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Abstracts

Democratization and Government Education Provision in East Asia

Jing Chen

Although it is commonly believed that democracy promotes public services such as education, efforts have just started to evaluate empirically how the recent trend of democratization affects education services in the developing world. This article reports on the first regionwide investigation in East Asia. By studying the effects of democracy on multiple education indicators in a time-series–cross-section dataset of eight East Asian countries/political entities, the article examines whether democratic governments increase education spending and access and which social groups are favored in the process. The statistical results, which are corroborated by findings from two case studies, show that democracy plays a progressive role in promoting education spending and school enrollment at the basic level in East Asia.

KEYWORDS: democratization, education policy, East Asia, redistribution, education spending, school enrollment, error correction model, time-series–cross-section analysis, Taiwan, Thailand

The Origins of Regional Autonomy in Indonesia: Experts and the Marketing of Political Interests

Benjamin Smith

This article argues that, in contrast with prevalent choice-theoretic accounts of institutional origins in new democracies, the passage of Indonesia's regional autonomy laws in 1999 took place despite the interests of powerful political actors rather than because of them. Lacking the past experience to calculate retrospectively the likely electoral payoff from supporting an effort to devolve political power to Indonesia's city and regency governments, New Order-era political elites in Jakarta gambled on the advice of a team of experts. The experts assured them that supporting the effort would give them strong and salient reformist credentials on the eve of free elections. The conclusion of the article suggests that the political origins of regional autonomy in Indonesia have broad implications for the understanding of institutional genesis in new democracies, and that the potential impact of expert advisers is a fruitful focus of future research.

KEYWORDS: Indonesia, decentralization, federalism, institutionalism, transition

Interest Groups in North Korean Politics

Patrick McEachern

North Korea is often characterized as some form of highly centralized rule: totalitarian, posttotalitarian, corporatist, or personalistic. This article argues that much of the confusion around understanding North Korea's actions stems from misplaced models. Much of the current thinking on North Korea's politics does not account for the limited institutional plurality in the system. The article documents how the state's political institutions have changed since the country's founding and highlights the formal and informal roles of each major bureaucracy today. The Korean Workers Party and the role of Juche have declined, but the National Defense Commission and "military-first politics" have not taken their place as reigning supreme. Rather the interaction between the Korean Workers Party, military, and cabinet helps explain and moderate policy outcomes.

KEYWORDS: North Korea, DPRK, institutions, interest groups, pluralism, cabinet, NDC, KWP

Assessing North Korean Nuclear Intentions and Capacities: A New Approach

Jacques E. C. Hymans

This article develops a novel assessment of the nuclear program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Using a theory-driven approach rooted in comparative foreign policy analysis, the article undermines two common assumptions about the DPRK nuclear threat: first, that the North Korean leadership's nuclear intentions are a measured response to the external environment and, second, that the DPRK has developed enough technical capacity to go nuclear whenever it pleases. In place of these assumptions, the article puts forth the general theoretical hypotheses that (1) the decision to go nuclear is rarely if ever based on typical cost-benefit analysis, and instead reflects deep-seated national identity conceptions, and (2) the capacity to go nuclear depends not only on raw levels of industrialization and nuclear technology, but also on the state's organizational acumen. Applied to the case of the DPRK, these hypotheses suggest that it has long been strongly committed to the goal of acquiring an operational nuclear deterrent, but also that it has been finding it very difficult to successfully implement that wish. The article also demonstrates that these hypotheses are supported by the meager evidence available on this case.

KEYWORDS: comparative foreign policy, DPRK (North Korea), national identity conceptions, neopatrimonialism, nuclear proliferation, regime type and state structure, sultanistic regimes, threat assessment

North Korea and the World: A Bibliography of Books and URLs in English, 1997–2007

Walter C. Clemens Jr.

This survey of books in English on North Korea, 1997–2007, identifies nearly 240 titles—mostly by US authors but also by authors in Australia, Europe, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Russia. The books fall into eleven categories: history and culture; the Korean War revisited; the DPRK regime and its leaders; human rights and humanitarian issues; the economy: Juche, Songun, collapse, or reform; DPRK military assets and programs; relations with the United States; arms control negotiations and outcomes; regional and world security; prospects for North-South unification; and North Korea's future. A final section includes useful websites. This survey points to a wide interest in North Korea and underscores the serious and ongoing efforts of many scholars and policy analysts to understand developments there.

KEYWORDS: North Korea, scholarship, bibliography, history, Korean War, DPRK regime, Kim Jong Il, human rights, economy, military, United States, arms control, negotiation, security, DPRK-ROK unification, peace, future