

Learning to Lose in One-Party Dominant Systems

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Much of the recent work on political transitions has tended to focus on whether states move away from authoritarianism or not. The singular attention paid to a certain form of transition overlooks other kinds of transitions which also profoundly impact the nature of political life, such as from one 'kind' of authoritarianism, for instance, Stalinist totalitarianism, to another, such as the dominant party authoritarianisms in PRI Mexico, PAP Singapore, and KMT Taiwan. China may be undergoing such a transformation presently, one which continues to elude democratic practices but one that has contributed to some political stability and economic modernization. Transitions can occur within democracies as well, and with significant implications on political, social and economic life. India, Japan and present-day South Africa provide insights into such ongoing transformations.

This edited volume examines dominant party systems, both authoritarian and democratic, and explores specifically important political transitions within as well as across the authoritarian-democracy boundaries. It does so by focusing on the *political consequences of losing* on the part of dominant parties. Many of the contributions in the volume explore how dominant parties or former authoritarian-turned-democratic parties adapt to new electoral realities (i.e. Taiwan, Korea, Mexico, the former Soviet Union). Some parties merely look to survive, while others adapt to remain competitive in the short and longer terms. Several of the other case-studies examine how dominant parties have responded to emerging political challenges, which, short of outright electoral defeat, have nonetheless forced such parties to adapt in order to maintain their dominance. Some of these parties have retained or regained their dominance in democratic settings (i.e. Japan, South Africa), while others have effectively initiated strategic political-economic reforms, though within authoritarian contexts (i.e. China, Malaysia, Singapore). Differences and similarities among these varied sets of cases are explored in this volume.

Unlike other studies which attempt to identify and categorize in static ways 'hybrid' regimes (i.e. "competitive authoritarianism"), ours centers on *change and adaptation*, and how losing in politics can be an important impetus to critical and ongoing transitions, both East and West. Simply put, our study explores the choices that political elites make when they are confronted with their own defeat (or the prospects of defeat). The book examines political transitions in China, Mexico, the former Soviet Union, South Africa, Japan, India and other large and important nations. The comparative scope of the study is broad, and while the focus is on dominant parties/regimes, the in-depth case-studies offer tremendous empirical detail, reflective of our authors' noted expertise. In this respect, *Learning to Lose* positions itself to be both a theory-generating and empirically useful collection; it will appeal to social scientists specifically interested in political transitions and to students of comparative politics more generally.

The Learning to Lose volume grew out of an international workshop hosted by the Munk Centre and the Asian Institute in the spring of 2006. Participants came from Canada, the US, Asia and Europe.