Supplementary Appendix for
Oppose Autocracy Without Support for Democracy:
A Study of Non-democratic Critics in China

Haemin Jee[*]   Tongtong Zhang[†]

Abstract

Opponents of authoritarian regimes are often assumed to desire democracy in place of the current regime. In this paper, we show that authoritarian dissidents hold divergent attitudes towards democracy and identify a key bloc within the regime opposition: "non-democratic critics" (NDCs) or those who are dissatisfied with the current regime but resist adopting democracy. We develop the concept of NDC, theorize why they exist and how they differ from supporters of democracy and the status quo, and test implications of this framework using interviews and an original survey across China. We find that nearly half of respondents who oppose the current Chinese regime are non-democratic critics who also do not support democracy. Compared to democracy and status quo supporters, NDCs have a distinct set of political and socio-economic demands and higher uncertainty about the performance of democracy in meeting these demands. We also find that NDCs are economically better off than democracy supporters, suggesting that unequal access to the benefits of state-led economic development may motivate differing attitudes toward democracy among regime opponents. These findings put forth an important explanation for why the world's largest authoritarian regime endures—those who oppose the regime have divergent and unclear visions of what political system should be adopted in its place.

Keywords: public opinion, regime opposition, autocracy, democracy, China

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[*]Social Sciences Department, United States Military Academy West Point. haemin.jee@westpoint.edu.
[†]Corresponding author. Department of Government, American University. ttzhang@american.edu.

A Online Supplementary Appendix

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A.1 Appendix: Additional details of interviews

A.1.1 Interview questionnaire

Each interviewee was asked the following six open-ended questions:

1. What do you think about the status quo Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime?

2. What do you think about China adopting multi-party democracy—a political system that conducts regular, competitive elections between different political parties?

3. What countries came to your mind just now when you heard the term "multi-party democracy"?

4. Assuming that you can freely choose to live in any country, what are the five most important qualities and deliverables that you would demand from the government of that country?

5. On the five qualities you just said, to what extent do you think a multi-party democracy—defined as a political system that conducts regular, competitive elections—would be able to deliver these qualities? Why?

6. In your opinion, how could China's current political system be improved?

7. (Other questions on interviewee's socio-demographic information)

A.1.2 Demographics of interviewees

Table A1 shows that an average interviewee in our study is a young and highly educated woman. Similar to our survey sample, the majority of interviewees have a college degree and come from high or middle income regions in China.

Table A1: Demographics of interviewees (N=62)

Demographics	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	0.32	0.47
Age	26.7	7.2
Bachelor's degree	0.97	0.18
East China (high income region)	0.74	0.44
Central China (middle income region)	0.08	0.27
Full-time work experience	0.42	0.50
Work in public sector	0.26	0.44

A.1.3 Distribution of responses

Political attitudes   Among the 62 interviewees, 26 are supporters of only the CCP regime, 14 are supporters of only multi-party democracy (MPD), 6 are dual supporters of both CCP regime and MPD, and the remaining 16 are non-democratic critics who oppose both the CCP regime and MPD. In this way, 48% of interviewees report opposition to the CCP regime, and among these regime opponents (i.e. NDCs and democrats), 53% are NDCs.

Conceptualization of status quo autocracy   An important purpose of the interviews was to help us select context-appropriate terms to describe democracy and the current Chinese autocracy in the survey. When asked what they think about the status quo regime in China, over 80% of interviewees reported that "concentration /centralization of power (集权/中央集权)" is a primary feature of the current political system in each of the four types of respondents (NDC, democrat, and CCP supporter, and dual supporter). Therefore, we use the term "concentration of power (集权制)" to represent the status quo political system in China in the survey.

Conceptualization of multi-party democracy   Each interviewee was asked what countries came to their mind when they heard the term "multi-party democracy" (民主多党制). Below are the countries that were mentioned by over half of interviewees among NDCs, democrats, and status quo supporters, respectively:

- **NDCs**: US, Korea, India, France, Germany, Brazil, UK, Denmark
- **Democrats**: US, India, Japan, Brazil, UK, France, Italy, Sweden
- **Status quo supporters**: US, UK, Japan, India, France, Germany

In all three groups, interviewees mentioned countries that have different levels of economic development (e.g., in each group, over half of interviewees mentioned both India and the US) and also countries that have different sizes of social redistribution programs (e.g., in each group, over half of interviewees mentioned the US and also some welfare states in Europe such as France and Nordic countries). These results show that in all

three groups, people do not associate the term "multi-party democracy" only with positive outcomes (e.g., highly developed economy). Instead, all states mentioned by NDCs, democrats, and CCP supporters conduct regular, competitive elections. In this way, we believe that using the term "multi-party democracy" in the survey is more likely to prime respondents to think about democratic institutions (e.g., election) rather than certain outcomes.

Responses in the survey confirm that NDCs are more likely to associate the term "multi-party democracy" with institutions rather than outcomes. Chapman et al. (2023) finds that people who define democracy along economic outcomes have weak and inconsistent support for democracy compared to those that define democracy in terms of institutions. In this way, if NDCs define multi-party democracy in terms of outcomes and democrats define MPD in terms of institutions, this might explain why NDCs report higher uncertainty than democrats regarding the ability of democracy in the survey. Since we did not have a question in the survey that directly asked about respondents' definition of democracy, we assess the potential impact of this concern by analyzing in what area (institution or outcome) do NDCs think MPD outperforms the CCP regime.

71 of the 226 NDCs in the survey report that MPD outperforms the CCP regime at delivering their most desired regime quality or avoiding their most undesired quality. If NDCs conceptualize the term MPD as certain outcomes rather than institutions, we would expect these 71 respondents to report that MPD outperforms the CCP regime at delivering good outcomes, not institutions. However, that is not what we see. Among these 71 NDCs, 32% report that MPD does a better job at delivering positive outcomes such as economic growth and public goods, but the remaining 68% all report that MPD does better at providing their desired institutions such as protection of free speech and regular checks and balances on the ruling party. While these results does not cover all NDCs in the survey, they nevertheless provide strong suggestive evidence that NDCs think MPD's merit lies mainly in its institutions. In other words, these findings suggest that NDCs are more likely to associate the term MPD with institutions rather than outcomes.

A.2 Appendix: Additional details of survey design

A.2.1 Operationalization of democracy

There are multiple definitions and operationalizations of democracy, both in popular discourse and academic work. Some scholars focus on a narrow definition that highlights meaningful political competition and representation (Schumpeter 1942; Dahl 1971). These works then distinguish between democracy and autocracy through the presence or lack of competitive, free, and fair elections. Other scholars advocate for broader definitions of democracy and emphasize citizen participation and deliberation as well as effective governance. Based on these conceptualizations of democracy, there have also been various datasets that categorize countries into regime types as outlined in Table A2. The common denominator of all these various measures of democracy, however, is their inclusion of political competition through elections as a primary feature of democratic regimes.

Another potential concern regarding the "Support Democracy" instrument is that the two terms "multi-party" and "democracy" have been used by the CCP regime to describe itself. The CCP claims that China's political system is "democratic" in the sense that eight "democratic parties" exist in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and can provide policy consultation for the CCP, provided that the CCP has firm control over these parties and has the final say on all matters.[1] We assess the potential impact of this concern using two strategies. First, we ask participants in the pre-survey interviews to list what countries they think of when they hear the term "multi-party democratic system". No one mentioned China or CPPCC (See Appendix A.1.3). Second, in the survey we ask respondents to rate on the scale of 0 to 6 how much they desire "*effective checks and balances between the ruling political party and other political parties* (执政党权力受到其它政治团体的有效监督)." On average, respondents who agree with the "support democracy" statement give a higher rating than those who disagree with this statement by 35% (0.26 points). This difference is significant at 0.01 level, suggesting that the "support democracy" statement makes respondents think about meaningful inter-party competition rather than the CPPCC. Additionally, state-owned media in China also make clear to the public that CPPCC is different from the multi-party system in democracies.[2]

Dataset	Conceptualization	Measurement
Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2021)	Broad (electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, egalitarian)	Continuous (0-1)
Regimes of the World (Lührmann, Tannenberg and Lindberg 2018)	Narrow (electoral and liberal democracy)	Classification
Lexical Index (Skaaning, Gerring and Bartusevicius 2015)	Narrow (electoral or liberal democracy)	Categorization
Boix-Miller-Rosato (Boix 2003)	Narrow (electoral democracy)	Binary
Polity (Marshall and Gurr 2021)	Narrow (electoral and liberal democracy)	Continuous (-10 to 10)
Freedom House (Freedom in the World 2022)	Narrow (electoral and liberal democracy)	Categorical
Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2024)	Broad (electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberate, and effective democracy)	Continuous (1-10)

Table A2: Operationalizations of Democracy in the Literature

Another potential concern about the concept of NDCs is that while NDCs dislike the current regime and democracy, they would support the lesser of the "two evils" when opportunities for regime change emerge and ally with either regime supporters or democratic activists. While this is plausible, studies of political psychology have shown that when people become disillusioned with the ideology of a group, the first action they would take is to disengage from activities organized by that group (Bjørgo 2011; Kenney and Chernov Hwang 2021; Meirowitz and Tucker 2013). Importantly, NDCs' disagreement with democrats can split the anti-regime bloc and dampen prospects for regime transition.

Describing autocracy   We use the phrase "集权制" (concentration of power) to describe China's current autocratic system. To confirm that this is the appropriate term to use, we first read prominent academic journals published in China and found that "power concentration (集权)" is used by scholars in China to portray the current system (Chen 2001; Fang 2011; Yang 2014). We also consulted local surveyors in China and they suggest that "power concentration" is a safer term to use in domestic surveys compared to other Chinese terms such as "极权" (totalitarian). Other terms for autocracy including "极权" (totalitarian), "专制" (despotism) and "独裁" (dictatorship) were rejected by the local Chinese survey firm for being too sensitive.

Comparison with other instruments of political attitude   As with other public opinion studies, our survey faces the question of choosing abstract vs. concrete objects for assessment when operationalizing the concept of political support (Lu and Dickson 2020). In previous studies, support for the Chinese regime is often assessed by asking people's attitude toward a set of specific institutions such as the court and National People's Congress (NPC) (Chen 2004; Dickson 2016; Shi 2014; Tang 2016), while support for democracy is assessed through attitude toward a set of normative values such as freedom of speech and protest (Chen 2013; Gibson, Duch and Tedin 1992). Compared to these multi-item instruments, we recognize that the abstract term "system" in our instrument may potentially increase measurement uncertainty. Yet, we chose not to use multi-item instruments for two reasons. First, we use an indirect questioning method to guard against the impact of

preference falsification. Applying this method to each item in a multi-item design would dramatically increase the number of survey questions, which would cause substantial cognitive and attention burdens for respondents.

More importantly, the concept of non-democratic critics requires that we assess people's attitude of the current regime and democracy on the *same* level of political support—that is, people's support toward each regime's *overall* political system. This implies that the two survey instruments for assessing support for the current regime and democracy should have a similar level of specificity and a similar ease of comprehension for respondents. Thus, while asking respondents about their support for all major political institutions in China may also capture their attitude towards China's overall political system, it is not reasonable to ask about people's attitudes toward the corresponding institutions in democracy because it would be extremely difficult for ordinary citizens in China to imagine how these specific institutions operate in a democratic system.

Among previous measures of regime support, our instrument is closest to those used in the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), which ask about people's belief in the superiority of their current political system as a whole.[3] When comparing ABS with other commonly used instruments of regime support in China, Lu and Dickson (2020) find that ABS' instruments are best able to capture sentiment regarding China's overall political system. As they write, "an abstract object like 'our system' poses more cognitive challenge than a concrete object like 'the NPC,'[...]Nevertheless, a political regime is more than just specific institutions" (p. 691). To capture people's support of the overall political system, we follow ABS and ask respondents about their views on China's current system as a whole and their views on a democratic system as a whole.

A.2.2 Innocuous questions in the crosswise model section

In the crosswise model section of the survey, we asked four innocuous questions that also use the format of the crosswise model. Table A3 presents the two statements—both are non-political—in each innocuous question. These innocuous questions serve three purposes. First, Question 1 appears at the beginning as a practice question, aiming to familiarize respondents with the crosswise question format. Second, Questions 2, 3, and 4

Table A3: Statements in the innocuous crosswise questions

Question	Innocuous statements
1 (practice)	(1) Modern society needs specialized personnel more than generalists. (2) I do not have a driver's license now.
2	(1) I usually wear glasses for reading. (2) I will stop anyone who smokes in a public non-smoking space.
3 (attention filter)	(1) I am a male (2) I have full-time working experience.
4	(1) Luck is more important than effort for a person's success. (2) My current cell phone is a Samsung model.

are inserted in randomized order between the crosswise question on current autocracy and the crosswise question on democracy to reduce the possibility that responses to the first political question affect responses to the second political one. Statements in all innocuous question are constructed so that they do not prime respondents to evaluate the CCP regime or democracy in a particular direction. For example, we construct statements on social topics commonly debated in both autocracies and democracies (e.g., non-smoking).

Third, Question 3 also helps us filter out respondents who do not pay attention or fail to follow the instructions of the crosswise model. More specifically, the two statements in this question concern the respondent's gender and whether he/she has full-time working experience. At the end of the survey, we directly ask respondents about their gender and length of full-time work experience. By comparing their responses to these direct questions and responses to Question 3, we are able to see whether a respondent correctly understands the instructions of the crosswise model.

A.2.3 Desirable and undesirable qualities of a regime

Table A4 presents the 16 desirable qualities we show to survey participants. Table A5 presents the 16 undesirable qualities in the survey. Each group of 16 qualities covers the following five areas of a political regime:

1. Political Institutions: institutions for selection of political leaders, horizontal relationship between legislature, executive, and judiciary organizations, and vertical relationship between center and local governments.

2. Societal-political outcomes: outcomes regarding social stability and continuity of government policy.

3. Political leaders: outcomes regarding the capability and integrity of political leaders in domestic and foreign affairs.

4. Individual rights and freedom: institutions regarding the government's influence on individual rights and freedom.

5. Socio-economic outcomes: outcomes regarding economic growth and provision of public goods.

Table A4: Desirable Qualities of a Political Regime

Areas of a regime	Qualities
Political institutions	1. Effective checks and balance between the ruling party and other political groups
	2. Legislature has power to overrule executive decisions
	3. Merit-based selection of government leaders
	4. The ruling party is free to mobilize societal resources
	5. Highly centralized government
	6. Government must consult societal professionals on policy proposals
	7. Transparency in the government's decision-making process
Societal-political outcomes	8. Social stability
	9. Government policy has high continuity
Political leaders	10. National leaders stand up for national interests in foreign affairs
	11. Local officials execute orders from the center with high efficiency
Individual rights and freedom	12. Effective protection of private property rights
	13. Legal institutions protect the freedom of speech
	14. Effective protection of citizen physical safety from state repression
Socio-economic outcomes	15. Steady growth of national economy
	16. Good provision of public goods (e.g., education and health care)

We take two steps to select the 16 desirable qualities in Table A4 and the 16 undesirable qualities in Table A5. In the first step, we reviewed the existing literature on regime legitimacy, as well as seminal works on democracy and autocracy to identify representative features of each regime (Dahl 1971; Geddes 1999; Gehlbach, Sonin and Svolik

Table A5: Undesirable Qualities of a Political Regime

Areas of a regime	Qualities
Political institutions	1. Legislative gridlock
	2. Too frequent turnover of executives
	3. A low bar for political groups that can contest for ruling power legally
	4. Government has the power to manipulate judiciary decisions
Societal-political outcomes	5. Social instability
	6. Political conflicts are resolved violently
	7. Tyranny of the majority
	8. There exist political extremist groups
Political leaders	9. Corrupt bureaucrats
	10. Incompetent political instigators take office
Individual rights and freedom	11. Weak protection of private property
	12. No legal institution protects the freedom of speech
	13. Government can repress the mass without constraints
Socio-economic outcomes	14. Economic inequality
	15. Decline of the national economy
	16. Bad provision of public goods (e.g., education and health care)

2016; Haggard and Kaufman 2016; Linz 2000; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Manin 1987; Przeworski 2016; Simpser, Slater and Wittenberg 2018). From these theoretical works, we collected 31 desirable qualities and 32 undesirable qualities that cover the five areas stated above. In general, political scientists believe that democratic legitimacy stems from its institutions or procedures, which are conventionally considered to be more fair and liberal than autocratic regimes (Bohman 2000; Christiano 1996; Dahl 1956; Merkel 2004; Munck 2016; Schumpeter 1942). But scholars have also found that democracy is effective at providing desirable outcomes like a vibrant civil society (Berman 1997; Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland 2011; North and Weingast 1989). In the second step, we select from these 63 qualities a subset that are most relevant for contemporary Chinese citizens. Specifically, we ask 366 Chinese citizens with diverse socio-demographic backgrounds[4] to rank the importance of the 63 qualities we summarized from the literature. We include the top-rated 16 positive qualities (Table A4) and the top-rated 16 negative qualities

(Table A5) in the survey.

A.2.4 Checks of preference falsification

A potential concern with identifying NDCs is preference falsification. While the cross-wise model is designed to assure people that their political attitudes are obscured, respondents might assume that researchers could identify their political opinion through collecting demographic information. If there is preference falsification, then the proportion of CCP supporters identified in our survey should reflect the corresponding proportions in surveys that use direct questioning. However, that is not what we observe. In our crosswise model, 58% of respondents report supporting the CCP regime. A survey conducted around the same time finds that over 70% of respondents report supporting the CCP regime when asked directly.[5] The survey used a similar strategy of participant recruitment and was also fielded online. Other recent surveys using face-to-face interviews identify 80% of the Chinese public as CCP supporters, which is also much higher than the corresponding proportion (58%) in our survey.[6]

In addition, if respondents believe we could calculate their individual political attitude using their responses to the crosswise model along with responses to birth year and provincial location at the end of the survey, respondents might also lie when answering the demographic questions. To assess the impact of this concern, we compare the self-reported provinces in the survey with IP addresses that are automatically recorded by the survey website.[7] We find that only 9% of respondents' self-reported provinces do not match the provinces suggested by their IP address. If people report false locations because they fear exposing their opposition against the CCP regime, they would want to be coded as regime supporters rather than opponents. This would imply there would be a higher proportion of misreporting among the identified CCP supporters, compared to the identified CCP opponents. However, that is not what we observe. There is no statistically significant difference in the probability of location misreporting between CCP supporters and CCP opponents, or between CCP supporters and NDCs. We also see no significant difference in the duration of completing the survey between NDCs vs. CCP supporters or between NDCs vs. democrats, which suggests that NDC is not a group constructed

simply by respondent inattentiveness (see Table A11 below).

A.3 Appendix: Additional details of survey sample

A.3.1 Descriptive statistics of respondents

Table A6: Characteristics of Survey Participants

	Survey participants	Chinese adult population	Chinese Internet population
Female	42.3%	48.8%	47.3%
Urban	87.3%	58.5%	73.3%
By age group			
≤19	0.4%	1.1%	21.6%
20-29	19.3%	24.7%	26.8%
30-39	33.1%	24.6%	23.5%
40-49	36.9%	27.7%	15.6%
≥50	10.4%	21.9%	12.5%
By region			
Eastern China	70.6%	46.2%	53.3%
Central China	14.3%	26.6%	23.1%
Western China	14.1%	27.2%	23.6%
By education			
< high school	2.9%	68.6%	56.9%
High school	11.4%	17.6%	24.5%
College or above	85.7%	13.9%	18.6%

Notes: Data about Chinese adult population (18+) are from *Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2018* (https://bit.ly/3yEynH5). Data about Chinese Internet user population are from *The 43rd Statistical Report of Internet Development in China*, 2018 (https://bit.ly/46KtKrw). East provinces include: Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, Hainan, Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang. Central provinces include: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan. West provinces include: Neimenggu, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang. This categorization comes from http://bit.ly/2pS0ygQ.

A.3.2 Reweighing survey sample

We use an online sample for several reasons. To our knowledge, no existing survey with a nationally representative sample asks about people's attitude toward the overall systems of the CCP regime and multi-party democracy using the same format in the same questionnaire. Given the current regulatory and technical constraints in China, conducting a nationally representative survey with stratified sampling would inevitably require in-person interviews with respondents. That would be problematic for obtaining truthful answers to the political questions. Relatively speaking, anonymous online survey is more likely to elicit truthful responses. Moreover, the Internet has become an important site of political mobilization in China, with the middle class preferring digital forms of engagement over traditional avenues of participation (Lei 2013; Yang 2009). While our sample is Internet savvy and more educated on average than the general Chinese population, people with these attributes also tend to be more politically active (Welzel 2013), and so their attitudes towards the CCP regime and democracy merit particular attention.

That said, to achieve better representativeness across demographics, we also construct a new, reweighed sample of 400 respondents[8] by resampling from the original sample using population benchmarks and an inverse probability reweighing scheme. The joint distribution of gender, age cohorts, and province in the reweighed sample aims to match the urban population distribution in the 2015 *Chinese General Social Survey*.[9] Since nearly 90% of our online participants come from urban areas, we focus on the urban population characteristics in reweighing. We do not embed a reweighing scheme in statistical modeling because some estimation procedures in our analyses (e.g., confirmatory factor analysis) cannot easily accommodate sampling weights. Table A7 compares the original sample, reweighed sample, and the Chinese urban population. It shows that compared to the original sample, the reweighed sample is substantially closer to the urban population on multiple key socio-demographic characteristics such as age and geographic location.

Table A8 compares all results presented in the paper about NDCs (size, political demands, uncertainty level, and socio-demographic features) between the original sample and the reweighed sample. It shows that there is no significant difference in any of these

Table A7: Original sample vs. reweighed sample

	Original sample	Reweighed sample	Chinese urban population
Female	42.3%	45.8%	48.6%
By age group			
≤19	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%
20-29	19.3%	15.2%	17.6%
30-39	33.1%	24.0%	23.5%
≥40	47.3%	60.2%	58.0%
By region			
Eastern China	70.6%	67.2%	61.1%
Central China	14.3%	19.8%	21.6%
Western China	14.1%	12%	17.3%
By education			
< high school	2.9%	3.5%	51.1%
High school	11.4%	15.0%	23.9%
College or above	85.7%	81.5%	25.0%

Notes: Data about Chinese urban population (18+) are from *Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2018* (https://bit.ly/3yEynH5). The categorization of Eastern, Central, and Western provinces are the same as Table A6.

results between the two samples. This suggests that results from our original sample may be generalizable to the urban population of China.

Table A8: Survey Results in the original sample vs. Results in the reweighed sample

	Original sample	Reweighed sample	P-value
Proportion of NDCs	0.167	0.175	0.708
Uncertainty level of NDCs	0.434	0.386	0.478
NDCs' demands of a regime			
Desire for social stability	−0.118	−0.165	0.674
Desire for individual freedom	−0.035	−0.027	0.93
Desire for economic development	−0.091	−0.140	0.660
NDCs' personal characteristics			
Male	0.633	0.671	0.553
Aged over 30	0.695	0.743	0.431
Eastern China (most developed region)	0.774	0.671	0.106
Work experience over 10 years	0.544	0.629	0.211
CCP membership	0.181	0.143	0.436
Bachelor degree	0.872	0.800	0.180
Major in social science / humanities	0.358	0.276	0.230
Frequent consumption of domestic media	0.898	0.914	0.683
Frequent consumption of foreign media	0.416	0.457	0.548
Observations	1,354	400	–

Notes: Political demands are values on latent factors. All other entries are proportions.

A.3.3 Comparing interview sample and survey sample

Table A9 compares the interview and survey samples on socio-demographic character-istics that are collected in both samples. It shows that the two samples are statistically indistinguishable on most individual-level characteristics.

Table A9: Interview sample vs. survey sample

	Survey participants	Interview participants	p-value
Work in public sector	0.35	0.26	0.11
Male	0.58	0.32	<0.01
By region			
Eastern China	0.71	0.74	0.60
Central China	0.14	0.08	0.12
Western China	0.14	0.18	0.49
Observations	1,354	62	-

Notes: Public sector includes government bureaucracies and their affiliated insti-tutions (e.g., public schools and state-owned enterprises). The categorization of Eastern, Central, and Western provinces are the same as Table A6.

A.4 Appendix: Additional details of survey results

A.4.1 Factor analyses of demands

We first confirm that the observed rankings of the 32 qualities are organized in a non-random manner by conducting a principal component analysis (PCA). Figure 1 shows the scree plot. The left panel displays the eigenvalue of each principal component (PC). The right panel displays the percentage of variation each PC explains in the normalized data.[10] Figure 1 shows that the first 13 PCs have eigenvalues bigger than 1, which is the variance of each normalized observed variable. In particular, the first four PCs explain considerably larger variation of the observed data than the rest of PCs. The first four PCs explain 10%, 7%, 5%, and 5% of the variation, respectively.
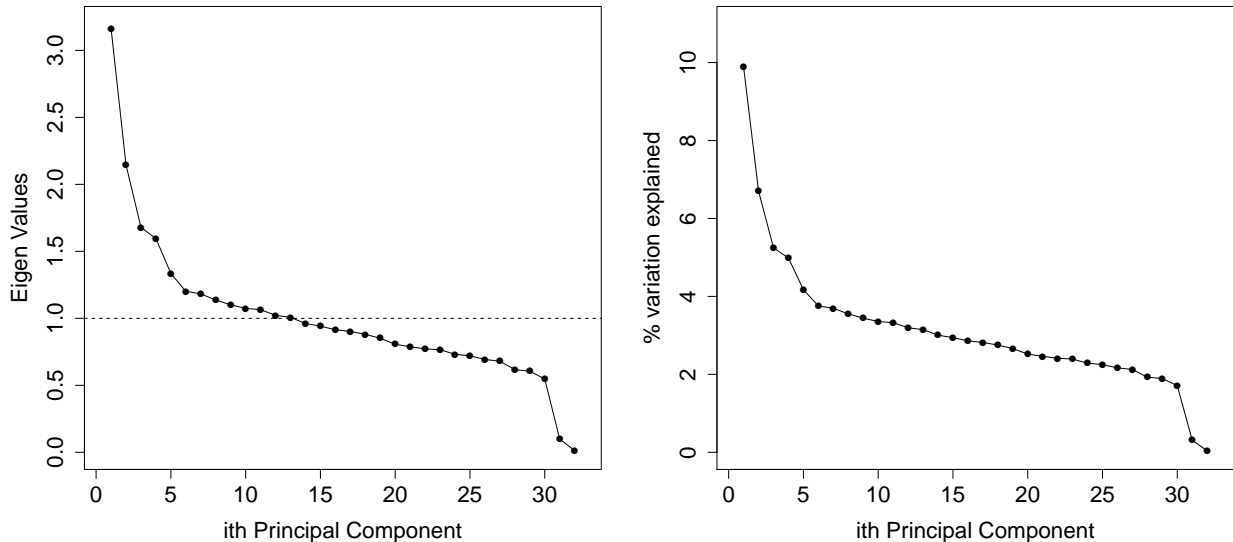

Figure 1: Scree Plot

We then use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to identify the latent factors of respondents' reported demands from a political regime. CFA is a type of factor analysis that evaluates the fit between observed data and a model specified by the researcher about how the observed variables map onto a construct of latent factors (Brown 2014). By construction, each latent factor drives only a subset of the observed variables. This feature makes latent factors in CFA easier to interpret compared to latent traits in other types of factor analysis such as PCA and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). An additional advan-

tage of CFA over PCA and EFA is that CFA produces a set of fitness statistics for each model, such as chi-square (χ^2) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). These metrics allow us to compare models using statistical tests. CFA has been used to study public opinion in China (Lu and Dickson 2020; Pan and Xu 2018).

With a large number of observed variables, the number of possible CFA models can easily become astronomical. The 32 qualities we asked in the survey come from 5 areas of a political regime (see Appendix A.2.3). To make our analysis tractable, we add two assumptions when building the CFA models: (1) each quality is driven by only one latent factor; (2) all qualities in the same area are driven by the same latent factor.[11] Under these assumptions, the maximum number of latent factors in a CFA model is 5 and the total number of possible models is reduced to 52. We estimate all 52 models and find that a model of three latent factors best characterizes respondents' reported demands.

Dimensionality   Since we have ordinal data, we use the Diagonally Weighted Least Squares (DWLS) estimator to estimate CFA models (Li 2016). We run a complete search of all 52 models and select the model that has the best fitness statistics. 24 of the 52 models are valid, which means these model converge and their estimated variance-covariance matrices of the latent factors are positive definite.[12] Table A10 presents the fitness statistics of the best valid model of each dimension (#dim), including measures of absolute fit (χ^2 and RMSEA) and measures of relative fit (CFI or Comparative fix index, and TLI or Tucker-Lewis Index). It shows that a three-dimensional model (Model A) best describes the configuration of people's demands of a political regime.

Substantive meaning of latent traits   The first dimension of Model A, which we refer to as *desire for inclusive political institutions*, includes qualities of three areas in Tables A4 and A5: political institutions, societal-political outcomes, and political leaders. The CFA estimates of this first latent factor, as well as their 95% confidence intervals, are shown in Figure 2. Each coefficient represents the standard deviation increase (or decrease if the sign is negative) in the ranking for the observed quality due to one standard-deviation increase in this first latent factor. Figure 2 shows that people who care more about social

Table A10: CFA Model Selection

	#dim	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	p-value
Model A	3	3509	0.590	0.559	0.070		
Model B	4	3618	0.575	0.539	0.072		
Model C	2	3684	0.566	0.535	0.072	175	0.000
Model D	1	4097	0.511	0.477	0.076	588	0.000

Notes: The chi-square difference test (last two columns) shows that Model A has significantly better fit than Models C and D. The best model of 4 dimensions (Model B) is not a nested model of Model A. So, the chi-square test is not applicable to test if they are distinguishable. We determine Model A is better than Model B because A has bigger CFI and TLI, as well as smaller RMSEA.

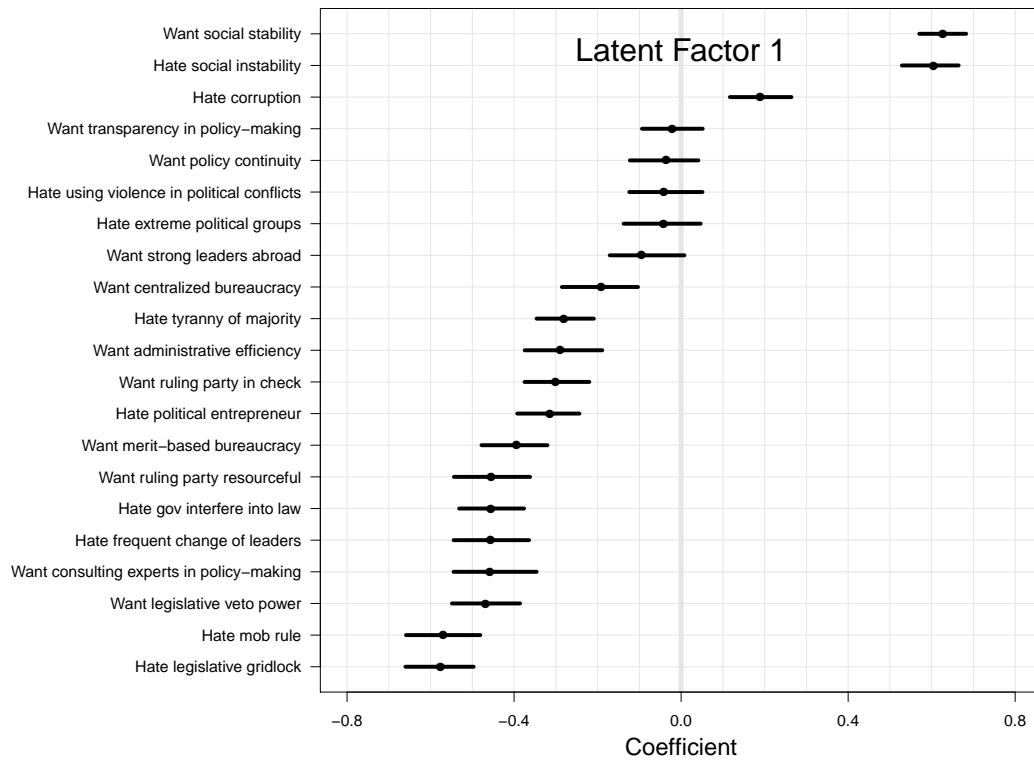stability tend to care less about having inclusive institutions.

Figure 2: CFA Coefficients: First Latent Factor

The second dimension of Model A, which we refer to as *desire for individual rights and freedom*, includes qualities in this area in Tables A4 and A5. The CFA estimates of this second latent factor, as well as their 95% confidence intervals, are shown in Figure 3. It shows that people who desire more protection of private property also tend to desire

more constraints of government repression (i.e. protection of individual's safety).
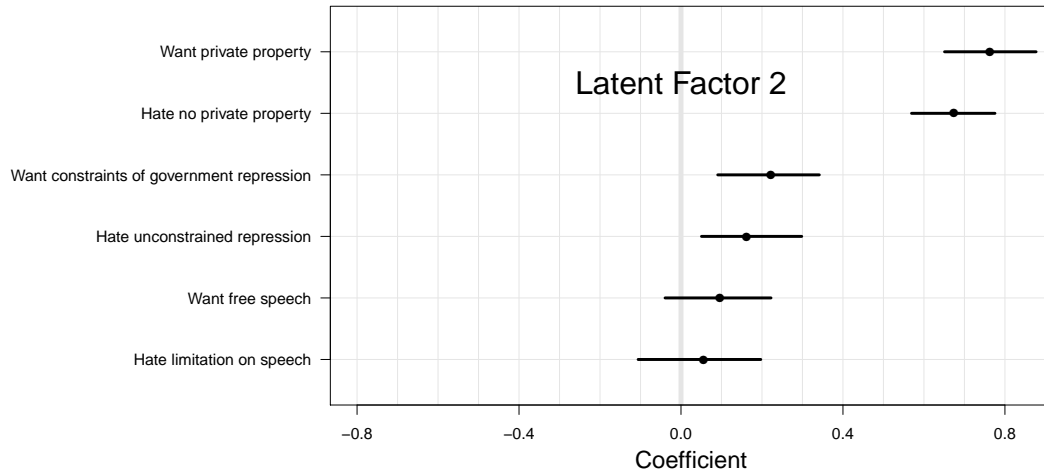

Figure 3: CFA Coefficients: Second Latent Factor

The third dimension of Model A, which we refer to as *desire for economic development*, includes qualities in the area of socio-economic outcomes in Tables A4 and A5. The CFA estimates of this third latent factor, as well as their 95% confidence intervals, are shown in Figure 4. This figure shows that people who care more about public goods also tend to care more about economic growth and economic equality.

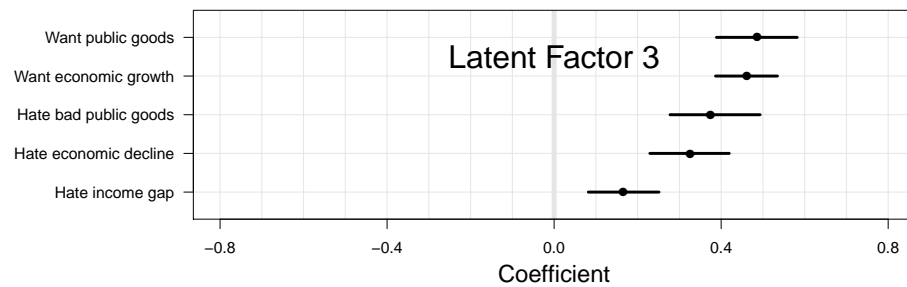Figure 4: CFA Coefficients: Third Latent Factor

A.4.2 Socio-economic characteristics by group

Table A11 presents the socio-economic characteristics of NDCs, democracy supporters (DEM), and status quo supporters (CCP). The first three columns present the mean values in each group. The last two columns present p-values from t-tests between NDCs vs. democracy supporters and between NDCs vs. status quo supporters.

Table A12 presents the socio-economic features of dual supporters (column 1), as well as the p-values from t-tests between the dual supporters vs. democracy supporters (DEM), dual supporters vs. status quo supporters (CCP), and dual supporters vs. NDCs, respectively (columns 2-4). The table shows that dual supporters are closest to democrats in terms of socio-demographic background. There is no statistically significant difference on any socio-demographic variable between dual supporters and democrats. Instead, dual supporters differ significantly from the CCP supporters on three socio-demographic variables at 0.05 level. Dual supporters also differ significantly from NDCs on three socio-demographic variables at 0.05 level and on another two demographic variables at 0.1 level. These results suggest that dual supporter is a distinct group from non-democratic critics.

Table A11: Socio-demographic characteristics of NDC, democrats, and CCP supporters

	NDCs	Democracy supporters	Status quo supporters	p-value (NDC vs. DEM)	p-value (NDC vs. CCP)
Born after economic reform (1980)	0.64	0.51	0.43	<0.01	<0.001
Work experience over 10 years	0.54	0.64	0.68	0.03	<0.001
Economically developed region (East China)	0.77	0.71	0.68	0.07	0.01
Frequent consumption of domestic media	0.90	0.87	0.88	0.25	0.47
CCP membership	0.18	0.10	0.14	0.01	0.12
Frequent consumption of foreign political news	0.19	0.20	0.12	0.85	0.02
Frequent consumption of foreign media	0.42	0.48	0.25	0.14	<0.001
Bachelor degree	0.87	0.89	0.82	0.44	0.058
Major in social science / humanities	0.36	0.34	0.28	0.73	0.04
Employed in public sector	0.38	0.31	0.38	0.095	0.999
Male	0.63	0.54	0.56	0.04	0.06
Time of completing the survey (minutes)	31	21	46	0.49	0.39

Notes: Entries in the table are proportions. Frequent media consumption means several times a day. East China provinces are Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, Hainan, Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang.

Table A12: Socio-demographic characteristics of dual supporters

	Dual supporter (Dual)	P-value Dual vs. DEM	P-value Dual vs. CCP	P-value Dual vs. NDC
Male	0.608	0.131	0.219	0.578
Age (years)	38.7	0.484	0.130	0.019
Work experience over 10 years	0.675	0.332	0.895	0.004
CCP membership	0.118	0.510	0.495	0.057
Bachelor degree	0.882	0.666	0.019	0.740
Major in social science / humanities	0.352	0.833	0.048	0.897
Frequent consumption of domestic media	0.857	0.725	0.366	0.172
Frequent consumption of foreign media	0.544	0.291	0.011	0.445
By region				
Western China (most underdeveloped region)	0.148	0.366	0.296	0.013
Eastern China (most developed region)	0.705	0.949	0.458	0.088
Central China	0.143	0.881	0.877	0.954

Notes: Entries are proportions, except that age is in years. Frequent consumption of media means watching/reading news several times a day.

A.4.3 Robustness checks on predictors of NDC

1) Using alternative measures of economic status Table A13 shows that the results in Table **??** in the main paper stays substantively unchanged when using three alternative measures to assess a respondent's economic status: GDP per capita in the respondent's current province, GDP per capita in the person's Hukou province, and whether the respondent was born after economic reform (1980).

Table A13: Predictors of NDCs using alternative measures

	(1)	(2)	(3)
GDP per capita in current province (in 100,000 RMB)	0.363*		
	(0.207)		
GDP per capita in Hukou province (in 100,000 RMB)		0.343*	
		(0.208)	
Born after 1980			0.599***
			(0.193)
Frequent consumption of CCP media	0.370	0.358	0.437
	(0.276)	(0.276)	(0.283)
Frequent consumption of foreign media	-0.277	-0.265	-0.278
	(0.181)	(0.180)	(0.188)
Province fixed-effects	N	N	Y
Controls	Y	Y	Y
Observations	1354	1354	1354

Notes: Outcome is a nominal variable that has four levels. Frequent media consumption means several times a day. All columns use multinomial logistic regression and coefficients are marginal effects on the log odds of being NDC vs. Democrat. Controls include respondents' age, gender, education level, and employment sector.*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

2) Predicting NDC status among regime opponents Table A14 and Table A15 present the effects of three predictors—1) economic status; 2) exposure to CCP propaganda; 3) consumption of foreign information—on the probability of being a NDC among regime opponents. In both tables, the outcome is a binary indicator that equals 1 if the respondent is a NDC and 0 if the respondent is a democrat. The two tables use different measures to assess respondents' economic status. Consistent with the results when we use multinomial

regression in the main paper, Tables A14 and A15 show that residing in the economically developed region increases the likelihood of being a NDC among regime opponents in all models, whereas consumption of CCP propaganda or foreign media have no effect at the conventional level after controlling for other characteristics of respondents.

Table A14: Predictors of NDC among regime opponents

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Economically developed region	0.085*			0.086*	0.088**
	(0.045)			(0.045)	(0.044)
Frequent consumption of CCP media		0.084		0.065	0.081
		(0.058)		(0.062)	(0.058)
Frequent consumption of foreign media			-0.064	-0.064	-0.066
			(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Observations	564	564	564	564	564

Notes: Outcome is a binary indicator that takes on the value of 1 if the respondent is a NDC, and 0 if the respondent is a democracy supporter. Economically developed resion means living in Eastern China provinces. Frequent media consumption means several times a day. All columns use logistic model and coefficients are marginal effects on the probability of being a NDC. Controls include respondents' gender, age, education level, CCP membership, and employment sector. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table A15: Predictors of NDCs among regime opponents using alternative measures

	(1) OLS	(2) Logit	(3) OLS	(4) Logit	(5) OLS	(6) Logit
GDP per capita in current province (in 100,000 RMB)	0.088* (0.053)	0.088* (0.050)				
GDP per capita in Hukou province (in 100,000 RMB)			0.084* (0.050)	0.085* (0.050)		
Born after 1980					0.109** (0.044)	0.110*** (0.042)
Frequent consumption of CCP media	0.075 (0.060)	0.074 (0.061)	0.074 (0.060)	0.073 (0.061)	0.091 (0.061)	0.092 (0.058)
Frequent consumption of foreign media	-0.066 (0.043)	-0.065 (0.042)	-0.062 (0.042)	-0.062 (0.042)	-0.062 (0.045)	-0.063 (0.041)
Province fixed-effects	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Controls include age	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Observations	564	564	564	564	564	564

Notes: Outcome is a binary indicator that takes on the value of 1 if the respondent is a NDC, and 0 if the respondent is a democracy supporter. Controls include respondents' gender, age, education level, CCP membership, and employment sector. Robust standard errors are clustered at the province $\times$ age level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

3) Effect of political curriculum reform on NDC Given that the coefficient on frequent consumption of CCP media is also large (though not significant) in Table A13, we conduct a separate test for the effect of CCP propaganda on the likelihood of being a NDC by exploiting a gradual reform of political textbooks in China between 2004 and 2010 (Cantoni et al. 2017). In different years during this reform, different provinces started to use a new set of state-approved textbooks that added substantial content criticizing Western-style democracy for the entering cohort of high school students. Table A16 shows that receiving this new ideological curriculum has no effect on the probability of being a NDC. Column (1) replicates the main regression model in Cantoni et al. (2017),[13] which uses a generalized difference-in-difference framework by controlling for age fixed-effects and province fixed-effects. Column (2) adds the same controls as in our main regression model (Table **??** in the main paper), including respondents' gender, employment sector, education level, and CCP membership.

Table A16: Effect of political curriculum reform on NDC

	(1)	(2)
New curriculum	-0.072	-0.086
	(0.102)	(0.101)
Controls	N	Y
Age fixed-effects	Y	Y
Province fixed-effects	Y	Y
Observations	552	552

Notes: Outcome is a binary indicator that takes on the value of 1 if the respondent is a NDC, and 0 if the respondent is a democracy supporter. Controls include respondents' gender, employment sector, education level, and CCP membership. All columns use linear model. Robust standard errors are clustered at the province $\times$ age level. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Notes

[1] For details, see https://bit.ly/3xu23Cp.

[2] See https://bit.ly/3mJ69S1.

[3] Since 2010, ABS' core questionnaire measures support for the Chinese regime by asking respondents the extent to which they agree with four statements: 1) Thinking in general, I am proud of our political

system; 2) Over the long run, our political system is capable of solving the problems our country faces; 3) A political system like ours, even if it runs into problems, deserves the people's support; and 4) I would rather live under our political system than any other I can think of. We do not use these statements directly because some of ABS' wording are not applicable to ask about people's support toward democracy (e.g., "I am proud of our system").

[4]The 366 participants in this pre-test are between 18 and 69 years old, and vary in education levels from high school to PhD degrees. They also have diverse working experience across public institutions, government agencies, state-owned enterprises, private firms and foreign firms.

[5]See Guang et al. 2020. This survey also asks respondents if the CCP regime is their ideal choice.

[6]See Cunningham, Saich and Turiel 2020 and Asian Barometer Survey 2012.

[7]Respondents took the survey on Qualtrics. After linking those IP addresses to provinces in China, we discarded all system-recorded IP addresses.

[8]Given that our original sample only has 1,354 people, resampling over 400 people will make the reweighed data statistically indistinguishable from the original sample on most sociodemographic features.

[9]For details, see https://bit.ly/3WMsccf.

[10]We normalized each observed variable by subtracting its mean from the data and then dividing by its standard deviation. So, the total variance after normalization equals 32, the number of observed variables.

[11]Though restrictive, these assumptions substantially reduce model complexity. The first assumption rules out cases where one quality is driven by two or more latent traits. This makes sense substantively because each quality in the survey only touches on one dimension of a regime. The second assumption improves the clarity of interpretation of each latent trait. We allow for correlation between any two latent factors and the collapse of multiple factors into one factor.

[12]If the estimated variance-covariance matrix is not positive definite, that indicates some of the latent factors are highly collinear and should be collapsed into a single factor.

[13]Cantoni, Davide, Yuyu Chen, David Y Yang, Noam Yuchtman and Y Jane Zhang. 2017. "Curriculum and ideology." *Journal of Political Economy* 125(2): 338–392.

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