

BECOMING ELECTABLE: THE CAUSES OF THE SUCCESS AND FAILURES OF
OPPOSITION PARTIES IN JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

In the past twenty years, opposition parties in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have been experiencing different levels of success in elections, despite similarities in the three countries' institutions (particularly the electoral system) and political history. While Duverger's Law predicts that the three countries, with their single member district focused electoral system, will tend toward a Westminster model of two-party rivalry over time, whether this is truly the case remains to be seen. The apparent collapse of Japan's main opposition party following the 2012 elections, as well as the recent rise of third parties in Korea and Taiwan, present important questions about the direction of these Asian democracies.

In this paper, I use a model based on electoral game theory to outline the conditions required for an opposition party to win an election, drawing upon existing scholarship regarding resource advantage of dominant parties and incumbency advantage. I argue that two conditions are required of opposition parties and their leaders to succeed in their electoral campaigns: 1) legitimacy as the leader of the opposition and 2) an appropriate and rational issue-frame that distinguishes the opposition party from the incumbent and panders to public opinion. I then test my model through empirical testing of past presidential/general elections in the three countries, and find that opposition parties across the three countries have experienced, or are still experiencing difficulties in transitioning to become a catchall, centrist party.

In tandem with providing a recent political history of competitive democracy in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, this paper contributes to the literature on the comparative politics of Asian democracies and the evolution of politics post-democratization.

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Introduction

2016 has been a busy election year for political parties in Japan, South Korea (hereafter “Korea”) and Taiwan. In Japan, the newly-formed Democratic Party (DP) suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who won an astounding two-thirds majority in the House of Councilors. In contrast, the opposition parties of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan and The Minjoo Party (henceforth “The Minjoo”) in Korea won formidable electoral victories. The DPP gained a majority in the Legislative Yuan and Tsai Ing-wen won the presidential election by a landslide, while The Minjoo defied opinion polling and won a plurality in the National Assembly.

But if we wind back the clock to 2009, the situation was very different. The DPP’s eight-year stint in power came to a crashing end after President Chen Shui-bian’s corruption scandals, and the Kuomintang (KMT) returned to power. The Democratic Party, the then main opposition party in Korea, had suffered crushing defeats in the 2007 presidential and 2008 legislative elections. On the other hand, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won a sweeping victory in the 2009 general elections, ousting the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for the first time in 16 years, and for the second time in Japanese postwar history. Clearly, a lot has changed in the past seven years—or has it? What variables account for the waxing and waning of the viability of opposition parties in these Asian democracies?

This paper aims to examine why opposition parties have differing levels of success in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, despite facing similar political challenges, democratic institutions and electoral systems. In particular, this study looks at the factors that have or have not made an opposition party electable in the past 20 years, and place the findings within the general literature of opposition politics and electoral game theory. The secondary and broader purpose of this study is to address a long-time question in the field of Asian comparative politics: whether these maturing democracies are headed toward a Westminster model of functional, two-party rivalry, a consensus model of multiparty, coalition-based politics, or something else entirely.

Definitions and Limits

First, I will begin by defining the specific terminology used throughout this study. This paper uses the terms “dominant party” and “opposition party” in the following manner (also refer to Table 1.1 below):

Dominant parties: Conservative elite parties that have traditionally dominated politics in the three countries, in particular before democratization in Taiwan and Korea, and the fall of the 1955 System in Japan.

Opposition parties: Broadly defined as the left-of-mainstream parties that have perennially challenged the ruling parties. Within the scope of this paper, opposition parties will largely be limited to those that have been in government (as the major party in a coalition at the least).

Table 1.1: *Dominant and Opposition Parties in Japan, Korea and Taiwan*

| | Dominant Parties | Opposition Parties |
|--------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Japan | LDP (-Komeito coalition) | DPJ, DP, JSP and others |
| Korea | Saenuri (and its ancestral forms) | Democratic Party (and its various spin-offs) and the People’s Party, Justice Party, United Progressive Party and others |
| Taiwan | KMT (and the Pan-Blue) | DPP (and the Pan-Green) |

The terms “new democracies” and “one-party dominance” (interchangeable with “dominant party equilibrium”) are used throughout this paper in reference to Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Although Japan has a longer history than Korea or Taiwan as a constitutional democracy, the LDP has been in power for most of Japan’s postwar history. This single-party dominance, albeit under a democratic system, was maintained through practices of pork-barrel politics and vote-buying. This practice was also common in dominant parties in Korea and Taiwan, and I thus categorize all three states as (previously) single-party dominant, flawed democracies.

Correspondingly, the timeline of this study starts from the late 1980s, when Korea and Taiwan underwent democratic reforms, and Japan experienced a change of government for the first time in 38 years. It covers up to the present day (2016), as well as touching upon projections for the future.

Political Background: Shared Characteristics

Japan, Korea and Taiwan are the most prominent of democratic governments in East Asia. Sharing many similar cultural roots, the largely analogous political systems and climates in the three countries render them good comparative case studies in political science.

Many scholars in the social sciences have already compared the three countries. For example, Celeste Arrington looks at the differences in the “public sphere” (which she defines as news media, legal profession and activist sector) across Japan, Korea, and to a lesser degree, Taiwan, to examine the role of litigation in activism (2016). Others have addressed the human rights situation in the three countries, or the role of the internet in activism and civil society (Neary 2002; Ducke 2004). In addition, the three countries are hailed as the most successful cases of the “developmental state” model (Woo-Cumings 1999).

The challenges that the three countries currently face are also similar. Economic growth has slowed, and revitalizing the economy is a top-priority concern. Yet simultaneously, the demographic challenges in the years ahead—the “ageing society” problem, resulting from falling birth rate and longer life expectancy—call upon the governments to expand their welfare policies, despite national debt being on the rise.

Institutionally, the three countries share many common characteristics, in part due to the Japanese colonial legacy. They are all unitary states, and in comparison to the size of their populations, policymaking is centralized and top-down (Lijphart 2012:178; Rigger 1999). Legislative and budgetary powers are concentrated in the national-level legislature. Nevertheless, governors or mayors of provincial/prefectural governments have a degree of autonomy in regional spending, and can rise to levels of national prominence, as demonstrated by individuals such as Ishihara Shintaro, Lee Myung-bak and Chen Shui-bian.

Moreover, the three countries share similar problems regarding the quality of its democracy. All are listed as “flawed democracies” by The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2015 Report. This is due to issues with press freedom and political participation, in particular by women.

Most prominently however, the three countries share the same electoral system for their legislative elections (in Japan, this is for the Lower House, or the House of Representatives). This “mixed” system is a combination of two separate sections within a single election. The first section is a majority/plurality section, divided into first-past-the-post (FPP), single-member districts (SMD). The second section is elected by proportional representation (PR): in Japan, this is done through 11 regional voting blocs, and in Korea and Taiwan, through nationwide party lists.

Table 2.1: Proportions of SMD and PR seats in the legislatures of Japan, Korea and Taiwan

| | Single-member Districts | | Proportional Representation | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | Seats | Proportion | Seats | Proportion |
| Japan (National Diet) | 295 | 62.1% | 180 | 37.9% |
| Korea (National Assembly) | 253 | 84.3% | 47 | 15.7% |
| Taiwan (Legislative Yuan) | 73 | 64.6% | 34 | 30.1% |

* In Taiwan, there is a small (6 seats, or 5.3%) section of two three-member districts for aboriginal voters.

This “mixed” system aims to achieve the merits of both the Westminster model and consensus model; by leaving a larger section of the seats to FPP, this makes it likely that a winning party will gain a majority, hence allowing for efficiency in legislation (Lijphart 2012). On the other hand, by adopting a smaller PR section, the system ensures that smaller parties will be represented in the legislature also. This type of “mixed” voting system is limited to Japan, Korea and Taiwan currently, which renders them excellent comparative case studies.¹

The fact that the three countries share a similar voting system is highly germane to exploring the causes behind the successes and failures of opposition parties. For example, FPP has been shown to favor entrenched parties (as predicted by Duverger’s Law), while PR is better for ensuring a dynamic, multiparty climate in the legislature. Why then, despite the similarities in electoral systems, do opposition parties have differing levels of electoral success?

¹ Russia will also adopt a 50% FPTP and 50% PR system of voting in 2016

Literature Review

There are a number of reasons why existing scholarship cannot fully explain the varying levels of success in opposition party election across Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Firstly, this is because comparative political literature on the election of opposition parties tend to be focused on established, Western democracies where relatively even competition is assumed and resource asymmetries in one-party dominant systems unaccounted for. For example, a study of the Britain's Labour Party in opposition in 1970-1974, or the Conservative Party in opposition in 1997-2010, is not helpful in understanding opposition politics in new democracies where the interplay of power between two great parties is not established or constant. Because in a system like the U.S. or the U.K., there is no historical "opposition" party and the two parties' roles have been fluid between that of the ruling and opposing, these studies assume no more resource advantage than that associated with incumbency when examining electoral game theory.

Secondly, while scholars recognize the theoretical importance of one-party dominance, and this is critical in understanding the handover of power from ruling to opposition parties, the perspective of these studies have primarily been that of ruling parties. For example, Lindberg and Jones examine the role of dominant parties in democratic African states, and conclude that dominance has significant impacts on government efficiency, economic growth and the quality of democracy (Bogaards and Boucek 2010:198). It is left largely to the reader to infer how exactly opposition parties contribute—or otherwise—to politics in these societies. Marco Rimanelli notes that in one party dominant states, there is an "inevitable trend towards corruption and finance embezzlement by single-party governments, accustomed to decades-old monopoly on national politics to preserve power", and Andrew Wedeman compares "developmental corruption" in Korea and Taiwan in his study of corruption in China (1999:15; 2012). Neither, however, theorize specifically about the impact of such corruption on opposition parties, or how they behave as underdogs (1999).

Kenneth Greene, whose arguments I build on in this paper, formulates a game theoretic model of dominant party equilibrium breakdown from erosions to a dominant party's "hyper incumbency advantage" (2007:39). Although this can take various forms, one reason that Greene argues that it is likely in most societies is because vote-buying strategies become less effective over time as a society gets richer, lowering incentives to continue endorsing the dominant party. In outlining his

ideas, he also explains how this breakdown translates into opposition party gain, but his work primarily explains power transition through the shortcomings of dominant parties rather than the efforts of opposition parties. While I do not disagree, removing the agency of opposition parties and not giving heed to their political calculus fundamentally omits a critical part of why power transitions occur.

Thirdly, while there are studies on opposition parties and/or democratization in specific countries, few examine opposition parties in a comparative political context across states. Ethan Scheiner, for example, looks at opposition failure in Japan, and Shelley Rigger examines how the DPP went from opposition to power (2006; 2001). Gregg Brazinsky applies the theory of “developmental autocracy” to examine how authoritarian regimes in Korea unintentionally undermined their own power by growing the middle class and allowing certain civil liberties (2007).

One particularly helpful work in this field is Dongtao Qi’s examination of the links between Taiwan’s Independence Movement (TIM) and the DPP, and his theory of the “movement government”. Qi adapts this concept from Robert C. Tucker’s usage of the term “movement regime” to describe the revolutionary mass-movement regime types established in the 20th century (1961). Qi applies the “movement government” idea to democratic governments that have gained momentum from social movements, such as the TIM in Taiwan, or the Solidarity movement in Poland, and I would argue, the democratization movement in Korea.

From here, he builds the argument that the DPP “movement government” had two support bases: the TIM and the members of the public that support the DPP government (“governmental supporters”), and hence dual roles of leading the movement and the government. Balancing between the two can be difficult and sometimes contradictory if the expectations and goals of the two support bases diverge. Qi’s “movement government” is a useful lens to examine opposition parties in Korea and Taiwan, where its members have deep grassroots links to social movements. I will be using this in my own argument to examine how “movement governments” evolve.

While the existing literature is undoubtedly critical in my study, no previous work puts together the three new democracies in East Asia and examines the causes of success of opposition parties

in elections and subsequent political pluralization. Empirical explanations of individual opposition parties and where they failed and succeeded help us to understand the political history of these countries, but the gap in current literature lies in theorizing the electoral success of opposition parties in these previously one-party dominant, recent democracies.

Methodology

I will begin my study with a presentation of my theoretical model, which has foundations in electoral game theory. I will then proceed to test the accuracy of my model by examining each success and failure of opposition parties in Japan, Korea and Taiwan in their executive elections. In the case of Japan, as the prime minister is the leader of the largest party in the Diet, I will be examining the Lower House elections. For Korea and Taiwan, my case studies will be presidential elections.

One point of note is that I will not be covering the 1993 General Elections in Japan as a separate case. This is because there was no definitive opposition party among the eight-party coalition that is appropriate for analysis.

Main Argument

So how then, do we explain the varying levels of success and failure among opposition parties in Japan, Korea and Taiwan?

Building from Greene's explanations of dominant party equilibrium breakdown, I present a set of conditions that I argue determine the course of an opposition party's campaign. Firstly, Greene's argument can be summarized into the following basic points:

1. A dominant party controls the government fully, including the bureaucracy. This gives them access to public funds and extra fundraising capacity, which they can direct legally or illegally to partisan use and pork.

2. This patronage allows a dominant party more than just the resource advantages associated with incumbency, virtually eliminating the chance of election for an opposition party.
3. Careerist politicians thus have no incentive to join an opposition party. The only people who will throw their weight onto a non-dominant party are individuals who are ideologically motivated. By definition, these people are those on the extreme ends of the political spectrum, and distant from the position of the dominant party, who panders to the median voter.
4. Thus, opposition parties are forced into non-centrist, niche positions, rendering them under-competitive individually and too ideologically separate to coordinate together against the incumbent.
5. It is when the opposition parties expand into catchall competitors with broader appeals (i.e. closer to the median voter) that dominant parties are threatened.

Greene's arguments are convincing because he addresses critical gaps and flaws in classical definitions of single-party dominance and electoral game theory, particularly in assuming a level playing field between entrenched parties and challengers entering the system. For example, Riker (1976) finds from his study of the Indian Congress Party that the reason for the party's success was its centrism, as well as the extreme positions taken by opposition parties. What Riker's argument does not account for however, is why such opposition parties move closer to the median voter (m), where they are able to appeal to a larger section of the electorate. Greene's answer to this puzzle is that the resource asymmetry greatly favors dominant parties, to the degree that it restricts the locations at which opposition parties can enter in the first instance.

However, as previously mentioned, Greene's explanations are insufficient in understanding the evolutions of opposition parties, because his primary goal is to examine the breakdown of dominance. Nor does he examine, beyond the scope of dominant parties inadvertently losing their resource advantage, how opposition parties strategize to pick up the losses of the dominant party when they begin losing their edge, or what happens to the competition between a formerly-dominant party and the opposition parties once the dominant party equilibrium collapses.

My addition therefore, to Greene's model, are the following points:

1. Resource advantage decline is not sufficient by itself to explain how opposition parties come into power; as much as shortcomings on the side of the dominant party are a part of the formula, so are the preparedness of opposition parties to fill those shoes. This “preparedness” is what I argue makes an opposition party electable, and consists of two factors: issue and legitimacy.
 - a. **Issue** refers to a policy area where the opposition party is distinguishable from the corresponding position taken by the dominant party (e.g. Opposition party advocates for engagement with a foreign country, while the dominant party advocates military intervention). However, the issue position an opposition party adopts should also be rational, sensitive to public opinion and ideologically flexible.
 - b. **Legitimacy** refers to whether an opposition party holds the mandate to challenge the dominant party. Simply put, it tries to measure the degree to which the public perceives the opposition party, and especially its leader, as one that can represent their interests when they are dissatisfied with the performance of the dominant party. One metric of legitimacy is the length of time a leader has been in opposition, whether formally or otherwise.
2. Once regime transition occurs once, given that the electoral system is conducive to Duverger’s law, the dynamics between the dominant and opposition parties will begin to resemble a Westminster model, albeit in a slower fashion compared to established two-party rivalry democracies
3. The importance of “issue” becomes greater after the first time an opposition party is elected, because it needs to mimic the centrist flexibility of the dominant party and become a catchall party. In game theoretic terms, appropriate issue-framing is the measure of the opposition’s shift towards *m*.

The table below models what is required of a prime ministerial or presidential candidate and his/her party to be elected. I argue that without both issue and legitimacy, election is difficult as an opposition party, and that after the first instance of an opposition party getting into power, having an issue is more critical to a party’s success than legitimacy.

Table 3.1: Likelihood of electoral success from issue and legitimacy as independent variables

| | | Legitimacy | |
|-------|---|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | | ✓ | ✗ |
| Issue | ✓ | Q1 Election Very Likely | Q2 Unlikely |
| | ✗ | Q3 Unlikely | Q4 Most Unlikely |

In theory therefore, all elected opposition leaders in the three countries should fall into Q1, and all who were unsuccessful in Q2, Q3 or Q4. I will now examine empirically whether this holds true in my case studies of Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

Empirical Analysis: Successful Elections by the Opposition Parties

In this section, I look at the issue and legitimacy of party leaders who have been successful, and also diagnose where unsuccessful leaders were lacking.

Japan

Hatoyama Yukio (2009 General Elections—Elected)

Legitimacy: Hatoyama Yukio is a hereditary politician, the grandson of Hatoyama Ichiro, who served as prime minister in 1954-1956. In Japan, inheriting a Diet seat lends politicians credibility in Japan (Usui and Colignon 2004). Consequently, there have been many prime ministers in recent years whose fathers or grandfathers were earlier premiers: Abe (grandson of Kishi), Aso (grandson of Yoshida), Fukuda Yasuo (son of Fukuda Takeo) and the aforementioned Hatoyama. However, unlike the others, Hatoyama is the only one who has crossed party lines, leaving the LDP to found the DPJ, in the process using his own family’s wealth to fund his campaign. This gives him the double-pronged legitimacy of being a pedigree politician from a prestigious family, yet concurrently being his “own man” with independent political views.

Issue: The success of the DPJ can be attributed to its image as a reformist yet centrist party, particularly on two issues. With the economy continuing to stagnate, the post-Koizumi LDP turned to the party's old tricks to increase spending on public works (Fackler, 2009). This led to a massive increase in public debt, but failed to stimulate growth. At the same time, the economic downturn was putting pressure on the public, as ailing companies began to cut the welfare that they had generously provided their employees and their families during better times. The onus was increasingly on the government to provide welfare to its citizens, and the DPJ exploited this, by pledging to increase access to medical facilities for Japan's aging population and providing childcare benefits in order to boost birth rate (CFR 2009).

Moreover, the DPJ presented itself as a party that was able to "say no" to the U.S., reducing Washington's influence on Japan and instead seeking better relations with its Asian neighbors. Hatoyama pledged during the election campaign that if he became prime minister, he would move the U.S. bases in Futenma, Okinawa to "at the very least, outside of the prefecture" (Nippon 2014). All in all, the DPJ presented itself as a dynamic alternative to the LDP's traditionalist and conservative policies, while avoiding issue areas that may be perceived as extreme, or too alienating of strong interest groups.

Noda Yoshihiko (2012 General Elections—Defeated)

No issue, no legitimacy: Noda is a victim of circumstance and his party's failure in internal cohesion. Coming into office in 2011 after a dismal failure on the part of his predecessor to contain the 3.11 crisis, Noda faced many challenges. While there are normally benefits associated with being an incumbent, in the case of the DPJ, this was a curse for Noda. During the elections, he could not distance or rebrand himself from the DPJ's ineffective governance, and his party lost a mammoth 173 seats.

Moreover, although Noda has been a long-time member of the party, his policy position is arguably closer to that of the LDP. For example, it was under the Noda administration that Japan's entry into the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) was suggested for the first time, with opposition from many members of his own party (Japan Times 2012; Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA 2012). Especially after he reached out to the LDP to ensure the passage of the legislation, a steady flow

of defections occurred within the party (Solis 2012). It was obvious then, that Noda was not recognized as the leader of his own party, let alone a fit opposition leader in the eyes of the public.

Analysis

Greene lists Japan as one of the case studies that support his idea of resource advantage being the most critical factor in sustaining dominant party equilibrium, arguing that the LDP's oust from power in 1993 was a result of powerful LDP politicians with individual assets defecting from a party whose resource advantage was gradually decreasing. This is indeed true, as LDP heavyweights such as Hata Tsutomu and Ozawa Ichiro left the LDP to form new parties.

Greene explains that the comparative resource advantage loss in Japan however, was much smaller than that in other dominant party equilibrium breakdowns, which is why the LDP returned to power in 1994, in a coalition with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). I would argue however, that the end of the 1955 system was critical in the formation of the DPJ and its later victory in 2009. Firstly, this is because the LDP's defeat in 1993 resulted in electoral reform, allowing a majority of seats in the Diet to be elected by FPP SMDs, facilitating the birth of a two-party rivalry in the 2000s.² Secondly, although the eight-party coalition that formed under Prime Minister Hosokawa dissolved in a year, the lack of an LDP majority forced the party to seek a coalition with its long-time rival, the JSP. As Curtis puts it, this was the “definitive end to an era in which political competition pitted conservatives against progressives” (1999:28). This is important for two reasons: firstly, because this “sleeping with the enemy” decimated the JSP, leading to many of its members later joining the DPJ, but more importantly, because this blurring of the cleavage of left and right facilitated the DPJ's self-branding as a catchall party.

Simultaneously however, this is where the DPJ's weakness lies, and why it has been performing badly since its ascent to power. Precisely because the DPJ has been a catchall party—not just in its appeal to the electorate but also in the backgrounds and ideologies of its members—the party lacks a definitive political identity. As we have seen above in the analysis of Noda, the lack of cohesion in the party both undermines its legitimacy and capabilities to adopt an issue.

² FPP SMDs are predicted by Duverger's Law to create two-party rivalries.

These problems can be expected to continue even after the DPJ's recent merger with the Japan Innovation Party (JIP). The DPJ professes itself as a "progressive" or center-left party, while the JIP is center-right, although admittedly significantly more centrist one of its parents, the Japan Restoration Party (Pekkanen, Reed and Scheiner 2016:212). Although it may be beneficial to join forces for the sake of short-term pragmatism, their ideological disparities may weaken one or both parties in the long-term as supporters feel inaccurately represented, much like the LDP-JSP coalition of 1994.

Korea

Kim Dae-jung (1997 Presidential Elections—Elected)

Legitimacy: Kim Dae-jung was a career politician who became the main opposition party's leader in the 1960s under Park Chung-hee's authoritarian regime. Kim's legitimacy as the torchbearer in Korea's democratic struggle was inadvertently strengthened by assassination attempts by the Park regime, and arrest, trial and exile by the Chun regime in the 1980s for Kim's alleged role in the Gwangju Uprising of 1980.

The fact that Kim was born in Jeolla region and used it as his political base was also important in cementing his position as an opposition leader. Korean development in the 1960s and 70s favored the southeast of the peninsula (the Gyeongsang region), and Jeolla in the southwest was left behind. This regional favoritism translated into a deep regional divide in political sentiment, which was further exacerbated after Chun Doo Hwan's brutal oppression of the Gwangju Uprising. Many in Jeolla craved a regional leader who would stand up for their interests, and Kim was the natural candidate (Kwon 2004).

Issue: Korea in 1997 was in panic over the Asian Financial Crisis, following the emergency \$57 billion bailout package and subsequent pressures from the IMF for reforms. 1997 saw a split in the conservative vote, and as the sole candidate from the opposition, Kim was the choice for voters who sought to punish the incumbent conservative government. Furthermore, unlike the conservative elites, who had been colluding with the *chaebol* (business conglomerates), Kim had long been an advocate of *chaebol* reform (Guk 2011).

Roh Moo-hyun (2002 Presidential Elections—Elected)

Legitimacy: Roh was a man of the people. Hailing from a disadvantaged background, he was unable to pursue university education. However, he self-studied and passed the bar exam to become a lawyer. In 1981, a group of students and school teachers in Busan were arrested and tortured in the “Burim Incident”. Roh was introduced to the case by a colleague, and took on their defense pro bono. From this, he increasingly became involved in contentious politics as a human rights attorney, even going to jail while investigating a case and losing his license to practice law (Britannica Korea).

Roh’s entry into politics was just as tumultuous as his career. Although he joined the Democratic Reunification Party in 1988 under the guidance of Kim Young-sam and was elected into the National Assembly, he protested Kim’s merger with the Democratic Justice Party (the party of Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo) and left the party. His subsequent time in opposition was particularly difficult as he opposed Kim Dae-jung’s return to politics in 1995 and initially refused to work with Kim (Hankyoreh 1997). He eventually reconciled with Kim before the elections of 1997.

During the legislative elections of 2000, under the Kim administration, Roh declined his party’s endorsement for the Seoul Jongro district, which was seen as an “easy” seat. Instead, Roh ran in Busan in order to “overcome regionalism”, but lost the election. Many of his supporters nationwide simultaneously admired this courageous decision and found his obstinacy regrettable, forming an *Nosamo*, an online Roh fan club. *Nosamo* later proved critical in mobilizing support for his presidential election (Jang 2007).

Roh’s experience as a human rights lawyer and his unconventional political career, where at several points he chose “the road not taken”, established him as a charismatic leader of the opposition. Unlike Kim, who was more symbolic of a generation’s struggles toward democratization and Jeolla’s regional chagrin, Roh appealed to the common man, he himself being from very humble origins. His political style of straight-talk and simple parlance distinguished him from Kim, who was known as an orator and a well-read, scholarly type. Aided by his ardent

Nosamo fans, he was able to appeal to a broad range of the electorate, winning the presidency in 2002 (Friedman and Wong 2008).

Issue: On the surface, it may be easy to argue that Roh's campaign did not have much of an issue at hand, as Roh pledged to inherit the most contentious legacy of Kim—the Sunshine Policy. It is possible to argue that Roh and his party were being ideologically rigid and pursuing an inefficient policy. Indeed, this is the line of criticism that conservatives today employ against him. Even leaving aside the missile test of 2006, they say, the First and Second Battles of Yeonpyeong (1999 and 2002), should have been sufficient warning that unconditional engagement with and aid to North Korea would not tone down its belligerence.

I would argue however, that this is a retrospective judgement; when Kim left office, his support rating was 24%, which is neither low nor high in the context of South Korean presidential politics (Gallup Korea 2015:3). Moreover, many had truly gained hope from the inter-Korean dialogue and exchange that took place under Kim, and the policy was popular with progressives. As former Minister of Unification and representative of the Korea Peace Forum Jeong Se-hyeon said in a recent interview, the Sunshine Policy had an 80% support rating among the public even in the aftermath of the First Battle of Yeonpyeong (SisaIN Live 2016). Thus, I would argue that it was not misguided for Roh, with the information he had at the time, to pledge to continue the Sunshine Policy.

Chung Dong-young (2007 Presidential Elections—Defeated)

Legitimacy, no issue: Chung served two terms in the National Assembly in opposition parties (National Congress for New Politics and the Millennium Democratic Party), prior to becoming the Minister of Unification under the Kim administration. He was a firm supporter of the Sunshine Policy, and his biggest achievement was the creation of the Kaesong Industrial Complex. However, it was unwise of the United New Democratic Party to choose Chung, whose image was so intricately linked to the Sunshine Policy. By this point, North Korea had conducted the 2006 missile test, and the public mood was hawkish. Chung himself did not help matters by putting his North Korea policy at the forefront of his campaign, mentioning in his book that he

“knew upon meeting Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang that soon the era of cooperation and reconciliation between the two Koreas will begin” (2007).

Moon Jae-in (2012 Presidential Elections—Defeated)

Legitimacy, no issue: Moon is considered a pro-Roh politician in the progressive circles, and his own background as a human rights lawyer strikes parallels with the former president. Moon is also one of the founders of the progressive newspaper, the *Hankyoreh*, and certainly these facets lend him credibility and legitimacy as an opposition party leader. However, the problem in 2012 was two-fold: firstly, that he was seen as too pro-Roh, excluding those who were not from the party and the electorate, and secondly, because he endorsed the Sunshine Policy, effectively making the same mistake as Chung in 2007 (Shin-Donga 2016).

Analysis

We can attribute the first election of Korea’s opposition party to two factors which are inherently linked: personality politics and the fact that the opposition party was a “movement government”. Korea’s struggle for democracy and the roles of individuals such as Kim and Roh gave them the legitimacy required to mobilize their supporters, taking the “movement” from a civil protest force to a “movement government”. In part as a result of this, opposition party politics, especially in early years, was strongly focused on personality politics. Kim was a “born orator”, while Roh was a “genius in populist mobilization” (Pollack 2006).

However, because their personalities, political background and support bases were strongly grounded in the “movement” aspect of the opposition party rather than the more centrist and broadly-appealing “government” aspect, the groundworks of the opposition party are weak, and the party is internally split between the two paths. To make matters worse, the opposition party is still yet to overcome Korea’s deeply-entrenched regionalism. Another cleavage in the opposition is the pro-Roh (*chinno*) and no-Roh-affiliation (*bino*) groups. The fact that the opposition and its individual members today is discussed in the parlance of a former President shows the degree to which the party is tied to Roh’s personal legacy, and by extension of that, the democratization movement. It shows that the Korean opposition party is yet to fully transition into the phase where they are a truly catchall, centrist party, and that they do not always prioritize the issue areas that

voters consider important in elections. In other words, they are failing to recognize the decreasing importance of leader legitimacy and increasing significance of issue-framing.

Those who protest this “outdated” style of politics have been calling for an era of “new politics”, primarily under Ahn Cheol-soo, a non-establishment and recent politician who comes from an IT and business background. Until recently, he had joined forces with opposition leader Moon, but has now split away from The Minjoo under the banner of the People’s Party (PP). With a more centrist image than politicians in the Saenuri or Minjoo parties and moderate success in the recent elections, Ahn and the PP seem on the surface to become the centrist opposition party that will grow to challenge the Saenuri Party in a two-party rivalry . However, this too is unlikely, as many of the heavyweights in the PP are defectors from The Minjoo, and several are from Jeolla. This re-creates the regional divide, this time within the context of interparty opposition competition rather than within the party.

It would seem then, that despite the establishment of a two-party rivalry (whether the existence of a sizeable third-party will be temporary or permanent remains yet to be seen), the opposition in Korea is experiencing internal divide and discord in moving to the center and adopting a more voter-sensitive pragmatism in its North Korea policy and regionalism, the two great political cleavages in Korea.

Taiwan

Chen Shui-bian (2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections—Elected)

Legitimacy: Chen Shui-bian started his career as a lawyer. His involvement in politics began in 1980 while defending the participants of the Kaohsiung Incident. He soon became a prominent member in the Tangwai movement, and in the following year of 1981, he was elected to the Taipei City Council.

He was catapulted to political fame in 1985 when, following his campaign for the position of Tainan county magistrate, his wife was hit by a tractor and paralyzed. To his supporters, this was a sign that the government tried to intimidate, or perhaps even kill him, and many ordinary voters

sympathized with Chen. Chen was elected to the Legislative Yuan and served as the executive director of the DPP Congress, as well as the convener of the National Defense Committee. He played a critical role in articulating and moderating the DPP's position on Taiwanese independence. Lastly, his time as the mayor of Taipei established him as a presidential-level national candidate, as his efforts to improve the city's environment and ameliorate tensions between mainlanders and aboriginal Taiwanese gave him international recognition.

Issue: As Chen admits in his own autobiography, one of the lessons Chen learnt from his electoral defeat in 1998 was that ethnic tensions matter a great deal (Chen 2000). Even though Taipei flourished under his guidance and his support ratings were high throughout his office, Chen found that Mainlanders ultimately favored the KMT due to their ethnic loyalties. The divide between Taiwanese aboriginals and Mainlanders was extremely deep—decades of “colonial” rule by KMT Mainlanders had resulted in a crevice between the two populations. Correspondingly, their attitudes toward Taiwanese independence were starkly different, with many more Taiwanese being involved in the Taiwan Independence Movement (TIM) than those who had arrived in Taiwan post-1949. Chen understood that he would not be able to become president without embracing the public at large. His role in the DPP, in particular his involvement in moderating the party line on the issue of independence, demonstrates his understanding of independence as a major political cleavage where he would have to win over both sides.

Frank Hsieh (2008 Presidential Elections—Defeated)

Legitimacy, no (or conflicting) issue: Hsieh, like Chen, was a defense attorney in the Kaohsiung Incident and an influential member in the founding of the DPP. He also served as the Mayor of Kaohsiung City, and his legacy includes cleaning up the Love River and the creation of the Kaohsiung Mass Rapid Transit System (Norris 2004; Hille 2007). He consistently received high approval ratings, and this established him as a prominent opposition member in southern Taiwan, where the DPP tends to perform better than Mainlander-concentrated northern cities. Hsieh was also well-known for his relatively open-minded approach to mainland China, even going as far as to say that “Kaohsiung and Xiamen are two cities within the same country” (Hung 2000). Hsieh also distanced himself during Chen's presidency from Chen's independence-driven rhetoric, for example by refusing his endorsement in the 2006 Taipei mayoral elections. This

ensured that Hsieh was a balanced candidate: a proven leader with a track record in the DPP's heartland, but also a rational politician with a pragmatic stance on China (Brown 2007).

Unfortunately however, Hsieh was rendered incapable by Chen's legacy within the DPP of exercising this pragmatism during his campaign in 2008. As Qi explains, Chen increasingly radicalized the party line on cross-Strait relations and gathered support from independence fundamentalist during his office (2016:74). By the time he resigned in January 2008, it was "too late" to turn back, and Hsieh had to continue the radical strategy in order to maintain the fundamentalists' support (2016:90). However, this policy of favoring ideology and fundamentalist voter consolidation cost the DPP and Hsieh the support of the median voter.

Tsai Ing-wen (2012 Presidential Elections—Defeated; 2016 Presidential Elections—Elected)

Legitimacy: Tsai Ing-wen stands out from the politicians covered above for several reasons: firstly, she is a rare female politician. Secondly, she hails from an academic career, with a PhD in Law from the London School of Economics. Thirdly, she served as a bureaucrat prior to her entry into politics, first in the Fair Trade Commission and the Copyright Commission in 1992-2000, and then as a member of the National Security Council and as the Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council during the Chen administration. Lastly, she joined the DPP in 2004, but has never been an elected member of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwan News 2015).

Nevertheless, these differences do not undermine her legitimacy; if anything, her unconventional background was critically important to the DPP's return to politics after Chen's corruption scandals. She strikes the balance between being someone from outside the establishment—free from corruption and utilizing her bureaucratic and academic expertise in policymaking rather than playing political games—and a seasoned and capable politician who has led her party out of a devastating electoral defeat back into being a viable opposition (Qi 2016:159).

In addition, Tsai is of part-aboriginal descent, being a quarter Paiwan from her mother's side. This is particularly important in gaining legitimacy as the DPP's leader within the movement side of the "movement government", as native Taiwanese are the strongest supporters of Taiwanese independence.

Tsai's legitimacy is also bolstered by her support among young people. Since the Sunflower Movement of 2014, when protestors (primarily those in their early 20s) staged a sit-in in the Legislative Yuan to protest the KMT's push to pass the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement without clause-by-clause reviews, the Taiwanese youth have been an increasingly important voting demographic (Rowen 2015). Although the participants of the Sunflower Movement went on to form the New Power Party (NPP), increased political participation by young people also led to a surge in support for Tsai and the DPP. According to a survey by Liberty Times, 54% of voters in their 20s supported Tsai, while only 4.6% supported Chu, the KMT candidate (Joongang Ilbo 2016).

Issue 2012: Qi summarizes Tsai's 2012 electoral defeat as "Ma's stability card defeats Tsai's social justice card" (2016:183). Ma was rated favorably in 2012 for his various accomplishments in fostering better relations with mainland China (e.g. establishing direct flights), and his campaign focused on the importance of maintaining stability in cross-Strait relations, which was germane to revitalizing Taiwan's ailing economy. Tsai's position on cross-Strait relations, on the other hand, was seen as "confusing", and her rejection of the "1992 Consensus" too hawkish by centrist voters (2016:184).

In contrast, Tsai's criticism of Taiwan's uneven growth under Ma was highly effective. Lambasting that GDP growth did not trickle down ("a recovery unfelt by people (*wuganfusu*)"), Tsai declared that she would prioritize income inequality and unemployment (Qi 2016:187). This gained her many supporters, to the degree that many thought that she would win the election, but her ambivalence on cross-Strait relations ultimately cost her the presidency in 2012.

Issue in 2016: By 2016, Tsai had learnt the mistakes of her 2012 campaign. By pushing social justice issues—which are still salient today—but toning down her rhetoric on the contentious issue area of cross-Strait relations, she managed to appeal to the electorate as an increasingly centrist and pragmatic leader.

Moreover, she played effectively to the public's fears that Ma's policies of linking Taiwan's economy to China came with greater vulnerability to political pressure from Beijing. With an increasing proportion of Taiwan's population identifying as Taiwanese before or without identifying as Chinese, and President Xi's bullish attitude toward ethnic and territorial conflicts, Taiwanese nationalism and identity politics rose in its importance as an issue area. Tsai was able to navigate these troubled waters expertly this time round, by expressing well-timed nationalistic sentiments, but still publicly declaring her support for the "maintenance of the status quo" over the more radical and contentious position of independence (Lowther 2015). For example, she expressed intentions to integrate Taiwan into the TPP in its eventual second round of negotiations, thereby diversifying Taiwan's trade partners and reducing its reliance on bilateral trade agreements with the PRC.

Regarding social justice, Tsai sought to increase the minimum wage and expand social welfare policies, such as the creation of subsidized housing, improvements in care of the elderly, and building new childcare facilities (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission 2016). These policies are particularly popular after the KMT government's failure in redistributive policies, resulting in low wage growth (0.8% per year on average) in comparison to GDP growth (2.85%) (Chan and Gan 2016).

Analysis

The DPP started as a "movement government", torn between appeasing its traditional base of TIM supporters and its new, mainstream supporters, whose votes had allowed the party into government. Chen's initial strategy, in game theoretic terms, was to move further away from *m* (leaning toward more radical views) in order to appease the TIM base. By fanning nationalism (e.g. through a criticism of the PRC in 2003 for mishandling the SARS crisis and putting Taiwan at risk), he attempted to move *m* itself closer to the political pole of Taiwanese independence. This may have worked initially, but the DPP had alienated too many centrist voters by 2008 (Qi 2016:80).

Tsai and the DPP post-2008 attempted to rebrand the party as a catchall party with more moderate views than before on the independence issue. 2012 had not been sufficient, but in 2016, Tsai's

legitimacy and issue areas were cohesive and apposite to national sentiment, giving her and the DPP a landslide victory in the elections (Fell and Chen 2014:39).

The history of the DPP from 2000 to the present is closely fits my main argument, in particular Parts (2) and (3). Since the first transition of power from the dominant to opposition party, the DPP over time has come to challenge the KMT in a consistent and lasting two-party rivalry. Moreover, we see an increasing tendency of the DPP to adopt a centrist position, demonstrating the ideological flexibility required of a catchall party in a Westminster model. In the most critical issue area of Taiwan's independence, the DPP has moved on from its "movement" roots, adopting a pragmatic position that nevertheless still differentiates it from that of the KMT.

Alternative and Co-existing Arguments

In this section, I analyze alternative arguments that have been made about the rise and fall of opposition parties in general and in East Asia.

The Argument of Opposition Party Incompetence or Dominant Party Competence

Elections are iterative games, and punitive voting for incompetence is rational voter behavior. Voters look to both the past and the future for voting—that is, while electoral promises are important in appealing to voters, voters examine the feasibility and likelihood of promises being kept by reviewing a party or candidate's track record.

On the whole, scholars find that voters are driven more by retrospective than prospective evaluations (Norpoth 1996; Alvarez and Nagler 1998). Therefore, the argument that an opposition party either succeeds for reasons of the failure of the incumbent party, or is defeated because of the competence of the ruling party, more so than because of the effectiveness of their prospective electoral campaign, begs serious consideration in an examination of any two-party rivalry.

For example, some scholars argue that the in the first turnovers of power in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, the opposition parties did not, in actuality, have the popular mandate (Rigger 2001;

Greene 2006). This is because in Japan, it was only a coalition of eight parties that was able to defeat the LDP, which still had a plurality in the Lower House. It is difficult to argue that any single one of these parties was mandated to come into power, because clearly, compared to any of the opposition parties, the LDP gained more of the popular vote. In the cases of Korea and Taiwan, Kim and Chen's presidencies were somewhat serendipitous, as the conservative vote was split between two candidates in both elections. They both won the presidency with less than 50% of the vote.

I would argue however, that the fallout effects of conservative split or relative decline in support, will not necessarily translate into support for the main opposition parties. For example, voter disenfranchisement often manifests in lower turnout if the electorate believes that there is no worthwhile alternative. Or, as we saw in the case of the Japanese general elections in 2012, their votes may go to a third party (Reed, Pekkanen and Scheiner 2013). Hence, the preparedness of opposition parties is crucial in being able to catch voters who are disappointed by the incumbent party, which relates back to Part (1) of my argument.

The more difficult side of the argument to refute is that sometimes, the presence of legitimacy and/or issue do not matter when an opposition party performs excessively poorly in government, or if the incumbent (dominant) party performs extremely well in government. The best illustration of this situation is the DPJ after their mismanagement of the 3.11 crisis and other failures to keep their electoral promises. Many scholars unequivocally defined DPJ governance as a "catastrophe", and assert that the return of the LDP in 2012 was disillusioned voters returning to a "tried and tested party" (RJIF, 2013).

However, crunching numbers shows us that this is not necessarily true, and that in 2012, there were two million fewer votes for the LDP in the SMD section of the election. While 2012 was a "harsh referendum on an unloved incumbent government", the dissatisfaction for the DPJ did not, in any way, lead to an increase in votes for the LDP (Pekkanen, Reed and Scheiner 2013:36). Rather, a dip of ten million in turnout resulted in an increase of vote share for the LDP, a phenomenon multiplied in magnitude by Japan's malapportionment problems.

Therefore, while competence, or incompetence, is a significant contributing factor to election results, it varies case-by-case, and is more of a residual consideration than a stand-alone theory.

Corruption

Qi explains that most scholarly analyses of the DPP's defeat in 2008 focus on Chen's corruption scandals (2016:108). Similar arguments have been made about other prominent opposition leaders, such as Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun and Ozawa Ichiro, and there is ample academic evidence to show that a negative correlation exists between corruption or alleged corruption and popularity/legitimacy (Oka and Hughes 2010; McCurry 2012).

However, this argument has no traction in explaining the successes and failures specifically of opposition parties. After all, the main reason that the LDP, Saenuri (and its ancestral forms) and the KMT were able to become dominant parties is because they were closely tied to big businesses and received "black gold", which they channeled as party funds (Kang 2002; Wedeman 2012). Neither is corruption a thing of the past; President Park and her faction faced a political crisis in 2015 when Sung Wan-jong, a construction tycoon who committed suicide while facing investigation, alleged that he had bribed several members of her inner circle (Financial Times 2015).

Moreover, it is not even necessarily clear that corruption affects voting behavior. Studies show that many voters in Japan, Korea and Taiwan simply overlook corruption, mainly because they perceive most politicians to be corrupt (Choi and Woo 2012). Therefore, I would argue that the link between the opposition and political corruption is weak at best.

Conclusion

As outlined above, my theory is that opposition parties require the following conditions to be elected:

1. The "hyper incumbency advantage" of the dominant party erodes over time.

2. The opposition party presents the electorate with a legitimate party model and leader, who carries the banner of reform in a relevant issue area.
3. Over time however, in order for the opposition to be a consistently viable party in a two-party rivalry, it needs to move closer to the political center and demonstrate through their approach on key issue areas (i.e. legitimacy and issue are both important, but issue appeal becomes more important than having legitimacy as a challenger to the dominant party).

Through my empirical testing, I have demonstrated that successful opposition elections tend to occur in instances where a party is seen to have both legitimacy and an issue. I have also found that weakness of opposition parties in the three countries of study can be broken down into the following factors: various cleavages in political identity leading to internal division (Japan and Korea) and difficulty in exercising ideological flexibility as the party makes the transition from a “movement” government to a catchall, centrist party (Korea and Taiwan). Again, both of these factors are linked to constituting legitimacy and issue.

As mentioned before, the political fates of the opposition in the three states in October 2016 could not seem more different. Japan witnessed a merger of two divergent parties uniting amidst predictions that individually, they stand no chance against the LDP. Nevertheless, the DP performed abysmally in the Upper House election. In contrast, the main opposition party has split in two in Korea, yet disillusionment with the conservative government and hopes of “new politics” have allowed the opposition parties a majority in the National Assembly. On the other hand, while the DPP in Taiwan has experienced their biggest win in history, the pressure is strong from Beijing to contain the DPP’s return to power and to undermine the new president’s mandate of Taiwanese identity politics.

Twenty years ago, the challenge for opposition parties was coping with suddenly becoming electable, as the erosion to one-party dominance somewhat unexpectedly thrust the role of a viable alternative party upon them for the first time. The second test was to maintain that status, and now, it is to revamp their image and structure into being the voter’s active choice rather than an alternative, all the while rising to the challenge of competing with “old guard” dominant parties that often still have the advantages of resource and entrenchment.

It is still too early to say with conviction whether we will continue to witness the shift toward a two-party model in these new democracies, and if the distinction that I use in this paper of “dominant” and “opposition” parties will collapse with fluid and constant interchange of their roles. As we have seen in Japan in 2012 and Korea in 2016, disenfranchised voters may turn to third parties, or civil forces akin to the Sunflower Movement of 2014 may give rise to new political challengers. The fate of opposition parties will both shape and be shaped by democratic developments and challenges in these new Asian democracies.

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