Perils of Transition: Korea and Taiwan Democratization Compared

Hieyeon Keum and Joel R. Campbell

Taiwan and South Korea are two of the clearest cases of recent democratization in East Asia. The elections of Moon Jae-in in Korea and Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan seemed to herald new political alignments in both countries, but there has not been a major change in either state. Many observers have stated that the two countries' experiences are quite similar, and that they followed nearly identical paths. We suggest that major differences mark the two cases, in terms of political history and type of authoritarian regimes, timing of transitions, political cultures, nature of ruling parties and nature of political cleavages within the two countries. We profile two leaders who illustrate those differences, Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan and Park Geun Hye of Korea. We also note that democratization literature applied to the two countries needs to be upgraded, and this can have important implications for general democratic theory. Finally, we sketch out possible futures and the agenda for democratization in the two countries.

Key Words: Taiwan, South Korea, democratization, political cleavages, transitional justice, Third Wave of democratization

Results of the snap South Korean presidential election of May, 2017 and the regular Taiwanese presidential election in January, 2016 were nothing if not clear-cut. In South Korea (hereafter Korea), Democratic Party candidate Moon Jae-in was easily elected, garnering a 41.08% plurality of the popular

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vote. Moon's decisive victory came after several months of turmoil surrounding a major bribery and influence-peddling scandal involving former president Park Geun Hye. After weeks of popular non-violent demonstrations in the center of Seoul (the "Candlelight Revolution"), a form of citizen-based popular democracy, Park had been impeached by the National Assembly in December, 2016, and this was upheld by the constitutional court the next March (Kwon et al. 2017, 1-9). For such international news outlets as *The Washington Post*, the events showed the world "how democracy is done" (Caryl 2017, 1-2). Even before her scandal, Park was widely criticized for inadequate vetting of major appointments, lack of progress on her legislative agenda, and sluggish reaction to the Sewol ferry disaster in 2014. Major issues worrying the public, such as cozy connections between big business and government, spiraling education costs, and rising youth unemployment, were ignored (IISS 17/06/01, 1). Conservative candidates usually poll about 45% of the electorate, but this time they split into two new parties, which together barely scored a third of the vote (Nurnus 2017, 1). The win seemed to settle Korea's two-decade-long polarization, and signify the triumph of the Left in Korean politics. There is only one problem with this point of view: similar things were said about the triumphs of conservatives Park in 2012 and Lee Myung Bak in 2007, leftists Roh Moo Hyun in 2002 and Kim Dae Jung in 1997, and the moderate Kim Young Sam in 1992. Aside from Park, all their victories were quite solid, and seemed to herald a new era under their leadership—yet the voters swung completely the other way in a few years.

The Democratic Progressive Party's Tsai Ing-wen's election in Taiwan was by an overwhelming 56.2%, over twenty-five percent ahead of her Kuomintang (KMT) opponent. It seemed a heady moment and the beginning of a new age: following upon the popular "Sunflower Movement" that protested the Ma Ying-jeou government's efforts to secure a comprehensive trade agreement with Mainland China, the election of the island's first female leader, and her party's vindication after eight years in the political wilderness (Tiezzi 2016, 1-2). The Sunflower Movement was propelled by ordinary people who claimed to be angry that Taiwan's politicians fail to deal with the most important issues facing the nation, as the Taiwan Identity issue faded in recent years (Sullivan 2014, 1-8). The problem was, almost the same things were said about the election of Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT in 2008, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP in 2000, and Lee Teng Hui from the KMT, reelected in the first popular presidential election in 1996. Superficially, the two countries are thus similar, but subtle differences are immediately apparent. While both electorates swung, Chen's and Ma's election victories were fairly narrow, and Lee's reelection victory in 1996 was unsurprising, given the post-democratization strength of the KMT and the

gradual emergence of the DPP.

In this article, we compare democratization in Taiwan and South Korea. These East Asian nations make useful most-similar systems cases, since both countries began their democratization about the same time, were the product of national divisions due to ideological war, thus became front-line anti-Communist states during the Cold War, served as U.S. allies during most of the early Cold War, were ruled by authoritarian modernizing regimes controlled by a heavy-handed ideological and party apparatus, and accordingly faced major issues of transitional justice as a result of human rights abuses and suppression of labor rights and political opposition groups. One would have expected similar paths of democratic development, but major differences developed in how ruling and opposition parties became structured, the degree and kind of political cleavages and resultant polarization experienced, and the nature of corruption suffered in both countries. Reasons for these differences are suggested by political culture and historical paths followed by two countries. Initial pro-democracy protests were led by students and civil society groups in Korea, whereas lawyers, intellectuals and party activists provided leadership in Taiwan. We examine, first, the political history and general patterns of the two cases. We then consider the nature of political cleavages and corruption, and then look at specific political episodes in terms of leadership. We also analyze Taiwan and Korea in terms of democratization literature, and suggest possible directions for political development in these two countries.

Our study uses an historical-institutional approach, which draws on the ideas of Charles Tilly and other scholars. We trace the development of social and political activity and change, and examine various features of democratic development in the two countries. We are using the comparative cases of Taiwan and Korea, specifically the relative democratization of Taiwan and Korea. We seek to show how historical forces and the development of cleavage structures in the two countries shaped democratic development. We draw on the literature of democratization to suggest that, despite similarities in developmental paths, the two countries achieved quite different outcomes. We focus particularly on the roles of historical factors, social development, and cleavage structures in the two countries. We do not wish to give the impression that there are no significant social or political differences between Taiwan and Korea. In fact, their differences are huge. We merely point out that, though they differ in important ways, they have also shared similarities in political development since the advent of democracy in the 1980s.

TAIWAN AND KOREA IN DEMOCRATIZATION LITERATURE

Both Taiwan and Korea can be evaluated in terms of both democratization literature and the nature of political change. Jacobs notes major similarities and differences between the two countries. Both experienced Japanese colonialism and strong economic growth under economically-oriented authoritarian regimes, both had major legitimacy crises, labored under news media and other institutions derived from their authoritarian regimes, and found the democratization process slow and painful. Both countries have divided politics and polarization, though the idea of democracy is nearly universally accepted within the two societies. Major differences included the nature of major political parties. Taiwanese parties enjoyed a great deal of continuity, while smaller parties came and went. Korean parties, by contrast, were centered on major leaders and were reshuffled and renamed several times. The recently ruling conservative party has gone through four key reorganizations and name changes since the early 1990s (Jacobs 2007, 227-260).

Shin and Chu examine the quality of democracy in Taiwan and Korea. They suggest that Taiwanese and Koreans have not “fully embraced the principles of liberal democracy over those of an authoritarian government” due to the nature of their authoritarian regimes. The soft authoritarianism dedicated to economic growth, generally efficient government operations and low levels of corruption may make democracy less attractive by comparison. Thus, there is a nostalgic longing for the authoritarian past in both countries. Then, “deficiency in the existing institutional arrangements” makes the comparison even more glaring. Constitutions do not provide adequate legislative checks, or “horizontal accountability” to executive branches. Both countries’ presidencies operate largely independently from legislative oversight or control (Shin et al. 2004, 2-17).

Ringstad asserts that four major democratization theories can be used in concert for Taiwan and Korea: modernization, transition, structural, and international factors theories. The first suggests that economic development leads to democracy building, the second that “deliberate elite decisions” shape the path toward democracy, the third that class struggles matter to adoption of democracy, and the last that international developments including support for democracy abroad help create a conducive environment for democracy. He says that all four perspectives provide equally relevant theoretical approaches, and thus should be “used rather as tools than frameworks” of analysis (Ringstad 2012, 4-49).

Wakabayashi suggests that the two most important differences between the two countries have been their postwar experiences of development and their patterns of political development. While they faced similar developmental challenges from the 1950s to 1980s, the end of the Cold War forced them open up democratically, but the ways they did so differed dramatically. Their political development has meant greater swings of political opinion from one election to the next in Korea, starting with the creation of a merged conservative party in the early 1990s, through the election of major opposition figure Kim Dae Jung only a few years later. Taiwan did not develop an indigenous authoritarianism like Korea, but “transplanted” its KMT-Leninist party from the Mainland to the island (Wakabayashi 1997, 422-439).

All of these theories suggest fruitful lines of research, but are lacking to some degree. Jacobs presents a laundry list of political changes, but does not put forward a coherent theory for them. Shin and Chu discuss a byproduct of democratization, and not an actual cause of similarities or differences. Ringstad does not give adequate support for any of the theories that he presents, so they all end being roughly equal in weight. Wakabayashi presents the most fruitful ideas about the differences between the two states but, though he has been proven right over time, the paper was already out of date in the late 1990s. Building on Wakabayashi’s work, we suggest that similarities and differences between the two countries have been shaped by their historical trajectories. That Taiwan was an artifact of the freezing in place of the Chinese civil war in 1949, and the ideological dividing line running through the Taiwan Strait shaped both politics and identity issues until the present. The need for transitional justice and the salience of the Taiwanese identity came from the toxic politics of the Chiang Kai Shek and Chiang Ching Kuo eras. Korean politics were driven by the division of the Korean Peninsula into two countries. The North-South Korean issue became the background concern of all other major political issues, powerfully informed the formation of political parties, and stood behind the nature of political cleavages and the types of corruption experienced.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The modern historical development of the two countries, while seemingly similar, contains major divergences. Taiwan developed as a kind of frontier society at the edge of the Chinese cultural area, and its society contains several distinct cultural groups, including Taiwanese who mostly descend from Fujian province, Mainlanders who came with the KMT government and Army in 1949-1950, Hakka Chinese, and various indigenous groups. The most important political and social division has been between the Taiwanese and Mainlanders.

Until the 1980s, Mainlanders tended to dominate the government and Armed Forces, while Taiwanese had major presences in the agricultural and business sectors. Korean society in modern times has never experienced ethnic divisions, as Koreans are made up of one ethnic group. However, regional differences have created major divides within both society and politics. The most pronounced regional division has been between the politically dominant and relatively prosperous southeastern Kyongsan provinces and the less powerful and poorer Cholla provinces (or Honam region).

South Korea's early post-Korean War development principally concerned a struggle between authoritarianism and nascent democratic forces. Its modern political history begins with the surrender of Japan in World War II. The country was divided into Soviet and American occupation zones, which by 1949 evolved into the Communist North Korea and the putative democratic capitalist South Korea. During the South's First Republic, 1948-1960, Syngman Rhee (Lee Sung Man) held power in a personalist autocratic regime, and maintained his grip by manipulating patronage and presidential elections. Massive demonstrations following a fixed election in 1960 forced him out of power, and a parliamentary democratic regime (Second Republic) came to power that same year. Constant turmoil and unstable parliamentary governments led to a military coup d'état the next year. General Park Chung Hee authoritarian regime came to power to deal with the twin challenges of facing off with North Korea and building a modern industrial economy. Park formed a military government, and then ruled under a partial democracy (Third Republic) until 1972, when he disbanded most of the democratic institutions and instituted a more explicitly authoritarian system (Fourth Republic) that ended with his assassination in 1979.

Another brief interim regime was succeeded by a second military government (Fifth Republic) under Chun Doo Hwan that ruled until mass demonstrations forced the rewriting of the constitution and granting of free presidential elections in 1987. Chun had continued with Park's twin focus on security and industrialization, now concentrating on development of high-tech industries. Roh Tae Woo, though an official of the former military regime, became the first popularly elected president of the Sixth Republic, due to a split in the opposition. He was followed by the first democratically elected civilian, Kim Young Sam, in 1993 and the first peaceful transition of power to the opposition in the person of Kim Dae Jung in 1998. A second peaceful transition took place in 2008, when conservative Lee Myung Bak succeeded liberal Roh Moo Hyun, and each transition was accompanied with a massive swing of voters away from the ruling party to the opposition, often due to scandals surrounding the incumbent government (Kil 2001, 33-64; Hahn 2001, 107-135).

Most of Taiwan's post-World War II development concerns rule by a one-party state imposed on Taiwan's people from outside. Also starting in that same momentous year of 1949, Taiwan's modern political history follows the relocation of the KMT government that had ruled the Mainland for over twenty years to Taipei.¹ Chiang Kai Shek served under martial law as Taiwan's only president from 1950 to his death in 1975. His son, Chiang Ching Kuo, succeeded him in 1978 after brief rule by a party functionary, and he held office until his death in 1988. He was succeeded by Lee Teng Hui, the first native Taiwanese to hold the presidency, who was reelected by the National Assembly in 1990. Chiang Ching Kuo's government had initiated various political reforms, including allowing opposition parties to function, that culminated in free elections for the National Assembly in the early 1990s, and the first election for a national leader in any Chinese territory in 1996, which Lee won. The peaceful transition of power to the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) under Chen Shui-bian in 2000 was followed by another back to the KMT under Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 and yet another to the DPP under Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 (Roy 2003, 176-104, 152-240). Taiwan's transitions were accompanied by vote swings but, aside from Tsai, they were generally smaller than in Korea.

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

East Asia's political development has always differed from that of its Western counterpart. Western political development of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries placed a premium on democratic elections and individual rights. In post-World War II East Asia, economic development, improvements in standards of living, and socio-political stability took precedence over creation of popular governments. Fukuyama notes that the Northeast Asian states developed "high-quality, centralized, bureaucratic states early in their histories, and consolidated relatively uniform national identities over ethnically homogenous populations," but strong states lacked the concept of rule of law or checks and balances. States were free to develop their economies

¹ Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) Party led the initial Chinese Revolution in 1911-1912, and then served as the ruling party of China from 1927 to 1949. Chiang Kai Shek (sometimes referred to as CKS) served as president during much of this time. Escaping to Taiwan during the civil war with the Communists, Chiang continued as the president of the Republic of China on Taiwan until his death in 1975. His son, Chiang Ching Kuo (CCK) became president three years later, and continued in office until his death in 1988. Taiwan had begun its transition to democracy under CCK, and became a fully functioning electoral democracy under Lee Teng Hui, who served as president from 1988 until 2000. Chen Shui-bian, representing the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was the first opposition figure elected president that same year. The KMT regained power in 2008 under Ma Ying Jeou, but lost power to another DPP in 2016.

as they saw fit, led by an elite bureaucracy and focused on export-oriented industrial development. Asian states developed a form of authoritarianism that emphasized effective institution building, recruitment of talented personnel into the national bureaucracy, and accountability that only went upward toward national institutions. As these countries democratized, the rule of law developed only slowly, bureaucrats continued to dominate the policy process, and accountability to the people or local government was limited, at best (Fukuyama 2011, 29-42). Taiwan and South Korea shared rapid economic development under authoritarian governments aided by an American security umbrella, and both transitioned to democracy at about the same time. Both countries carried out fairly successful land reform policies, which freed farmers from land tenancy and allowed them to start small businesses. This reform was somewhat more democratic in form in Taiwan, though the effects were similar in both countries (You 2014, 191-219). Both countries also had similar experiences with labor/management relations, as labor unions were systematically suppressed by both governments until liberalization began in the 1980s (Buchanan et al. 2004, 59-83). Though Taiwan and Korea have taken similar paths since democratization, they have experienced differing consequences of this process.

Taiwanese and Korean democratization was part of the Third Wave. Huntington coined this term to refer to the world-wide trend toward democratization, beginning in the mid-1970s and continuing to nearly the end of the twentieth century.² The two countries were typical cases in that, as both societies experienced high levels of economic development and rising incomes, publics became restless and calls for authoritarian governments to yield power grew louder. In both cases, the governments agreed to transitions of power, though the length of transition varied, taking longer in Taiwan.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index in 2015, Korea ranked twenty-second and Taiwan ranked thirty-first and both of them are one of fifty-eight countries that fall into the Index's category "Flawed Democracies." Only twenty countries are ranked as "Full Democracies," and no Asian countries are among them. Korea and Taiwan accordingly are far from

² The Third Wave of democratization is a concept associated with political scientist Samuel Huntington. He suggested that the first wave had been a long trend from the early nineteenth century until World War I. The second, lasting only about fifteen years after World War II, was much shorter and coincided with the postwar reconstruction of Europe and decolonization in the developing world. The Third began in the mid-1970s with overthrows of right-wing governments in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. It then spread to Latin America and East Asia in the 1980s. Each of the three waves was followed by a period of backsliding, as democratic governments weakened and were replaced by authoritarian regimes.

perfect democracies; specifically, the report notes that “free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected,” but democratic weaknesses remains. Weaknesses include “problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture, and low levels of political participation.”(The Economist Intelligent Unit 2015)

As the two countries democratized, clear political, economic and social cleavages emerged. Popular demands to address significant socio-economic issues took center stage, and frequent elections saw generally peaceful transitions of power, but scandals became frequent facts of life in both countries. In South Korea, virtually all presidents have come to bad political ends, usually involving investigations or indictments for crimes committed by the president or members of his family, and one president (Roh Moo Hyun) committed suicide as an investigation into his financial dealings began. Other presidents were convicted of financial crimes (Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo), investigated for their own or family members’ corruption (Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam) or, most recently, impeached (Park Geun Hye). In Taiwan, one president (Chen Shui-bian) was convicted and sentenced for corruption, while another (Ma Ying-jeou) is being investigated for possible crimes. A third president (Lee Teng Hui) was kicked out of his party for supporting Chen Shui-bian.

Both countries have introduced the notion of Transitional Justice as part of their democratization effort. In Korea, this has meant creation of a commission to investigate alleged crimes of previous military governments.³ As a candidate, Moon Jae-in talked of ramping up such efforts, and linking it to issues of human rights and worker rights. In Taiwan, the first president who did not come from the KMT, Chen, set up a special committee to investigate legal and political responsibility for the 2-28 Incident in the 1940s, when thousands of Taiwanese were killed or imprisoned as the KMT sought to regain control of the island after World War II and so suppressed any opposition. The committee’s report held Chiang Kai shek responsible, and so dozens of his statues were removed from public places. Chiang Kai-shek International Airport was renamed Taoyuan International Airport and Chiang’s face was removed from coins. Chen’s aim was to gain more public support through eradication of the authoritarian legacy.

³ Transitional justice is a concept involving the setting up of democratic mechanisms to deal with the legacy of authoritarian regimes. Latin American and East Asian governments often confronted the hangover from military regimes, while South Africa set up the Truth and Reconciliation commissions to allow victims of apartheid to seek justice and perpetrators of human rights abuses to seek forgiveness through confession. Both Taiwan and South Korea have tried to confront the legacy of authoritarian governments through various means. Taiwan’s programs to deal with historical issues have been both more thorough and more politicized than similar efforts in Korea.

However, when Ma Ying-jeou succeeded him, most of the previous decisions were reversed, and the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall regained its previous name, the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial.

TAIWANESE AND KOREAN CLEAVAGES

POLITICAL CLEAVAGES IN TAIWAN AND KOREA

Pronounced political cleavages also characterize contemporary politics in both countries. Taiwan's divide between the Blue and Green coalitions centered, respectively, on the KMT and DPP parties, and Korea's Right-Left split has intensified since the 1990s. Corruption and a relatively immature democracy have added to the divisions in both countries.

Major differences between the two countries' experiences are clear. Economically, Korea built large family-run, diversified conglomerates (the *chaebol*), which were intended as competitive global-scale companies. Even so, Korea has only a middling inequality ranking among OECD countries (OCED 2014). Korea's democratic transition was relatively rapid, centered on constitutional redrafting and holding of the first completely free presidential election since the republic's founding, both in 1987. Legal and institutional changes to fortify democracy then unfolded during the presidencies of Roh Tae Woo, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung. While the Taiwanese created some large companies, the center of gravity was in the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have traditionally characterized Taiwan's economy. Taiwan's transition took about a decade, as the government gradually introduced local elections, then elections for the Legislative Yuan, and finally a free presidential election in the mid-1990s. Civil society activity was well-organized and a major conduit of political change in Korea, and had been growing in importance during the latter years of military rule. Civil society organizations were limited and less effective in Taiwan.

Taiwan and Korea can both be characterized as post-democratic or post-authoritarian states, in which the focus of politics is the national leader, in the person of the president. In such states, political energy shifts from previously energized publics to political professionals and elites.⁴ In such strong presidential

⁴The term post-democracy comes from Crouch, who suggests that the early stage of democratic development, which comes closest to the democratic ideal of citizen involvement becomes exhausted and citizen engagement lags. Regular elections are held, but voters become increasingly disengaged from electoral politics and apathetic, while rival teams of political professionals and experts take center stage. Most political interaction involves government officials and members of the political and social elite, which tend to represent business interests above all others (Crouch, 1-4).

systems, major decisions are made by presidents alone, but they face strong pressure to respond to legislative opposition, which have largely replaced previous politics centered on protests and demonstrations. The powerful presidencies have accentuated cleavages in both countries. The KMT was the dominant party up to the 1990s, and those not associated with the party were considered outsiders. The political spectrum has been defined mainly by the Green vs. Blue coalition division, which has been reinforced by ethnic divisions, i.e., Mainlanders vs. Taiwanese. In Korea, the face-off was between those supporting the incumbent president and his/her powers and those claiming to fight for democracy. Korea's spectrum was thus more left vs. right, but this kind of political fight usually is not an ideological struggle as in many Western countries. Instead, it mainly concerns differing policy preferences, especially on such issues as labor vs. management (unions vs. *chaebol*), North Korea and reunification policy, and economic growth vs. demands for redistribution. Following democratization, political preferences shifted in both countries, from freedom to participation and governance, a renewed emphasis on reunification, and questions of how to approach long-time Communist foes, i.e., governments in Beijing and Pyongyang.

Over time, as Crouch's post-democratic concept suggests, Taiwanese and Korean publics have become discontented with how politics have played out. The two relative new political systems have had difficulty confronting the problems of mature democracies, especially aging societies, rising unemployment, income disparities, corruption, and environmental degradation. These have added to problems of unification vs. independence, and containment or engagement of Beijing and Pyongyang.

Perhaps the most significant challenge for the Korean political system is curbing the centralization of power within the presidency. First, institutionally, the President nominates three judges for the Constitutional Court and the Justices of the Supreme Court. Second, freedom of press has been under attack from recent chief executives. According to Freedom House, Korea regressed from "Free" to "Partially Free," citing increased online censorship and penalization of 160 journalists for criticism of the government in 2013 (Freedom House 2017). The Park Geun Hye administration also increased pressure on critical media through lawsuits against journalists and news media organizations. Similar concerns have been raised about Taiwan's powerful presidency, but Taiwan's other institutions have been able to exercise at least limited checks and balances against the president.

Corruption is another challenging issue for both countries, where the nature of power and institutional arrangements help encourage a culture of corruption.

Korea's centralized model is much more corrupt than Taiwan's decentralized system. Even so, the two countries have middle ranking in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by Transparency International (TI). Taiwan ranked thirtieth in 2015, advancing five notches from thirty-fifth in 2014, while Korea ranked thirty-fifth, which is roughly the same as Malta and the Czech Republic. Centralization of power aids Korean corruption, as all major decisions get elevated to the highest levels, and access to power becomes vital for various economic interests. By contrast, separation of powers helps create more opportunities for Taiwanese corruption, as there are more access points for private interests (Transparency International 2015). Korea's corruption is probably more pervasive, but ordinary Taiwanese tend to believe that their system is uniquely corrupt.

Corruption remains common in Korea. The recent Choi Sun-sil Affair and the resultant impeachment of Park Geun Hye is but the latest in a long string of presidential scandals and, though the National Assembly has passed various pieces of anti-corruption legislation such as the recent Anti-Graft Law that strictly limits the amount of outside compensation that any public sector employees may receive, the problem continues. Korean voters tend to react to corruption scandals by swinging away from the incumbent party and electing the opposition party, as happened with the 1997 election of Kim Dae Jung and 2007 election of Lee Myung Bak. Due to Park's removal from office, the opposition Democratic Party candidate Moon Jae-in won a clear victory in the 2017 snap election (Breen 2016, 1-5). Taiwanese voters take longer to swing to the opposition party, as they did after three presidential terms in 2000, and two terms in both 2008 and 2016.

WHAT CAUSES THESE POLITICAL CLEAVAGES?

In both countries, political, economic, cultural and international factors, such as the strong role of the government and leadership, an economic policy of export-oriented industrialization (EOI), and the U. S. security umbrella protecting their political systems from outside threats played important roles in their success stories. Major differences between Korea and Taiwan are found in political setups, political and social cleavages, and strategies for national reunification. Cleavages in both Korea are not based solely on traditional left-right ideological concerns. Particularly in Taiwan, a 2008 survey indicated that 45% of people refused to place themselves on an ideological spectrum, and that their placement of the two main parties on a 0-10 ideological scale put them fairly close together. Koreans were more likely to see ideology as important, and 95% of them could place themselves in a particular ideology. They also could associate their own

ideological position with stances on major political issues, especially policy toward North Korea and economic issues such as growth and distribution. Perhaps even more important for average voters are “affective feelings” toward the two major political parties in both countries, as well as lack of trust, especially in ruling parties (H. Lee, 1-7, 17-20).

Cleavages are in part driven by generational change. Korea’s “88o K Generation” contains college graduates who have not been able to find decent jobs, and Taiwan suffers a similar “22k” dilemma.⁵ Even the best college graduates who manage to find employment receive lower salaries than expected that are a far cry from counterparts in Beijing and Shanghai. Moreover, Taiwan’s education system is in disarray, with many world-class professors leaving Taiwan for higher salaries (for instance, Taiwan’s professors only earn about one fifth of Hong Kong counterparts).

Overall economic development also fuels polarization. This has gradually eclipsed Taiwanese Identity politics, as younger voters focus more on issues of distribution and fairness than their parents, and a perceived wealth gap has widened (Wu 2013, 1-18). Even though the KMT government pushed a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA, essentially a free trade agreement) with the Mainland, Taiwan has the worst performance among the four Asian “tiger” economies, lagging far behind South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong. For nearly two decades, Taiwan’s growth rate has stagnated at roughly two percent. The student-led Sunflower Movement protests against increased economic ties with China in 2015 led to a freezing of the China pact and the KMT’s subsequent loss in local elections.⁶ The new DPP government under Tsai tried to diversify its economic partners by pushing regional economic cooperation. Despite the recent steady but slow economic recovery, Tsai’s government has to be careful not to spark such protests again.

Taiwanese politics before democratization was characterized by antagonism and competition between the KMT and “Party Outsiders” (*dangwai*, 黨外) which aimed at breaking the KMT power monopoly. Korea’s political system

⁵ The 88oK generation refers to young millennial Koreans whose salary is only about 880,000 won per month (roughly \$650). The 22K generation are Taiwanese young people whose salaries are limited to NT\$22,000 per month (around \$770-1,000). As both Korea and Taiwan are now relatively affluent societies, it is difficult to live on such small monthly salaries. In both cases, the terms mean that, despite higher education, young people often are unable to find high paying jobs

⁶ The Sunflower Movement was a series of mass protests in Taipei in 2014. The mostly young demonstrators were upset about a trade agreement between the KMT government and China’s government. They felt that increased trade across the Taiwan Strait would harm Taiwan’s economy and leave it vulnerable to political pressure from Beijing.

was divided into two blocs, those supporting the dictatorship vs. civil society organizations that promote democracy; this was mainly a political struggle between military authoritarianism and the democratic opposition groups. After democratization, Taiwan and Korea developed different political and social cleavages. Taiwan was divided by its “color contention” between the Pan-Blue Coalition led by the KMT and the Pan-Green Coalition led by the DPP.⁷ The main area of contention was their diametrically opposed China and unification policies and differing ideas about the Taiwanese Identity. That identity issue was shaped by Chinese and Taiwanese culture and history in much different ways than in Korea, i.e., it drove Taiwanese public opinion away from embracing the Mainland as it enhanced ethnic and party identification, while in Korea desire for reunification remained strong (if long-deferred and not immediately welcomed) (Tsai 2007, 2-29).

Table 1. Political Spectrum in Taiwan

Pan-Green Coalition/Progressive DPP	Pan-Blue Coalition/Conservative KMT
Democracy	Social Harmony
Taiwanese Identity	Chinese Nationalism
Freedom and human rights	Political stability, rule of law
From Independence to status quo	From Unification to pro-China
Equal distribution	Economic growth and prosperity
Erasing authoritarian legacies	Reducing dependence on China

Table 2. Political Spectrum of Korea

Left/Progressive Governments	Right/Conservative Governments
Anti-Authoritarianism	Development and mobilization
Nationalism	Anti-Communism
Emphasis on distribution	Emphasis on growth
Democracy/Equity	Political stability
Reconciliation with North Korea	Reunification by superiority of South
Pro-labor	Pro-chaebols

⁷ The Pan-Blue and Pan-Green alliances were attempts in recent presidential elections to unite all parties on, respectively, the right and left. The hope was to concentrate voter support and increase chances for election for either the KMT or DPP candidate. The effect in both 2004 and 2008 was to polarize the electorate.

Korea was divided into two political extremes, the Right or Conservative and Left or Progressive blocs, characterized by differing policy preferences toward North Korea and unification and *chaebol* vs. labor interests, as well as priorities placed on either growth or redistribution. In both countries, there is also geographical-social cleavage. In Taiwan, provincial registries add to tensions among ethnic groups (Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and indigenous peoples), while regional conflicts in Korea (especially Kyongsan vs. Honam areas) continually cause political tension.

As divided nations, Korea and Taiwan used to rely on Anti-Communism in all of its forms to justify dictatorship and secure political legitimacy. After democratization and the end of the Cold War, political concerns shifted from freedom to participation and governance, as well as possible national reunification with Communist rivals. The public in both countries now engage with dominant elites in heated debates about how to approach their Communist foes, and whether to integrate two very different polities. As a result, opposition elites were able to become politically powerful, but they became divided over how to deal with these issues. Since it has diplomatic recognition from most countries, Korea has a more supportive external environment and a more stable international status. Despite its dwindling diplomatic status, Taiwan has managed to maintain political stability under recent presidents due to the key roles Taiwan performs in the regional and global economy.

In both Korea and Taiwan, strong presidencies in which chief executives are at the apex of decision-making tend to exacerbate political polarization. All major decisions are made by Presidents without direct participation from opposition leaders, even though final decisions are subjected to strong pressure from opposition parties and from public demonstrations, i.e., riots in the 1980s and now mass demonstrations. Even so, the more decentralized Taiwanese system means that there are limits on presidential power, and accordingly more access points to policymaking for the opposition and civil society.

Recent events and new governments in the two countries have reshuffled the decks of ruling and opposition coalitions. Taiwan's Tsai government relies less on the Taiwan Identity issue than the Chen government to mobilize voters. The Taiwan Identity issue was seized away from the DPP by young middle class protesters in the Sunflower Movement protests against stronger trade and investment ties with Mainland China. A perceived renewal of the China Threat now dominates much political discussion on the island, and there are increasing calls to upgrade the unofficial relations with the U.S. under America's Taiwan Relations Act. Tsai also has struggled to advance her progressive legislative agenda.

In Korea, the Moon government has not yet been able to use its mandate to shift ground on the North Korean issue, since Pyongyang is intent on developing its nuclear missile program and has not responded to overtures for bilateral or multilateral talks about its nuclear program. Moon has frozen deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system from the U.S. Also, he so far has not put forth any major proposals on reform of the *chaebol*, democratic reforms, or enhanced welfare programs. According to Brown and Asmolov, Moon's leftist supporters seemed keen on getting even with conservative enemies, criticizing those without sufficiently progressive positions, and advancing the left's own agenda rather than in promoting unity under a centrist government (Brown 2017, 1-11; Asmolov 2017, 1-5). This same dynamic played out during the Roh Moo Hyun government, as the left never completely embraced the center-left Roh. Koo argues that the key agenda items stressed by some of Moon's leftist supporters include vanquishing the conservatives, the *chaebol*, and the national security establishment (Koo 2017, 1-7).

CASE STUDIES IN CONTRAST

TAIWAN UNDER CHEN SHUI-BIAN AND KOREA UNDER PARK GEUN HYE

The cases of two disgraced presidents, Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan and Park Geun Hye of Korea, illustrate some of the differences between the two countries. The two national leaders, Chen and Park, are arguably two of the most consequential presidents since the democratization process began in each country, but from differing directions. Chen was the first president elected from the opposition, and his failure and imprisonment illustrated the weakness of the DPP in asserting its control of the country. Park was the only offspring of the controversial authoritarian leader, Park Chung Hee, and was the first woman to become president in the very patriarchal Korea. Her failure as president, by contrast, set back the conservative cause and splintered the ruling party, while her non-identification with the Korean women's movement probably did not hurt women's overall political advancement.

Chen was one of the early leaders of the DPP. His political prominence thus derived from his role in the democratization struggle and leadership of his party, not from his own charisma or personal following. Born into a poor family in what is now Tainan City in the southern part of the island in 1950, Chen excelled in school, became a lawyer, and gained prominence due to fighting for the rights of those opposed to the Chiang regime. He got elected to the Taipei City

Council in 1981, and ran for Tainan County Chief. He lost, and the next day his wife was paralyzed in a hit-and-run accident, which the Chens suspected was a government-sanctioned attack. Joining the young DPP, he was elected to the Legislative Yuan in 1989, and then as mayor Taipei in 1994. His mayoral tenure was generally considered successful, as he cleaned up the city, launched the city's subway system and closed shanty towns. He lost his bid for reelection in 1998, but began running for president soon after, and successfully used Taiwan Identity and independence issues to defeat KMT candidate Lien Chan in 2000.

As president, Chen cancelled a nuclear power plant, which upset the KMT-controlled legislature and led to waning confidence among foreign investors. When he changed his mind the next year, it created anger within his party. Meanwhile, Chen's pro-independence statements, failure to deepen economic ties with the Mainland, and redesign of the passport with the word "Taiwan" on the cover upset Beijing. Chen was barely reelected in 2004, only days after an alleged assassination attempt against him and his vice president, in which both were superficially wounded. Some observers felt that the attempt was staged to foster a sympathy vote for Chen. Chen's second term was dominated by various corruption scandals, involving Chen, his wife, aides and family members. Six months after leaving office in 2008, he was arrested and tried for corruption, convicted on several charges and sentenced to life in prison. Some of the convictions were overturned on appeal, and his sentence was cut to seventeen years. In 2011, he was convicted in another case and received an additional sentence of eighteen years (McCarthy 2000, 1-2).

Park Geun Hye could not have had more different background. Her position in the ruling party came directly from being the offspring of Korea's most authoritarian modern leader. The daughter of Park Chung Hee, Korea's military dictator in the 1960s and 1970s, she was traumatized by the assassination of her mother by North Korean agents in 1974 who were trying to kill her father as he gave a major speech. Forced to become Korea's first lady, she was again traumatized by the assassination of her father by the Korean CIA chief in 1979. During the 1980s to late 1990s, she kept a relatively low profile, but was elected to the National Assembly from Taegu as a member of the conservative party in 1998. Serving until 2012, she was twice party chair, and was credited with the party's win in the National Assembly in 2006. She also shepherded the party's rebranding in 2011. She lost the presidential nomination to Lee Myung Bak in 2007, but easily won the nomination in 2012 and went on to win the election against the Democratic Party's Moon Jae-in by a small margin. Her father's legacy became a major issue in the campaign. Supporters were heartened by her calls for unity and use of rhetoric similar to the elder Park, while opponents,

according to Halpin, feared a return to her father's authoritarian ways (Halpin 2017, 1-3). Others even pejoratively referred to her as *gongju* (princess) for her connection to her father, her aloof manner, and her ties to the *chaebol*.

At first fairly popular, Park lost much support over her government's handling of the Sewol ferry disaster in 2014, in which over 300 high school students and others died. She was attacked for her slow reaction to the crisis and failure to coordinate an effective emergency response. She was also criticized for pro-business policies that appeared to favor the large *chaebol*. A major scandal began brewing in late 2016, as the news media reported that her long-time confidant Choi Soon-Sil apparently had used her connection to the president to extort \$70 million from *chaebol* companies to support her religious organizations. Choi also allegedly had unauthorized access to Park's speeches, government papers and classified documents, and had advised the president informally. The National Assembly moved to impeach Park in December, 2016, and the decision was upheld by the Constitutional Court in March, 2017. That same month, Park was arrested and now faces multiple charges in the Choi Soon-Sil case (BBC News 17/03/10, 1-4; Steger 2017, 1-9).

While both Chen and Park were brought to trial for corruption, the nature of that corruption was quite different. Chen was accused of lining his and his wife's pockets from their contact with various private interests. Park apparently granted special access to the president's office to her long-time friend, Choi, who was daughter of her religious mentor. Her associate then allegedly used that access and privileged information to squeeze *chaebol* companies for funding. The two leaders' backgrounds were also quite different, as Chen was a self-made man and Park was a political princeling; princelings are common in Korean, Japanese and Chinese politics, but so far have not been seen as often in Taiwan.

TAIWAN AND KOREA IN LIGHT OF OTHER AUTHORITARIAN AND DEMOCRATIC CASES

As late democratizing countries, Taiwan and Korea share features with other Third Wave cases. The most obvious cultural comparisons are to Southeast Asian developing countries. Nearly all of Southeast Asia, with the exceptions of Vietnam, Laos and Burma/Myanmar, has undergone either democratic transformation or limited democratic change from the 1980s onward. Thailand is a rare case of the complete dismantling of democracy, as it experienced two coups and currently has been under military rule since 2014. Singapore, Malaysia, and Cambodia are partial democracies that have gradually improved political participation since the middle 1990s. Burma had a very long-lived military-personalist regime that launched a partial democratization only in 2010.

The military retained the largest bloc of seats in the National Assembly, and the widely respected opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was constitutionally prohibited from becoming the president (but as leader of her party, she became the unofficial head of government). The Philippines is perhaps the nation closest in experience to Taiwan or Korea, as it moved from the long-ruling authoritarian regime of Ferdinand Marcos to full democracy with the election of Corazon Aquino in 1986, only slightly ahead of its two Asian neighbors. Like its Northeast Asian counterparts, Philippine democratization has been rocky and accompanied by frequent crises of legitimacy, removal of and criminal cases brought against presidents, and endemic corruption. Despite continuous crises, it maintains its democratic institutions.

Early Third Wave countries in the Mediterranean also share some of the Taiwan/Korea experience. Greece, Portugal and Spain democratized in the mid-1970s, and have steadily built democratic institutions since then. Unlike their Asian counterparts, their democratic governments succeeded widely reviled fascist or fascist-like regimes, and were encouraged to initiate political change by the European Community (predecessor of the European Union) as a way to include them in the burgeoning European regional integration project. Eastern European Third Wave countries' experiences are quite different from East Asia, as they involved restoring of political traditions that were interrupted by World War II and the Cold War, when Communist regimes were imposed on them by postwar Soviet occupations. Latin American cases, as in East Asia, saw democracy's arrival at about the same time (the 1980s), and have mostly made progress since that time. Unlike Taiwan and Korea, Latin America has often experienced regional political and economic contagions, and a number of the Latin cases have seen recent retreats from full democracy, most especially in Venezuela and Bolivia, but to a limited extent in Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador and Brazil.

Korea's Candlelight Revolution and Taiwan's Sunflower Movement might be compared to the recent populist wave that started in Greece during its financial crisis, then spread to Spain (the success of the Podemos Party), France (the election of Emmanuel Macron as president, leading a new party created only months before the vote), and even the U.S. (the election of Donald Trump as president, essentially the takeover of the Republican Party by an independent-like candidate). However, most of those countries are previously industrialized countries that have not come out of the experience of the Newly Industrialized Economies of East Asia and Latin America.

Finally, Taiwan and Korea share many cultural and political features with Japan and China. Through the colonial period (1895-1945 for Taiwan and

1905-1945 for Korea), Japan shaped the two societies in profound ways. Korean postwar development, though mostly authoritarian until the 1980s, shared certain features with Japan: the politically powerful and generally competent bureaucracy, a hegemonic ruling party, and a close political economic relationship between economic bureaucrats and large industrial enterprises, aimed at export-led economic growth. However, democratization in Japan was accomplished in two waves: a very limited democratization during the Meiji and Taisho eras (1868-1912 and 1912-1926, respectively) and an externally-imposed democratic transformation during the American Occupation after World War II (1945-1951). Taiwan's political development shared a number of features with Mainland China up to the mid-1990s, especially the hegemonic role of a Leninist party (the KMT), centralized political leadership centered on the president and party leader, party domination of the bureaucracy, and the key grassroots role of small business within a Chinese social context. However, the People's Republic of China, despite extensive economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, has so far not undergone any significant democratization.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The trial of Park Geun Hye began in May, 2017. She was indicted on charges of abuse of authority, bribery, coercion and leaking of government secrets. The trial was widely expected to take six months or more. Moon Jae-in began his presidency with widespread public support, and called for a "wider, deeper, stronger democracy" in Korea (Moon 2017, 1-2). As expected, he indicated that he would like to improve relations with North Korea. His suggestion was greeted by the North's missile tests and rejection of possible talks. Among the major items on his foreign policy agenda are managing the U.S. alliance in light of Moon's rejection of the THAAD system, getting relations with China back on track after Beijing cut trade as a way to punish Seoul for that missile defense system, and whether to restart Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy of multi-level ties with the North.⁸ Moon thus must balance his desire for better relations with the North with maintenance of the U.S. alliance. He claims that "he will not be a slave to the liberal legacy of Roh Moo Hyun" (Lee 2017, 1-14), for whom he worked as chief of staff, but has appointed mostly leftists (including the first female foreign minister) to foreign policy posts. Domestic agenda priorities being pushed by Moon's young supporters include breaking ties between *chaebol*

⁸ "South Korea's new president will face challenges from all directions." *The Conversation* (May 8, 2017), pp. 1-5. <http://theconversation.com/south-koreas-new-president-will-face-challenges-from-all-directions-76397> (retrieved 7/23/17).

and government, addressing the lack of career opportunities for people who do not work for the big companies (President Moon wants to increase public sector employment), and relieving young adults of the costs of taking care of aging parents (Rich 2017, 1-5).

Meanwhile, Tsai Ing-wen has made some progress toward achieving her policy goals. These include a general judicial reform, changes in working hour rules, and pension reform. She has had mixed foreign policy success, launching a Southbound Policy toward Southeast Asia and Oceania, and has improved relations with the U.S., but the China relationship remains frozen over Beijing's insistence that she embrace the "1992 Consensus" on the One China Policy, and Panama switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to the PRC (Taiwan News 17/03/20, 1-3). Among the major challenges that she still faces center on the economic, including restoring growth, creating more jobs, and restoring confidence. Major economic initiatives include the "five industries" program to promote future-oriented production and services, and an Asian Silicon Valley Development Agency (ASVDA) to construct an Asian high tech incubator (Brown 17/03/17, 1-5). Her popularity has declined over the past year, but still remains fairly strong relative to that of her two immediate predecessors. Polls in early 2017 indicated her public approval rating hovering in the 27-38% range, down from 69.9% immediately after her inauguration. Heightening a sense of change in the air is a bold decision by Taiwan's constitutional court to open the way to legalization of gay marriage, as it ruled against the civil code's definition of marriage as only involving a man and a woman (Horton 17/05/24, 1-3). Among the factors lessening her approval were the softening economy and the return of frosty relations with Beijing. Her consolation has been that her numbers are several points ahead of the opposition KMT, still blamed for lackluster growth and loss of trade advantages to China (Yinglee 17/03/02, 1-3). Given the two countries' divided politics, we can expect that Moon and Tsai will finish their respective terms of office far less popular than now, while the opposition is likely to have an excellent chance to replace them in the next elections. Both leaders probably will face corruption scandals inside their governments, if not within their immediate families, and cabinet shuffles likely will not stem falling approval ratings.

Seoul mayor Park Won Soon suggests that a new politics has come to Korea, involving distrust of the old system, rejection of politics that fails to reflect the views of the public, and an explicit recognition of workers' rights (Park 2017). Until Taiwan and Korea develop more mature institutions and habits of democratic interaction, one can expect the patterns discussed above to continue for the foreseeable future. Patterns of democratic interaction develop over

decades, and changes in political culture take even longer. Zakaria argues that countries can become democratic, and then backslide into “illiberal democracy” for a time (Zakaria 1997, 22-45). Most Western countries began their progress toward democratic government at least 200 years ago, and did not become fully democratic until after World War II. Germany, Italy and Eastern European countries fell into authoritarianism during the 1920s to 1940s. Korea and Taiwan have been lucky that their respective political development paths have been fairly smooth over the past thirty years, and both countries have maintained stable societies and economies, relative to many developing countries, even in East Asia. Perhaps their best opportunities for continued progress are in socio-cultural realms. People under age forty in both countries are much better educated, have more international experience than their elders, are among the most tech-savvy populations in the world, and are not shy about using the internet and social media for political purposes. Their use of technology and continued participation in social and cultural affairs—if not political campaigns and policymaking—allow them to put more consistent pressure on government, making it gradually more transparent and accountable.

CONCLUSION

We have shown that major differences developed in how ruling and opposition parties were structured, the kinds of political cleavages and polarization experienced, and the nature of corruption experienced in both countries. Reasons for such differences are driven by political culture, political history and economic development in the two countries. We analyzed Taiwan and Korea in terms of democratization literature, and suggested possible directions for political development in these two countries. We considered the political history and general patterns of the two cases. We then looked at political cleavages and patterns of corruption in the two cases, and then contrasted two recent leaders who encountered serious scandals.

Given the challenges that both countries face, Korea and Taiwan may have to solve many domestic economic and social, and political problems before they can consider high political issues such as North Korea’s nuclear program, possible unification of Korea, and independence or improved cross-strait relations for Taiwan. Ruling parties in Taiwan and Korea cannot rule the country alone, but must work together with main opposition parties and other smaller parties. Both Seoul and Taipei have witnessed large protests demanding more democratic, stable and transparent governance. This should be embraced as an indicator of

robust citizen-led democracy. Leaders in both countries should make efforts to reduce the gap between what people want from the government and what the government can provide. Failing that, both countries could enter new periods of instability with the advent of each new administration.

Democracy is still highly valued and there is a strong consensus among the Korean and Taiwanese people that democracy is the best form of government. According to a recent survey, fifty-seven percent of Taiwanese and sixty-three percent of Korean believe that democracy is their most favored form of government. However, quite a number of people think that democracy can be improved and reformed. Korea and Taiwan have relatively short histories of democratic rule, and remnants of authoritarian rule persist, a legacy of Neo-mercantilist economic growth. Both countries must make efforts to strengthen and consolidate deeper, broader democracy with greater transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Whether Korea and Taiwan maintain their status as beacons of democracy will depend on how national leaders, governing elites and voters deal with the national integration policies and political, economic and social challenges that have emerged during the post-democracy period.

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