The Korea Democracy Barometer Surveys: Unraveling the Cultural and Institutional Dynamics of Democratization, 1997-2004*

*Doh Chull Shin**
*Jaechul Lee***

**Abstract**

South Korea is regarded as the most influential and vigorous new democracy in East Asia. The country has not only transferred power peacefully to an opposition party but has

*The Korea Barometer Surveys reported in this paper were supported by grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation (SRB-94-09835 & SES-99-09037). The Korea-Gallup provided support for writing this report.

**Doh Chull Shin holds the Endowed Chair in Korean Studies at the University of Missouri at Columbia, U.S.A. As a member of the global network of democracy baromaters, he is currently analyzing the cultural and institutional dynamics of third-wave democracies. His recent publications include *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets around the Pacific* (co-edited, 2006) and "Democratization: Perspectives from Global Citizenries" (2006). E-mail: shind@missouri.edu.

***Jaechul Lee is Research Professor of the Institute of Social Sciences at Sogang University, Korea. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri at Columbia, U.S.A. His current research focuses on the role civil society in the process of democratic consolidation in Korea. E-mail: jaechull@gmail.com.

© 2006 by THE INSTITUTE OF KOREAN STUDIES.
also fully transformed its age-old crony capitalism into a competitive and transparent market economy. Yet the question remains: How much progress has Korea really made in democratizing its authoritarian institutions and its underlying cultural values that for nearly three decades supported the military dictatorships that ruled the country? This study addresses this question by analyzing the Korea Democracy Barometer surveys conducted over the period of 1997-2004. The results of this analysis reveal that, both institutionally as well as culturally, Korea remains far from being a consolidated democracy.

**Key Words:** Korea, Democratization, Consolidation, Culture, Institution, Survey Analysis

### I. Introduction

The current wave of democratization began in Southern Europe thirty years ago and has spread to Latin America, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Africa (Huntington, 1991; McFaul, 2002; Shin, 1994, 2006). In response to this proliferation of new democracies, an increasing number of individual scholars and research institutes have, especially over the past decade, expanded their efforts to study democratic regime change from the perspective of the mass citizenry in the midst of that change (Camp, 2001; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Montero, 1993; Norris, 1999; Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Rose et al., 1998). The Korea Democracy Barometer (KDB hereafter) represents one of these research endeavors seeking to monitor and compare the dynamics of democratization and its consequences for citizen well-being. The KDB is one of the oldest and most innovative democracy barometer projects, although it is not considered one of the best-known.