

# **The Consolidations and Breaks of Authoritarian Regimes: A Comparative Study of Taiwan and South Korea in the 1950s**

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By comparing the political development of Taiwan and South Korea in the 1950s, this paper aims to explain the consolidations and breaks of authoritarian regimes. This research claims that an authoritarian regime is shaped from two critical factors. First, its consolidation is substantially affected by the main source of support, which determines the stability of nation-state relations. While an authoritarian regime could sustain stable state-society relations through the support from elites, it may suffer from instability through the support from citizens. For example, in the 1950s, Chiang Kai-shek's government built exchange relationship between state and local elites, and it obtained the stability of state-society relations. In contrast, Syngman Rhee's government developed connection between state and citizens, and it lost the stability. Second, its strengthening is profoundly influenced by the design of election institutions, which essentially shapes the possibility of collective movements. An authoritarian regime may reduce the possibility of collective movements by limiting the election systems on the local level, whereas it may raise the possibility by extending the election institutions on the national level. For instance, in Taiwan, KMT's regime confined the elections on the local level, which successfully separated political dissent and formed an atomized society. On the other hand, in Korea, Liberal Party's regime opened the elections on the local level, which enabled citizen to organize nationwide movements. In short, an authoritarian regime's reinforcement is determined by election institutions and the main source of support.

Key words: authoritarian regime, main source of support, state-society relations, election institution, collective movement, Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek