

# The Development and Transformation of Political Party Modernization in East Asia

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**Abstract:** Asia is a very diverse region, due to the great diversity of history, culture, religion and economic development levels, political development paths and specific processes vary from country to country. There is a diversity of party systems and great differences in value orientation, political parties and party systems in East Asian countries are the result of the collision and integration of eastern and western political civilizations and the product of the specific political and social environment in East Asia. There are many factors influencing the political development of political parties in East Asia, including historical and cultural factors, colonialism, economic and social development level, international environment and other factors, all of which have exerted a strong influence on the political development of political parties in East Asia. After World War II, party politics in East Asian countries experienced three major stages of development, various factors promote the political transformation of East Asian parties and the characteristics after the transformation. East Asian countries have generally experienced tortuous political development, it is not only influenced by the western political model, but also influenced and restricted by its own history, culture and social conditions. How to establish a democratic political system in harmony with the modern economic and social environment is an arduous task for Asia's political development in the future.

**Keywords:** East Asian party politics; Party political development ; Party political transformation

## 1. Introduction

Political parties and party system are a common phenomenon in modern national political life. Political parties are very important political organizations and influential political forces in modern political life, its influence involves the whole process of modern political operation. The existence and operation of political parties is an important part of political life, the nature, location and mode of activities of a political party also determine the characteristics of a country's political life from a point of view. As a political organization representing the interests of a certain class, stratum or group, a political party is a political organization connected with the state power, and it is a process of gradual improvement with the development of the parliamentary system and the electoral system. Historical experience shows that political parties can only survive and develop in the process of transformation and adaptation. In the face of the current wave of political democratization and economic globalization, only by following the trend, adapting to the requirements of the social modernization process, and adjusting its own structure and operation in time, can political parties have a more scientific and effective impact on the operation of political power and politics.

## 2. Basic Features of Party Politics in East Asia

Asia's development is uneven and diverse. In this region, there are developed countries, but more developing countries, in the latter, there are newly industrialized countries as well as those countries whose modernization is just starting or not starting. There are socialist countries and capitalist countries. Asia is the most populous region in the world. It is also a region with diverse ethnic groups, religions and cultures, with diverse development models and levels. As a result, party politics in East Asia is more complex and diverse than anywhere else.

### 2.1. The diversity of Asian party systems

Asian countries differ greatly in national conditions, political systems and party systems. Huntington believes that to explain the differences in social development, "one must go back to the specific national conditions of each country, including natural resources, geographical environment, quality of residents and, of course, historical experience." [1]. In China, with the great progress of the construction of socialist democracy, the multi-party cooperation system led by the CPC has made great progress. In northeast Asia, North Korea has three political parties, Japan and South Korea have multi-party systems, and Mongolia adopted a multi-party system in the late 1980s. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam and Laos have one-party systems, Brunei has only one party, and other countries have different forms of multi-party systems. In South Asia, Bhutan is a monarchy with no political par-

ties, and all other countries have multi-party systems. In central Asia, apart from the one-party system in Turkmenistan, other countries have multi-party systems with different characteristics. In west Asia, political parties are more complex. In the gulf, Iran and Iraq are increasingly multi-party politics. The six Gulf States have no political parties, but Kuwait allows different political factions to operate legally [2].

### **2.2. The value orientation of various political parties varies greatly**

East Asian political parties differ greatly in history, culture, value orientation and ideology, as well as in social basis, interest demands, domestic and foreign affairs. There are socialist parties, such as the ruling parties of China, Korea, Laos and Vietnam, social democratic parties, national democratic parties, such as the social Democratic Party of Japan and the congress party of India, as well as conservative parties and parties with religious overtones. In fact, the political divide in many Asian parties is blurred, at the same time, it has many political and social attributes and ideological characteristics.

## **3. The Factors Influencing the Political Development of Political Parties in the Modernization of East Asia.**

Political parties and party systems in East Asian countries are the result of the collision and integration of eastern and western political civilizations and the product of the specific political and social environment in East Asia. As a matter of fact, East Asian culture itself is also embracing all rivers and lakes in a manner to meet such challenges and constantly make itself to realize the so-called transformation to modernization [3]. On the one hand, East Asian political parties and their systems bear a strong western brand, no matter from the generation of political parties or from the development process, on the other hand, East Asian political parties and their systems grow and mature in the specific political, economic, historical and cultural soil of East Asia, with authentic Oriental characteristics.

### **3.1 Historical and cultural traditions**

Historically, most Asian countries have long practiced feudal centralized systems, and this unique political tradition has exerted a great influence on the political development of Asia. Although the colonial rule of western powers in Asia promoted the gradual disintegration of the traditional centralized political and administrative system in Asia to a large extent, it did not completely eliminate the political tradition in Asia, and it continued and passed on to a certain extent. After gaining national independence after World War II, Asia cherished and attached great importance to its history and traditional culture,

which led to the revival of the traditional politics of various countries to some extent, the Authoritarianism that once prevailed reflected some characteristics of the traditional politics of East Asia in many aspects.

Several of the most influential traditional cultures in Asia also influence each other, overlapping and overlapping in time and space. For example, Southeast Asia was influenced by Confucian culture, Indian culture and Islamic culture in history. In modern times, with the invasion of western colonialism, it was also strongly penetrated by western culture [4]. Therefore, the diversity of Asian culture influences the diversity of political development practices to a certain extent, which is reflected through the various political development orientations and patterns of Asian countries.

### **3.2. The legacy of western colonialism**

In the process of colonizing Asian countries, western powers also transplanted western political systems to these countries, exerting a strong influence on their modern politics. When western colonists invaded Asia, missionaries often accompanied gunboats, and whenever they occupied a place, they preached, causes the western civilization and the eastern civilization conflict and the collision. Britain occupied Singapore, Malaya, Brunei and other places in Southeast Asia and established the British and Indian colonial empire in the south Asian subcontinent; The Netherlands occupied Indonesia; Spain and the United States occupied the Philippines. Western colonial invasion interrupted the independent development process of these countries in Asia and weakened the traditional political and social management system of these countries, a western political system or a mixture of east and west was introduced to varying degrees.

### **3.3. The level of economic and social development**

The state of a society's political system is always linked to its level of economic development. Economic development is the basis of political development, which is fundamentally restricted by the level of productive forces. Historically, the development of western democratic politics is also based on the premise of economic development and social progress, and political development is achieved along with economic development and the improvement of productivity level.

A country with a high level of industrialization and economic development is more conducive to the development of democracy. On the contrary, in backward agricultural societies, it is difficult to find suitable soil for democracy to take root.

The modernization of East Asian countries began on the basis of traditional agricultural society. The changes of social development level and social structure have a strong influence on political development. Political development cannot be separated from a certain social basis.

The special social development level and structure in Asia have formed strong constraints on political development, which makes the long-standing tradition of centralization and autocracy still show strong vitality in this environment, it is against this background that authoritarian politics has entered the historical stage. Of course, this social structure is not fixed, but with the development of economy and society, the social structure has undergone drastic changes, which will lay a foundation for the implementation of modern democratic politics.

### **3.4 The impact of the international environment**

The political development in Asia mainly depends on the specific internal social and historical conditions and is also influenced by the external environment. The Second World War dealt a heavy blow to colonialism, many Asian colonial countries took advantage of the favorable international environment to fight for independence, get rid of colonial rule and establish national independent states. However, the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, formed in the later period of World War II and after the end of World War II, had an important impact on many Asian countries, making some countries go to socialist countries, while others joined the capitalist camp or remained neutral.

With the development of political democratization and economic globalization, the contact and communication between countries in the world have become increasingly close, and the demonstration effect of western democratic system has also been increasingly strengthened. Democratic politics has become the most influential system in the world, attracting more and more countries to make efforts for it. Of course, only relying on the demonstration effect of western democratic system cannot bring democracy, and the political transformation of democracy can be successful only on the basis of mature domestic conditions.

## **4. The Political Transformation of East Asian Parties**

As an important way to realize democratic politics, party politics appears and develops, which is the core part of modern political operation. In a broad sense, political transformation refers to the structural change of great significance in the process of national political development, while in a narrow sense, it refers to the qualitative change from one political form to another. After the Second World War, party politics in East Asian countries experienced three major stages of development [5].

The first phase, from 1945 to about 1965. Many political parties have been established in various countries and multi-party systems have been established in imitation of those in the west. As a result of internal struggles within the multi-party system, economic stagnation and social unrest have resulted in dissatisfaction among the people,

this shows that the multi-party system could not work effectively in the East Asian society at that time, this multi-party system changed into the one-party system or one-party superiority system for various reasons. Similar to the one-party system, authoritarianism often provides order, discipline and stability [6], catering to the needs of authoritarian rule.

The second phase, from 1965 to the mid-1980s. Under the rule of authority, East Asian countries have implemented the party system of one-party superiority. The one-party system is actually the iron rule of a few elites or soldiers in a party. Basically, it is the one-party monopoly, which has been in power for a long time, suppressing or canceling other parties. Under the situation of one-party dominance, the domestic situation is quite stable and the policy implementation is relatively long. Therefore, the national policy is not subject to frequent changes by political parties or bills proposed by the government are easily passed by the legislature and the administrative efficiency is relatively high. Empirical research shows that in the early stage of modernization, the one-party system provides a strong institutional guarantee, so it is often better to maintain social stability [7]. During this period, the economies of various countries developed rapidly and the society was relatively stable. However, under the one-party dictatorship, political and social freedom was greatly restricted.

The third phase, from the mid-1980s to the present. Many authoritarian countries in East Asia have undergone political transformation, and socialist country Vietnam has also begun to carry out political innovation, thus the political development of East Asian countries has entered a new stage of development. With the breakthrough of economic modernization and political democratization, political parties and party politics have undergone major changes and transformations in this period under new conditions. Due to the differences in the stage of economic development and social and cultural conditions, the development level of political parties and party systems in various countries is not uniform, and the transformation occurs sooner or later. In 1986, the Philippine people's power revolution overthrew Max's 20-year dictatorship. Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia and other countries bid farewell to the old authoritative rule and began the democratization process, from dictatorship to democracy, from single-party domination to multi-party politics, from centralization to decentralization, from military regime to civilian regime. These indicate that East Asian countries begin to re-explore political systems suitable for their national conditions.

## **5. Analysis of the Reasons for Party Transformation in East Asia**

The political transformation in East Asia is a profound political transformation in the history of East Asian polit-

ical development, It emerged in the context of political democratization and economic globalization. The political transformation of political parties in East Asian countries during this period was facilitated by various complex factors, among which the following are the key factors.

### **5.1. The rapid economic development has laid a solid material foundation for the political transformation in East Asia**

Marxism holds that the economic basis determines the superstructure. Economy is always not based on people's subjective will to open their own way forward, not only improve the material basis for the development of politics, but also put forward the requirements for the reform of the old political system, so as to promote the development of the political system. After decades of rapid economic development after the war, the level of economic modernization of East Asian countries has been greatly improved. Democratization requires at least the prerequisites for transformation, as in the case of the Philippines and Indonesia [8]. On the one hand, great economic achievements have provided conditions for political democratization; on the other hand, they have put forward requirements for changing the old political system. With the continuous development of market economy, the government-led model in authoritarian politics is replaced by the market-led model, and the disadvantages of the political centralization model are increasingly exposed, the popular demand for democratic rights and the rule of law is increasingly strong. Under the new historical conditions, authoritarian politics has increasingly lost its political legitimacy.

### **5.2. The formation of modern civil society and the growth of the middle class have prepared the social and class basis for political transformation**

In the process of economic modernization, the market economy has given birth to relatively independent social forces, namely the middle class and civil society. Huntington believed that in the "third wave" of democratization, the economic level of political transformation should reach the per capita GDP of \$500-1,000 [9]. In the case of East Asia, democracy developed and grew in the process of contradiction and game between civil society and state centralization, and the middle class formed the backbone of the democratization movement. Generally speaking, the higher the level of economic and social development, the higher the level of political participation will be [10]. Compared with other members of the society, the affluent and better-educated middle class have stronger awareness and ability of political participation, and are more concerned about the use of public power and political rights. Therefore, they have more

urgent requirements to protect their economic interests in terms of system and law.

### **5.3. The development of cultural education, and the enhancement of democratic concept and political participation consciousness are also important factors to promote the political transformation of East Asian parties**

Rapid economic development has led to an increase in the number of educated people in East Asian countries and an unprecedented increase in the level of public education. The improvement of education level not only promotes the economic growth, but also strongly promotes the improvement of the public's willingness and ability to participate in politics. Education also plays an important role in the training of administrative elites, the expansion of civil servants from the middle class promotes the administrative reform of the government, on this basis, Political movements calling for democratic reform in East Asian countries are generally carried out.

### **5.4. The market economy has cultivated people's democratic politics and legal concept, and prepared the ideological basis for political transformation**

Modern market economy is characterized by the exchange of equivalent value, fair competition and free development, so it is conducive to breaking the closed, conservative and narrow way of life and thinking under the traditional natural economy, and promoting the formation of contract consciousness and right consciousness among people. In the process of developing the modern market economy, the public consciousness and ability to participate in politics in East Asian countries have been significantly enhanced, and the culture of participatory democracy has been gradually nurtured and grown.

## **6. Positive Characteristics and Some Think of Political Transformation of East Asian Parties**

Political transformation is a concept belonging to the category of political development and political modernization. In a broad sense, it is a structural change of great significance in the process of national political development. In a narrow sense, one form of politics transforms into another. The political transformation in East Asia specifically refers to the development and change process from authoritarian politics to modern democratic politics. In the political transformation of East Asia, there are several characteristics: The first is to realize the transition from the military regime to the civilian government. With the rapid development of economy and the advancement of national modernization, especially the establishment of democratic political system, military intervention has become a threat to the democratic system

and the rule of law. In Indonesia and South Korea, for example, soldiers have withdrawn from the center of political power, returning power to the people and reducing the threat of military intervention.

Second, with the advance of democratic political system, the structure of administrative centralization under authoritarian politics has changed significantly. After the transition, most of the countries adopted measures such as amending the constitution and strengthening the powers of the legislative and judicial organs to transition to the democratic system of decentralization and checks and balances, and developed a trend of checks and balances of the three powers. Third, in the period of authoritarian rule, the one-party system or one-party dominance system is often implemented. The ruling party occupies the dominant position and excludes and limits the opposition parties. In the process of democratic transformation, the opposition political movement began to recover with the relaxation of the authoritarian government's control over the country and the increase of the people's awareness of participation in politics, thus forming a powerful impact on the one-party system, through free election and multi-party competition, under the guidance of the spirit of democracy and the rule of law, political parties take turns to govern, and there is a trend of competitive multi-party politics. For example, in Singapore, the first opposition mp was elected to the parliament in 1981, which shocked the politics and attracted the attention of the world. Since then, the opposition parties have gradually become active and increased. Every time a candidate has been elected to the parliament, people's attention to the opposition parties has also increased. The ruling people's action party (pap) has also had to take competition from the opposition seriously, relax political restrictions, give the opposition more room to operate, and carry out institutional and policy reforms [11]. Fourth, interest groups and the public's enthusiasm for political participation has become active. The active participation of interest groups and people in national political life is one of the great advantages of modern democratic politics, which shows that the power of society is growing, while the power of authoritarian countries to control society is weakening, and a vibrant modern society is taking shape, laying a foundation for the development of democratic politics.

From the perspective of the political development stage of political parties in history, east Asian authoritarianism has a positive aspect, which plays a role in maintaining national independence and social stability, actively developing economy and promoting social modernization, thus laying a solid foundation for the establishment of modern state and political democracy. To be specific, in

terms of economy, it should still give top priority to economic development, improve market mechanism, attach importance to people's livelihood and improve social welfare. In terms of politics, we have actively promoted the modernization of the country and the construction of the democratic political system. East Asia in this period was at the same historical stage of political development or party system development with Western Europe and North America in the 19th century, central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century and Latin America since the 1970s. Of course, in terms of specific historical circumstances, it can't be exactly the same. After the political system transformation of East Asian countries, the trend of the transformation from one-party system to multi-party system occurred. Although the modern competitive party system has taken shape, it is a long way from complete transformation. The stability of political parties is poor, the institutionalization level of political parties and activities is low, most countries implement a weak party system, party politics is not mature enough, there are various problems, East Asia's party politics is still in the primary stage [12].

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