“Theoretical Problems in Economic Development and Democratization: Korean Model in Comparative Perspective”

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At a Conference on:

“Recasting the Korean Model of Development: Issues, Debates and Lessons”

Hosted by:
Korean Economic Association,
Korean Political Science Association, and
The Asia Foundation’s Center for U.S.-Korea Policy

Date: Wednesday, June 30, 2010 and Thursday, July 1, 2010 (10am – 5:45pm)
Venue: B1 Ballroom, Willard Intercontinental
1401 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington DC 20004
Democracy promotion as part of U.S. foreign policy has gotten a bad rap recently. In fact, the various U.S. government agencies in charge of democracy promotion now hide behind the term “Enhancing Democracy.” Not too long ago, intellectuals debated and celebrated the “End of History” thesis—the end culminating in the victory of democracy. Now, as democracy promoting NGO Freedom House recently reported, the very essence of democracy—freedom—is in retreat everywhere.¹

Despite the setbacks in democracy promotion in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere, democracy as a desired political system has not lost its appeal, as it was readily evident from the streets of Teheran in 2009, in Yangon in 2007, in Beirut in 2005, and in Kiev in 2004. Those young and old who risked their lives came out to chant “Freedom”, “Democracy”, and “Sovereignty”—not unlike those young and old South Koreans who came out in force to demand democracy, freedom, and better governance in the 1980s.

Winston Churchill once sardonically described democracy as being the worst form of government except all others that have been tried. Yet, the wave of democracy that engulfed the twilight of the previous century is one of the most salient political developments of the twentieth century. As a political system and ideology, Amartya Sen notes that theorists no longer frame the debate around the question whether a country is deemed “fit” for democracy; “rather, it has to become fit through democracy.”² The importance of democracy is not lost among the academics. Almost 70 percent of all articles published in the leading journals dedicated to

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comparative politics focuses on some aspect of democratization and democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{3} Despite the recent appearance of retreat in democracy, the yearning for democracy and its related concept of good governance have not waned.

South Korea succeeded in 1987 in making the democratic transition from authoritarian rule. However, 1987 was neither a starting point nor an endpoint for South Korea’s road to democracy. The four decades preceding the 1987 presidential election witnessed countless cycles of democratic protests followed by immediate government repression. Two decades later, South Korea’s democratic consolidation continues.

What is interesting about the South Korean case of democratization is that South Korea fits into just about every category of debate regarding political and economic development. Therefore, the Korean case is often used to test the hypotheses regarding democratic transition and democratic consolidation. What is the relationship between economic development and democracy? Can it be crafted? Or does democracy require a certain level of economic development and other pre-conditions? What leads to democracy? Is it having a vibrant civil society? The bottom-up, grassroots approach to democracy. Or is it an elite pact? The top-down approach to democracy. How does one measure and define democracy? And so on.

That the Korean test case validates each of the aforementioned theoretical questions is both a validation of how complex political-economic development is and how unsatisfying existing theories are when it comes to explaining democratization. Therefore, this paper will examine a) the relationship between economic development and democracy, b) Korea’s democratization process, and c) factors that lead to Korea’s democratic transition and

consolidation in a comparative perspective. In so doing, this paper will argue that rather than seeking a coherent, unified theory of democratization, social scientists should identify underlying dynamics of democratic transition and consolidation with the hope of mapping out alternative ways to explain processes of democratization.

Economic Development and Democracy

The major debate is: what is the relationship between democracy and economic development? This debate examines the conflict between the proponents of the endogenous theory and the exogenous theory. The endogenous theory states that democracy is a function of economic development; as poorer countries develop, the likelihood for a democratic transition also increases. The exogenous theory argues that while economic development sustains the longevity of a democracy, the transition to democracy from authoritarian rule is exogenous to development, that is say that development does not cause democracy. What this paper is not about is how Korea grew economically.4

The endogenous theory posits that democracy emerges as a function of economic development. Lipset observed five decades ago that “the most common generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development.” As states become industrialized, the society undergoes a highly specialized and complex transformation. Urbanization takes place, and this requires a more sophisticated government to both control and provide for the citizenry. In a traditional society, the state’s penetration into the masses was rare, largely limited to tax collection or conscription to fight a war. In a newly industrializing and urbanizing state, the government’s interaction with the masses was pervasive and frequent. Governments had to provide for large construction projects such as railways, roads, public utility, and other public goods. The state had to embark on massive education programs to educate the children of the factory workers and urban dwellers who would later grow up to administer the complexities of an industrializing society. The state saw through education the creation of a modern citizen who would not only contribute to the economic growth but also become more compliant to the needs of the state: obeying laws, paying taxes, etc. Through the massive educational programs, successive generations’ level of literacy would rise. This rise in literacy rate would correspond with the flourishing of the press—newspapers, journals, weeklies, and more. The increased level to media exposure would lead to increasing participation in politics by the citizenry in all arenas—political, civil, and economic. Thus, a society—a civil society—emerges that, once reaching a threshold, could and would

question and then challenge what the rulers do. This narrative is in a nutshell the modernization theory.⁸

Deduced from this logic/narrative is the view that this process ultimately leads to the democratization of the state. Some critics of modernization theories have attacked the basics of the theory and its variations for being overly deterministic, too Western-centric, too linear in transformation, and seeing democracy as the endpoint.⁹ Others have criticized it for being overly structural and abstract, lacking precision in causal changes and the agents behind the effective changes.¹⁰

The most serious challenge to the endogenous component of the modernization theory is the exogenous argument put forth by Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi over a decade ago. In their seminal 1997 *World Politics* article “Modernization: Theories and Facts”, Przeworski and Limongi challenge the endogenous claims by arguing that “dictatorships are equally likely to die and democracies to emerge at any level of development.”¹¹ The authors provide empirical evidence to show that there is no causal relationship between development and transition to democracy. Moreover, once a democracy is established in a well-to-do economy, “the probability that a democracy will die during any particular year in a country with an income above $4,000 is practically zero: two in a thousand years.”¹² This is the exogenous argument of the modernization theory. The high correlation between democracy and wealthy nations is due

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⁸ See Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: Free Press, 1958);
¹² Ibid., 166.
to the sustaining role that development has on democracy. For the authors, the emergence of
democracy is really *deus ex machina*.

Given the emergence of democracies recently and historically under the conditions of
economic growth, is there really no causal relationship between democracy and development? Can decades of research on the impact of economic development on political development be negated? Challenging Przeworski and Limongi are Carles Boix and Susan Stokes writing in the same journal. Boix and Stokes contend that “economic development has a strong effect on democratization.”

The authors challenge Przeworski and Limongi by enlarging the sample size to includes cases from mid-nineteenth century on as opposed to post-1950 cases used by Przeworski and Limongi. The larger case sample shows that earlier democratizations in Western Europe had strong endogenous effect.

The Korean Case

Where does Korea fit into this debate? How does democracy emerge in South Korea in the late 1980s? What does the Korean democratization process tell us about democratic transition and consolidation? Samuel Huntington put it forcefully, “Economic development makes democracy possible; political leadership makes it real.” Thus far, the body of literature discussed centers on the necessary structural condition but not a causal one. Because democratization is about a process that involves actors and coalitions in conflict with one another, any kind of theory trying to explain for democratization must take into account the role of agents,

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14 Ibid.
how their demands are articulated, how they overcome oppression, and how they overcome collective action problems.

At its most rudimentary form, non-democratic rulers are compelled to make some kind of democratic reforms that allow the sharing of power or allow the masses to have a direct say in the power sharing and formation. This process begins usually with an opening that makes democratic transition possible. The simple question then is to ask: who demands democracy and how does this opening come about?

There are three broad categories of explanations for Korea’s democratization in the 1980s. The first is that the political elites, under social and economic duress, come into a political pact that pave the way for a direct presidential election in 1987. The second explanation is the civil society argument. A vibrant civil society had emerged by the mid-1980s, and that this civil society compels the elites to yield to the demands of the various actors in a coalition that called for democracy. The third argument is a descriptive one in which both chance and foreign influence played the critical role in the democratic transition.

**The Backdrop**

In April 1987, President Chun Doo Hwan who had come into power through a military coup at the end of 1979 announced that there would be no discussion of constitutional changes until after the hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics and that his successor would be chosen via an electoral college that was constitutionally rigged by his supporters. This announcement already fueled the spreading of student demonstrations throughout Korea. University students
joined labor protests and labor unions joined forces with the student protests demanding direct presidential election. Hoping to catch not only domestic attention but also international attention as Korea prepared to host the 1988 Summer Olympics, coalitions of groups banded together to carry out large-scale protests throughout the country. Their plan worked.

What started out as pockets of student-led demonstrations turned out to be a tidal wave of mass demonstrations, supported by every sector of society. Resembling the Philippines’ People Power movement the year before, the mass demonstrations confronted the government with two stark choices: clamp down on the demonstrators using excessive violence or give in to the people’s demands. In a surprise but shrewd move, the ruling party presidential candidate Roh Tae Woo made his famous June 29 declaration calling for a direct national election and a revision of the constitution. Roh Tae Woo wins the presidency in a three-way race, when opposition leaders Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung fail to field a unified candidate. When Roh is inaugurated in February 1988, Korea’s democratic transition is complete.

For the purpose of analysis, the definition of democracy used here is the institutional or a procedural definition of democracy, what theorists of democracy have called the minimalist view of democracy. Joseph A. Schumpeter defines democracy as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” Schumpeter argues that his definition provides an “efficient criterion by which to distinguish democratic governments from others” and captures the principle of democracy, “that the reins of government should be handed to those who

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18 Ibid.
command more support than do any of the competing individuals or teams.”¹⁹ Using the minimalist definition better suits the identification of actors and the opening in which the transition occurred.

**Elite Pact**

Elite pacts are agreements by political elites that make transition to democracy happen. Hyug Baeg Im argues: “The South Korean transition emerged out of a protracted and inconclusive standoff between the authoritarian regime and its democratic opponents. The authoritarian regime and democratic opposition made a breakthrough for democratic transition on the brink of ‘reciprocal destruction.’”²⁰ The events of 1987 are seen through this narrative of political elites coming together based on a narrow set of political calculations: Chun Doo Hwan making the April 13 statement to ensure his rule through the 1988 Seoul Olympics, opposition leaders Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung mobilizing massive opposition, and Roh Tae Woo conceding to the demands.

What this narrative does is raise countless questions. Why did this pact happen when it did? Did the ruling elites fear uncontrollable widespread protests? To be sure, there had been other massive protests in 1960, 1980, and 1986. Why didn’t the state crack down? Did it not have the capacity or the will? Why was 1987 different from the past? What impact did economic development have on Korea’s political and social landscape?

¹⁹ Ibid., 273. Schumpeter argues that his “another theory” of democracy takes out the normative value in democracy by shifting the emphasis away from the classical definition of democracy that favors direct participation of the citizens in the act of governance because a modern nation-state is simply too large and complicated for each individual to have a direct say in the daily political decision making.

²⁰ Hyung Baeg Im, “South Korean Democratic Consolidation in Comparative Perspective,” in *Consolidating Democracy in South Korea*, Larry Diamond and Yung-Kook Kim, eds., (Boulder, CO; Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 25.
The explanations that focus on elite calculations alone cannot explain the context for their decisions. The Korea of 1987 was very different from the Korea of the 1950s. Rapid urbanization of the first half of the 20th century continued after the Korea War. Cities with over one million inhabitants grew from 40% in 1960 to 55.9% in 1987.21 The per capita GNP in 1960 was $80, roughly the same as Ghana and Sudan.22 By 1988, the per capita income of Korean citizens is $3,120.23 Similarly, education level also increased dramatically. In 1946, the share of work force with secondary school education was 7.4%; in 1983, this figure was almost 50%.24 Korea’s urbanization, increase in education, and rising income positively correlate with the central tenets of modernization theory. As such, the structure that constrains elite decision making in Korea in 1987 could have evolved over the preceding decades. Moreover, just because an elite pact provided an opening for democratic transition does not necessarily mean that it caused it.25

**Role of Civil Society**

Another explanation for the Korean democratic transition is the role civil society played. Civil society is broadly defined as that area “beyond the boundaries of the family and the clan and beyond the locality; it lies short of the state.”26 Larry Diamond contrasts “civil society” from “society” in general in that “it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make

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demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable (italics original).”

In short, a vibrant civil society can aggregate the interests of the public and challenge the state.

Sunhyuk Kim argues that Korea’s civil society is the most crucial variable in explaining Korea’s democratization because “groups in civil society significantly precipitated—if not directly caused—authoritarian breakdowns, facilitated democratic transitions, and, to large extent, also determined the dynamics of posttransitional politics in democratic consolidation.” Kim argues that there are three democratic junctures: 1956-1961, 1973-1980, and 1984-1987. At each of the junctures, civil society played a critical role; and in the third juncture, civil society played the most influential role. The role of civil society would answer the question of how and when an “opening” emerges.

The problem, however, with the civil society thesis is one of measurement. How large and active was the civil society when it intruded into the state’s behavior to constrain it or modify its behavior? Because we firmly believe in active participation of the individual in a democracy beyond the periodic voting, civil society proponents inflate the causal role of civil society. The explanation is too often historical and descriptive, as leaders’ names and groups are thrown together to suggest that they represent either the totality of civil society or that these groups have large memberships to effect change.

The reality of Korean civil society, especially at the time of 1987 events, is that the civil society reflected the political society; that is to say, the civil society was an elite-based society that at times could mobilize a large number of people. Because the locus of civil society is in the masses, a civil society explanation should show a wide level of citizen participation. According

28 Ibid., 5.
29 See Figure 2.3 in Kim’s *The Politics of Democratization in Korea*, p. 18.
to Doh C. Shin, when it comes to political acts beyond voting (94%), Korean citizens had participated in double digits only in three of the nine activities.\(^{30}\)

### Percentages Engaging in Ten Political Activities\(^ {31}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigning</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Political Meetings</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining Political Organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Activity</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting Government Officials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1994 Korean Democratization Survey

Shin’s findings were based on a questionnaire that asked Korean citizens their participation rate from 1988-1994. It is conceivable that acts like demonstrations and strikes were much higher in the period prior to 1988. However, Jae H. Ku’s findings closely resemble Shin’s figures, albeit his findings are based on a Seoul metropolitan sample of 300.\(^{32}\) Ku’s questionnaire did not have any date stipulations. For example, 19% of the Seoul sample had signed a petition which approximates the national figure of 14% reported by Shin. Antigovernment demonstration (8.7%)/lawful demonstration (8%) match up with the 1994 Democratization Survey’s demonstration figure of 9%. Furthermore, the Democratization Survey shows a 3% participation rate in strikes whereas the survey of Seoul is 1.7%. Only


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 102. See Figure 4.4.

attending political meetings is substantially different. The 1994 Korean Democratization Survey shows an 18% participation rate whereas only 5.9% of Seoul residents have attended a political rally. Every political activity, other than signing a petition, registers less than ten percent among Seoul’s adult population.

Percentages of Seoul Residents in Non-electoral Forms of Political Participation

Source: SAIS Survey 2000
N=300; ±5.7% error
Number of cases: Antigovt. Demonstration (26), Strikes (5), Lawful Demonstration (24), Political Rally (18), Letter/Call (22), and Petition (58).

The empirical evidence suggests that, while civil society is an important variable, it is not altogether certain how critical it is in the transition phase. Is it a necessary condition? Is it the causal variable? What is the proper relationship between those in the political society who agreed to the transition and those in the civil society who may have created the condition for the elite pact? Perhaps, a different approach is needed that takes into consideration both spheres.

The impact of civil society may have a more acute influence in the democratic consolidation process of Korea. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan define democratic consolidation

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33 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
as a “political situation in which, in a phrase, democracy has become ‘the only game in town.’”

Previously, democracy was defined as an institutional arrangement for contesting votes. The emphasis placed on electoral contestation, however, has been criticized as “fallacy of electoralism” because some democracies, while adhering to the “letter” of these institutions, were not following the “spirit” of these requirements. Robert A. Dahl builds on this shortcoming by delineating institutional guarantees required in a democratic system. For Dahl, a democracy is a political system in which the government is “completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens.” For this to occur, citizens must be able to formulate their preferences, signify their preferences, and have their preferences weighed equally by the government. As a result, theorists added to this list of institutional guarantees. Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl argue that the “polity must be self-governing” and that the popularly elected officials must exercise their constitutionally entrusted power without being overridden by un-elected officials, what Larry Diamond has called “the absence of ‘reserved domains’ of power.” These reserved domains have largely been confined to the military and the security apparatus, although they are not the only ones.

Liberal democracy differs from an electoral democracy in that in addition to Dahl’s institutional guarantees, a liberal democracy requires both the absence of “reserved domains”

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38 Ibid., 2-3. Dahl stakes out eight institutional: freedom to form and join organization, freedom of expression, right to vote, eligibility for public office, right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.
and the existence of “horizontal accountability”.41 Horizontal accountability refers to a system of checks and balances where the state agencies “are authorized and willing to oversee, control, redress, and if need be sanction unlawful actions by other state agencies.”42

The argument is that consolidation of democracy will be strengthened if the citizens also engage in civil society activities. If citizen activity in civil society is substantial quantitatively and qualitatively, democracy will be strengthened because citizen interests can be aggregated, their interests will be articulated, and the collective action problems associated with putting forth their interests will be overcome. Such grassroots pressure would thereby lead to the government’s addressing the demands and concerns of the citizens—hence, horizontal accountability.

Role of the United States

The third explanation is the role of the United States. The narrative suggests that in the events leading up to the 1987 transition, U.S. government officials repeatedly sent clear and strong signals opposing violent repression by the Korean military, thereby constraining and limiting the choices of the government elite and paving the way for a democratic transition.43

The problem with this argument is the problem of identifying the proper agents and the structure. Given the classified nature of U.S. documents, it is unclear what kind of communication existed between the two governments. Even if the U.S. had communicated

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strongly against violent repression and called for democratic reforms, there exists a threshold problem. Did the Korean government feel the pressure? Was this pressure more than the pressure emerging domestically? Finally, how was the final outcome influenced by the U.S.? A noted scholar suggests that “the American role in South Korea’s democratization was at best secondary.”

Comparing Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines

In the sections above, this paper argued that modernization creates the structure necessary for democratic transition and consolidation. Citizens become educated, urban, and literate about the political events of our time. In short, they become democratic participants. By participating, they demand democracy and create an opening in which democratic transition and/or consolidation can be made.

How do four democracies of the third wave in Asia compare? The section below examines the participation level of urban citizens in Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The data come from SAIS Survey 2000. The four cases are interesting because they belong to the third wave category of democracy, have different levels of development, and

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45 The SAIS-Yonsei Survey for Seoul and SAIS Survey for Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines: surveyed three hundred (N=300) randomly selected citizens in each of the capital cities of Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The sampling error for each individual sample is plus-minus 5.7 percent on a confidence level of 95 percent. The sampling framework employed was stratified random sampling with quota considerations given to age and gender (male: 65%, female: 35%). The interviews were conducted face-to-face, each interview lasting 1.0-1.5 hours. The target population was those who are aged between 21 and 54, had not participated in any survey in the six months prior to this survey, and reside in metropolitan Seoul, Bangkok, Jakarta, and Manila. The surveys were conducted in March-April 2000 by the marketing firm of A.C.Nielsen in each of the respective capitals.
are at different levels of democratic consolidation. Two dimensions of participation are analyzed: voting and non-electoral participation.

**Voting**

All four capitals show a high rate of voting. Figure 1 presents the distribution of frequency of voters in each of the four capitals. The Manila respondents are the most frequent voters; over 77 percent of the respondents voted in the two previous elections, whereas the same

Figure 1. Voter Frequency in Seoul, Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta.

Source: SAIS-Yonsei Survey for Seoul, SAIS Surveys of Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta.

N=300 (Indonesia N=310); ±5.7 % error
The total may not add up to the total N due to missing values.

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46 A high voter is someone who has voted in the two consecutive national elections, either in presidential or parliamentary elections, whereas the low voter is someone who voted only once or in neither of the two previous presidential or parliamentary elections
figure for the respondents from the other three capitals is in the low to mid-60s. As for the low voters, all four capital samples show this figure to be slightly over 20 percent. In each of the four capitals, over eighty percent of the respondents have voted in either of the two most recent presidential or parliamentary elections or in both. Indeed, this is a positive sign for democracy.

What is the socioeconomic background of these frequent voters? See Appendix 1 for a binary logistic regression of the variables: gender, age, education level, mass media exposure, and monthly income. The findings show that gender plays no statistically significant role in Seoul, Bangkok, and Jakarta; men and women tend to vote just as frequently. Only in Manila is gender a significant factor. Manila men vote slightly less frequently than women.47 In Seoul and Bangkok, older voters tend to vote more frequently, which is consistent with voting literature in advanced democracies. However, in Jakarta and Manila, age does not affect the frequency of voting. What is most interesting is that factors that should influence voting, according to modernization theory, do not have any influence. These factors are education, media exposure, and income. It is expected that individuals who are more educated and have higher income should vote in higher levels. In Asia, the high voter turnout in all groups suggest that voting is internalized as an integral democratic act or has become a democratic ritual devoid of democratic affect.

Non-electoral Participation

In all vibrant democracies, political participation must extend beyond the periodic voting. Only through regular acts of political participation will the elected leaders continue to be held

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47The actual cases show that among men, only 74 percent belong in the high category in Manila whereas 82 percent of women belong in the high category.
accountable. How do the individuals from the four capitals measure up on non-electoral participation (NEP)? To measure the level of non-electoral participation, an NEP index was created, based on five areas of non-electoral forms of political participation. The index is based on the respondents’ answers to whether they have participated or would contemplate future participation in five areas of non-electoral forms of political activities: writing a letter to a newspaper or calling a radio or a television show, signing a petition, attending a lawful demonstration, participating in an election rally or a meeting, and joining unofficial strikes. A separate index of high, medium, and low categories was created for each of the capital sample. Therefore, high, medium, and low categories are not uniformly based. For example, a high participant in Seoul and Jakarta may not have the same score; however, each score reflects the degree of participation relative to others that are drawn from the same representative sample. This should not detract from cross-capital comparison because the indexes are roughly comparable in all four capital samples. In other words, the categories of participants across the capital samples share similar characteristics that allow cross-national comparison.

Figure 2 graphically illustrates the frequency distribution of high, medium, and low participants across the four Asian capitals. Across the four Asian capitals, it is clearly evident that non-electoral participation is very low. Only the Seoul sample shows a high participant category that exceeds ten percent. Bangkok and Manila samples show a high participant rate to be eight percent, while this figure is three percent in Jakarta. The vast majority of respondents in each of the four capital samples belong in the low category of participation. Some 75 to 80 percent of the respondents in Jakarta, Manila, and Bangkok belong in the low category of

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48 The answers allowed were “have done”, “might do”, and “never”. A “never” answer was given a score of one, “might do” a score of three, and “have done” a score of five. The scores were then added to form an index.
49 Hereafter, those individuals scoring in the three categories will be simply labeled as high, medium, and low participants.
participation; this figure is slightly less for Seoul at 63 percent. Even if one were to combine the
high and medium categories, only about a quarter of the respondents from Manila, Jakarta, and
Bangkok would belong in this category; the figure for Seoul would be a little more than a third of

Figure 2. Non-electoral Participation Index for Seoul, Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta.

Source: SAIS-Yonsei Survey for Seoul, SAIS Surveys of Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta.
N=300 (Indonesia N=310); ±5.7 % error
The total may not add up to 100% due to missing values.

the respondents. Despite the similarity in all four cities regarding low participation level, there is
a noticeable variation in these capitals among those who actually do participate, with Seoul at the
top end of participation and Jakarta at the bottom of participation.
Which socioeconomic factors characterize the high, medium, and low participants? See Appendix 2 for regression analysis of the variables: gender, age, education level, mass media exposure, and monthly income. In all four capital samples, gender, media exposure, and income have little or no bearing on non-electoral forms of political participation. Men and women are equally likely to be participants. In Seoul and Bangkok, age is not a statistically significant factor. However, in Manila and in Jakarta, age is negatively correlated with participation. It is the 20-29 year olds who engage heavily in non-electoral forms of participation. Only in Seoul does education matter. Only those with high levels of education tend to participate in non-electoral forms of education. This finding collaborates the role of the university students in the democratization process. What these empirical findings show is that modernization does not lead to a repeatable pattern. In fact, there is a certain disconnect between modernization and democracy in Asia.

**Conclusion: A Unified Theory or an Eclectic Approach?**

The above examination has assessed both the strengths and shortcomings of both exogenous and endogenous theory of democracy. The exogenous theory is parsimonious and empirically sound, albeit if the cases are limited to the second half of 20th century. What makes it dissatisfying is that democratization occurs and transitions are successfully made, yet this theory says very little about how democracies emerge. On the other hand, the endogenous claims are messy and confusing. Much of the argument is about refining modernization theory to create a structural condition in which actors and coalitions can mount a real challenge to the
state that forces democratic transition. While rich in description, the difficulty arises in finding a parsimonious explanation linking structure with agents.

Where do we go from here? Recent studies have called for a unified approach, an approach that explains not only the democratic transitions but also the typologies of transition. Carl Boix in *Democracy and Redistribution* and Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson in *Economic origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* posit a game theoretic approach to explain democratic transitions. Boix’s argument boils down to inequality and asset specificity. As income inequality narrows between the rulers and the ruled and the mobility of capital increases, “economic tensions decline, and the rich are increasingly inclined to accept a democratic regime—elections have only a marginal impact on the wealthy’s consumption level.” The rulers feel less threatened and, therefore, can entertain the idea of democratic reforms. In a more complex treatment of collective decision making and the role institutions play, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson argue that democracy is about individuals making informed decisions, always calculating and rational but always in conflict. That the ruling elites will agree to concede to some level of democratization is out of fear of revolt by the masses that would lead to their ruin; this fear leads to concessions by the rulers who show commitment to promises made to the masses in the form of democratic transitions and rule.

There are limitations to economic-based explanations or rational calculations. In the Korean case, the emphasis on redistributive demands can perhaps explain for the labor protests. But does this also explain the student unrest? Did the tens of thousands of university students, largely from middle class background, share the labor demands for redistribution of assets?

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52 Carl Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution*, pp. 37.
Perhaps. But where does socialization, passion, ideology, and kinship fit into an economic-based calculations. What if significant portions of Asians participated and protested because of familial, moral, patron-client obligations?

If rational-choice theories are not universally applicable, should the study of democratization continue to seek a unified theory or should it accept the view that there are many different paths to democracy? Samuel Huntington in his *The Third Wave* suggests that there are many causal factors in the dynamics of democratization and that social environment must be analyzed.

If democracy is necessarily about collective action of individuals staking out a political claim, the study of democracy should be about citizen participation. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady argue that “Citizen participation is at the heart of democracy. . .[because] political participation provides the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs and generate pressure to respond.” Perhaps, the best approach is an eclectic one that centers on the factors that promote and inhibit citizen participation. No participation, no democracy.

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Appendix 1.

Logistic Regression Analysis of High Voters in Seoul, Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seoul Ex(B)</th>
<th>Bangkok Ex(B)</th>
<th>Manila Ex(B)</th>
<th>Jakarta Ex(B)</th>
</tr>
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<td>Male (Female)</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>-.745**</td>
<td>.475</td>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>40 to 54</td>
<td>.814**</td>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>2.265***</td>
<td>9.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39 (20 to 29)</td>
<td>.959***</td>
<td>2.609</td>
<td>1.436***</td>
<td>4.204</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-.288</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>-.338</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (Medium)</td>
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<td>-.357</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>1.004*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media Exposure</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.617</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (Low)</td>
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<td>.319</td>
<td>-.281</td>
<td>-.103</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low N/A: Only</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>-.541</td>
<td>.442</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manila &amp; Jakarta (Medium)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R Square</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Significant at .015<p<.055 (.05 level of confidence)
**Significant at .005<p<.015 (.01 level of confidence)
***Significant at .0005<p<.005 (.001 level of confidence)
Reference category is in parenthesis
Exp(B), odds ratio, is given for significant correlation

Source: SAIS-Yonsei Survey of Metropolitan Seoul (N=300); SAIS Survey of Metropolitan Bangkok (N=300), Manila (N=300), & Jakarta (N=310)

Note: High, Medium, and Low incomes are as follows: Seoul—High is $1151-$1750+, Medium is $551-$1150, & Low is $0-$550; Bangkok—High is $651-$1750+, Medium is $250-$650, & Low is $5-$249; Manila—High is $551-$1750+, Medium is $151-$550, & Low is $0-$150; & Jakarta—High is $151-$950+, Medium is $61-$150, & Low is $0-$60. For Manila and Jakarta, “no answer” category was included because 113 respondents in Manila and 120 respondents in Jakarta did not provide an answer.
Appendix 2.

OLS Regression Analysis of Non-Electoral Participation (NEP) in Seoul, Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Electoral Participation</th>
<th>Seoul</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Manila</th>
<th>Jakarta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male (Female)</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.080</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 54</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.148</td>
<td>-.243***</td>
<td>-.179**</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 to 49 (20 to 29)</td>
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<td>-.146</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>-.146*</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.192***</td>
<td>.135*</td>
<td>.139*</td>
<td>.124*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (Medium)</td>
<td>-.128*</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>-.124*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (Low)</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.014</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Monthly Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>-.136*</td>
<td>-.005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.171*</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>-.145</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manila &amp; Jakarta (Medium)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Seoul</th>
<th>Bangkok</th>
<th>Manila</th>
<th>Jakarta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.160</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .015≤p<.055 (.05 level of confidence)
**Significant at .005≤p<.015 (.01 level of confidence)
***Significant at .000≤p<.005 (.001 level of confidence)
Reference category is in parenthesis
Exp(B), odds ratio, is given for significant correlation

Source: SAIS-Yonsei Survey of Metropolitan Seoul (N=300); SAIS Survey of Metropolitan Bangkok (N=300), Manila (N=300), & Jakarta (N=310)

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References


Fowler, James. “The United States and South Korean Democratization.” Political Science Quarterly 114, no. 2 (Summer, 1999).


