

COMPARATIVE GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL STABILITY: A STUDY OF SINGAPORE AND SOUTH KOREA

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Statement of Originality

This research paper is my own original and independent work. I have cited and referenced all sources, ideas, and materials from other authors, and I have followed the guidelines as specified in the APA 7th edition. I did not obtain help from sources I shouldn't have, nor have I submitted this paper for another class. I have read and understand the university's principles of academic integrity, and, thus, I am responsible for the integrity and truthfulness of this submission.

Abstract: In this paper, I compare political stability and governance models for Singapore and South Korea using qualitative comparative analysis. I first look at how two successful Asian states achieved stability and economic development through different political systems Singapore under a soft-authoritarian regime and South Korea under a liberal democracy. The use of case study analysis and other secondary statistical data helps identify key similarities concerning economic modernization and institutional effectiveness, as well as differences regarding political freedoms, political party competition, and state-society relations. I find that Singapore employs governance that is more constricted and order-preservative, while South Korea employs a more open and order-affirming democracy. I argue that both systems create stability, albeit through different means, which are influenced by their historical and state-building trajectories.

Keywords: governance, political stability, Singapore, South Korea.

Introduction

One of the most heated topics in comparative politics is the question of political stability and how different systems of governance order and accrue legitimacy and trust in society. This paper seeks to analyze the question of how politically "stable" Singapore and South Korea are under different systems of governance. The mid-20th century saw the two states economically blossoming and socially modernized, but politically, their divergence was pronounced. Singapore's governance was "soft" authoritarian with a dominant party. South Korea, after 1987, moved from military rule to a competitive democracy. The comparison between these states reveals the question of whether stability is best achieved through strong, centralized, and dispersed order or through democracy and pluralism.

Political institutions and the relative stability of governance of a polity, the paper argues, are primarily determined by the political party system, governance modalities and strategies, and citizen and state relations. Mechanisms of stability are also maintained through the legitimacy of the system. The case studies offer a comparison based on the primary qualitative research trend. The political order, legitimacy, construction of dissent, governance, and political environments are different in each case, and examine the effectiveness of governance in two different systems.

There are interesting cases to study. The first is Singapore. It performs exceptionally in the areas of economic competitiveness, corruption control, and effective government. It is, however, interesting to note that it has limited political competition and civil liberties. Then, take a look at South Korea. It has a fully functioning democracy, active civil society, and pluralistic debates, but it has also had to deal with political fragmentation, mass protests, and corruption scandals. These contrasting cases present important opportunities for studying the relationships among democracy, governance, and stability.

This study aims to implement a political stability mechanism within the two frameworks and determine if democracy or semi-authoritarianism allows for the most effective governance. Comparative analytics has shown that the type of governance model in place within the state is not the sole determinant of stability. Other factors include state capacity, social historical legacies, and social and institutional design. Singapore, for instance, practices technocratic governance and has a limited system of civil participation. South Korea has a system of democracy and a political accountability framework that is much more relied upon.

This research has added scope to the understudied topic of governance in East Asia. It has also contested the view that long-term stability is the monopoly of democracies. It argues that both models can succeed based on certain sociohistorical conditions. The subsequent sections will review the relevant literature, outline the research design, provide the case studies, and explain the implications for the field of comparative politics.

Literature Review

The connection between different types of governance and their effect on political stability has been the focus of much scholarly discussion. Singapore and South Korea are frequently together in the comparative literature because of their different institutional paths and comparative developmental success. Rodan (2018) describes Singapore's political system as dominant-party governance within state-controlled participation processes and the system's technocratic elite. He contends that such a system provides stability by conflict minimization and continuity of policy implementation. South Korea, by contrast, embodies what Shin (2012) describes as a "mobilized democracy" by having a democracy where civil society is active, competitive elections are held, and robust accountability from the public is expected.

In Singapore, the People's Action Party "authoritarian stability" and "democratic resilience" are juxtaposed by Kang (2017), who explains that the PAP provides legitimacy to citizens through performance on governance and in the provision of public goods. Limited political pluralism is accepted by citizens because the state provides economic growth and public goods. In contrast, South Korea's legitimacy is built on political elections, public participation, and a constitution that provides active limitations on public power (Kim, 2020).

Some scholars argue that democracy does not always bring about stability. For instance, Case (2019) uses Singapore as an example of a situation in which calibrated governance prevents polarization and disintegration of a political system. George (2014) points out that the media, speech, and opposition politics are all tightly controlled and regulated systems, and thus argue that soft authoritarianism merely stifles dissent. On the contrary, South Korea encourages contestation, and as a result, the freedom of the press aids in government accountability, which can lead to considerable civil disorder, like the mass protests that are sometimes seen.

It cannot be disputed that the role of economic development as a subject is significant. In this regard, Johnson (1999) states that the two nations used development state models with focus on export-based development, strengthened state bureaucracies and industrialization.

However, the political events in the two nations moved in different directions once the economies were made consistent. As Singapore continued to be centralized, South Korea had been democratized through a process of issuing social movements and political rights protests.

Institutional design patterns are paid attention by some people. To illustrate, as noted by Mutalib (2015) the electoral system of Singapore is such that it helps to ensure that the ruling party of state stays in control, which is not the case in South Korea where the mixed electoral system encourages and promotes competition. South Korea is viewed as a country with high state capacity whereas Singapore is viewed as a country with high democratic accountability (Freedom House, 2023).

Contrary to this, people recognize the many similarities. They concentrate on the meritocratic bureaucracies, similar educational systems, and the long-term developmental planning. Nonetheless, the differences in governance models reveal social contracts of a different order. For Singapore, the social contract is around order and efficiency, while for South Korea, it is around rights and participation.

There are also different perceptions regarding the future of the two countries. Some people think the Singaporean government may face tougher challenges in the future as citizens become more politically conscious and active. Others, however, believe the risk in South Korea's democracy is polarization and the erosion of trust. These perspectives provide context for the current study.

Methodology

The study uses the QCA and case study methods to explore Singapore and South Korea. Primary sources and secondary data, institutional reports, and academic literature comprise the data collection methods. 'Comparative governance' allows one to view the political 'settlements' and 'constellations' and order frameworks of stability and governance. Singapore and South Korea were chosen because, while their political regimes differ, their systems share comparable development trajectories. Once again, this was meaningfully useful. The comparative analysis, which does not rely on any theoretical constructs, variables, or frameworks, focuses on the understanding of political stability attained within each state and describes and analyzes the extent to which it was achieved. The political development in this region and the relevant interest of the scholarship on the subject adequately justifies the choice of this case.

Case Studies: Singapore and South Korea

Singapore

Singapore's political system integrates dominant political party rule, strong technocratic governance, and highly developed state capacity. Since independence, the PAP has continued to win staggering electoral majorities owing to a centralized bureaucracy and systemic policy planning. Strict governance of civil societies, the media, and political opposition aids the maintenance of political stability. The government defends such stability as a prerequisite for economic success and stresses the need for social harmony and national security. Limited political pluralism, high public trust in state institutions, and low corruption firmly reinforce legitimacy. Nonetheless, dissent is attenuated through a systemic and legal framework, as institutional pluralism is highly restricted.

South Korea

After 1987, South Korea changed from authoritarian military rule to a democratic society. The foundation of political stability consisted of democratic competition, an active civil society, and a constitutional order consisting of checks and balances. There is competition in elections, presidents have term limits, and political party's alternate power. The presence of corruption scandals and mass protests is public accountability. South Korea

is mainly concerned with the governance model of social and political participation, freedom, and openness of public institutions. More politically contentious than Singapore, South Korea, nevertheless, derives stability from democratic legitimacy.

Comparative Discussion

Even with the difference, the two states maintained important Similarities. Highly Developed bureaucratic institutions, Long-term educational investments, and strategies contributed to their rapid economic expansion and the modernization of their respective societies. Though governance structures differ -state-corporatism and centralized decision-making in the case of Singapore versus political competition and the participation of civil South in the case of South Korea - the two attain political stability. Predictability and order generate the political stability enjoyed in Singapore and the legitimacy of the democracy in South Korea. South Korea suffers from legal and political strife and institutional resilience. Both systems are stable but different with respect to the historical developments and the societies in focus.

Discussion

In my opinion, looking at Singapore and South Korea shows that political stability is not a matter of what regime type is adopted. Instead, stability is a function of how governance meets the expectations of the governed and how the history of a region plays out. Singapore's model is effective because its governance meets the priorities of its society, which are order, economic security, and predictable governance. Many Singaporeans actually appreciate continuity and trust a technocratic leadership. South Korea's model works also because its citizens value political freedoms and appreciate актив participation in the processes. Protests, governance scandals, and electoral turnover are not signs of system instability, but a reflection of democratic culture that invites accountability, and in fact, should be encouraged.

Democratic systems, in my opinion, bolster governance legitimacy in the long run, even if they are associated with conflicts in the short run. South Korea's experience shows that trust can be maintained by government in a time of crisis relative to governance turnover through open democratic accountability. An economically efficient Singapore, however, may be likely to experience challenges of crisis governance in the future as society continues to modernize in its demand's active participation. The presence of limited pluralism stands as a likely greater democracy vulnerability in the systems of Singapore as the population expects governance to modernize and grow in multiple directions. Nevertheless, Singapore strongly demonstrates that soft authoritarian governance succeeds within specific contextual conditions, and especially in small states with cohesive technocratic capacities and populations.

The two systems exhibit some form of stability at the end of the day. South Korea emphasizes the bottom-top orientation and Singapore model focuses on the top-down governance. In the long-term sustainability perspective, I would also argue that the democracy in South Korea, though turbulent, has more flexible and long-lasting building blocks. Political contestation cannot be avoided and it must be taken as strength because this is a testament to the fact that a democracy is alive and well.

Conclusion

This paper is dedicated to the role that various governance structures can play in ensuring that Singapore and South Korea remain politically stable. Although both Singapore and South Korea share the same history of development, the two countries differed so much in terms of their political development. South Korea handles political stability issue by participatory democracy, competitive elections, and involvement of civil society whereas Singapore handles the political stability issue by dominant-party rule, technocratic

government, and heavy control by the state. This indicates that stability should be flexible and it is neither an authoritarian nor a democracy in its entirety.

Singapore has its political stability due to order and predictability whereas South Korea has its due to the political democracy and accountability. All of the systems have weaknesses; Singapore does not appear to be able to respond to the changes, whereas South Korea has the weakness of political instability due to conflicts. Both of these, however, have also developed historically the political stability with respect to their own history.

This demonstrates that there cannot be a single method of governance and that there cannot be a single system that can bring about stability. Rather, the interdependence of the societal values and the legitimacy and responsiveness of the institutions can bring about stability. The two cases make useful contributions to the theoretical literature on comparative politics on the context and rule of political systems.

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