

**Regionalism is becoming less important in South Korea's political system. Overcoming regionalism for cooperation among regions is essential for South Korea to achieve greater democracy.**

**ASIA367: Contemporary Korean Culture**

**By Edward Kyoo-Hoon Kim**

**Word Count: 3990 (Excluding Bibliography)**

Contemporary South Korea has received international acclaim with their achievements in rapid economic development known as the miracle of the Han river. Despite South Korea's phenomenal achievements, economic distribution in South Korea were not fairly provided to all its regions, eliciting regionalism into politics and affecting its democratization. For the study, we define democracy as a state with social and economic equality including the fair representations of its people. Previous regimes and administrations in South Korea has utilized regionalism in their favor for political security and has been proven to be effective. However, due to various factors, whether political figures can continue to depend on regionalism like the past to garner political support need to be questioned. The following study argues that the importance of regionalism in contemporary South Korean politics is diminishing and that overcoming regionalism for the enhancement of regional cooperation is essential for the South Korea to become more democratic. To address the argument, a combination of various data including presidential electoral results and distribution of high ranking officials will be used. Also, various political protests will be used to describe the importance of overcoming regionalism for greater democracy. Lastly, various dramas and films will be addressed throughout to portray the media representation of this study.

### *Historical Regionalism and Regional Bias in Contemporary Politics*

Regionalism is a significant component of contemporary South Korean politics. Regionalism has existed throughout Korean history, however, its growth in contemporary politics and its effect on voting behaviour was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s during Park Jeong-hui's regime (Park 2003: 814). The electoral divide between Yeongnam constituting: North and South Gyeongsang-do, Busan, Daegu and Ulsan and Honam constituting: North and South Jeolla-do and Gwangju. began to emerge since Park Jeong-hui held office. The emergence occurred to oppose against Park Jeong-hui's composition of core members with people primarily from Yeongnam to gain political security as his military based authoritarian regime lacked political legitimacy (Park 2003: 814). By imposing regionally biased politics through discrimination and unfair allocation of public resource for Yeongnam, Park Jeong-hui could guarantee continuous support from Yeongnam (Park 2003: 814). Looking at Table 1, the distribution of constructed industrial districts in the 1960s were 4-fold higher in Yeongnam than Honam. This exemplifies a discriminative economic policy against Honam during his regime. According to a survey commissioned by the Presidential Committee for National Cohesion, 14.3 percent of Honam residents expressed discrimination against them (Hahn et al. 2017: 506). Such discrimination is exemplified in *The King* (N.E.W., Director Han Jae-rim, 2017), a film portraying the South Korea prosecution system and its corruption. While Park Tae-su portrayed by Jo In-seong is waiting for the assignation of the location of his mandatory military service, he narrates that his father portrayed by Jeong Seong-mo told him to falsify his birthplace of Honam as he will receive unfair treatment in military placements. Since, then Park Tae-su informs newly met acquaintances that he is a native from Seoul and moves his *Hojeok* [family register] to Seoul.

**Table 1.** Government initiated industrial district built in the 1960s

Busan	Sasang Industrial District
Daegu	Daegu Third Industrial District
Daegu	Sungseo Industrial District
Daegu	Geomdan Industrial District
South Jeolla	Yeochon Industrial District
Gangwon	Gyongchun Industrial District

Data retrieved from "Territorialized Party Politics and the Politics of Local Economic Development: State-Led Industrialization and Political Regionalism in South Korea" *Political Geography* 22, no.8 (2003): 823 by Park, Bae-Gyoon.<sup>1</sup>

We can also measure regional economic disparity using regional share by Gross National Product of the Gross National Product. In 1962 and 1970 Yeongnam's regional share by GRP was 29.4% and 29.6% of the GNP respectively (Park 2003: 825). This shows that economically, Honam faced discrimination and was underdeveloped compared to that of Yeongnam. Furthermore, between 1963 and 1979, 40.0% and 17.7% of the regional origin of high-ranking officials were from Yeongnam and Honam respectively (Park 2003: 816). This shows the unfair distribution of power among regions and how non-Yeongnam were under expressed in government. Such political divide influenced the voting behaviour of South Korean citizens, impeding South Korea to achieve greater democracy. The effect of regionalism in voting behaviour was significant until the Kim Dae-jung administration and decreased during the No Mu-hyeon administration but became prevalent again during the Lee Myeong-bak and Park Geun-hye administration. Again, the presence of regionalism in present South Korean politics have become less significant since the impeachment of president Park Geun-hye and the election of president Mun Jae-in.

We can see an example of regional divide effecting voting behaviour in *Reply 1997* (tvN, Director Sin Won-ho and Park Seong-jae, 2012), a drama portraying South Korean society and culture since 1997 with examples of real events. Throughout various episodes Seong Dong-il and Lee Il-hwa argue over Sung Dong-il's actions towards the 15<sup>th</sup> presidential election. Lee Il-hwa expresses that she cannot understand Seong Dong-il's desire to watch the presidential debates despite he has already made up his decision to vote for Kim Dae-jung. The scenes show that Sung Dong-il's vote has been secured by Kim Dae-jung as they were both from Honam. Such voting bias is seen in Table 2 where Kim Dae-jung has over 90% voting average in all Honam regions, showing clear voting bias. The menial votes Kim Dae-jung received in Yeongnam, are likely from voters like Seong Dong-il from *Reply 1997* who originates from Honam but resides in Yeongnam.

---

<sup>1</sup> See bibliography for full reference

**Table 2.** 15<sup>th</sup> presidential electoral results by voter's location in percentage<sup>2</sup>

	Lee Hoe-chang	Kim Dae-jung	Lee In-je	Kwon Yeong-gil
Seoul	40.9	44.9	12.8	1.1
Busan	53.3	15.3	29.8	1.2
Daegu	72.7	12.5	13.1	1.2
Incheon	36.4	38.5	23.0	1.6
Gwangju	1.7	97.3	0.7	0.2
Daejeon	29.2	45.0	24.1	1.2
Ulsan	51.4	15.4	26.7	6.1
Gyeonggi	35.5	39.3	23.6	1.0
Gangwon	43.2	23.8	30.9	1.0
Chungbuk	30.8	37.4	29.4	1.3
Chungnam	23.5	48.3	26.1	1.0
Jeonbuk	4.5	92.3	2.1	0.4
Jeonnam	3.2	94.6	1.4	0.2
Gyeongbuk	61.9	13.7	21.8	1.5
Gyeongnam	55.1	11.0	31.3	1.7
Jeju	36.6	40.6	20.5	1.4

Data retrieved from "Interpretation of the Results of the 15<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election and the Background of a Peaceful Exchange in Administration." *Journal of Korean Social Trends and Perspectives* (1998): 58 by Jeong Dae-hwa.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 3.** Distribution of high ranking officials during the Kim Yeong-sam administration by regional origin in percentage

Yeongnam	43.7
Honam	11.0

Data compounded from <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> and [http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/View/at\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0000035983](http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000035983) by Jeong Ban-seok (2017) and Kim Dae-ho (2016).<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Data does not include minor candidates

<sup>3</sup> See bibliography for full reference

<sup>4</sup> 정반석 Jeong Ban-seok, 정권 편차에도 영남 쏠림 뚜렷 ... 호남, DJ·노무현 때 반짝 [Despite Administration Deviation Favoritism Towards Yeongnam is Evident ... Honam's Spark During DJ and No Mu-hyun's Administration], *한국일보 [Korea Times]* (2017), <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> (accessed Nov 22, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> 김대호 Kim Dae-ho, 현 정부들어 고위직 호남 출신 늘어 [Increase in High Ranking Officials from the Honam Origin Since the New Administration], *Oh My News* (2016), [http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS\\_Web/View/at\\_pg.aspx?CNTN\\_CD=A0000035983](http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0000035983) (accessed Dec 3, 2017).

**Table 4.** Distribution of high ranking officials in the Kim Dae-jung administration by regional origin in percentage

Honam	29.8
Other	71.2

Data retrieved from <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> by Jeong Ban-seok (2017)<sup>6</sup>

**Table 5.** Distribution of child-births in 1949 (column 2) and regional origin of high ranking officials in the No Mu-hyeon administration appointed during the initial 100 days (column 3) in percentage

Seoul	7.2	14
Incheon · Gyeonggi	13.6	6.1
Gangwon	5.6	5.6
Daejeon · Chungcheong	15.7	14
Gwangju · Jeonbuk · Jeonnam	25.2	23.8
Daegu · Gyeongbuk	15.9	15.8
Busan · Gyeongnam	15.5	17.8
Jeju	1.3	1.9

Data retrieved from [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_storytelling/2017/elite/](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_storytelling/2017/elite/) by *Kyeong Hyang News*<sup>7</sup>

**Table 6.** Distribution of child-births in 1949 (column 2) and regional origin of high ranking officials in the Lee Myung-Bak administration appointed during the initial 100 days (column 3) in percentage

Seoul	7.2	17.2
Incheon · Gyeonggi	13.6	4.2
Gangwon	5.6	4.7
Daejeon · Chungcheong	15.7	17.2
Gwangju · Jeonbuk · Jeonnam	25.2	17.7
Daegu · Gyeongbuk	15.9	19.5
Busan · Gyeongnam	15.5	14.9
Jeju	1.3	2.3

Data retrieved from <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> by Jeong Ban-seok (2017)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 정반석 Jeong Ban-seok, 정권 편차에도 영남 쏠림 뚜렷 ... 호남, DJ·노무현 때 반짝 [Despite Administration Deviation Favoritism Towards Yeongnam is Evident ... Honam's Spark During DJ and No Mu-hyun's Administration], 한국일보 [Korea Times] (2017), <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> (accessed Nov 22, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> 정부 핵심요직자 213명 분석 문재인정부 파워엘리트 [Analysis of the 213 Power Elites in Mun Jae-in Administration], 경향신문 [Kyeong Hyang New], [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_storytelling/2017/elite/](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_storytelling/2017/elite/) (accessed Nov 20, 2017).

**Table 7.** Distribution of child-births in 1949 (column 2) and regional origin of high ranking officials in the Park Geun hye administration appointed during the initial 100 days (column 3) in percentage

Seoul	8	19
Incheon · Gyeonggi	10.6	6.3
Gangwon	6.1	5.4
Daejeon · Chungcheong	16	16.7
Gwangju · Jeonbuk · Jeonnam	24.7	19
Daegu · Gyeongbuk	15.9	16.3
Busan · Gyeongnam	17.5	15.8
Jeju	1.2	0.9

Data retrieved from <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> by Jeong Ban-seok (2017)<sup>8</sup>

**Table 8.** Distribution of child-births in 1960 (column 2) and regional origin of high ranking officials in the Mun Jae-in administration appointed during the initial 100 days (column 3) in percentage per region

Seoul	9.8	14.1
Incheon · Gyeonggi	11	7
Gangwon	6.5	4.7
Daejeon · Chungcheong	15.6	13.6
Gwangju · Jeonbuk · Jeonnam	23.8	26.3
Daegu · Gyeongbuk	15.4	14.6
Busan · Gyeongnam	16.7	18.8
Jeju	1.1	0.9

Data retrieved from <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> by Jeong Ban-seok (2017)<sup>8</sup>

Currently, in Mun Jae-in's administration regional distribution have diminished drastically compared to that of his predecessor Park Geun-hye. Looking at Table 3-8 we can see that compared to previous administrations Mun Jae-in's administration is more equally distributed when comparing regional population size and high ranking officials. Better representation of the state will bring upon fairer economic policies and result in a greater democracy. Furthermore, with fairer state representation, the administration can minimize corruption and investigate falsely reported history like link between Jeon Du-hwan and Gwangju Uprising, which could not be done when political representation was favored towards Gyeongsang-do. The fair state representation seen in the Mun Jae-in administration cannot be seen in Lee Myung-bak's, Park Geun-hye's and Kim Dae-jung's administration.

<sup>8</sup> 정반석 Jeong Ban-seok, 정권 편차에도 영남 쏠림 뚜렷 ... 호남, DJ·노무현 때 반짝 [Despite Administration Deviation Favoritism Towards Yeongnam is Evident ... Honam's Spark During DJ and No Mu-hyun's Administration], 한국일보 [Korea Times] (2017), <http://www.hankookilbo.com/v/444c35493b7e4bf287febce32e2855bb> (accessed Nov 22, 2017).

**Table 9.** Voting turnout by age groups in percentage for the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> presidential election in South Korea

	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	≥ 60	Total
17 <sup>th</sup>	54.2	51.1	42.9	51.3	58.5	66.3	76.6	76.3	63
18 <sup>th</sup>	74	71.1	65.7	67.7	72.3	75.6	82	80.9	75.8

Data retrieved from “19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics.” *Tomorrow Open History* (2017): 70 by Jeong Hae-gu<sup>9</sup>

**Table 10.** Voting turnout by age groups in percentage for the 19<sup>th</sup> presidential election in South Korea

	19-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	≥ 70s	Total
19 <sup>th</sup>	86.9	87.2	91.2	87.5	85.5	80.8	87.7

Data retrieved from “19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics.” *Tomorrow Open History* (2017): 72 by Jeong Hae-gu<sup>10</sup>

### *Arising Trends in Electoral Campaign*

A phenomenon shown in the recent political campaign are the targeting of different age groups. From Table 9 and 10, voting turnout among younger age groups has increased significantly in every age group with the largest change in the ages between 19-39. The data from Table 9 and 10 imply that presidential candidates can no longer depend significantly on their region of origin as voting turnout of voters that are ≥ 60 in age are stagnant and younger generations make up large proportion of the South Korean electorate (Hahn et al. 2017: 510). The voters in these age groups are more likely to be more issue based voters as better education can result in the realization of the potential harm of regionalism for democracy. There is also a continue of growth of South Korean students receiving their education abroad with increasing accessibility through exchange and study aboard programs. Students whom studied abroad, especially those who left South Korea at an early age are less likely to be influenced by regionalism. Furthermore, increased education allows voters to vote for a candidate based on their political platform and engaging in identity politics rather than regional politics. Seong Dong-il in *Reply 1997* not enroll in post-secondary education and focused on athletics rather than education throughout his life. Hence, the probability of him becoming an issue based voter is low. The large increase in voting turnout seen in table 9 and 10 for the 19<sup>th</sup> presidential election is likely due to the Park Geun-hye administration’s political corruption scandal.

**Table 11.** 19<sup>th</sup> presidential electoral results by voter’s age group in percentage, table only includes major candidates.

	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	≥ 70s	Total
Mun Jae-in	47.6	56.9	52.4	36.9	24.5	22.3	41.08
Hong Jun-pyo	8.2	8.6	11.5	26.8	45.8	50.9	24.03
An Cheol-su	17.9	18	22.2	25.4	23.5	22.7	21.41
Yu Seung-min	13.2	8.9	6.5	5.9	4.1	2.6	6.76
Sim Sang-jung	12.7	7.4	7	4.5	1.6	0.9	6.17

Data retrieved from “19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics.” *Tomorrow Open History* (2017): 73 by Jeong Hae-gu<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Bibliography for full reference

<sup>10</sup> See Bibliography for full reference

**Table 12.** 19<sup>th</sup> presidential electoral results by voter's location in percentage

	Hong Jun-pyo	Yu Seung-min	An Cheol-su	Mun Jae-in	Sim Sang-jung
Seoul	20.78	7.26	22.72	42.34	6.47
Busan	31.98	7.21	16.82	38.71	4.85
Daegu	45.36	12.60	14.97	21.76	4.72
Incheon	20.91	6.54	23.65	41.2	7.16
Gwangju	1.55	2.18	30.08	61.14	4.57
Daejeon	20.30	6.34	23.21	42.93	6.75
Ulsan	27.46	8.13	17.33	38.14	8.38
Gyeonggi	20.75	6.84	22.91	42.08	6.92
Sejong	15.24	6.03	21.02	51.08	6.14
Gangwon	29.97	8.86	21.75	34.16	6.92
Chungbuk	26.32	5.90	21.78	38.61	6.7
Chungnam	24.84	5.55	23.51	38.62	6.79
Jeonbuk	3.34	2.56	23.76	64.84	4.93
Jeonnam	2.45	2.09	30.68	59.87	4.01
Gyeongbuk	48.62	8.75	14.92	21.73	5.17
Gyeongnam	37.24	6.71	13.99	36.73	5.32
Jeju	18.27	6.11	20.9	45.51	8.51

Data retrieved from "19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics." *Tomorrow Open History* (2017): 68-69 by Jeong Hae-gu<sup>11</sup>

Results from Table 12 shows that despite Hong Jun-pyo having second most total votes in the 19<sup>th</sup> election, he had accumulated the least number of votes from voters in their 20s and significantly less votes than Mun Jae-in from voters in their 30s and 40s. Such results show that as age progresses regionalism plays a more decisive role in candidate selection whereas younger voters are more issue-based.

Referring to Table 11 and 12, many of Hong Jun-pyo's voters are from the Yeongnam region as well as the older generation, hence, regional bias likely played a decisive role in Hong Jun-pyo's candidacy. Oppositely, Mun Jae-in and An Cheol-su's votes from the Yeongnam region are likely from voters engaging in identity politics or issue based politics. From looking at Tables 9 to 13 we can see that there is a positive correlation between fairer voting distribution and voting turnout among younger generations. Also, diminishing voting bias can be seen by voting trends of the Honam region in Table 12. If regional bias had been dominant, it would be expected that An Cheol-su would garner majority of the votes as his spouse Kim Mi-kyeong originates from Honam. However, votes for Mun Jae-in surpassed that of An Cheol-su's, showing evidence that age groups played a significant role in Mun Jae-in's election. In contrast, Table 14, show the evident cleavage of votes between Honam and Yeongnam for the 14<sup>th</sup> presidential election. This emphasizes that Kim Dae-jung and Kim Yeong-sam's campaign relied significantly on regional bias for their campaign. Such trend is less seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> presidential election summarized in Table 12.

<sup>11</sup> See bibliography for full reference



**Table 13.** 18<sup>th</sup> presidential electoral results by voter's location in percentage, table only includes major candidates

	Park Geun-hye	Mun Jae-in
Seoul	48.18	51.42
Busan	59.82	39.87
Daegu	80.14	19.53
Incheon	51.58	48.04
Gwangju	7.76	91.97
Daejeon	49.95	49.7
Ulsan	59.78	39.78
Gyeonggi	50.43	49.19
Sejong	51.91	47.58
Gangwon	61.97	37.53
Chungbuk	56.22	43.26
Chungnam	56.66	42.79
Jeonbuk	13.22	86.25
Jeonnam	10	89.28
Gyeongbuk	80.82	18.61
Gyeongnam	63.12	36.33
Jeju	50.46	48.95

Data retrieved from "19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics." *Tomorrow Open History* (2017): 68-69 by Jeong Hae-gu<sup>12</sup>

**Table 14.** 14<sup>th</sup> presidential electoral results per voter's location in percentage (Jeong 1998: 61), table only include major candidates

	Kim Yeong-sam	Kim Dae-jung
Seoul	36.4	37.8
Busan	73.3	12.5
Daegu	59.6	7.8
Incheon	37.3	31.7
Gwangju	2.1	95.9
Daejeon	35.2	28.7
Gyeonggi	36.3	32.0
Gangwon	41.5	15.5
Chungbuk	38.3	26.0
Chungnam	36.9	28.6
Jeonbuk	5.7	89.1
Jeonnam	4.2	92.1
Gyeongbuk	64.7	9.6
Gyeongnam	72.3	9.2
Jeju	40.0	32.9

<sup>12</sup> See bibliography for full reference

Data retrieved from “Interpretation of the Results of the 15<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election and the Background of a Peaceful Exchange in Administration.” *Journal of Korean Social Trends and Perspectives* (1998): 58 by Jeong Dae-hwa.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the inclusion of the disposition of regionalism in politics has been expressed in various political campaigns by prominent political figures including but not limited to An Cheol-su, Mun Jae-in and Pyo Chang-won. An Cheol-su who’s political platform is named new politics, expressed his pursuit to get rid of regional discrimination throughout his campaign during the 19<sup>th</sup> presidential election.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, Mun Jae-in during his presidency declared his efforts to break down regionalism in South Korea.<sup>14</sup> Pyo Chang won has also expressed his apposition towards regionalism through various social media outlets like twitter. As the importance of breaking down regionalism in South Korea becomes more actively pursued by prominent figures, awareness among the population will increase, eventually decreasing regionalism in South Korea.

### *Geographical Mobility and Technology*

Increased geographical mobility has also contributed to the decline of regional animus in South Korea (Hahn et al. 2017: 512). Advancement in transportation and communication methods like social media results in an increase of population hybridization among regions, making it is becoming more difficult for candidates to include regionalism into their political platform. With netizens actively searching for misconduct and benevolence, it is more difficult for politicians to promote discriminatory political platforms. Coming of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution and the growth of online sources, blogs and social media increases awareness of the downsides of regionalism. Secondly, places are becoming less centralized with people from the same regional origin (Horiuchi and Lee 2008). For example, in *Reply1997*, Seong Dong-il resides in Yeongnam despite being from Honam. Hence, a political campaign discriminating against the Honam region in Yeongnam will garner negative response by those like him. Especially with many industries headquartered in Yeongnam like fishing and steel, the population likely has increased homogenized from people from various regions.

### *Past Protests*

The film *Taxi Driver* (Showbox, Jang Hun, 2017) based on a true story is about the 5 · 18 Gwangju Uprising in the lens of a taxi driver from Seoul and a journalist from Germany. *Taxi Driver* portrays the isolation of Gwangju citizens’ fight for democracy and the unfortunate massacre that was upon them by the South Korean military to eradicate democratic movements.<sup>15</sup> However, the uprising did not show strong collaboration among regions and was only used as a motivation for future democratic movements including the June Democracy Movement. A depiction of the June Democracy Movement is shown throughout the drama *Reply 1988* (tvN, Director Sin Won-ho, 2015-2016), a spin-off of *Reply 1997*. In *Reply 1988*, university students from across the country including Bora, an attendee of Seoul National University portrayed by Ryu Hye-yeong participates in protests for democracy. The protest is symbolic of

---

<sup>13</sup> 안철수, ‘전북 홀대론’에 “지역 차별 없애겠다” [An Cheol-su, To Jeonbuk “I will Get Rid of Regional Discrimination”], *JTBC News* (2017), [http://news.itbc.joins.com/article/article.aspx?news\\_id=NB11422491](http://news.itbc.joins.com/article/article.aspx?news_id=NB11422491) (accessed Dec 10, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> 정유경 Jeong Yu-gyeong, 문 대통령 “가야사 복원해 영호남 지역감정 허물자” [President Mun, “Let’s Rejuvenate Gayasa and Break Down Yeongnam and Honsam Regionalism”], *한겨레 [Hangeore]* (2017), [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics\\_general/797110.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/797110.html) (accessed Dec 10, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> 김지은 Kim Ji Eun, 현소은 Hyeon So-eun, 5 · 18에 대한 매우 쉬운 설명 6가지 [6 Easy Explanation of 5 · 18], *Huffington Post Korea* (2016), [http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/2016/05/18/story\\_n\\_10015576.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/2016/05/18/story_n_10015576.html) (accessed Dec 14, 2017).

how putting regional differences aside can advance democracy and achieve results which included election rights and democratic reform.

### *Impeachment of Park Geun hye and the Candle Light Protest*

More recently the importance of homozygosity of regions for democracy in South Korea can be seen through the candle light protests. To impeach the president for her various corruption scandals, people from all regions came to Seoul, South Korea to participate the candle light protest including 25,000 and 32,000 people from Yeongnam and Honam respectively.<sup>16</sup> The candle light protest also occurred in various locations in the Yeongnam and Honam region for those who could not find transportation to Seoul as boarding passes to Seoul on the KTX or buses were sold out.<sup>17</sup> Such high number of participants from Yeongnam was not expected as it the birthplace of both former presidents Park Geun-hye and her father Park Jeong-hui. Like the June democracy movement, this event showed that placing regional differences aside can advance South Korea's democracy. Furthermore, the candle light protest was very effective and produced satisfying outcomes including the election of a new president, arrests of people involved in the corruption and impeachment.

We can see that placing regional differences aside during national protests and voicing the citizens' concerns as one country was very effective to establish greater democracy. Furthermore, looking at the various protests and its attendees, we can see that the government's dependence on regionalism for political security is disappearing. Since the 5 · 18 Gwangju Uprising, cooperation among regions has progressed and has resulted in greater results than each preceding protest. We can expect that South Korea will continue to show progressive united movements for advancement in democratization, while displacing regionalism in contemporary politics.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

How we can alleviate regionalism in politics and continue to advance democracy in South Korea is a complicated subject matter. However, here we suggest possible solutions that can be done. Firstly, the government should integrate and learn from political models of other states where regionalism is less evident, such as, Canada. Appointment of high ranking officials in Canada are taken from a pool of already elected member of parliaments, rather than people whom did not receive voter's election in South Korea. Because, sampling from only elected member of parliament can result in the inability to nominate the best candidate, an official advisory council to the ministry should also be created. This can limit administrations from selecting from specific regions. Secondly, a legislation requiring each administration to select high official candidates proportional to the population size of the region. Furthermore, a legislation should also be implemented where government funded economic projects are created fairly across all regions. Hence, a second economic project cannot occur until economic projects in all other regions are completed at least once. Also, an effective use of media in South Korea can play a

---

<sup>16</sup> 권기정 Kwon Ki-Jeong, 강현석 Kang Hyeon-seok, 박용근 Park Yong-geun, 노도현 No Do-hyeon, 내일 광화문 민중총궐기...비수도권 시민대거 상경 [Tomorrow Gwanghwamun Democratic Movement...Non Metropolitan Residents' Participation], 경향신문[Kyeong Hyang News] (2016), [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=201611102236005&code=940100](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201611102236005&code=940100) (accessed Dec 1, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> 원성윤 Won Seong-yun, 11월 12일, 집회에 참여하려는 당신이 알면 좋은 8가지 [8 Good Information to Know Before Participating in Nov 12 Protest], *Huffington Post Korea*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/2016/11/11/story\\_n\\_12908652.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.kr/2016/11/11/story_n_12908652.html) (accessed Dec 6, 2017).

large role to alleviate regionalism. South Korea being a country with high media consumption, using media to educate the downsides of regionalism to the older and younger generations can have positive effects.

This study has provided an insight to the effects of regionalism on democracy in South Korea as well as evidence of the decline in utility of regionalism in contemporary South Korea politics. Furthermore, possible solutions to effectively tackle regionalism in South Korea was addressed. The current Mun Jae-in's administration must understand the criticality of the subject matter and effectively respond to regionalism and prevent it from occurring in future administrations. Finally, to overcome regionalism, continuous support from the government is necessary.

## Bibliography

- 안용흔 An, Yong-Heun. 투표선택, 정치제도, 그리고 민주주의: 2012년 총선과 대선의 투표행태와 연관성 분석 [Electoral Choice, Political Institutions, and Democracy: An Analysis of Voting Behavior and the Association between Legislative and Presidential Election in 2012]. *평화연구 [Peace Studies]* 21(1) (2013): 215-246.
- Chi, Eunju, Yangho Rhee, and Hyeok Yong Kwon. "Inequality and Political Trust in Korea." *Korea Observer* 44, no.2 (2013): 199-222.
- Hahn, Kyu S., Jihye Lee, Inho Won, Seulgi Jang, and Joonwhan Lee. "Is Regional Animus in Decline in Korea? A Test of the Generational Difference and Geographical Mobility Hypothesis." *Pacific Affairs* 90, no.3 (2017): 505-533.
- Horiuchi, Yusaka, and Seungjoo Lee. "The Presidency, Regionalism, and Distributive Politics in South Korea." *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no.6 (2008): 861-882.
- 정대화 Jeong, Dae-hwa. 제 15대 대통령선거 결과에 대한 실증적 연구 여·야간 평화적 정권교체의 배경과 투표결과에 대한 해석 [Interpretation of the Results of the 15<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election and the Background of a Peaceful Exchange in Administration]. *동향과 전망 [Journal of Korean Social Trends and Perspectives]* (1998): 52-82.
- 정해구 Jeong, Hae-Gu. 19대 대통령선거 결과와 그 의미: 지역주의 정치에서 세대정치로 19 [19<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election Results and its Meaning: Regional Politics to Generation Politics]. *내일을 여는 역사 [Tomorrow Open History]* 68 (2017): 67-76.
- Kang, Woo Chang. "Local Economic Voting and Residence-Based Regionalism in South Korea: Evidence from the 2007 Presidential Election." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 16, no.3 (2016): 349-369.
- Kim, Kyong-Dong. "Presidential Election and Social Change in South Korea." *Institute for Social Development and Policy Research (ISDPR)* 32, no.2 (2003): 293-314
- Lee, So Young. "Regionalism as a Source of Ambivalence in Korea." *Korea Observer* 40, no.4 (2009): 671-699.

이영민 Lee Yeong-Min. 20대의 정치의식 특성과 정치성향의 형성경로 [Path Formation of Political Conscious Characteristics and Political Tendency of the 20s Age Group]. *사회연구 [Sociology Research]* 19(1) (2010): 9-43.

Moon, Woojin. "Decomposition of Regional Voting in South Korea: Ideological Conflicts and Regional Interests." *Party Politics* 11, no.5 (2005): 579-599.

Park, Bae-Gyoon. "Territorialized Party Politics and the Politics of Local Economic Development: State-Led Industrialization and Political Regionalism in South Korea." *Political Geography* 22, no.8 (2003): 811-839.

Rhyu, Sang-young. "The Challenge of Social Integration in South Korea." *Global Asia* 12, no.2 (2017): 30-35.