

Asia Inquiry: A Continental Analysis

by Takashi Inoguchi

1. ASIABAROMETER SURVEY

The AsiaBarometer Survey was launched in 2002, with the aim of gauging quality of life among ordinary people in Asia. Asia as a region includes East, Southeast, South and Central Asia. As a geographical entity, Asia is extremely diverse and complex. Today, it is considered one of the most dynamic regions in the world. Yet systematically collected empirical data about the daily life of ordinary people has been scant and spotty.¹ The United Nations Development Program issues annually one of the most useful statistical data collections of the developing world. The missing piece is how ordinary people perceive daily life activities like health, money, leisure, sleep, work, transport, satisfaction with different life aspects, their life priorities, etc., are not well documented and, therefore, are not well researched scientifically.

All of the twenty-nine Asian societies, i.e., Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, plus three adjacent societies to Asia (Australia, Russia and the United States) were surveyed between 2003, and 2008. Funding for this huge survey project came from the Japanese Ministry of Education for 2005-2008, with funding in 2003 and 2004 coming from a dozen or so private business firms and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs respectively. The Nihon Research Center, a polling company in Tokyo, carried out the entire coordination of operations using local polling companies with the master English questionnaire and translated versions of the master questionnaire in some 35 other languages. With sample sizes ranging from 1000 to 3000 people, national random sampling and face-to-face interviews were carried out throughout the above 32 societies. See Inoguchi and Fujii, *The Quality of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality of Life in Asia* (2013) for methodological details. In what follows I describe the overall themes and analyses of a number of publications that have emanated from this undertaking and some that are still forthcoming.

2. QUALITY OF LIFE AND WELL-BEING IN ASIA

Inoguchi and Fujii, Shin and Inoguchi and Inoguchi and Estes focus on quality of life and well-being. Inoguchi and Fujii provide the most comprehensive and

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systematic analysis of quality of life in Asia.³ Especially important is their causal analysis of quality of life in which various contributions by degree of satisfaction with life aspects and life priorities and demographics are specified, society by society. Shin and Inoguchi focus on happiness through achievement, enjoyment, and satisfaction in East Asian or Confucian societies, society by society. Inoguchi and Estes is part of *The Untold Global History*, in which the history of each world region is given narratives and analyses from the bottom up or from the perspective of ordinary people, focusing on quality of life and well-being through a long time span of some 2000 years. Inoguchi and Estes focus on East Asia.

Top five lifestyle priorities in 29 Asian societies are listed in Table 1.

Table 6.1 Top five lifestyle aspects

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Afghanistan	Diet	Health	Home	Being devout	Job
Bangladesh	Health	Medical care	No crime	Being devout	Home
Bhutan	Health	Home	Diet	Job	Work
Brunei	Health	Home	Diet	Family	Job
Cambodia	Diet	Health	Home	Job	Income
China	Health	Home	Job	Medical care	No crime
India	Health	Home	Diet	Job	Family
Indonesia	Health	Diet	Home	Being devout	Job
Japan	Health	Family	Job	Home	Others
Kazakhstan	Health	Job	Home	Medical care	Income
Kyrgyzstan	Health	Diet	Job	Home	Income
Laos	Health	Diet	Home	Job	Family
Malaysia	Health	Home	Diet	Family	Job
Maldives	Diet	Medical care	No crime	Health	Job
Mongolia	Health	Home	Diet	Job	Medical care
Myanmar	Health	Diet	Being devout	Home	Job
Nepal	Health	Diet	Job	Work	No crime
Pakistan	Health	Diet	Home	Being devout	Income
Philippines	Diet	Health	Home	Job	Family
Singapore	Health	Home	Job	Family	Diet
South Korea	Health	Home	Family	Job	Income
Sri Lanka	Health	Diet	Home	Family	Job
Tajikistan	Health	Diet	Home	Job	Income
Thailand	Health	Diet	Home	Job	Family
Turkmenistan	Diet	Health	Income	No crime	Home
Uzbekistan	Health	Home	Income	Job	Diet
Vietnam	Health	Job	Diet	Home	Work
Asia	Health	Home	Diet	Job	Family

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

When the top five lifestyle priorities in twenty-nine Asian societies are calculated, they are: Health, Home, Diet, Job, and Family. This order of lifestyle priorities makes sense for most societies. Yet the placement of some issues, such as Family, Being Devout, Medical Care, and No Crime, which appear among the top five in some societies, requires closer attention.

3. TRUST: INTERPERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

Inoguchi and Tokuda focus on trust.⁴ Part I focuses on cross-cultural comparisons of Asian societies in terms of trust. Conceptions of human nature, utilitarian calculus, and conformity with prevailing regime ideology and system emerge as three key dimensions of trust in Asia. Part II focuses on institutional trust, analyzing the popular sense of being comfortable in delegating work to those social institutions like national government, political parties, national parliament, army, police, court system, medical hospitals, mass media, and business firms. In part II, trust in health-related institutions in Japan is scrutinized by one of the co-editors, a practicing medical doctor.

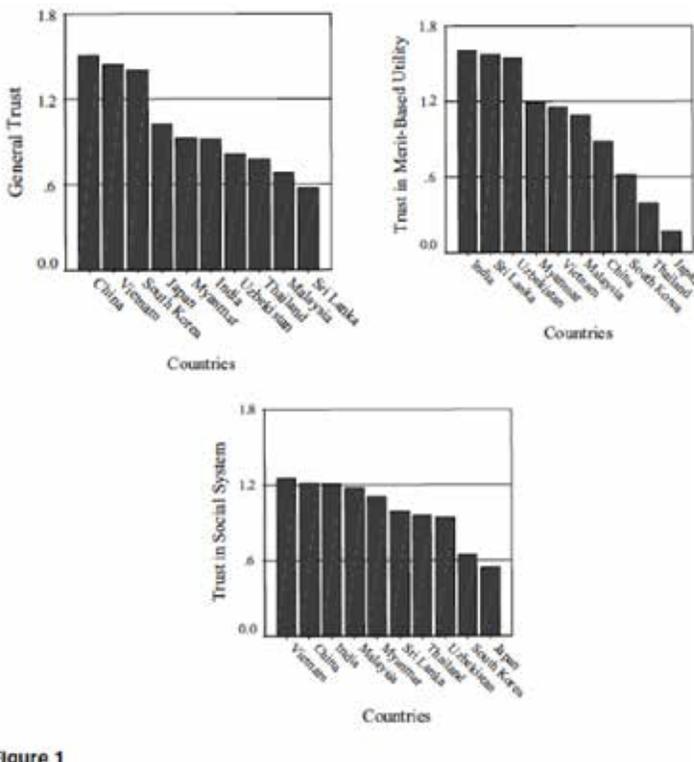


Figure 1

Figure 1. Factor Analysis Results of Trust in Ten Societies in Asia.

Source: Japanese Journal of Political Science, Vol.5, Issue 1, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

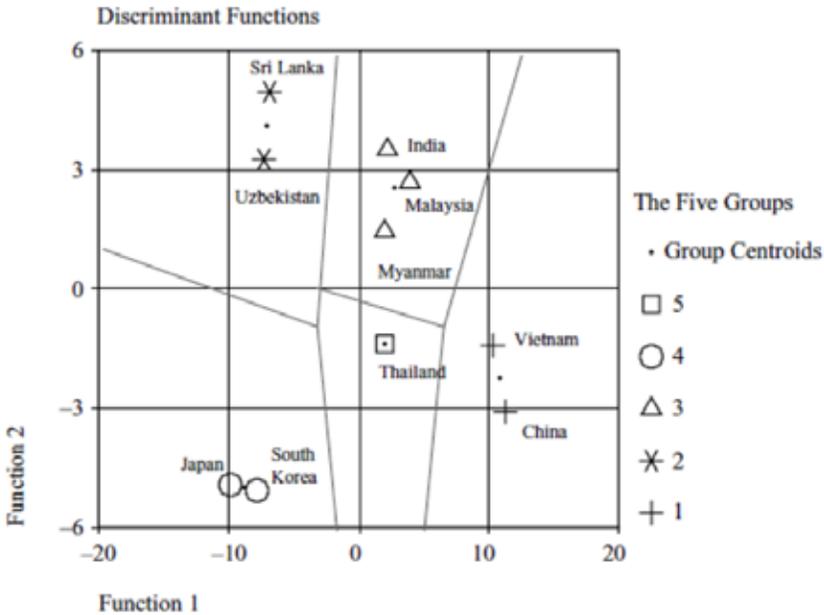


Figure 2. *Discriminant Functions of Trust in Ten Societies in Asia.*

Source: Japanese Journal of Political Science, Vol.5, Issue 1, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Factor-analysis of those responses in ten Asian societies, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Japan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Vietnam, India to a host of trust-related questions yields three dimensions of trust: 1) human nature, good or bad, 2) utility calculation, and 3) harmony with a social system. Figure 5 informs the geographical locations of ten societies in terms of conceptions of trust.

4. EXIT, VOICE AND LOYALTY IN ASIA

Inoguchi poses an unusual question and comes to some surprising answers in his endeavor to identify which option is preferred by the thirty-two societies.⁵ Albert Hirschman poses a question: What would you do when your organization deteriorates in its appeal, its performance and its prospect for survival?⁶ If you are told to wait patiently when you request a government agency to issue a permit, which option would you choose? Exit is to get out. Voice is to make noise. Loyalty is to keep quietly working. We ask the respondents to choose one of the seven: 1) act without a permit; 2) bribe an official; 3) write a letter; 4) use connections; 5) do nothing; 6) wait patiently and hope things will go well; 7) don't know. Inoguchi carries out causal analysis of which chosen option is "caused" by which factors, such as satisfaction with daily life aspects, life priorities, and demographics. All of the thirty-two surveyed societies, twenty-nine Asian societies and three non-Asian societies, i.e., Australian, American and Russian societies, rendered the same

logit regression analysis. In the process, I discovered some surprising, and not so surprising, findings.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of six options country by country (%)

	Use connections to obtain the permit	Nothing can be done	Wait and hope that things will work out	Write a letter	Act without a permit	Bribe an official	Don't know	N
United States	29.2	6.1	18.4	30.4	3.1	0.5	12.3	1002
Australia	12.5	6.6	28.7	45.8	2.1	1.2	2.9	1000
Japan	5.3	28.1	34.2	18.2	4.3	0.3	9.6	1012
India	31.6	10.4	28.5	19.1	2.9	5.1	2.1	1052
Russia	35.6	10.2	13.5	18.3	4.8	4.4	13.2	1055
China	21.3	21.6	28.9	21.8	2.5	2.2	1.5	1000
Total	22.8	13.9	25.3	25.5	3.3	2.3	6.9	6121

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

Adding options (1) and (6) creates a broader voice option. The broader voice option seeks to accomplish objectives, by hook or by crook.⁷ Option (4) is a bureaucratic voice option. Adding (2) and (3) creates a broader loyalty option.

One can immediately notice that diversity is easily visible. Across societies, “Act without a permit,” is one of the least chosen options. Yet Russia and Japan register higher scores here. “Bribe an official” is the option registering the lowest overall score. But India and Russia register the highest figures on this choice. Japan is salient in registering a higher score of “Wait and hope that things will work out” and “Nothing can be done.” The United States is salient in registering higher figures in “Use connections to obtain the permit” and “Write a letter.”

5. TYPOLOGY OF ASIAN SOCIETIES

Inoguchi presents a typology of Asian societies on the basis of satisfaction about lifestyle priorities.⁸ The typology of Asian societies has been dominated by the classical ideas of Hegel (one man’s freedom), Marx (Asiatic mode of production), and Wittfogel (Asiatic despotism). Of the following lifestyle aspects or life circumstances, survey respondents selected five lifestyle priorities that are important to them. The list of the twenty aspects is as follows:

Having enough to eat, having a comfortable house, being healthy, having access to good medical care if required, being able to live without fear of crime, having a job, having access to higher (beyond compulsory) education, owning lots of nice things, earning a high income, spending

time with your family, being on good terms with others, being successful at work, being famous, enjoying a pastime, experiencing art and culture, dressing up, winning, expressing your personality or using your talents, contributing to your local community or to society, and being devout.

Factor analysis on data of important lifestyle aspects of life circumstances, society by society, has yielded three dimensions of space: materialism, post-materialism and public sector dominance. Focusing on the first two key dimensions and their order, five types of Asian societies emerge: Ab, Ac, Ba, Bc, and Ca. Ab means that the first dimension is materialism and the second dimension is post-materialism. Ac means that the first dimension is materialism and the second dimension is public sector dominance. Ba means that the first dimension is post-materialism and the second dimension is materialism. Bc means that the first dimension is post-materialism and the second dimension is public sector dominance. Ca means that the first dimension is public sector dominance and the second dimension is materialism. Cb means that the first dimension is public sector dominance and the second dimension is post-materialism.

Which societies fit which types? Japan and Indonesia, along with many other societies, fit with the Ab type society. India and China, along with many other societies, fit with the Ac type society. Thailand and Vietnam, along with many other societies, fit with the Ba type society. Pakistan and Kazakhstan fit with the Bc type society. Singapore and the Maldives fit the Ca type society. Which society fits with the Cb type? Although survey data is not available, North Korea might best fit with the Cb type. First, public sector dominance is unquestionably strong. Second, dense underground market-focused human relationships are becoming stronger and stronger to fill the space emptied by public sector dominance.⁹

(a) *Distinguishing Life Sphere of Domain Assessments-Japan*

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Materialist	Post-materialist	Public	
Housing	0.41			0.70
Standard of living	0.77			0.31
Household income	0.77			0.34
Education	0.44			0.64
Job	0.49			0.60
Friendships		0.47		0.69
Marriage		0.59		0.55
Health		0.36		0.69
Family life		0.67		0.47
Leisure		0.53		0.58
Spiritual life		0.63		0.44
Neighbors			0.38	0.66
Public safety			0.64	0.52
Condition of the environment			0.60	0.51
Social welfare system			0.71	0.44
Democratic system			0.70	0.46

Notes: The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation.

Japan

Factor	Eigenvalue
Factor 1	5.640
Factor 2	1.097
Factor 3	0.645
<i>n</i>	1,352

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

(b) *Distinguishing Life Sphere of Domain Assessments-India*

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Materialist	Public	Post-materialist	
Housing	0.62			0.56
Friendships	0.53			0.63
Marriage	0.52			0.62
Standard of living	0.66			0.51
Household income	0.62			0.57
Health	0.55			0.61
Education	0.58			0.62
Job	0.56			0.62
Neighbors	0.43			0.64
Public safety		0.62		0.57
Condition of the environment		0.65		0.58
Social welfare system		0.66		0.54
Democratic system		0.63		0.57
Family life			0.57	0.52
Leisure			0.51	0.62
Spiritual life			0.57	0.56

Notes: The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation.

India

Factor	Eigenvalue
Factor 1	4.804
Factor 2	1.430
Factor 3	0.422
<i>n</i>	1,202

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

(c) *Distinguishing Life Sphere of Domain Assessments-Thailand*

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Post-materialist	Materialist	Public	
Housing	0.41			0.70
Friendships	0.42			0.75
Marriage	0.55			0.63
Neighbors	0.56			0.59
Family life	0.65			0.49
Leisure	0.57			0.57
Spiritual life	0.60			0.51
Standard of living		0.53		0.51
Household income		0.65		0.54
Health		0.38		0.72
Education		0.55		0.65
Job		0.65		0.52
Public safety			0.61	0.53
Condition of the environment			0.60	0.53
Social welfare system			0.66	0.51
Democratic system			0.59	0.62

Notes: The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation

Thailand

Factor	Eigenvalue
Factor 1	5.001
Factor 2	0.974
Factor 3	0.659
n	701

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

(d) *Distinguishing Life Sphere of Domain Assessments-Pakistan*

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Public	Materialist	Post-materialist	
Public safety	0.67			0.47
Condition of the environment	0.73			0.43
Social welfare system	0.77			0.39
Democratic system	0.71			0.48
Housing		0.50		0.66
Friendships		0.43		0.66
Standard of living		0.55		0.50
Household income		0.74		0.41
Health		0.59		0.58
Education		0.51		0.66
Job		0.60		0.49
Marriage			0.50	0.62
Neighbors			0.40	0.75
Family life			0.56	0.60
Leisure			0.45	0.60
Spiritual life			0.58	0.64

Notes: The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation

Pakistan

Factor	Eigenvalue
Factor 1	4.745
Factor 2	1.563
Factor 3	0.754
n	579

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

(e) *Distinguishing Life Sphere of Domain Assessments-Singapore*

	Factors			Uniqueness
	Public	Post-materialist	Materialist	
Public safety	0.70			0.66
Condition of the environment	0.71			0.45
Social welfare system	0.73			0.42
Democratic system	0.71			0.45
Housing		0.44		0.71
Friendships		0.56		0.61
Marriage		0.58		0.51
Neighbors		0.34		0.72
Family life		0.65		0.45
Leisure		0.62		0.48
Spiritual life		0.56		0.56
Standard of living			0.44	0.64
Household income			0.67	0.48
Health			0.54	0.54
Education			0.62	0.55
Job			0.57	0.57

Notes: The reported loadings were from a principal factors solution with orthogonal varimax rotation.

Singapore

Factor	Eigenvalue
Factor 1	5.420
Factor 2	1.308
Factor 3	0.673
<i>n</i>	578

Source: *The Quality Of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality Of Life in Asia*, Coauthored by Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, Springer, 2013.

Factor analysis of satisfaction about life spheres of domain for Japan, India, Thailand, Pakistan, and Singapore yields Tables 3-7 for each. It demonstrates the validity and utility of an evidence-based typology of Asian societies. The scheme can be applied to non-Asian societies as well.

6. REFLECTIONS OF ASIA INQUIRY

Looked at this way, Asia is a very fertile field of study. With the advent of survey methods and smart technologies for communication and interviewing, the heartland of the Eurasian continent has ceased to be the space that one can only dream of visiting in person to observe how daily lives of people are enveloped. Those findings about quality of life, trust in institutions, adaptive modes of how people struggle to cope with the deterioration of organizations, communities and societies, i.e., exit, voice and loyalty, and types of Asian societies on the basis of satisfaction about life priorities, give fresh awakening to Asian people and societies.

Asia inquiry has ceased to be the monopoly of adventurers and anthropologists. Asia inquiry has ceased to be the monopoly of spies and diplomats. Asia inquiry has become the quasi-routine of daily life for business persons, policy makers, journalists and academics. With Asia comprising more than sixty percent of the world population, representing a combined forty percent of the world's gross national product (GNP), and containing three large Asian democracies, India,

Indonesia and Japan, that amount to 1.6 billion people, Asia is being recognized as a huge, diverse and very dynamic grouping of world societies.

NOTES

¹ Takashi Inoguchi, "Quality of Life in Asia," in *A Life Devoted to Quality of Life: Festschrift in Honor of Alex C. Michalos*, ed. Filomena Maggino (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 237-269.

² Takashi Inoguchi, "AsiaBarometer's Achievements, Underutilized Areas of the Survey Materials, and Future Prospects," in Staffan Lindberg and Benjamin Smith, eds., 'Special Issue on the Barometers,' *American Political Science Association's Comparative Democratization Section Newsletter*, 10, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 13-15.

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³ Shin, Doh Chull and Takashi Inoguchi, "The Quality of Life in Confucian Asia: From Physical Welfare to Subjective Well-Being", in *Social Indicators Research*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011); Takashi Inoguchi and Richard Estes, "The History of Well-Being in East Asia: From Global Conflict to Global Leadership," in *The Pursuit of Well-Being: The Untold Global History*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017): 301-348; Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fuji, *The Quality of Life in Asia: A Comparison of Quality of Life in Asia* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

⁴ Takashi Inoguchi and Yasuharu Tokuda, *Trust with Asian Characteristics: Interpersonal and Institutional* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017).

⁵ Takashi Inoguchi, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty in Asia: Individual Choices under Asian Societal Umbrella*, (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming 2017 b).

⁶ Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁷ Rose Richard and Caryn Peiffer, "Paying Bribes to Get Public Services: A Global Guide to Concepts and Survey Measures," *Center for the Study of Public Policy*, (University of Aberdeen: 2012).

⁸ Takashi Inoguchi, "An Evidence-Based Typology of Asian Societies," *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 18, no. 2 (March 2017 a): 216-234.

⁹ "Defectors-turned-activists say capitalists' stalls all that's keeping North Korea Economy afloat," *Japan Times*, November 23, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/11/23/business/defectors-turned-activists-say-capitalists-stalls-thats-keeping-north-korea-economy-afloat/#.WE8-Fnkk06Y>.

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