

Changes in the social and regional basis of electoral support for Kim Dae-jung: a trend analysis of the 1987, 1992 and 1997 presidential elections*

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1. Introduction

Tainted though by the economic crisis that led to an intervention of the IMF, the victory of Kim Dae-jung (DJ) in the 1997 presidential election was a milestone on consolidating procedural democracy in South Korea (Diamond and Kim 2000). Korean voters finally handed the party in opposition executive power for the first time in their electoral history. DJ wound up winning enough electoral support over the presidency in 1997 after running in three consecutive elections since 1987: he won 40.3 percent of the popular votes, barely beating the first runner-up, Lee Hoe-Chang by a meager 1.6 percent of margin.

One of the obvious challenges for DJ had been to widen regional basis of electoral support over and beyond his traditional, regional stronghold of Jeolla, or perhaps to overcome the “regional antagonism” (see for the analysis of regional voting Bae and Cotton 1993; Bae Sun-kwang 1995; Lee Nam-young 1998; Lee Kap-yun 1998; Cho Ki-suk 2000). The regional vote returns for DJ in the 1987, 1992 and 1997 elections seemed to indicate that he had been most successful in winning over the voters of Chungcheong over time, but he had achieved somewhat limited success in the other regions, and in Gyeongsang no success at all (see Table 1). One would easily speculate that DJ’s alliance with Kim Jong-pil (JP), who had a strong tie with Chungcheong voters, might have helped him winning the support of the Chungcheong voters in 1997. But in 1992, in which JP had formed alliance with the winning, governing party candidate Kim Young-sam, the reasons for DJ’s utmost gain over Chungcheong voters seemed not to be clear-cut.

* I am very grateful to Gallup Korea for allowing me to use its post-election sample survey data reported in this study. But I am alone responsible for the interpretations of the data, of course.

Table 1. Kim Dae-jung vote shares by region in the 1987, 1992, and 1997 presidential elections (percent)

Region	1987	1992	1997	1992 - 87	1997 - 92
Seoul	32.6	37.8	44.9	+5.2	+7.1
Gyeonggi	22.1	31.9	39.1	+9.8	+7.2
Gangwon	8.8	15.5	23.8	+6.7	+8.3
North	11.0	26.0	37.4	+15.0	+11.4
Chungcheong					
South	12.4	28.6	46.9	+16.2	+18.3
Chungcheong					
North Jella	83.5	89.1	92.3	+5.6	+3.2
South Jella	91.3	93.4	95.6	+2.1	+2.2
North Gyeongsang	2.5	8.9	13.1	+6.4	+4.2
South Gyeongsang	6.9	10.9	13.7	+4.0	+2.8
Jeju	18.6	32.9	40.6	+14.3	+7.7
National total	27.1	33.8	40.3	+6.7	+6.5

Source: Jungang seongeogwalli wiwonho [Central Election Management Committee].

In this study, however, we will not pursue to identify the factors that may have led to DJ's victory or to discuss the political significance of his victory (Kim Yong-Ho 1998). Rather, we will examine changing patterns of DJ's electoral support if there had been any changes at all. That is, borrowing the concepts of various types of 'change and stability' from developmental psychology (Golembiewsk et al 1976; Mortimer et al 1982), we will attempt to characterize changes in the pattern of electoral competition in this era of democratic transition. First of all, we will examine whether there had been "structural or qualitative" changes in the social basis of electoral support for DJ overtime by looking at the patterns of electoral support modeled by a series of multiple regression analysis. Then, we will characterize the changes of social basis of DJ support by examining DJ support among various social and regional groups overtime. For this study, we will use three cross-sectional post-election sample survey data collected by Gallup Korea in 1988, 1992 and 1997, respectively, on the variables of 'regionalism' and some of the 'socio-economic characteristics'.

2. Data and methodology

2.1 Methodology

In order to characterize the pattern of electoral support for DJ across time, we incorporate the concepts developed in development psychology to characterize stability and change. For example, Mortimer et al argued that structural invariance, which refers to "the degree of continuity in the nature of the phenomenon under investigation," is of foremost importance in the analysis of stability, not only because it is by itself a meaningful concept, but also because "establishing structural invariance is a necessary precursor to the investigation of other kinds of stability (e.g., change in level or persistence in the pattern of individual differences)" (p.267). That is, any characterization of change presupposes that the concepts to be compared are structurally invariant across time.

At the first stage of the analysis, thus, a series of multiple regression analysis were performed with DJ vote as the dependent variable for each of the respective elections. Standardized Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression coefficients of the explanatory variables were compared within and across the models in order to find out: (1) which were the variables of importance within the models and (2) whether there were notable differences in the pattern of importance ranking among the variables across the models. By doing so, it was aimed to identify whether there was 'qualitative or structural' change over time. Significant deviation from structural invariance may indicate a new stage of growth or development, which may be characterized by a "big bang" *gamma* change that refers to "a change from one state to another" (Golembiewsk et al, p.138). Golembiewsk et al noted that this kind of change involves "the basic *redefinition of the relevant psychological space*" (p.138, original emphasis). We would take a significant change in the R-square scores - which attest the variance explained by the model - as an indication of a structural change.

Independent variables included in the models were all dummy variables representing differences in gender, age, education, religion, occupation, and place of origin. These variables were chosen to represent 'socio-economic characteristics' and 'regionalism' of the respondents. 'Place of origin' rather than 'region of residence' was chosen to represent 'regionalism.' This choice was based on the consideration that 'regionalism' in Korea may in essence have stemmed from the power struggle among regionally based political forces who had been seeking a control over the center stage, i.e. Seoul (e.g., Henderson, 1968).

Once we identified existence of "structural variance/invariance" or "*gamma* change/lack of *gamma* change" by comparing the standardized regression coefficients across the models, we attempted to characterize the nature of the change by examining trends of the DJ votes for each of the 'socio-economic' and 'regional' variables. The trends of DJ support were examined by looking at cross-tabulation data of the voting choice variable for DJ and each of the explanatory variables overtime. T-tests and correlation coefficients were used to identify which type of change had occurred during this period, incorporating the concepts of "level stability" and "normative stability" (Mortimer et al), and "*alpha* change" (Golembiewsk et al). Normative stability, which is usually measured by the correlation between measures of an attribute across time, refers to "the persistence of individual ranks or differences on an attribute of interest" (Mortimer et al, p.267). Level stability, which may be indicated by the invariance of group means on successive occasions, refers to "persistence in the magnitude or quantity of a phenomenon over time" (Mortimer et al, p.269). *Alpha* change, which is conceived as occurring along "relatively stable dimensions of reality that are defined in terms of discrete and constant intervals (Golembiewsk et al, p.135)," indicates significant deviations from or the opposite of the level stability.

2.2 Data

The data used in this study were collected after the respective presidential elections. The data for the 1997 and 1992 elections were collected just after the respective elections, but for 1987, the data collected after the 1988 National Assembly election - in which the respondent's voting choice in 1987 was asked retrospectively - were used instead, due to the unavailability of the 1987 post-election data. The substitution of the 1988 data for 1987 seemed not to cause a methodological problem, as both of the elections were fought on the same ground in terms of patterns of party

competition, and the time lapse was only a few months. The data for 1992 and 1987 were collected by face-to-face interviews, and the data for 1997 were collected by telephone interviews. The resulted sample size (N) was 1,500 both in the April 1988 and the December 1992 surveys, and 1,300 in the December 1997 survey. Appendix 1 reports a summary of the data.

3. Result

3.1 Structural stability or change?

Data presented in Table 2 provide the details regarding the pattern of social basis of DJ support over time. For example, the *beta* coefficients show that 'regionalism' exerted the strongest impact on the voting choice for DJ over time, especially for those of Jeolla origin who favoured DJ far more than the others. The negative, but strong effect of Geongsang origin on DJ support especially in 1997 (and in 1987 to a lesser degree) is also noteworthy. In addition to these strong effects of regionalism on DJ support, the effects of age, religion and occupation on DJ support are also notable. That is, the younger voters had somewhat favoured DJ over time, but Buddhists had shown somewhat negative level of support over time, net of other things. In 1997, those of primary industry workers and the self-employed somewhat favoured DJ significantly. Overall, the patterns of DJ support do not seem to indicate a significant change: i.e., regionalism has exerted the strongest effect, and some effects of age and religion has been present over time.

Table 2. Standardized OLS regression coefficient (beta) for DJ vote in 1987, 1992 and 1997

Variables		1987	1992	1997
Gender (Female):	Male	.015	.006	.002
Age (Fifties and Twenties over):	Twenties	.048*	.098*	.087**
	Thirties	.060*	.061*	.039
	Forties	.013	.022	-.028
Education (Primary):	Junior High	-.003	-.003	.018
	Senior High	.029	-.017	.053
	College and over	.067*	.004	.076
Place of origin (Others):	Seoul/Gyeonggi	-.001	.066*	-.047
	Chungcheong	-.025	.062*	.023
	Jeolla	.657*	.673*	.450**
	Gyeongsang	-.085***	-.038	-.201***
Religion (None/others):	Buddhist	-.037*	-.065***	-.062**
	Protestant	.010	-.029	.008

	Catholic	.041*	.013	.023
		*		
Occupation (Others):	Farming/Fishery/Forestry	.025	.056*	.084**
	Self-employed	-.011	.026	.087**
			*	
	Blue collar work	-.018	.034	.010
	White collar work	-.043*	.039	.021
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	R-Square	.515	.469	.356

Note: (1) Reference categories of the dummy variables are in parenthesis.

(2) Statistical significance level: * - $p < .10$; ** - $p < .05$; *** - $p < .01$ in a two-tailed test.

Although the patterns of DJ support along the dimensions of socio-economic and regionalism variables do not indicate a notable deviation as discussed above, however, the change in the R-square scores between 1992 and 1997 is a notable one. That is, the variances explained by those variables in the models of 1987 and 1992 were around a half, but it went down to about one-third in the 1997 model. This is a clear indication of a structural change in 1997: i.e., there may have been more factors of importance that we were unable to specify in the models of 1987 and 1992 than in the 1997 model. This is of course not a conclusive evidence for *gamma* change, but this structural instability at least suggests that we may have to approach with caution in characterizing the nature of change between 1992 and 1997. Nevertheless, we may safely conclude that there had been no structural change between 1987 and 1992, which warrants further characterization of the types of stability between these elections.

3.2 The types of stability

Table 3 provides data on the DJ shares of vote among the social groups. For example, in 1987, 26.3 percent of the male respondents reported to have voted for DJ, which was not much different either from the national total (26.9 percent) or from that of the female respondents (27.6 percent). In 1992, male support for DJ rose to 35.2 percent and female 32.3 percent, which were also not much deviated from the nation total (33.8 percent). In 1997, male support again rose to 44.1 percent compared to female 40.2 percent - the national total support for DJ was 42.2 percent, according to the sample survey data.

Table 3. Kim Dae-jung vote shares by the socio-economic and regional groupings (percent)

Variables		1987	1992	1997	92 - 87	97 - 92
	Nation Total	26.9	33.8	42.2	+ 6.9	+ 8.4
Gender	Male	26.3	35.3	44.1	+ 9.0	+ 8.9
	Female	27.6	32.3	40.2	+ 4.7	+ 7.9
Age	Twenties	29.7	39.0	51.2	+ 9.3	+12.2
	Thirties	32.3	33.2	43.8	+ 0.8	+10.7
	Forties	21.0	32.4	36.3	+11.5	+ 3.9
	Fifties and over	22.0	29.2	37.5	+ 7.2	+ 8.3
Education	Primary	27.1	33.2	36.9	+ 6.1	+ 3.7
	Junior High	25.7	33.5	43.0	+ 7.7	+ 9.5
	Senior High	26.3	33.2	43.0	+ 6.9	+ 9.8
	College and over	29.0	36.2	43.0	+ 7.3	+ 6.7
Place of origin	Seoul/Gyeonggi	14.3	22.8	30.0	+ 8.5	+ 7.2
	Chungcheong	11.2	21.5	40.2	+10.3	+18.7
	Jella	83.2	87.6	89.2	+ 4.4	+ 1.6
	Gyeongsang	5.5	8.9	14.4	+ 3.4	+ 5.5
	Others (Gangwon, Jeju)	14.7	14.7	37.6	+ 0.0	+22.9
Religion	Buddhist	15.4	20.9	31.3	+ 5.5	+10.4
	Protestant	33.7	35.5	48.8	+ 1.8	+13.3
	Catholic	34.1	40.5	44.4	+ 6.4	+ 3.9
	None/Others	29.1	40.2	46.3	+11.2	+ 6.1
Occupation	Farming/Fishery/Forestry	36.3	37.2	49.2	+ 0.9	+12.0
	Self-employed	23.7	33.3	46.8	+ 9.7	+13.5
	Blue collar work	23.3	34.3	42.1	+11.0	+ 7.8
	White collar work	25.0	39.4	42.3	+14.4	+ 2.9
	Homemaker	25.8	29.0	38.2	+ 3.3	+ 9.2
	Others	27.4	37.2	38.7	+ 9.8	+ 1.4

Data in the last two columns report the magnitudes of changes in vote shares of DJ by the socio-economic and regional groupings. For example, there appears to be the most notable change in the magnitude among the regional groupings between 1997 and 1992. That is, DJ vote share among the Chungcheong and other category of regional origins (i.e., Kangwon, Jeju, and North Korea) (disproportionately) increased far more than the share among the other regional origins.

In order to characterize the nature of change, the data in Table 3 were subjected to statistical procedures. Paired-samples t-tests were performed for the two pairs, i.e., between 1987 and 1992, and between 1992 and 1997 of all the variables in Table 3: the null hypothesis being that there is no difference between the pairs. T-score for the 1987 and 1992 pair was statistically significant ($t=9.112$ with 24 degrees of freedom, $p < .001$), and so was for the 1992 and 1997 pair ($t=8.655$ with 24 degrees of freedom, $p < .001$). So we reject the null hypothesis - there is a significant difference between the two pairs: i.e., the results indicate the lack of “level stability” and point to the “*alpha* change”. That is, there lacks persistence in the magnitude or quantity of the DJ’s social basis of electoral support over time.

As a next step, we also calculated correlation coefficients of the two pairs of data in Table 3. The 1987 and 1992 pair resulted in a very high positive correlation of $r=.963$, and so did the 1992 and 1997 pair ($r=.931$). Strong positive correlations indicated that social groups who scored high or low at the first period retained the same relative positions in the second. That is, we have observed a clear indication of “normative stability” of these two pairs. In other words, the pattern of electoral support for DJ among those socio-economic and regional groups has been persistent over time.

4. Discussion

DJ's running in three consecutive elections since 1987 provided us with a unique opportunity to investigate the nature of change in the pattern of electoral competition without raising a serious methodological problem involved in this type of research. That is, since DJ was a constant variable over time, we could avoid an important measurement issue in a longitudinal study - i.e., the compatibility of the concepts across time.

Overall, we were able to characterize the pattern or the structure of the competition in this period as stability rather than change. The characteristics of change had been kept at the minimal level - i.e., we only observed “*alpha* change.” That is, we were only able to reject the hypothesis of “level stability” - i.e., persistence in the magnitude or quantity of an attribute. This is not an unexpected result, given that DJ increased his support over time nationally to the level of garnering a majority of the votes after all.

What may be interesting though is the fact that we observed “normative stability” across time. That is, the pattern of DJ support may have not been changed over time despite of his quantitative success - no major changes in relative ranking of the social groups were observed. Perhaps, the voters might not have re-constituted their interpretation of the nature of political competition during this period.

However, it may be premature to conclude that stability characterizes the pattern of electoral competition during this period. There was an indication of “*gamma* change,” evinced by the fluctuations of the variance explained by our regression models, although the evidence was not conclusive enough since we only employed social structural variables as explanatory variables. A full factorial model incorporating the variables that may represent a full psychological space is in need to draw a firm conclusion on this point.

Appendix 1. A summary of the data: sample characteristics of the variables (percent)

Variables		1987 (N=1396)	1992 (N=1293)	1997 (N=1174)
Voting choice	DJ vote	26.9	33.8	42.2
Gender	Male	50.6	50.2	50.2
	Female	49.4	49.8	49.8
Age	Twenties	29.2	29.9	21.0
	Thirties	27.9	28.3	32.5
	Forties	19.5	17.0	22.1
	Fifties and over	23.4	24.9	24.5
Education	Primary	27.5	21.4	13.6
	Junior High	19.5	17.1	10.3
	Senior High	32.7	41.0	41.6
	College and over	20.3	20.5	34.5
Place of origin	Seoul/Gyeonggi	12.5	13.2	12.8

	Chungcheong	16.6	19.1	17.0
	Jella	23.5	25.6	24.4
	Gyeongsang	35.1	32.1	32.5
	Others (Gangwon, Jeju)	12.2	10.0	13.4
Religion	Buddhist	24.1	28.8	28.1
	Protestant	18.7	20.3	22.8
	Catholic	5.9	5.7	8.1
	None/Others	50.3	45.2	41.0
Occupation	Farming/Fishery/Forestry	15.2	12.7	10.1
	Self-employed	12.1	11.6	16.0
	Blue collar work	11.7	15.3	11.9
	White collar work	13.2	14.5	23.2
	Homemaker	35.3	34.7	27.2
	Others	12.5	11.2	11.7

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