

# The Local Dimension in the Industrialization- Democratization Connection: Scale, Opposition Demands, and Ruling Party Transformation in Taiwan and South Korea

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## **The Local Dimension in the Industrialization-Democratization Connection: Scale, Opposition Demands, and Ruling Party Transformation in Taiwan and South Korea**

Taiwan and South Korea seemingly followed parallel paths from authoritarian industrialization to vibrant democracy in a few short decades. Differences can be found in the opposition movements and in the responses of ruling parties. In South Korea, opposition took a radical character, while the ruling party maintained top-down practices well beyond democratic transition. In Taiwan, opposition was less radical and the ruling party abruptly abandoned the practice of building clients during democratization. The explanation of this variation centers on differences in the scale at which authority and resources were distributed during industrialization. A greater dispersal of power and wealth to local units can lead, unintentionally, to an undermining of ruling party hierarchies but also to a more moderate opposition movement. Concentration of power and wealth can fuel confrontational opposition activism but also reinforce party hierarchies. Attention to scale can help refine arguments about the links between industrialization and political change.

**Keywords:** democratization, South Korea, Taiwan, opposition movements, ruling parties

# The Local Dimension in the Industrialization-Democratization Connection: Scale, Opposition Demands, and Ruling Party Transformation in Taiwan and South Korea

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## I. Introduction

Democratic transformations in Taiwan and South Korea unfolded alongside each other. This situation has made the two East Asian societies excellent subjects for comparative research on modernization and democratization. In both places, middle classes drove movements for democracy and authoritarian rulers eventually instituted elections that could yield turnover in power. Upon closer inspection, finer distinctions can be drawn between the two societies' opposition movements and between the responses of their ruling parties. In South Korea, opposition to the authoritarian regime took a radical character, while the ruling party maintained its top-down practices well beyond the democratic transition. In Taiwan, by contrast, the opposition movement took a less radical stance, but during the course of democratization the ruling party departed sharply from its previous methods of building clients. These differences are counter-intuitive: we might expect, in societies undergoing parallel socio-economic and political transformations, a more radical movement to produce greater change in a ruling party and a less radical movement to lead to less change. What explains these differences?

I suggest that the characteristics of opposition movements and the adaptations of ruling parties are linked to each other. These outcomes are significant for their place in the democratization process and because they relate to continuing features of these polities. The argument offered here speaks to the broader theme of links between industrialization and democratization. Claims about economic growth and the rise of middle classes have proven useful for understanding democratization in Taiwan and South Korea. Those arguments can help explain who participated in anti-authoritarian movements and why regime change was eventually likely. The purpose here is not to dismiss existing explanations of democratization in East Asia but to explore a way that understandings might be refined to account for another set of distinctions. What is at stake here is not whether a middle class engages in opposition activism nor whether a regime concedes, but the manner of opposition activism and the shifts within ruling parties.

My argument begins with inspiration from a theme in writings on Taiwan's political and economic development: the significance of local actors both for democratic transformation (e.g., Chu 1992; Tien 1996; Rigger 1999; Cheng and Lin 2008) and for industrialization (e.g., Gold 1986; Wu 2005). Local actors grabbed increasing influence, in part due to locally-based economic growth but also to institutions that linked local society to formal electoral politics. The local was a sphere of power change. Similar arguments have not been offered for South Korea. This difference may signal a deeper distinction in the trajectories of political development in these societies.

I argue that differences in the scale at which authority and resources were distributed during industrialization contributed to the divergence in opposition movements and in the fates of ruling party hierarchies. In Taiwan, dispersal of authority and resources to local actors was reinforced at several points. This pattern produced a diluted sense of class consciousness but also shifted power to the ruling Kuomintang's (KMT's) one-time clients, who forced the party leadership to seek new

means of generating support. In South Korea, greater concentration of authority and resources led to sharper class divisions but also to a relative weakness among local business elites who might otherwise have put pressure on the ruling party to change its methods of mobilization.

This essay has three purposes. First, it aims to refine existing explanations of differences in the way growth shaped democratic change in Taiwan and South Korea. In particular, by highlighting the significance of local forces, the argument adds to understandings of interactions between institutional and economic change. Second, it suggests an alternative hypothesis on the causes of radical activism and poorly-institutionalized parties in South Korea. This hypothesis emerges only from comparison. Third, and more broadly, it draws attention to the potential significance of scale of effective authority in shaping patterns of political change in industrializing contexts.

## **II. Scale, Political Institutions, and Economic Resources**

Scale offers a fresh lens on differences in the political structures and economies of these two rapidly-industrializing societies. The design of political and political-economic institutions in Taiwan and South Korea reflects distinct scales at which power and resources were organized. I offer a scale-focused narrative of governance and growth in these two societies. Divergence can be found in the immediate post-colonial period, as new regimes managed distinct sets of problems. Later decisions and unintended situations led to the reinforcement of patterns set in the mid-twentieth century. In the following paragraphs I sketch the key points from a scale-focused account of change in these societies.

Regimes in South Korea faced different challenges to establishing order. In Taiwan, the KMT was culturally distinct from the population it sought to rule. Due to early missteps in running the island, which Chiang Kai-shek and his colleagues had initially assumed would be a temporary

basis, the KMT's Mandarin-speaking mainland-born leaders discovered that governing Taiwan would require compromises with the Hokkien- and Hakka-speaking island-born populace. The KMT installed local elections across Taiwan in 1950 in order to gain support from Taiwanese. These elections had no implications for islandwide governance but they did place the levers of local political economies in the hands of figures on the periphery of the regime. In return for discretion in local economic matters, elected officials—who joined the KMT in order to win office—would broker popular support for the ruling party (Chu 1992; Bosco 1994b).

South Korea's rulers, who had no sub-ethnic distinction from those they ruled, faced less pressure to offer a compromise. The Japanese departure had touched off popular uprisings on the Korean peninsula. Suppressing popular demands was the priority of, first, the American Military Government (1945 to 1948) and subsequent governments in Seoul. While the Republic of China (ROC) was under martial for nearly four decades, the Republic of Korea (ROK) held elections from 1948—with brief but significant periods of exception. Restrictions on who could participate applied to South Korea's elections, and elections became more rigid over time. After a coup in 1961, local elections were abolished. Districts for National Assembly seats were drawn so large as to make mobilization through social ties ineffective. Such a scheme suited both the country's military rulers and other elements in the political class, who for the most part lacked local roots. The regime engaged in less local-level mobilization of society than did the KMT in Taiwan. Both of these states on the front of the Cold War used tremendous coercion to rule, but Taiwan's rulers invested more heavily than South Korea's in a local-level compromise.

In both East Asian societies, political decisions contributed to the creation of capitalist classes. These decisions were also guided by scale considerations. The distribution of Japanese industrial assets is a case in point. Governments in both places had inherited enterprises left by the

former colonizer. In Taiwan, the KMT in the early 1950s linked distribution of these assets to land reform, which gave land to the tiller and stipulated maximum limits on how much land any household could own. The state paid landlords with shares in Japanese industrial assets. In one fell swoop, a traditional rural elite was wiped away and a new class of petty-capitalists was created (Gallin 1966; Cheng and Haggard 1992: 4-5). Laws forbid former landlords from seeking profits from traditional agriculture, so they had incentives to learn quickly to do business. In South Korea, by contrast, Japanese industrial assets were auctioned off to a small number of large firms. The Rhee regime gained political donations in return. This move, especially in a high-inflation context, expanded the wealth of the wealthiest industrialists. The political alliance of big business and state elites contributed to the concentration of industrial resources.

Subsequent situations and decisions reinforced these approaches to scale. By the 1960s, Taiwan's small and medium enterprise (SME) sector was leading an economic boom. The KMT regime had interfered little in SMEs. This attitude was partly a political strategy: the KMT preferred to have ambitious Taiwanese pouring their energy into small businesses than into high politics. The KMT was sensitive about large enterprises for fear of their potential political clout, but SMEs appeared an innocuous outlet. From the mid-1970s, the government actively promoted SMEs. In South Korea, the Rhee regime of the 1950s collapsed in 1960 in part because of criticism of corrupt links between Rhee's cronies and big business. The Park Chung Hee regime that followed the coup of 1961 promised to clean up government. While Park extracted support from big business in more subtle ways than Rhee, he continued to work closely with a few concentrated players. They provided an easy source of political finance, and he also had leverage over them for directing their investment. This relationship persisted through the 1970s and into the Chun Doo Hwan regime (1981-87).

As industrial booms hit these countries, patterns of resource

dispersal or concentration had clear economic and social effects. In Taiwan, the proportion of manufacturing employment in small firms of twenty workers or fewer increased while that in larger firms decreased. In South Korea, the largest firms occupied huge portions of output and contained much of the workforce. There was a geographic component to these patterns. Both places urbanized quickly, but in Taiwan smaller urban places grew, rural industry was common, village-to-town commuting occurred, and the largest cities grew moderately. In South Korea, rural industry faltered, former farmers left the countryside permanently, and the population ended up disproportionately in the big cities (especially in Seoul and the capital region).

This account converges with other observations about differences in the politics and political economies of these East Asian societies. A focus on scale, though, elucidates differences in political-economic linkages that have received less attention. In Taiwan, local elections and a permissive environment for small businesses were driven by similar political motives. In addition, as shall be seen, an SME boom in a context of local elections had implications for shifts in power. By the late 1970s Taiwan had many small firms throughout the island; lines between farmers, workers, and capitalists were blurred. It had political institutions that gave local influence to local elites, whose fortunes were expanding. In South Korea, both rural-urban divisions and worker-capitalist distinctions were sharper, and the benefits of growth accrued disproportionately to central rather than local leaders. Electoral institutions offered few intersections between formal politics and local society. In the next four sections I document the contributions these situations made to two sets of political outcomes in each place: moderate versus radical middle-class opposition, and transformation versus stasis in ruling party hierarchies.

### III. Social Class Identity and Opposition Activism in Taiwan

Growth patterns had implications for class formation and class politics. In Taiwan, distinctions between capitalists, workers, and farmers tended to be fluid: laborers could realistically become their own bosses and workers often continued to be farmers. Families straddled agriculture and industry, and rural and urban spaces. A variety of arrangements emerged for combining agricultural and industrial work. One anthropologist reports on a village where full-time farmers were scarce—but only ten percent of households had left agriculture entirely (Hu 1984: 66–68). When men commuted to factory work in nearby towns or cities, wives managed farm plots. Since the husbands tended the farm only on their days off, they were known as “weekend peasants” (Ch’en 1977: 84–86). This “part-time proletariat” (Gates 1979) moved fluidly between primary and secondary sectors.

The informal nature of employer-employee relations in small work units also dulled class identity. Tiny factories in villages had no licenses and no rights to issue contracts or invoices (Hu 1984: 96–97). Taiwanese labor law prohibited workers in enterprises of fewer than thirty employees from establishing labor unions. That gave small firms greater flexibility. Many of these firms mobilized family labor (Greenhalgh 1995). Patriarchal norms rather than legal codes informed management practices (Hsiung 1996: 29–30). Young women worked in factories and then quit when they married. But many married women took on work later in these small firms close to home. Some even subcontracted out and did work from home. In fact, by the 1980s, most female workers were in small factories, not in large firms (Hsiung 1996: 3–4). Rural factories depended so much on family ties that only factories with five or more employees hired from outside the kin network (Hu 1984: 98). These characteristics contributed to the weakness of the Taiwanese labor movement. A worker who is employed by a family member and aspires

to become a boss is unlikely to conceive of his or her interests as class interests.

By the same token, the capitalist class was a more diverse group. It was not exclusively an elite class that identified mostly with the state. Entrepreneurs who ran small firms acted beyond the purview of state control (Cheng and Haggard 1992: 9-10). Other social groups had less reason to have grievances with capitalists as a whole class.<sup>1</sup>

While these forces dimmed the class identities of Taiwanese, political institutions also encouraged the rising middle class to make demands within the sphere of electoral politics. Local elections provided an arena in which demands could be articulated. By the late 1970s, non-KMT figures from a new professional class began to gain some success in elections for county council positions. These leaders formed the *dangwai* or “outside the party” group. *Dangwai* politicians were independent candidates who became increasingly successful in elections in the late 1970s.

Middle-class anger was channeled into *dangwai* support. An important episode occurred during the 1977 elections. In the race for Taoyuan county magistrate, a non-KMT candidate was expected to poll well. His supporters, fearing vote-rigging by the KMT, took to protest in the town of Chungli. As the protest escalated, police violence did as well and culminated in the killing of three young people. Popular anger at the Chungli Incident brought non-regime politicians together under the *dangwai* label (Chen Mingtong 1995: 183). Two years later this pattern was repeated. Following US president Jimmy Carter’s announcement in late 1978 that formal ties with the ROC would cease, the KMT postponed elections. In response, office holders associated with the *dangwai* petitioned the government to hold elections. One of them,

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<sup>1</sup> Solinger (2008: 107-109) notes that the aloofness of Taiwan’s capitalists from the regime, when contrasted with the close ties between business and the party-state in China, suggests diverging political patterns on either side of the Taiwan Strait.

Huang Shin-chieh, then founded a dissident journal called *Formosa Magazine*. The periodical sponsored peaceful gatherings. When one of these gatherings was denied a permit to mark Human Rights Day in December 1979 in the city of Kaohsiung, organizers initiated a demonstration instead. The regime ordered military police to intimidate participants. Authorities then detained many prominent activists connected with the magazine and with the *dangwai*. The most shocking episode surrounding these detentions occurred in 1980, when activist Lin Yi-hsiung's young daughters and his mother were murdered in his home while he was under detention (see Lu 1992: 124–125). Lawyers, many of whom had previously not been political, jumped to defend politicians and activists put on trial by the regime.

While some founding members of the *dangwai* launched their careers in electoral politics and then moved into opposition activism, others started as lawyers and shifted into electoral politics. Future president Chen Shui-bian, for example, was a lawyer specializing in commercial law who became involved in politics through the Kaohsiung Incident. In 1981 he won a seat on the Taipei City Council. Chen was a key figure in both anti-regime activism and electoral politics. In 1986 *dangwai* politicians organized themselves into the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which went on to become the major opposition party. The composition of the DPP leadership makes clear the linkage between authoritarian elections and demands for democracy. Of the first ten DPP chairmen, serving from 1986 to 2008, eight won elected office prior to 1990. All had been connected with the Kaohsiung Incident; most were lawyers.<sup>2</sup> This group of educated activists had one foot in electoral politics before the transition to democracy.

The middle class formed the base of support for the *dangwai*/ DPP. Forces from two sources pushed Taiwan's new middle class toward non-

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<sup>2</sup> This information can be found in many sources, including references such as Copper (2010).

radical activism. On one hand, the muting of class identities meant that workers were unlikely to be politicized. On the other hand, competitive local elections provided a moderate outlet for opposition to the regime. There were opportunities to press the KMT on its own terms in these elections. The *dangwai*/DPP absorbed middle-class activism and directed it toward elections and toward expansion of elections.

#### **IV. Social Class Identity and Opposition Activism in South Korea**

In South Korea, both the class dimension and the institutional environment were different. While in Taiwan many people thrived by undertaking activities that linked rural and urban places, in South Korea young people and whole families abandoned the countryside and became full-time urban workers. Hagen Koo observes that geographically concentrated industrialization in South Korea facilitated full-scale “proletarianization” of workers. Permanent rural-urban migrations meant that working-class cultures and habits emerged to replace village-based practices (Koo 1990: 676; Choi 1989: 65–81). South Korea’s quick urban transition contributed to the rapid formation of a city-based working class. Industrialization came with few feedback loops into the rural sector. Success came from throwing oneself into extra-local networks, not from returning or staying home.

Compared to Taiwan, more capitalists were more closely tied to the state and to elite power. The absence of a strong small business class meant that capitalists could be associated with the state. This condition could exacerbate class tensions.

The institutional environment in South Korea also pushed ordinary people toward radicalism. The rising middle class in South Korea could vote against the ruling party but the effect could only be limited. While Taiwan’s local officials could wield influence in the local political economy, elections had minimal impact on governance. After Park

Chung Hee revised the constitution in 1972, the president was indirectly elected and National Assembly elections were designed so that the ruling party was virtually guaranteed a majority; even then, bills rarely began in the legislature. The opposition that did exist had been permitted, and it included many figures who emerged from the conservative politics of the 1950s.

Established electoral and party politics were thus limited as outlets for the demands of South Korea's growing working and middle classes (Lee 2011). In Taiwan, starting in the late 1970s, leaders of middle class activism entered electoral politics. In South Korea, activism and electoral politics were less closely linked. The Korean counterpart to Taiwan's Kaohsiung Incident, in terms of being a galvanizing moment in the movement for democratization, is the Kwangju Uprising of 1980. In May of that year, citizens of the southwestern city of Kwangju seized control of government offices. General Chun Doo Hwan, serving as de facto president, sent in the military to retake the city. The suppression was bloody, with hundreds if not thousands of Kwangju residents killed. The uprising followed Chun's seizure of power in the wake of president Park's assassination in October 1979. Unlike in Kaohsiung Incident, there was no direct link to electoral politics. Kwangju was a response by citizens to state encroachment. In the Kaohsiung Incident elected politicians responded to the postponement of elections, and the episode enhanced ties among non-regime activists who would later run for office. Kwangju, by contrast, radicalized regime opposition.

The Kwangju Uprising helped touch off a deeper political movement. The movement included diverse interests that were held together by a *minjung*, or common people, ideology that framed demands in a way that was meaningful to a variety of Koreans. This variety included workers, students, and church-based activists. The frame articulated pride in elements of mass Korean culture, history, and everyday life. As "a particular postcolonial engagement with history" (Abelmann 1996: 20), the *minjung* movement sought to find a Korean

subjectivity that had been lost in colonial subjugation and not regained with the immediate post-colonial impositions. Activists questioned the resolution of the ROK's founding conflict and, by extension, the basis of the state. As Koo (1993: 72) notes in writing about the surprisingly anti-establishment views of the middle class: "In South Korea, struggles about class actually mean struggles against the state." The *minjung* ideology mobilized people in a way that institutionalized party politics failed to do. In fact, some activists were skeptical of elections, because participants had seen how elections had served old elites. Activists pushed for fundamental reordering of the relationship between the state and the people.

Workers formed a component of the movement. The pattern of concentrated industrialization had created a strong working class identity. Furthermore, because workers knew that the state supported their exploitative bosses, their grievances could take a political character. Suppression of labor organizing in the 1980s led to politicization of workers (Koo 2001: 102–104). This treatment of workers differed from the paternalist attitude toward workers seen in Taiwan's smaller workshops. There was also a specific linkage between middle-class radicalism and worker activism. Students played key roles mobilizing workers. University students posed as workers and took jobs at factories. At night they would teach their coworkers basic subjects as well as political ones (Koo 2001: chpt. 5). These activities helped bring workers into the popular movement demanding political change.

The distinction between South Korea and Taiwan in the relationship between anti-authoritarianism activists and elections can be illustrated by comparing two former activists who became presidents. The figure in South Korea's democratization whose career was most similar to Chen Shui-bian's was Roh Moo Hyun, who served as president from 2003 to 2008. Like Chen, Roh was a lawyer who started his career in the 1970s. Roh made his name in property law. He had no links to politics until he decided to represent a group of students who had been arrested, tortured,

and charged as state enemies. Just as the Kaohsiung Incident politicized Chen, this case turned Roh into a human rights lawyer and political activist. However, while Chen went immediately into electoral politics, Roh did not. In the 1980s he remained an anti-regime activist without links to parties or elections. Neither the events that politicized Roh, nor the way he participated in politics were related to elections. Only after the transition did he and several colleagues enter party politics and run for office.

## **V. Industrial Resources and Political Hierarchies in Taiwan**

Dispersed authority and resources also had an impact on ruling party hierarchies in Taiwan. Starting in the early 1950s, the KMT had cultivated local-level clients. The core actor was the configuration known as a local faction (*difang paixi*), a set of clientelist networks oriented wholly to competing in elections. Faction members ran for office, or endorsed particular candidates. They sought nomination from the KMT, but they also had roots in local communities. Factions were neither emanations from local culture nor state impositions but “rather the product of a particular state-society articulation at a particular point in history” (Bosco 1994b: 114). Factions provided the local networks and systems of legitimacy that facilitated grassroots electoral mobilization. Votes for the KMT came through loyalty to a community leader who was respected for his or her local status and contributions to the community, not from positive views of the KMT as an organization. Local loyalties were then transformed into KMT support as the party coopted faction leaders. Local factions formed a key component of the link from elections to legitimacy for the regime (Chu 1992: 28). This sort of mobilization was not ideological. The regime continued to repress open discussion of tension between Taiwan-born and mainlanders and to use schools, campaigns, surveillance, and coercion to inculcate Chinese

identities. Through elections, though, local leaders could improve their positions and claim to represent their communities.

The KMT had multiple tools for disciplining local factions. Besides designing institutions to ensure that local factions were powerless on the national stage, the KMT used informal means to check local power. Within districts, the KMT cultivated rivalries between factions. The KMT could alternate nomination between the two factions to balance one against the other. Propping up a weaker faction prevented a stronger one from becoming dominant and gaining leverage against the party. Where factions were similar in strength, the party might support the slightly more influential one so that the party could gain local prestige (Chen Mingtong 1995: 150–153). In order to prevent factional conflict from escalating, the KMT could make sure the county executive came from one faction while the chairman of the county assembly came from another (Chen Jishuo 1996: 80).

By turning to local factions, the KMT put itself in the position of having to negotiate with a set of actors on the regime's periphery. KMT leaders wanted to avoid becoming dependent on local factions, lest the latter learned to win elections without the party. The party name, after all, did little to get votes. In the 1970s the KMT attempted a strategy of nominating "good governance" candidates. The party picked educated Taiwanese who could make the party look more professional than candidates affiliated with local factions (Dickson 1996: 50–53). In 1972 this approach worked and the KMT won all elections. Five years later, however, the strategy backfired.<sup>3</sup> Of the seventy-eight provincial assembly seats, twenty-one went to non-KMT candidates; four non-KMT mayors were elected. In Taoyuan County, outside Taipei, a local faction representative who was disgruntled after not being nominated won the

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<sup>3</sup> In 1977 only fifteen percent of KMT nominees for magistrate/mayor came from local factions, down from sixty-five percent in 1968 and forty percent in 1972. See Chen Mingtong (1995: 183).

magistrate position as an independent. His candidacy touched off the Chungli Incident that mobilized *dangwai* politicians. The KMT discovered that it had to consider the power of local factions in planning electoral strategies.

Local elections also eventually exerted a “trickling-up pressure” (Cheng and Lin 2008: 166) on the regime to expand elections to higher levels of office. Successful politicians at local levels had aspirations for further power. Although the regime continued to use repression into the 1980s, the growing competitiveness of elections may have marked a turn toward “soft authoritarianism” (Winckler 1984: 482).

Local growth contributed to the rising power of local factions. Small entrepreneurs invested their wealth in politics in the 1970s. The SME boom had given them funds and as employers they could serve as patrons to community members. Many entrepreneurs held status in their communities, for example as temple committee members. These resources and networks helped local leaders gain leverage against higher levels of the KMT. With their newfound leverage, local factions could defect away from the KMT. They could run in elections as independents. The effect was to make elections more competitive. Competition, in turn, raised campaign costs. Rising costs, in the context of widespread prosperity, made it harder for the KMT to control patronage resources (Tien 1996: 18–20). Bruce Dickson (1996: 46–47) explains the effect: “Although co-opting local leaders expanded and consolidated KMT power on Taiwan, the practice of co-optation subsequently facilitated the KMT’s evolution away from its Leninist origins.” As Shelley Rigger (1999: 31) puts it, co-optation through elections “redistribute[d] power from the regime center to the grassroots by increasing the regime’s reliance on the individuals directly responsible for delivering votes.” Clientelism had made Taiwanese society “weak,” but growth had the unintended consequence of challenging patronage hierarchies.

Competition within the KMT led blocs of politicians to turn to business for support. Yun-han Chu (1992: 143) found that among twenty-

four magistrates and mayors elected in 1989, eighteen received financial support from a business group. Business pushed its way up to islandwide offices, too. In the Legislative Yuan of 1989 to 1992, thirty-eight of 101 elected members were known to have business links. This shift signaled the KMT's declining leverage over those who aspired to power. Because of the growth in resources outside party control, party control over candidates declined.

Taiwan did, of course, continue to have large enterprises. The largest firms tended to be connected to, if not directly controlled by, the KMT. While these firms remained important for both the economy and for KMT rule, the pace of growth in the SME sector meant an expansion in resources beyond the scope of central KMT control. Even if politicians with a business background or supported by business formally allied with the KMT, local KMT candidates were usually not deeply integrated into party hierarchies. Their business interests were beyond the purview of the party. Further, with its strategy of switching nomination between factions, the KMT exhibited little loyalty to local politicians.

For the KMT, the rising competitiveness of elections meant that a component of its ruling strategy was deteriorating. By the early 1980s, the party could no longer rely on local elections for cultivating clients who, by running under the KMT banner, could generate legitimacy for the regime. Not only were local faction allies no longer dependable; ties with them also exposed the party to criticism. *Dangwai* politicians could challenge the KMT's record in collaborating with local faction figures who may have had underworld associations (Bosco 1994a). The KMT needed alternative strategies for garnering support. In the 1980s, the party oscillated between shunning local factions and allying with them. After the turn of the century, a scholar announced "the end of clientelism in Taiwan" (Wang 2006). The KMT's vulnerability in the face of empowered local clients contributed to the party's shift away from a clientelist party to one that mobilized on the basis of messages.

Another adjustment to the declining reliability of local allies was

the incorporation of more Taiwanese into the KMT. Mainlanders had dominated the KMT and state, with Taiwanese given access mostly to the realm of local elected office. Beginning in the 1970s, the KMT recruited and promoted more Taiwan-born people within the party and state. In 1976 three-quarters of new cadres were Taiwan-born. Between 1975 and 1985 the percentage of island-born county-level cadres rose from thirty-five to fifty-four percent (Dickson 1996: 55–57). Growth in Taiwanese officials was slower at more central levels but in 1984 president Chiang Ching-kuo appointed a Taiwanese as his successor. At the same time, there was a shift in leadership from revolutionaries to technocrats (Jiang and Wu 1992: 82-83). Meanwhile, as politicians who built careers winning local elections started to succeed in higher-level contests, political leadership shifted toward types whose strengths lay in managing election campaigns rather than in other areas (Cheng and Lin 2008: 166). These changes signaled a reorientation of the regime away from pursuing Chinese nationalist ideals and toward governing Taiwan's society. The changes had multiple causes, and the declining ability of local elections to deliver support to the KMT made this transformation more important in the KMT's quest for social support.

## **VI. Industrial Resources and Political Hierarchies in South Korea**

The local forces that drove the subversion of ruling party hierarchies in Taiwan were far weaker in South Korea in the same period. On one hand, the political system offered scant opportunities for local elites to step into electoral politics. Local elections were not held after 1960. Constituencies for National Assembly elections were so large that the influence of any single county—the traditional unit of local social life—was marginal. South Korean rulers had not set up a system of clientelism like the KMT's. On the other hand, as we have seen, industrialization had not significantly expanded the resources of local elites. The local

business class that developed in Taiwan scarcely appeared in South Korea. Instead, ambitious people left the countryside for jobs in cities.

Given the weak ties between parties and any local elite, South Korea's parties felt little pressure from below. While the KMT by the late 1970s started to struggle to nominate the most competitive candidates, South Korea's ruling party faced no such difficulty. In fact, the party had so much leverage over would-be candidates that the party leadership could maintain top-down nomination practices—even years after the democratic transition. All of South Korea's major parties inherited top-down candidate selection procedures from pre-transition parties. Park Chung Hee's DRP had rules for selecting candidates but the formal procedures left space for central party leaders to appoint nominees directly (Sim and Kim 2006: 353). The DRP's rules were passed on to the subsequent ruling party, the Democratic Justice Party (DJP), which maintained them after 1987. When the DJP merged with two other parties in 1990 the candidate selection procedures followed. Successors to that party inherited the procedures. The opposition adopted rules that similarly did nothing to restrict interference from party leaders. Secret meetings of screening committees set slates of candidates. Whatever the stated rules, "In practice authority over nomination is monopolized in the hands of an imperial party head who monopolizes organization, personnel, and finance" (Yi Hyeon-cheol 2003: 42). Even when party reforms after 2000 created the appearance of institutionalized nomination procedures, central leaders could still influence the process. As a newspaper opinion piece put it, "All that's happened is that nomination screening committees have taken over the imperial role of the two Kims" [referring to former presidents Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung] (*Donga Ilbo*, March 18, 2008, 34). Industrialization in South Korea, in a political environment in which the ruling party had not depended upon a set of local clients, did not give rise to a set of vote-getters who could eventually challenge the ruling party electorally.

In the absence of electoral pressure from the local arena, South

Korea's ruling party had little need to adjust its organizational tactics before democratization. The KMT's ambivalence toward local factions from the early 1980s to the early 1990s had forced the party to reach out to new groups and, in so doing, to turn to new, appeals-based forms of mobilization. No similar dynamic could be found in South Korea. The ruling DRP and DJP could remain aloof, since representatives had nowhere else to turn if they wanted to win office. Candidates continued to need parties more than parties needed particular candidates.

Under these conditions, South Korea's ruling party could simply continue in its old, top-down ways. To be sure, the profile of the elite underwent change. Military officers left government. Former opposition figures, including activists, joined party politics. In 1990 the ruling party assimilated a large section of the former opposition through its incorporation of Kim Young Sam. This move contributing to the shifting of the basis of inter-party struggle from pro-regime versus anti-regime to other issues, including position on North Korea and regional identification. At the same time, parties did not revise their organizational structures or practices as the country democratized. The institutional frailty of South Korea's parties is infamous, as parties have collapsed and re-emerged every few years. Individual personalities have been enormously influential. Figures such as Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung had been in elite party politics since the 1950s, and they dominated their parties. While there are claims that cultural norms justify such domination (Helgesen 1995; Kim 1998), there must also have been a relative weakness among party subordinates to allow the leaders to assert such claims. Comparison with Taiwan reveals that South Korea's particular political institutions and concentrated pattern of industrialization made it easier for party elites to impose their will on their parties. In comparative perspective, the weakness of local economic and political actors in South Korea stands out as a factor contributing to stability in party hierarchies.

Even the introduction of local elections in the 1990s did little to

diminish these hierarchies. The major parties were almost immediately tremendously successful in winning elections at all levels. Candidates competed hard for support from one of the major parties. One scholar observed that “the party nomination system in local elections leads to one-side, vertical relationships between the center and the provinces” (Hwang A-ran 2002: 264). Had a strong local elite existed, parties might have encountered greater competition in local elections. Instead, centralized party hierarchies only extended into the local arena after democratization.

Another factor to which these differences might be attributed is the mode of authoritarian rule in each place. Since a Leninist party ruled Taiwan while South Korea’s generals used parties only to win elections, one might argue that it is unsurprising that post-democratic parties in South Korea were less institutionalized than those in Taiwan. This claim has merit. If we look more specifically, though, at the KMT’s transformation from clientelist organizer to platform-based electoral party, then more particular features of KMT rule and Taiwan’s political economy must be given attention. It is not only that a party ruled but that the regime used local elections to cultivate local-level support and encouraged growth in small, local firms. Those specific features—and their absence in South Korea—can more precisely account for the variation under investigation here.

## **VII. Conclusion**

In Taiwan and South Korea, the modernization theory expectation that growth would produce social forces demanding democracy came true. However, the nature of opposition demands and the adjustments by ruling parties differed. This essay has offered an explanation for these patterns, which are not captured in broader narratives of modernization and democratization. The explanation here centers on distinctions in the scale to which authority and resources were distributed. Early in its rule,

the KMT initiated a set of compromises that, in the context of rapid industrialization, would empower local actors and link them to formal politics. By the late 1970s, these empowered actors demanded more influence in national politics. In the space created by such demands, a rising middle class—in which identities as farmers, workers, and capitalists were blurred—pressed for greater say in formal politics. In response, the KMT was forced to alter its methods of building support. South Korea's leaders did not make the same initial compromise and, as a result, local elites were weaker and less connected to formal politics even as growth created more resources. As big cities and large firms prospered, people were pushed into more sharply-defined class categories and workers faced state suppression. Opposition activism took on a more radical character than in Taiwan. Although this resistance led the regime to liberalize, the ruling party faced little pressure to reform its top-down organization.

This study introduces a new hypothesis for explaining the poor institutionalization of South Korea's political parties. Previous studies of South Korea's democratization have not given attention to the weakness of local forces as a possible cause of features of the country's political transformation. Comparison with Taiwan suggests that this factor may distinguish South Korea's experience. The relative weakness of local forces meant that central party leaders have had relatively fewer obstacles to exercising power. This concrete situation facilitates the successful application of norms that empower individual party bosses. It would also help explain why, as some scholars argue (Choi 2005), continuities in party politics can be found from the late 1940s or mid-1950s to the democratic period—local forces did not push elite politics off its trajectory. The poor institutionalization of South Korea's parties may be underpinned by this history of weak local connections.

An implication of this study is to suggest that scale may be a useful dimension to explore in discussions of comparative development. I have outlined a framework that could be applied to contexts beyond the ones

examined here. Among developing societies, Taiwan's more dispersed pattern of authority and resources may be closer to the average than South Korea's more concentrated pattern. The ROK state has had a capacity that is hardly matched. Many industrializing countries in other regions, such as in Southeast Asia, have more far-flung territories and greater ethnic diversity. Such characteristics make dispersal of authority and resources more likely than concentration. Examining the consequences of variation in the extent of dispersal of authority and resources could yield insight into political outcomes that are more specific than those predicted in many discussions of industrialization and political change.

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