

Linkage & Leverage: Comparing External Democratizing Pressures in Taiwan & South Korea

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Introduction

This paper compares the external dimensions of democratization in Taiwan and South Korea with the specific purpose of understanding how leverage and linkage have operated to raise the cost of authoritarianism, allowing the political opposition to effect democratic

breakthrough. Leverage and linkage are concepts developed by Levitsky and Way to capture what they call the “international dimension of democratization” - the focus of regime change studies since the Cold War and a topic all the more salient with recent experiences in the Middle East and North Africa. Levitsky and Way define leverage as the “authoritarian governments’ vulnerability to external democratizing pressure” from the West, the latter of which is exercised through a variety of ways including “political conditionality and punitive sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and military intervention.”¹ These can be understood as forms of top-down, or external state pressure that directly raises the cost of authoritarianism for the target governments. Linkage, on the other hand, is defined as ties to or cross-border flows with the West, with at least five key dimensions: economic, geopolitical, social, communication and transnational civil society.² Linkage can be understood as that which raises the cost of authoritarianism by, amongst other means, “heightening the salience in the West of authoritarian government abuse”, “creating domestic constituencies with a stake in adhering to democratic norms,” “strengthening democratic forces in relation to autocrats,” and “increasing the probability of an international response.”³ In other words, linkage is the means through which forms of bottom-up democratizing pressures are generated and channeled.

Contrary to what Levitsky & Way claim, however, the “international dimension of democratization” was not necessarily less significant in East Asia.⁴ In fact, without considering the external dimensions of democratization in Taiwan and South Korea, it is impossible to understand democratic breakthrough in 1986 and 87 respectively. Domestic-based approaches fail to give a complete and satisfying explanation of democratization there because both Taiwan and South Korea had reached a comparable level of economic development during the 1970s that Huntington calls the “political transitions zone,” which should have prompted transition toward democracy.⁵ Instead, Taiwan and South Korea lingered on in what Samuel Huntington calls the middle-income “political transitions zone” for about a decade without immediate prospects for democratic change.⁶

Indeed, strong hopes of establishing democracies in East Asia in the immediate post-war period withered when the Cold War framework came to be superimposed upon local conflict. Under external threat from China and North Korea respectively, strong states with overdeveloped apparatuses of repression matured in Taiwan and South Korea and came to be monopolized by political elites who did not hesitate to use it – with the tacit support of the West – to suppress the development of genuine democracy. The cost of authoritarianism was lowered significantly by the ease with which national security could be evoked to either suspend or distort formal democratic institutions, or to repress the political opposition. The lack of international scrutiny at this time was due precisely to the fact that these allies to the West were under the communist threat. The intensity of such external threats meant, therefore, that genuine political competition could not develop despite the fact that the socio-economic structural

¹ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “International Linkage and Democratization,” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 16 No. 3 July 2005: 20-34, p. 21.

² Levitsky & Way 2005, pp. 22-3; Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Jul., 2006): 379-400, p. 379.

³ Levitsky & Way 2005, p. 23.

⁴ Levitsky & Way, 2006, p. 380.

⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 60.

⁶ *Ibid.*

changes which attended economic development did in fact prompt growing opposition to authoritarian rule.

It is interesting therefore to uncover why it was that, despite the persistence of such structural obstacles well into the 1980s, the political opposition in Taiwan and South Korea were able to consolidate and mobilize to successfully pressure the authoritarian governments there into taking the first steps toward genuine democratic reform. The timing of these democratic breakthroughs has prompted observers to suggest that, once again, international factors had some role to play in political developments in Taiwan and South Korea. In June 1986, a “people power” movement in the Philippines toppled the authoritarian regime of President Marcos. Although this event was given perfunctory coverage by the state-controlled media in Taiwan and South Korea, opposition activists did take note and found much encouragement in it. The zeitgeist of democracy would not only consume Taiwan and South Korea but would come to sweep into China by 1989. Parallels were soon drawn between the popular movements that triggered political transitions in Eastern and Central Europe and those in Asia, prompting suggestions that the rapidly thawing Cold War environment was a necessary contextual factor in this wave of (what were then thought to be) transitions to democracy. With the end of the Cold War, the “virtual disappearance of legitimate regime alternatives” further incentivized “developing-world elites to adopt formal democratic institutions.”⁷ In formally democratic Taiwan and South Korea, the ability of political elites to justify authoritarianism to the people would seem to have been all the more untenable. Although the Cold War never really left the East Asian region, within the context of such international trends, it makes sense to take the “international dimension of democratization” in East Asia more seriously than Levitsky and Way do.

Further research has also revealed that in the context of these two particular cases, the distinction made between leverage and linkage is helpful even within the pre-breakthrough, or pre-transition, stage. This stage of democratic development is of particular interest in the cases of Taiwan and South Korea precisely because of the continued existence of structural impediments to the development of an effective political opposition during the time of democratic breakthrough. However, Levitsky and Way were more interested in the transition and consolidation phases of democratization. The conceptualization of the “international dimension of democratization” as leverage and linkage was meant to shed light on why it was that many countries that transitioned away from authoritarianism in the late 1980s and 90s eventually did not make it as liberal democracies. Instead, as they correctly observed, many evolved into “competitive authoritarian” regimes. Their inquiry is therefore not primarily focused on the pre-transition phase of democratic development, or what is known as the gestational “political liberalization” period in the transitology literature.⁸ Instead, they convincingly argue that linkage has been particularly important in keeping regime transitions on the democratic track.⁹

The reason for which leverage and linkage were important in the pre-transition stages of democratic development in Taiwan and South Korea was because what appeared to constitute “political liberalization” were sporadic and reactive measures to contain political opposition at best. These measures were also accompanied by heavy-handed political repression, making it

⁷ Levitsky & Way, 2005, p. 20.

⁸ O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P. & Whitehead, L. ed. *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Carothers, Thomas, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002): 5-21.

⁹ Levitsky & Way, 2005.

impossible to characterize “liberalization” in a progressive fashion. “Liberalization” by no means indicated the possibility of democratic breakthrough as the balance of power between the incumbent authoritarians and pro-democracy opposition was not significantly altered during this period. Indeed, the political opposition in both cases remained vulnerable to fragmentation, while incumbent authoritarians remained largely cohesive at this time. Although “hardliners” and “softliners” would become more distinguishable later on, such distinctions were largely negligible at this time.¹⁰ How the political opposition was able to develop into an effective democratic force cannot be explained by the internal dynamics of the opposition movement alone nor the domestic structural conditions against which they continued to struggle. It can be inferred, therefore that external factors were likely to have been crucial in the development of an effective opposition movement by altering the incentive structure that conditioned the choice of authoritarian elites there to use or refrain from using the repressive state apparatuses still available to them to quash the nascent opposition movement. Indeed, a sense of such change in the incentive structure gave the political opposition impetus to galvanize and form a more cohesive movement to further pressurize the authoritarian regimes in Taiwan and South Korea. Such an understanding of the domestic context within which democratic breakthrough took place in Taiwan and South Korea in 1986 and 7 respectively allows us to understand why it is that the concepts of external linkage and leverage are also applicable during the “political liberalization” phase of democratization in Taiwan and South Korea. A similar logic may be applied in other cases.

These two East Asian cases of democratization are considered here not simply because they refute Levitsky and Way’s general observation about East Asia, however. They are significant because they demonstrate that although analytically distinct, leverage and linkage are more closely intertwined in practice than Levitsky and Way first conceived. In fact, the cases of Taiwan and South Korea both demonstrate that the degree of linkage has tended to have a positive causal impact on the degree of leverage and vice versa, leading to an upward spiral effect. Although varying configurations of low levels of linkage and high levels of leverage, or high levels of linkage and low levels of leverage are certainly discernible in the cases they look at, by speaking in such terms Levitsky and Way have failed to capture this relationship between leverage and linkage. What remains to be explained in many cases they examine in their articles is exactly why there were such particular configurations, especially since the cases of Taiwan and South Korea demonstrate that linkage and leverage tend to have a positive causal relationship.

Further, these cases demonstrate very clearly how this positive relationship actually works: “bottom-up” external pressure that stems from and are channeled through various forms of linkage also influence the extent to which external “top-down” external pressure is exercised as leverage. To the extent that linkage is able to “[heighten] the salience in the West of authoritarian government abuse”, and “[increase] the probability of an international response,” external state pressure is more likely to be generated and exercised upon the authoritarian governments because Western democratic states become obligated to stick to their normative commitments. This was particularly so in the case of South Korea, for reasons that will be explored shortly. In fact, what is important to understand is that linkage created “domestic constituencies with a stake in adhering to democratic norms” not only in the target countries, but in Western democracies. While *realpolitik* was the modus operandi in US policy toward Taiwan

¹⁰ The national security imperative was still paramount and the argument that a nascent opposition could potentially destabilize the political system still held sway amongst the incumbent elites.

and South Korea, certain forms of linkage were able, in particular, to raise the international profile of authoritarian repression and thus *pressure* Western democratic allies to take a stronger stance on human rights and democracy.

While linkage is crucial to the exercise of leverage, this relationship is only important if leverage is able to convince authoritarian regimes that the political cost to authoritarianism is too high. Leverage is, to Levitsky and Way, rarely sufficient to convince authoritarian regimes to democratize, however, and is “most effective when combined with extensive linkage to the West.”¹¹ The role of the US as security guarantor to both Taiwan and South Korea would suggest that leverage, in these cases, would have been a more significant causal factor than in other cases Levitsky and Way have observed. The following discussion will reveal that although generally true, this is by no means straightforward, and will depend to a large extent on the immediate geopolitical and domestic political circumstances attending the authoritarian regime in question at a particular time. Before we proceed to consider this, however, let us consider how leverage and the various aspects of linkage applicable in the cases of Taiwan and South Korea had the potential to raise the cost of authoritarianism for the authoritarian governments there.

Leverage in Taiwan and South Korea

To Levitsky and Way, leverage – or a target government’s vulnerability to forms of external state pressure – is a function of at least three factors: (1) the relative sizes of states’ military and economic strength (2) the extent to which target governments have access to political, economic, or military support from an alternative regional power and (3) the existence of competing issues on the foreign policy agendas of states with the potential to exercise external state pressure.¹² The first two factors determine the power differential that renders the target government more vulnerable to external state pressures; but to be more accurate, the third and last factor should be considered as that which determines the propensity of Western democracies to exert top-down forms of pressure, not the “vulnerability” of target governments per se. Nevertheless, careful consideration of each of these factors is a useful way to explain the exact nature of leverage in these cases, and in turn, the relationship between leverage and linkage in Taiwan and South Korea.

Both Taiwan and South Korea are relatively small countries, militarily, politically, and economically dependent upon US support in the face of the Cold War confrontation they faced from China and North Korea. During the 1950s and 60s, Taiwan was reliant largely upon US military and economic aid, whilst South Korea continued to do so well into the 1970s and 80s. US private investment and open markets were also crucial to the viability of their export-oriented industrialization policies. Further, the governments of Taiwan and South Korea were consistently dependent upon the US as their principal security guarantor. The US was very important to Taiwan during the 1950s and 60s because hostilities continued across the Taiwan Strait. Although the US had derecognized Taiwan and ceased official diplomatic relations by 1979, the rapid international isolation that had set in following Taiwan’s displacement from the United Nations in 1971 rendered it even more reliant upon the US. The North Koreans continued, on the other hand, to try to destabilize the South throughout the 1950s and 80s, making the US an indispensable security ally.

Because of these national security threats, the continued political support of the US also became a significant source of domestic legitimacy for the governments of Taiwan and South Korea. In the case of Taiwan, derecognition dealt a significant blow to the legitimacy of the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Levitsky and Way, 2005, pp. 21-22.

Nationalist government – it was merely the continuation of unofficial relations through the Taiwan Relations Act which saved the Nationalist government from outright delegitimation. South Korea’s dictators did not always manage to maintain consistently good relations with the US, but even grudging political support from the US remained crucial. This was especially the case when other sources of domestic legitimacy was weak.¹³ External threats posed by both China and North Korea thus made Taiwan and South Korea particularly susceptible to US leverage.

There were no completely viable alternative sources of such support from a regional power either. Despite historical animosities, Japan did become another source of economic support, providing Taiwan with significant loans after US aid ended in 1965.¹⁴ When relations were normalized with South Korea in 1965, Japan also extended significant levels of aid and loans. By the 1970s Taiwan’s economy had grown significantly and was less in need of such economic support, however; and although South Korea continued to be reliant upon external loans, it too had less need for Japan’s economic support.¹⁵ Because of constitutional constraints, and high levels of tension with China and North Korea, Japan could not maintain more than a defensive force and was limited in the security support it could have openly provided to Taiwan and South Korea. Ultimately, Japan could at best maintain lukewarm relations with Taiwan and South Korea at the time due to popular anti-Japanese sentiments there. This rendered any kind of political support Japan could have extended Taiwan and South Korea redundant and even counter-productive. In sum, Japan was a poor substitute for the US, enhancing US leverage over the authoritarian governments of Taiwan and South Korea. It is not true to claim as Levitsky and Way have done, therefore, that strong economic and/or security interests in the region have made East Asian governments less vulnerable to external pressure from Western democracies, in this case, principally the US.

Nevertheless, the US never did exert external pressure on these governments in a *consistent fashion*, reflective of the existence of competing issues on its Asia agenda. Taiwan policy had always been shaped by the larger concern of Sino-US relations within the broader context of the Cold War. While realpolitik during the height of the Cold War meant that Taiwan was high in importance on the US security agenda, thereby guaranteeing the Nationalist government that human rights abuses and the distortion of its democratic institutions would remain largely uncriticized, the US tended only to pursue “quiet diplomacy” over authoritarian practices in Taiwan during the 1970s and 80s for two reasons. The first is simply the desire not to undermine the legitimacy of the Nationalist government any further – although the “abandonment” of Taiwan was necessary to win China, it did not serve the US interest to have the Nationalists completely vulnerable to the Chinese communists.

The second reason is more complicated. It should also be understood that by the 1970s, the political climate in the US had changed significantly following the Vietnam War debacle and the Watergate scandal. The American public’s skepticism of government and of the morality of

¹³ The government of Park Chung Hee (1961-79) could afford tense relations with the US because the “performance legitimacy” it could derive from rapid economic development was significant. The Chun Doo Hwan government was widely considered to have been illegitimate because of the way popular resistance to his grab for power was crushed in the city of Kwangju in 1980. Indeed, the long shadow of the Kwangju Massacre that hung over the Chun Doo Hwan government rendered it particularly sensitive to the political winds of Washington.

¹⁴ When US aid ended in 1965, Taiwan turned to Japan and received a loan of USD150 million, repayable over a 15-to-20-year period.

¹⁵ Japan had become an important trading partner, of course, and a source of foreign direct investments in the meantime, but this did not create a relationship of dependency.

US foreign policy in particular, had translated into a greater degree of public scrutiny and Congressional oversight of what was previously an executive prerogative. US officials at the White House and State Department were generally put on the defensive, making high profile cases of human rights abuses by allied authoritarian governments abroad politically dangerous. Consistent with this changed political environment in the US, it became an imperative to voice official concerns – whether in private meetings with high level officials of the target government or in public – to contain what could become politically costly public relations fallouts over blatant human rights abuses by American-supported dictatorships. Of course, the broader international normative context that supported the legitimacy of human rights issues as that which could affect state-to-state relations from the mid-1970s onward also helped to create and maintain such pressure on US politicians and officials.¹⁶

Derecognition of Taiwan in 1979 had interesting ramifications on whether and how the US would exercise the leverage it had over the Nationalist government in Taiwan, however. Overall, the US never did exert substantive leverage on the Nationalist government, linking its political and military support to democracy and human rights in Taiwan, opting instead for “quiet diplomacy” when necessary. The end of official diplomatic ties meant that the US was sufficiently distanced from the Nationalist government and as such was no longer perceived as being directly responsible for political developments on the island. This lowered the cost of political association with the authoritarian government in Taiwan significantly. Taiwan’s case is interesting therefore because contrary to expectations, it was the much lower importance that Taiwan held in the US security agenda that caused the US to refrain from exercising substantive leverage over the Nationalist government.

Happily for US officials, throughout the 1970s, the Nationalist government and opposition elements also responded to increased international isolation by avoiding large-scale confrontations that would no doubt have led to internationally visible human rights abuses that would embarrass the US. The Nationalist government also undertook several measures to co-opt the politically disenfranchised “native Taiwanese” into the ruling apparatus, spinning these gestures through its carefully managed international public relations machinery as “political liberalization.” Indeed, the end to official US-Taiwan diplomatic relations rendered the Nationalist government not only more sensitive to US foreign policy makers, but also to Congress and the American public opinion – on which it now relied to maintain unofficial support through the Taiwan Relations Act.

This meant that the US generally did not have to exert substantive or rhetorical pressure through public statements condemning the authoritarian practices of the Nationalist government, but this did not mean that large-scale crackdowns on pro-democracy activists did not take place whatsoever, either. In 1979 an opposition-led human rights rally ended with the rounding up of many opposition leaders, including those holding office and irrespective of whether they were at the scene of the rally. They were held incommunicado and allegedly tortured to obtain “confessions.” Many of the charges appeared fabricated in order to augment the severity of the sentences, including the death penalty for sedition under martial law. In two further rounds of arrests, supporters of the political opposition were also brought to trial, including a Taiwanese Presbyterian minister who tried to prevent the arrest of a key organizer of the rally. This signaled the Nationalist government’s intention of eradicating the opposition movement, despite the fact

¹⁶ The Helsinki Process was significant in instituting human rights norms as a legitimate international concern that should not be negated by the principle of sovereignty. See Thomas, Daniel C. *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

that US diplomats had privately advised President Chiang Ching-kuo not to undertake harsh reprisals against the political opposition prior to the trials. There was very little political fallout in terms of US-Taiwan relations, however, mostly because US derecognition of Taiwan meant that the cost of associating with such a regime had already become quite low for the US.

The opposite was true for South Korea. Although South Korea remained vitally important in the Pacific front of the Cold War in the period of interest, what we have seen is that the US exercised a greater degree of leverage over the military dictatorships there. In fact, it was precisely because of the continued close association between the Republic of Korea and the US that necessitated such leverage. Unlike the Nationalist government of Taiwan, which had been made cautious by US derecognition and international isolation, the dictators of South Korea had little or no such worries. Levels of political repression and human rights abuses remained comparatively high, making the cost of association with successive authoritarian governments in South Korea in the 1970s and 80s accordingly high for the US government. Further, the high level of US security engagement on the Peninsula necessitated diplomatic interventions to prevent overt forms of human rights abuse that would reinforce arguments for withdrawing support for allied dictatorships, an argument put forward by many pro-democracy human rights activists, Christian leaders and high-profile academics in the US.

Nevertheless, these statements have to be qualified by the fact that leverage was not exercised through substantive means and only public rhetorical pressure and quiet diplomacy was used. Troop reductions were part of the larger plan to reduce US military presence in East Asia (Guam Doctrine) even as relations with China were warming – not over human rights issues. The use of more rhetorical pressure while refraining from substantive leverage reflected the need to contain potentially costly public relations fallouts for the US while delicately balancing the security interests it had vested in the military viability of South Korea. Beyond public rhetorical pressure, US officials also actively intervened on a number of occasions to effect the release of large numbers of political prisoners throughout the 1970s and 80s, including internationally known political leaders such as Kim Dae Jung. These interventions were dramatic in scale and much publicized, which served to demonstrate that US Korea policy was not entirely immoral. Indeed, interventions on behalf of high profile dissidents such as Kim Dae Jung were particularly important to stave off critics of US Korea policy, explaining why interventions on behalf of the opposition came to be focused on high-profile releases of Kim or that of large numbers of lesser-known political prisoners.

In sum, the cases of Taiwan and South Korea compare interestingly on two counts. As Levitsky and Way have noted, security and/or economic interests can complicate the extent to which leverage is exercised. In both cases, the potential leverage that the US could have exercised to pressure the authoritarian governments there to undertake political reform was not fully exercised through the linkages that could have been made between human rights and democracy on the one hand, and US military, economic and political support on the other. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the cases of Taiwan and South Korea: much more external pressure was exerted on the South Koreans than the Taiwanese, both at the rhetorical level and through interventions on behalf of political prisoners. This appears to be counter-intuitive, however, since the security interest in South Korea remained very high whilst the warming of US-Sino relations had relegated Taiwan to secondary strategic importance to the US. This cannot be fully understood until we have examined how linkage operated in the cases of Taiwan and South Korea.

Linkage in Taiwan and South Korea

Of the five types of linkages discussed by Levitsky and Way, the social, transnational civil society and communication linkages have been most instrumental to democratic breakthrough in Taiwan and South Korea. Economic linkage between the US and Taiwan and South Korea are extensive, but such linkages have generally not worked toward promoting democratization there. Taiwan and South Korea's export-oriented economic model meant that low labor costs were essential to international competitiveness, and Western foreign direct investments vested international business interests in labor repressive regimes there. Geopolitical linkages to Western governments besides the US, Western-led alliances and organizations were not quite relevant to Taiwan after its displacement from the UN in 1971 led to further displacements from other international organizations, along with derecognition by other countries over the 1970s. In the context of South Korea's security threat, the single most important strategic relationship was with the US, and this shaped the extent to which linkages with other Western-led alliances and organizations were significant. In the South Korean case, these linkages do not appear to have been significant.

Although communications technologies were not as advanced during the 1970s and 80s, basic communications infrastructure was in place to make telephone and telegraphic communications easily available in Taiwan and South Korea. Information flowing in and out of Taiwan and South Korea were heavily monitored, of course, and important documents such as name lists of political prisoners often had to be smuggled out of Taiwan and South Korea in person. In terms of social linkage, the diaspora communities residing in the US or university students and academics there have been important in helping to effect democratic breakthrough in both Taiwan and South Korea in ways that will be described shortly. Along with transnational civil society linkages such as ties to international human rights NGOs and churches such "grassroots" linkages have been crucial in influencing the extent of leverage exercised by state actors, encouraging the development of opposition movements in Taiwan and South Korea and changing the balance of power between the political opposition and the incumbent authoritarians.

The importance of these linkages lies in that they enabled these non-state actors to generate pressure on both the US and the target governments of Taiwan and South Korea. It is important to understand that grassroots pressures generated by those transnational nonstate actors mentioned above on American officials to stick to the normative commitments of the US were crucial in many occasions to the generation of external state pressures. These grassroots pressures were produced by activities that created and maintained a high international profile of political repression in Taiwan and South Korea. The high international profile of political repression had, in turn, the potential to raise the political cost of repression for target governments, thus constraining repressive state behavior. Further, these transnational civil society members also lobbied and worked with Congressional members in the US to further generate pressure on US foreign policy makers and leaders. A handful conducted Congressional Hearings over human rights abuses and specific incidences of political repression, held press conferences, made public speeches to highlight human rights abuses and initiated House Resolutions. While the latter rarely passed – especially in the case of Taiwan - the very attempts to do so effectively denounced the repressiveness of the Taiwanese and South Korean governments publicly and helped to raise the international profile of repression there.¹⁷

¹⁷ Strongly anti-Communist Congressional members tended to block many of the bills to link security or economic assistance to human rights issues and resolutions denouncing the authoritarian leadership of both Taiwan and South Korea.

Further elaboration is needed of the kinds of activities that these transnational civil society actors and diaspora community members were engaged in to generate grassroots pressures. These human rights activists, Christian missionaries and ecumenical workers, overseas Taiwanese and South Korean communities, academics and students formed interlocking transnational networks that worked together to generate accurate information on the actual political situation in Taiwan and South Korea and to create alternative channels of information, particularly for the outflow of political news, to the international community. This was particularly important in the case of Taiwan, where relative political stability and rapid economic development tended to mask the existence of political repression there and allow the Nationalist government to paint an unfavorable image of the political opposition. Indeed, many of these human rights activists and Christian leaders – whether local or foreign – were at the forefront of the opposition movements themselves. Their close connection to the political opposition allowed them to activate formal organizational linkages abroad easily for the purpose of channeling information out of Taiwan and South Korea.

Their close connections to the political opposition also allowed them to have mostly firsthand knowledge of the exact political developments in Taiwan and South Korea, giving the information they had more currency, especially where the mainstream media were skeptical or indifferent. That many of these individuals were foreign nationals was important because it not only gave them a degree of immunity from the authorities, it also enabled a much higher degree of transnational mobility. That is not to discount the importance of members of the overseas Taiwanese and Korean communities, who played a special role because of their national origins, which lent their reports and testimonials at Congressional Hearings credibility.

The Geopolitical Environment and the Operation of Leverage and Linkage

Levitsky and Way argue that leverage is generally effective only when combined with linkage. When we compare South Korea to Taiwan, however, it is possible to argue that the specific grassroots pressures that could be generated through linkage were most effective only when channeled through state actors as “top-down” external pressure. This is explained by the geopolitical environments immediately surrounding Taiwan and South Korea, which on the surface looks very similar. In actuality, there were subtle differences that conditioned the extent to which grassroots pressures could translate directly into political costs for the target authoritarian governments.

We have already seen that important qualitative differences existed in their geopolitical circumstances because of the change in the direction of US China policy following the Sino-Soviet split. While Taiwan was diplomatically derecognized by the US in 1979, intensifying its international isolation, South Korea retained the full support of the international community. These circumstances were by no means trivial because they conditioned the extent to which the governments of Taiwan and South Korea were sensitized to international opinion, and thus, the extent to which external grassroots pressures could translate directly into political costs for the target government.

However, the sensitization of the Nationalist government in Taiwan to international opinion should not be understood in terms of the exceptional circumstances of international isolation. Instead, we should understand that this sensitivity stems from the fact that the nature of the conflict with China had changed qualitatively toward the mid-1970s. Indeed, what had begun as a military conflict shifted to the diplomatic arena at this time. Changes that later took place in China stacked the odds against Taiwan, for Deng’s policies in 1978 to “open up” China further

turned the tide of favorable international opinion toward China.¹⁸ US derecognition in 1979 of course turned the tide irrevocably against Taiwan in this diplomatic battle, further sensitizing the Nationalist leadership to the need of projecting Taiwan's international image as "Free China," but what should be understood is that had Taiwan not experienced international isolation, the qualitative shift in the nature of the conflict with China would also have sensitized it to international opinion. The implications of such a perspective will be clearer when we consider the case of South Korea, whose military leaders remained relatively immune to negative international opinion precisely because the nature of the conflict on the Peninsula remained largely military in nature.

In the meantime, what this meant was that high international visibility of political repression became politically costly to the Nationalists, whose own political survival would have been threatened by negative international opinion. For these reasons these networks of grassroots actors were able to pressure the Nationalists by seriously undermining efforts to build such a positive international image at a time when it was important to maintain a place for Taiwan in the Western democratic camp.¹⁹ Of course, while this was generally true, there was no uniformity of opinion amongst the leadership, and as we shall see later, the hard-line approach toward the political opposition was taken in the wake of US derecognition. It was at this moment that these networks of nonstate actors and the substate actors they recruited most decisively stepped in to pressure the Nationalist government, setting an unforgettable precedent into the 1980s.

The political leadership of South Korea was not sensitized to international opinion in the same way that Taiwan's leadership was, however, making it more difficult to translate external grassroots pressures directly into political costs for the authoritarian leadership. North Korea's diplomatic offensive to bring to question the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea had long failed by the 1970s and as such, the conflict on the Korean Peninsula remained largely military in nature. This qualitative difference in the nature of this conflict meant that South Korea's national security was underpinned by its strong security alliance with the US, not positive international opinion. Moreover, the authoritarian leaders of South Korea could be sure that the international community would stand by South Korea despite the gross human rights violations committed by its government because of the implications for international stability were they to fail to. Of course, efforts to raise the international profile of political repression did matter when it negatively influenced US-ROK strategic relations. During such occasions, external grassroots pressures could translate effectively into high political costs for the target government. It is for this reason that these bottom-up pressures were most effective when channeled through state actors, and we will soon see that the Park and Chun governments responded to these pressures

¹⁸ Conscious of political competition with China, President Chiang Ching-kuo expressed in an interview with Katherine Graham of the *Washington Post* in 1981 that, "Especially today when the communist bandit regime is near the end of its road...it is more important than ever for us to strengthen the construction of constitutional government to demonstrate clearly that the strong contrast between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait is basically due to the fact that one side has implemented a constitution based on the Three People's Principles while the other has not." As quoted in Andrew Nathan and Helena Ho, "Chiang Ching-kuo's Decision for Political Reform," in Shao-chuan Leng (ed.) *Chiang Ching-kuo's Leadership in the Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Lanham, MD: American University Press, 1993), p.38-9.

¹⁹ There is evidence to suggest that by the 1980s, President Chiang had begun to lose his grip on the security apparatus, explaining why despite increasing concerns with Taiwan's international image at the political center, potentially explosive political assassinations were still taking place in Taiwan and abroad. See Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son*.

most when good US-ROK strategic relations were undermined by the high international profile of human rights abuses committed by these governments.

The implications of emphasizing the qualitative differences in the geopolitical circumstances surrounding Taiwan and South Korea may at first seem subtle. However, this perspective makes it possible for us to understand that the ability of these networks of grassroots actors to exert direct pressure on the Nationalist leadership in Taiwan was not predicated on the exceptional circumstances of international isolation as much as it was on the diplomatic nature of the conflict with China. There is a case to be made that had Taiwan not experienced international isolation, the Nationalist government would nevertheless still be more sensitized to the ability of these transnational networks of grassroots actors to generate a negative international opinion of the Nationalist government. This point makes possible the understanding that the transnational networks of grassroots actors have the potential to travel across other cases where exceptional circumstances of contested sovereignty do not exist.

Comparing Taiwan to South Korea thus enables us to properly comprehend the immediate geopolitical contexts surrounding them, and the consequent implications for the operation of linkage and leverage.

Tracing the Effects of Leverage and Linkage in Taiwan and South Korea

Process tracing reveals interesting and significant differences in the effects of leverage and linkage on democratic breakthrough in Taiwan and South Korea. This was not due to the qualitative differences between the forms of linkage in Taiwan and South Korea. Although the forms of linkage discussed earlier helped in both cases to raise the international profile of political repression, the bottom up pressure generated was most effective in constraining repressive state behavior in South Korea when channeled through state actors.

South Korea

It is significant that opposition to the Nationalist government on Taiwan enjoyed a revival in what would become an effective opposition movement from the mid 1970s when transnational civil society actors had correspondingly coalesced around the political opposition. The increasing protection received by the political opposition from these complex networks of nonstate actors is one reason for which the political opposition was able to effectively challenge the authoritarian government from the late 1970s onward.

Although it is seldom noted, limited efforts to raise the international visibility of political repression had begun as early as the 1960s. It was under such circumstances that Lei Chen's daughter and a small handful of supporters in the US began a campaign to mobilize officials at the State Department, along with members of Congress and the Senate, to pressure President Chiang Kai-shek to release the opposition activists. Their efforts recruited the support of only one member of Congress and Senate each – Representative Charles Porter (Oregon) and Senator Harrison Williams (New Jersey) – who proceeded to pressure the State Department to either persuade the Chiang Kai-shek government to drop charges against Lei or issue a public statement against Lei's subsequent sentence – the latter which never occurred.²⁰ Ultimately, efforts to secure Lei's release and to revive the opposition movement culminated only in limited news coverage, private letters of protest from members of Congress to the State Department and

²⁰ Consistent with our assessment of the role of the US earlier, it should also be noted that State officials sought to persuade the Chiang government to release Lei and his supporters by warning against the *public relations* fallout that the Lei Affair would cause at the international level. The State Department was mainly concerned about the affair in this respect. See Bush, *At Cross Purposes*, pp. 60-7.

inconclusive diplomatic conversations that yielded no tangible results. The complex transnational networks that were firmly in place by the late 1970s and early 80s had not, at that point, developed. A sustained effort to raise the international visibility of political repression in Taiwan thus failed to materialize and the political opposition languished.

Another wave of oppositional activities peaked with a human rights day rally held in the city of Kaohsiung in 1979 where many opposition leaders were arrested. In two further rounds of arrests supporters of the political opposition were also brought to trial. Under pressure from the international press and human rights activists the closed trials taking place in military court were forced to become public. For the first time, close news coverage of the sedition charges, the evidence presented and the sentences meted out to the opposition leaders allowed the Taiwanese and international community to scrutinize the Nationalists' actions in the court of law. As a result of following the trials intimately, human rights activists were able to present to the international community alternative evidence to that presented in court against the political opposition. The International Committee for Human Rights in Taiwan and the Society for the Protection of East Asians' Human Rights published a complete transcript of the speeches made by opposition leaders at the Kaohsiung rally in 1981, for example, testifying that they had not incited violence as alleged.²¹

In the meantime, human rights activists and the overseas Taiwanese tirelessly lobbied US legislators to pressure the Nationalists into reducing their charges against the dissidents. As one human rights activist described, the outrage felt by many overseas Taiwanese over the Nationalists' attempts to crush the opposition at this time was a watershed moment in the mobilization of the overseas Taiwanese networks in support of the political opposition in Taiwan.²² These networks were further stimulated to keep up a sustained effort to raise the international visibility of political repression in Taiwan in the form of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA).²³ Despite numerous attempts to cut off contact between the political opposition and members of the transnational networks, and to intimidate them, collective efforts to raise the international visibility of the Nationalists' repressive nature continued.²⁴ Public statements calling into question the legitimacy of the court evidence and subsequent military and civil court trials even found their way into the US State Department's annual Human Rights Report in 1981. Many of the dissidents today believe that the bad publicity generated internationally resulted in the reduction of sentences - many of those charged with sedition

²¹ *The Kaohsiung Tapes* (Seattle, Washington: International Committee for Human Rights in Taiwan, Feb 1981).

²² Gerrit van der Wees, Interview in DVD format, Taipei, Oral History Project, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, 2003.

²³ That the Nationalists were well aware of the constraints the activities of these transnational networks was imposing on its actions is suggested by the fact that during the trials of the *Kaohsiung* dissidents, it sought repeatedly to discredit the opposition in the local media "by tying them to foreign interference in Taiwan's politics." John F. Copper, "Taiwan in 1980: Entering a New Decade," *Asian Survey* Vol. 21, No. 1 (Jan 1981): 51-62, p. 54.

²⁴ While local elements of the transnational networks like Reverend Kao were punished for shielding the opposition, a foreign academic supportive of the opposition was also falsely implicated in the murders of opposition politician Lin Yi-hsiung's mother and twin daughters - possibly an effort to intimidate members of the networks themselves. Lin's mother had attempted to contact Amnesty International in Osaka a day before members of the Iron Blood Patriot Society - allegedly connected to members of the Nationalist government - broke into their home and brutally stabbed Lin's family while it was under 24 hours of security surveillance. This incident, widely reported by the press, "further sullied the image of the [Nationalists], particularly in the eyes of the American press and human rights activists in the United States." Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.357.

received long prison sentences instead of the death penalty. Two other convictions were overturned in civil court upon appeal after being transferred from the military court.

For reasons easily conjectured, the security apparatus began to turn their attention to the supporters of the opposition movement abroad. In 1981, a Taiwanese-born professor at Carnegie-Mellon University was murdered while on a home visit in Taipei.²⁵ As questions continued to hang over Chen's untimely death, the international media picked up this sensational news story and members of these transnational civil society networks again lobbied US Congress to hold investigative Hearings over the matter. Detailed Hearings by the Subcommittees for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Human Rights and International Organizations in July and October 1981 later uncovered the frightening nature of the Nationalists' security operations in Taiwan and the US.²⁶ Two weeks after Chen's death, some 150 members of the American Taiwanese community from across the Midwest and East Coast mobilized to attend a memorial service at Carnegie Mellon University. Public protests by overseas Taiwanese in Oakland and Los Angeles also took place, publicizing the political motivations behind the murder of Chen. With possible public relations fallout at hand, then Government Information Office director James Soong "personally telephoned the Hong Kong bureau chief of a foreign wire service to advise him to have his reporters back off the story."²⁷ By this time US officials also began expressing considerable concern over the possibility that the international image of the Nationalist government would be irreparably damaged.²⁸

Chen's murder did not have as large an impact as later acts of intimidation that took place in the US, however. The explosive nature of dissident writer Henry Liu's murder by two Taiwanese gangsters hired by the security apparatus was precisely owed to the fact that it took place in San Francisco, where he was living. Shortly following Liu's controversial murder was the arrest of Li Ya-ping, a US permanent resident and editor of the Los Angeles-based Chinese language International Daily News, on the basis of allegedly pro-Communist articles published in the US. These acts clearly violated the constitutional rights of US residents and citizens and US sovereignty. These cases further stirred up a hornet's nest over the question of whether agents of friendly states had been given unwarranted leeway to operate against residents and citizens of the US – already the subject of Congressional hearings since Professor Chen Wen-chen's murder.²⁹ The Reagan administration – not pleased with these developments – was also very much constrained in its ability to contain the situation because it had already begun to adopt

²⁵ Chen Wen-chen, a US permanent resident, was an active member of the Taiwanese Association and a vocal critic of the Nationalist government connected to prominent opposition leader Shih Ming-teh. Forensic evidence and circumstantial evidence suggested that the security services were involved – a view held strongly by the overseas Taiwanese community who also believed that it was an effort to intimidate the political opposition at home and their Taiwanese supporters abroad.

²⁶ *Taiwan Agents in America and the Death of Professor Wen-chen Chen*, Hearings before the Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and on Human Rights and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, First Session, Jul 30 and October 6, 1985 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983).

²⁷ David E. Kaplan, *Fires of the Dragon: Politics, Murder and the Kuomintang* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992) p. 309.

²⁸ In a private meeting between AIT chief Charles Cross and Nationalist officials, Cross expressed the concerns of the State Department that, "in upcoming congressional hearings it would not be to Taiwan's advantage to be in the company of Libya..." Kaplan, p.310.

²⁹ See *The Murder of Henry Liu*, Hearings and Mark-up before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, First Session on H. Con. Res. 49 and 110, February 7, March 21, April 3, 1985 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985).

a stronger human rights position in foreign policy. Further, the scandals alienated what friends the Nationalists had in Congress and shocked the American public at a time when Taiwan most needed friends in a climate of international isolation.

It was impossible to hush up these scandals because of the efforts of these transnational civil society actors, who worked hard to capitalize on these incidents to raise the international visibility of Nationalist government's authoritarian nature. In fact, members of the transnational networks were integral to the publicization of these events as symptoms of systemic political problems in Taiwan. The overseas Taiwanese community persuaded Liu's hesitant widow to make public statements about the political motivations behind the murder and testify at Congressional Hearings. Expert witnesses from the academic and religious community, along with the testimony of the overseas Taiwanese, provided damning evidence of the Nationalist government's illegitimate use of violence against the political opposition during these Congressional Hearings. This evidence was accordingly conveyed to the international media through channels already described, generating a hard-hitting editorial from the Washington Post that described Liu's murder as "a savage act of terrorism on American soil...a hostile act."³⁰

As a result of what was exposed about the Nationalists, President Chiang Ching-kuo was compelled to issue a directive to dismantle the Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense and Special Intelligence Bureau.³¹ These two organs of the security apparatus were subsequently merged and restricted to only gathering military intelligence. Further housecleaning included the removal of Wang Sheng, an ambitious and somewhat shady character in charge of the informal "liu-shao-kang" office that had become the power center within the Nationalist party as the President slipped into bad health.³² As a result of raising the international visibility of political repression, significant hardliner elements within the Nationalists government were reined in by the mid-1980s, paving the way for the political opposition to spearhead a democratic breakthrough shortly following these scandals. Indeed, the confidence that the political opposition had on the evening of September 28 that the Nationalists could no longer clamp down on the movement should an illegal opposition party be declared proved true. Indeed, there could no longer be another Lei Chen Incident because of the international visibility of political repression in Taiwan. In the words of President Chiang Ching-kuo, "the times have changed, events have changed, trends have changed."³³

South Korea

With the exception of two periods between 1977-79 and 1983-5, levels of repression were high even though the efforts of the transnational networks of nonstate and substate actors to raise the international profile of political repression was getting progressively stronger (see Table below). This observation implies that negative international opinion generated by these transnational networks of civil society actors was unable to constrain repressive state behavior. Incidentally, during these times of relative ineffectiveness, US Korea policy was a conservative one that largely condoned human rights abuses. During 1977-79 period, however, US-ROK relations soured tremendously for a variety of reasons, and these transnational nonstate actors capitalized on this to drive home human rights concerns, further complicating US-ROK relations. And although US-ROK relations appeared to be cordial during the 1983-5 period, the rising tide of anti-Americanism in South Korea was beginning to affect the strategic thinking in US policy

³⁰ See Kaplan, p. 456.

³¹ Taylor, p. 393.

³² Wang, a "hardliner," had been slated to succeed President Chiang. Ibid.

³³ Li Hsiao-feng, *Taiwan minzhu yundong sishinian* (Taipei: Zili wanbaoshe wenhua chubanshe, 1991), p.242.

circles. At this time, members of the transnational networks were also making more inroads into US Korea policy, with the result that security concerns were no longer divorced from human rights. The threat of losing US support as a result of these developments was a serious matter for the Chun government, not least because the Kwangju Massacre continued to cast a long shadow on its legitimacy. The relatively soft approach taken by the Chun government toward the political opposition at this time can be reasonably conjectured to reflect such considerations.

VARIATION IN LEVEL OF REPRESSION AND US-ROK RELATIONS

Time Period	Level of Repression	US-ROK Relations
1972-1976 (Park)	High	Security relationship firm; tensions later deepen
1977-1979 (Park)	Lower	US-Korea relations sour tremendously
1979-1982 (Chun)	High	Unconditional US support
1983-1985 (Chun)	Lower	US exerts private pressures to ease repression in exchange for continued support
1986-1987 (Chun)	High; later capitulates on 29 June 1987	US ambivalent in support; later condemns

Did this mean that external state pressures were more significant than grassroots pressures? It has been found that “bad publicity” created by these forms of linkages was necessary to motivate state actors into using public rhetoric and private pressures to constrain the repressive actions of the Park and Chun governments. US officials were motivated to overcome these normative constraints activated by these transnational networks of nonstate and substate actors because they would have limited US ability to maintain its security interests in the ROK, which was a cornerstone of the regional Cold War.³⁴ The focus of diplomatic efforts on Kim underscores the fact that his rescue was in part an exercise in public relations undertaken to enable further US support for the Chun government. Indeed, the prospect that Congress might derail the traditional course of US Korea policy may have helped to convince the particularly recalcitrant Park government during the late 1970s that continued US support depended on the easing of political repression.

Although the levels of repression remained comparatively high throughout the period of interest, the transnational networks of grassroots actors were crucial in this respect - securing the release of the most important opposition leaders who were then able to gradually bring together disparate elements of the opposition in a broad based movement that would force the authoritarian leadership to capitulate to the demands of the political opposition in June 1987. Indeed, the earliest signs that the transnational networks of non-state actors had an early role to play in protecting the political opposition came in 1973, on the heels of the arrest of Rev. Park Hyung-Kyu and other pastors in July 1973 for the distribution of anti-Park leaflets. The mobilization of overseas Churches in the form of an investigative committee, which arrived in August that year to inquire into the arrests, and the numerous protest letters and telegrams sent to the President is widely believed to have forced the Park government to release the church leaders

³⁴ Ambassador Gleysteen later wrote of the grassroots campaign to save Kim Dae Jung that, “most knowledgeable Americans were impressively united behind this campaign, including many anti-communist conservatives who, despite their reservations about Kim Dae Jung as a leader, believed that his execution would dangerously impair American support for Korea.” Gleysteen, William, *Massive Entanglements, Marginal Influence* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999), p. 172.

in September 1973, only two days after prison sentences were already handed down.³⁵ The international mobilization of human rights groups, Christian Churches, academic community, the media and the overseas Korean community to condemn the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung from Tokyo that same year were also crucial in prompting forceful external state pressures to prevent him from being murdered by the KCIA.

Short of internationally prominent opposition personalities such as Kim Dae Jung and Christian leaders with strong international contacts, other less internationally recognizable opposition activists were also freed as a result of these forms of linkages. “Foreign pressures” forced the Park government to release “hundreds of intellectuals, students and religious and military figures condemned by the military tribunals.”³⁶ This list also included opposition journalists, whose sentences were reduced because AI, which adopted them as “prisoners of conscience”, brought their plight to international attention.³⁷ Indeed, human rights organizations were crucial in helping to bring pressure to bear on the Park government to release or commute the sentences of numerous “prisoners of conscience” by “urgent appeals” that often mobilized individuals from all over the world to condemn their treatment.³⁸ The lobbying efforts of the transnational non-state actors also mobilized important substate actors such as Donald Fraser, whose actions in Congress at this time put in place the most explicitly anti-authoritarian legislation that had the potential to affect US-ROK security relations.

The efforts of the transnational networks of grassroots actors at this time also helped to bring the draconian nature of the Emergency Decrees to international attention and thus mobilized some external state pressures in the form of quiet diplomacy and a damning State Department Report on human rights in South Korea. This secured a momentary reprieve from repression for the political opposition in the very difficult 1972-6 period. Emergency Decrees Nos. 1 and 4 were eventually repealed on 23 August 1974, less than a month before President Ford’s visit.³⁹ It was precisely at this time that a resurgence of protest activities was observed and both parliamentary opposition and activists formed a new national-level coalition, the National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy, with numerous branch organizations throughout South Korea.⁴⁰ Continued efforts to raise the international profile of trumped up charges against the political opposition again yielded some results in December 1976, when the Seoul Appellate Court confirmed the conviction of all the Myongdong Incident activists but later

³⁵ Hak-Kyu Sohn, *Authoritarianism and Opposition in South Korea* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.59. Further, “the sympathetic concern of international churches towards this case led to their extended support for the human rights cause of the Korean churches in the succeeding periods.” Ibid.

³⁶ Cohen and Baker, “US Foreign Policy and Human Rights in South Korea,” in Shaw, William, *Human Rights in Korea: Historical and Policy Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 178.

³⁷ AI Annual Report, Republic of Korea, 1975.

³⁸ See AI’s report of 1975 for details of those whose sentences were either successfully commuted or were released altogether that year.

³⁹ As Sohn explains, a state visit by the US President was particularly welcome at this time because it signaled US commitment to the Korean government. “Relaxation of political repression was therefore a gesture that would allow President Ford to avoid the possible embarrassment he might otherwise incur as a consequence of the human rights issue in Korea. The abrogation of the PEMs ... can be interpreted as evidence of this disposition ..., as can the regime’s restraint in its actions against the opposition movement.” Sohn, p. 77 The announcement of the planned visit had been made in the midst of controversy in Congress and the press over human rights abuses by the Park government. Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 75-6. Renewed efforts by the parliamentary opposition to attack the Yushin Constitution were also seen at this time after a period of relative confusion and impotence. See Sohn, p. 75.

reduced the sentences of Kim Dae Jung, Yun Posun and Hahm Suh Hon whilst suspending another four “without explanation,” a decision confirmed by the Supreme Court.⁴¹

By 1977-79, the repression of the political opposition had eased.⁴² Further, trials under both Emergency Measures and regular laws were made public whereas they had been previously undertaken by special military court. With the exception of Emergency Decree No. 9, other Emergency Measures were gradually rescinded between 1977 and 1978. Over 106 political prisoners were released in late 1978 under US diplomatic pressure in the run-up to the Carter-Park Summit.⁴³ Of special note during this interval was the direct discussions entered into between the government and leaders of the chaeya movement in October 1977, which was unprecedented.⁴⁴ These developments were undoubtedly influenced by the development of the Koreagate scandal.⁴⁵ Indeed, the human rights organizations, Christian Churches, academics and the overseas Korean community capitalized on the scandal to further advertise the repressiveness of the Park government. Members of the transnational civil society networks also continued to provide expert testimonials and eyewitness accounts in the Congressional Hearings that helped to raise pressure on US officials to stick to their normative commitments at this time. By December 1977, bilateral relations had so soured over the Koreagate affair that Secretary of State Cyrus Vance actually warned that aid to Korea would be affected if the Park government did not cooperate in the investigations.⁴⁶ In the clamor of transnational grassroots support for Kim Dae Jung upon his re-arrest in 1976, US-ROK relations were further soured and “quiet pressures” for his release intensified. Kim was finally released on 27 December 1978, shortly before the planned Carter-Park Summit to be held the following summer.

The release of important opposition figures was in turn a decisive factor in the revival of attempts at this time to further consolidate the extra-parliamentary opposition. The easing of political repression at this time also allowed “the formation of a growing alliance among the leadership of the now proliferating dissident groups.”⁴⁷ Further, the release of Kim Dae Jung in late 1978 allowed the chaeya dissidents to rally around his leadership. On 1 March 1979, Kim and two other prominent opposition leaders formed the National Alliance for Democracy and Unification as a non-party opposition organization that would serve to be Kim’s political base and a platform for further oppositional activities. Indeed, this formal alliance brought together the student movement, the labor movement, the farmer’s movement, journalists, academics and other independent dissidents with the parliamentary opposition.⁴⁸ It was against such a backdrop of a strengthening opposition movement that the parliamentary opposition won the majority of votes in the 1978 National Assembly elections and the leadership position of the New

⁴¹ AI Report 1977.

⁴² Political prisoners were no longer singled out for harsh treatment, as was the practice earlier, whilst prison conditions improved. The practice of torture also eased. Political prisoners except Kim Dae Jung were released after “statements of regret” negotiated between the Korean government and human rights and church leaders. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴³ Sohn, p. 150.

⁴⁴ These discussions were held to work out a plan for the release of most of the political prisoners detained under Emergency Measure No. 9. In July that year, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct appointed Leon Jaworski special counsel. Jaworski was counsel in the Watergate Affair.

⁴⁵ Although the scandal had already erupted in late 1976, it was no coincidence that the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct issued an unequivocal statement charging the Park government of being directly involved in the bribery scandal in October 1977

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Sohn, p. 124.

⁴⁸ Sohn, p.151. This was again significant as Korean political parties were not traditionally mass based parties and a disconnect between the parliamentary opposition and the extra-parliamentary opposition movement had existed.

Democratic Party was wrested from the pro-Park Lee Chul-Sung and restored to Kim Young Sam in May 1979. This show of unity amongst the opposition leadership was rare and important, especially as the parliamentary opposition movement was mostly fragmented and rivalry between the two Kims was intense. By the spring of 1979, repression had, however, begun to return to previous levels as the Park government sought to make contact between the political opposition and the US delegation to the Carter-Park Summit impossible. External grassroots pressure alone could not prevent the Park government from re-arresting the political opposition at this time.⁴⁹

It is important to note that US-ROK relations were poor during the 1977-9 period not only because of gross human rights violations by the Park government. Carter's troop withdrawal initiative, the Koreagate scandal and last but not least, President Park's secret nuclear program were significant sources of strain. These nonstate actors merely capitalized on these circumstances to add further strains on the human rights front. In any case, the assassination of President Park in 1979 promised a window of opportunity for democratic breakthrough. Under continued pressure from AI and other human rights organizations, hundreds of political prisoners arrested and charged under the Emergency Measures were released, albeit with the possibility of re-arrest without trial. Despite an initial atmosphere that promised political liberalization Cohen and Baker observed of that, "the human rights situation in the Republic of Korea remained as bad or worse during the early years of the Chun Government as in the last years of the Park Government."⁵⁰ Of course, it was during this time that the US gave the Chun government unconditional support.

Under such circumstances, the transnational networks of civil society actors were nevertheless still successful in securing the safety of particular opposition leaders crucial to the democratic movement. When the Kwangju uprising gave the incoming Chun government the excuse to slap Kim Dae Jung and other opposition leaders with charges that held the death penalty, members of the transnational networks sprang into action to draw attention to these individuals. The resultant international scrutiny brought to bear no small amount of pressure from state actors such as the US and Japan to intervene through quiet diplomacy and public condemnation of the irregularities of the trials and the harsh sentences meted out to Kim and his supporters.⁵¹ The efforts of these transnational networks also helped to ensure the better chances of a fair trial by forcing the Chun government to relax restrictions placed on defense lawyers.⁵² Following "worldwide expressions of concern," and President Reagan's public and private requests, Kim's death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1981, whilst the sentences of his co-defendants were reduced.⁵³ They were eventually released altogether in 1982, and Kim was allowed to go into exile in the US.

Although the Chun government showed no less propensity to arrest and torture political dissidents at this time, it also granted numerous large-scale amnesties to political prisoners under

⁴⁹ Kim Dae Jung was kept under house arrest, opposition parliamentarians harassed and the extra-parliamentary opposition rounded up. Kim Young-sam was displaced from the NDP leadership and later expelled from the National Assembly for speaking out against the Park government to the *New York Times*.

⁵⁰ Cohen and Baker, p. 196.

⁵¹ See "Seoul Rebuffs Washington's Appeal for Leniency as Trial of 24 is Begun," *New York Times*, 15 Aug 1980.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ AI Report 1981, p.231-2. See also Harold Hinton, *Korea Under New Leadership: The Fifth Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 22.

pressure from the US.⁵⁴ To be sure, the Reagan administration's open and certain support of the Chun government created a permissive environment for repression. However, the Chun government did not have completely free rein in the matter either - what was demanded in return were precisely those grand, face-saving gestures of amnesty which the Reagan administration could then use to defuse grassroots pressures, particularly those channeled through Congress, whilst containing a public relations fallout. Without the efforts of the members of these transnational civil society networks to raise the international visibility of political repression these demands of the Chun government might not have been made. Although it would seem that these forms of linkage were mostly unsuccessful in constraining the Chun government from re-arresting and ill-treating these very same dissidents, these periodic amnesties were in fact very important in keeping the opposition movement alive. Indeed, once released, most of these chaeya dissidents and opposition leaders would resume their protest activities and further galvanize the opposition movement before being arrested again. The cumulative effect of this cycle of release and re-arrests was to allow the opposition to grow and strengthen with the passing of time.

Certainly, scholars of Korean politics speak of a relative easing of political repression by 1983-5. The periodic granting of political amnesties continued at this time and was further accompanied by the lifting of the ban on some 567 politicians (excluding Kim Dae Jung and fifteen others) who were barred from politics in 1981. In two presidential amnesties granted in August and December 1983, some 1944 political prisoners were also released.⁵⁵ The death sentence was also commuted in three political cases. Over 200 student protestors were also released from prison in 1984, whilst over 1000 were academically reinstated. House arrest and short-term detention was increasingly used against the political opposition, instead of draconian legislation that potentially imposed life sentences or the death penalty. By 1985, most demonstrators were charged under the Minor Offences Punishment Act.

Of course, the 1983-5 period encouraged more oppositional activity, and by 1985 we see a swing towards repression once again as the Chun government reacted to this renewed opposition.⁵⁶ Importantly, Congress had been successful in passing a couple of Resolutions against political repression there, but these sentiments were not shared by US officials. Secretary of State Schultz instead condemned those extra-parliamentary opposition elements agitating against authoritarianism at this time as "inciting violence" during a visit to Korea in May 1986.⁵⁷ Further, when pressed by a journalist on whether he had discussed the need to move on human rights and political reforms with President Chun, Schultz answered that, "the idea that somehow there isn't an effort to bring into play democratic institutions and have an orderly transition of power is wrong. It's right there for everyone to see."⁵⁸

It was clear that the Reagan administration supported the crackdowns on the political opposition elements that were considered a threat to political stability at this time. Fortunately, it was no longer possible to contain the democratic movement, which had by this time garnered the support of the middle classes, and the continued agitations forced upon the military leaders the acknowledgement of the need for substantive democratic reform in June 1987. The case of South Korea thus demonstrates that the grassroots pressures generated by the transnational nonstate

⁵⁴ Many more remained in prison at this time, of course, especially the more significant opposition leaders. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁵⁵ Long-term detainees did not receive amnesty, however.

⁵⁶ "After Pause, Seoul Renews Crackdown on Dissent," *New York Times*, 7 October 1985.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Statement of Secretary of State Schultz at a news conference in Seoul, 8 May 1986. See "Secretary's Visit to Korea and the Philippines," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 86 No. 2112, July 1986, p.39-40.

actors and the substate actors they lobbied were most effective when channeled through state actors.

Conclusion

We have seen how leverage and linkage have operated to different extents to raise the cost of authoritarianism in Taiwan and South Korea, allowing the political opposition to effect democratic breakthrough in 1986 and 7 respectively. We have also seen how certain international structural variables, namely, the immediate geopolitical environment, conditioned the extent to which leverage and linkage generated the most effective forms of external pressure. Whether leverage or linkage is most effective in encouraging democratic breakthrough is therefore conditioned by such contextual factors. Further, these cases also illustrate the complex relationship between leverage and linkage that have tended to be underexplored. Indeed, they refute the idea that strong security interests vested in the stability and military viability of authoritarian states necessarily restrains the exercise of leverage.

Together, Taiwan and South Korea are two East Asian cases that refute the idea that the “international dimension of democratization” was negligible in the region – on the contrary, it is arguable that they add interesting insights to the existing literature of democratization.

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