


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Why mission-directed governance risks authoritarianism: lessons from East Asia

Bryan Cheang 

STICERD, London School of Economics, London, UK  
Email: [b.cheang@lse.ac.uk](mailto:b.cheang@lse.ac.uk)

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## Abstract

Recently, scholars have advanced an ideal of the entrepreneurial state in which industrial policy is pursued in a mission-directed manner. Crucially, this perspective does not merely call for the heavier use of industrial policy, but envisions the state as a central focal point, mobilising society around the pursuit of a common mission. Using the historical example of East Asia's developmental state, which closely resembles its contemporary variant, I demonstrate that mission-directionality – should it be consistently applied – tends towards the pursuit of a singular overarching mission, and could require the use of authoritarian and disciplinary mechanisms to sustain mission focus in an environment of uncertainty. In turn, this potential risk arises because mission-directionality seeks to transcend the otherwise directionless nature of market-based and democratic decision-making through the use of bureaucratic discretion, to align the behaviour of social actors in a cohesive and directional manner.

**Keywords:** East Asia; entrepreneurial state; industrial policy; liberal democracy; mission directionality; moonshot; uncertainty

## Introduction

Industrial policy has regained attention from prominent economists such as Joseph Stiglitz (2017), Dani Rodrik (2022), and Paul Krugman (2023). Industrial policy is closely related to the normative ideal of the entrepreneurial state, which transcends the mere use of interventionist tools by but expecting the state to ambitiously address grand challenges such as solving the climate emergency. Mariana Mazzucato (2021a) advances precisely such a political ideal, unburdened by neoliberalism, in which social actors all work towards a collective goal, with the state playing a central role driving radical social transformation.

Overwhelmingly, many of these advocates point to East Asian nations as exemplars worth imitating (see Chang and Andreoni, 2020; Coyle and Muhtar, 2021 for examples). It is said that countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore not only used industrial policy but also 'demonstrate how to combine planning with market forces' (Aiginger and Rodrik, 2020). Special focus is placed on how their bureaucracies exercised the necessary capacity to drive innovation and other successes (Kattel *et al.*, 2022).

Critics of industrial policy have raised concerns about its effectiveness (Henrekson *et al.*, 2024; Karlson *et al.*, 2021; McCloskey and Mingardi, 2020; Mingardi, 2015; Wennberg and Sandstrom, 2022), with some of these critiques involving East Asia (Audretsch and Fiedler, 2022; Cheang, 2022, 2023). This paper however is not focused on whether industrial policy works, or whether East Asia's success was due to 'free markets' or 'state intervention', which are old questions that have not produced a consensus one way or another. The more important issue I consider is the

political implications of pursuing mission-directed governance on the institutions of liberal democracy, which has not received adequate attention. This is surprising considering that the mission-directed entrepreneurial state is essentially a normative theory of state–society relations and not just the mere use of industrial policy, and even more so because East Asian developmental states were established by authoritarian leaders.

In this paper, I argue that the consistent pursuit of mission-directionality comes with the serious risk of authoritarianism because the internal logic of this mode of governance *tends towards* the singular pursuit of and consensus around a mission, failing which the problem of uncertainty that it seeks to solve persists unabated. The singular nature of this ‘missionary position’ means that the state has to subordinate the diverse aims of private actors and align them towards a single ethical code. In so doing, society, which in normal circumstances facilitates the disparate pursuit of often incommensurable ends by individuals, is treated as a closed ‘organisation’ (a ‘taxis’) in which the state exerts a totalising effect. The underlying lesson is that ‘individual freedom cannot be reconciled with the supremacy of one single purpose to which the whole society must be entirely and permanently subordinated’ (Hayek, 1944: 211).

I exemplify this argument through a historical investigation of East Asia’s developmental state, detailing how it arose within circumstances that favoured the emergence of authoritarian governance, and how it resorted to the suppression of dissent to maintain focus on the mission of economic growth. The onset of democratisation in the 1980s diminished state capacity in Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, whereas Singapore persisted with the authoritarian path until the present day, making it the last-standing developmental state notwithstanding China. Moreover, the communitarian culture meant that East Asians willingly identified with collective goals and thus legitimised such authoritarianism. By examining these institutional details, I argue that contemporary proposals to establish mission-directed governance along similar lines would *at best* be futile given the absence of a similar communitarian ethos, and *at worst*, seriously compromise liberal norms in democratic societies.

Granted, entrepreneurial state advocates do not seek to coercively impose missions onto society but claim to be respectful of the democratic process, whether when selecting missions or engaging citizens after one has been selected (see Mazzucato, 2021a: ch. 5). I argue that this is an untenable combination because democratic processes both assume and generate a *diversity* of views, which conflict with the *singularity* of mission-directed governance. It is the underlying logic of mission-directed governance that promotes a tendency towards the mobilisation around a singular mission, without which its aim of being a central focal point is rendered impossible.

The contribution of this paper is to exemplify this argument by showing how the early establishment of the developmental state in East Asia involved the suppression of competing interests, to maintain collective solidarity around the mission of national development. I will draw on available literature to show how these developmental states arose in ‘emergency situations’ which favoured and legitimised authoritarian rule, and how disciplinary mechanisms – ranging from outright repression to softer tactics – were utilised to sustain mission focus on the national imperative of growth. The reason why this is relevant to the contemporary entrepreneurial state literature is because they are not merely content with using industrial policy, but forging the same kind of collective solidarity over specific missions. The East Asian developmental state is the closest historical approximation of mission-directed industrial policy-centric governance and provides relevant historical lessons.

### *The ideal of mission-directionality, not mere industrial policy*

It is wise to clarify key terms. This paper is not critical of ‘industrial policy’ *per se*, understood as ‘policies that explicitly target the transformation of the structure of economic activity in pursuit of some public goal’ (Juhasz *et al.*, 2024). These policies, including but not exclusive to provision of incentives, protectionism, and direct government investment, are ubiquitous, especially amongst contemporary governments. Rather, what I criticise is the concept of ‘mission-directionality’, i.e. the pursuit of public goals in a mission-directed manner, whereby state capacity is focused towards politically ambitious, large-scale

goals and where social actors are marshalled around a common mission. Mission-directionality exists on a spectrum and may be episodic or localised, e.g. the Apollo programme, or ‘war on poverty’, or within militaries. However, what is episodic or localised in the usual course of governance is being elevated here as a *central feature* in the normative ideal of the entrepreneurial state.

As such, when this paper refers to the ‘entrepreneurial state’, it is not referring to specific industrial policy projects that governments have undertaken, whether successfully or not. It is trivially obvious to anyone that many industrial policies have been carried out by existing democratic governments under mixed economies. That obvious fact is irrelevant to this paper’s argument, which is rather concerned about the yet-to-be-realised consequences of consistently emphasising mission-directionality in governance. The mission-directed entrepreneurial state, henceforth simply called ‘the entrepreneurial state’, is not simply a proposal for ‘more intervention’, but a *normative political ideal* of how state–society relations are to be restructured, towards one where the state acts as a central focal point. Crucially, the theory has an aspirational aspect, in that it seeks to radically transform contemporary governance, said to be wedded to ‘neoliberalism’. Lest I am accused of misrepresentation, let us take our cue from Mazzucato, who explains that this ‘transformation’ entails ‘changing the relationship between public and private sectors, and between them and civil society, so they all work symbiotically for a common goal. The reason for rethinking government is simple: only government has the capacity to bring about transformation on the scale needed’ (2021a: 205). Therefore, the entrepreneurial state theory that this paper is directed against is not reducible to specific government projects – such as the Apollo Project mentioned in Mazzucato’s (2013) earlier book<sup>1</sup> – but rather a new normative ideal of a directive state unburdened by neoliberalism.

Why then is East Asia relevant? It must be conceded that the ‘developmental state’ of East Asia was primarily geared towards the goal of catch-up growth, whereas the entrepreneurial state is concerned with other objectives, whether innovation, or climate change abatement, etc. However, as this paper will show, both share a *similar, underlying commitment to mission-directionality*, even if the direction of travel is different. It is this emphasis on mission-directionality that is the target of this paper’s criticism. It would be disingenuous therefore for entrepreneurial state advocates to object to the inclusion of East Asia, especially because they have themselves, in a recent articulation titled ‘how to make an entrepreneurial state work’ (see Kattel *et al.*, 2022), invoked East Asian examples heavily, drawing lessons from its experience to justify their institutional recommendations. They cannot reasonably object to the admissibility of East Asia’s evidentiary value without undermining their own account. Since East Asia is invoked, the legitimate question to ask is whether these scholars have properly appreciated its political dynamics. Yet, Rainer Kattel *et al.* (2022) spend pages discussing how East Asian bureaucracies operated without a single mention of how they were embedded within authoritarian regimes, a curious omission for a book that claims to focus on institutional considerations.

### State as a central focal point

The entrepreneurial state’s role is to provide stabilising confidence in a world of uncertainty. An important premise of Mazzucato’s argument is that economic agents operate in a world of radical ‘Knightian’ uncertainty. In such an environment, because private entrepreneurs are crippled by uncertainty, the state may ameliorate this problem by providing the much-needed stability and confidence that are otherwise absent. Using Keynesian terminology, entrepreneurs are subject to ‘animal spirits’, and as a result behave as timid ‘pussycats’ (Mazzucato, 2013: introduction). They dare not venture into long-term strategic investments. As a result, ‘the state is not only important for the usual Keynesian countercyclical reasons stepping in when demand and investment is too low – but also at any time in the business cycle to play the role of real tigers. Nowhere is this truer than in the world of innovation – where uncertainty is so high (Mazzucato, 2013: introduction)’.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, the United States’ Apollo moonshot (or NASA, or Silicon Valley clusters, etc.) was not *the* entrepreneurial state, but rather provides lessons for how the *normative ideal* of the mission-directed entrepreneurial state may be achieved in future (see Mazzucato, 2021a: ch. 5).

The entrepreneurial state does so through activist policymaking that is focused in a *specific direction*, around which social actors are marshalled. Traditional economic theory is supposedly inadequate in that it only sees interventionism as a response to market failures. The state ought to transcend this limitation to actively shape and even create markets where they do not even exist. In alignment with Keynesian theory, the entrepreneurial state should ‘do those things which at present are not done at all’ (Keynes, 1926 as quoted by Mazzucato, 2013: introduction). Such state activism resolves the problem of uncertainty and provides the directionality – or what Keynes called ‘directive intelligence’ – that the market lacks. Just as Polaris (the North Star) provides a crucial guidepost for navigators, the entrepreneurial state functions as a central focal point in a sea of economic uncertainty.

The important insight here is that such an ideal *tends towards a singular mission* for directionality to be sustained. If the problem of uncertainty is to be resolved, then admitting diverse missions to be simultaneously pursued would be counter-productive. As economic agents all work according to their own plans, the market is consequently purposeless, or in other words, ‘an open system’ with no teleological end. This is the very problem that the entrepreneurial state seeks to overcome in the first place. If diverse missions are allowed by the state, then the initial problem of uncertainty is reintroduced. It is only by aligning economic agents with a singular mission that the entrepreneurial state can lead socio-economic change within an environment of uncertainty, just as a ‘roaring tiger’ assumes a commanding position over a clutter of timid ‘pussycats’. Analogously, the epistemic value of the North Star arises precisely because it stands distinctively above all other stars, which appear to revolve around it, making it an excellent fixed point for celestial navigation.

Entrepreneurial state theorists do not explicitly advocate for one single mission to be achieved above all else. Mazzucato’s 2021 account outlines three different missions that may be chosen: a green new deal, innovating for accessible public health, and narrowing the digital divide (2021a). Governments inspired by her approach, for instance, the current Labour administration in the United Kingdom, have also spoken of missions in the plural (Pannell, 2024). However, to the extent that multiple missions are simultaneously pursued by a certain government, the ideal of mission-directionality is subverted, because it reintroduces the very problem the entrepreneurial state seeks to solve: the lack of a clear direction. Remember: the very thrust of Mazzucato’s argument rests on her dissatisfaction with how ‘the current state of the typical instruments used by governments, such as taxation, fiscal policy and monetary policy, is rudderless. There is no systemic directionality towards de-financialisation or sustainability’ (2021a: 24). Should £100m be allocated towards defence spending or green investment, or between objectives X, Y, Z, and so on? In the face of inevitably conflicting missions, a consistent commitment to ‘systemic directionality’ requires the selective and deliberate prioritisation of some missions over others, and taken to its fullest extent, one mission above all. Entrepreneurial state advocates may not wish to pursue this logic so consistently, but if this is so, then they need to be content with the realities of democratic politics which is typically ‘rudderless’, rather than correct this natural fact.

The innovative contributions of entrepreneurial state theory should be acknowledged. It does not aim at comprehensive planning but rather envisions a role for private enterprise and sees collaborative public–private partnerships as an essential part of the innovation ecosystem. The hope is that such fruitful partnerships may be catalysed by the entrepreneurial state so that both business and government are ‘working together’ to ‘achieve a common mission’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 129). Also, in addition to Keynesian stability, the entrepreneurial state also acts like a Schumpeterian innovator, a combination labelled ‘agile stability’ (Kattel *et al.*, 2022). This is achieved through ensuring that its internal structure is responsive to change, and by allowing a degree of experimentation to private actors. As a result, the entrepreneurial state claims to steer away from the traditional ‘picking winners and losers’ approach of industrial policy. Mazzucato (2021a: 53) writes:

If a government is to act as an investor of first resort and steer an economy towards meeting goals such as a digital revolution or the green transition, of course it will need to make bets and pick winners. But it should pick a direction, and within that direction take a wide portfolio approach. In other words, not pick one technology, or a random sector (usually one of those that lobbies hardest), or even a type of firm (SMEs) but a direction that can foster and catalyse new

collaborations across multiple sectors and have as a key spillover the growth of firms that engage with it. In that sense it is not about picking winners, but picking the willing.

In other words, the entrepreneurial state must ‘pick a direction’ but leave stakeholders to experiment with diverse strategies to reach the chosen mission. As such, Mazzucato’s ideal consciously claims to be in the democratic spirit, through engaging and involving citizens in the design of missions and their implementation.

However, despite these claims, the problem that remains is that the ideal being favoured is nonetheless wedded to the state having to ‘pick a direction’, and thus having to mobilise society towards it. Two related problems arise. First, this position commits itself to the use of discretion by bureaucrats, who make subjective judgements about the desirability of missions. Even though theorists claim to be cognisant of experimentation under uncertainty, their position requires bureaucrats to occupy an external position from which to direct how private actors behave. Second, this position is at odds with respect for the democratic will, because it puts bureaucrats in a prime position to adjudicate between the inevitable conflicts that arise in the policy formulation process. Let us explore these problems one at a time.

### *Bureaucratic discretion*

The entrepreneurial state ideal rests on an internal inconsistency over how complexity is to be managed. On the one hand, the entrepreneurial state vision consciously embraces experimentation rather than meddling interference. According to Mazzucato (2021a: 154), this is necessary because the problems being dealt with, such as narrowing the digital divide, are complex ‘wicked’ problems that ‘cannot be solved in a linear way’, and thus require experimentation. Yet, her ‘wide portfolio’ experimentation works *within* the parameters of a pre-chosen mission where the state must first ‘pick a direction’. This is akin to allowing drivers to experiment with different routes and driving styles but expecting them to arrive at the same destination.

Mazzucato’s theory is ostensibly sensitive to the challenge of complexity, recognising that social problems are inherently multifaceted and resistant to simple solutions. Yet, there is no recognition that complexity is precisely the *raison d’être* of the market process, rather than its death knell. It is precisely because agents operate in an environment of uncertainty, and where human action may lead to unpredictable outcomes, that market-based decision-making is advantageous in facilitating trial-and-error learning (DeCanio, 2014; Hayek, 1978; Kirzner, 1973). Specifically, markets facilitate the comparison of multiple counterfactuals which are necessarily eliminated in the context of the state, which must make a singular decision (DeCanio, 2021). Over time, new techniques, products, and approaches are discovered, as improvements supersede old procedures. Importantly, this process exhibits no directionality and is reflective of the random selection and adaptation in the evolutionary paradigm.

The entrepreneurial state ideal of Mazzucato does not eliminate experimentation *per se*, but rather limits its scope to questions of means, i.e. how to achieve a certain mission after one has been picked. This position simplistically divorces means and ends, and assumes that experimentation of one is possible without the other. Numerous economists have shown that preferences are subject to dynamic change, especially when agents encounter ever-changing conditions (see Delmotte and Dold, 2022 for a summary). The possibility that agents, when experimenting with means, also discover new ends, must be recognised. Imagine a thought experiment involving a passionate graduate student named Joe, who determines to accomplish the mission of being a Nobel Laureate specialising in the ills of neoliberal governance. He adopts a ‘wide portfolio’ approach as he trials different strategies for academic success. Along the journey, he might realise that neoliberalism is great after all. He might abandon academic life altogether, to be a social entrepreneur, or simply be an ‘ordinary joe’. The same process of experimentation applied to discovery of means can very well revise ends too. Conversely, if a certain mission is elevated indefinitely, certain means are foreclosed: Joe will probably have to abandon playing video games daily, which would be counter-productive in fostering intellectual vitality.

Granted, mission-directed governance consciously accommodates adaptation under radical uncertainty. The theory envisions state actors as operating within open systems that ‘are full of uncertainty and ambiguity’, where there is a need ‘to adapt to the underlying complexity’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 203). This is also based on a rejection of ‘the lens of mainstream economics’ where the focus is on ‘equilibrium and ideal outcomes’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 202–203). If this position is accepted, then the state is no different from any other entrepreneurial agent, because it is *similarly embedded* within the same environment of radical uncertainty as private actors. It is impossible for a state, however entrepreneurial, to simultaneously be embedded within an environment of uncertainty but somehow occupy a standpoint above said complexities to achieve mission-directionality. If the state is to achieve mission-directionality, it must enjoy access to a standard of knowledge unavailable to typical market agents, to ‘steer’ them towards the chosen mission.

Market process theory, viewed from a disequilibrium perspective, therefore already provides a theoretical framework that addresses the concerns of complexity, rendering the whole notion of a mission-directed form of governance superfluous. As this conclusion is rejected for being neoliberal, then Mazzucato’s position is, despite claims to the contrary, committed to bureaucratic discretion which interferes with the diverse experiments undertaken by market agents to bring about ‘directionality’. If drivers are expected to arrive at the same destination regardless of how much leeway is accorded during the journey, then corrective measures must be implemented if some veer off. Entrepreneurship fosters deviance.

Importantly, I am not necessarily committed to *laissez-faire*. The criticism rather is against the view that the state must engage in large-scale social transformation. Even ‘socialist’ policies, assuming done on a small-scale, are compatible with the liberal order (Hodgson, 2019). The problem with the ideal of the entrepreneurial state is that it claims that ‘the case for radical change is overwhelming’, believing that ‘only government has the capacity to steer the transformation on the scale needed’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 23). If such ambitious state energies are applied towards a ‘direction’, then it is disingenuous to simultaneously appeal to the evolutionary paradigm (see Mazzucato, 2016: 147–148), which is inherently gradual, incremental, and open-ended. Evolution is a slow process operating without any predetermined direction, leading to adaptations that are contingent on random events and changing environments (Aldrich *et al.*, 2008). There is no ‘systemic directionality’ in evolution.

### *Values, tradeoffs, and democratic choice*

When bureaucratic discretion is licensed, conflicts between alternative missions are being decided in a forum outside of the democratic process. The central point here is not about the rightness of the mission being chosen, but who gets to decide the mission to be pursued.

The fundamental problem is that entrepreneurial state downplays tradeoffs.<sup>2</sup> Take for example the point by Mazzucato who claims that the ‘greatest problem of our time’ is the ‘climate emergency’ (2021a: 138). Significantly, solving such a grand mission requires one to reject an obsession with the ‘costs of our public services’, which is the ‘assumption that if we spend more in one area, we have to spend less in another’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 4). Cost considerations are secondary to achieving the mission. Budgetary allocation only comes *after*, to be formulated ‘to help fulfil the mission to which it is allocated, whether it be putting a man on the moon or eliminating homelessness or building a carbon-neutral city’ (Mazzucato, 2021a: 92). In other words, accomplish the mission even at exorbitant cost.

The implications of such an approach may be further investigated in the context of climate policy. Here, environmental economist William Nordhaus has estimated that the costs of climate inaction, in the worst-case scenario amount to approximately 2.9% of GDP by 2100, in line with the 2.6% estimate of the 2018 UN Climate Report (IPCC, 2018; Nordhaus and Moffat, 2017). Given this figure, a sensible policy response would be to ensure that climate policies are not more costly than that which would

<sup>2</sup>In an important paper, Randall Holcombe (2024) shows that the entrepreneurial state cannot be entrepreneurial, and is at best an ‘engineer’, because it is limited to maximising specific technical objectives rather than addressing the economic problem of choice between competing ends.



be incurred anyway. The problem with many of existing climate policies under the Paris Agreement, as some have shown, is that it comes with significant transition costs but ‘relatively insignificant emissions reductions’ (Li *et al.*, 2017). Further estimates show that these costs vary from 1 to 2 trillion annually by 2030, with most of the costs borne by developing countries (Lomborg, 2020). If these figures are true, it means that more modest abatement strategies are preferable, to ensure that policy costs are minimised. These may include a combination of carbon taxes, climate adaptation, and pro-innovation measures. Yet, these measures are precisely rejected by entrepreneurial state theorists on the basis that they are ‘lethargic’ instruments that are not ambitious and mission-directed enough (Mazzucato, 2021a: 143).

Naturally, there are legitimate debates to be had about the accuracy of respective cost estimates. The point is not that climate change is insignificant, or that Pigovian solutions are the most optimal. Advocates of mission-directed governance may be right about the severity of the climate emergency and the attendant response. These legitimate disagreements in environmentalism stem from the difficulty of accurately engaging in cost–benefit analysis, considering the inherent subjectivity involved in individual perceptions of costs and benefits (Pennington, 2001). This not only makes statistical modelling an imperfect exercise, but also renders any judgement about what the ‘greatest problem’ is to be at best reflective of one’s *subjective* interpretation. When asked what the top global priorities were, a global survey of almost 10 million people by the United Nations identified access to education, health, and jobs as the most pressing, with ‘action on climate change’ last on the list (see Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2015).

Given such legitimate and natural disagreements over policy goals, the value of liberal democracy is that it provides a collective forum for alternative values to be balanced. Citizens get to choose between different policy priorities advanced by rival parties, arrive at some compromise, and possibly change course at periodic intervals. Realistically, the democratic process does not exhibit any specific ‘directionality’ towards any one mission and is often cyclical, marked by gridlock and inertia. The entrepreneurial state ideal, by emphasising mission-directionality, short-circuits the vicissitudes of democracy in favour of a partial interpretation by bureaucrats of what the desired mission ought to be.

The entrepreneurial state ideal consciously claims to be in the democratic spirit, by engaging in stakeholderism. However, there is a latent ambiguity as to how such stakeholder participation is operationalised, demonstrating the lingering tension between the demands of mission-directionality and democratic disagreement. If the state has to first ‘pick a direction’, then this means that citizens and stakeholders enter the picture subsequently *after* a mission has been pre-decided. Discussion, deliberation, and stakeholder collaboration would rubber-stamp what has already been picked by the state, hardly a commitment to genuine democracy. If, however, stakeholder involvement is incorporated *concurrently* as the mission is being formulated, then different voices are brought to bear on the policy process and can undermine the mission-directionality that is sought in the first place. What is to prevent diverse interest groups from steering the agenda towards their preferred mission? At this point, the crucial question is that if democratic deliberation results in a mission (or multiple missions) that conflicts with what the entrepreneurial state had expected, would it override the collective will?

Interestingly, entrepreneurial state theorists claim to be respectful of the democratic will. Mazzucato writes on the importance of having ‘true participation’, because ‘open systems are more reactive to what can be seen as a countervailing power, i.e. dissension’ (2021a: 202). If this is taken seriously, and the full scope of democratic contestation, deliberation and disagreement is embraced, then this is simply the practice of liberal democracy that most Western nations *already have*. In this scenario, the entrepreneurial state is simply executing a mission that the democratic process has already collectively decided, in which case the entire concept of mission-directed governance is hardly unique or even necessary. In short, either the entrepreneurial state is superfluous in existing liberal democracy, or it has to in some way subordinate the democratic will to a pre-chosen mission.

Therefore, the entrepreneurial state ideal advanced by Mazzucato seems to rest on an equivocation between an emphasis on mission-directionality on the one hand, and the claim to democratic stakeholderism on the other. In her account, who gets to decide ‘what is to be done’ is answered by the paradigm of ‘voice’, using Hirschman’s terms (Mazzucato, 2024). However, she downplays the

possibility of deep disagreement and the potential for seemingly innocuous missions such as ‘sustainability’ to be more controversial than expected. Disagreement, even irreconcilable ones, is an endemic feature of democracy, and which isn’t always ameliorated by deliberation (Gaus, 1997; Sunstein, 2002). Consequently, democracy’s value stems from its peaceful, open-ended resolution of differences, rather than any tendency towards ‘systemic directionality’. Any collective agreement reached within ‘voice’ is fleeting at best, to be replaced at the next electoral cycle or by a new coalition of interests. To give full respect to democratic voice means that the state must simply be a *follower* of the ever-changing public will, rather than *lead* structural change.

### Enforcing collective solidarity in East Asia

This section will exemplify the above argument through a historical account of East Asia’s developmental state, which is an instance of mission-directed governance, one that arose in emergency circumstances. The state, to maintain mission focus on the pursuit of economic development, found it needful to discipline social actors who might undermine its economic strategy. This recalls Manuel Castell’s observation that ‘the fundamental element in the ability of developmental states to fulfil their project was their political capacity to impose and internalise their logic on the civil societies’ (1992: 64). Consequently, it is no coincidence that mission-directed governance reached its apex under East Asian developmental states under authoritarian regimes, whether it is the Kuomintang’s (KMT) martial law in Taiwan until 1987, the autocracy in Korea from 1961 to 1987, or Singapore’s one-party governance under the People’s Action Party (PAP) until today. The authoritarian politics of the region are echoed by East Asian scholars, who have said that ‘each policy transition was accompanied by a reconsolidation of authoritarian domination in all the East Asian cases’ (Chu, 2016: 10; Haggard, 1990).

### Why the developmental state is mission-directed

The developmental state in East Asia has several characteristics that make it the closest recent approximation of the mission-directed entrepreneurial state ideal discussed above. Both heavily adopt industrial policy, whether involving infant-industry protection, provision of targeted subsidies, or government investment spending. Critically, these industrial policies are pursued by ‘pilot agencies’ who take the lead in driving economic policy. These agencies enjoy high bureaucratic discretion with which they influence private actors, but yet are said to be sufficiently autonomous from them (Evans, 2012). This ‘embedded autonomy’ means that policies can be crafted with long-term continuity, without interruption from democratic processes or being hijacked by interest groups.

The reason why the East Asian developmental state is an instance of mission-directed industrial policy is because there is a high degree of elite consensus, and in fact across society, around the pre-chosen mission of national economic growth. It transcends the mere use of industrial policy, because ‘what distinguishes developmental states from others is not the existence of intervention per se but rather the developmental ambition and elite consensus that frames that intervention and the existence of institutional capacities that help translate ambition into more or less effective policy outcomes’ (Thurbon, 2014: 11). Of course, the modern entrepreneurial state’s desired mission is not catch-up growth, which is typically favoured by developing countries. Yet the underlying ingredient of mission-directionality is present.

As explained above, mission-directionality exists on a spectrum. In East Asian developmental states, not only did state elites imbibe a shared commitment towards the national mission of growth, this collective solidarity also extended to broader society as well. In other words, it is truly a case where ‘all work symbiotically for a common goal’, in so far as this ‘goal’ was catch-up growth. Developmental state theorists have written extensively on this collective solidarity, calling it a ‘developmental mindset’ or ‘developmental determination’, which if absent makes citizens unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices for national growth (Thurbon, 2016; Woo-Cumings, 2019). Consequently, many post-war Western governments, such as France, cannot be classified as a developmental state even though industrial policy was heavily used, because they lacked a ‘solidaristic vision’ around a common mission (see Loriaux,



1999). Whatever the precise terminologies, East Asian development is clearly an instance of mission-directed governance because the entire *public consciousness* – and not just disparate actors in government – was cohesively directed towards a common mission.

### *Emergency wartime mentality*

The historical origins of the East Asian developmental state are instructive. History shows that wartime and emergency-like circumstances favour the growth of state power (Higgs, 1987). It is in such periods that there emerges a singular mission that is held in collective agreement by people, whether it is defeat of foreign invaders or the extermination of a contagious virus, which otherwise is absent in the usual course of life (Hayek, 1944; Pennington, 2021).<sup>3</sup> This is why military rulers and tactics are applied during such times to accomplish the mission at hand. Framed from an epistemic perspective, such emergencies create background conditions of radical uncertainty that call for the stability and confidence that authoritarian rulers are said to provide.

Emergencies do not by themselves entail authoritarianism. Much depends on conditions within ‘critical junctures’, time-windows when alternative trajectories of institutional development are possible (Soifer, 2012). In the critical juncture of post-Second World War, the rebuilding process in the Western world proceeded in a democratic fashion, because it could draw on its prior historical inheritance of liberalism. In East Asia however, there was no such historical memory to draw on, and it thus saw the emergence of strong rulers to overcome conditions of high uncertainty.

In East Asia, the tumultuous circumstances experienced, whether in terms of Singapore’s ejection from Malaysia, the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War and Japanese occupation in Taiwan, wartime devastation in Japan, or the upheavals of the Korean War in South Korea, all sowed the seeds for authoritarian governance to take root. The first aspect was high economic uncertainty, arising due to a post-war shortage of supplies, rampant inflation, and destruction of capital. Keynesian-style economic planning was deemed necessary to stabilise the situation, an approach that was further entrenched because of American support for these regimes. Japan’s post-war developmental state may be traced back to the pre-war institutions and wartime planning set up by the fascist regime. As Erich Pauer (1999: 1–38) has shown in his analysis, the post-war solidaristic vision has continuities with the pre-war ideology of ‘*kyodo-shugi*’ – which called for economic nationalism as a basis of policy – and the post-war planning agencies were similarly traceable to wartime bodies in the fascist era. Remember that unlike the West, East Asia did not enjoy a liberal inheritance. As such, the emergence of top-down planning in post-war Japan drew from its illiberal past: ‘a considerable amount of Japan’s post-war government industrial policies and regulations stemmed from prewar planning’ (Nakamura, 1990: 3–20, 1999: 21).

Economic uncertainty was compounded by social instability. For example, in the Singapore case, there was great ethnic fractionalisation which spilled over into open communal conflict. This conflict was partially within the Chinese community, but mainly between the Chinese and non-Chinese communities over the question of race. This issue culminated in the expulsion of Singapore from the Malay federation due to the former’s insistence on being a multi-racial state. This social instability heightened the already pressing economic uncertainty of how a small state with no domestic hinterland would survive. It was in this context that the elites from the ruling PAP dominated the political landscape and ever since legitimised themselves as guardians of stability. A ‘wartime’ siege mentality has always been part of the Singapore public consciousness, and its citizens have become permanently ‘militarised civilians’ (Chong and Chan, 2017). Crucially, this social dimension helps us understand that the developmental state did not just engage in economic interventions, but also reached far into the sphere of civil society to engineer favourable conditions within which the mission of growth could be frictionlessly achieved.

<sup>3</sup>Strikingly, in the wake of COVID-19, Mazzucato (2020) urged ‘let’s not let this crisis go to waste’, because it is an emergency situation that makes her preferred ideal more desirable.

### *Disciplinary control for mission focus*

If economic growth was such an overriding imperative, then the mission-directed state would need to exert itself into the private sphere to engineer favourable conditions for said mission to be accomplished and to counter threats that might undermine it. In other words, to maintain 'mission focus', disciplinary mechanisms would have to be employed, which range from outright repression to subtler tools, all of which were seen in East Asia.

In the early stages of the East Asian developmental state, rival social classes had to be marginalised. This concerned the state's economic plans which centred around labour-intensive industrialisation. In this context, land and political competition were the subjects of control. Indeed, repressive land reforms – involving expropriation – were instrumental in the early establishment of East Asian developmental states (mainly Korea and Taiwan), because the existence of a wealthy landed class might cause resistance to industrialisation and be a target for communist insurrections (Ban *et al.*, 1980: 287–291; Castells, 1992; Cumings, 1984; Gold, 1986). In Taiwan, the KMT regime sought to redistribute land from the landlords to tenant farmers as part of a broader 'Land to the Tiller' initiative. This process involved limits on the amount of land that could be owned and the compulsory purchase and redistribution of surplus lands. Most had acquiesced under the looming threat of force because they 'knew that the KMT would not shirk from employing force again if it saw fit', referring to the authoritarian actions taken in 1945–1947 to gain power, most dramatically the 28 February incident which ever since depoliticised the citizenry (Gold, 1986: 66; Yang, 1970). To mobilise its state-led industrialisation, agricultural surplus from peasants was squeezed to supply the necessary materials and to feed the urban population, which in turn required controlling them politically through newly created state-based farmers' associations (Gold, 1986).

There was a similar logic at play in Singapore, though the target of the state's disciplinary control was not landlords, but the need to physically re-engineer the physical space. To exert control over the physical landscape of Singapore, the state engaged in the forced reacquisition of land under the 1966 Land Acquisition Act. From that point on, and through successive legal instruments, more than 90% of the land was acquired, violating property rights to establish authoritarian capitalism (Chua, 2018: ch. 4). Another important opposition group were traditional community leaders in the wider Chinese community. The colonial economy had seen the economic success of the Chinese population, and from whom arose influential leaders of small–medium enterprises and industry associations. This coalition was wedded to the trade-based economic structure of colonial times and was also predominantly Chinese-speaking. Besides the fact that this group was political opposition, the new PAP state also found it useful to suppress their influence due to the perceived incompatibility of their trade-based orientation to the new modern, English-speaking, industrial economy they sought to create (Visscher, 2007). Local Chinese business leaders, most notably Tan Lark Sye, were marginalised by the state, which then also forced through a language policy that ever since disadvantaged Chinese speakers (Hong and Huang, 2008).

The disciplinary control that the developmental state presided over was not limited to just the early circumstances of its birth but was instrumental to its continued persistence. Arguably the chief mechanism this is carried out through is by targeting the labour class, which had to be disciplined to sustain an availability of cheap and productive labour, and the absence of industrial disruption. The Singapore case is instructive. To create the conditions to attract foreign capital and mobilise high savings, not only were union activity criminalised, a range of social and para-political institutions were erected to discipline labour. The construction of public housing in Singapore by the Housing Development Board, for example, had this objective in mind. The Singapore state forcibly relocated swathes of the population into these estates, grafted state-led social welfare organisations into these estates to cultivate loyalty to the dominant party, and most dramatically, made housing access and financing dependent on the national forced savings scheme called the Central Provident Fund. Christopher Tremewan (1996) appropriately characterises these housing estates as 'working class barracks', and one of many instruments used by the developmental state to realise disciplinary control over labour. This exertion of control, crucially, was in the early period of state-building:

the period from 1966 to 1978 was a time when the PAP consolidated its political gains over the broad opposition movement it had confronted in the transition from colonial rule. Political resistance during this period was manifested through institutions which the PAP had acquired the power base to co-opt or suppress one by one. It had consolidated the local capitalist class through the domestic construction industry. It had reformed the lower classes into an urban proletariat physically located in government housing which it could pay for only by working in the nearby factories of the transnational corporations (Tremewan, 1996: 56).

Therefore, the disciplinary control exercised by the developmental state was not merely one of brute force. Rather, it incorporated subtle methods such as appeals to national solidarity, the creation of educational programmes to forge compliance, and the demonisation of 'Western values'. All these instruments were employed by developmental state elites to ensure citizens were on track to fulfil the mission of economic development.

The military dictatorship in Korea of Park Chung Hee, which established the developmental state, illustrates the use of disciplinary mechanisms to repress workers. An illuminating case is the workplace culture created by Chung Ju-Yung, head of Hyundai, the leading conglomerate favoured by the developmental state regime. It is said that he would often 'gather his employees on the shop floor to exhort them to higher efforts', 'the objective of it all was to build a strong and independent nation' (Ogle, 1990: 71). This was no ordinary tactic of workplace motivation, but part of a 'moral authoritarianism' exercised over the lives of Korean workers in the 1970s, whereby workers were not only made to work over their contracted hours, pressured to accept poor wages and unsafe conditions, but also exposed to propaganda and fear tactics. According to Ogle's (1990: 78–79) landmark study, education programmes were organised to instil loyal obedience to their superiors, framed in terms of patriotism and anti-communism, which if refused might see the worker being intimidated by 'a black jeep with a driver and two KCIA (Korean Central Intelligence Agency) agents'. Importantly, such authoritarian measures in Korea were not merely incidental to the process of economic development, but an instrumental core of it. This sentiment is best expressed by George Ogle, who writes that: 'the ideology of the economic developmentalists also worked toward the demise of democracy and labor unions. As Korea moved successfully through its first and second five year plans, increasing demands were made for more control over all the variables. Every nerve was to be stretched to reach the export quotas, to expand investments, increase productivity and decrease costs. Criticisms from politicians, media and labor were identified as obstructions to development' (1990: 23).

Social engineering was not just an instrument to maintain mission control over development, but to sustain regime longevity. This longevity is extremely important because it is reflective of the type of long-term stability that mission-directed governance offers in conditions of radical uncertainty (Kattel *et al.*, 2022; Mazzucato, 2013). The case of Singapore is most representative of this phenomenon because as compared to its counterparts, its authoritarian governance has persisted until the present day. A big source of this longevity is its use of the discourse of political meritocracy and Asian values, to frame political leaders as virtuous stewards of the national mission of development, and to paint liberal criticisms as unwanted Westernisation (Cheang and Choy, 2023; Chua, 2018). By portraying themselves as rational, disciplined, and pragmatic stewards of national progress, these state elites managed to perpetuate their mission-directed form of governance until the present day, shifting from the catch-up growth mission of the previous era to other higher-order goal characteristics of entrepreneurial state theory.

### Political implications for contemporary liberal democracies

The historical account just offered demonstrates that to exert mission control over society, the state had to reach far into the social sphere to garner collective solidarity over a common mission. There was a need to discipline social classes whose interests or aims may run counter to the state's pre-chosen 'direction'. This exercise of authoritarianism in East Asia is relevant for evaluating contemporary arguments for the entrepreneurial state, in light of theorists of who hold up the region as an

exemplar, and considering that the developmental state was the *closest modern approximation of mission-directed governance*, where the state not only actively used industrial policy, but marshalled society around a common mission, in this case national economic growth.

These authoritarian implications of exercising mission-directionality are further exemplified when one considers the nature of East Asia's democratisation in the late 20th century. Critics of my position may raise the example of Japan, which was never authoritarian, to suggest the possibility of maintaining mission-directionality under democracy. Additionally, with the exception of Singapore, all East Asian nations – such as Korea and Taiwan – are today advanced democracies. Further consideration of their political institutions is necessary to truly evaluate whether mission-directionality necessarily risks authoritarianism.

A careful analysis of these nations' political institutions buttresses my argument about the close association between mission-directionality and authoritarianism. Take the example of Japan: although it was indeed formally democratic, the institutional reality meant that it was 'bureaucrats who actually initiate and draft virtually all-important legislation', and who even enjoy 'extralegislative ordinance powers that are almost on par with the statutes themselves' (Johnson, 1995: 123). These bureaucratic agencies, put in comparative perspective, are as accountable as the 'E-Ring of the Pentagon or the Central Intelligence Agency at the height of the Cold War' (Johnson, 1995: 13). The Japanese developmental state enjoyed an autonomy unparalleled in liberal democracies. Additionally, although other East Asian nations did formally transition to liberal democracy, this came with the *concomitant erosion of mission-directionality they once enjoyed*. As elites confronted more stakeholders and a more globalised environment, there were more veto points frustrating their ability to exert their will (Carroll and Jarvis, 2017; Chu, 2016: 15–18, 117–138; Yeung, 2017). Changed circumstances, including the greater desire for democracy, meant that the state 'could no longer wield autonomous power in governing the market and directing the growth trajectories of national firms' (Yeung, 2017: 84). Pouring cold water on the idea of the 'democratic developmental state', Chu (2016: 17–18) emphasises how democratic leaders have to confront more divergent concerns from the electorate, which provides 'reasons for caution when asserting the compatibility between democratic government and developmental intervention'. The basic point is clear: mission-directionality contributed to authoritarianism in East Asia, and was eroded by greater democratisation.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, it must also be recognised that in the East Asian context, its political institutions were – and continues to be – embedded in a *communitarian* political culture.<sup>5</sup> This meant that its citizens, during the height of the developmental state era, were more willing to forgo civil liberties for the sake of collective goals, enabling the state to sustain mission-directionality around the mission of national growth. This communitarian social culture has persisted today *despite* the formal democratic transition of some East Asian nations. Global survey results show that even today, East Asian citizens are more predisposed to strong leaders (Figure 1 in the Appendix), and for said leaders to exercise paternalism rather than simply executing voters' wishes (Figure 2 in the Appendix). As such, even though East Asian nations such as Taiwan and Korea became formally 'liberal democratic', their underlying political culture continues to predispose its citizens to work 'symbiotically for a common goal' in a way difficult to replicate elsewhere. In such an environment, it is easier for state officials to attain 'systemic directionality'.

The problem to emphasise is that most liberal democracies have never shared, and do not today share, such a similar cultural heritage, and is instead rooted in an individualistic ethos. Liberal societies would simply find it much more challenging to get 'all to work symbiotically for a common goal'. In an environment seeped with liberal social dynamics, efforts to implement a collective mission are

<sup>4</sup>The only East Asian nation that continues today to enjoy disproportionate, even authoritarian, state capacity to lead social transformation is Singapore. It is unsurprising that industrial policy advocates have singled out Singapore in particular, where it was supposedly so successful that it constituted an 'effrontery' to economics, mainly that of neoliberalism (see Chang, 2011).

<sup>5</sup>Entrepreneurial state theorists, to the extent they even acknowledge East Asia's Confucianism and communitarianism at all, do so in a simplistic manner. Kattel *et al.* (2022: 58) describe Confucianism there as selecting competent bureaucrats, where 'all that matters is actual, final performance'. Although this is true, Confucianism also involved treating citizens at best in a paternalistic manner, or at worst, in an authoritarian fashion.

bound to be frustrated by resistance, pushback, or at least disagreement by various quarters in civil society. To the extent that such individualist dynamics persist in liberal democracies, the entrepreneurial state will find itself severely constrained in attaining mission-directionality.

Recall that culture acts as a constraint on whether certain forms of governance may be implemented.<sup>6</sup> Peter Boettke *et al.* (2008) have shown that attempts to globally export liberal democracy in the world have often failed because they clash with the presence of non-liberal cultures. This may also work in reverse. Attempting to mimic from abroad a non-liberal mode of governance such as mission-directed entrepreneurial statism is also hindered by the presence of a liberal culture. If liberal states cannot legitimise such intrusive governance the same way that East Asia could, then it means that any resistance faced would have to be quelled, if one commits to actualising mission-directionality come what may. If Western citizens are unlikely to accept paternalism as easily as East Asians have, this only heightens the need for heavier-handed methods to quell dissent.

### *Will mission-directionality be consistently pursued?*

Once again, entrepreneurial state theorists may insist that there is no such intention to suppress civil society and democratic disagreement. They might claim that East Asia's experiment with the developmental state may have involved authoritarianism or state paternalism, but Western societies could forge its own model of the entrepreneurial state within its democratic culture. If this is indeed so, then such theorists must eschew the use of East Asia as an exemplar to be emulated (such as by Juhasz *et al.*, 2024; Kattel *et al.*, 2022), especially because the state capacity those governments wielded involved a heavy dose of communitarian culture that is simply not present in the West.

Moreover, the idea that a mission-directed entrepreneurial state may be reconciled with liberal democracy is questionable. The logic of mission-directionality entails the use of bureaucratic discretion to define what a desirable mission is, which may not necessarily coincide with the democratic will. If entrepreneurial state theorists claim that democratic deliberation and discussion are primary, then bureaucracies *simply follow rather than lead*, which undermines the very need for mission-directionality in the first place. In this case, the ideal of the entrepreneurial state is simply a theory of internal organisational management, and no different from New Public Management which came before it. As this is explicitly rejected, entrepreneurial state theory is in essence an ideal vision of a type of state–society relations, of how the state should engage in some degree of social engineering to correct deviations from the chosen mission.

Even though the ideal of the entrepreneurial state has not been actualised in the West, we might be wary of its illiberal potential. Consider the specific examples of success that have been cited by those supporting this ideal. The Manhattan Project which resulted in the atomic bomb was a secret military programme. The Apollo Project of landing a man on the moon, and the so-called invention of the internet by DARPA, while not secret military programmes, were carried out by wings of the military–industrial complex. Although contemporary mission-directed governance explicitly focuses on broader social missions rather than these technological goals, there is an increasing discourse of 'emergency' that has framed them. Most obviously, it is said that due to the 'climate emergency' and 'sixth great extinction', mission-directed governance and 'wholesale' change are needed more than ever (Mazzucato, 2021b).<sup>7</sup> Climate goals may very well be important – that is not the point – but the framing of this mission as an emergency imperative lends legitimacy to authoritarian measures to solve the problem whatever it takes.

Indeed, solving the climate emergency may have a particularly totalising effect, because the global nature of the problem may legitimise extending mission-directionality on a planetary scale – a problem recent scholars have warned about (see Goodman *et al.*, 2024; Hulme, 2023; Roth, 2024). Nathan Goodman *et al.* (2024) specifically show that climate policy has been increasingly framed

<sup>6</sup>In the same vein of thought, Sanders *et al.* (2024) show how entrepreneurial states cannot succeed absent conditions favourable to entrepreneurialism.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter titled "State of Emergency".



through militaristic language. Evidence cited includes rhetoric by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who has referred to the climate crisis as ‘a battle for our lives’ and by the US-based advocacy group Climate Mobilization, which uses the metaphor of war to appeal to the ‘muscular’ and ‘patriotic’ sentiments of those who might otherwise disregard environmental messaging. Further cases cited include scholars such as Malm (2020) who advocate for a ‘war communism’, where governments should enforce severe production constraints, permanently shut down fossil-fuel industries, and break down private property to achieve climate goals. Additionally, proposals such as Lester Brown’s ‘Plan B’ and the ‘Green New Deal’ invoke wartime mobilisation, calling for sweeping interventions to reconfigure national and global economies, including strict controls over industries and mass reskilling of workers (Goodman *et al.*, 2024). This militaristic framing also appears in calls for personal carbon rationing, with comparisons to Second World War-style rationing schemes, as suggested by scholars such as Cohen (2011). Such examples illustrate how the narrative of climate change as a ‘war’ has permeated both policy proposals and public discourse, contributing to a totalising narrative that imposes a singular, urgent standard by which society must be judged (for similar analysis see Hulme, 2023). To be clear, Mazzucato does not explicitly advocate such coercive measures. Yet, if one wishes to avoid unintentionally fostering such a stifling and totalising climate, the concept of mission-directionality is unhelpful.

## Conclusion

Entrepreneurial state theorists are not simply recommending ‘more industrial policy’, but are presenting a new ideal of governance where the state acts as a central focal point in an environment of uncertainty. As it cannot admit competing missions without reintroducing the initial problem of uncertainty, the entrepreneurial state must tend towards the pursuit of a singular mission in a determined, ambitious, and focused manner, i.e. with mission-directionality, or ‘systemic directionality’. Practically speaking, this involves bureaucrats making subjective judgements about the desired mission to pursue in society, and taking the necessary actions to bring about conformity to it. The consistency with which it pursues this logic will determine the extent to which competing missions in society by private actors and civil society are to be quelled.

The argument for mission-directed governance is still in its infancy, and as such it remains to be seen to what extent its logic is consistently pursued. Still, one may detect instances of how dissent has been stifled by the pursuit of singular missions in society. In the recent pandemic response, due to the desire to maintain mission focus on a robust lockdown and social distancing strategy, alternative discourses that advocated lighter responses were castigated as deviating from ‘the science’ (Pennington, 2021). Similarly, in the spirit of solving the ‘climate emergency’, alternative voices that stress more modest adaptive responses are ostracised, especially in a totalising environment where increasing aspects of life are policed with reference to climate metrics (see the dangers of ‘climatism’ by Hulme, 2023).

Although there is no way to definitively prove this dystopian future, the history of East Asia’s developmental state is instructive because it exemplified the use of industrial policy in a mission-directed manner, which closely resembles the entrepreneurial state ideal. There, the developmental state arose within emergency circumstances and was also legitimated with a wartime mentality by the state. Disciplinary mechanisms had to be employed to ensure conformity to the mission of growth. Although the authoritarian repression in East Asia was real, it was somewhat accepted by citizens due to a communitarian political culture. The absence of such willingness to readily accept collective solidarity in most liberal democracies makes it difficult to sustain mission-directed governance, and – if one indeed pursues the logic of mission-directionality consistently – makes it even more necessary for repressive methods to be employed.

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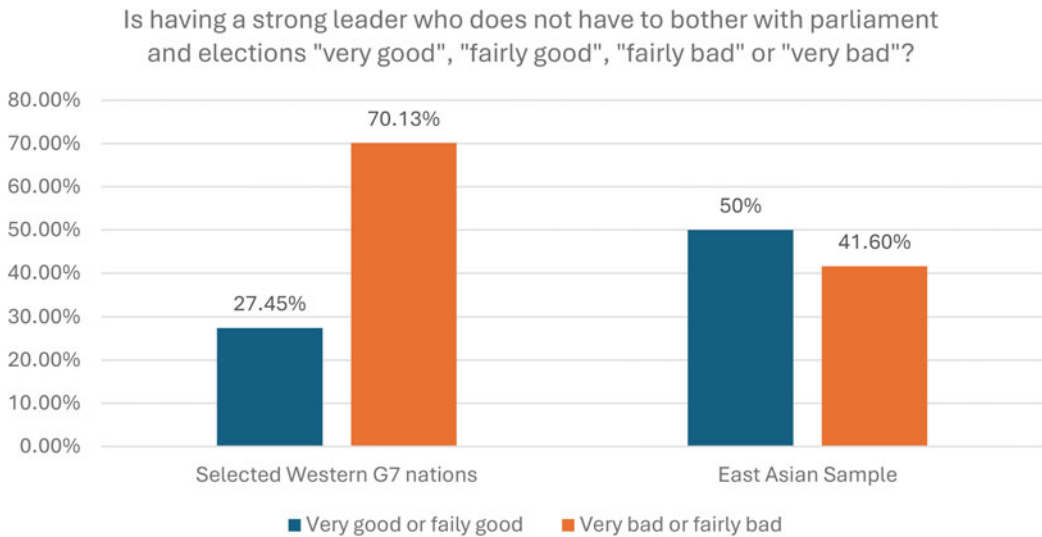
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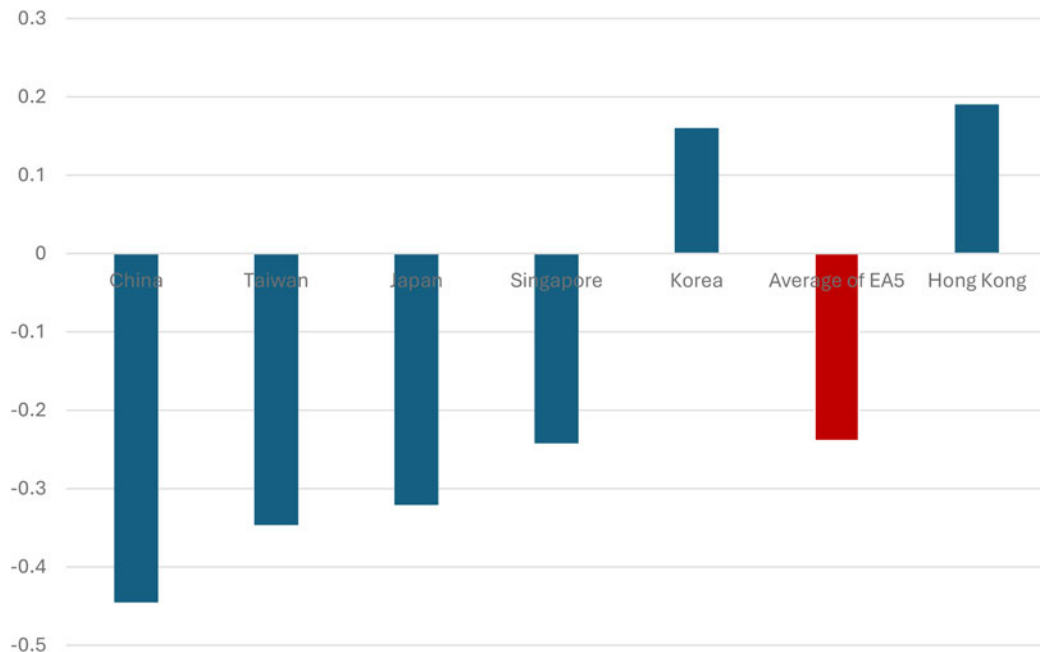
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## Appendix



**Figure 1.** Survey results comparing responses to World Values Survey Question 235 on the desirability of a strong authoritarian leader. G7 nations are selected as a representative of the developed democratic nations in the world. The G7 sample includes the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany only, because France and Italy's data are not available in World Values Survey wave 7 and Japan, being an East Asian nation, is removed from the calculation. The East Asian sample includes Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea.

Source: Author's calculations from World Values Survey Wave 7 (2024). See World Values Survey, <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>.



**Figure 2.** Which do you agree is the proper role of government: ‘Government leaders implement what voters want’ or ‘Government leaders do what they think is best for the people’? (Positive coefficient represents agreement with the first statement, and negative coefficient represents agreement with the latter). Respondents are given two options for both statements: ‘strong agree’ and ‘somewhat agree’. Strong agreement with the democratic statement is coded as a value of 2, mild agreement with the democratic statement is coded as a value of 1, strong agreement with the paternalistic statement is coded as a value of  $-2$ , mild agreement with the paternalistic statement is coded as a value of  $-1$ . The total value of all respondents of that country are added and divided by the number of responses for each country to generate the country coefficient.

Source: Author’s Calculations from Asian Barometer Survey Wave 5 (2024).