THE ORIGINS AND CHANGES OF EAST ASIAN PARTY SYSTEMS AND VOTER ALIGNMENTS: SOCIAL CONDITIONS, ISSUE EFFECTS, AND PARTY COALITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines both how East Asian party systems formed and why they have changed since the end of the World War II. The related literature maintained that East Asian party politics was caused by the homogeneous culture and the philosophy. However, I argue that the issues of economic development and national security strongly affected East Asian party system formations and contributed to making majority coalitions over the four decades. In other words, the strong issue effects across social groups suppressed social cleavages and other agendas in the Cold War and industrialization period. The overarching issues were closely associated with East Asian socioeconomic settings and international relations. Based on severe economic conditions and external threats, long-term governmental parties effectively emphasized both general concerns and made the party coalitions.

Meanwhile, successful economic development in a short amount of time and the end of the Cold War caused a decline in both strong issue effects on social groups and issue agendas. As the urgent problems declined, social divisions and new issues emerged since the 1990s. Also, the new generations had different political orientations compared to the old generations. This research extends social cleavage theory by adding the importance of issues, external threats and national industrialization to Lipset and Rokkan (1967)’s list of “revolutions.”