

Democratization and Environmentalism: South Korea and Taiwan in Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the emergence and evolution of environmentalism in South Korea and Taiwan since the mid-1980s, this paper analyzes the relationship between democratic consolidation and environmental politics. In both countries, an environmental movement arose after a series of environmental disasters and expanded through the effective politicization of environmental issues by the opposition parties. The general relationship between environmental groups and political parties differs significantly in the two countries compared. In South Korea, environmental groups have maintained relative autonomy from political society, forging only tactical alignments with opposition parties. In Taiwan, the environmental movement from its inception has been closely affiliated with and depended upon the dissident movement. Additionally, in terms of the relationship between the environmental movement and the state, South Korea represents a pattern of “congruent engagement” whereas Taiwan stands for a “conflictual engagement.” These differences in the development of environmentalism are closely related to the different modes of democratic transition in the two countries. In South Korea, the intensive “politics of protest” by civil society groups resulted in drastic changes in the ruling bloc. In Taiwan, elite-led and pacted transition largely enabled the ruling regime to maintain its control of society at large. As a result, in South Korea environmentalism emerged as a “new social movement” after the transition, whereas in Taiwan, it served as an essential component of the pro-democracy movement against the KMT government.

In the comparative politics literature, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) have been an intriguing pair of twins: they appear quite alike upon a cursory glance but are considerably different upon a closer look. In the late 1980s, scholars first became interested in South Korea and Taiwan primarily because of their phenomenal economic development in the postwar period. South Korea and Taiwan were lauded as “little dragons” in

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East Asia (Vogel 1991) and were considered to represent an East Asian model of economic development, characterized by a strong developmental state and political authoritarianism. However, as scholars looked deeper into details such as developmental strategies and industrial policies, they soon realized that the two cases were in fact distinct (Wade 1990a, 1990b, 1993; Haggard 1990; Doner 1992; Cheng 1990; Johnson 1987; Koo 1987).

In the mid-1980s, both South Korea and Taiwan embarked on a democratic transition and became two leading nascent democracies in Asia. Analysts began formulating an East Asian model of political transformation in which rapid economic development led to the growth of the middle class and “civil society,” and eventually to political liberalization (Gold 1986; Eberstadt 1992; Scalapino 1993). However, as scholars more closely compared various aspects and dimensions of the democratization processes in South Korea and Taiwan — for example, constitutional and electoral structures, political parties, civil-military relations, the role of the middle class — they again realized that the two cases were significantly different (Huang 1997; Chu 1997; Hsiao and Koo 1997; Friedman 1994). All in all, South Korea and Taiwan have provided comparativists with a theoretically challenging pair of empirical cases that are similar and different at the same time, pointing to the possibilities and limitations of intra-regional generalization.

This article continues the recent comparative inquiry into the cases of South Korea and Taiwan. Specifically, it purports to contribute to the expanding literature on East Asian comparative democratization by examining yet another very important — but to date largely neglected — element in the politics of democratization in South Korea and Taiwan: environmentalism.

The main objective of this article is to analyze how the recent emergence and development of environmentalism in South Korea and Taiwan have influenced and also have been influenced by the processes of democratization. What were the contributions of the environmental movements to the recent democratic transitions? How did the democratic transitions, in turn, affect and transform the status, power, and activities of the environmental groups? What are the main characteristics of environmentalism in the two countries in the post-transitional settings, namely in the politics of democratic consolidation? Section 1 analyzes the dynamics between democratization and environmentalism in South Korea. Section 2 investigates the dynamics between democratization and environmentalism in Taiwan. Section 3 identifies and explain the similarities and differences between the South Korean and Taiwanese cases. The article concludes with a few theoretical reflections on the interaction between the politics of democratization and the politics of the environment.

Democratization and Environmentalism in South Korea

Environmental groups have existed in South Korea since the late 1960s. In the 1970s, however, the environmental movement in South Korea was primarily localized, unstable, and unsystematic in its nature. Focusing on monetary compensation for the property damage done by pollution, the environmental movement at the time was more or less limited to the coastal cities adjacent to the industrial complexes.

The movement in the 1970s failed to forge solidarity with other social movements, let alone form links among different environmental groups. Several factors militated against the significant organization and expansion of environmentalism at the time. First, the environmental movement was viewed as a nuisance by the developmental state (on developmental state, cf. White 1984). The developmental state, in close collusion with the big business conglomerates called the *chaebôl*, was primarily concerned with maintaining high economic growth rates and, therefore, ignored and suppressed the environmental movement (Kim 1997).

Second, the environmental movement was also considered digressive, if not destructive, by many movement groups in civil society. The democratic transition of South Korea later in 1987 was a result of protracted and intense struggles between the repressive state and the rebellious civil society (Koo 1993; Choi 1993; Kim 1996). The mode of democratic transition in South Korea, as compared with Taiwan, was highly "mass-ascendant" (Karl 1990:8-12). This hurt the environmental cause. Throughout the 1970s and up to 1987, civil society groups such as student organizations, religious groupings, and labor unions concentrated on "more urgent" issues of human rights, labor conditions, or political democracy throughout their struggles against authoritarian regimes. Consequently, many mainstream social activists at the time viewed the early stirrings of the environmental movement with considerable suspicion, if not disdain. "The environment was important, but in the end, it was a diversion from what more progressive and radical political elements understood as the deeper and far more critical social and political problems of Korean life (Eder 1996:101)." Either explicitly or implicitly, issues like the environment were considered secondary or subject to the greater cause of political democracy.

Since the democratic transition in 1987, however, such "issue hegemony" of political democracy has been gradually but significantly eroded. Groups in civil society began to raise a variety of new issues, particularly those issues neglected and under-represented in the past. One of the most crucial political developments in South Korea since the democratic transition in 1987 was the emergence and unprecedented proliferation of new social movement groups called "citizens' movement groups (*simin undong tanch'e*)." Of 69 major citizens' movement groups existing in 1993, 47 were created after 1988 (IDDS 1993:7).

These new social movement groups intentionally continue to distance themselves from the radical “people’s movement groups (*minjung undong tanch’e*)” that spearheaded the pro-democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The citizens’ movement groups focus on different issues, appeal to different segments of the populace, and develop different movement strategies and methods to create and develop their distinctive identity (Chông et al. 1993). Environmental organizations have been at the forefront of the associational explosion of “citizens’ movement groups.” Of 133 environmental organizations that existed in South Korea in 1993, the majority (112) were created after 1986 (CCEJ-Chosôn ilbo [Chosôn Daily] 1993:33).

The vigorous expansion of environmentalism in South Korea was primarily led by the Korean Anti-Pollution Movement Association (KAPMA). The KAPMA was established in 1988 by merging two existing environmental organizations at the time — the Korean Anti-Pollution Citizen Movement Council and the Korean Anti-Pollution Movement Youth Council. The KAPMA organized numerous conferences, round-the-country slide shows, and picture exhibitions, pressuring the business community to spend more on pollution control as well as raising awareness among the general public. Also, particularly alarmed by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, the leaders of the KAPMA actively joined the debate on nuclear issues and launched a major campaign against the construction of nuclear plants in South Korea, organizing mass rallies and collecting signatures (Lee 1993:362-363).

On April 2, 1993, with other local environmental organizations, the KAPMA created the Korea Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM). This organization is the biggest environmental movement group in Korean history. In its inaugural address, the KFEM put forward the following goals: 1) environmental movement as a daily practice; 2) environmentally sound business practices; 3) development of feasible policy alternatives; 4) consistent support for an anti-nuclear position; and 5) strengthened solidarity with environmental groups abroad to cope with environmental problems on a global scale (KFEM 1994). As of December 1998, the KFEM had 32 regional offices and about 50,000 dues-paying members, including many working journalists, lawyers, professors, religious leaders, medical doctors, nurses, social workers, artists, businesspersons, farmers, workers, students, and ordinary citizens. The leadership positions of the KFEM are filled with the new urban middle class. The cadres or activists who carried out everyday duties of the organization are also highly educated and reform-oriented.

Since its establishment, the KFEM has concentrated on a number of “focal projects” each year. Focal projects have included, for example, preserving clean water; reducing air pollution; increasing international solidarity on anti-nuclear movement; expanding the membership and local organizations of the KFEM; enhancing environmental education; computerizing environmental information;

waste reduction; diversification of energy sources; promoting environment-friendly local politics; and educating children in environmentalism.

What was particularly instrumental in the rapid expansion of environmentalism in South Korea was the role of the mass media. Above all, South Korean newspapers competitively — and most of the time favorably — covered the details of the activities of the KAPMA, the KFEM, and other environmental groups. In 1982, only 479 stories about the environment appeared in major newspapers. In 1992, however, 8,884 stories appeared (Eder 1996:76). Each major newspaper in South Korea now has at least one reporter fully dedicated to environmental issues. Moreover, many newspapers independently launched environmental campaigns. For example, in 1989, one of the biggest and most influential newspapers in South Korea, *Chosôn ilbo* [Chosôn Daily], began an environmental campaign, analyzing major issues in the environmental movement, reporting the status of environmental groups, and presenting solutions to environmental problems. Later, other major newspapers such as *Donga ilbo* [Donga Daily] and *Han'guk ilbo* [Korean Daily] all followed suit (Eder 1996:77-78).

In addition, some of the dynamics related to the politics of democratic consolidation facilitated the expansion of environmentalism in South Korea. First, a series of dramatic political and socio-economic reforms by the government in 1993-1994 prompted the opposition party to politicize and use environmentalism as a source of its new offensive against the ruling party and the government. The Kim Young Sam government (1993-1998), particularly in its first two years, designed and carried out sweeping reforms including comprehensive anti-corruption campaigns, implementation of the real-name financial transaction system, and reshaping of civil-military relations (Cha 1993; Lee and Sohn 1995). Most of these reforms were very well-received by the public, and the popularity of the president rapidly escalated. The opposition Democratic Party, disconcerted and “out-reformed” by the Kim government, needed to differentiate itself from the ruling party with fresh issues and new policies. Environmental pollution provided the opposition politicians “a platform for criticism, an appeal to broadly-held public sentiment, and the ability to articulate a vision of improved quality of life for all Koreans” (Eder 1996:90). As a result, the opposition party installed an environmental study group within the party and attempted to align and cooperate with environmental groups in civil society to criticize and challenge the government.

Ultimately, an environmental disaster in 1994 greatly helped the opposition party politicize environmental issues and solidify its alignment with environmental groups. In April 1994, a large number of fish died in the Yôngsan River basin, located in the southwest corner of the Korean peninsula. In the adjacent city of Mokp'o, the municipal water authorities had to suspend service to 63,000 households and began water rationing. While investigating causes of the contamination, the Ministry of Environment initially claimed that the fish were dying not due to

any discharge of industrial waste but a natural phenomenon created by the washing of existing pollutants downstream by heavy rains after months of severe drought conditions. The government's unconvincing explanation provided leaders of the opposition party's environmental study group with an optimal opportunity to highlight their concern about Korea's environment and public health. Opposition politicians demanded and eventually held a special public hearing on the incident in the National Assembly (Eder 1996:92-93). The opposition party's skillful politicization of the environmental disaster strengthened the position and heightened the influence of environmental groups.

Furthermore, decentralization, one of the key elements in the politics of democratic consolidation in South Korea, also facilitated the expansion of environmentalism. Under the preceding authoritarian regimes from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, local autonomy was postponed indefinitely. According to the apologists of the authoritarian regimes, local autonomy would undermine the authority of the central government and would be inimical to national security, particularly considering the intense confrontation and competition between South Korea and communist North Korea. However, the national security argument gradually became hollow in the late 1980s once North Korea plunged into profound economic difficulties and, as a result, the economic gap between the two Koreas grew irrevocably wider. After the democratic transition in 1987, therefore, local autonomy was fully restored in South Korea. In the local elections for municipal and provincial offices, many candidates used environmental issues to establish their credentials and articulate their public concerns. Environmentalism served as an effective tool for the candidates in distinguishing themselves from other candidates and also in relating more closely to the local population.

In sum, environmentalism in South Korea emerged and evolved after the democratic transition, as the authoritarian state exited from the scene and the "issue hegemony" of democracy movement groups subsided. Environmental movement in South Korea since 1987 has been particularly facilitated by the mass media's favorable coverage, the opposition party's effective politicization of the environmental issues, a highly controversial environmental disaster, and the decentralization of the political structure.

Democratization and Environmentalism in Taiwan

Popular dissatisfaction about the environment emerged in Taiwan in the early 1980s. At the time, however, the environmental movement in Taiwan was largely localized and disorganized. Similar to the South Korean case, it was primarily the residents of the area affected by pollution that initiated sporadic protests against private companies or local authorities. As a result, environmental protests were small in scale and moderate in method, and the authoritarian central government,

which had consistently been strongly supportive of rapid economic growth at whatever cost, was rarely a target.

A broader environmental movement developed later with the beginning of a conservation movement that stressed wildlife and wilderness preservation. This conservation movement succeeded in receiving considerable public attention. But it was still led by a loosely organized group of journalists, scholars, and government officials and, thus, lacked a clear strategy and a unified leadership (Chan 1993:51).

It was only after the 1986-1987 period that environmentalism emerged as a national issue, and environmental groups became a significant political force in Taiwan. The year of 1986, in particular, proved to be a major turning point for the environmental movement in Taiwan. In April 1986, Taichung County citizens formed an anti-pollution committee to oppose hazardous emissions from nearby San Yu Chemical Plant. In a watershed victory, the groups eventually succeeded in closing down the factory.

The successful mobilization of Taichung County residents greatly inspired people in nearby Changhua County. In a series of well-organized mass demonstrations in 1986 and early 1987 — later called the “Lukang Rebellion” (Reardon-Anderson 1992) — residents of Lukang City successfully blocked the construction of a titanium dioxide plant by DuPont that would have polluted the water and hurt the local fishing industry. This was a major victory for the environmental movement in Taiwan, because the DuPont project, if completed as originally planned, would have been the largest single foreign-investment in Taiwanese history. Because it was such an important foreign investment project, the central government and its major ministries all supported it. During the process of anti-DuPont protests, citizens naturally came to target the central government and pose a major challenge to the KMT (Kuomintang) government’s authority and legitimacy. At the time, democratization did not yet begin in earnest in Taiwan, and the martial law was still in effect. The protesters remained unsure whether the government would suppress them, but central officials were restrained in their response. The protests ended without violence when DuPont voluntarily withdrew its construction plan. Through extensive media coverage, the anti-DuPont incident substantially increased citizens’ sense of political efficacy and, therefore, helped to galvanize the environmental protest movement (Tang and Tang 1997:284).

The number of environmental protests soon began to increase dramatically. In 1986, a demonstration pressured Taiwan Cement to begin burning a cleaner fuel grade at their Kaohsiung plant. In 1987, Chu Hsing-yu, a Democratic Progressive Party Kaohsiung City councilor, staged a hunger strike protesting Taiwan Cement’s hazardous emissions into the air. In the same year, protesters blockading the Lee Chang Jung chemical plant made the company agree to refurbish its facilities and remove dangerous chemicals. These victories spurred the growth of even more environmental groups. By 1987-1988, the number of protests for environmental

protection reached one per day (Chan 1993:51). In 1980-1987, there was an average of 13.75 environmental conflicts per year; the average increased to 31.33 in 1988-1990 and to 258 in 1991 alone (Tang and Tang 1997:284).

The creation of the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) was also critical to the environmental upsurge beginning in 1987. This organization was founded on November 1, 1987 in order to promote environmental protection and ecological preservation in Taiwan. The TEPU was originally composed of professors and volunteer students at the National Taiwan University. But it is now expanded into an organization with about one thousand members including university professors, school teachers, medical doctors, homemakers, students, workers, farmers, and many others. It has ten local chapters stretching all over the country. The TEPU has been in the forefront of the environmental movement in the 1990s, excoriating the Environmental Protection Administration and pursuing environmental investigations (Arrigo 1994:37).

The year of 1986, which marked a critical turning point for environmentalism in Taiwan, was at the same time an important year in terms of democratization of the country. On September 28, 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was founded. The DPP was originally created by family members and defense lawyers of political prisoners who were bold enough to risk their freedom and lives to defy the martial law and the KMT's one-party authoritarian order. Over the years, the DPP has garnered strength through each election and has now grown from a party of political dissidents into the largest opposition party of Taiwan, with about one third of the parliamentary seats and mayor of Kaohsiung City as well as other municipal governments. The DPP pushed forth major constitutional reforms, including the abolishment of the martial law in 1987, the 1992 parliamentary general elections, and the direct presidential elections in 1996.

Since its inception, the DPP, whose party color is green, has paid special attention to environmental issues and has closely cooperated with environmental movement groups in civil society. In the elections in December 1986, for example, many DPP candidates used the Lukang incident to criticize and discredit the KMT rule and its big business supporters (Tang and Tang 1997:285). Gradually, the activities of opposition politicians, environmental movement leaders, and other social movement activists coalesced into a movement referred to as the *tangwai*, or "outside the (KMT) party" (Gold 1997:172).

With the formation of the DPP and its focus on environmental issues, environmentalism became an essential ingredient in the pro-democracy movement in the transitional and later stages of Taiwanese democratization. The development of a broad-based grassroots environmental movement and its solid alliance with the militant opposition party has been the biggest challenge to the KMT's authoritarian political order and growth-oriented industrialization strategy.

Despite the anti-government movement by the alliance of the DPP and environmental groups, however, the democratic transition of Taiwan in 1987, compared with that of South Korea, was to a great extent an elite-centered and continuous process. The scope, intensity, and power of civic mobilization by the DPP and its allies in civil society, as compared with South Korea, were at best modest. Democratic transition in Taiwan in 1987 was primarily due to the unilateral decision by the top KMT leader, Chang Ch'ing-kuo, to lift the martial law and gradually liberalize the political system. Because this decision was so dramatic, unexpected, and bold, some scholars hail Chang as a far-sighted leader with a great vision of a democratic Taiwan. But, in fact, this unilateral decision was a shrewd political tactic to undermine the pro-democracy alliance between political and civil society actors and to stem further expansion and empowerment of the opposition. By such a preemptive decision, the authoritarian KMT government could obtain the credit for democratization, weaken the opposition, and purchase some time for controlled political liberalization.

Consequently, unlike in South Korea where the politics of protest by civil society groups and their pro-democracy alliance was important in the stages of authoritarian breakdown and democratic transition, in Taiwan, civic mobilization and dissident politics became more important later, in the stage of democratic consolidation. Regime continuity, not discontinuity, fundamentally characterized Taiwanese democratization. The incumbent regime was neither overthrown nor replaced. Nor did it go through any fundamental transformation. "Instead, it remain[ed] in power throughout the transition and control[led] the direction, pace, and political agenda of the transition" (Tien 1997:124). This is why the DPP-environmentalism nexus has continued to be crucial in the politics of democratic consolidation in Taiwan. The anti-government, pro-democracy movement has not lost its relevance and significance in the politics of democratic consolidation. Environmentalism has continued to be an essential element in the pro-democracy movement.

With regard to environmental protests in particular, the KMT government, still powerful and influential, has been able to protect its vital interests in some instances by the use of informal political instruments. They effectively utilized local political networks to defuse popular dissatisfaction about the environment and to undermine the solidarity of environmental groups in some areas. For example, the central government mobilized local elites to discourage and discredit environmental protests (Tang and Tang 1997:291).

More importantly, the KMT government effectively manipulated the mass media and public opinion to defame and demoralize the environmental movement and its alliance with the DPP. Initially, the mass media in Taiwan carried sympathetic and favorable reports on environmental protests. But as more and more of the protests focused on seeking monetary compensation from industries, the KMT

government widely publicized the negative facets of the environmental movement by stressing the self-serving elements among the protesters. In this respect, the KMT regime skillfully utilized the “cultural strategies of agenda denial” (Cobb and Ross 1997), persistently denying the significance of the issue and discrediting the group advocating the environmental cause. Because of such sophisticated tactics on the part of the government to undermine the environmental movement and the opposition, both the DPP and environmental groups in Taiwan still find it essential to continue their strategy of combining the pro-democracy movement and environmentalism.

To sum up, the emergence and evolution of environmentalism in Taiwan was greatly facilitated by a series of successful mass protests against pollution. Environmental movement, from the beginning, closely aligned and cooperated with the anti-government democracy struggle. Battling against the central government that skillfully employed various strategies of agenda denial, repression, and public relations campaigns, environmental groups in Taiwan coordinated their movement with dissident movement groups, constantly challenging and reprimanding the KMT government.

A Comparative Analysis

As seen in the preceding sections, the emergence and expansion of the environmental movement in South Korea and Taiwan since their democratic transitions in 1987 have several notable similarities. First, South Korea and Taiwan are similar in terms of the evolutionary path of environmentalism. Initially — in the 1970s for South Korea and in the 1980s for Taiwan — the environmental movement was localized, sporadic, disorganized, and spontaneous. Later, spurred by widespread dissatisfaction with the deteriorating environment, broader and stronger organizations emerged and led the environmental movement. Eventually, the environmental movement in civil society expanded to political society, in the form of policy or electoral alignment with opposition political parties.

In both South Korea and Taiwan, there existed some catalytic events that dramatically strengthened the environmental movement. In the case of South Korea, the Yôngsan River contamination incident in 1994 significantly increased public attention to the environment and boosted the status and legitimacy of the environmental movement. In the case of Taiwan, the “Lukang Rebellion” symbolized the potency of environmentalism in politics. These catalytic incidents elevated environmentalism, through broad mass media coverage and exposure, from a local to a national level. Placed in a comparative perspective, the critical role of a catalytic incident in strengthening environmental movement is by no means unique to South Korea and Taiwan. In the former Soviet Union, for instance, the Chernobyl disaster “opened the public’s eyes not only to environmental degradation, but to the bank-

rupt policies that had brought on the catastrophe” (Jancar-Webster 1993:211). A broad consensus that the overthrow of the communist regime was the only fundamental solution helped environmental movement groups recruit mass support for their protests against the totalitarian regime (Jancar-Webster 1993:214).

South Korea and Taiwan are also similar in terms of the high degree of politicization of environmentalism. In both countries, the opposition parties were outmaneuvered and frustrated by the aggressive and preemptive measures by the ruling regime. Because of the soaring popularity of the government, the opposition was disconcerted and incrementally losing its legitimacy. Having realized the potential of environmentalism, opposition parties in both South Korea and Taiwan capitalized on environmentalism to establish a new rallying point behind which they could re-mobilize anti-government forces.

Despite these similarities, the South Korean and the Taiwanese cases show distinct differences upon a closer look. First, the timing of the emergence and evolution of environmentalism in the two countries are dissimilar. In South Korea, environmentalism emerged immediately *after* the democratic transition in 1987. To a great extent, the environmental movement was the result and outcome of the democratic transition. Environmental groups, taking advantage of the liberalized political space following the transition, proliferated and developed their distinctive movement strategies and methods, distancing themselves from the old and radical social movement. In this regard, environmental groups were one of the main beneficiaries of the democratic transition in South Korea. In contrast, in Taiwan, environmentalism emerged *before* the democratic transition in 1987. As a result, environmentalism became a crucial element of the pro-democracy coalition against the KMT's authoritarian rule. Environmental groups were not merely a beneficiary of the political liberalization — they were an active creator of the democratic transition.

South Korea and Taiwan differ again in terms of the pattern and nature of the linkage between environmental groups and political parties. In South Korea, although environmental groups and political parties have cooperated and aligned with each other, the linkage has not been solid. The cooperation and alignment almost always remain flexible and tactical, changeable depending on specific political situation. At best, the alignment between environmental groups and political parties has been a marriage of convenience in South Korea. In comparison, in Taiwan, the opposition party, specifically the DPP, formed and institutionalized its alliance with environmental groups. The linkage was not a frail marriage of convenience: rather, it was a strong solidarity based on shared beliefs and common purposes. The degree of cooperation between environmental groups and the opposition has been much higher in Taiwan.

Finally, South Korea and Taiwan have differences also in terms of the relationship between the environmental movement groups and the ruling regime. As

already mentioned, in South Korea, environmentalism emerged and evolved in the post-transitional setting, interacting with comparatively democratic regimes. On the other hand, environmental groups in South Korea constantly tried to distance themselves from the radical image of the traditional social movement groups that had spearheaded pro-democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, environmental movement groups, in general, have been in a “congruent engagement” (Bratton 1989) with the state, interacting cooperatively with each other. In contrast, in Taiwan, environmentalism was always considered as an important element of the anti-government, *tangwai*, movement. Therefore, the relationship between environmental groups and the central government has been characterized by a “conflictual engagement” (Bratton 1989), marked by repression and resistance. Well into the stage of democratic consolidation, environmental groups in Taiwan have been maintaining an antagonistic and confrontational stance toward the ruling KMT regime, which reflects the highly “path-dependent” nature of Taiwanese environmentalism.

Conclusion: Democratic Consolidation and Environmental Politics

In this paper, I examined the relationship between democratic consolidation and environmentalism in South Korea and Taiwan. Both countries underwent rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s. Environmentalism emerged in part as civil society’s reaction and resistance to the export-oriented and environmentally costly industrialization strategy imposed by the developmental state. More importantly, environmentalism emerged and evolved in constant interaction with various stages and elements of democratization in the two countries. As stated, in South Korea, environmentalism emerged as a new social movement, distinct from the old radical movement that spearheaded the pro-democracy struggles earlier. In Taiwan, environmentalism, to a great degree, emerged and expanded as a crucial part of the opposition against the one-party authoritarianism of the KMT. This crucial difference — environmentalism as a new social movement in South Korea and environmentalism as a political opposition in Taiwan — serves as a basis for assessing the future of environmentalism and democratic consolidation in the two countries.

In the case of South Korea, environmental groups in civil society have not been closely linked to political parties. Therefore, environmental groups are not associated with or involved in intense partisan struggles among different political factions and ideological camps. The degree of politicization of environmental issues is much lower as compared with that of Taiwan. Environmental groups are relatively autonomous from partisan politics in political society. Admittedly, unprincipled cooperation with or inclusion into the state or ruling party have various anti-democratic implications and should be avoided (Dryzek 1996:483-486). In this regard, the relative autonomy of civil society from political society

may be conducive to further development of the environmental movement. On the other hand, because there exist few institutionalized channels with either political parties or the state, and because environmental groups are not organized as a political force, environmental groups may become marginalized in the political process.

In the case of Taiwan, the linkage between environmental groups in civil society and the opposition party have been very close. They formed and developed a grand pro-democracy coalition. Similar to the case of the former Soviet Union, environmentalists provided the “cradle” for the democratic movement, helping people learn democratic tactics with which to challenge and oppose the authoritarian regime (Jancar-Webster, 1993:217). Nevertheless, too close a relationship between environmental movement and the opposition party also entails certain problems. Environmental issues are highly politicized, and the environmental movement is unduly dependent on party politics. Because environmentalism is so attached to certain political parties, when party politics becomes either too progressive or too conservative, the environmental movement has no choice but to mirror such ideological biases. When some of the environmental activists aligned with the DPP were disillusioned by the “conservative” nature of the DPP in January 1996, their solution was to bolt the DPP and create their own political party devoted to environmentalism — the Green Party Taiwan. But it is still questionable if such a strategy will be the best choice for the future of environmental movement in Taiwan, since Taiwanese environmentalism will continue to remain highly politicized, extremely dependent on political circumstances, and unavoidably subject to elite calculations, strategies, and interactions.

Environmental movement in South Korea and Taiwan emerged and evolved rapidly around the democratic transition in the mid-1980s. Unlike in Eastern Europe where the power of environmental groups “fractured” after the democratic transition (Jancar-Webster 1993:214), in both South Korea and Taiwan, environmental movement continues to play crucial roles in the politics of democratic consolidation, challenging the ruling regime, providing policy alternatives, and helping citizens articulate their concerns and interests (Schmitter 1997:247; Diamond 1994:7-11). At the same time, South Korea and Taiwan present two different models of democratization and environmentalism. While in South Korea environmental groups have been relatively autonomous from political parties, in Taiwan they have been closely associated with opposition parties. Only time will tell how these two different types of environmentalism will affect the further consolidation of these fledgling democracies in East Asia.

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