Curtailing Political Parties Efficiently: The Policy Decision to Abolish Party Chapters in South Korea

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Summary

This article deals with the policy decision process leading to the abolishment of party chapters in South Korea. Why and how the 'party on the ground' came to be banned by law twenty years after formal democratization is a puzzling question, since the institution of party chapters is key to achieving the central task that political parties have of translating the political will of the people into actual policy, and because parties are (therefore) constitutionally required to have the 'necessary means' to do so. While the justification for the abolishment can obviously be traced back to corruption and abuse of power at the election-district level, a systematic analysis of the decision-making process has been largely neglected in academic literature. The author of this article, however, has scrutinized the policy decision from a long-term perspective, doing so by way of discourse analysis in order to obtain a grounded understanding of the dynamics behind it and to provide insights for further theoretical inquiry and possible practical application.

1. Introduction

In the Republic of Korea (hereafter 'South Korea'), party chapters[2] were the basic regional party organization 'on the ground' for over forty years until they were abolished in 2004. Many of them were sites of malpractice and corruption, making them a target of demands for 'less costly and more efficient' politics and political parties. Starting in the early 1990s, it took about a decade of repeated debating to

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[2] The author of this article decided to use 'party chapter' as his translation of the Korean word *chigudang*, which can be literally translated as '(election) district party (organization).'

decide whether to maintain the status quo, to seek democratizing reform, or simply to abolish party chapters altogether. These represented the 'old system of politics' and were seen as strongholds of 'old politicians' that had to be removed for the sake of political reform, i.e., in order to achieve 'modernization.' With the general public annoyed by the notorious political class, the civil society growing ever stronger and the influx of young reformist politicians into the institutionalized political arena at the beginning of the 2000s, the debate came to an end — temporarily — in 2004. The opinion prevailed that if one wanted to solve the problems of corruption and inefficiency in party politics, there was no other way of doing so than to abolish party chapters.

Since the democratizing reform of political parties is a necessary and noble endeavor all over the globe, this particular case is puzzling in regard to its solution, viz., restricting party organization on the level of local electoral areas, or wards. Hence the question is: Why would lawmakers in a formally democratic country like South Korea want to change its legal framework so that the organization of political parties at and below the election-district level was *prohibited* by law?

Political parties are a central institution of representative democracies. Even though one could argue about whether they are still the best way of organizing the political will, the majority of democracies around the globe have political parties at their heart, linking society and its institutionalized alter ego, the political system. Only political parties have sufficient constitutional status and the adequate organization to interface these two realms effectively — ideally, reaching from the foundations of society to the treetops of the political system. In this way, parties' organizational foundation (on a local level) can be understood as "a key source of political legitimacy" (Mair 2003: 6) and as a precondition for fulfilling the "representative role" (Mair 2005: 50) of political parties.

South Korea's governance structure is based on principles of representative democracy (South Korean Constitutional Court [hereafter 'KCourt'] 2001: 537), and its constitution is designed for party democracy (KCourt 1996: 304; 1996a: 351; 1996b: 207). Accordingly, "[p]olitical parties [...] shall have the necessary organizational arrangements for participat[ing] in the formation of the political will of the people" (South Korean Constitution, Article 8.2), and regional party organizations are "requested to be of 'sufficient size and strength' and exist 'permanently or for a lengthy period of time'" (KCourt 2006: 413). What, then, could the reason be for an industrialized nation that achieved formal democracy more than twenty years ago to curtail the foundation of one of its central political institutions, it being the basis of the whole representative democratic system, for the sake of 'highly efficient and low-cost politics'?

Of course, it is well known that there has never been a golden age of parties in South Korea. And it is also generally acknowledged that South Korean parties are institutionalized to only a small degree (see Köllner 2003). Thus, in this case we

cannot proceed on the same assumptions or apply the same evaluation standard as in 'the West.' A substantial liberalization of old-style politics and parties only occurred after the process of democratization started at the end of the 1980s, continuing while the Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung governments were in power in the 1990s and up to the beginning of the end of the 'Era of the Three Kims'[3] in the early 2000s. This development was mainly pushed by young, reform-oriented politicians. However, it was at that very moment — when the force of gravity toward the 'Three Kims' decisively waned — that party chapters were abolished. How, then, can it be explained that this institutional reform of the "party on the ground" (Katz and Mair 1995) occurred in 2004, during the term of the relatively progressive president Roh Moo-Hyun and his "participatory government"?

The reason stated officially was 'to make politics more efficient and less costly.' However, in performing its functions "to organize participation, to aggregate interests, [and] to serve as the link between social forces and the government [...], the party necessarily reflects the logic of politics, not the logic of efficiency" (Huntington 1968: 92). Simply discounting the phenomenon as an outcome of power struggles between different forces might be one way of rationalizing it, but that does not suffice to fulfill an epistemic endeavor. This is why we need a persuasive, grounded explanation of the policy decision process that led to its 'perverted' outcome, i.e., curtailing the very foundation of the party system. The following pages are dedicated to this very enterprise.

2. Literature review

There is a wide range of research available in Korean that deals with problems of party chapters from a normative perspective, mostly trying to provide a prescription for the right reform before they are abolished (Shin MS 1995; Kim YH 1998; Lee GT 1999; Jeong YK 2000; Bang SJ 2002; Jeong JM 2003). After the amendment in 2004, scholars dealt with related questions of how reasonable and useful the reform was and what could be done to improve the law on the next occasion (Park MH 2004; Kim SK 2005; Lee HC 2005; Jeong JM 2005; Kim YH et al. 2008; Jeong YJ 2009). However, research on the decision-making process itself, i.e., the question of why and how one would reach such an agreement, is rather difficult to find. There are only a handful of cases that regard this phenomenon as a puzzle in the first place (Park SH 2004; Park SJ 2006; Yoo JS 2008; Mosler 2008; Mosler 2008a; Lee JJ 2010; Jaung H 2010). The most insightful of these will be discussed below.

Yoo (2008) approaches the phenomenon of the abolition of party chapters from a comparative angle in light of developments taking place in Germany at almost the same time. In line with her earlier contention that political parties all over the world

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[3]   The term "Three Kims' politics" usually designates the time during which three major political
       leaders dominated the political landscape: Kim Dae-Jung, Kim Young-Sam, and Kim Jong-Pil. This
       was between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s.

are experiencing a certain "global pressure" that leads to a general weakening of party structures (Yoo 2007), she starts with the question of how one could explain the almost contrary reactions to this pressure found in South Korea and Germany (Yoo 2008). Her explanation is that there has been a strong party structure in Germany for a long time, coupled with a decisive impact due to the appearance of the Greens and their typical culture of grassroots democracy and the fundamental constitutional embeddedness of (inner-)party democracy (Yoo 2008: 14). However, as interesting and insightful as her analysis is, her paper nonetheless exhibits a strong leaning toward a simple path-dependency. Analysis via this theoretical approach may provide some valuable insights on the characteristics of South Korean polity, but it does not convincingly show how the inner workings of the decision-making process could account for the causal effects of such a fatal dependency.

Having learned from this very insightful literature and being aware of its weaknesses, Mosler (2008a), following on from a first attempt (Mosler 2008), posed the question straightforwardly: "Why were the party organizations abolished on election-district level in 2004?" Using the 'multiple streams' model developed by Kingdon (1984), he was able to capture the complexity of the entire policy process. Through his systematic approach to process tracing, Mosler provides important empirical insights into the dynamics of the decision-making process. This is still inadequate, however, both in terms of finding a causal explanation and in terms of substantially identifying the actual mechanisms of the process, which can mainly be attributed to the basic assumptions of the applied approach.

Referring to Mosler's case study (2008) in a follow-up to this research agenda, Jaung (2009a) presents an analysis of the party-chapter reform in 2004 via an ideational approach. At the outset, Jaung, in a kind of counterfactual demonstration, points out the explanatory limits of theoretical approaches, such as rational choice and historical institutionalism (Jaung 2009a: 124 ff.). For his part, he sees the key as focusing on the ideas of actors involved in the policy-making process in order to find a grounded explanation. Jaung cleverly points out the well-known deficiencies of the aforementioned approaches that could theoretically have been applied, but he stops short of explaining the dynamics of his central factor in full: ideas. This is because he limits his scope of analysis to ready established narratives and frames and to a short time frame of approximately four years, and does not scrutinize the dynamics generating it in the first place. In this way, restricting himself to a passive notion of ideas and a static "rule-following logic" (Schmidt 2008: 314), Jaung finally provides a relatively 'thin' description and 'flat' explanation. He is interested in the question of when which policy succeeds and when which one does not, which is an important endeavor in its own right, albeit only part of the story (as Jaung himself admits in his conclusion; ibid.: 140), which would have to be explained in order to understand the way in which certain ideas become influential. This might be due to the fact that his undertaking seems to be strongly directed toward verifying the causal influence of ideas in the process of policy decision-making. In other

words, he makes plausible statements, saying that ideas matter (as "linchpins" or "catalysts," as he writes) and even touches on who makes use of them, when, why, and why not. What he misses, though, is the prior or simultaneous generative "how" of the process.

Based on what we have learned from the above discussion, an attempt is made in the following section to take the theoretical perspective a step further by developing the existing approaches into one that can account for a wider part of the complex process of policy decision-making.

3. The approach: ideas in policy discourse, and discourses on policy ideas

As Mosler (2008) and Jaung (2009a) have already made clear, ideas are at the heart of decision-making, which makes them the central object of analysis. However, even though ideas — or rather, whatever is on the minds of those involved in the decision-making process — are necessary scripts, they themselves are still not enough for the process to unfold and develop in a certain direction. To this end, ideas have to be understood in their interactive correlation with the discourse they are being conveyed by. Only by using the term 'discourse' can we "simultaneously indicate the ideas represented in the discourse [...] and the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed" (Schmidt 2008: 309). Schmidt's 'discursive institutionalist' (DI) approach suggests — in addition to the individual realm of ideas[4] elaborated in the aforementioned literature — the notion of 'foreground discursive abilities' (FDA). This refers to the agents' ability "to think, speak, and act outside their institutions even as they are inside them" (Schmidt 2008: 315). These abilities are realized respectively through their 'coordinative' and 'communicative function.' This theoretical contention is not only necessary in order to be able to explain change despite obviously idea-framing institutions, but it also provides one with the required analytical tool to trace the decision-making process. In the realm of *coordinative discourse*, policy-constructing interaction takes place between high-level policy actors, such as politicians from the administration, political parties, National Assembly committee members, and various policy experts. The realm of *communicative discourse* comprises the interaction between these high-level policy actors and the general public, mass media, and/or civil-society organizations (Schmidt 2008: 308).

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[4]   With respect to this individual realm, Schmidt speaks of "background ideational abilities (BIA)" that account for the fact that rationally bounded agents have the semi-passive ability to comprehend or interpret meanings in a given context. In other words, agents are able to comprehend, assess, and explain the world. These BIAs are divided into 'cognitive' and 'normative functions.' While the cognitive function refers to the cognition of defining problems, the appropriateness of solutions, and compatibility with the paradigmatic worldview, the normative function enables rationalization of policies and programs in light of the sentiment of the general public (Schmidt 2008: 307).

For the purpose of translating the assumptions of this theoretical framework into the setup of applicable analyzing concepts and guiding hypotheses for empirical analysis, we can draw on concepts taken from 'argumentative discourse analysis' (ADA) (Hajer 1995). The basic contention of ADA is that policy decisions cannot be understood as simply being constituted by a structure of rational argumentation that one can retrace according to an actor's proclaimed rationale or his institutional determination in acting. Rather, actors' behavior is the complex and volatile result of the logic of 'argumentative rationalization' (Hajer 1995) that is established in the contentious process of interaction through and by discourse. In order to reconstruct the process of argumentative rationalization, the following four theoretical contentions serve as basic assumptions in analyses.

First of all, a policy decision is assumed to be an institutionally embedded, long-term process of discourse structuration and institutionalization (Hajer 2003: 278 f.). We speak of 'discourse structuration' when "central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse," i.e., a discourse begins to dominate how the world is being conceptualized within a specific discourse field (see Hajer 2003: 278). Institutionalization means this discourse manifests itself in the results of the actual policy process that is dominated by respective ideas. The whole process is originally unleashed (and repeatedly reinforced) by exogenous shocks, or 'key events,' or endogenously induced idea-shifts; existing discourses become potentially useless or delegitimized, because these no longer provide sufficient instructive explanations on how to address and cope with empirical reality. In other words, policies no longer appear to solve the problems at hand, and the practices they facilitate no longer work, leading to the generation of new ideas that legitimize new policies and their practices (Schmidt 2002: 309). Second, key phrases are quantitative and qualitative markers for establishing the intensity and direction of discourse. The frequency of certain phrases allows inferences to be made about the existence and intensity of a discourse. Meanings and connotations of evocative phrases permit the researcher to analyze the direction of the discourse, since certain statements and propositions are emphasized while others are omitted. Third, actors' agency comes into play through social learning or teaching in the form of spiral storytelling, each "story line" coming in sequential episodes (Hajer 1995: 56, 62 f.; Hajer 2008: 216 f.). Fourth, the existing hegemonic discourse is challenged by a newly emerging discourse, leading to a bipolar constellation of 'discourse competition,' while success depends on the various actors' institutional and perceived power.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, we can contend that the success of a discourse that favors certain policies or measures depends upon whether it is capable of generating a coherent picture or frame of the policy to be realized with respect to the wider policy program in which the policy can be located and the current public philosophy or worldview within the given social context of a particular polity (Schmidt 2002: 309). In other words, the more the idea behind the policy being

conveyed is cognitively justifiable and normatively convincing, the higher is the likelihood of its successful realization.[5]

The empirical analysis of this single case will be guided by the method of process-tracing combined with a time-series comparison design in order to grasp the processual development that led to the policy decision and filter out decisive actors' constellations and interactions that facilitated the realization of ideas. Since discourses — even hegemonic ones — are always potentially subject to transformation or exchange, our observation cannot begin in the middle of the process, because from a static view we would only see a snapshot of the whole generative development and its dynamics. For this reason, we assume a time frame of "about a decade or so" (Sabatier 1988) from initiation to conclusion of the potentially looping process of discourse competition.

In order to base this analysis on empirically observable scales, legislative-session periods of the South Korean National Assembly are taken as dividing lines, since it is in the committee meetings and plenary sessions that one can substantially verify whether ideas have been institutionalized or have manifested themselves in lawgiving. This empirical binding also helps to narrow down possibly relevant discourse fragments to be included in the material to be analyzed, even though observation will not be limited to members of the Assembly simply because they are empirically closest to the decision. Besides literature on the subject, the empirical data that was scrutinized for analysis comprised newspaper articles, minutes of public hearings, proceedings of conferences, transcripts of committee meetings, laws, legal decisions, and interviews with central actors such as assemblymen, assembly presidents, and policy experts.

4. Analysis

4.1 After formal democratization: purging the past and initial reforms (1992–1996)

The advent of the idea to eliminate party chapters can be traced back to the beginnings of Kim Young-Sam's 'Civil Government' (1993–1998) in 1993, when "New Korea" narratives of "international competitiveness reinforcement," "government efficiency," radical "structural reform," and the like were propagated directly from the Blue House under the official state-level reform discourse (see Kang 2000: 446 ff.). In the context of this already neoliberal-prone overall political discourse of 'efficiency' and 'clean politics' and in light of the power struggles

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5   While the (cognitive) necessity of the policy has to be shown by its relevance, applicability, coherence, and capacity, its (normative) appropriateness has to be conveyed by showing how it solves the defined problem while harmonizing with present currents of public opinion (*Weltbild*, or philosophy).

within the heterogeneous government party,[6] the Democratic Liberal Party (DLP), the reform forces around Kim Young-Sam rolled out a program for "curing the Korean disease" that called for "sharing the pain" in all sectors of society, including political parties, to part with the authoritarian past (Segye Ilbo, Jan. 11, 1993: 2; Dong-A Ilbo, March 5, 1993: 3; Kyunghyang Sinmun, April 7, 1993: 5). President Kim's explicit order to take the U.S. system as a model for South Korean party reform is an instructive example (Segye Ilbo, Aug. 14, 1993: 2; Seoul Sinmun, Aug. 18, 1993: 5), which comes at a crucial moment in time: in mid-August 1993, only a few days after the first enactment of the Real-name Financial Transaction System (RFTS), in the aftermath of which the issue of party chapters as a central source of corruption again became one of the foci of the reform debate.

Only a few of the so-called progressive papers and magazines cited scholars who provided a story along the lines of 'democratization through party (chapters')' vitalization' (Hankyoreh, Aug. 17, 1993: 2; Wolgan Mal, Aug. 1993: 43). The mainstream press, on the other hand, started to propel the idea of abolishment further by arguing that the existing party structure stemmed from an instrumentalization by the illegitimate authoritarian regimes of the past, due to which it became inefficient and costly, and hence was in need of abolishment (Hankook Ilbo, March 8, 1993: 3; on a similar note, see Segye Ilbo, Jan. 26, 1993: 3; Chosun Ilbo, Jan. 10, 1993: 3). However, the germinating abolishment narrative in the communicative discourse realm suddenly met with fierce opposition from the higher ranks of the ruling party coalition, switched abruptly into reverse, and finally vanished almost completely for the next few years.

The contrary was true for scholars and researchers who had been dealing with the question mostly within the coordinative realm ever since the early 1990s, back then in the form of government internal policy research (Shin MS 1990; also Choi DK 1992), later at policy forums,[7] and especially in the context of the policy-reform committee of the National Assembly (June 16, 1993). The majority of academics commenting on the issue were very skeptical about abolishing party chapters and partly directly challenged the discourse-strategy attempt of associating or mingling the reform narrative with other solidifying discourses by pointing out that notions of economy and politics (or democracy) have to be dealt with separately (see Minutes of the National Assembly Committee 1993, hereafter MNAC; also Kyunghyang Sinmun, June 17, 1993: 4). Here, contrarily, an attempt was made to connect the issue with the sub-topic of political reform regarding the regional self-government

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[6]   On January 22, 1990 the merger of the Democratic Justice Party (Roh Tae Woo), New Democratic Republican Party (Kim Jong Pil), and Unification Democratic Party (Kim Young Sam) was made public, unifying — albeit rather artificially — government and opposition forces under one roof.

[7]   See, for example, the forums on "Regional Self-Government Elections and Relations of Political Reforms" (January 12, 1995), "Globalization and Korean Politics" (January 18, 1995), and "Modernization of Korean Politics. With [a] Focus on Party Reform" (March 15, 1995) to name just the most representative ones.

system that was soon to be institutionalized (again) and (therefore) had great symbolic power.

When the revision of the Political Parties Act was decided at the end of December 1993, it was explicitly justified by stating the need for "extending people's participation opportunities" and the respective need for "political parties taking root in the citizenry" (see Political Parties Bill 1993, hereafter PPB 1993), echoing the discursive coalition narrative of "democratic improvement" while completely bypassing the one of "economic streamlining restructuration." In the following years until the opening of the 15th Assembly in spring 1996, however, scholars would actively engage in studying and debating the question as part of the coordinative discourse and produce the development of two coalition clouds, one of which proposed an abolishment narrative and the other a vitalization narrative. These rather quiet developments within the coordinative realm can be seen as preparatory insofar as the research results and debates could later be referred to and so could be made to serve as a pool for narratives and story lines with a certain degree of authority for certain actors to draw on. In the meantime, the government pushed the political discourse of "internationalization" farther and did the same thing later regarding the discourse on "globalization" (see Kang 2000: 448 ff.), which meant an additional discursive impact on the people's general sentiment and accordant expectations.

4.2 After the financial crisis: restructuring reforms and professional arguments (1996–2000)

The first seven months after the convention of the 15th Assembly (May 1996) were very quiet in terms of discourse competition, but at the beginning of the year of the upcoming presidential elections and the simultaneous ignition of the Hanbo scandal[8] in January 1997, a slight movement could be detected in the communicative realm. The coordinative discourse sphere, on the other hand, was vibrating strongly with many expert forums and academic conferences. While the presidential elections were the main pull factor, the Hanbo scandal was instrumentalized as a pressing argument, especially in the mass media. The International Monetary Fund's loan program and its restrictions, following the financial crisis breakout at the end of 1997, not only served as an additional key event that quantitatively exposed discrepancies between the general public's expectations and experiences concerning politics, but it also had a qualitative impact due to the fact that ideas and narratives of the hook-up discourse of 'efficiency' and 'small government' were now powerfully institutionalized. Through the substantial situation of crisis (or the definition and accordingly invoked solution of it), the new government under Kim

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[8] This scandal refers to a multibillion-dollar corruption affair that erupted on January 23, 1997 involving South Korea's second-largest steelmaker Hanbo Iron & Steel Co. and members of the inner circles of Kim Young-Sam, his New Korea Party (NKP; formerly the DLP) and his second son Kim Hyun-Chol.

Dae-Jung (1998–2003) came to comply with and itself propagate a cost/efficiency discourse. This can be seen as a result of 'discourse affinity' (Hajer 2003) between the neoliberal restructuring narrative and the anti-corruption story line that saw the corrupt relationship between politics and business as a product of the preceding government's responsibility for the crisis, leading to a common discursive ground (see Kang 2005: 284 f.).

This development manifested itself in very lively practices by the Blue House (Munhwa Ilbo, Jan. 31, 1998: 1) from January 1998 onward, spurred on by explicit statements on the part of the new president (Segye Ilbo, Jan. 12, 1998: 3; Hankyoreh, Jan. 31, 1998: 5; Segye Ilbo, Feb. 3, 1998: 4; Hankook Ilbo, June 19, 1998: 2 & July 2, 1998: 5) and his government's coalition partners[9] (Munhwa Ilbo Jan. 31, 1998: 1) about abolishing party chapters. In the same vein, the government coalition induced additional macro-actors as a strategy for strengthening the influence of the abolishment narrative: the Federation of Korean Industries (FKI) and the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KORCHAM), i.e., the two most powerful institutions of the business realm. Both organizations pleaded in their proposals — which were requested by the Blue House — for the abolition of party chapters (Seoul Shinmun, Feb. 28, 1998: 6). Even the Tripartite Commission, a (neo-)corporatist creation of Kim Dae-Jung's so-called 'citizens' government' composed of government, business, and labor officially proclaimed with one voice the need to "share the pain" and (amongst other things) abolish party chapters (Segye Ilbo, 31.1.98: 2). Interestingly enough, the oppositional Grand National Party (GNP), which had actively promoted the abolition narrative during its election campaigning in 1997 (Kyunghyang Shinmun, Apr. 30, 1997: 3; Segye Ilbo, May 7, 1997: 4; Seoul Shinmun, May 14, 1997: 5; Kyunghyang Shinmun, June 3, 1997: 2), now performed an about-face and argued in favor of preserving the party chapters with democratizing improvements, basing their argument on a story line of party chapters being indispensable "institutions of grass-roots democracy" (Kyunghyang Shinmun, Feb. 4, 1998: 4).

Within the academic debate, we can discover two noteworthy narratives. One is the explicit reference to abolishment story lines on the part of certain scholars whose strategy it was to decouple the idea-blended discourse. They argued that it was not only wrong to apply the same cost-efficiency logic of the business realm indiscriminately to the realm of politics, but also that it would be a 'perverse' order to try to cut costs in order to install democracy (see Kang and Park 1998 and in a similar vein Jung DH 1998a). The other narrative is the 'parliamentary party' (or 'caucus party') story line, which made a temporary appearance in coordinative

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9   Former political 'foes' Kim Dae-Jung (National Congress for New Politics) and Kim Jong Pil (United Liberal Democrats) joined forces in order to win the presidential elections. Kim Jong Pil had been promised the position of premier minister together with plans to change the political system from a presidential to a cabinet system.

discourse as a strong narrative complement to the abolishment/reduction frame. Kim (Kim YH 1998) and Shin (Shin MS 1997), for example, argued in favor of parliament-centered politics in order to realize 'clean politics' and a 'productively working parliament.' This is a very sophisticated line of argument in that it raises many points that can easily be accepted as reasonable assessments and measures from the perspective of competing 'democratic reform' discourse, but mainly served — or rather, was mostly interpreted as serving — the coherence of the 'efficiency streamlining' discourse frame. This becomes important for the so-called party-model debate occurring a few years later (Mosler 2008a: 142). The 'parliamentary party' story line can be seen as an important narrative supplement as the various discourses continued to compete with one another.[10]

In a public hearing that was initiated by the reform committee of the National Assembly in mid-November 1999 (MNAC 1999), representatives of the government coalition on the one hand and the opposition on the other presented positions along very clear but contrasting lines. While representatives[11] of the oppositional GNP argued the case for maintaining the chapters (Lee Won-Bok, Bak Ju-Cheon, Byeong Jeong-Il), representatives of the ruling camp advocated a reduction/abolishment narrative (Kim Hak-Won, Im Chun-Ung, Song Hun-Sik, and Chun Jung-Bae). A blending of ideas was evidently taking place here as a result of both parties' need to present a convincing explanation of what the problem was and how it would have to be solved.

Speakers from the ruling camp made the case for abolishment by pointing to other countries' models and experiences, the fact that the chapters would not function as they were supposed to, and that irregularities could not be eliminated by any other means than abolition due to the particular characteristics of South Korean polity (MNAC 1999). The opposition presented coherent story lines that attacked the logic of solving the problems of political parties by simply abolishing party chapters, saying that it was an "argument turned on its head" (ibid.). Moreover, references to other countries were refuted by saying that those countries were not only different polities, but also that such solutions would only lead to other problems if they were applied to the South Korean context. They maintained that abolishing party chapters would be synonymous with abolishing the party system in itself; not least, the freedom of party activity was a guaranteed right, according to the constitution (ibid.).

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[10]   However, to be correct, the concept of parliamentary party or caucus party (versus members' party) was introduced for the first time by Kim YH (April 9, 1998) and differs in some crucial aspects compared to some of its later adoptions, which do not state (as Kim (1998) explicitly does) that the party (structure/organization) outside the parliament would have to be eliminated completely (see Lim 2003, for instance).

[11]   The author speaks of 'representatives' here, because not only the committee members took part, i.e., assemblymen from the respective parties, but also scholars and other 'discussants' who were proposed by the parties respectively, as is common for public hearings.

The actual result of the deliberation process inside and outside the Assembly was the amendment of the (11th) Political Parties Act in February 2000. While the revised law did not involve abolishing party chapters, it limited salaried personnel to the central party and city/province parties, implicitly prohibiting any paid staff at the level of party chapters and beneath (PPA 2000). Justification for the law amendment reads accordingly (see PPA bill 2000). The narrative of "solving high-cost, low-efficiency politics" found its way into the text of the law proposal for the first time, reflecting the fact that the discursive field of the party-chapter issue had been 'structurated' (Hajer 1995: 59) by the respective frame. This is also in line with the amendment of the Election Law, according to which the number of parliamentary members was "rationally settled," dropping from 299 to 273 (see election law bill 2000). The noteworthy shift from mostly coordinative discourse activity to communicative activity is another indication of this restructuring. Still, the discourse on party chapters was obviously not saturated enough to institutionalize the abolishment frame.

4.3 After the 'Three Kims': reform hysteria and party-chapter abolition (2000–2004)

After the push factor of the general elections (April 2000) had dissolved, the communicative discourse in particular subsided to almost nothing. The coordinative discourse also slowed down. Only when the first meetings of the National Assembly's reform subcommittee took place in April 2001 did the process revive again. The PPA revision a year later included the abolition of party liaison offices on the administrative levels of towns (*ŭp*), townships (*myŏn*), and neighborhoods (*tong*), while salaried staff members were allowed again; this was limited to two per party chapter, however. It also allowed one paid member of staff in each liaison office at the level of districts (*ku*), cities (*si*), and counties (*kun*). The official reasons for this revision were explained using the rhetoric of an "improvement in the organizational structure of political parties" and the "promotion of a reasonable (rational) party operation system" (PPA bill 2002).

The next main push factor was the presidential election in December 2002, which explains the communicative discourse that suddenly unfolded between the time immediately after election day at the end of December and February 2003 (see figure 1 beneath). The question of party chapters had not been one of the main issues before the election, but became a central topic right after it. The GNP in particular was keen to make a comeback after five years out of office. But within the ruling New Millennium Democratic Party (NMDP), forces around presidential candidate and later president-elect Roh Moo-Hyun were also very active in publicly advocating reformist ideas of party-chapter abolition, while Roh himself was quite skeptical about this particular issue (Seoul Shinmun, Jan. 11, 2003: 8), even though he eagerly supported and promoted political reforms on all levels.

The next concrete venues for an opportunity to implement policy ideas were the committee sessions at the National Assembly that were scheduled for the beginning of September 2003. With general elections coming up in spring 2004, the political landscape was facilitating further discourse competition. Even before his official inauguration in January 2003, Roh held meetings with his aides at which the problem of the boss-like dominance of party chapters was mentioned as an institution that needed to be reformed (DongA Ilbo, Jan. 25, 2003: 5). Also, the official president-elect's transition team announced the need to abolish party chapters and install 'local committees' in their place (Seoul Shinmun, Jan. 11, 2003: 8).

Figure 1: Frequency of the key phrase "party-chapter abolishment" in major newspapers over time (Oct. 2002–Mar. 2003)
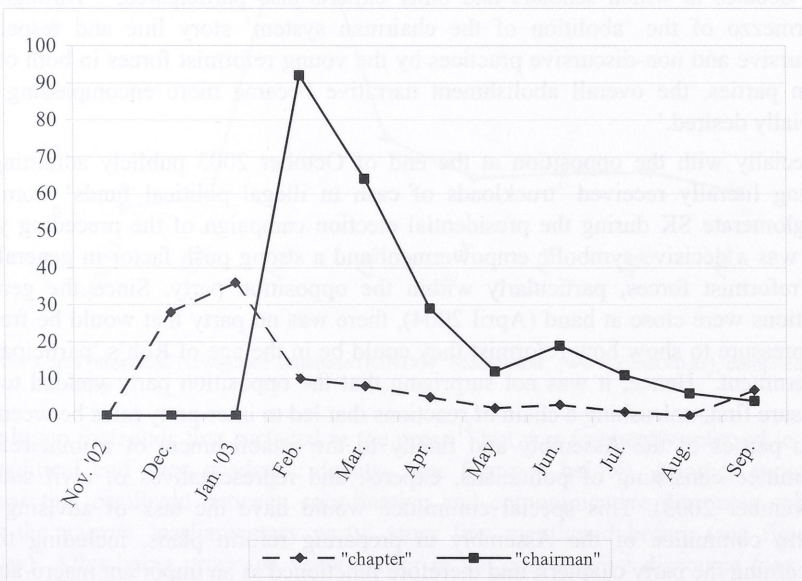

Source: Korea Integrated Newspaper Database (KINDS) "Mediagaon" (www.kinds.co.kr); compiled by
        the author

It was during this time, i.e., between January and September 2003, that the communicative discourse was mainly focused on the abolition of the party chapters' chairman (system) and not so much on the party chapters as such (see figure 2 beneath). This can be seen as part of a strategy followed by the reformists within the NMDP, who would put pressure on the old faction in power by proposing a reform compromise. However, while this clear differentiation of a strategy shift can be made afterwards, at that point in time the discourse could not easily be disentangled from the narrative of party-chapter abolition. Since, in the course of discourse competition through the use of metaphors and other rhetorical shorthand there was generated a discourse affinity. In other words, respective ideas and perspectives

seemed to be connected and mutually reconfirming while originally they were put forward as part of a certain discourse strategy by individual actors independently.

In particular, new forces within the parties that were composed of relatively young aspirants were now becoming more influential through their reformist narratives, promoting story lines that were not only aimed at the success of their party, but were also based on positions held by intraparty factions. Up until then, committees on party reform within the respective parties had still been taking place as meetings comprising the whole party; now, however, there were committees and forums initiated and conducted by intraparty factions with agendas not tied to party opinion,

Figure 2:   Comparison of the frequency of the key phrases "party-chapter abolishment" and "abolition of the party-chapter chairman" in major newspapers over time (Nov. 2002–Sep. 2003)

Source: Korea Integrated Newspaper Database (KINDS) "Mediagaon" (www.kinds.co.kr); compiled by the author

but rather to factions' opinions. This was an important precondition for the opportunity structure in terms of more freely floating narratives, since forces that were not in the position to do so before this point in time could give their story lines stronger voices. This is an illustration of the discursive reality that power cannot be defined by one's position alone — ideas also infuse power by influencing the perception of positions of power (Schmidt 2010: 18).

Within the ruling party, even party leader Han Hwa-gap, who called the reform plans of his reformist fellows "reform dictatorship" (Kyunghyang Shinmun, March

20, 2003: 4), had to resign from his post in the end. This also has other aspects to it, of course: for example, the fact that he belonged to the old main faction, i.e., the so-called *tonggyodong* faction of Kim Dae-Jung. The young and ambitious had threatened the main party with large-scale party defection and even with the foundation of a new rival party, a threat that became reality upon the formation of Open Our Party (OUP) in November 2003. The opposition party experienced in-fighting of a similar intensity, the leadership of which still held on to a resolute preservation stance concerning the party-chapter issue while its reformist newcomers now pressed for abolishment. As part of the communicative discourse strategy, these reformists went public with their plans to tip inner-party power relations in their own favor. On various occasions, mostly young, ambitious politicians from the ruling party and from the opposition convened for joint forums and debates in which scholars and other experts also participated.[12] Through the intermezzo of the 'abolition of the chairman system' story line and respective discursive and non-discursive practices by the young reformist forces in both of the main parties, the overall abolishment narrative became more encompassing and 'socially desired.'

Especially with the opposition at the end of October 2003 publicly admitting to having literally received 'truckloads of cash in illegal political funds' from the conglomerate SK during the presidential election campaign of the preceding year, this was a decisive symbolic empowerment and a strong push factor in general for the reformist forces, particularly within the opposition party. Since the general elections were close at hand (April 2004), there was no party that would be free of the pressure to show how reformist they could be in the age of Roh's 'participatory government.' Hence, it was not surprising that the opposition party yielded to the pressure first, unleashing a chain of reactions that led to inter-party talks between the main parties of the Assembly and finally to the establishment of a joint reform committee consisting of politicians, experts, and representatives of civil society (November 2003). This special committee would have the task of advising the reform committee of the Assembly in preparing reform plans, including those concerning the party chapters, and therefore functioned as an important macro-actor.

At this point in time, the mass media was so heated by the reform debate that the politicians' agreement was met with a very strong wind of encouragement and warning at the same time — as if it were the politicians' last chance to prove to the public that they really wanted change. In their editorials, almost all of the dailies pushed for an almost unconditional reform (e.g., editorials on November 5th: DongA Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Munhwa Ilbo, Kookmin Ilbo, Hankyoreh, Hankook Ilbo, and Seoul Shinmun; editorials on November 6th: Kyunghyang, Seoul Shinmun, Hankook Ilbo,

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[12]   One of the various examples is the organization of the 'Pan-citizens Association for the Advancement of Political Reforms' in January 2003 by the triangle of reformist politicians from the ruling party, the opposition, and representatives of civil-society organizations.

Segye Ilbo, Kookmin Ilbo, and Chosun Ilbo), mostly following one or another narrative about the need to abolish party chapters (see figure 3), which were almost exclusively labeled as "money-eating hippos."[13] (see figure 4)

Figure 3: Frequency of the key phrase "party-chapter abolishment" in major newspapers over time (Sep. 2003–Apr. 2004)
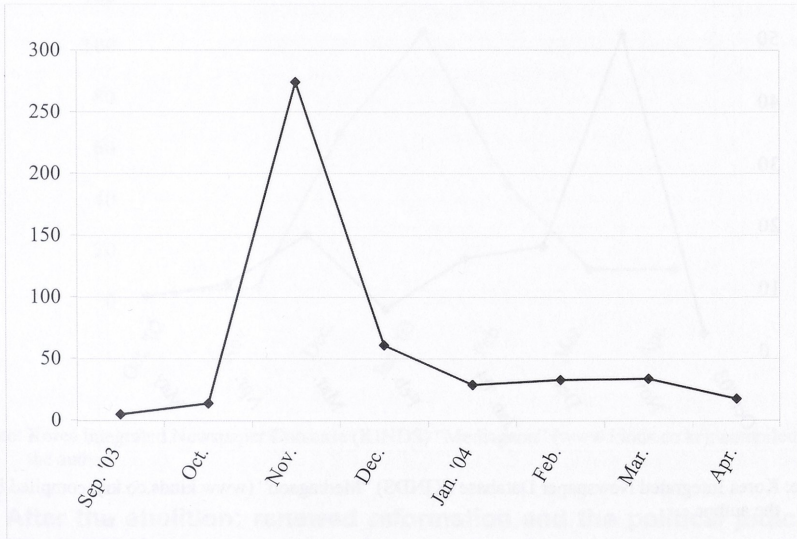
Source: Korea Integrated Newspaper Database (KINDS) "Mediagaon" (www.kinds.co.kr); compiled by
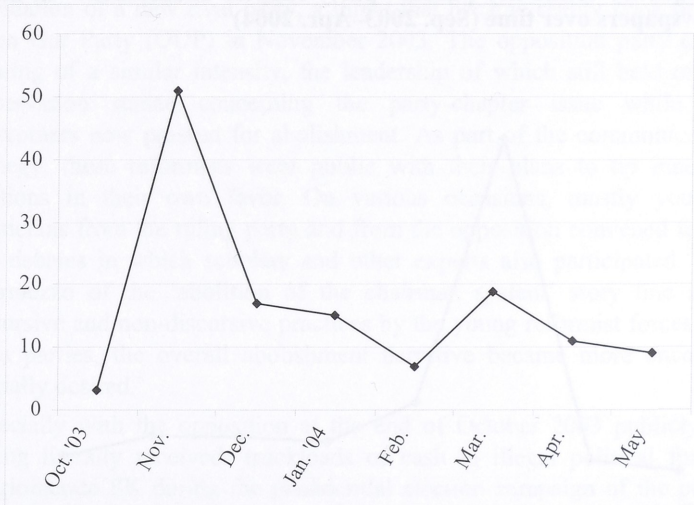the author

The hippo metaphor first surfaced in the press,[14] but was frequently referred to later in political and even academic debates (see figure 4 below). Another evocative phrase that oscillated between coordinative and communicative discourse spheres was the narrow 'parliamentary party' story line mentioned before (see figure 5 below). After being proposed years earlier in the coordinative discourse (see Kim 1998), it came to the fore of the communicative discourse at the end of 2001, only to

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[13]   This metaphor goes back to a cleaning product made by Oxy (formerly known as Dongyang Chemicals) with the brand name "Thirsty hippo" (literally, "water-eating hippo"), which came on the market in 1986 and is still successfully merchandized today as an effective way of absorbing moisture in the air, especially during the humid rainy season of Korean summers. The significance of the metaphor becomes clear when we see how often it was used, by whom, in what way, and on what kind of occasions. In relation to the findings of his recent study "On the perception of party nomination in regional elections" (Jae-Wang Kim 2009), the author explained in an interview that we need to conceive of party chapters not as *money*-eating hippos, but as *water- and grass*-eating hippos (Kukmin Ilbo, December 30, 2009).

[14]   To the best of the author's knowledge, the first account of this figurative expression goes back to an article by Jong-Cheol Kim in the *Hankyoreh Sinmun* on March 22, 1996 (p. 11), but it only became widely popular in 2003.

become one of the major issues in the reform discourse in 2003 (see Seo 2004). Here it mainly served as an authoritative academic argument for the abolition rationale.

Figure 4: Frequency of the key phrase "money-eating hippo" in major newspapers over time (Oct. 2002–Apr. 2003)
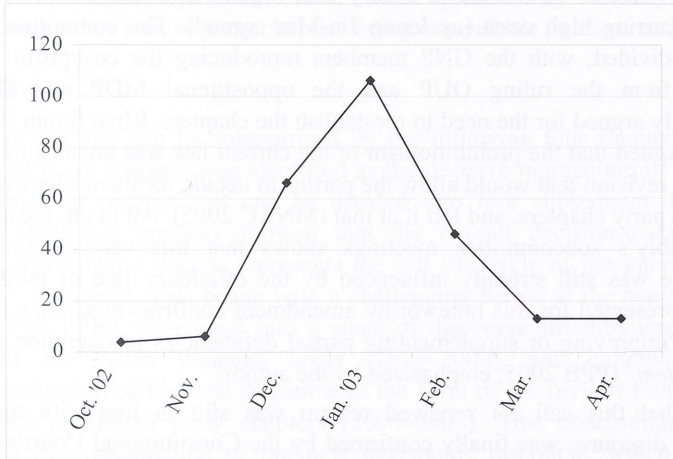

Source: Korea Integrated Newspaper Database (KINDS) "Mediagaon" (www.kinds.co.kr); compiled by the author

President Roh, who was neither fond of the idea of moving the party inside parliament nor of abolishing the party chapters, beseeched the assemblymen in an open letter written in mid-December not to eliminate the institution of party chapters, but to innovate it instead (Kookmin Ilbo, Nov. 13, 2003: 4; Roh MH 2003). But by that point, he was already stripped of sufficient leverage due to the institutional division of president and (ruling) party and the overwhelming discourse structure, and accordingly became disregarded, a powerless 'power actor.' This fact manifested itself in the unchallenged discourse style and content of the Assembly's reform committee, held without any (public) hearing (trimming of any potential coordinative challenges), and the resulting formulation of the policy decision. The need to "completely abolish the party-chapter system" was justified on the grounds of "improvement of the parties' high-cost/low-efficiency structure" (PPA bill 2004).[15] The reason stated leaves no doubt here — indeed, it makes it explicitly

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[15]   The revised law stated that the party organization had to be composed of the central party in Seoul and its branches in the cities and provinces. Simply omitting any regulation on organizational structure beneath city or provincial level or any other regional organization was also prohibited (PPA 2004). Moreover, the authoritative interpretation by the National Election Commission (NEC) reconfirmed this fact.

clear that the main objective was no longer perceived in political terms, but almost solely in economic terms.

Figure 5: Frequency of the key phrase "parliamentary party" in major newspapers over time (Oct. 2002–Apr. 2003)

4.4 After the abolition: renewed reformation and the political judiciary (2004–2008)

Even while the new hegemonic discourse was still being institutionalized, in spring 2004 the newly formed OUP began establishing its regional party organizations, which were named 'party-member councils' (*chiyŏgwiwŏnhoe*), but closely resembled former party chapters. Right after the enactment of the new PPA, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) submitted a constitutional challenge to the institutionalized discourse. While the Constitutional Court was working on the case, the National Assembly's reform committee convened and prepared to reform the PPA again so that party activity would be allowed again below city and provincial level (MNAC 2004). However, this did not mean a change in the dominating discourse of 'low cost and high efficiency,' because while entities of party-member councils were allowed again, the actual operation of any kind of office was explicitly prohibited (PPA 2005: §37).

The debates in the National Assembly's committees were almost an identical remake of the previous competition that arose among the discourses (MNAC 2005). The experts who had been invited to speak divided into two coalitions. One group criticized the abolishment decision and its basic (economic) assumptions and pled for the re-introduction of the party chapter as an institution, albeit in a better way

(e.g., Son Hyeok-Jae and Jeong Yeong-Tae). On the other side of the fence, the argument was put forward that it would be too early to reinstate the chapters, because necessary preconditions were lacking, such as party members who volunteered to participate in them. And even if chapters were to be reintroduced, they would have to be limited to a very lean organization that could be operated without incurring high costs (as Jeong Jin-Min argued). The committee members were also divided, with the GNP members reproducing the cost/profit rationale. Members from the ruling OUP and the oppositional MDP and DLP only halfheartedly argued for the need to reestablish the chapters. Rhyu Simin (OUP), for example, argued that the prohibitionism of the current law was unconstitutional and proposed a revision that would allow the parties to decide for themselves whether or not to have party chapters, and left it at that (MNAC 2005). All in all, the analysis of the Assembly's subcommittee meetings shows that this very dubious reform compromise was still strongly influenced by the efficiency line of thinking. The reasoning presented for this noteworthy amendment confirms this, since it claimed to aim at "improving or supplementing partial deficiencies in operation under the *current system*" (PPB 2005; emphasized by the author).

The fact that this call for renewed reform was still in line with the current hegemonic discourse was finally confirmed by the Constitutional Court's decision, which was made public in mid-December 2004 (KCourt 2004). In a surprisingly simple and unambiguous style of argumentation, the Court, in its institutionally strong position as the judiciary macro-actor, stated in its verdict that the decision to abolish party chapters had been an "appropriate measure for the problem" and would not run counter to the rights of political parties guaranteed by the constitution (ibid.). This assessment was shared by the President of the National Assembly. Even more surprising was the fact that there was no noteworthy opposition to the decision or the law revision — neither on the part of the DLP, nor by civil-society organizations or any other potentially critical actors. Even though one could agree with the Constitutional Court's argument that the question of the new law's appropriateness should not be judged on the constitutional level, there still seems to be room for challenging the prohibition of party chapters as a legitimate step supported by the constitution (see Jeong TH 2006). In view of a decade of fierce controversies, it is surprising to learn that both the Constitutional Court and the President of the National Assembly presented their arguments almost without questioning the appropriateness of the means. In this regard, it is very telling that the verdict speaks of the abolishment as being an appropriate way of satisfying the "aim of the legislation to improve the costly and inefficient party structure" (ibid.) — and not that of achieving democratization.

Of course, the Constitutional Court had ruled that the abolishment conformed with the constitution, but it did not rule that allowing chapters would be unconstitutional. What is of particular importance here is the fact that its unanimously rendered verdict did not only have an authorizing effect on abolishment narratives (e.g., Jang

YS 2005: 36) as a phenomenon of 'political jurisprudence,' but it also reconfirmed the fact that the abolishment nine months earlier was not simply the result of the efforts of a group of overenthusiastic politicians, but was actually the product of a new understanding of political parties. This reproduction of refined and concentrated narratives of 'efficiency,' 'low cost,' and 'productivity' clearly reveals a consolidation of the idea of party chapters being expendable political entities.

5. Findings

The above analysis can be summarized by the following four findings. First, the abolition of party chapters was identified as the decisive momentum of a long-term decision-making process that can be divided into four subsequent development stages. Time-series analysis showed that the overall decision-making process spanning more than a decade represents the full life cycle of the interchange of a hegemonic discourse. This began with a challenging period at the beginning of the 1990s (1992–1996), developed into a stage of discourse structuration around the period of the Asian financial crisis (1996–2000), and culminated in the institutionalization of the new discourse in the form of the revised Political Parties Act, which prohibited party chapters (2000–2004). This concluding stage was completed by consolidation of the new hegemonic discourse, which manifested itself in further discourse reproduction (2004–2008). This incremental development process can also be traced back through the gradually intensifying media coverage of the topic: this shows ever-higher peaks of use of the key phrase "party-chapter abolishment" in newspaper reports that appeared in the respective periods (see figure 6 below).

Second, after democratization, the discourse arena opened up with respect to political reforms, and competition arose between two discursive coalitions on the question of the institution of district chapters. One of the coalitions can be identified as advocating the normalization of district chapters by reinforcing and activation, with the objective of democratizing political parties. The other discursive coalition produced a narrative of party efficiency that could only be realized through extensive downsizing or completely abolishing party chapters. The former adopted a perspective on the issue as part of the political realm that is based on principles of democracy and aims to achieve participative democracy. The discourse of the latter finally prevailed and can be characterized as follows: it defined the problem at hand not as one going back to deficiencies in dealing with principles of democracy, political culture and practices, or social cleavages, but almost exclusively as an issue of cost/profit efficiency. This qualitative shift in the party-reform discourse could be substantially detected in the law reforms implemented in 2000, where efficiency- and cost-related arguments appear in the law-revision argumentation for the first time. Up until then, there had been a steady and consistent narrative of democratization and activation of parties, especially since democratization in 1987.

Since the year 2000, however, the proclaimed aim has no longer been democratization, but efficiency in the sense of cost cutting.

Figure 6: Frequency of the key phrase "party-chapter abolishment" in major newspapers over time (1990–2008)
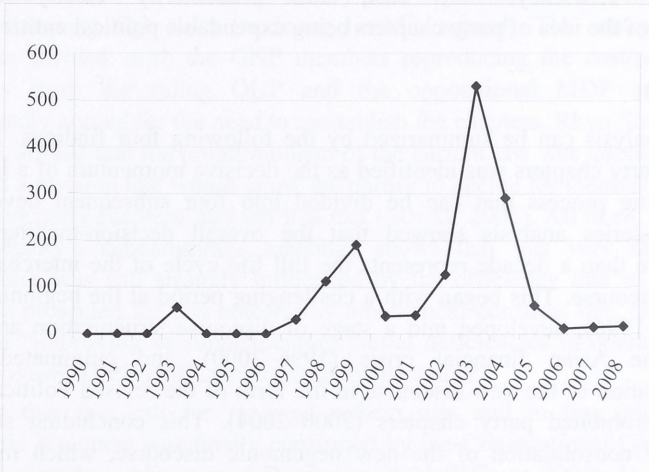
As a result of the two discursive coalitions' mutually exclusive lines of argumentation, the competition developed into a one-dimensional argument of 'Are you with us or against us?' While the participative democracy discourse rejected the basic presumptions of the efficiency discourse, such as cost/benefit calculations being criteria for questions of a political nature, the efficiency discourse was almost completely blocked in its receptivity to any notion of normalizing district chapters as a means of strengthening the institution of political parties. Even though there were many occasions on which the various key actors were able to exchange their lines of argumentation, in most cases they literally talked at cross-purposes — a fact that is well illustrated by the controversial party-model debate among scholars as well as the public hearings and debates in the National Assembly's Special (Sub-) Committees. In the end, this development led to the manifestation of a highly exclusive frame that only allowed one solution — and no compromises.

Third, the influx of a new generation of politicians in the early 2000s provided a key precondition for a new constellation of actors that facilitated this policy decision. Politicians of the so-called "386 generation"[16] — i.e., those in their 30s who had

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[16] The influx of the young and ambitious 386 generation started with the parliamentary elections under the Kim Dae-Jung government in 2000 and continued under the Roh Moo-Hyun government in 2004. A central role in the reform movement that included the abolishment of party chapters was played by

demonstrated for democracy in the 80s and were born in the 60s — found their way into institutional politics, at the latest due to the general elections held in 2000, and gained more and more influence in the wake of the presidential elections two years later. The young and ambitious "386" politicians, who were finally able to walk onto the institutional stage of politics from the beginning of the new millennium, made use of the widely held neoliberal mindset[17] in order to empower themselves vis-à-vis the old, entrenched politicians in their respective parties. In the wake of the deepening crisis of the old 'Three Kims politics' and intensifying disapproval of this kind of politics by South Korea's citizens, the young and ambitious attained positions of influence and were able to soften the existing power relations of the forces in their respective parties that had vested interests. With the election fund scandals becoming public knowledge in autumn 2003, the new factions were able to drive their old rivals into a corner, empowering themselves through narratives of reform, including the innovative renovation of party politics. Transcending the ruling and opposition parties, these key actors seized the opportunity to get rid of what they defined as being an important source of the generally much-distrusted and shamed old form of politics. However, by simply abolishing party chapters entirely and not for example reform party organization they can be said to have thrown out the baby with the bath water.

Fourth, up until the election of Roh Moo-Hyun, the discourse competition had been centered on the classic cleavage between the ruling and opposition camps. However, in view of the legitimacy crisis of the 'old kind of politics,' the advent of young progressives making the case for abolishing the chapters regardless of party affiliation served as a sufficient condition to create the necessary opportunity structure. Their discursive and non-discursive practices produced a constellation of reformist politicians on the one hand and reactionary politicians on the other, the former promising to change the corruptness of politics, the latter standing for the status quo. In a similar way to President Kim Dae-Jung when he took office during the financial crisis of 1997/8 and tried to fight the hegemony of the *chaebŏl* with the mistaken leverage of the IMF's neoliberal policy package (Kang 2005: 291), the young politicians now availed themselves of a rhetoric of "efficiency," "productivity," "downsizing," and other notions taken from the field of business management. While their rhetoric drew on terms and notions of market economy or neoliberal restructuration, their story lines were promising, if only for the reason that they were a clear departure from the existing authoritarian and collusive politics that practically nobody had trusted for a long time. By connecting the public call to cleanse politics of corruption and enhancing the 'productivity and efficiency of politics' as the last realm still to be streamlined since the crisis began, coupled with

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lawmakers such as Oh Se-Hoon, Won Hee-Ryong (GNP), Chun Chung-Bae, Rhyu Simin, and Kim Seong-Ho (OUP).

[17] See Kang WT (2005: 291) for a more detailed analysis of the neoliberal structuration of the overall political discourse during the early 2000s.

ever-stronger demands for reform by civil-society organizations and the mass media with imprecise and very vague contentions and propositions, the discourse competition finally turned into a single, raging torrent of hysteria about abolishing the party chapters.

6. Conclusion

This article started by posing the question of how the policy decision that led to the abolishment of party chapters in 2004 can be explained, its major argument of efficiency and its outcome of curtailing parties being contrary not only to the logic of the political realm, but also to *realpolitik* reasoning. The answer to the question is twofold.

First, at the level of concrete practices, the analysis confirmed that diverse errors were committed by the actors involved in the policy decision-making process, most of which are already known and which are actually part of the problem in the first place. It may be rather too much of a generalization if we judge the behavior of the key actors in the decision-making process, such as assemblymen, experts, and journalists, as lacking integrity and professionalism. With regard to the assemblymen, it can be said that they mostly lacked the necessary expertise in the field of their committees and conducted committee meetings very laxly. The deficiencies on the part of the experts, who are mostly professors and researchers, manifested themselves in the political party-model debate, amongst other things, where they almost exclusively held onto their own perspective and were subsequently unable to achieve a common definition or identification of the problem; in fact, they literally talked at cross-purposes to each other and to the politicians, as well as the general public, who would have needed their expertise in order to develop an opinion of their own. The mass media, for their part, did the whole decision-making process a disservice when they lumped all the different facets of party reform together and incorporated them into a major instigative moral campaign demanding the unconditional surrender of the political class. All in all, these constellations and interactions had a facilitative effect on the adoption of actionist solutions, such as abolishing party chapters.

Second, the analysis of the continuing discourse competition showed how the idea of treating party chapters as disposables was generated, conveyed, and eventually prevailed. This could explain why it was that party chapters were abolished under a progressive president. Roh Moo-Hyun's victory in the presidential elections of 2002 provided the opportunity for young reformists to empower themselves by criticizing the entrenched political forces and demanding the old, corrupt world of politics to be cleansed. The decisively deepening legitimacy crisis of the "old" political forces following the election-fund scandals suffered by the opposition along with the government camp in mid-2003 provided a pretext for the new discourse coming to the fore. Admittedly, the conflict developed between the young, ambitious thinkers

and the old, entrenched politicians, but it increasingly grew *across* government and opposition party lines. "386" politicians, in particular, would lead the 'groundbreaking' transformation of politics in calls for 'modernization,' 'innovation,' and 'reform.' The backing of the media and the general public's demand for a reform of politics provided crucial support to drive the entrenched forces into the corner and finally extort appropriate concessions from them. In the process, the institution of party chapters, which had been the subject of reform debates since the early 1990s, was made one of the central issues of the power struggle. The development of the new, challenging discourse could be identified by its representative argumentation of "low efficiency and high costs" in politics, depicting party chapters as "money-eating hippos." These phrases were coined by the media, adopted by politicians and scholars alike, and widely used as shorthand for the respective abolishment argumentation. In what followed, the reform discourse was framed by an argumentative rationalization in favor of abolishing the party chapters for the sake of efficiency, i.e., to improve the *management of politics*, not make politicians' *involvement in politics* more effective. In other words, what eventually happened was that "they pursue[d] modernity at the expense of politics and in the process fail[ed] to achieve the one because of their neglect of the other" (Huntington 1968: 92).

Thus, thanks to the insights of the findings that have been presented above, we are now free to take into consideration the unconditional efficiency thinking that substituted for the idea of democratic principles during the decision-making process and acted as a determining factor upon choices made by key actors in the policy-making process (see Lasswell 1951: 524). This knowledge is a precondition for any successful attempt to break out of the vicious circle of never-ending reforms and constant technocratic tinkering on the part of political institutions.

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