

Democratization in South Korea during 1979-1987

Dukhong Kim

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Political Science

Timothy W. Luke, Chair
Ilja A. Luciak
Deborah J. Milly

May 29, 1997
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Democratization, Negotiated Transition, Mediated Transition, South Korea
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(Abstract)

Most scholars who study the transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones use an actor-oriented approach, and assume four major actors participate in the negotiated transition. They explain the results of such transitions by analyzing the strategic interactions of these four major actors. If the configuration of actors and their interactions differ from one case to another, then those differences need to be explained. The case of South Korean democratization differs from democratization in other countries in two major respects. First, without significant division within the regime, the opposition bloc can manage to make a transition to democracy by maintaining coordination between the social movements and the moderate opposition party. Second, the U.S. played an important role in the process of negotiation. The negotiated transition model offers no account for the participation of a third party, and it fails to cast light on the participation of the U.S. in the Korean democratization process. This shortcoming can be solved by complementing the negotiated transition model with the mediation model in which the role of a third party can be addressed. Owing to U.S. mediation, the dynamics of negotiated transition changed in the Korean transition to democracy.

Acknowledgments

There are many people to whom I am indebted for making it possible for me both to write this thesis and to study in the U.S. Although it is impossible in this limited space to set down all of their names, I would like to express my thanks to those who contributed most directly to the project realized in the following pages. Above all, I thank Dr. Luke for his generous comments on my thesis draft and for his continuous encouragement. Whenever, I faced difficulties and struggled with self-doubt, he supported me with his good humor. I also thank Dr. Luciak for his helpful comments and corrections of the many mistakes I failed to catch. His good humor also eased the stress involved in writing this thesis. I enjoyed the privilege of working as a teaching assistant for Dr. Milly, and I am grateful for her encouragement. Dr. Hult helped me to prepare my conference paper which was an important stepping stone for this thesis. Without her editing I could not have finished the paper by April 1996. I would also like to thank Dr. White for his generosity. He was always supportive of me whenever I asked for academic advice as well as for financial support. The financial assistance provided by the Department of Political Science at Virginia Tech made it possible for me to participate in the ICPSR class at the University of Michigan in the summer of 1996 and to do research at the Library of Congress. I have enjoyed humane and close relationships with my student colleagues and faculty members of the political science department for two years of my graduate study.

I would like to thank my younger brother Nak-Jung for doing the painful job of finding useful materials and shipping them to me. And without my parents' support this study would have been impossible. I thank them for their patience and love for me. My grandmother and grandmother -in-law also supported me with their prayers. I also express my thanks to my friends Ju-Sung Kim, Tae-Sul Roh, and Sung-Dae Cho who encouraged me to study in the U.S. Finally, I must thank God who was always with me during my studying and my everyday life. Needless to say, I am responsible for any errors that might remain in this thesis.

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