

Globalisation, Public Opinion and the State

Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia

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8 Finding global solutions?

How citizens view policy problems and their solutions

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Introduction

Recent trends towards greater international economic integration continue to raise questions about how public policies will cope with or improve new inequalities and risks attached to globalisation and truly global problems such as immigration, environmental destruction and poverty. While establishing greater regional or global policy coordination is a matter of institution building, any change in the balance between national, regional and global decision-making will hinge in part on political will formation, and in turn, on favourable public opinion about creating global power. At the level of national polities, the idea that public policies are made without considering the opinions of elites, likely winners and losers from policy change and the public at large is hard to sustain. And, at the same time, evidence shows that public opinion is strongly shaped by the experience of public policy and public policy traditions (see Pierson, 2004, p. 150; Stimson, 1999). As other chapters in this book suggest, the relationship between national and global processes deserves attention. Awareness and involvement in globalisation processes now play an important role in the development of national identity, political culture and ideology. Is this true of public policy as well? Is globalisation – or the prospect of global policy-making – registering with citizens? With the help of the results of the Asia-Europe Survey, this chapter starts to address this question by finding out how evaluations of policy problems and expectations of the *role of government* differ between these two regions, and what insights these judgements offer about the future of state capacity and global policy-making.

One point of departure for our discussion is an ongoing debate about the reshaping of national government in the face of global challenges (see, for instance, Garrett and Mitchell, 2001; Wilensky, 2002). How national governments respond – or are *able* to respond – to the benefits and challenges of globalisation is a source of ongoing contention. Protagonists of globalisation argue that the policy capacity of the nation-state is undermined by economic globalisation. This well-known argument contends that trade and foreign investment, corporate integration and the regulatory power of international bodies such as the World Trade Organization create a set of new limits on the activity of

national governments. Indeed, the same protagonists argue that one political consequence is a new level of fiscal and policy discipline among national governments, which Thomas Friedman has imaginatively called the 'Golden Strait-jacket' (1999). While bilateral and multilateral trade agreements are visible examples of these new constraints, the constraints posed by global integration on the future of the welfare state – and the challenge to employment systems posed by the export of 'good jobs' – raise the most public anxieties.

On the other side of the debate, we find a more sceptical view about the demise of national state capacity, and one that has perhaps more cautiously observed the facts. For example, Linda Weiss (1997) argues that recent world economic development is better understood as a form of *deeper internationalisation*, with nation-states playing a leading role as they adapt their capacities to cope with greater openness (see also, Hirst and Thompson, 1999; Kahler, 2004). Much of Weiss's case rests on empirical insights into the performance of the newly industrialising countries of East Asia. As is now well known, these countries have relied on powerful state bureaucracies to facilitate trade and investment, the integration of research, new technologies and new industries, and some level of control over financial flows. And other evidence, which largely refutes the belief that welfare states face unique threats from the new 'laws' of global economics (Castles, 2004; Swank, 2002; Hicks and Zorn, 2005), raises further questions about how to understand better the national policy realities – and challenges – posed by economic integration.

To improve our understanding, we also need better information about how the public views the place of global or international policy-making in resolving or managing economic, social and environmental risks. This chapter does four main things to assist with this task. The first three are concerned with *policy evaluation* (how worried citizens are about particular problems) and the last is concerned with *policy orientation* (preferences about the broad direction of government policy). First, we provide fresh evidence from the nine Asian and nine European countries surveyed in the Asia-Europe Survey about the most important policy problems facing respondents and then consider how the publics across both regions judge government performance on these problems. Second, we find out whether there are regional differences in the policy areas where governments are judged poorly. These measures tell us, in regional terms, where weaknesses in citizen assessment of state capacity lie or, in other words, where governments are seen to fail in providing solutions to problems. Third, we directly address the question of whether the public believes that problems in three critical policy domains – the state of the economy, unemployment and the environment – are caused by international or national factors – and then whether solutions lie in international or national action. These findings enable us to locate those traditionally *national* policy areas that citizens now regard as deserving an international policy response. The final section addresses broad policy preferences that are particularly relevant in how national governments adapt to greater economic and political integration: attitudes to social protection and economic protection.

Citizen policy evaluations: what worries Asians and Europeans?

Barometers of national and regional opinion regularly take stock of policy areas that matter to citizens and voters. The Asia-Europe Study provides an opportunity to do this as well, across two large world regions. The first area for investigation includes items in Q. 205 – the policy areas that preoccupy citizens across the eighteen countries surveyed. The question is:

Q. 205 When thinking specifically about the situation in [Country], how worried are you about each of the following? [The economy; political corruption; problems of human rights; unemployment; the level of crime; the quality of the public services; the level of immigration; ethnic conflict; religious conflict; the condition of the environment.

(Response categories: very worried, somewhat worried, not worried at all, don't know).

The level of worry for ten policy areas is measured by aggregating the percentages of respondents who opt for the first two responses ('very worried' or 'somewhat worried') on the 4-point scale. Table 8.1 ranks the findings by (the Asian) region. Before considering the comparisons, we first comment on the type of

Table 8.1 Major policy preoccupations in Europe and Asia, 2000 (per cent of respondents 'very worried' or 'somewhat worried')

	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Gap (positive score means Asian respondents more worried)</i>
Level of crime	56	58	-2
Unemployment	53	44	+9
Economy	46	23	+23
Corruption	45	33	+12
Environment	34	40	-6
Problems of human rights ^a	25	28	-3
Religious conflict	19	22	-3
Ethnic conflict	18	29	-11
Quality of public services	17	28	-11
Immigration	17	32	-15

Source: Asia-Europe Survey 2002.

Note

a Not asked in the People's Republic of China.

policy concerns surveyed. The distinction between ‘material’ and ‘postmaterial’ concerns (see Inglehart, 1997; and Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) helps us group, and make sense, of the findings. Material policy priorities reflect the immediate physical and security needs of the population (and pertain to items on the state of the economy, unemployment, the level of crime, and corruption). Postmaterial worries reflect ‘quality of life interests’ (quality of public services, the environment, human rights).¹ However, the remaining policy areas surveyed – including immigration and worries about ethnic and religious conflict are different again. We understand these as problems of *social integration* that governments may be closely involved in (such as setting immigration quotas) or may attempt to manage (such as alleviating potential ethnic tensions by promoting multiculturalism or cultural integration).

Respondents across the Asian countries surveyed place material preoccupations at the top: crime, unemployment, the economy and corruption. We find that worries about the economy and unemployment are strongly correlated, as we might expect for developmental states in which most welfare institutions are embedded in the provision of private sector industrial jobs (Kwon 2005, p.1). South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines register the highest number of respondents who are worried (see Figure 8.1). Singapore is the clear outlier in the Asian region, with much lower economic insecurity than in the remaining eight Asian countries. The level of economic insecurity in the Asian region closely corresponds to those economies damaged by the financial crisis that began in 1997. Indeed, the weak economy and increased employment insecurity that followed prompted major social policy reforms in at least two of these states – Taiwan and South Korea (Kwon, 2005, p. 2).

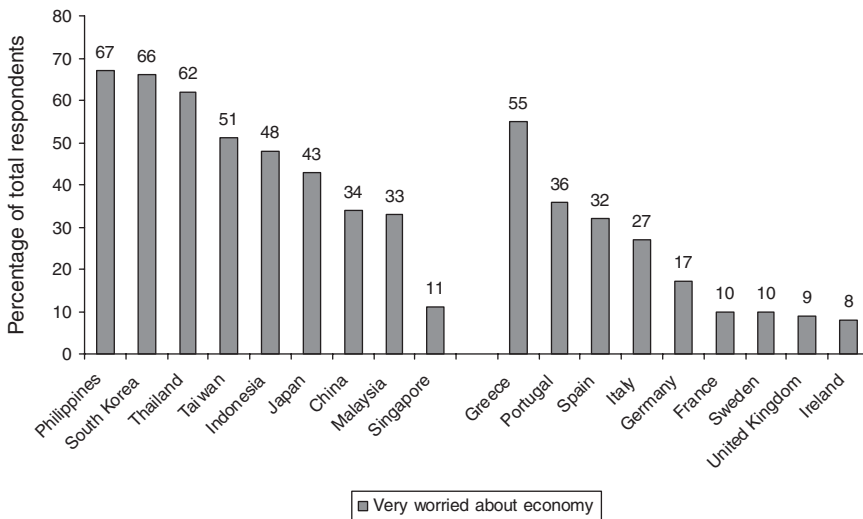


Figure 8.1 Asian countries more worried about the economy.

Table 8.2 Policy responsiveness by governments in Europe and Asia, 2000 (per cent of respondents choosing 'very well' and 'quite well')

	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Gap (positive score means Asian respondents more satisfied)</i>
Level of crime	36	52	14
Unemployment	31	36	-5
Economy	44	47	-3
Corruption	27	23	4
Environment	48	32	16
Problems of human rights ^a	43	45	-2
Religious conflict	53	37	16
Ethnic conflict	50	31	19
Quality of public services	53	32	21
Immigration	44	29	15
Mean policy score	43	36	7

Source: Asia-Europe Survey 2002.

Note

a Not asked in the People's Republic of China.

Base concerns about crime and corruption rank highly in both regions, as we would expect. In Asia, Japanese respondents are most likely to be very worried about crime (72 per cent of Japanese sample), and again, Singapore least. Anxieties about crime and corruption are not always closely related to the scale of the problem. For example, Japan has a comparatively small crime problem and, in fact, only around 60,000 people in prison (Ministry of Justice, 2005). By contrast, policy pre-occupations among Europeans reflect a greater mix of concern about material, postmaterial and social integration problems. Worry about the economy is weaker in Europe than it is in Asia, but unemployment remains a major source of insecurity (see Figure 8.2). Importantly, we find that the four countries that rank highest on global economic integration (see Appendix at the end of the chapter and Table 8.2) – Singapore, Malaysia, Ireland and Sweden – are all ranked in the bottom five survey countries for unemployment insecurity. We also find that general economic insecurity and unemployment insecurity appear less strongly related in Europe than they are in Asia. We offer an explanation: European economies have experienced 'jobless growth' (unemployment and economic insecurity coincident with economic growth) while developmental Asian states have had general downturns coincident with unprecedented unemployment.

The policy areas that we tentatively call postmaterial – the environment and the quality of public services – are more salient among Europeans than among

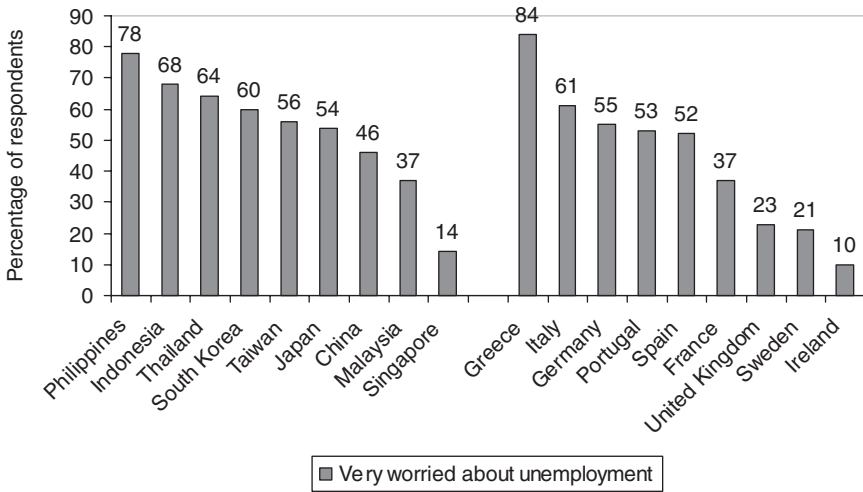


Figure 8.2 Unemployment troubles in both regions.

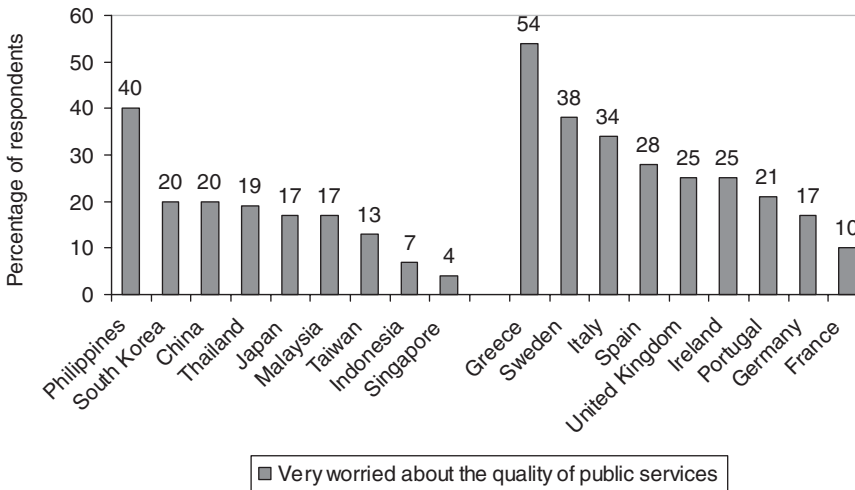


Figure 8.3 Asian countries more worried about respondents.

Asian respondents (for public services, see Figure 8.3). The environment ranks third among European policy concerns and the quality of public services is more important to Europeans than to Asians by a margin of 11 per cent. This is to be expected. As Inglehart and Welzel (2005) demonstrate, environmental concern rises along with economic development (i.e. as material pressures on the population subside, the public begins to focus on problems affecting quality of life). The same argument probably applies to European attention to the state of public services. Peter Lindert (2004, pp. 28–29) shows that the preference for social

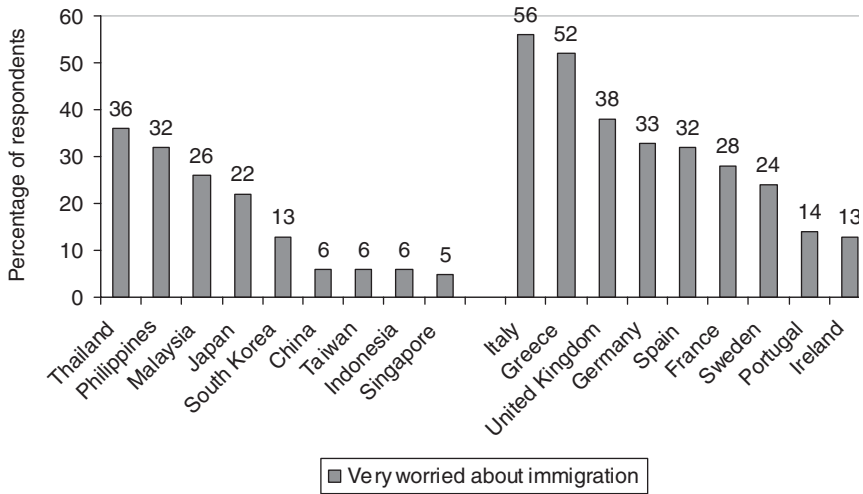


Figure 8.4 European anxieties about immigration.

expenditure increases as the political voice of welfare interests grows with the overall level of overall economic development, so it is no surprise that affluent Europe has high expectations about public services. As we shall suggest later, however, there are good reasons to expect that the Asian societies surveyed are likely to follow this path and increase their demand for environmental protection and public services.²

Recent tensions about the levels of immigration and ethnic conflict across Europe and in some Asian countries (like Thailand) warrant our attention. Although these immigration/ethnic integration problems are more pronounced in Europe than in Asia, they are not uniform by region and not necessarily related to actual levels of immigration (see Figure 8.4). Italian and Greek respondents are most likely to express their antipathies about the level of immigration (56 and 52 per cent, respectively) and these two countries also express the most anxiety about ethnic conflict. Italy and Greece both share borders with the former Yugoslavia and Albania from which many poor migrants have attempted to migrate in recent years and both countries have only recently become destinations sought by immigrants (Freeman 1995, p. 881). Fears about immigration attenuate in most Asian countries with the exceptions of Thailand and the Philippines, which are similar to the middle-ranking European countries.

So far, we have profiled national and regional differences on policy problems confronting publics and government. The Asia-Europe Survey also asks respondents from each country to evaluate how well their national governments are dealing with each problem area. The same ten-item list can now be used to gauge citizen views about the level of policy responsiveness (or perhaps effectiveness) of their governments, and these results are reported in Table 8.2. The

scores are the sum of responses for the 'Very well' and 'Quite well' categories. The relevant question from the survey is:

Q. 206 How well do you think the [Country] government is dealing with the following issues in [Country]? [list as above for Q. 205] (Response categories: very well, quite well, not well, not well at all).

Generally, respondents in the Asian countries surveyed rate government performance higher than do Europeans. Not surprising is that the low scores for both regions were recorded against the two main policy problem areas of crime and unemployment (see Figure 8.2). Europeans give poor ratings to several areas of government management: crime, corruption, immigration, and ethnic conflicts.

Again, regional differences in perceptions of government performance can be calculated by measuring the difference between Asian and European evaluations. The largest performance gaps (Europeans rating government performance lower than Asian respondents) are recorded for: the quality of public services and the environment, and for ethnic and religious conflict and immigration (see Table 8.2). As we stated earlier, these unfavourable results for European countries probably reflect the higher expectations of the public sector and environmental protection that come with socio-economic development (rather than 'Asian indifference' to both). And perhaps in the same vein, poor performance of European governments on immigration and ethnic conflict are a product of a complex mix of economic, social and cultural insecurities present in emerging multicultural democracies.

Turning now to specific areas of evaluation, we find that East Asian governments rate poorly on unemployment, which may reflect the specific circumstances faced by these economies after 1997, and by Japan for most of that decade (see Figure 8.5). (Dissatisfaction with overall economic performance by Asian governments follows a similar pattern). The southern European states are among Europe's poor performers when it comes to unemployment (OECD, 2006).³ Not surprisingly, we can see from Figure 8.2 that respondents from Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal are insecure about employment. This insecurity finds its way across to assessments of government performance on unemployment. Spaniards, Italians, Greeks and the Portuguese all think governments are performing poorly in this area (again, see Figure 8.5).

Corruption features strongly as a public anxiety throughout the Asian and European countries surveyed. We also find that governments in both regions rate poorly on handling corruption, although these rankings generally correspond with the 2004 corruption rankings available from the rankings of political corruption compiled by the University of Passau (Transparency International, 2004). Even though aspects of its internal politics and administration are regularly described as authoritarian and nepotistic, Singapore is the only country where most respondents

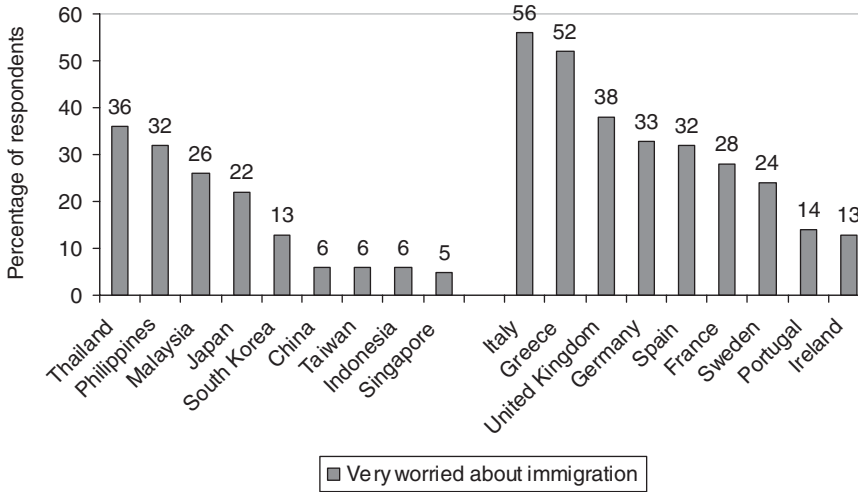


Figure 8.5 Most Asian and Southern European governments rate poorly on Unemployment.

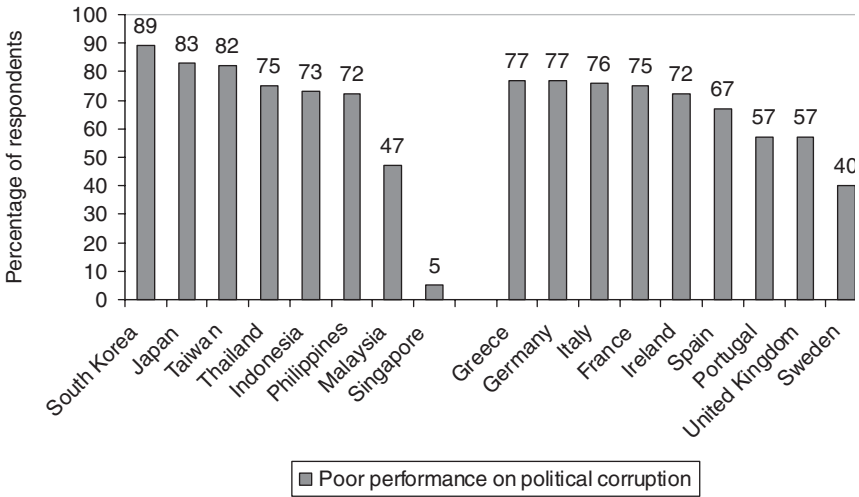


Figure 8.6 Governments rate badly on political corruption except in Singapore, Sweden and Malaysia.

think the government is handling corruption well (see Figure 8.6) and this confidence is confirmed by its ranking as the fifth *least* corrupt country in the world according to the Transparency rankings. Singapore is rated as the least corrupt country of the eighteen included in the Asia-Europe study. Next is Sweden (in sixth place on the world rankings) and the United Kingdom in eleventh position. The next country in the rankings in Asia is Japan, ranked twenty-fourth, while the most corrupt country surveyed is Indonesia, ranked at 133rd place overall.

Table 8.3 Policy capacity ‘gaps’ in Europe and Asia, 2000^a (per cent)

	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Europe</i>
Level of crime	-20	-26
Unemployment	-22	-8
Economy	-2	24
Corruption	-18	-10
Environment	10	-8
Problems of human rights ^b	18	17
Religious conflict	34	15
Ethnic conflict	32	2
Quality of public services	36	4
Immigration	27	-3

Source: Asia-Europe Survey 2002.

Notes

a Number of respondents rating governments effective in a policy area minus the number of respondents worried about policy area.

b Not asked in the People’s Republic of China.

Where do citizens think national governments are weak on policy?

Policy weaknesses – attributed to the problems of globalisation, meeting public expectations or unresolved national problems – inevitably call into question ‘state capacity’. This capacity refers to the government’s institutional ability to deal with or resolve policy problems (Painter and Pierre, 2004; Marsh, 2004). The Asia-Europe project is not primarily engaged with the task of assessing where weaknesses in state capacity lie. But survey results are able to provide some information about areas of policy – in individual countries and in both regions – that are considered very important but where government performance is judged weak. From this, we can obtain simple measures of a *policy performance gap* subtracting the per centage of respondents who are concerned (‘very worried’ or ‘worried’) about each policy area from the per centage who rate the national government effective in that area of policy (see Table 8.3). We acknowledge that this measure reflects only the balance of public opinion about policy performance, and does not account for objective measures of policy capacity attached to national governments found in the state capacity literature. But it still establishes where Asian and European respondents most believe the performance of government is weak.

As Table 8.3 (and Figure 8.7) show, responses to the problem of crime, and to some extent corruption, are poorly rated in both regions. Overall, the scores for crime are -20 points in Asia and -26 points in Europe. In other words, both Europeans and Asians think the ability of governments to deal with crime is much more limited than the extent of the problem. The problem of crime stands out in Europe as a real weakness of state policy. This may tell us something about ongoing political opportunities for tougher criminal sentencing and greater

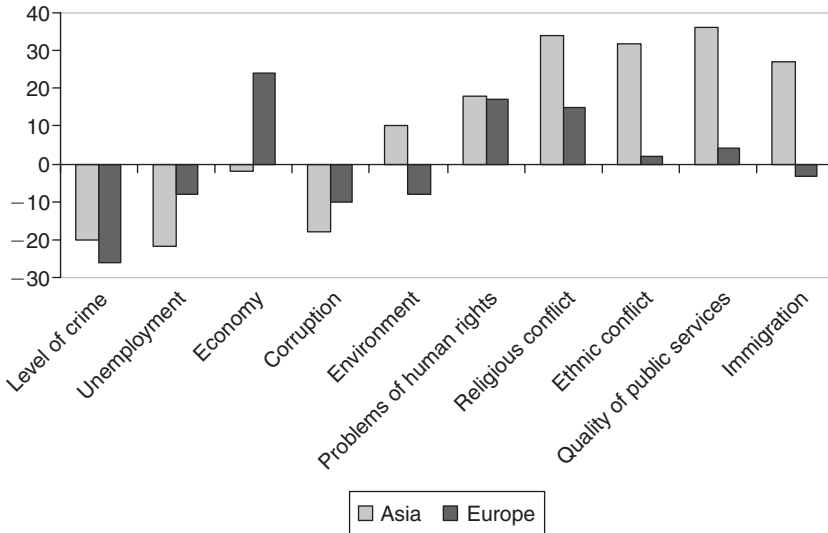


Figure 8.7 Net policy performance: governments in both regions report poorly on crime, unemployment and corruption.

Note

A net performance score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents in each region who were 'Very worried' about each category of problems from the percentage of 'respondents who thought the government was responding 'Very and fairly well' to each problem. A negative score suggests that concern about a problem exceeds confidence in how the government is handling it.

law-and-order campaigning to build a new populist-right electorate in many European countries such as France and the Netherlands. Certainly, French presidential aspirant and UMP Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, has built his political profile in France on being tough on crime.

By contrast, unemployment is Asia's policy Achilles' heel. Taken as a whole, the Asian public rates government performance some 22 percentage points lower than its level of insecurity about the unemployment problem. Here public opinion corresponds closely with an objectively established weakness in policy capacity of developmental economies: the poor result is a response to the combination of regional economic crisis and inadequate welfare institutions to deal with unemployment. As we mention above, some East Asian governments extended social protection schemes to deal with this problem, but this is one area where most Asian region governments still lack state capacity (especially after the 1997 crisis and the slower levels of growth that have followed). As for areas of national government policy that appear to hold the public's confidence, Asian citizens judge their governments competent in the areas of religious and ethnic conflict and on the quality of public services. Again, this may tell us more about

the ‘non-problems’ that these policy areas represent in Asia rather than government capacity to deal with them. But hardline policies towards ethnic minorities and separatists in countries as diverse as China, Thailand and Indonesia may have registered with their respective publics.

Policy problems and their solutions: do citizens want global action?

Although we can identify weaknesses in policy responsiveness by national governments, some policy problems are generated by international causes that nation-states may have a limited ability to manage. Certainly, Friedman’s ‘golden straitjacket’ analogy would apply more forcefully if the public too view policy problems as genuinely international in both origin and solution. How the public come to attribute global causes and solutions to policy issues is an important question (see Marsh, 2004); here, we evaluate responses at an empirical level. The Asia–Europe Study asks respondents:

Do you feel that [problems in the economy, unemployment, condition of the environment] are mainly due to causes within [country] or are due to in the international situation, or both?

(Response categories: mainly causes within the country; mainly international causes; both equally; don’t know).

Of the three policy areas surveyed – problems in the economy, unemployment and the environment – international factors are most implicated in problems of the economy: at least 60 per cent of respondents across the eighteen countries choosing either ‘International causes’ or ‘Both equally’ (see Table 8.4). Europeans are 9 per cent more likely than Asian respondents to consider international factors as the main cause of economic problems (27 to 18 per cent; see also Figure 8.8 for country breakdowns). Again, the strongly state-centric East Asia is *least* likely to think economic problems have global causes while the ‘globalisation’ worldview appears to have most strongly influenced French public opinion.

There is little controversy in claiming that environmental problems are now among the most urgent facing the international community. Problems like pollution, air traffic, the depletion of fish stocks and global warming are not problems confined within national borders. Do the publics of the survey countries see the problem in the same way? Overall, around 50 per cent of respondents attribute (either wholly or partly) an international dimension to ecological problems. But Europeans and Asian respondents hold different views, with Europeans around 15 per cent more likely to attribute these problems to international causes (Figure 8.9). Although ecological consciousness can be in part explained by postmaterial values of affluent Europe, it is less clear whether these value

Table 8.4 National or international causes of economic, unemployment and environmental problems, 2000 (per cent)^a

	<i>Problems in the economy</i>	<i>Unemployment</i>	<i>Environment</i>
Asia			
National	35	57	51
International	18	11	12
Both equally	42	27	33
Europe			
National	28	53	35
International	27	15	21
Both equally	39	27	38

Source: Asia–Europe Survey 2002.

Note

a Don't know excluded.

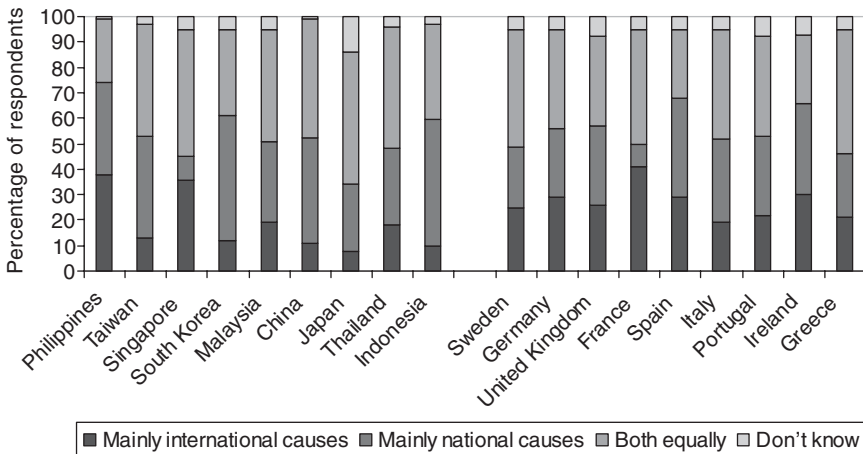


Figure 8.8 Europeans more inclined to see economic problems as International.

differences can explain differences in attribution between national and international factors. It may be the case that Europeans also believe that, with environmental standards improving within its borders, the worst problems remain either truly global, such as atmospheric changes, or confined to destructive activities in developing countries, like primary deforestation or unregulated industry emissions. The differences could also be explained by the geographical boundaries of national states: most of the European countries surveyed share a land mass, while most Asian countries surveyed are islands with distinct national-geographical borders.

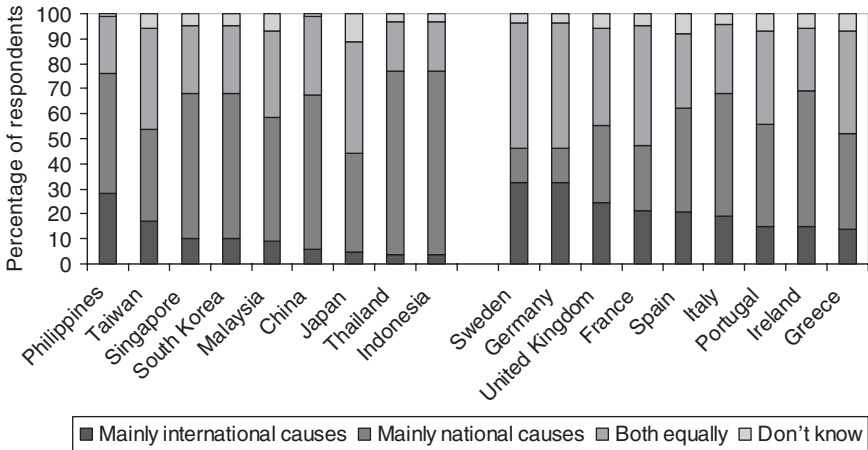


Figure 8.9 Europeans see environment as an international problem and Asians a national problem.

By contrast, when we examine the causes of unemployment, a quite different pattern of responses becomes clear. A majority of respondents in both Europe and Asia see unemployment as a problem with *national* causes (Figure 8.10). While respondents are more inclined to see environmental problems and general problems of the economy as having international causes, the problem of unemployment is seen as national. The shift to national causes is particularly strong in European countries, which otherwise see policy problems as largely international in their origin (see Table 8.4).

How do respondents in the Asia-Europe Survey judge the solutions to these policy problems? It does not automatically follow that if policy problems are attributed to national causes that the public will view solutions in the same way, and the same can be said for the balance between international causes and solutions as well. The Survey asks respondents:

Would you please tell me whether each of these problems should be dealt with by each country deciding for itself what should be done or by all countries together deciding what should be done?
 (Dealt with by each country; dealt with by all countries together, Don't know; haven't thought about it much)

We find that Europeans are much more likely than Asian respondents to seek international solutions to the list of nine problems outlined in Table 8.5. This is not surprising given that a substantial regional government (in the European Union) is now well established, while corresponding regional activity in Asia is not (yet) at the level of regional government. However, there is strong majority

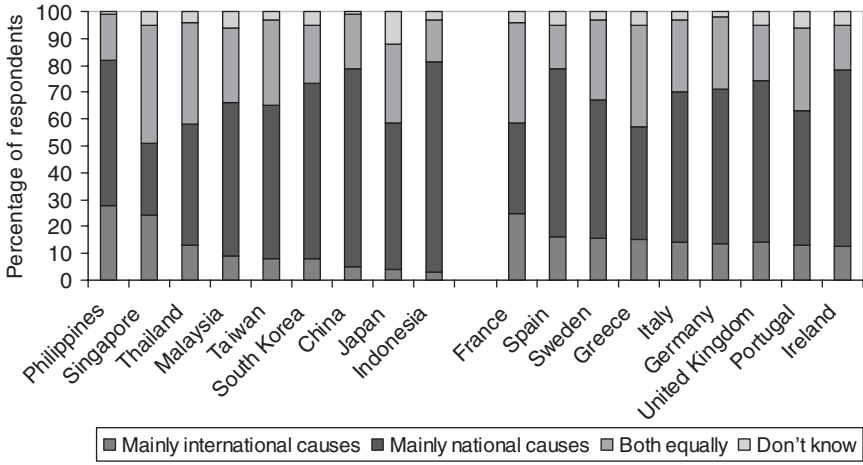


Figure 8.10 Respondents in most countries see unemployment as a national problem.

Table 8.5 Support for ‘all countries together’ dealing with problems ranked by total, 2000 (per cent)^a

	Asia	Europe	Total
The danger of military conflict in Europe	–	77	77
The danger of military conflict somewhere else in the world	69	79	74
The problem of developing countries	54	76	65
The danger of military conflict in Asia	64	–	64
The problem of refugees and asylum seekers	59	62	61
Environmental problems	49	70	60
Problem of human rights	43	70	58
The problem of women’s rights	36	57	46
The problem of unemployment	28	38	33

Source: Asia–Europe Survey 2002.

Note

a Don’t know excluded.

support international action where the danger of military conflict in Asia, Europe or elsewhere in the world becomes possible. It is difficult to give a close interpretation to what this result means. It could mean that respondents strongly support international action and solidarity to prevent military conflict or perhaps support for international rather than unilateral action in the event of conflict. On the two of the three policy problems for which we have evaluated responses about whether they have national or international *causes* – environmental prob-

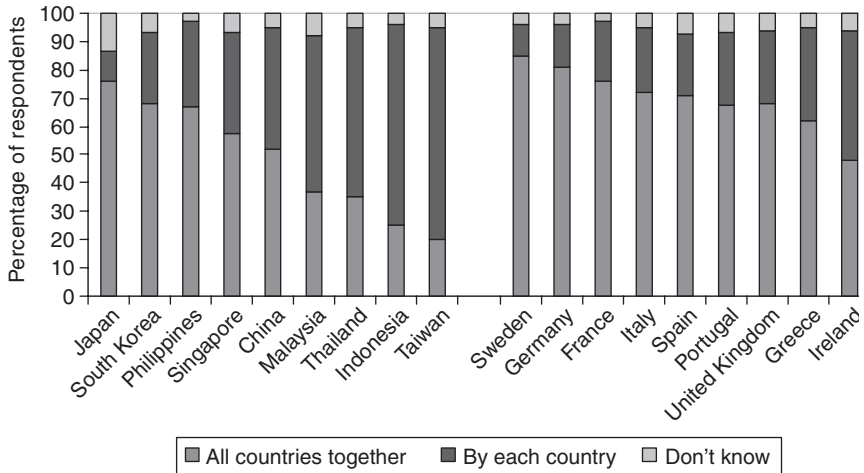


Figure 8.11 More variation among Asian publics about working together on environment.

lems and unemployment – we have corresponding responses for preferences for national and international solutions. We find much higher support for international solutions to problems of the environment than we do unemployment. Only 28 per cent of Asian respondents and 38 per cent of Europeans seek all countries to work together to find solutions to joblessness, while 49 and 70 per cent, respectively, seek international response to environmental problems.

Country-level analysis shows that the publics of Asian countries vary more over global solutions to environmental problems than do Europeans (see Figure 8.11), where only in Ireland does the number of ‘pro-global’ responses fall below a majority. On unemployment, France and Italy lead the Europeans in seeking global (probably regional) solutions (see Figure 8.12). Both countries have had among the most protracted unemployment problems in Europe, which may mean voters are compelled to look beyond national governments.

These results offer a preliminary assessment of how the publics in two regions understand ‘the division of labour’ between national and international policy responses. Europeans – with their now lengthy experience in regional institution building – are more inclined to support international decision-making. And, as we saw earlier, they are also more likely to perceive problems as having at least international causes in the first place. On military conflict, economic development, the protection of human rights and the environment, we see public opinion in both regions generally supportive of international action. No doubt visible achievements (and headaches) in these areas at the supra-national level mean that the public is already aware of the ‘globalisation’ of these problems. The one area where the publics of both regions are more reticent about international solutions is on unemployment.

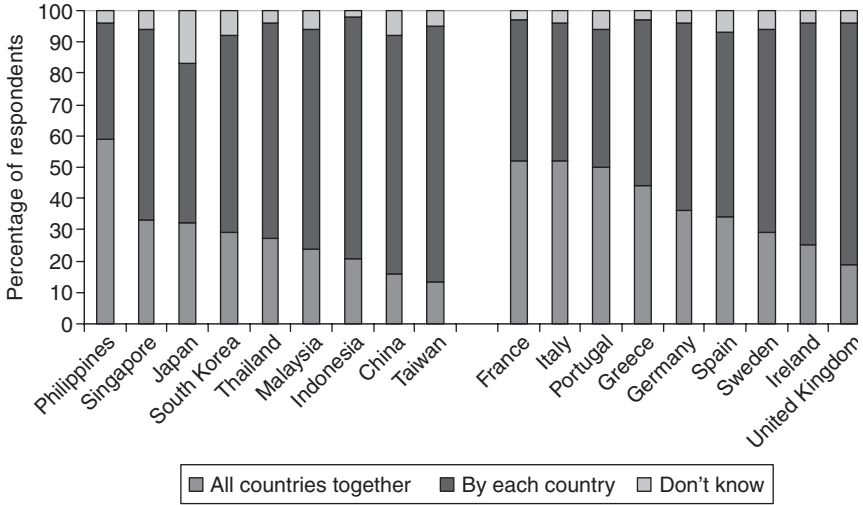


Figure 8.12 National solutions to unemployment prevail in most European and Asian countries.

What does this finding mean? The main point to establish is that there is little visible effort to build institutions that can solve unemployment beyond national boundaries – even in a region like Europe where substantial policy-making infrastructure now exists. Although there are some regional initiatives to combat unemployment (EU funds for development), most of the responsibility for this lies with national governments – and the public seem to recognise or expect this. Clearly, the absence of effective international means for dealing with unemployment (beyond those policies designed to promote growth in developing countries) shapes public opinion. But it may also be true that the public expects that national governments – much like Linda Weiss suggests – will tune their state capacities to ensuring social welfare and employment in adapting to greater global economic integration.

Policy orientations: do regions differ on social and economic outlooks?

So far, we have surveyed policy problems that trouble Asians and Europeans, and considered whether these publics want problems to be addressed nationally or internationally. There is a high degree of recognition of the value of international and regional policy coordination. But, as we have seen in responses to unemployment, which is at the heart of domestic welfare, the public does not think all problems should be solved by international means. This final section addresses broad policy preferences that are particularly relevant in how national

governments adapt to greater economic and political integration: attitudes to social protection and economic protection.

Attitudes to social protection – Asia and Europe

For citizens, the most important and visible area of government activity is the social security system. European states have the most mature and developed social welfare states of any region in the world, although they still vary considerably in generosity, financing and redistributive scope (see Castles, 2004). At the same time, European societies are well known for their preference for social protection, and scholarly work has confirmed this (Svallfors, 1997). Less is established about Asian states and the welfare orientations of their citizens, in part because these institutions are still emerging in most countries (see Ramesh, 2004; Kwon, 2005). However, Asian welfare development is likely to become central to policy development in the coming decades, as the entire economic region grows in affluence and as the region struggles with new policy institutions after the limits of the growth-centred approach were painfully exposed in the 1990s. As Ian Gough remarks '[t]he older confidence in economic growth as the social policy has evaporated' (2000, p. 19).

As Gough's review of social welfare activity in East Asia shows, relatively few resources are devoted to social protection in these countries (2000, p. 8). Indonesia, for example, spends about 3 per cent of GDP on education, health and social protection (Gough, 2000, p. 8). The Philippines spends around 6 per cent and Malaysia 8 per cent (2000, p. 8). No Asian country has come close to the European average for social expenditure, with the exception of Japan. But, as Huck-ju Kwon points out, 'East Asian countries [have] adopted social welfare programmes at lower levels of socioeconomic development than the European countries had done' (2005, p. 1). And, two Asian states in the OECD – South Korea and Japan – have both recorded social expenditure growth at a faster rate than the average for 28 OECD countries. Korea's public social expenditure expanded from 3 per cent of GDP in 1990 to 6 per cent in 2001 and Japan's social expenditure has risen sharply, increasing from 11 per cent in 1990 (the level it had been for the previous decade) to 17 per cent in 2001 (OECD, 2004). In critical areas like health care, there are signs of greater development in the public health systems of South Korea and Taiwan (Kwon, 2005) and in the Philippines (Gough, 2000).

As we noted above, long-held perceptions of Asian values as monolithic or authoritarian are hard to sustain. Indeed, as Inglehart and Welzel (2005, p. 156) have shown, Confucian societies – long held up as having inherently anti-democratic features – are not only more democratic than is assumed, but their level of democratic commitment is following the path of their socio-economic development, and is thus likely to rise further over time. There is a prevailing view that (especially East) Asian countries are also 'anti-welfare' and that authoritarian social structures and economic-growth-first development strategies are mirrored in strong public values of hard work and self-reliance. Do we find weaker support in

the Asian survey countries for social protection than we find for Europe? Although the Asia-Europe Survey does not include a sufficient range of questions to scale responses into a 'welfare orientation scale' with adequate statistical properties, we are still able to evaluate responses to the following statements:

- Incomes should be made equal (*income equality*).
- The government should take responsibility for ensuring that everyone either has a job or is provided with adequate social welfare (*universal minimum provision*).
- A woman's primary role is in the home (*gender equality*).
- Individuals should strive most of all for their own good rather than for the good of society (*individualism versus collectivism*).

Asian respondents are less inclined to support the proposition that incomes should be made more equal than Europeans – 50 versus 74 per cent (see Table 8.6). The exceptions in Asia are Thailand and South Korea, which have preferences similar to most European countries. The result for South Korea is not surprising given strongly reformist preferences revealed elsewhere in this volume. Higher support in Europe for equality is a likely outcome of long-term public policies aimed at reducing inequality that have shifted European preferences (see Svallfors, 1997). This is confirmed when national preferences for making incomes more equal are compared with the Gini coefficients for each country available in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report (2004). We find that most countries with a strong preference for reducing inequality have already obtained a lower level of income inequality (see Figure 8.13). By contrast, a group of Asian countries – Malaysia, China, the Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan – have a high level of income inequality and weak preferences for redistribution.

On another measure of social protection – the government should take responsibility for ensuring that everyone either has a job or is provided with adequate social welfare – Asian responses are as supportive as Europeans (86 v. 84 per cent). The uniform level of support for this proposition deserves a brief explanation. Perhaps respondents everywhere found it hard to *disagree*

Table 8.6 Social policy orientations in the two regions, 2000 (per cent agree)

	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Europe</i>
Incomes should be made more equal	50	74
The government should take responsibility for ensuring that everyone either has a job or is provided with adequate social welfare	86	84
A women's primary role is in the home	30	17
Individuals strive for their own good rather than for the good of society	31	26

Source: Asia-Europe Survey 2002.

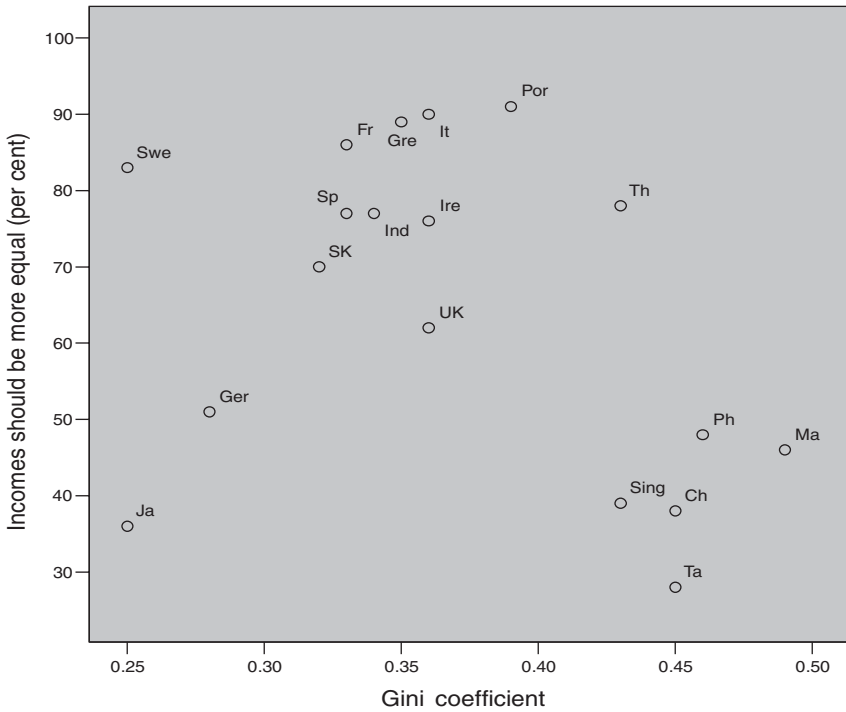


Figure 8.13 European countries have more equal incomes but also prefer lower income inequality.

with this apparently reasonable statement, so the question may not perform the task of revealing real opinion differences about ‘government assistance’ versus ‘self reliance’. But perhaps stronger Asian support for this proposition than the income equality proposition reflects different expectations on what governments will do. Developmental states gain their legitimacy by taking responsibility for growing incomes and employment through government-led economic development, but not through explicit efforts at reducing income inequality (through ‘welfare means’ such as high taxes and high welfare spending).

Attitudes towards gender equality tend to modernise (towards the norm of gender equality) with higher levels of socio-economic development. Still, ensuring equal access to employment and the public sphere is an important component of national social policies. We find that national responses to the proposition that ‘A woman’s primary role is in the home’ vary greatly across the Asian sample (see Figure 8.14). We find a strong adherence to traditional gender expectations in South Korea (despite that country seeking economic redistribution) and a very strong rejection of that tradition in China whose state-socialist heritage has stressed formal equality at least. There is a wide rejection of this proposition among Europeans with Greeks (most supportive) and Swedish (least supportive) at the two extremes.

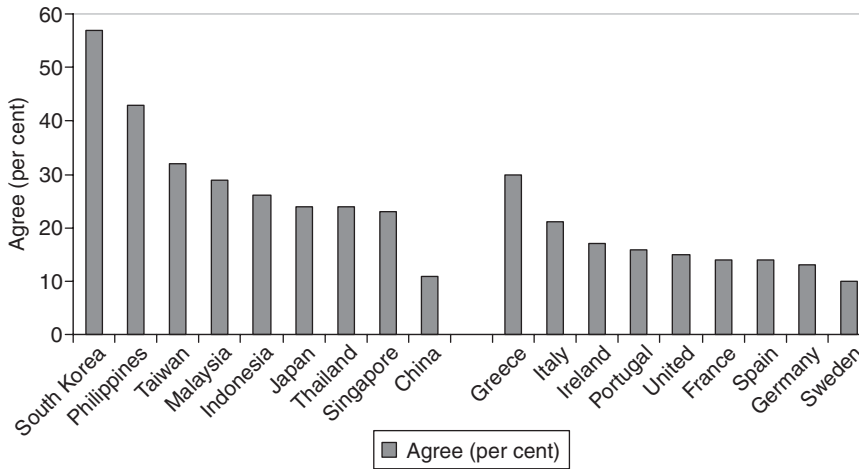


Figure 8.14 Asian countries differ greatly in their responses to women's equality.

Attitudes to economic protection – Asia and Europe

Although protectionism is not typically part of the liberal view of globalisation, national policies to protect local economies and selectively promote globally competitive industries are closer to the reality of greater economic integration. Europe is traditionally known for its preference for economic and cultural protectionism (especially countries like France, which make a strong public virtue out of both). But on three measures, the Asia-Europe Survey suggests that the Asian region remains more protectionist. The margin of difference on the proposition that '[country] should limit the import of foreign products' is relatively small at 4 per cent (49 per cent of Asian respondents agree). But on the proposition that foreigners should not be able to buy land in the respondent's country of residence, we find Asian respondents much more likely to agree (51 v. 28 per cent). And preference for national culture – television should give preference to (locally) made films and programmes – is over 20 per cent higher in Asia than in Europe (62 v. 41 per cent).

We single out preferences for import restrictions for country-level analysis in Figure 8.15. International studies have shown that support for protection *within* countries is higher among low skilled workers, workers whose jobs are exposed to global trade and individuals with relatively lower socio-economic status (Mayda and Rodrik, 2002). But are there also differences between countries – in and between regions? Variations in responses are considerably greater between Asian countries than between their European counterparts. Preferences for restricting imports is low in successful export economies such as Japan and Singapore in Asia (both with big current account surpluses) and in Germany and Sweden (which also are both among Europe's most export-oriented economies). Greece and Thailand are the most protectionist of the two regions.

Table 8.7 Protectionist orientations in the two regions, 2000 (per cent agree)

	Asia	Europe
[Country] should limit the import of foreign products	49	45
Foreigners should not be able to buy land in [country]	51	28
[Country's] television should give preference to [Country's] made films and programmes	62	41

Source: Asia-Europe Survey 2002.

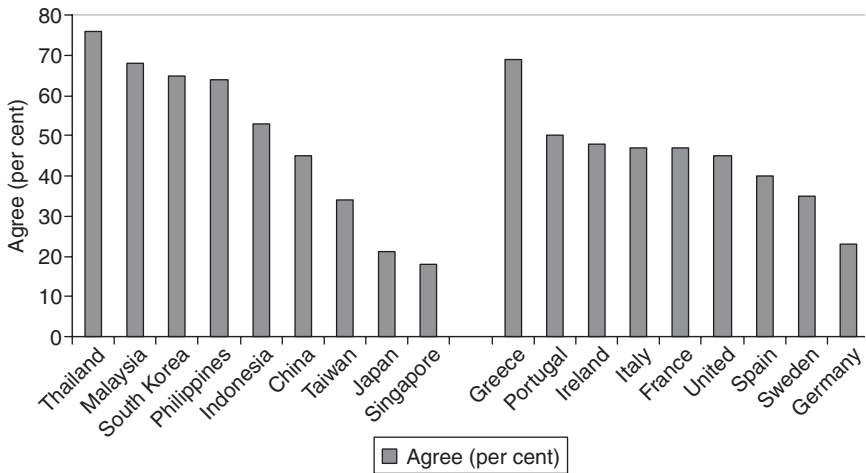


Figure 8.15 Successful export economies in Asia and Europe do not prefer import restrictions.

Conclusion

This chapter has mainly considered how policy problems are shaped by regional and global factors. We find that the policy concerns of Asian survey countries are generally more ‘materialist’ – consistent with their level of socio-economic development. In Europe, however, ‘postmaterial’ policy priorities emerge as also important, particularly for the environment and the state of public services. These generalisations do not account for intra-regional differences that depend on more cautious explanations attuned to history, culture and politics, and in most cases beyond the scope of our immediate research. Yet another set of policy problems confront European societies, which we have called here problems of social integration (immigration, ethnic and religious conflict), which indicate plenty of conflict over the future of multicultural societies.

Two policy problems stand out particularly across the regions: corruption and

unemployment. Governments are seen as failing to address both adequately. Europeans are generally more likely to see economic and environmental problems as international in their origin and support international efforts at managing them. The Asian survey countries – and particularly the East Asian countries of China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – are most likely to view policy problems as national in their origin and management. However, Europeans share with citizens of most Asian countries surveyed the view that unemployment remains a national policy problem and believe national governments are responsible for solving it. Clearly, the publics of most countries entrust national governments to play an active role in securing adequate employment *regardless* of the larger question about the role of global forces in shaping the economic opportunities afforded to national governments. Part of these expectations for national action may be closely linked to highly visible past or ongoing efforts to create full employment by national governments, and the absence of plausible global alternatives.

Scholars and commentators outside Asia are increasingly less prone to see the Asian region as united by ‘Asian values’, even when Asian leaders themselves have referred to such values for various, often convenient, reasons (see Sen, 1997; Blondel, 2006). Understood in this way, Asian values have often referred to the ethics of hard work, self-support (extrapolated to mean anti-welfare) and being undemocratic (tolerance for authoritarian politics). Inglehart and Welzel undermine these assumptions in demonstrating that the publics of Confucian societies are more committed to democracy than is assumed. We also find here that Asian expectations of social policy are not sharply different from the ones held by Europeans. Although some differences in expectations of women, the role of individual achievement and income inequality are apparent, the most important findings of this chapter are that European and Asian citizens hold similarly strong expectations of government in providing welfare and employment and Asian citizens are no more inclined to seek economic growth at the expense of the environment.

Appendix

To measure the impact of international economic integration, we rely on the following index provided by *Foreign Policy* magazine (see Table 8.A1; see Table 8.A1 notes for measurement details). Three of the top four most economically integrated economies in the world are included in the ASES study – Singapore, Ireland, Malaysia and Sweden. Generally, Asian countries outperform their European counterparts on foreign trade, but the reverse holds true for foreign investment.

Table 8.A1 Ranking of eighteen countries by global economic exposure

	<i>Foreign trade</i>	<i>Foreign investment</i>	<i>Overall economic</i>
Singapore	1	1	1
Ireland	4	2	2
Malaysia	2	21	4
Sweden	21	6	12
Thailand	7	43	14
Taiwan	13	32	18
Spain	42	11	22
France	46	10	24
China	36	19	26
Philippines	41	51	28
United Kingdom	45	20	32
South Korea	25	47	38
Germany	30	54	43
Portugal	34	53	44
Italy	50	40	47
Indonesia	37	59	50
Greece	48	58	55
Japan	62	52	62

Source: *Foreign Policy?* (2005). Available online at: www.foreignpolicy.com.

Note

Countries ranked in the respective categories of trade and FDI by percentage of GDP.

Notes

- 1 We acknowledge that, perhaps increasingly, the provision of goods like public services and the state of the environment have clear material implications, as do Inglehart and Welzel (2005).
- 2 Speculating on the question of Asian values and the welfare state, Peter Lindert (2004 p. 29) points out
Convergence toward the OECD standard of high social transfers will probably occur even in East Asia, contrary to the frequent rhetoric about antistatist “Asian values”. As their populations age, even those countries where official dogma espouses Confucian traditions of reliance and family support will experience a rise in public pensions and other social transfers as a share of GDP’.
- 3 We do note, however, that Spain’s (very high) unemployment is dropping relative to other southern welfare states (Italy, Greece and Portugal).

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