

Project title:

Globalization, Democratization, and the Reconfigured Developmental State: South Korea and Taiwan. GRF Project Number: 241308

Abstract of research:

The developmental state, i.e. a government that actively guides and supports economic development, is one of the main perspectives put forth to account for the rapid industrial growth of Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian countries. However, social and political changes since the mid-1980s have presented critical challenges to the Asian development state (ADS). Globalization, whether embraced strategically by Asian states or subjecting them to merciless global competition, has been accompanied by the pursuit of knowledge-based industries. In turn, the blooming of these industries is said to require conditions different from those provided by the ADS. An additional factor to consider is the democratization of some Asian countries, which in triggering the reorganization of political institutions and processes has transformed the conditions under which Asian states can exercise developmental leadership. Hence, this project will examine whether the challenges of globalization and democratization have (1) led to the decline of the ADS, (2) allowed the ADS to remain intact, deploying prevalent instruments, or (3) facilitated the reconfiguration of the ADS and enabled it to continue to play a developmental role.

To address this multifaceted question, the project will involve an examination of the information technology sector in Korea and Taiwan – an area in which both the PI and the Co-I have considerable research experience. The research question will be divided into two analytical dimensions. The first will study whether democratization and globalization have led to the reorganization of state institutions and processes and, if so, whether the state elite can continue to exercise developmental leadership. Compliance and collaboration on the part of the social-economic actors will accordingly form an integral part of this dimension of the project. The second dimension will study the actual guidance and support rendered to knowledge-based industries and evaluate whether they differ from the assistance offered in an earlier era. These two analytical questions will, in turn, be examined through (1) a macro-level study of the policies for the development of the information technology sector put in place by the Korean and Taiwanese governments since the 1990s, and (2) micro-level research that takes the patenting efforts in Korea and Taiwan as

the point of departure. Both document analysis and in-depth interviews will be used.

The overall aim of the project will be to provide a more thorough and theoretically informed analysis of the reconfigured developmental states of Korea and Taiwan. We expect to publish several internationally refereed journal articles and, in time, a monograph on the findings.