%)	531 (44.58%)	1191	145

Note:

"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations. Question wording: "General speaking, would you say that “Most people can be trusted” or “that you must be very careful in dealing with people”?".

Table C.14: Age Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	38.658	13.507	38	18	77	1000	0
Cambodia	2012	38.723	14.320	37	18	80	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	40.683	14.176	39	18	84	1200	0
China	2007	47.086	15.210	45	18	95	5098	56
China	2015	49.259	16.304	50	18	95	4068	25
Hong Kong	2007	47.438	16.415	46	18	90	849	12
Hong Kong	2012	51.722	18.207	52	18	96	1177	0
Hong Kong	2016	48.265	17.349	49	18	91	1217	0
Indonesia	2006	39.655	12.986	38	18	85	1581	0
Indonesia	2011	42.128	13.914	41	18	93	1530	0
Indonesia	2016	44.628	13.671	44	18	91	1550	13
Japan	2007	54.559	16.013	57	20	94	1067	0
Japan	2010	55.726	16.982	58	20	89	1880	0
Japan	2016	56.432	17.038	59	20	96	1081	0
Malaysia	2007	38.837	14.818	37	18	89	1217	0
Malaysia	2011	41.389	15.240	41	18	94	1214	0
Malaysia	2014	41.630	15.925	41	18	86	1207	0
Mongolia	2006	39.555	14.064	38	18	82	1211	2
Mongolia	2010	40.616	14.362	39	18	93	1210	0
Mongolia	2014	40.768	14.781	39	18	93	1228	0
Myanmar	2015	41.721	12.085	42	18	64	1620	2
Philippines	2005	42.629	15.780	40	18	95	1200	1
Philippines	2010	40.852	15.429	39	18	89	1200	0
Philippines	2014	43.057	15.343	41	19	108	1200	0
Singapore	2006	45.368	13.994	45	21	80	1012	0
Singapore	2010	41.483	14.530	39	21	90	1000	0
Singapore	2014	40.838	13.842	40	21	86	1039	0
South Korea	2011	45.342	14.553	45	19	84	1207	0
South Korea	2015	45.725	14.562	47	19	80	1200	0
Taiwan	2006	45.274	16.368	44	21	94	1587	0
Taiwan	2010	46.066	15.852	46	21	91	1592	0
Taiwan	2014	47.853	16.036	48	21	90	1657	0
Thailand	2006	43.008	15.303	42	18	89	1546	5
Thailand	2010	46.924	14.722	46	18	87	1512	15
Thailand	2014	45.570	12.970	46	20	104	1199	2
Vietnam	2006	42.048	15.954	40	18	93	1200	0
Vietnam	2010	43.711	15.370	43	18	89	1191	0

Note:
"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.15: Sex Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Male	Female	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	500 (50.00%)	500 (50.00%)	1000	0
Cambodia	2012	600 (50.00%)	600 (50.00%)	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	600 (50.00%)	600 (50.00%)	1200	0
China	2007	2598 (50.96%)	2477 (48.59%)	5098	23
China	2015	1988 (48.87%)	2080 (51.13%)	4068	0
Hong Kong	2007	388 (45.70%)	461 (54.30%)	849	0
Hong Kong	2012	541 (45.96%)	636 (54.04%)	1177	0
Hong Kong	2016	526 (43.22%)	691 (56.78%)	1217	0
Indonesia	2006	794 (50.22%)	787 (49.78%)	1581	0
Indonesia	2011	766 (50.07%)	764 (49.93%)	1530	0
Indonesia	2016	775 (50.00%)	775 (50.00%)	1550	0
Japan	2007	505 (47.33%)	562 (52.67%)	1067	0
Japan	2010	890 (47.34%)	990 (52.66%)	1880	0
Japan	2016	506 (46.81%)	575 (53.19%)	1081	0
Malaysia	2007	615 (50.53%)	602 (49.47%)	1217	0
Malaysia	2011	602 (49.59%)	612 (50.41%)	1214	0
Malaysia	2014	604 (50.04%)	603 (49.96%)	1207	0
Mongolia	2006	522 (43.10%)	685 (56.56%)	1211	4
Mongolia	2010	537 (44.38%)	673 (55.62%)	1210	0
Mongolia	2014	525 (42.75%)	703 (57.25%)	1228	0
Myanmar	2015	807 (49.81%)	811 (50.06%)	1620	2
Philippines	2005	600 (50.00%)	600 (50.00%)	1200	0
Philippines	2010	600 (50.00%)	600 (50.00%)	1200	0
Philippines	2014	600 (50.00%)	600 (50.00%)	1200	0
Singapore	2006	522 (51.58%)	490 (48.42%)	1012	0
Singapore	2010	500 (50.00%)	500 (50.00%)	1000	0
Singapore	2014	545 (52.45%)	494 (47.55%)	1039	0
South Korea	2011	605 (50.12%)	602 (49.88%)	1207	0
South Korea	2015	597 (49.75%)	603 (50.25%)	1200	0
Taiwan	2006	797 (50.22%)	790 (49.78%)	1587	0
Taiwan	2010	835 (52.45%)	757 (47.55%)	1592	0
Taiwan	2014	849 (51.24%)	808 (48.76%)	1657	0
Thailand	2006	746 (48.25%)	800 (51.75%)	1546	0
Thailand	2010	723 (47.82%)	774 (51.19%)	1512	15
Thailand	2014	559 (46.62%)	638 (53.21%)	1199	2
Vietnam	2006	629 (52.42%)	571 (47.58%)	1200	0
Vietnam	2010	652 (54.74%)	539 (45.26%)	1191	0

Note:

"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.16: Educational Attainment Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Tertiary Education	Obs.	Missing
Cambodia	2008	662 (66.20%)	311 (31.10%)	12 (1.20%)	1000	15
Cambodia	2012	776 (64.67%)	411 (34.25%)	13 (1.08%)	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	757 (63.08%)	416 (34.67%)	27 (2.25%)	1200	0
China	2007	2209 (43.33%)	2429 (47.65%)	175 (3.43%)	5098	285
China	2015	1740 (42.77%)	1915 (47.07%)	379 (9.32%)	4068	34
Hong Kong	2007	222 (26.15%)	508 (59.84%)	112 (13.19%)	849	7
Hong Kong	2012	353 (29.99%)	667 (56.67%)	150 (12.74%)	1177	7
Hong Kong	2016	310 (25.47%)	811 (66.64%)	96 (7.89%)	1217	0
Indonesia	2006	743 (47.00%)	713 (45.10%)	122 (7.72%)	1581	3
Indonesia	2011	739 (48.30%)	686 (44.84%)	105 (6.86%)	1530	0
Indonesia	2016	659 (42.52%)	761 (49.10%)	129 (8.32%)	1550	1
Japan	2007	204 (19.12%)	654 (61.29%)	194 (18.18%)	1067	15
Japan	2010	243 (12.93%)	1231 (65.48%)	398 (21.17%)	1880	8
Japan	2016	134 (12.40%)	660 (61.05%)	276 (25.53%)	1081	11
Malaysia	2007	307 (25.23%)	822 (67.54%)	88 (7.23%)	1217	0
Malaysia	2011	285 (23.48%)	754 (62.11%)	175 (14.42%)	1214	0
Malaysia	2014	247 (20.46%)	779 (64.54%)	179 (14.83%)	1207	2
Mongolia	2006	296 (24.44%)	580 (47.89%)	331 (27.33%)	1211	4
Mongolia	2010	286 (23.64%)	497 (41.07%)	427 (35.29%)	1210	0
Mongolia	2014	215 (17.51%)	497 (40.47%)	516 (42.02%)	1228	0
Myanmar	2015	712 (43.95%)	762 (47.04%)	145 (8.95%)	1620	1
Philippines	2005	349 (29.08%)	689 (57.42%)	162 (13.50%)	1200	0
Philippines	2010	266 (22.17%)	772 (64.33%)	162 (13.50%)	1200	0
Philippines	2014	307 (25.58%)	751 (62.58%)	142 (11.83%)	1200	0
Singapore	2006	230 (22.73%)	618 (61.07%)	164 (16.21%)	1012	0
Singapore	2010	205 (20.50%)	610 (61.00%)	185 (18.50%)	1000	0
Singapore	2014	103 (9.91%)	624 (60.06%)	312 (30.03%)	1039	0
South Korea	2011	119 (9.86%)	703 (58.24%)	385 (31.90%)	1207	0
South Korea	2015	60 (5.00%)	758 (63.17%)	382 (31.83%)	1200	0
Taiwan	2006	373 (23.50%)	947 (59.67%)	264 (16.64%)	1587	3
Taiwan	2010	269 (16.90%)	964 (60.55%)	356 (22.36%)	1592	3
Taiwan	2014	283 (17.08%)	880 (53.11%)	490 (29.57%)	1657	4
Thailand	2006	879 (56.86%)	529 (34.22%)	136 (8.80%)	1546	2
Thailand	2010	879 (58.13%)	474 (31.35%)	156 (10.32%)	1512	3
Thailand	2014	600 (50.04%)	439 (36.61%)	150 (12.51%)	1199	10
Vietnam	2006	300 (25.00%)	840 (70.00%)	60 (5.00%)	1200	0
Vietnam	2010	159 (13.35%)	893 (74.98%)	103 (8.65%)	1191	36

Note:

"N": Sample size. "Obs.": Number of observations. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.17: Subjective Socioeconomic Status Descriptive Statistics

Country	Year	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	N	Missing
Cambodia	2008	2.572	0.846	3	1	5	1000	1
Cambodia	2012	2.674	0.900	3	1	5	1200	0
Cambodia	2015	2.632	0.860	3	1	5	1200	0
China	2007	3.169	0.943	3	1	5	5098	672
China	2015	2.833	1.007	3	1	5	4068	423
Hong Kong	2007	2.143	0.827	2	1	5	849	31
Hong Kong	2012	2.518	0.857	3	1	5	1177	48
Hong Kong	2016	2.118	0.662	2	1	5	1217	129
Indonesia	2006	2.896	1.003	3	1	5	1581	126
Indonesia	2011	3.257	0.964	3	1	5	1530	182
Indonesia	2016	3.246	0.850	3	1	5	1550	157
Japan	2007	2.828	0.720	3	1	5	1067	69
Japan	2010	2.918	0.723	3	1	5	1880	43
Japan	2016	2.908	0.793	3	1	5	1081	57
Malaysia	2007	3.129	1.126	3	1	5	1217	52
Malaysia	2011	3.282	0.866	3	1	5	1214	15
Malaysia	2014	3.325	0.936	3	1	5	1207	24
Mongolia	2006	2.765	0.825	3	1	5	1211	24
Mongolia	2010	2.536	0.814	3	1	5	1210	3
Mongolia	2014	2.927	0.773	3	1	5	1228	27
Myanmar	2015	2.977	0.861	3	1	5	1620	39
Philippines	2005	2.571	1.034	3	1	5	1200	6
Philippines	2010	2.599	1.134	3	1	5	1200	44
Philippines	2014	2.896	1.007	3	1	5	1200	27
Singapore	2006	3.221	0.862	3	1	5	1012	18
Singapore	2010	3.631	1.048	4	1	5	1000	280
Singapore	2014	3.434	0.801	3	1	5	1039	173
South Korea	2011	2.693	0.778	3	1	5	1207	0
South Korea	2015	3.107	0.750	3	1	5	1200	10
Taiwan	2006	3.126	0.827	3	1	5	1587	82
Taiwan	2010	3.041	0.899	3	1	5	1592	77
Taiwan	2014	3.049	0.838	3	1	5	1657	89
Thailand	2006	2.949	0.654	3	1	5	1546	89
Thailand	2010	3.380	0.844	3	1	5	1512	134
Thailand	2014	3.105	0.757	3	1	5	1199	130
Vietnam	2006	3.143	0.818	3	1	5	1200	36
Vietnam	2010	2.985	0.921	3	1	5	1191	342

Note:

"N": Sample size. "SD": Standard deviation. "Min": Minimum value. "Max": Maximum value. "Missing": Number of missing observations.

Table C.18: Hierarchical Regression Models for Confidence in Political Institutions

	Confidence in Political Institutions		
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a
Public Contestation Index		**−0.190*****	**−0.161*****
		(0.018)	(0.020)
Human Development Index			−0.095
			(0.052)
Average Economic Growth			**0.034***
			(0.017)
Government Effectiveness			0.088
			(0.046)
Sociotropic Economic Ev.	**0.086*****	**0.086*****	**0.086*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Economic Ev.	**0.014*****	**0.014*****	**0.014*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Government Responsiveness Ev.	**0.078*****	**0.078*****	**0.078*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Corruption Control Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.069*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Security Perception	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.051*****	**0.051*****	**0.051*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social OTA	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.025*****	**0.024*****	**0.025*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Sex (Female)	0.004	0.004	0.004
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Edu. Attainment (Secondary)	**−0.019*****	**−0.019*****	**−0.019*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Edu. Attainment (Tertiary)	**−0.039*****	**−0.038*****	**−0.038*****
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Subjective SES	0.002	0.002	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.555*****	**0.559*****	**0.558*****
	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.008)

	Confidence in Political Institutions		
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a
ICC	0.232	0.068	0.053
Marginal R^2	0.219	0.463	0.477
Conditional R^2	0.400	0.500	0.505
AIC	−18682.595	−18732.524	−18735.971
BIC	−18546.609	−18588.038	−18565.988
Log Likelihood	9357.298	9383.262	9387.986
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.010	0.003	0.002
Var: Residual	0.035	0.035	0.035

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Fixed effects models based on maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

Table C.19: MLM Regression Models for Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions		
	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b
Public Contestation Index		**−0.039***	−0.027
		(0.018)	(0.021)
Human Development Index			−0.069
			(0.054)
Average Economic Growth			0.006
			(0.017)
Government Effectiveness			0.093
			(0.049)
Sociotropic Economic Ev.	**0.063*****	**0.062*****	**0.062*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Economic Ev.	**0.018*****	**0.018*****	**0.018*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Government Responsiveness Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.069*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Corruption Control Ev.	**0.061*****	**0.061*****	**0.061*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Security Perception	**0.048*****	**0.048*****	**0.048*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.044*****	**0.044*****	**0.044*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Social OTA	**0.032*****	**0.032*****	**0.032*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	−0.003	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Sex (Female)	**0.012*****	**0.012*****	**0.012*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Edu. Attainment (Secondary)	**−0.032*****	**−0.032*****	**−0.032*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Edu. Attainment (Tertiary)	**−0.033*****	**−0.033*****	**−0.033*****
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Subjective SES	**0.006****	**0.006****	**0.006****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.600*****	**0.601*****	**0.599*****
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)

	Confidence in Implementative Institutions		
	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b
ICC	0.070	0.063	0.054
Marginal R^2	0.202	0.237	0.246
Conditional R^2	0.259	0.285	0.287
AIC	−15257.444	−15259.988	−15259.840
BIC	−15121.457	−15115.502	−15089.857
Log Likelihood	7644.722	7646.994	7649.920
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.003	0.003	0.002
Var: Residual	0.038	0.038	0.038

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Fixed effects models based on maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

Table C.20: Cross-level Interactions, Contextual and Individual Direct Effects for Confidence in Political Institutions

	Political Institutions		
	Model 4a	Model 5a	Model 6a
Soc. Eco. Ev. x Public Contestation	−0.007		
	(0.011)		
Government Resp. Ev. x Public Contestation		−0.005	
		(0.010)	
C.C.E. Ev. x Public Contestation			−0.014
			(0.011)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. (mean)	**0.146*****		
	(0.028)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. (mean)		**0.118*****	
		(0.028)	
C.C.E. Ev. (mean)			**0.094*****
			(0.019)
Public Contestation Index	**−0.091*****	**−0.101*****	**−0.108*****
	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.022)
Human Development Index	−0.063	−0.044	**−0.108***
	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.044)
Average Economic Growth	0.017	0.024	**0.031***
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.014)
Government Effectiveness	0.046	0.029	0.060
	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.041)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	**0.075*****	**0.086*****	**0.085*****
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Eco. Ev.	**0.014*****	**0.014*****	**0.014*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Inst. Resp. Ev.	**0.077*****	**0.072*****	**0.077*****
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.002)
C.C.E. Ev.	**0.068*****	**0.068*****	**0.063*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Security Perception	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.051*****	**0.051*****	**0.051*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social OTA	**0.029*****	**0.029*****	**0.029*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.025*****	**0.025*****	**0.025*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)

	Political Institutions		
	Model 4a	Model 5a	Model 6a
Age	0.000	−0.001	−0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Sex (Female)	0.003	0.004	0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Edu. Attainment (Secondary)	**−0.019*****	**−0.019*****	**−0.019*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Edu. Attainment (Tertiary)	**−0.038*****	**−0.039*****	**−0.038*****
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Subjective SES	0.002	0.002	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.556*****	**0.559*****	**0.556*****
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
ICC	0.052	0.052	0.048
Marginal R^2	0.496	0.488	0.486
Conditional R^2	0.523	0.514	0.510
AIC	−18691.055	−18666.417	−18695.103
BIC	−18487.076	−18462.437	−18491.123
Log Likelihood	9369.528	9357.208	9371.551
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.002	0.002	0.002
Var: Residual	0.035	0.035	0.035
Var: ABS Studies Soc. Eco. Ev.	0.001		
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) Soc. Eco. Ev.	−0.000		
Var: ABS Studies Inst. Resp. Ev.		0.001	
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) Inst. Resp. Ev.		−0.000	
Var: ABS Studies C.C.E. Ev.			0.001
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) C.C.E. Ev.			−0.000

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Mixed effects models based on restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.

Table C.21: Cross-level Interactions, Contextual and Individual Direct Effects for Confidence in Implementative Institutions

	Implementative Institutions		
	Model 4b	Model 5b	Model 6b
Soc. Eco. Ev. x Public Contestation	**−0.028***		
	(0.011)		
Government Resp. Ev. x Public Contestation		**−0.032*****	
		(0.009)	
C.C.E. Ev. x Public Contestation			**−0.023***
			(0.009)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev. (mean)	0.052		
	(0.036)		
Inst. Resp. Ev. (mean)		0.048	
		(0.032)	
C.C.E. Ev. (mean)			**0.071****
			(0.022)
Public Contestation Index	−0.022	−0.011	0.013
	(0.033)	(0.031)	(0.027)
Human Development Index	−0.038	−0.064	−0.093
	(0.062)	(0.057)	(0.053)
Average Economic Growth	0.008	−0.001	−0.003
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Government Effectiveness	0.075	0.078	0.086
	(0.056)	(0.053)	(0.049)
Sociotropic Eco. Ev.	**0.055*****	**0.062*****	**0.062*****
	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Egocentric Eco. Ev.	**0.018*****	**0.019*****	**0.018*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Inst. Resp. Ev.	**0.069*****	**0.062*****	**0.069*****
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)
C.C.E. Ev.	**0.060*****	**0.060*****	**0.056*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Security Perception	**0.048*****	**0.047*****	**0.047*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Political OTA	**0.043*****	**0.043*****	**0.044*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Social OTA	**0.031*****	**0.032*****	**0.032*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Social Trust (Trustful)	**0.029*****	**0.028*****	**0.029*****

	Implementative Institutions		
	Model 4b	Model 5b	Model 6b
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	−0.002	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Sex (Female)	**0.011*****	**0.012*****	**0.011*****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Edu. Attainment (Secondary)	**−0.032*****	**−0.032*****	**−0.032*****
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Edu. Attainment (Tertiary)	**−0.032*****	**−0.033*****	**−0.033*****
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Subjective SES	**0.006****	**0.006****	**0.006****
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Intercept	**0.599*****	**0.600*****	**0.598*****
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
ICC	0.070	0.065	0.058
Marginal R^2	0.249	0.246	0.254
Conditional R^2	0.302	0.295	0.297
AIC	−15202.918	−15200.742	−15170.468
BIC	−14998.938	−14996.762	−14966.488
Log Likelihood	7625.459	7624.371	7609.234
Observations	36285	36285	36285
ABS Studies	37	37	37
Var: ABS Studies (Intercept)	0.003	0.003	0.002
Var: Residual	0.038	0.038	0.038
Var: ABS Studies Soc. Eco. Ev.	0.001		
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) Soc. Eco. Ev.	0.000		
Var: ABS Studies Inst. Resp. Ev.		0.000	
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) Inst. Resp. Ev.		−0.001	
Var: ABS Studies C.C.E. Ev.			0.000
Cov: ABS Studies (Intercept) C.C.E. Ev.			−0.000

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$. Mixed effects models based on restricted maximum likelihood estimation.

Values are standardized regression coefficients (Gelman 2006). Standard errors in parentheses.