



Strategic Regionalism and Realignment of Regional Electoral Coalitions: Emergence of a Conservative Government in the 2007 Presidential Election*

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The 2007 presidential election is understood as a critical election. A large number of swing votes occurred in the Capital region and also in the Daejun-Choongnam region. Those votes brought about a fatal defeat to the Democratic Party and a landslide victory for the Grand National Party (GNP). This paper conducts descriptive and confirmatory analyses and find out that a new, strategic regionalism is the key to the enormous electoral changes. The most significant feature of the 2007 presidential election is that a hegemonic regional coalition has been created between the Capital region and Youngnam region. As a result of this new coalition, the GNP was able to win the election and to transform a reformist policy regime of the previous governments toward a highly conservative direction.

Keywords: critical election, swing vote, regional cleavage, strategic regionalism, regional coalition, conservative revolution

THE 2007 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AS A CRITICAL ELECTION

The 2007 presidential election can be understood as a critical election in several respects.¹ First, a large number of swing votes have occurred in the Capital region² and the Daejun-Choongnam region. Second, as a result of these swing votes, the electoral coalition between

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¹ On the concept of critical election, see Key (1966).

² The Capital region includes Seoul City, Kyunggi-Do, and Inchun City.

Honam and Choongchung that has made possible both the Kim Dae-Jung government and the Roh Moo-Hyun government take power has collapsed suddenly. Third, at the same time, a new regional electoral coalition between the Capital and Younngnam regions has been created, enabling a conservative candidate Lee Myung-Bak to become the new president. Fourth, the new government, based on two politically and economically dominant regions in Korea, began to implement highly conservative policies such as tax-cut, deregulation, privatization, and confrontational policy against North Korea, replacing the reformist policy regime of the previous governments. As a whole, the 2007 presidential election brought about a 'surge realignment' of electoral coalition,³ power transfer, and transition to the conservative policy package. In this sense, the 2007 presidential election is a critical election that put an end to the reformist governments and that gave birth to a conservative government within 10 years.

Then, what caused this revolutionary (i.e., rapid and sweeping) electoral change? Who were the defectors from the Democratic Party (DP)?⁴ Who were the supporters of the Grand National Party (GNP, Hannara Party)? What made the voters of the Daejun-Choongnam region change their position from strongly supporting the DP in 2002 to voting Lee Hoe-Chang as the leader of their own region in 2007? What made a huge number of the Capital region's voters to turn away from the DP and to move to the GNP and other parties in 2007?

In order to answer those questions, this paper compares the collective data of the 2007 election with that of the 2002 election. In addition, this paper will conduct both descriptive and confirmatory analyses to find out major determinants of the 2007 election in comparison with the 2002 election, using the county-level data. In doing such analyses, I will argue that regionalism still prevails major elections but that the nature of regionalism has changed significantly from a primitive-type regionalism to a strategic-type one. With this distinction, I will also argue that the large swing votes in the Capital region and the Daejun-Choongnam region occurred due to a new strategic regionalism. Finally, I will argue that the large swing votes in those two regions caused a breakup of the East-West divide of the last 10 years and instead helped to create a new X-divide aligning developed regions on the one line and underdeveloped regions on another line.⁵

³ A surge realignment refers to a realignment of electoral coalition which occurs drastically within a short time period (see Paulson 2007).

⁴ The Democratic Party has a long twisted history. In 2002, it was called as the New Millenium Democratic Party. But in 2004, the Open Woori Party was dissociated from the New Millenium DP. Just before the 2007 presidential election, the Open Woori Party was dissolved and the United New Democratic Party (UNDP) was founded. After the presidential election, the New Millenium DP and the UNDP were united into the current DP. With these changes in mind, I will use the name DP for the whole period since 2002.

⁵ For more details on an X-divide, see the section on the hypotheses below.

THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

Three types of Electoral Theories

Many theories have been proposed to find out the determinants of voter choices.⁶ Demographic theories suggest gender, age, and the place of living as an important predictor. Theories of socio-economic status focus mainly on the effects of education, income, occupation, and class position. Social-psychological theories emphasize the importance of party identification (Campbell et al. 1960), sense of political efficacy, and the image of a candidate. Rational choice theories argue that voters first calculate utility to be expected from a certain candidate or a party and then make choices based upon such a calculation (Downs 1957). Theory of economic voting, one of the rational choice theories, suggests that voters make a decision based on a retrospective evaluation and/or a prospective evaluation (Kramer 1983; Rew et al. 2008). Lastly, theories emphasizing ideology stress that proximity or distance between the voters and the candidates along an ideological spectrum determines voter decision (Hinich and Munger 1994).

These theories have been applied in the context of Korea and produced a large number of fruitful studies.⁷ And hence, they contributed greatly to an understanding of voter behaviors in Korea and to a discovery of major determinants of electoral outcomes. However, these theories are all about characteristics of individual voters. They do not consider structural characteristics of electoral counties and regions. Neither do they directly take into account inter-regional competition and large regional swing votes that produce highly volatile electoral dynamics. In this sense, all the theories suggested above are micro-level theories.

Electoral outcomes can be significantly affected by what strategies political parties take. Parties may try to agitate and mobilize as much as possible intense rivalry among regions (Lee 1997). Parties may try to make a maximum use of ideological differences between voters (Paulson 2007). Parties may try to utilize social networks to mobilize bloc votes or rely more on mass media. All these strategies show that political parties, located between the electorate and the government, are a very intentional actor who can make a big difference in determining electoral outcomes (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). Among many theories, theories focusing on party strategies can be classified as meso-level theories.

These theories are useful in understanding electoral dynamics in which political parties interact actively with the electorate and other parties with their own strategies and policies. But the meso-level theories too do not pay enough attention to the major structural characteristics of electoral counties, regions, and the society as a whole. Therefore, when we want to

⁶ For a general overview of theories on voting, see Kang (2008), Kim (2008), and Park et al. (2008).

⁷ Good examples of empirical studies are Lee, ed. (1998), Cho, ed. (1999), Park, ed. (2005), Eo, ed. (2006), and Park, ed. (2008).

understand structural determinants of an election, we need to utilize cleavage theories that focus on structural divisions between diverse social groups (see Lipset and Rokkan 1964). Among many cleavages such as class, religious, ethnic, and regional cleavages, this paper concentrates on regional cleavage because it has been the most important structural cleavage in the Korean society in determining largely the direction and the outcome of an election.

Unlike India and Northern Ireland, for example, Korea has been almost absent from religious conflicts. Unlike Taiwan and Nigeria, Korea has been free from ethnic conflicts. Class cleavage is argued to have been suppressed by the authoritarian governments in the past, weakened by the injection of false consciousness such as anti-communism and pro-capitalism, or replaced by regional conflicts being over-explored after the democratic transition in 1987 (Sohn 1996; Cho 1997, 2000; Choi 2002). In any case, it is clear that the regional cleavage has been and is the most powerful determinant of electoral outcomes in Korea.

However, two things should be noted with regard to the weight and the nature of regional cleavage. One is that although other cleavages like generation and class cleavages recently began to affect the electoral outcomes significantly, especially since the 2002 presidential election, the most important determinant is still the regional cleavage which accounts for a large amount of electoral variation. The second point is that the nature of regional cleavage has been changing from a primitive-type regionalism based on regional (or local) membership and emotional bond to a strategic-type regionalism based on calculation of self-interests and rational choice.⁸ This is especially true because three Kims (Kim Young-Sam, Kim Dae-Jung, and Kim Jong-Pil) who symbolized the old, primitive-type regionalism in the past retired from politics and because voters have come to recognize that elections are powerful instruments to defend or seek their interests as elections of all levels are held repeatedly.

The most prominent example of the new, strategic-type regionalism is the promise by the DP in the 2002 presidential election to relocate the administrative capital to the Choongchung region. The voters of the region, in turn, responded strongly to that promise, forming a large electoral coalition with the Honam region and bringing about the victory to the DP. Since this election, strategic regionalism began to predominate the successive elections and functioned in the 2007 presidential election as a magnet to mobilize the voters of the Capital region against the Participatory Government's anti-Metropolitan policies such as the relocation of the central government and the public corporations.⁹ Thus, strategic regionalism has become the main driving force in forming regional electoral coalition and determining the electoral outcome.

⁸ Jang (2005) suggests a distinction between traditional regionalism and policy-related regionalism, while Jung and Im (2006) suggest a distinction between emotional regionalism and rational regionalism. These distinctions are quite similar to my distinction presented here.

⁹ The Participatory Government sought to relocate the administrative capital and 175 public agencies from the Capital to other regions for the purpose of both balanced national development and a qualitative development of the Capital region itself. But the residents of the Capital region seemed to perceive this policy more as threatening to their self-interests, ignoring the positive aspects.

As argued above, the regional cleavage dividing voters along the regional distributions of power and wealth is the most important fault line upon which political parties devise their strategies for electoral mobilization and coalition-building¹⁰ and upon which individual voters feel, calculate, and make their decisions. Seen this way, the theory of regional cleavage can be understood as the macro-level theory which seeks to understand the predisposing or pre-directing effects of unequal distribution of power and wealth among regions on meso- and micro-level actors. But it should be noted that the determining effect of regional cleavage is not perfect but very large (or the largest), compared to other factors.

Hypotheses

Many elements such as power, economy, religion, ethnicity, and so forth can be involved in constituting regional cleavages. But this paper considers only two such elements. One is an unequal distribution of political power among regions. Another is an unequal distribution of socio-economic resources among regions.

Political power of a region, especially with regard to elections, can be understood as the sum total of population, economic resources, the level of the residents' income and asset, the number of governmental and public agencies, the number of corporate headquarters, the number of universities and hospitals, and so on so forth. Table 1 below shows that political power is extremely unequally distributed among regions.¹¹ The most surprising feature in the table is that the Capital region appears to be the predominant power in Korea. In addition to the enormous population and the highest level of socio-economic development, the Capital region is the place where 85% of government and public agencies are located, 92% of the headquarters of 100 largest companies operate, and 65% of income tax is collected, and 94% of the comprehensive real estate tax-payers live. Therefore, it can be claimed that the Capital region holds a hegemonic position in the Korea's regional hierarchy, exerting a decisive influence in governmental decision-making and also in elections.¹²

The Youngnam region, the second largest and powerful region in Korea, has been the industrial center and also the center of conservative politics. Due to these characteristics, some scholars argue that the Youngnam region has been the bulwark of hegemonic regionalism (Whang 1997). On the other hand, the Honam region has been the least developed and politically weakest region in the past, thus being the center of resistance (or challenging)

¹⁰ It is quite natural and essential for a political party to form an electoral coalition to win. In a highly regionally divided situation, political parties and candidates of a certain region do every thing to form a minimum winning coalition with other regions. In elections, therefore, a regional cleavage and a regional coalition are two sides of the same coin.

¹¹ Among many indicators, this table includes only population and the score of overall socio-economic development of a region. But they seem to summarize very well the total picture of political power of each region.

¹² In late 1960s, Henderson (1968) argued that Seoul has overwhelmed Korea and hence "Seoul is Korea." That description seems to be more true today than in 1960s.

Table 1. Distribution of Power Resources among Regions

Regions	Population in 1,000 (2005)	Mean Score of Overall Development (2005)
Capital Region	22,766	5.99
Youngnam Region	12,702	4.03
Honam Region	5,022	3.36
Daejun-Choongnam Region	3,332	3.82
Choongbuk Region	1,460	3.48
Kangwon Region	1,465	3.28
Jeju Region	532	3.99

Note | For more details, see the footnote 15.

regionalism (Whang 1997).

The Daejun-Choongnam region (or Choongchung in general including Choongbuk) is complicated in two respects. First, this region is located geographically between the Capital and other Southern regions. In addition, the developmental level of this region also lies between the Capital-Youngnam regions and the rest. Second, possibly due to these factors, the Daejun-Choongnam region had acted as a casting voter from the Park Chung-Hee government until recently, forming an electoral coalition with Youngnam or Honam based on strategic calculation of their collective regional interests. Therefore, Daejun-Choongnam has been the center of strategic regionalism, whereas Youngnam and Honam have been the center of hegemonic regionalism and the center of resistance regionalism, respectively.¹³

Political Power Cleavage and Realignment of Regional Electoral Coalition

From the descriptions above, I will suggest two hypotheses to explain the defeat of the DP and the victory of the GNP in 2007. The first hypothesis is concerned with why the voters of Daejun-Choongnam have withdrawn their support for the DP and moved to other parties in 2007.

As the marginal utility of the DP's promise to relocate the administrative capital to the Yunki-Kongju county declined with the progress of that project, the voters of Daejun-Choongnam who have sought strategic regionalism lost their political goal and were disoriented when the 2007 presidential election race began. In this situation, voters were mobilized first around Shim Dae-Pyung who, once the governor of Choongnam, founded the

¹³ The Youngnam region and the Honam region have a commonality in that two regions are the bastions of a strong primitive regionalism. But other regions are very different in their political orientations. The Jeju region, which is politically and economically weak, shows a reformist political orientation and supports the DP. The Kangwon region, however, seems to be ambivalent in political attitude. On the one hand, due to its proximity to both North Korea and the Capital region, it is very conservative, thus joining the Capital-Youngnam core alliance in the 2007 presidential election. On the other hand, it is backward and underdeveloped economically, hence supporting as much the DP as the GNP in the 2008 parliamentary election.

People First Party (PFP)¹⁴ and then around Lee Hoe-Chang who became the presidential candidate representing their region. Thus, a large number of voters of this region deserted the DP and moved to support the PFP and the GNP in 2007.¹⁵ As a result, the electoral coalition between Honam and Choongchung of 2002, which was the electoral basis of the reformist governments of Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun, collapsed suddenly, helping greatly the GNP to win the 2007 presidential election and consolidating strategic regionalism in the region of Daejun-Choongnam. So, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: (Breakup of the Honam-Choongchung Coalition) With the changing nature of regionalism from primitive to strategic one, the voters of the Daejun-Choongnam region are more likely to desert the DP and to move to the regionalist party PFP and also to the GNP, hence dealigning the electoral coalition of 2002.

The second hypothesis is about why a large number of the voters of the Capital region withdrew their support for the DP and moved to the GNP in 2007, compared to 2002. It is curious why more than 3.1 million voters of this region stopped supporting the DP in the first place. As Figure 1 shows, the Capital region has been the stronghold of democracy and hence the political base for the opposition and reformist parties for the last 40 years. Suddenly, however, they refused to vote the DP. What happened?

It seemed that they thought their self-interests have been jeopardized by the Participatory Government's or the DP's anti-Capital policies such as the relocation of the administrative capital, the relocation of many public agencies, and tightening of the real estate taxation. Faced with these policies, the voters of the Capital region seemed to have been frightened and awakened to defend their self-interests. Thus, the Capital region's voters came to get mobilized around strategic regionalism which had never existed before and to vote the GNP and other conservative parties.¹⁶

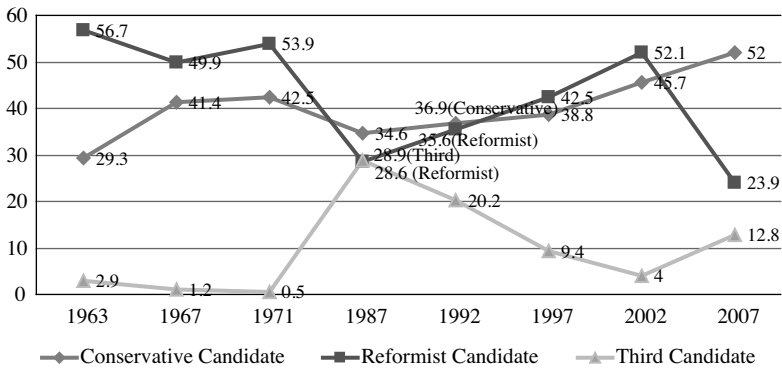
Hypothesis 2: (Revolt of the Capital region and Building of a New Hegemonic Coalition) Threatened by the Participatory Government's policies against the interests

¹⁴ This party was basically a regionalist party that sought to promote the collective interests of the Daejun-Choongnam region and later in May of 2008 renamed itself as the Liberal Advancement Party (LAP) to emphasize its conservative orientation.

¹⁵ The voters of Choongbuk seemed to act differently from those of Daejun-Choongnam. A large number of them also defected the DP and voted the GNP in 2007 but they did not support the PFP as much as those of Daejun-Choongnam. Later in the 2008 parliamentary election, however, they supported the DP. So, it is necessary to treat Choongbuk as a separate region in an electoral analysis.

¹⁶ Chung Dong-Young received only the total of 2.7 million votes from the Capital region. But Lee Myung-Bak received the total of around 5.9 million votes by gaining additionally 770,000 votes from there, compared to 2002. The difference between the two candidates was around 3.2 million votes which nearly determined the 2007 presidential election.

Figure 1. Outcomes of Presidential Elections (%): The Capital Region



of the Capital region, the voters of this region are more likely to turn away from the DP and vote the GNP, forming a new hegemonic electoral coalition with the Youngnam voters.

Socio-economic Cleavages and Formation of an X-Divide

It is true that Lee Myung-Bak and the GNP won a landslide victory in the 2007 presidential election, while Chung Dong-Young and the DP met with a fatal defeat. Interestingly, however, the story does not end there. If we peel off the surface of the election outcome, the inner world shows a surprising feature of a new regional division which has never existed before. That is, within the broad macro-structural cleavages of the regions whose overall powers are unequally distributed, Korean voters began to choose a political party according to their assessments of the socio-economic conditions of their own narrower counties and cities, not blindly following a primitive-type regionalism.¹⁷

It is thus expected that those who live in the developed and rich counties tend to vote the GNP which emphasizes economic growth, tax-cut, deregulation, privatization, and etc. On the other hand, those who live in the less-developed and poor counties are expected to vote the DP which stresses growth with equity, balanced national development, redistribution and welfare, social solidarity, and etc. Considering these aspects, two hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: (Alliance of the Developed, Core Counties) The higher the level of socio-economic development of a certain county, the more likely the residents of that county are to vote the GNP.

¹⁷ In this respect, the arguments related with socio-economic cleavages support the rational choice theory.

Hypothesis 4: (Alliance of the Less-developed, Peripheral Counties) The lower the level of socio- economic development of a certain county, the more likely the residents of that county are to vote the DP.

If the two hypotheses turn out to be true, the results would be that the Korean society is divided into the developed and rich counties on the one hand and the underdeveloped and poor counties on the other. Such a regional division is then mobilized and aligned through elections into an X-divide between the core alliance and the peripheral alliance, replacing the East-West divide of the past.¹⁸

Some argue that a broad Anti-Honam alliance besieging Honam has been created in the 2007 presidential election (Park 2008; Park et al. 2008). But I think it is only one part of the story. On the surface level, it can be said that such an anti-Honam alliance emerged. But if we look at the deeper level and observe the results of both the 2007 presidential and the 2008 parliamentary elections together, we can find that an X-divide or a core-periphery divide surely emerged.

DATA AND METHOD

In order to examine the hypotheses presented above, this paper will use two kinds of collective data. One is the collective data at the national level which are about the outcomes of the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections. Another is the collective data at the level of the administrative counties¹⁹ which are about the socio-economic conditions and about the ratio of votes received by the GNP and the DP during the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections.

The data for four main variables (population density, the ratio of the elderly over 65 years old, per capita revenue of local taxes, and the number of the seats of public libraries per 1,000), which will be used in a multiple regression analysis, are drawn from many sources such as the National Statistical Office (2005 data) and the former Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (2005 data).

For a broad, macro-structural level understanding of electoral changes and regional dynamics, this paper will conduct a descriptive analysis of the collective election data. For a

¹⁸ An X-divide is composed of two groups: a group of the developed counties along the Capital and Youngnam line which forms a core alliance and another group of the underdeveloped counties along the line of Jeju, Honam, Choongchung (mainly Choongbuk), and a part of Kangwon which forms a peripheral alliance. But it should be noted that even within this X-divide, there are many poor counties in the core area to vote the DP and many rich counties in the periphery to vote the GNP.

¹⁹ The administrative counties here include cities, rural counties, and districts of large cities. There were 234 such counties until Jeju-Do was reborn as a special autonomous province. The reason to conduct a research at a county level is that it makes possible to understand important structural differences of both socio-economic conditions and political competition which exist at the level of counties (see Field 1979; Cox 2002; Park 2005; Asaba 2008).

confirmatory test to find out the determinants of the electoral outcomes, this paper will conduct a multiple regression analysis using the county-level data. In addition, this paper will also conduct a comparative analysis which compares the 2007 presidential election with the 2002 presidential election to see significant differences between them.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis of the National Collective Data

The 2007 presidential election revealed diverse aspects of the Korean politics and society. On the one hand, it was an easy election for the presidential candidate Lee Myung-Bak and the GNP. On the other hand, it was a very complex and revolutionary election.

Table 2 below shows how easy it was to Lee and his party. Lee won the election with a huge margin of 5,317,708 votes. In addition, he prevailed every region except Honam. Therefore, it was really an easy election indeed (see also Appendices 1 and 2).

But the landslide victory for Lee and his party should not be exaggerated. Lee gained 48.7% in 2007 which was just a little more than 46.6% that Lee Hoe-Chang gained in 2002. In this regard, the victory was not a real victory at all: the GNP simply maintained its previous support level.

What is really new and surprising is the fact that Chung Dong-Young and the DP totally failed to maintain their previous electoral support. Chung only received 6,174,681 votes in 2007, while Roh Moo-Hyun gained 12,014,277 votes in 2002. Compared with Roh, Chung

Table 2. Outcomes of Two Presidential Elections

Regions	Presidential Election (2002)			Presidential Election (2007)		
	effective number of Votes	Roh Moo-Hyun (%)	Lee Hoe-Chang (%)	effective number of votes	Chung Dong-Young (%)	Lee Myung-Bak (%)
Seoul	5,443,990	51.3	45.0	5,051,369	24.5	53.2
Inchun-Kyunggi	6,025,822	50.5	44.3	6,222,764	23.6	51.4
Kangwon	762,937	41.5	52.5	723,503	18.9	52.0
Daejun-Choongnam	1,597,911	52.8	40.1	2,289,549	22.0	24.6
Choongbuk	734,385	49.8	42.3	702,593	23.8	41.6
Honam	2,952,536	93.2	4.9	2,576,855	80.0	9.0
Daegu-Kyungbuk	2,726,847	20.2	75.5	2,688,150	6.4	71.1
Busan-Woolsan-Kyungnam	4,080,159	29.4	65.3	3,811,168	13.0	56.2
Jeju	264,799	56.1	39.9	249,522	32.7	38.7
Nation-wide	24,561,916	48.9	46.6	23,612,880	26.1	48.7

thus lost an incredibly large number of 5,839,596 votes (see Appendix 1).

Who then withdrew their supports for Chung and the DP? There were two groups whose defection made a drastic change in the 2007 electoral outcome. The first group was the voters of Daejun-Choongnam and Choongbuk. Around 50% of the voters supported the DP in 2002 in response to the promise of the relocation of the administrative capital. This time, however, more than half of those supporters deserted the DP (around 700,000 voters) and moved to vote Lee Hoe-Chang or Moon Kuk-Hyun. Thereby, the electoral coalition between Honam and Choongchung fell down helplessly, making it impossible for this coalition to take power again.²⁰

But a more fatal blow came from the voters of the Capital region. In 2002, more than 50% of them voted Roh Moo-Hyun of the DP. In 2007, however, more than half of those who had voted Roh withdrew their supports for the DP and moved to vote Lee Myung-Bak, Lee Hoe-Chang, and Moon Kuk-Hyun.²¹ In these large swing votes, around 3.1 million metropolitan voters abandoned the DP and thus made it simply impossible for the DP to win the election.²²

Furthermore, those swing votes were combined with the votes of Youngnam which was the bastion of the conservative political forces in Korea. Thus, a new, powerful regional coalition has been built which enabled the GNP to win an easy landslide victory. What is more, the hegemonic coalition between the political-economic center (Capital region) and the industrial center (Youngnam region) has been a strong foundation upon which the new government launched a set of ultra-conservative policies such as bold tax-cuts, wide-ranging deregulation, a revision of the history textbooks toward a conservative direction, a confrontational approach to North Korea, and etc. In this sense, the 2007 presidential election was a revolutionary election which resulted in a conservative revolution.

To sum, the defection of the Choongchung voters and the mass revolt of the Capital region's voters were the basis for the defeat of the DP and the victory of the GNP. Therefore, the hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported by these observations.

Within this broad structural framework of regional cleavages, the level of overall socio-economic development²³ at the level of counties turns out to have a significant relation with the

²⁰ There is both similarity and difference between the voters of Daejun-Choongnam and those of Choongbuk. The two groups showed similarity in that a large number of voters deserted the DP. But they are different in that the former clustered around a new regionalist party (that is, the LAP), while the latter is divided in their political supports between the GNP (in the 2007 presidential election) and the DP (in the 2008 parliamentary election).

²¹ The largest beneficiary of these swing votes seems to be Lee Hoe-Chang who gained around 13% from this region and Lee Myung-Bak who received around 52% (the net increase was around 8%). Moon Kuk-Hyun received around 7%.

²² The Appendices 1 and 2 show that Chung Dong-Young lost too many votes in the Capital region, while Lee Myung-Bak gained there more votes than before. From this difference, it is evident that an enormous number of swing votes in the Capital region, in fact, determined the electoral outcome almost completely.

²³ The level of socio-economic development here is a composite index composed of 14 indicators (e.g., population density, average real estate value, per capita local tax revenue, the number of hospital beds per 1000, and etc). The time points for the data were all 2005. See Lee (2007) for the list of those indicators and the procedures for measuring

pattern of electoral supports. As the Figures 2 and 3 suggest, the level of socio-economic development seems to have a negative relation with the electoral support for the DP. But it seems to have a positive relation with the electoral support for the GNP. The correlation coefficients for the DP and the GNP are $-.212$ and $.257$, respectively.²⁴

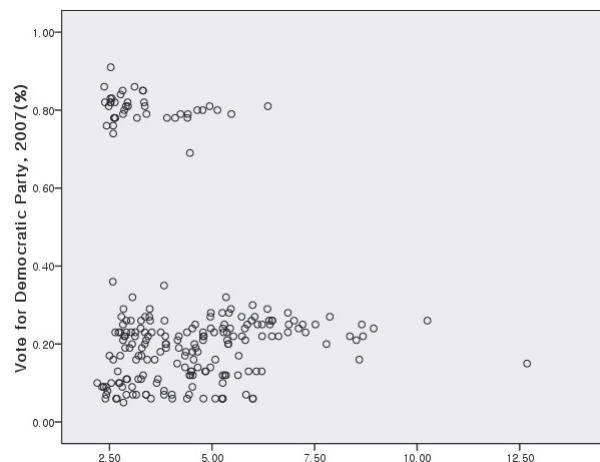
These findings are what I expected in the hypotheses 3 and 4. Above, I argued that as the GNP pursues the conservative goals such as tax-cut and deregulation, the voters of the developed and core counties are inclined to support the GNP. Since the DP emphasizes the reformist goals such as balanced regional development and welfare, however, the voters of the underdeveloped and peripheral counties are likely to support the DP. Now, with the results of the scatterplots in Figures 2 and 3, the hypotheses 3 and 4 are also supported.

Confirmatory Analysis of Multiple Regressions

Before we proceed with regression analyses, it is necessary to see the basic statistics and correlation between major variables. Table 3 provides general information about them. In the Table, there is one special characteristics that calls our attention. It is that the distribution of many variables may be highly skewed. That is because the difference between the minimum value and the maximum value of many variables is big and also because the standard deviation is quite large.

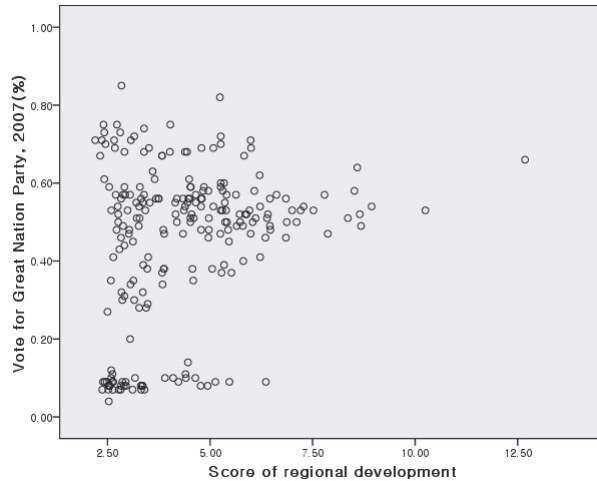
For example, Figure 4 below shows that the standardized score of overall regional

Figure 2. Scatterplot: Regional Development and Vote for the DP (2007)



that index.

²⁴ These correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the $p = .001$ level. The correlation coefficient for the 2002 presidential election is $-.106$ for the DP and $.113$ for the GNP which are all significant at the $p = .05$ level. This means that the correlation between overall regional development and the pattern of electoral supports became stronger over time.

Figure 3. Scatterplot: Regional Development and Vote for the GNP (2007)**Table 3.** Basic Statistics of the Major Variables (N = 224)

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall regional development	2.20	12.68	4.37	1.67
Population density	19.00	27,256	3,951	6,536.97
% the elderly over 65	3.60	33.80	14.62	8.39
Per capita local tax revenue	3.2 (mil)	1,452(mil)	142.8(mil)	184.4(mil)
The number of seats of public library per 1,000	0.00	5,806	999.38	995.20
% vote for the DP (2002)	17.0	96.0	50.0	24.0
% vote for the GNP (2002)	3.0	80.0	45.0	23.0
% vote for the DP (2007)	5.0	91.0	30.0	25.0
% vote for the GNP (2007)	4.0	85.0	45.0	20.0

development composed of 14 indicators is extremely skewed toward underdeveloped counties. The distribution of other variables such as population density and per capita revenue of local taxes is also highly skewed. This is due to the fact that diverse socio-economic resources of the Korean society are extremely unequally distributed among regions. In other words, they are concentrated in the powerful and affluent regions such as the Capital and Youngnam regions, while only a small portion of the resources is allocated to the rest.

Table 4 shows that no variables to be used in multiple regressions seem to have a serious multicollinearity problem. The ratio of the elderly over 65 years old has a significant negative correlation with the per capita revenue of local taxes ($r = -.549$). But it does not seem to distort the regression results seriously. With regard to the variable “per capita revenue of the local taxes,” it is worthwhile to note that it represents the level of economic resources and economic vitality of a certain county and thus could be understood as the major determinant of voting

Figure 4. Distribution of the Overall Regional Development Scores

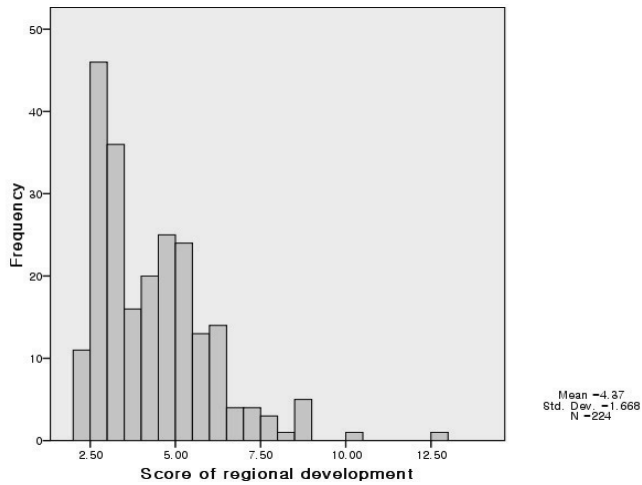


Table 4. Correlation between Major Variables

	A	B	C	D
Population density (A)	-	-.502	.353	.244
% the elderly (B)		-	-.549	-.452
Local tax revenue (C)			-	.428
Seats of public libraries (D)				-

pattern of the residents.

For the purpose of confirming four hypotheses suggested above, multiple regressions are designed in a way to include six dichotomous ‘region variables’ which are used to test the effects of the political regional cleavages on the collective voting patterns of a certain county. In addition, four ‘socio-economic variables’ are incorporated to test the effects of socio-economic cleavages on the collective voting patterns.

The region variables relating with hypotheses 1 and 2 are quite straightforward: if a county belongs to the Capital region, for example, it is coded 1 and 0 otherwise.²⁵ But the socio-economic variables relating with hypotheses 3 and 4 need some explanations. Two variables, population density and the ratio of the elderly over 65 years old, are included as representing the social dimension of the overall regional development. The per capita revenue of local taxes is included to represent the economic dimension of the overall regional development. The number of the seats of public libraries per 1,000 residents is in-between: it represents not only a

²⁵ In the regression analysis, Choongbuk was excluded so that it can be used as a base for comparison.

social dimension but also an economic dimension.²⁶

Four socio-economic variables are then expected to have different effects on the DP and the GNP. The higher the level of population density of a certain county is, the more likely the voters of that county will vote the GNP.²⁷ The larger the ratio of a certain county's elderly people over 65 years old is, the more likely the voters of that county will vote the DP.²⁸ The larger the amount of the local tax revenue of a certain county is, the more likely the voters of that county will vote the GNP. The larger the number of the seats of public libraries of a certain county, the more likely the voters of that county will vote the GNP.

Now, the results of regression analyses generally support my four hypotheses.²⁹ Table 5 shows that a weak regional electoral coalition for the DP has been built between Honam and Choongchung in 2002.³⁰ On the other hand, it shows that a strong regional coalition for the GNP, though not winning the election, has been created between Capital region, Youngnam, and Kangwon. Hence, the hypotheses 1 and 2 are (partially) supported.

With regard to the socio-economic cleavages, Table 5 confirms broadly my hypotheses 3 and 4 claiming that the voters living in more developed, core counties support the GNP, while those living in less developed, peripheral counties support the DP. But the effects of population density and the ratio of the elderly people are completely opposite to my expectation. That is, voters living in a county with a higher level of population density and with a lower ratio of the elderly people are more likely to support the DP, whereas those living in the contrary conditions are more likely to support the GNP.

These findings remind us that the effects of two variables should not be understood simply in an economic perspective. Rather, they should be interpreted in a political perspective. That is, those living in a county with a high level of population density (urban areas) and with few elderly people (also urban areas) have more political information and knowledge, more critical attitude, and hence a stronger democratic orientation. In this sense, the old proverb since the authoritarian times saying "the governing party (or a conservative party) is supported by the rural areas, while the opposition party (or a democratic party) is supported by the urban areas"

²⁶ Public libraries are basically a public service. But they are also related with economic capacity of a certain county since rich counties can afford more public libraries.

²⁷ It is because a county with higher population density tends to be more affluent economically than a county with lower population density.

²⁸ The rationale for this hypothesis is that a county with more elderly people tends to be underdeveloped and peripheral areas. Therefore, it is expected that the voters of that county will be more likely to vote the DP.

²⁹ Table 5 suggests the regression results for the 2002 presidential election. But it should be noted that all the independent variables were measured in 2005. Therefore it is logically impossible for the variables of 2005 to affect the election of 2002 in a reverse way. But a regression analysis was done only to compare with the 2007 electoral result,

³⁰ The relationship between the residence in Daejun-Choongnam and the support for the DP is positive. It is not statistically significant, though. So the argument that an electoral coalition between Honam and Daejun-Choongnam has existed in 2002 and was essential for the victory of the DP needs to be reassessed with more data and a more rigorous method.

Table 5. Results of a Multiple Regression for the 2002 Presidential Election (N = 224)

	% Votes for the DP			% Votes for the GNP		
	Coefficients	t	Sig.	Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.562	30.374	.000	.347	15.774	.000
Capital	-.044	-2.581	.005	.056	2.808	.002
Youngnam	-.279	-18.04 1	.000	.298	16.249	.000
Honam	.410	25.394	.000	-.365	-19.004	.000
Daejun-Choongnam	.009	.517	.303	.002	.080	.468
Kangwon	-.100	-5.483	.000	.114	5.257	.000
Jeju	.029	.791	.215	-.006	-.128	.449
population density	1.68E-006	2.633	.005	-2.79E-007	-.367	.357
ratio of the elderly	-.002	-3.568	.000	.003	4.342	.000
local tax revenue	-4.03E-01 1	-1.761	.040	5.28E-011	1.938	.027
seats of public lib.	-4.83E-00 6	-1.259	.105	8.48E-006	1.858	.032
R Square		.962			.942	
Adjusted R Square		.960			.940	

Note | One-tailed test.

still holds true.

Table 6, summarizing the regression results for the 2007 presidential election, displays a clearer picture about the relationship between the regions and collective voting patterns than for 2002. According to the table, a strong regional electoral coalition between Capital, Youngnam, and Kangwon regions has been established for the GNP to win an enormous victory. On the other hand, a strong regional electoral coalition between Honam and Jeju has been created for the DP but failed to win the election because a large number of the Choongchung voters defected from the DP, crumbling the 10 year old Honam-Choongchung coalition upon which the two reformist governments of Kim and Roh were built. Furthermore, more than 3.1 million swing votes from the Capital region made the DP's chance of winning almost zero. Thus, my hypotheses 1 and 2 are confirmed again.

With regard to the socio-economic cleavages, it is affirmed once again that the voters living in a more affluent, core county are more likely to vote the GNP, whereas those living in a less affluent, peripheral county tend to vote the DP. Hence, my hypotheses 3 and 4 are also accepted. Concerning the population density and the ratio of the elderly people, however, the regression analyses produced opposite results to my expectation³¹: as in Table 5, those two

³¹ Using the survey data, Park et al. (2008: 234) also shows that older people vote Lee Myung-Bak more than Chung

Table 6. Results of a Multiple Regression for the 2007 Presidential Election (N = 224)

	% Votes for the DP			% Votes for the GNP		
	Coefficients	t	Sig.	Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.270	20.042	.000	.373	17.439	.000
Capital	-.033	-2.705	.003	.125	6.431	.000
Youngnam	-.163	-14.486	.000	.226	12.657	.000
Honam	.547	46.470	.000	-.328	-17.541	.000
Daejun-Choongnam	-.040	-3.112	.001	-.079	-3.872	.000
Kangwon	-.057	-4.324	.000	.107	5.091	.000
Jeju	.080	2.979	.002	-.026	-.616	.269
population density	1.84E-006	3.962	.000	-1.23E-006	-1.664	.048
ratio of the elderly	.000	-.821	.206	.002	2.401	.008
local tax revenue	-3.54E-011	-2.119	.017	6.53E-011	2.466	.007
seats of public lib.	-4.31E-006	-1.542	.062	6.12E-006	1.379	.084
R Square		.982			.930	
Adjusted R Square		.981			.927	

Note | One-tailed test.

variables do not operate as an economic variable but as an urban/rural variable or a political variable (i.e. political knowledge and orientation).

Overall, the results of the multiple regressions for the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections confirm my four hypotheses. But it should be remembered that the analyses unexpectedly brought about some results contrary to my prediction which require a new analysis with new and more data.

DISCUSSION

As we have observed above, an overwhelming victory of the GNP was in fact due to a near total defeat of the DP. What happened, then? Why did many voters of the Capital region stop supporting the DP and move to the GNP and other parties? Why did the regional coalition between Honam and Choongchung collapse? What were the new features of the 2007 presidential election? Regarding these questions, I will suggest three answers.

First, as a general context, it is important to mention that both the Participatory Government and the DP were very unpopular.³² The reasons offered from the GNP and the conservative

Dong-Young. This finding suggests that old people are conservative in their ideological orientations and hence tend to vote a more conservative candidate.

³² Based on the survey results, Jung and Oh (2008: 40) show that the popular support for the GNP began to far

newspapers were that the economic performance has not been good, that the jobs created have not been enough, and that the income gap has been widened (see Jung and Oh 2008; Kim and Park 2008; Park et al. 2008; Rew et al. 2008).³³ In addition, the ideological climate has changed drastically from being progressive to being conservative.³⁴ Therefore, the general public opinion about the Roh government and the DP has been extremely negative for a long period, hence making it easy for the former supporters to desert the DP with good reasons.

Second, the reason related to the defection of many Capital region's voters seems to be a combination of the pushing factor and the pulling factor. Concerning the pushing factor, I have already pointed out that the policies of the Participatory Government for balanced national development³⁵ and a tight real estate control have pushed the voters of the Capital region to turn away from the DP. But the pulling factor is also important. That is, during the presidential campaign, Lee Myung-Bak and his party pledged to build numerous "new towns" in many parts of Seoul and also pledged to remove the tight land regulations applied to the Capital region. These promises widely aroused a lust for enormous windfalls that would come from redevelopment and deregulation. As expected, numerous voters of Seoul, Kyunggi, and Inchun welcomed Lee's promises and voted accordingly.³⁶ In sum, the promises of new towns and deregulation, combined with the pushing factor, prompted the voters of the Capital region to punish the DP decisively and to support the GNP wholeheartedly.

Third, a new feature of the 2007 presidential election is without doubt the fact that more than half of the Capital region's voters began to be attracted to a new, strategic regionalism for the first time in the modern Korean history. In the past, the Capital region has been the political, economic, social, and cultural center in Korea and thus could be called the only, truly hegemonic region in Korea overwhelming other parts. Interestingly, however, it has been almost neutral with respect to regionalism. Instead, it has been the heartland of democracy and reformism for a long period. And the residents who originated from Honam, Choongchung, and Younngnam divided the votes of the Capital region more or less equally. But since the 2007 presidential election, faced with the pushing and the pulling forces, many voters of this area began to get united collectively to defend their regional self-interests and they succeeded. The voters of Daejun-Choongnam too showed a clear tendency to vote according to a logic of

exceed the support for the DP since the local election of May 2006. From this time until the 2007 election, the GNP has enjoyed the popular support of 45-50%, while the support for the DP has been below 15% level for the whole period.

³³ Regardless of whether these critiques were true or not, they have exerted a strong negative influence on voters' perceptions and choices.

³⁴ The ratio of those who were progressive was 41.1% in 2002 but declined greatly to 22.5% in 2007. On the other hand, the ratio of those who were conservative was 26.7% in 2002 but increased strikingly to 43.3% in 2007 (Park et al. 2008: 222).

³⁵ In addition to the relocation of the administrative capital and many public agencies, the maintaining of the regulatory system for the Capital region was included in this policy.

³⁶ Lee's promises of new towns and deregulation for the Capital region seemed to have the same political effect as Roh's promise of the relocation of the administrative capital to the Choongchung region in 2002.

Table 7. Analysis of the 2008 Parliamentary Election of Kangwon

Winning Party	Counties	Score of the Overall Development		
		county score	score of electoral county	average for the party as a whole
GNP	Chunchon	4.36	4.36	3.78
	Wonju	4.60	4.60	
	Hongchun	3.26	3.07	
	Hoengsung	2.88		
DP	Taebaek	3.28	3.04	2.95
	Youngwol	2.72		
	Pyungchang	3.03		
	Jungsun	3.12		
	Chulwon	2.83	2.86	
	Whachun	2.76		
	Yanggu	2.83		
	Inje	3.02		
Non-partisan	Kangnung	4.15	4.15	3.40
	Donghae	3.42	3.32	
	Samchuk	3.21		
	Sokcho	3.74		
	Kosung	2.88	3.20	
	Yangyang	2.99		

Note | The score of the overall development was calculated as a composite index of 14 measures (for more details, see the footnote 23).

strategic regionalism. But their regionalism has not been new: theirs has a long history since 1987 when Kim Jong-Pil founded the New Democratic Republican Party. In this respect, it can be said that strategic regionalism of Daejun-Choongnam was renewed and strengthened.³⁷

Another new feature that was discovered through this paper was that the Korean voters have begun to vote the DP or the GNP according to the assessments of their counties' positions on the socio-economic development hierarchy (or stratification) since the 2002 presidential election.³⁸ In other words, the voters living in the developed, core counties voted more the GNP, while those living in the less developed, peripheral counties voted more the DP. A new,

³⁷ Youngnam and Honam are not an exception with regard to regionalism. But their regionalism is mainly the kind of primitive regionalism. As well known, these two big regions continue to be the bastion of solid primitive (and partly strategic) regionalism.

³⁸ Park (2005) too showed that quite a strong tendency to vote according to the level of regional development existed in Seoul and Kyunggi in the 2004 parliamentary election. But as my paper shows, this tendency has already existed in the 2002 presidential election. In addition, it shows that the tendency has become stronger in the 2007 presidential election and in the 2008 parliamentary election.

structural divide, which I call an X-divide, thus emerged from this voting pattern. But one may argue that an X-divide is incomplete because a large number of the Kangwon voters supported the GNP in the 2007 presidential election. That is true. But as you see in Table 7, the Kangwon voters began to vote according to the assessments of their counties' positions in the 2008 parliamentary election. The average score of the overall socio-economic development in the counties where the GNP won was the largest, while it was the lowest in the counties where the DP won.

Therefore, we can conclude that an X-divide is now almost taking shape, showing a nationwide voting pattern based on the socio-economic cleavage. This is an extraordinary finding in that it revealed a new, meso-level (i.e. the county-level) electoral process operating under the macro-regional cleavages and coalitions. It could be understood as that class voting may occur under the big structure of regional cleavages or that class voting may occur side by side with regional voting. But how two voting patterns are combined with each other is not clear yet. It needs a more elaborate study.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

This paper explored what has caused the failure of the DP and the victory of the GNP in the 2007 presidential election. With the descriptive and confirmatory analyses, my paper discovered three important findings. The first is that the core determinant of the 2007 presidential election was a large number of swing votes that occurred in the Daejun-Choongnam region and the Capital region. Those swing votes broke up the old Honam-Choongchung electoral coalition and at same time created a new hegemonic electoral coalition between the Capital and the Youngnam regions, hence making the 2007 election a critical election.

Second, the essence of dissolution of the old winning regional coalition and of creation of the new winning regional coalition was the strategic regionalism which divides and mobilizes voters along the cleavages of collective regional interests. With this type of new regionalism spreading nationwide, both the Capital- Youngnam ruling coalition at the national level and an X-divide at the county level have emerged.

Third, these electoral processes and outcomes in turn have become the basis upon which a revolutionary policy change occurred. That is, a ultra-conservative government came to power with a super-conservative policy package composed of the pro-market reforms, a pro-business taxation, a conservativist revision of the history textbooks, a confrontational approach to North Korea, the pro-American foreign policy, and etc. With this policy package, the Lee Myung-Bak government is trying to totally reorganize the Korean society and to superimpose a new conservative order upon it. Therefore, we can conclude that the 2007 presidential election (and

the 2008 parliamentary election) has produced a revolutionary change seeking a conservative revolution.

What will happen, then, in the future? Will the voting patterns of the 2007 presidential election repeat themselves or change in a significant way in the 2010 local election and in the 2012 presidential election? With regard to these questions, my answers are mixed. I expect that the voting patterns based on strategic regionalism will be highly likely to repeat and that the electoral outcomes will be highly likely to be determined by the building of regional electoral coalitions.

With these general trends, however, who will lose or who will win in the next elections will heavily depend on what the Lee government does and on what its economic performance will be. The prospects for the Lee government do not seem to be very bright, though. First of all, the Lee's conservative policy package is likely to generate serious conflicts between political forces with different ideological orientations. The policy of tax-cuts, one of the important pro-business policies, will not only increase the income gap between social classes but also decrease the purchasing power of the middle and lower classes, hence making economic recovery very difficult or even worse aggravating economic depression. In addition, the policy of deregulation may not contribute to the facilitation of investment but more to the rampant speculative activities.³⁹

The consequences of tax-cut and deregulation will thus be more likely to be a long and deep stagflation. It will be an enormous economic and political burden for the Lee government and the GNP that came to power with the slogan of "economic recovery and job creation." Therefore, the likelihood of the GNP to win the coming elections, especially the 2012 presidential election, does not seem to be very high.

Plus, the Lee government and the GNP may not be able to maintain their regional electoral coalition between the Capital and Youngnam regions because of the policies they themselves adopted. For example, the policy of deregulation, especially the deregulation to remove the regulatory system applied to the Capital region, will be highly likely to provoke anger on the part of the Youngnam and Kangwon residents and may press a breakup of the regional electoral coalition.

If the Lee government and his party do not implement the pro-Capital policies (i.e. deregulation, reduction of the comprehensive real estate tax, and the new town project), however, they may be rejected by many residents of the Capital region. Therefore, they seem to be caught between Scylla and Charybdis. If they move for land deregulation, many residents of

³⁹ There are two reasons for this expectation. One is that many business firms and many wealthy people in Korea have already enough amount of cash and asset. It is known that there is currently more than 600 trillion won available for investment. Thus, the marginal effect of tax-cut which will stimulate investment is very small. Second, many Korean companies do not pay enough attention to the R&D to prepare for the future. According to one study, around 62% of the big companies spend less than 1% of the total sales on R&D (Daehan sang'gong hoe iso 2007). Therefore, tax-cut and deregulation are more likely to lead to more speculative activities.

Youngnam and Kangwon may desert them. If they do not move for that direction, many residents of the Capital region may abandon them. There is no choice, no way back, and thus they are entering the dead-end.

In this sense, the hegemonic regional coalition between the Capital and Youngnam regions seems to be Janus-faced. On the one hand, it was so strong that it brought about an overwhelming victory for the GNP. On the other hand, it is so fragile that the Lee government can not implement any one important policy they promised during the electoral campaign without arousing hostility on the affected side. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Lee government is built upon a very fragile regional coalition which has too many internal contradictions and conflicts to maintain itself long.

Another difficulty the Lee government will face is that the policy of tax-cuts will aggravate the already high level of income gap between social classes. If the effect of this policy is combined with low economic growth and also with severe global economic depression, then the middle and lower class people will suffer greatly and will be highly likely to turn their backs away from the Lee government and the GNP.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the major determinants of the next elections will be the regional cleavage, the class cleavage, and the ideological cleavage.⁴⁰ I expect that all three cleavages will be combined to make next elections most fierce and most polarized in the Korean history of elections. Among them, the integrated effects of regional cleavage and class cleavage will be the greatest as the Lee government and the GNP seek to stimulate the development of the Capital region first and at the same time to enrich more the wealthy people and big companies before anyone else. Therefore, it is very likely that the effect of regional cleavage will be combined very closely with the effect of class cleavage, fermenting tensions and escalating political conflicts among regions and among classes.

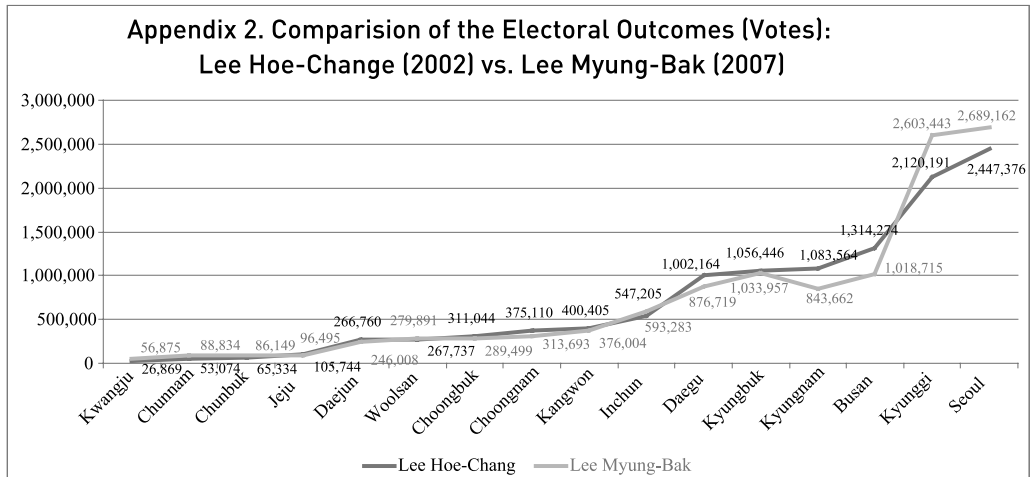
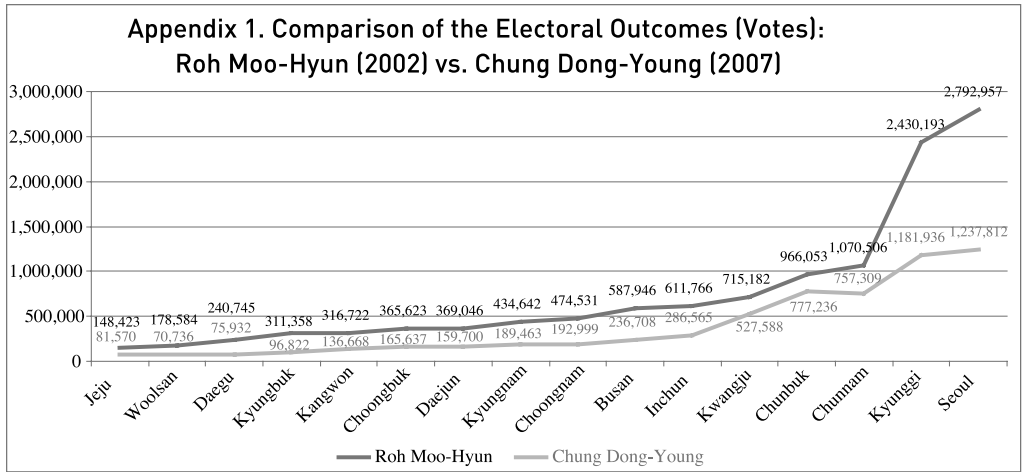
But no one can tell exactly what will happen in the next elections. The outcomes will depend very much on how well the opposition parties utilize the tensions, conflicts, and crises that arise from the mistakes made by the Lee government and the GNP. On the other hand, the outcomes will also depend on how well the Lee government and his party manage all those problems and how much economic performance they produce.

If there is anything that my paper contribute to the understanding of the future, it is that strategic regionalism will continue to play a very important role in the next elections and that political dynamics arising from realignment (or maintenance) of regional coalition will be the main determinant of the electoral outcomes. It should also be noted that the judgements and choices of the Capital region's residents who have the most votes and the largest political-economic resources will play a decisive role in determining the fate of the next elections and

⁴⁰ Because of the Christian bias of the Lee government, the religious cleavage that has never been a serious problem in Korea is now increasing tensions between Buddhist and Christian followers. Hence, it is possible that the religious cleavage can be an important dividing line in the next elections.

also the destiny for the whole Korean society in the future. Despite this fact, they may not pursue general interests but instead stick to their narrow collective regional interests. It is the essence of strategic regionalism they displayed both in the 2007 presidential election and in the 2008 parliamentary election. In any case, it is clear that the residents of the Capital region will have the most say not only in coming elections but also in many areas of public policies.

With all those factors in mind, we need to see in the future how the Lee government and the GNP on the one hand and the opposition parties on the other act and interact with each other in the framework of regional cleavages and coalitional dynamics.



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