

Competition for Party Nomination in the 90s: How do Factions and Personal Ties Matter in Korean Politics?

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This paper explores the candidate-nomination process for South Korean political parties. Given strong party identification in South Korea, nomination by major parties is extremely important for candidates in winning elections. Employing social network analysis, we examine how factions and personal ties affect candidate nomination. Our findings suggest that factions play only a limited role: candidates with weak factional ties but strong overall closeness to other party members enjoy an advantage in the nomination process. This finding is significant in that it indicates that factions tend to be fragmented and unstable, contrary to the conventional wisdom that factional rivalries are deeply embedded in Korean politics.

Keywords: Candidate-nomination, Korean National Assembly, Party Politics, Social Network Analysis

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I. Introduction

This paper explores the candidate-nomination process for political parties in South Korea. Given strong party identification, nomination by major parties is extremely important for candidates to be nominated. We are particularly interested in the effect of factions and personal ties in the nomination process. Do factions and personal ties (*inmaek*) matter in the nomination process? If so, how?

A few individuals enjoying tremendous power in their parties have dominated Korea politics. Notably, these leaders tolerated factions within their parties even though they had the power and influence to eliminate them. It would be interesting to know how these leaders managed intraparty factions in the nomination process. In order to investigate the nomination process in South Korea, we gathered extensive data on every candidate in the 15th and 16th national assembly elections, which is very

rare.¹ In this paper, we present our initial findings. We show that, first, factions had only limited effect. This is because party leaders managed factions by using the nomination process in a way to eliminate potential rivals by disallowing them from providing benefits to their followers. Without the ability to provide benefits to their followers, faction leaders were unable to maintain their factions. Suspecting they might be disadvantaged in the nomination process, faction members were no longer incentivized to follow their faction leaders, and ultimately the factions fell apart.

If factions do not matter so much, then, perhaps candidate's personal ties might be factor in the nomination process. Thus we also investigate which types of personal ties matter and how in the nomination process. Our analysis indicates that politicians with "weak ties" in the party are more likely to be nominated. Altogether, our findings are significant because they indicate that factions tend to be fragmented and unstable, contrary to the conventional wisdom that factional rivalries are deeply embedded in Korean politics.

In the next section, we provide a general background of party politics and the nomination process in South Korea. Section three provides an overview of the variables and the next two sections discuss the paper's findings. Section six concludes our paper.

II. Pathways to the Korean National Assembly

The South Korean Constitution and laws governing elections and political parties pose few explicit and detailed procedures for candidate

¹ "The current legislature is the 20th national assembly. Due to data limitations, we rely on past nomination processes to examine how personal ties matter in Korea politics. Although political parties have changed names, and faction leaders have changed overtime as well, we believe that the main characteristics of the party nomination process remain more or less the same. The empirical investigation of the 15th and 16th national assemblies thus offers valuable insights into the candidate nomination process in South Korea.

endorsement. Article 8.2 of the South Korean Constitution only states that the organization and activities of political parties, which includes the candidate nomination process, should be democratic. Laws governing elections and political parties mainly defer the candidate endorsement process to the political party itself. Each political party in South Korea has its own regulation on candidate endorsement but with few differences. In general, there exists the Party Endorsement (Nomination) Review Committee that reviews candidates for each district wishing to run for election with a party label. This committee selects a candidate for each district and makes recommendations to a Party's steering committee, which consists of high-ranking party officials including the party president, secretary general, and chair of the Policy Research Council that make the final decision. Candidates who are selected become official party nominees for each district, but those who fail to receive endorsement have to run in the election as an independent or look for another party's endorsement.²

For decades, a few individuals have dominated Korean politics. These individuals have also dominated political parties, rendering them personalistic and paternalistic.³ For example, in 1995, there were two major parties, the ruling New Korea Party and the National Congress for New Politics (hereafter National Congress) led by Kim Dae-Jung.⁴ These parties did not diverge much in ideology or in policy preferences but did have different electoral bases, namely, each leader's native region. The New Korea Party drew its main support from the southeastern Gyeongsang provinces and The National Congress drew its main support

² South Korea maintains a single-member district system, and only those who receive official party nomination can register as a party candidate. Also, each party can nominate only one candidate per district.

³ "Hee Min Kim, "Rational Choice Theory and Third World Politics: The 1990 Party Merger in Korea," *Comparative Politics* 30, no.1 (1997).

⁴ As of 2017, these two parties have different names; New Korea Party became the Liberty Korea Party and the National Congress for New Politics became the Minju Party.

from the southwestern Jeolla provinces. In the 1992 presidential election, for instance, Kim Dae-Jung received less than ten percent of the vote in the Gyeongsang provinces but more than ninety percent in the Jeolla provinces. Furthermore, no one in both parties won a seat in the national assembly from a rival region for decades.

Since political parties are identified with their leader and attain electoral support on a regional basis, party leaders enjoy tremendous authority within the party. Interestingly enough, for example, the former leaders of two major parties, Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, who had fought for democratization of the country for more than thirty years, maintained an extremely authoritarian system within their own parties.⁵ In particular, party leaders enjoyed the exclusive power to nominate a candidate regardless of the formal nomination process within each party, supposed to be “fair.” It is not an exaggeration to say that leaders can single-handedly deny an incumbent national assemblyman candidacy in the next election if they desire.⁶ Considering that independent candidates are rarely elected,⁷ the fate of politicians thus rests in the hands of a few party leaders dominating the party nomination process.

Despite the fact that Koreans tend to identify political parties with their leaders, who exercise absolute control over the party, intraparty factions still arise. As several scholars point out, factions are often formed on the basis of regional, school, or patronage ties.⁸ The very

⁵ Kim, “Rational Choice Theory and Third World Politics.”

⁶ Chan Wook Park, “Change is Short but Continuity is Long: Policy Influence of the National Assembly in Newly Democratized Korea,” in *Legislatures: Comparative Perspectives on Representative Assemblies*, ed. Gerhard Loewenberg, Peverill Squire, and Roderick Kiewiet (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

⁷ Since the thirteenth national assembly election, held in 1988, less than three percent of national assembly members have been elected as independents in each election. Note that South Korea overcome thirty years of direct or indirect control of the political process by the military in the late 1980s, whereby a full-fledged party system began to operate.

⁸ Sung-joo Han, “South Korea: Politics in Transition,” in *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (Boulder: Lynne Rienner

existence of factions, however, provides a puzzle. Why do party leaders allow these factions within the party? While several works have attempted to explain the existence of factions,⁹ the question remains as to how party leaders manage factions within the nomination process. Do factions matter in the nomination process?

As noted above, especially in the Jeolla and Gyeongsang provinces, official nomination from the regionally dominant party is commensurate to being elected. In addition, without party nomination, an independent candidate in the national election also has almost no chance of being elected. Thus, the competition for party nomination is notoriously as fierce as the election itself. However, unlike Japan, factions have not contested the candidacy for national assembly seats within districts. In other words, there is not much *tomodaore* as leaders succeed in managing factional conflict in the nomination process.¹⁰

In this paper, we are generally interested in investigating the determinants of party nomination empirically. Which candidates receive nominations? Meanwhile, we are particularly interested in how factions matter within each party. Does joining a faction increase the chances of a candidate being nominated? How do party leaders manage factions in the nomination process? In addition, we are interested in how personal ties matter in the nomination process. Do candidates with strong ties within the party win the nomination? Answering these questions is not so easy especially due to a lack of available data. We collected extensive data on politicians who applied for nomination in the 15th and 16th national assemblies in Korea. This data includes the nomination candidates'

Publishers, 1989).

⁹ Hyung Joon Kim, "Economics of Factional Politics: A Study of Factional Behavior in Korea" (Ph. D. diss., University of Iowa, 1994).

¹⁰ *Tomodaore* is a Japanese term for over-nomination due to factional conflict within the party. See Gary W. Cox and Frances Rosenbluth, "Factional Competition for the Party Endorsement: The Case of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 2 (1996).

various backgrounds and factional affiliations. In this paper, we provide our general findings from the dataset on party nomination in South Korea.

III. Data

We gathered information pertaining to the 15th and 16th Korean National Elections through the Korean National Election Committee. The variables included in the dataset are as follows: the entire list of candidates in the 15th and 16th Korean National Elections; age; election results for each election; province and district; gender; educational record; career prior to becoming a politician; party affiliation; and party nomination in both elections. In addition, we included the candidate’s competitiveness in the elections. The variable “competitiveness” refers to the ratio of the number of votes a candidate received to the total number of votes in the district in the election.

Table 1. Re-nominations in the Major Parties

	The New Korea Party	The National Congress
Total number of nominees in the 15th election	210	212
Re-nominated in the 16th election	86 (41%)	64 (30.2%)
Not nominated in the 16th election	124 (59%)	148 (69.8%)

Among all the nominees in both elections, this study focuses on the winners of the 15th election from the New Korea Party (currently Liberty Korea Party) and the National Congress (currently the Minju Party). The dataset for the New Korea Party consists of 126 legislators who were elected in the 15th election. The number of National Congress legislators was sixty-five. We created a variable “nomination” for the winners of the 15th election. If a legislator was nominated again in the 16th election then the binary variable “nomination” was coded as one. If he or she failed to be nominated, the variable was coded as zero. Table 1 provides the re-nomination rate for the two major parties at that time.

In addition, we identified the factions within each party. The New Korea Party contained five significant factions. We identified the factions and their members from two sources. First, we rely on Park’s study summarizing the major factions in Korean parties.¹¹ Second, this data was complemented by new information extracted from *Monthly Joong-ang* and *Shindonga*, which are considered the most prominent monthly magazines in Korea. During the nomination process for the 16th assembly, the five major factions were as follows: the Lee Hoi-chang faction; Kim Yun-whan faction; Lee Handong faction; Kim Duk-ryong faction; and Kim Young-sam faction. Table 2 shows the number of national assembly members who were nominated from each faction in the New Korea Party in the 16th election.

Table 2. New Korea Party Factions in the 16th election

	Lee Hoi- chang	Kim Duk- ryong	Kim Young- sam	Kim Yun- whan	Lee Han- dong
Nominated	23 (69.7%)	8 (72.7%)	10 (62.5%)	8 (57.1%)	3 (27.3%)
Not Nominated	10 (30.3%)	3 (27.3%)	6 (37.5%)	6 (42.9%)	8 (72.7%)
Total	33 (100%)	11 (100%)	16 (100%)	14 (100%)	11 (100%)

Lee Hoi-chang, who was the “boss” of the New Korea Party, led the largest faction. In our dataset, thirty-three legislators are identified as members of the Lee Hoi-chang faction (twenty-six percent of the total). The next largest was the Kim Young-sam faction, which consisted of sixteen legislators. Kim Duk-ryong and Lee Han-dong had eleven followers each, while Kim Yun-whan had fourteen. There were also a few legislators who were members of multiple factions. The Lee Hoi-chang and Kim Duk-ryong factions enjoyed the highest rate of re-nomination. About sixty-nine percent of the Lee faction members

¹¹ Chong-Sung Park, “The Structure and Dynamics of Political Factions in Korea,” *Korean Political Science Review* 27, no.1 (1993).

reran in the 16th election (twenty-three out of thirty-three), while about seventy-two percent of the Kim faction were re-nominated (eight out of eleven). However, overall, of all the 15th election nominees from the New Korea Party, only forty-one percent were re-nominated by the party (see table 1).

It is necessary to briefly mention the background of the 16th election. In the 1997 Presidential Election, Kim Dae-jung of the National Congress defeated Lee Hoi-chang of the New Korea Party by a narrow margin and was elected President. Lee Hoi-chang retired from politics, but only briefly. Without the presence of Lee Hoi-chang and the former President Kim Young-sam, the New Korea Party underwent political chaos, and members realized they had no choice but to bring back Lee Hoi-chang. After returning to the political scene, Lee monopolized the party nomination process for the 16th election in 2000. Under the slogan of “Reformist Nomination,” Lee Hoi-chang did not nominate some of the powerful faction leaders within the party. Kim Yun-whan and Lee Han-dong, calling Lee’s nomination policy a “massacre,” left the party with several other party seniors and founded the “Democratic People’s Party.” However, their experiment turned out to be a disaster, which even the endorsement of former President Kim Young-sam could not mitigate. The Democratic People’s party ended up winning only one seat in the 16th election.

The National Congress had three major factions: the Kim Dae-jung faction; Kim Sang-hyun faction; and Neutral faction. Among the sixty-five legislators in the dataset, twenty-two (thirty-three percent of the total) of them are identified as members of the Kim Dae-jung faction. The Kim Sang-hyun faction had nine members, and the Neutral faction had eight. It was the Kim Dae-jung faction that demonstrated the most successful record in the nomination process. Seventy-seven percent of the faction members (seventeen legislators out of twenty-two) reran in the 16th election, while only thirty percent of the National Congress nominees in the 15th election were allowed to rerun in the 16th election.

Table 3 shows the number of national assemblymen who were nominated from each faction in the National Congress in the 16th election.

Table 3. National Congress Factions in the 16th election

	Kim Dae-jung	Kim Sang-hyun	Neutral
Nominated	17 (77.3%)	5 (55.6%)	5 (62.5%)
Not Nominated	5 (22.7%)	4 (44.4%)	3 (37.5%)
Total	22 (100%)	9 (100%)	8 (100%)

IV. Do Factions Matter in the Nomination Process?

First, we looked at how well the members of particular factions did in the nomination process. We performed a logit analysis with respect to the dependent variable of “nomination” indicating whether a member received nomination or not. The independent variables included binary variables indicating factional affiliation, age, and competitiveness.

Table 4. The Effect of Factions on New Korea Party Nominations

Variables	Coefficient	S.E.	Wald	p-value
Lee Hoi-chang faction	1.363	.465	8.598	.003
Kim Duk-ryong faction	1.296	.765	2.872	.090
Kim Yun-whan faction	.841	.639	1.730	.188
Lee Han-dong faction	-.385	.745	.267	.606
Kim Young-sam faction	.920	.603	2.328	.127
Age	-.034	.033	1.010	.315
Competitiveness	.920	1.784	.266	.606
Constant	.750	2.058	.133	.716
N = 126				
Pseudo R squared = .102				
Log likelihood = -78.403				

Notes The dependent variable was “nomination,” which was coded as one when the legislator was nominated in the 16th election and zero when otherwise.

Table 4 reports the result for the New Korea Party. Not surprisingly, the variable indicating the faction of the New Korea Party leader, Lee Hoi Chang, is significant ($p=0.003$). Lee Hoi-chang faction members were more likely to be nominated in the 16th election than other members of the party. In addition, although not as strong as the Lee Hoi Chang faction variable, the Kim Duk-Ryong faction variable is also significant ($p=0.09$). Among the minor factions, only the Kim Duk-ryong faction enjoyed favoritism. The other three faction variables show that factions did not have a significant impact on their member's nomination.

With regard to table 4, it should be noted that there is no evidence that Kim Yun-whan, Kim Young-sam and Lee Han-dong faction members did not suffer any disadvantage for their nominations. Our guess is that Kim Yun-whan and Lee Han-dong's rebellion against Lee Hoi-chang's party leadership was not due to unfair treatment of their factions but probably their inability to provide their followers with privileged status vis-à-vis nomination. If that was indeed the case, the results suggests that Lee Hoi-chang cut Kim and Lee off from their factions not by getting rid of Kim and Lee faction members but by preventing the faction leaders from showing favoritism to their factions. If Lee Hoi-chang discriminated against minor faction members by eliminating them from the nomination process, he might have ended up facing severe resistance to his party leadership. However, Kim Yun-whan and Lee Han-dong faction members did not have any incentive to revolt against Lee Hoi-chang. They rather chose to stay and submit to Lee Hoi-chang's authority than leave the New Korea Party, which would have certainly risked their chances of winning in the 16th election race.

For the Kim Young-sam faction, which did not have a strong leader like Kim Yun-whan or Lee Han-dong, the results suggest a story that is not very different. After Kim Young-sam stepped down from the presidency and retired from politics, his faction could not find a formidable leader. Consequently, Lee Hoi-chang and Kim Duk-ryong absorbed much of the remaining Kim Young-sam faction. It is plausible

to infer that the Kim Young-sam faction was not able to procure Lee Hoi-chang's favor, but neither did Lee have any reason to turn them against him by discriminating against them.

In the case of the National Congress, only the members of the Kim Dae-jung faction, the leader of which was also leader of the party, had a better chance of re-nomination than other faction members or non-faction members ($p=0.3$). The results in table 5 indicate that the party favored the party leader's faction but, as with Lee Hoi-Chang of the New Korea Party, neither did Kim Dae-jung use the nomination process to eliminate potential rival factions.

It is surprising that both parties were not seriously concerned with a candidate's competitiveness in the election. In both models, the variable "competitiveness" was not statistically significant. Perhaps due to strong regionalism competitiveness was not necessarily an important factor in selecting nominees. As mentioned earlier, being nominated by the right party by district almost certainly ensured a seat in the national assembly. Combined with this powerful regionalism, the party nomination process controlled by the party leader thus actually prevented Korean voters from choosing their favorite candidates.

Table 5. The Effect of Factions on National Congress Nominations

Variables	Coefficient	S.E.	Wald	p-value
Kim Dae-jung faction	1.450	.661	4.808	.028
Kim Sang-hyun faction	-.133	.775	.030	.863
Neutral faction	.221	.842	.069	.793
Age	-.092	.041	4.995	.025
Competitiveness	-.884	1.453	.370	.543
Constant	5.401	2.236	5.832	.016

N = 65

Pseudo R squared = .1956

Log likelihood = -34.431

Notes The dependent variable is "nomination," which is coded as one when the legislator was nominated in the 16th election and zero when otherwise.

The empirical analysis also suggests that the younger National Congress members were more likely to be nominated than older ones. However, the variable “age” was not significant for the New Korea Party nomination process. On average, among incumbent candidates National Congress nominees were about three years younger than New Korea Party nominees. When we add nominees who were not incumbent legislators into the dataset, National Congress nominees still remain about two years younger than New Korea Party nominees. It seems that even though the National Congress did not consider candidates’ performance an important factor in the 15th election, it did prefer younger nominees. The National Congress tried to appeal to the demand for political reform by nominating younger candidates, who were supposed to be less corrupted by the existing political system. We speculate that it was natural for the National Congress to prefer younger nominees who could help with the party’s “liberal” image. By the same token, it is plausible to assert that the “conservative” New Korea Party had no reason to prefer younger nominees who were relatively liberal.

V. Do Personal Ties Matter in the Nomination Process?

The analysis in the previous section shows that the data do not indicate that faction members performed well in the candidate nomination process, excepting those from party leader factions. In other words, it seems that faction affiliation generally did not provide an advantage for candidate nomination. In this section, we investigate the effect of personal and social connections on the nomination process. It is often said that personal and social connections (*inmaek*) are the most important factors for success in Korean politics. We investigate this stylized fact with respect to our data. In order to check whether *inmaek* matters for nomination, we employ network analysis that is common in sociology and labor economics.¹² For this analysis, we created a matrix indicating the relationships among candidates. Given the data availability, we check

only one but also the most significant criterion for building personal ties in Korea: school ties based on undergraduate and graduate education.

Figure 1. Networks Based on School Ties: New Korea Party

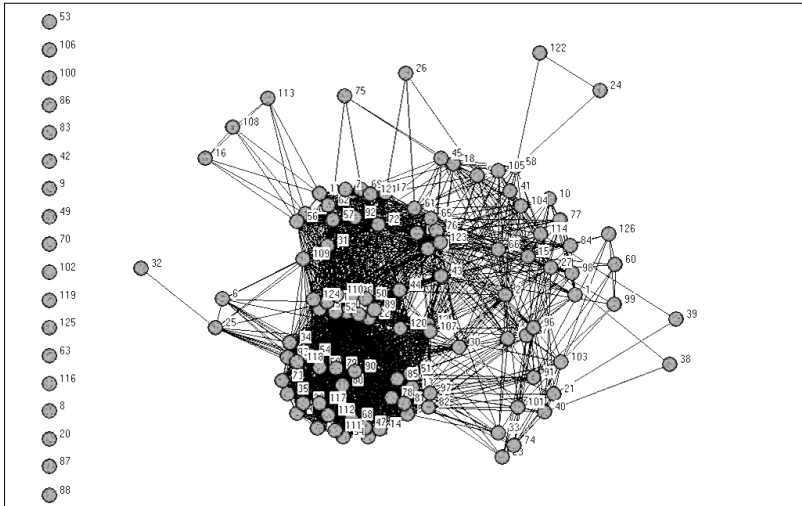
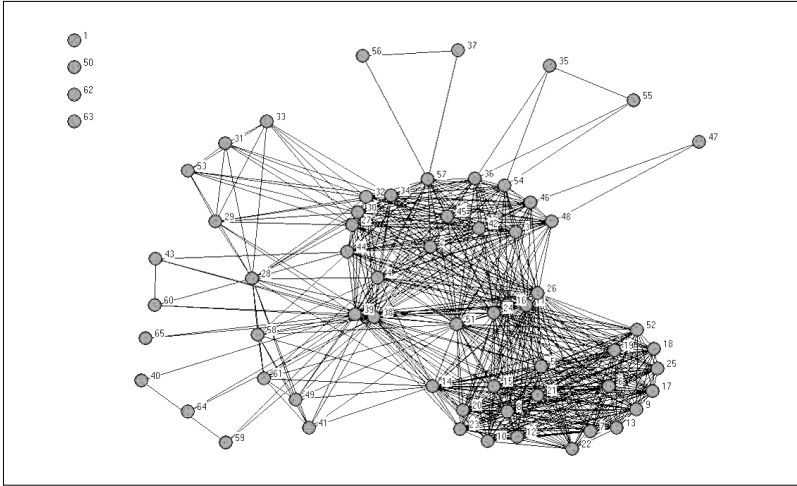


Figure 1 present the network pattern for New Korea. Each node in the figure represents a member of the party. The number next to the node is the number assigned to each member. The lines between the nodes indicate relationships. If a node does not have a line connected to it, it means that a member does not share any personal ties to the other members in the matrix. In the figure, we can see that there are groups of people connected more densely. Figure 2 presents the network pattern for the National Congress Party. Figure 3 compares the network patterns of the two parties. It is interesting to see that both parties have similar

¹² See, for example, M. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 789 (1973): 1360-1380; M. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited." *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 201-233; David Knoke, **Political Networks: Structural Perspective** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Figure 2. Networks Based on School Ties: New Korea Party

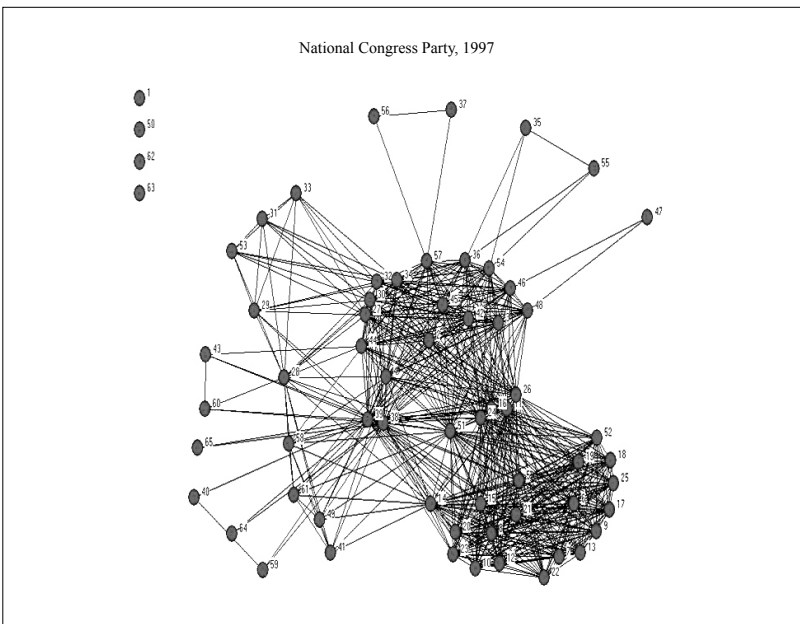
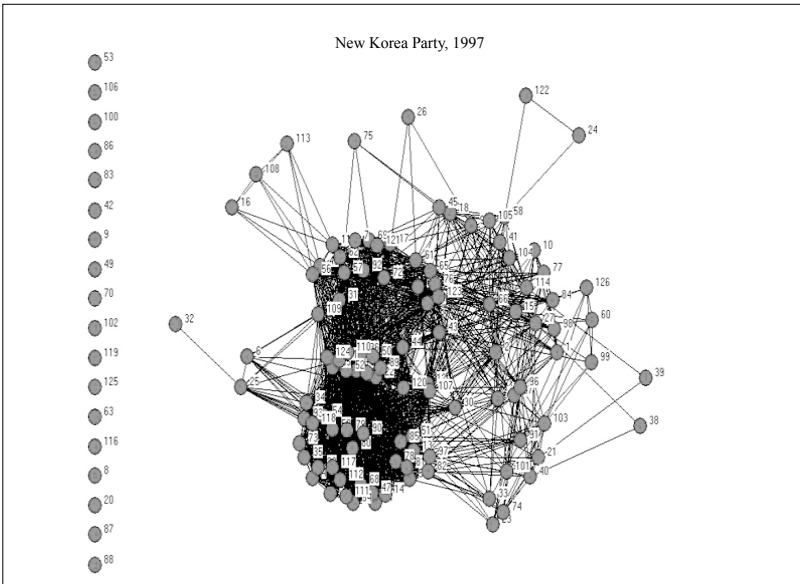


patterns of varying density, and both have two core groups that are closely tied. The difference in the densities with respect to each figure is due to the difference in the number of members in each party.

In order to check whether personal ties matters for the nomination process, we created three micro network measures, namely “degree,” “closeness,” and “betweenness.”¹³ “Degree” indicates the number of direct ties that each one member has in the network. It would be plausible to think that actors who have many ties to other actors may have enjoyed advantageous positions. Various and numerous ties may allow one alternative ways to satisfy needs and thus decrease dependence on any one individual. Most importantly, people with many ties may receive and send out more information than other individuals. This factor might conceivably translate into an advantage in the nomination process.

¹³ For the complete formula, see Robert A. Hanneman, *Introduction to Social Network Methods* (Riverside: University of California Press, 2001). The measures were created using the software UCINET for Windows

Figure 3. Comparison of Networks in Two Major Parties in 1997



We expect that members with a higher “degree” score, then, will be more likely to be nominated.

The second measure, “closeness,” measures the distance of an actor to all others in the network. The difference between “closeness” and “degree” is that “degree” only takes into account the immediate ties an actor has. One actor might be tied to a large number of others, but those others might be rather disconnected from the network as a whole. In this case, the actor might be a central one, but only in a local sense. “Closeness” takes into account both direct and indirect ties. Thus, this measure indicates how close a member is to the party in terms of ties we have in our data. We conjecture that a member who is closer to the party is more likely to be nominated.

Finally, we measure “betweenness.” Connections are often formed between individuals via an intermediary. Logically, the more people one knows, the more likely one is to be an intermediary in connecting others. Thus, it is plausible to speculate that an actor situated “between” other actors might be the more influential. Considering this point, we check whether members with more connections are more likely to be nominated or not.

Table 6 reports the result of a logit regression performed with respect to the New Korea Party. The dependent variable was “nomination,” which indicates whether a member was nominated in 16th election or not. “Age,” “competitiveness,” and “faction” were included as independent variables in addition to “degree,” “closeness,” and “betweenness.” The table provides several surprising results. First of all, “closeness” was the most important among the micro network measures. This suggests that overall closeness to the party rather than direct ties or “betweenness” is more important in the nomination process. In other words, politicians with more efficient access to, and who are more efficiently accessible by, other actors possess an advantage for the nomination process. Second, the faction variables were not significant, including the Lee Hoi-chang faction variable, when entered together with

Table 6. Nomination and Personal Ties to the Party: New Korea Party

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-0.39 (0.034)	-0.34 (0.34)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)
Competitiveness	0.523 (1.62)	0.88 (1.61)	0.98 (1.56)	1.07 (1.63)
Closeness	0.298 (0.15)**	0.35 (0.17)**		
Degree	0.008 (0.13)		0.02 (0.01)**	
Betweenness	0.001 (0.001)			0.002 (0.002)
Constant	0.49 (0.62)	0.89 (0.48) *	0.65 (0.56)	0.96 (0.54)
Kim Yun-Whan	0.55 (0.81)	0.81 (0.77)	0.80 (0.79)	0.97 (0.78)
Kim Yun-Whan	0.17 (0.63)	0.34 (0.61)	0.27 (0.64)	0.58 (0.63)
Lee, Han-Dong	-1.09 (0.78)	0.34 (0.62)	-0.73 (0.76)	-0.82 (0.79)
N	126	126	126	126
Pseudo R squared	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.09

Notes The dependent variable is “nomination,” which is coded as one when the legislator was nominated in the 16th election and zero when otherwise. The numbers in parentheses indicate standard error. ** indicates significance at 0.05, and * indicates significance at 0.1.

the network measures in the regression.

In sum, as in the previous section, we could find no strong evidence to support the conventional wisdom that factions play a crucial role in the nomination process. However, we found that personal ties to the party do matter. Especially, the overall closeness of an actor to others in the party is what matters. This provides strong evidence to overturn the conventional idea that factions play an important role in Korean politics. Factions tend to be exclusive. Therefore, members in a particular faction have very exclusive, strong ties among themselves but do not have strong connections with other members of the party. Our findings imply that an individual who is close to all other members of the party, or in other words an individual with weak ties to a specific network, tends to be nominated. As Granovetter suggests, weak ties can be a better source of job information than strong, exclusive ties because weak ties provide novel information.¹⁴ It seems that this is true in our case as well. Politicians with more direct and indirect ties were more likely to be

nominated. We think that politicians with weak ties have more information and knowledge of what is going on than other politicians, which helps in bargaining for and acquiring nomination.

VI. Conclusion

It is often said that factions are crucial for the candidate nomination process in Korean politics. Our analysis shows that factions do not play such a role. At best, only the members of the party leader's faction are more likely to be nominated. On the other hand, personal ties to the party matter. Our analysis shows that a politician with more ties to all other members rather than exclusive ties to some is more likely to be nominated. This is consistent with Han's argument that "Korean political factions and groupings tend to be fragmented, amorphous, and often lacking in strong personal leadership."¹⁵ Overall, personal ties (*inmaek*) based on education, region, and common experience are a more important factor than political factions in the candidate nomination process in Korea politics.¹⁶

Over the years, several aspects of the political environment in South Korea have changed. For example, Korean parties no longer have charismatic leaders such as Kim Dae-jung or Kim Yong-sam, who monopolized regional support. In addition, "grass-root nomination" has been experimented with since the presidential election in 2002. However, the parties still want to hold on to regionalism, which made it so easy to mobilize support. Regionalism, which created and sustained the old regime for the last thirty-five years, is thus still very much alive.

¹⁴ Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties."

¹⁵ Han, "South Korea: Politics in Transition," 296.

¹⁶ Some might argue that factions are formed based on personal ties. Although we have not yet fully analyzed the relationship between factions and personal ties, our measures of personal ties and factions are not correlated statistically.

Accordingly, we believe our empirical investigation of the 15th and 16th national elections undoubtedly offers valuable insights in this regard.

In order to improve upon these findings, future research should expand the dataset, whereby one can check the effect of factions and personal ties as well as analyze the relationship between network structure and party behavior over time. Furthermore, it would be fruitful to ask why factions in Korea, unlike in Japan, are not so stable or important for the nomination process. The answer to this question will increase our general understanding of the relationship between factions and the candidate nomination process.

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