

# The Survivability of Divided Government in the Korean Presidentialism

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Korea has practiced a presidential form of government since 1948, with the exception of a brief period of time from 1960 to 1961. The presidentialism, however, has faced a series of crises, as divided governments unexpectedly emerged. Thus far, the National Assembly has been under such an inverted setting several times, starting from 1988 and lasting over nine years in total. In this climate, three presidents had to confront oppositionist offensives, and attempted, in vain, to deviate from the troubled environment in several ways. Is the divided government survivable on the Korean soil without impairing the legislature's systemic framework? And ultimately, can the opposition-controlled assembly, or the divided government, get along with the strong presidentialism in Korea? The paper focuses on whether the divided government is compatible with the presidential polity in the Korean political climate. And to answer the questions above, the research examines the divided governments of Korea in the past, discovers and estimates 'good' and 'bad' schemes made in a bid to depart from the troubled setting, and finally suggests some possible prescriptions to overcome the situation.

**Keywords:** Presidential system of government, National Assembly, Opposition domination, Divided government, Unified government, Legislative-executive impasse, Parliamentary politics, Legislative conflict management

## I. Introduction

The Republic of Korea has adopted a presidential form of government since 1948.

However, system debate is still an unfinished agenda in the Korean political circle. As a matter of fact, choosing a regime type is among the most significant tasks facing the newly-independent nations including Korea. It is interesting to review the results of Fred W. Riggs' research on regime survivability of 136 developing nation-states (Riggs 1985). His survey reports that 30 out of 33 states adopting presidential systems, including Korea, experienced military coups, while 13 out of 43 under parliamentary polities were confronted with such political devastation (Riggs 1986). This may demonstrate that statistically, a parliamentary system of government is relatively safer than an presidential system in terms of its survival rate, though highly a superficial comparison. In fact, military coups or interventions in Third World politics might be caused by other factors rather than differentiation of the polity type. Fundamentally, such political irregularities might be attributable to the underdevelopment of political subsystems in many countries. This indicates the underinstitutionalization and malfunctioning of what Riggs called a constitutive system—an elected assembly, and electoral system, and a party system (Riggs 1969, 17)—, which constitutes a basis for democratic politics.

Korea has ever since been under a presidential system, with the exception of a brief period of time during the Second Republic(1960~1961), when a parliamentary regime was briefly experimented, yet soon or later encountered a military coup. In Korea, the presidential system of government, or briefly 'presidentialism', has been in no way smooth enough in its course, as in the other nations. In association with the presidential polity, the nation had undergone nine reforms of its basic law. To be specific, as tabled below, six out of the nine constitutional amendments were either to alter the way of presidential elections or to extend the term of office.

Thus far, over the past 60 years, 17 presidential elections took place in Korea. Of these, twelve presidents were popularly elected, while the remaining five were elected indirectly by either the National Assembly or the National Conference for Unification, or an electoral college. Here, a striking tendency is that whenever incumbent presidents were situated to be unfavorable under the existing electoral system, he necessarily schemed to seek for another system that guarantees his reelection. On several occasions,

Table 1. Principal Reasons for the Constitutional Revisions in Korea

Republics	Revisions	Principal Reasons
1st Republic (1948 to 1960)	1st revision (July 7, 1952)	To alter the presidential electoral system from the one by National Assembly to a popular vote.
	2nd revision (Nov. 29, 1954)	To remove restriction on presidential terms, i.e., for Syngman Rhee's reelections.
2nd Republic <sub>1</sub> (1960 to 1961)	3rd revision (June 15, 1960)	To switch to a parliamentary system, together with a bicameral legislature.
	4th revision (Nov. 26, 1960)	To legalize a retroactive punishment of those who were involved in the rigging of the presidential election on March 15, 1960.
3rd Republic (1963 to 1972)	5th revision (Dec. 26, 1962)	To return to a presidential system and a unicameral legislature.
	6th revision (Oct. 21, 1969)	To allow the third election of incumbent President Park Chung-hee by lifting the provision restricting the presidential term.
4th Republic <sub>2</sub> (1972 to 1979)	7th revision (Dec. 27, 1972)	To create another constitutional organ, the National Conference for Unification, whereby President Park was reelected indirectly.
5th Republic (1981 to 1988)	8th revision (Oct. 27, 1980)	To have the president elected indirectly by an electoral college, fixing the presidential term to a single 7-year one.
6th Republic (1988 to present)	9th revision (Oct. 29, 1987)	To return to direct presidential elections by voters, reducing the presidential term to a single 5-year one.

*Source:* The table above was organized on the basis of date in (Kim, 2001).

*Note:* 1. 1961 to 1963: Military government, following the military coup headed by General Park Chung-hee.

2. 1979 to 1980: Interim government, following the assassination of the late President Park on October 26, 1979.

electoral system was altered at the president's will from one system to another. What made this possible was that these presidents held strong ruling parties with an absolute majority. This tendency had lasted until the final constitutional revision took place in 1987. As mentioned earlier, system debate has yet to come to an end in the Korean

contemporary politics.

Meanwhile, this long-standing political pattern entirely broke down in the 13th National Assembly(1988 to 1992). As the then presidential party, the Democratic Justice Party(DJP), failed to maintain a majority in the 1988 general elections,<sup>1)</sup> the 13th National Assembly turned to be opposition-dominant for the first time. This was historically an unprecedented case, in which both the president and the government party became totally upset by losing control in the legislative process.

Once again, the same opposition-dominant assembly, or simply divided government, was resulted from the 1997 presidential election, in which opposition candidate, Kim Dae-jung, was elected president, a first-ever power shift between rival parties in Korea. From this reality were derived partisan clashes and deadlocks that could lead to threat of the system itself (Kang 1990, 65-88).

However, the Korean presidentialism goes on and on until now despite many trials and errors under the oppositionist domination. Is the divided government survivable on the Korean soil without hurting the legislature's systemic framework? Can the divided government ultimately get along with the strong Korean presidentialism? To answer these questions, the paper will focus on if the divided government is compatible with the strong presidential polity in Korea. And the paper will examine those of the past divided governments, discover and estimate the 'good' and 'bad' schemes, and finally suggest some possible ways to overcome the situation.

## II. Divided Governments in Korea

No doubt, the setting of divided government imposed a big burden on both the president and ruling party in the presidential regime of the Korean government. What

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1) In the 1988 general elections, the ruling Democratic Justice Party gained 125(41.8%), while the largest opposition Party for Peace and Democracy, 71(23.8%); the Reunification Democratic Party (RDP), 59(20%); and the New Democratic Republican Party (NDRP), 35(11.7%) respectively.

the Koreans call “Yeoso-Yadae”, or literally a small ruling/ large opposition, refers to an environment, wherein the opposition is numerically in dominance in the house by exceeding half the entire membership, while the governing presidential party loses control in the legislative process(Shugart 1955, 327-328; Elgie 2001). The divided government can emerge only in the presidential form of government, as long as there exist two separate elections, parliamentary and presidential. In nature, this can't take place in the parliamentarism where a majority party or parties are to form a government singly or in coalition.

Historically, the Korean presidentialism has been long in the unified government<sup>2)</sup>. A ruling party or parties<sup>3)</sup> have occupied the representative body with an absolute majority. As illustrated in Table 2, all of the government parties from the First to Fifth Republic(1948 to 1988) succeeded in securing a winning majority in the National Assembly, ranging from 51 to 75 percent of the entire membership. This numerical strength enabled the president to push his policies forward at his will, fully controlling both oppositionists and the elected assembly.

Then, there occurred a political ‘disaster’ in the strong Korean presidential polity, as a presidential party unexpectedly fell into a minority. The initial frustration came in the 1988 general elections under the Roh Tae-woo administration. The then governing Democratic Justice Party (DJP) failed to maintain a majority by gaining only 125(42%) seats out of 299 total members, while three opposition parties occupied 164(55%) in all (National Assembly Secretariat 2004, 59). This was unprecedented throughout the Korean political history. The turbulent 13th Assembly went on for some 20 months until

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2) In contrast of divided government, unified government represents a case in which both the executive and legislative branches of government are controlled by an identical party in the presidentialism (Coleman 1999).

3) During the 9th and 10th Assembly (1973 to 1979), Yujonghae, a political group, played a part as a quasi-government party, along with the then ruling Democratic Republican Party (DRP).

4) The three parties were the ruling DJP headed by President Roh Tae-woo, and two opposition parties—the RDP led by Kim Young-sam, and the NDRP led by Kim Jong-pil—, while the PPD led by Kim Dae-jung remained an opposition.

the so-called “Grand Merge” was proclaimed on January 22, 1990 by the three parties.<sup>4)</sup> This gave birth to a single gigantic ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP), whose seats reached 216(73%)(National Assembly 1998, 715).

As seen in Table 2, another similar phenomenon occurred during the President Kim Dae-jung’s term. As opposition candidate, Kim Dae-jung, won the presidential election in December 1997, the existing party picture got reversed. That is, the former governing Grand National Party(161 seats, 54%) turned to an opposition party, while the former opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) was switched into a governing party with its 79 seats (27% of the total). In a word, the National Assembly once again turned to be in opposition dominance. But the inverted setting did not go far yet survived only for six months, as the President Kim Dae-jung soon attempted at coalition with a minor United Liberal Democrats. In addition, he schemed another political manipulation, whereby the presidential party brought over 20 legislators from the opposition camp.

Anyhow, the coalition government could increase their legislators up to 153 in September 1998—the presidential NCNP, 101; and United Liberal Democrats. 52. Of course, harsh criticism followed over the manipulation on the part of the frustrated opposition New Korea Party, bringing the legislature to complete stalemate.

The opposition dominance was revisited over the entire term-period of the 16th Assembly, as the newly-created presidential party, the Millenium Democratic Party, failed to be a majority in the 2000 general elections, gaining merely 119(44%) seats. This climate continued until the end of the term, since power shift was not made in the 2003 presidential elections.<sup>5)</sup>

Finally, another divided government came in April 2005 during the term of the

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5) In the December 2003 presidential elections, a ruling candidate Roh Moo-hyun was elected the president. At the time, the National Assembly was controlled by the opposition Grand National Party.

6) The 17th Assembly was launched on May 30, 2004 with a stable ruling party, the Uri Party, which gained 152 seats (52%) in the general elections. But later on, the party members has been reduced up to 73(24%) as of July 2007, and faced its disorganization.

Table 2. Presidential Parties in Korea and Seat Occupancy

Republics (President)	National Assembly	Presidential Party	Seats <sub>1</sub>	Occupancy Rate
1st Republic (1948 to 1960) (Syngman Rhee)	Constituent Assembly (1948 to 1950)	No significant governing party		
	2nd Assembly (1950 to 1954)	No significant governing party		
	3th Assembly (1954 to 1958)	Liberal Party	114 (203) <sub>2</sub>	56%
	4th Assembly (1958 to 1960)	Liberal Party	126 (233)	54%
2nd Republic (1960 to 1961) Parliamentary System	5th Assembly (1960 to 1961)	Democratic Party	175 (233)	75%
3rd Republic (1963 to 1972) (Park Chung - hee)	6th Assembly (1963 to 1967)	Democratic Republican Party (DRP)	110 (175)	63%
	7th Assembly (1967 to 1971)	DRP	129 (175)	74%
	8th Assembly (1971 to 1972)	DRP	113 (204)	55%
4th Republic (1972 to 1979) (Park Chung- hee)	9th Assembly (1973 to 1978)	DRP	73 (219)	67%
		Yujonhoe <sub>3</sub>	73 (219)	
	10th Assembly (1979)	DRP	68 (231)	63%
		Yujonghoe	77 (231)	
5th Republic (1981 to 1988) (Chun Doo- hwan)	11th Assembly (1981 to 1985)	Democratic Justice Party (DJP)	151 (276)	55%
	12th Assembly (1985 to 1988)	DJP	148 (276)	54%

Table 2. Presidential Parties in Korea and Seat Occupancy(Continued)

Republics (President)	National Assembly	Presidential Party	Seats <sub>1</sub>	Occupancy Rate
	13th Assembly (1988 to 1992)	DJP (May 1988 to Jan. 1990)	129 (299)	43%
		Democratic Liberal Party (1990 to May 1992)	217 (297)	73%
6th Republic (1988 to present) (Roh Tae-woo) 1988 to 1993	14th Assembly (1992 to 1996)	Democratic Liberal Party (DLP)	156 (299)	52%
(Kim Young- sam) 1993 to 1998	15th Assembly (1996 to 2000)	New Korea Party (May 1996 to Feb. 1998)	151 (299)	51%
		National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) (Feb. 1998 to Aug. 1998)	79 (294)	27%
(Kim Dae-jung) 1998 to 2003		Coalition (NCNP & United Liberal Democrats) (Sept. 1998 to May 2000)	153 (299)	51%
	16th Assembly (2000 to 2004)	Millenium Democratic Party (Sept. 2001 to May 2004)	119 (273)	44%
(Roh Moo-hyun) 2003 to present	17th Assembly (2004 to present)	Uri Party (May 2004 to April 2005)	152 (299)	51%
		Uri Party (later, United Democratic Party <sub>4</sub> ) (May 2005 to present)	146 to 73 and 141 (299)	49% to 24% and 47%

Source: The data are cited from (National Assembly Secretariat 2004, 97-155).

- Note: 1. The figure for the seats represents the number of the ruling party members at the time of inauguration of each Assembly.
2. The number in parenthesis refers to the entire membership of the then Assembly.
3. Yujonghoe was a political group created to support the president and his policies. The members—one-third of the entire house membership—were all elected by the National Conference for Unification upon the recommendation of the president.
4. The Uri Party was split and dissolved in August 2007, and was again integrated into the United New Democratic Party(UNDP) in order to elect a single presidential candidate on the ruling side. The UNDP(135 members) was once again merged with the minor opposition Democratic Party(6 members) into 'United Democratic Party' in February 2008 in order to elect a single candidate for the coming April 9 general elections. The United Democratic Party numbers 141(47%).

current 17th assembly<sup>6)</sup>, as the ruling Uri Party failed in the re- and by-elections. After all, the Uri Party was doomed to dismantlement as its seats was reduced up to 73 with the split, and was finally absorbed into the newly-created Unified Democratic Party in February 2008. This condition will probably go on until the end of the term, May 29, 2008.

Opposition dominance in Korea, as in the above four cases, existed for some nine years in series, beginning in 1988, under the three different presidents— Roh Tae-woo, Kim Dae-jung, and Roh Moo-hyun. This inverted structure might be regarded in Third World politics as a necessary evil and/or a dilemma of the presidentialism (Riggs 1994). The paper will continue to scrutinize what were done specifically to depart from the painful divided governments—the 13th, 15th, 16th and 17th assembly, as darkened in Table 2.

### **III. Impasse-breaking Measures**

#### **1. Party Merge in the 13th Assembly(1990)**

There were a series of schemes and measures taken to break the troubled opposition-dominated setting. One was an attempt to realign the existing party structure in favor of ruling side. The above-mentioned 13th National Assembly(1988 to 1992) had sought such a breakthrough in 1990 by means of party merge, or what the Koreans called ‘grand merge’, whereby the three major political parties—the ruling DJP, RDP, and NDRP—organized a single gigantic Democratic Liberal Party(DLP), whose seats reached 216(73%) of the total 299. With this merge, the first-ever opposition-controlled legislature completely came to an end in a year and 8 months, May 1988 to January

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7) The then three party leaders—President Roh Tae-woo(DJP), Kim Young-sam (RDP) and Kim Jong-pil (NDRP)—joined their hands and declared a so-called ‘grand merge’ on January 22, 1990 in order to end the troubled opposition domination.

1990, subsequently generating extremely acute partisan conflicts.<sup>7)</sup>

(Aftermath)

It is true, however, that the political restructuring in 1990 brought out serious partisan confrontations between the new gigantic ruling party (DLP) and minority parties, turning to a zero-sum game. The 70-membered(23% of the total) opposition Party for Peace and Democracy (PPD) went totally isolated and frustrated in the legislative process. The party merge left behind a great ill effect on inter-party relations rather than creating a 'peace' or 'stability'. There followed a series of partisan clashes and confrontations between the rival camps, bringing the legislature into chaos. While the newly-created gigantic ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) went on to push for unilateral passage of their sponsored bills on the basis of their numerical strength, the frustrated opposition countered them by irregular steps such as physical clash, boycott of meetings, submission of resignations, extra-parliamentary politics, fast, and so on. The then opposition leader, Kim Dae-jung, attempted at a 13-day fast in order to protest on such unilateral actions of the ruling camp. And the 100-day regular session of 1990 spent two-thirds of the session with no meeting because of the opposition's boycott.

## **2. Attempt for the Shift to Parliamentarism**

In order to break the upset of divided government, another attempt was made during the 13th Assembly, a move to parliamentary system of government. At the time of the 13th Assembly, 1988 to 1992, consensus was increasingly formed in the political community for the need to move to a parliamentary system. However, this move went in vain initially as the 1990 'grand merger' took place. Afterwards, the parliamentary polity has been a recurrent issue in the political circle for various reasons. One of them is basically to evade the condition of divided government. A minority party leader, Kim Jong-pil, was a typical figure who cried out for the parliamentarism. He and his coalition

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8) During the 1997 presidential election campaign period, Kim Jong-pil, a minority leader(United

partner, Kim Dae-jung, had proposed constitutional amendment to adopt the parliamentary system of government as one of his 1997 presidential campaign pledges<sup>8)</sup>. However, the pledge did not come true yet because of lack of national consensus. The system debate remains unfinished and is still a hot potato in the Korean politics.

### 3. Coalition Government in the 15th Assembly(1998 to 2000)

As a way of breaking the painful opposition domination, coalition government was also utilized in the Korean presidentialism. In fact, the way of coalition is normally employed in the parliamentary form of government, yet rarely in the presidentialism. When the opposition candidate, Kim Dae-jung was elected president in December 1997, the then 15th National Assembly was being controlled by the governing Grand National Party(GNP) with an absolute majority—165 seats of the entire 299. But at the time, the opposition-turned new ruling National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) kept merely 78 lawmakers, accounting for just 26 percent. To reverse this unfavorable condition, the new president came to determine to make use of coalition government with the minor United Liberal Democrats (43 seats). With the so-called ‘DJP Collaboration’<sup>9)</sup>, some cabinet memberships<sup>10)</sup> including prime minister were shared between the two coalitioners. And additionally, the ruling party brought in many MPs from the opposition camp. As a result, the 15th Assembly could barely return to ‘normalization’<sup>11)</sup> in six months after the new president’s inauguration on Feb. 25, 1998. This coalition had lasted over the three and half years until the United Liberal Democrats lost

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Liberal Democrats), conceded his presidential candidate to Kim Dae-jung on premise that the two would form a coalition government after the win.

- 9) The DJP represents a collaboration between president Kim Dae-jung(DJ) and a minority leader Kim Jong-pil(JP).
- 10) During the first-ever coalition government period, Feb. 1998 to Sept. 2001, three prime ministers—Kim Jong-pil, Park Tae-jun, and Lee Han-dong—and 14 ministers came from the Kim Jong-pil-led United Liberal Democrats.
- 11) As of September 1998, coalition government came to enjoy an absolute majority with 153 of the total 299 membership:—the presidential NCNP, 101; the United Liberal Democrats, 52.

a position as negotiation group on September 4, 2001 (National Assembly Secretariat 2004, 149).

#### **4. Steal of Oppositionists**

To ensure a winning majority, the ruling camp had made attempts even to ‘steal’ colleagues from another party or parties. In fact, to steal opposition members was a routinized political tactics that ruling sides attempted for various purposes. Typical was the one schemed during the Kim Dae-jung administration in 1998. As mentioned earlier briefly, at the time of his beginning term of office, his rival opposition Grand National Party(GNP) won an absolute majority—151seats(51%) in the 15th National Assembly. To break this upset, the ruling Millenium Democratic Party was criticized to have schemed an artificial party realignment by bringing in a total of 26 MPs from the opposition GNP—18 members to its own party, and the remaining eight to its coalition partner United Liberal Party. With this, the party picture in the legislature got totally reversed. That is, the coalition between the presidential Millenium Democratic Party and the United Liberal Party came to guarantee an absolute majority with 153 seats(51%) in all.

#### **5. Policy Collaboration in the 16th and 17th Assembly (2001 to the Present)**

Policy collaboration was also attempted as a useful instrument to iron out the difficulties of divided government. This was practiced mainly during the 16th and 17th Assembly terms. Specifically it was done during the second half of the 16th Assembly after the DJP coalition was broken out in September 2001, and again during the current Roh Moo-hyun administration with exception of a brief period (May 2004 to April 2005) while the presidential Uri Party maintained a majority in the house, following the 2004 general elections. The then presidential party— Millenium Democratic Party during the 16th Assembly, and the Uri Party during the 17th Assembly—utilized this policy without resort to any other drastic measures. The divided government induced

cooperations from a minority party and/or parties, each time it needs help for the passage of its-sponsored bills or policies. It is true that this gave the president and his party a hard-time, but contributed a lot to the activation of party politics through the negotiations and compromise.

## 6. The Proposal of ‘Grand Coalition’ in the 17th Assembly(2005)

The so-called ‘grand coalition’ was also employed in order to end the uncomfortable condition of divided government. The term, grand coalition, represents that the presidential party whose seats reach less than the half woos the largest rival party to organize a single government in order to ensure a comfortable majority. The grand coalition is similar to the above-mentioned ‘coalition government’ in that it pursues cooperation of another party or parties, but differs in the sense that the partner is the largest rival party, not a minority one.

In fact, the grand coalition is hardly utilized in the presidential form of government, and is rarely practiced even in the cabinet system of government, as in the 2005 German Angela Merkel Government, in which the combined Merkel-led CDU and CSU invited the major rival SPD in order to make sure a winning majority. In fact, this was the second case<sup>12)</sup> in German politics, following the past 1966 Grand Coalition.

The similar case occurred in the Korean presidentialism. In 2005, President Roh Moo-hyun had officially proposed the ‘grand coalition’ to the leader of the 123-membered(40% of the entire membership) largest opposition Grand National Party, Park Geun-hye. This was understood to have gestured in order to overcome the ruling party’s unstable position, as the party came to lose an absolute majority<sup>13)</sup> as a result of by- and re-elections. However, the proposal was flatly rejected by the opposition camp.

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12) By the second Grand Coalition in Germany, Merkel government assigned the rival SPD eight cabinet memberships, while the combined ruling CDU and CSU occupied only six cabinet memberships.

13) In 2005, the ruling party’s seats were markedly reduced from 152 to 144, reaching less than half the 299 entire membership, as it failed in by- and re-elections.

In fact, the drastic measure did not shed light in Korean politics. Nonetheless, the proposal might be meaningful in that it was utilized as a breakthrough to overcome instability of divided government and stabilize parliamentary politics.

## IV. Estimation

As seen in the previous chapter, the research discovered that the divided governments in Korea had employed, in overall, six varied instruments—party merger, attempt for parliamentarism, coalition government, steal of opposition members, policy collaboration, and grand coalition, etc.—throughout the history to depart from the hard-time arising from opposition domination in the legislature. No doubt, it is clear that the setting of divided government imposed a great burden on the president as well as the ruling camp, especially in the newly-experienced presidentialism in Korea.

And it is noted that upon each crisis, the ruling side has adopted differing schemes and measures to break it. Fortunately, however, the fragile Korean presidentialism was not dismantled yet, but rather, did keep the identity despite the several crises.

Thus, it might be vital to esteem those of six particular measures to see what sort of impacts each had on parliamentary politics in specific, and the Korean presidential system in general. For this, the research describes the goal of these measures as well as the criteria.

### 1. The Goal and Scales

#### 1) Goal: Political Stability

What will be the profound goal, if any, for the ruling party to take such drastic measures in order to break impasses with the opposition, risking blames? The goal is believed to be ‘political stability’, at least, on the part of ruling side. In many cases, ruling camps have tried out varied forms of political manipulation in the name of securing what they called ‘political stability’ or ‘stable majority’ in the legislative

process, rather than tolerating the oppositionist domination. Besides, there could be some other political purposes, such as political offensive, control of the opposition, etc. However, political stability is considered a major goal for those of the political measures.

## 2) Scales: Effectiveness and Suitability

What should be satisfied for those measures to contribute to the goal of political stability? The research considers a couple of variables: one is effectiveness, the other suitability. By 'effectiveness' is meant how much efficient and contributable the respective measure was to the goal attainment, while by 'suitability' how much desirable and acceptable in light of parliamentary politics in the presidentialism. With these two particular scales, the research will try to measure the effectiveness and suitability of the above-mentioned six instruments.

## 3) Sub-scales: Winning Majority & Legislative Normalization, and Ethics & Side Effects

On the other hand, a variable of 'effectiveness' can be measured, in turn, by the following two sub-scales: 'attainment of winning majority' and 'normalization of the impasse', while the other variable, suitability, will be measured by a couple of sub-scales: ethics, and side effects.

By winning majority is meant if the ruling party's scheme or attempt resulted in an winning majority in the house, while the normalization represents whether the legislative impasse was resolved, returning to a normal operation.

In the meanwhile, by 'ethics' is meant if the measure was institutionally acceptable or not, in terms of presidential system as well as sound inter-party relations, while the side-effects represents what sort of aftermath—positive or negative—the measure brought about in the legislative process, namely, whether there was followed by serious conflicts between and among the legislative parties.

The relationship among the above variables is depicted as follows.



Figure 1. Scales and Sub-scales Measuring Stability

## 2. Estimation on the Political Measures

As described earlier, several measures were taken to overcome the setting of divided government in Korean politics. Some achieved their expected purposes to a considerable extent, while the others were failed in their experiments. This section will try to measure, even if subjective to some extent, the contributions of those political measures to the initial goal, political stability, utilizing the above scales and sub-scales. Table 3 depicts the extent of contributions made by the respective step to the goal.

As analysed on the table below, the respective measure brought about varied consequences in the parliamentary politics in specific, and the particular Korean presidential system of government in general.

Table 3. The Degree of Contributions by the Political Measures to Stability

Scales & sub-scales Type of measures	Effectiveness		Suitability	
	Winning Majority	Legislative Normalization	Ethics	Side Effects
Party Merge	High	Medium	Low	High
Shift to Parliamentarism	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Coalition Government	High	High	Medium	Medium
Steal of Oppositionists	High	Low	Low	High
Policy Collaboration	Medium	High	High	Low
Grand Coalition	High	Medium	Medium	High

### 1) Party Merge

To be specific, the first three-party merge conducted during the 13th Assembly in 1990 gave birth to a single gigantic ruling Democratic Liberal Party(DLP), whose seats in all reached 216(73%) of the total 299. With this merger, the newly-created DLP was surely guaranteed an absolute majority in the house, reaching beyond the two-thirds majority required for constitutional amendment. Nevertheless, the DLP brought about a lot of problems, such as legislative stalemate, ethnic problem, and other serious side effects. So far from legislative normalization, the side effects were so serious. Consequently, the legislature had long suffered from the ensuing partisan clashes and confrontations as well as prolonged legislative stalemate. Besides, the step was believed to be less acceptable in sense that it brought about a distortion in the choice of constituencies as well as in terms of conservative Korean political culture. And it might be also undesirable to have created such an overwhelming ruling party in light of check and balance between ruling and opposition parties.

### 2) Attempt for Parliamentarism

In fact, the parliamentary system of government had been first-ever adopted during the Second Republic, 1960 to 1961. This new system was, however, very short-lived with the 1961 military coup, as described in Table 1. Afterwards, this system has been claimed by some politicians, whenever the current presidentialism faces crisis, especially in the divided government. This claim, however, did not come true yet in the Korean politics, probably because of lack of consensus among the general public.

In the meantime, the parliamentarism is a political system contrasting to another form of government, presidentialism. Thus, the approach to the parliamentarism is the one going beyond the current systemic framework. Accordingly, the effectiveness and suitability of parliamentarism are treated as 'Not Applicable' in Table 3.

### 3) Coalition Government

The experiment of coalition government was relatively successful in overcoming the divided government, especially in terms of its effectiveness for political stability. By

bipartisan coalition, the presidential party brought a winning majority, and gained a kind of ‘normalization’ in the legislative process.

Meanwhile, as for the suitability, the credit of coalition government was a medium level. Some people accepted the coalition in that it could bring political stability, while the others blamed it in the sense the approach was not so recommendable in the presidential system of government. Furthermore, the then prime minister-nominee, Kim Jong-pil, could not be officially inaugurated in 1998 for over six months, because the opposition dragged out the legislative approval<sup>14)</sup>.

#### 4) Steal of Oppositionists

This was the worst case in light of suitability. To ‘steal’ colleagues from another party is not justifiable, whatever the reasons. However, this happened in reality several times in Korean politics. For this misbehavior, several tactics and bargains must have been employed on the part of ruling side: pressure, threat, incentives, and other carrots and whips. In this regard, this tactics will get the worst credit in both ethics and side effects, even if it might have brought a winning majority. In addition, this approach failed in the legislative normalization because of ensuring acute partisan conflicts, bringing the legislature to complete stalemate.

#### 5) Policy Collaboration

Policy collaboration is believed to be one of the most preferred steps in the opposition-dominated legislature. That’s because the approach can play a positive-sum game between the rival parties, while the most minimizing the side effects. However, we cannot but admit the fact that this approach is a time-consuming and arduous work. And winning majority takes time in real politics. Therefore, the ruling party inferior to the opposition in number should woo their support, and suggest ‘good’ policies to the satisfaction of the opposition. This can promote such legislative cultures as compromise

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14) Although President Kim Dae-jung nominated his coalition partner Kim Jong-pil as the first prime minister of his administration on March 3, 1998, the legislative approval to the nomination was dragged out until August 17 of the year because of the opposition’s opposition.

and concession. Once the policy collaboration is made among the parties, however, there is no question to create a winning majority and normalize the deadlocked inter-party relations. This strategy was actually experimented during the 16th and the current 17th assembly. Even if the approach was not so sufficient to guarantee a winning majority all the time, it must have contributed to preventing the collapse of the Korean presidentialism.

#### 6) Grand Coalition

In 2005, grand coalition was once attempted by the president Roh Moo-hyun towards the largest rival party leader, Park Geun-hye. This proposal was, however, flatly rejected by her opposition camp. In fact, this approach is plausible principally in the cabinet system of government as in the current German Merkel administration. Such an illustration is almost impossible to occur in the presidential system in nature, because two rival parties, whose ideology and objectives are the opposite, should organize a single government. Nonetheless, in case this comes true in real politics, it will hundred percent guarantee an absolute majority in the house. On the other hand, there is reservation on this approach in light of inter-party normalization and side effects, since a minority party or parties will completely get frustrated. Besides, such a drastic approach is not so desirable from the ethnic point of view, either.

## V. Conclusion: Suggestions

Clearly, the political condition of divided government seems to be something painful on the president as well as his governing side, especially where the political system is under- or less institutionalized (Riggs 1994, 46-48; Jang 2001). However, it won't be anything never to overcome, either. This section will make possible suggestions to prevent the breakdown of the Korean presidentialism and contribute to better political stability.

1) Choice of Reasonable Remedy Tools

At first, it might be required to make right choice of tools to remedy the reversed setting of divided government. For this purpose, it is necessary to remind of the effectiveness and suitability of the above-mentioned impasse-breaking efforts. <Figure 2> demonstrates the varying extent of contributions by the respective measures to the political stability.

As portrayed in the figure below, the research preferred, relatively, policy collaboration, coalition government, grand coalition, party merge, and finally steal of oppositionists in order. In fact, policy collaboration is the most preferred as a problem solver, followed by the two kinds of coalitions—coalition government and grand coalition—, while party merge is somewhat reluctant to adopt and finally, the steal of oppositionists regarded as the worst choice. In the meantime, the category of parliamentarism lies out of the analysis, because it went beyond the framework of presidentialism at hand. Therefore, it locates outside the diagram.

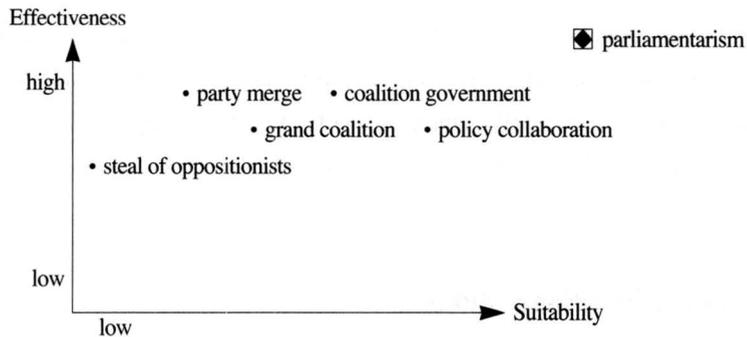


Figure 2. The Varying Degree of Contributions by the Respective Political Measures to Stability

2) Presidential Veto Power As a Safety Valve

Secondly, it is noted that presidential veto has been a very useful means to check the oppositionist offensives. One example is that in the beginning year (1988) of the 13th National Assembly, seven different bills, which had been unilaterally pushed through by the opposition, were effectively checked by the presidential vetoes. That is, four of them

were killed in the house re-vote by failing to meet an overriding requirement,<sup>15)</sup> while the remaining three were doomed to abrogation automatically, according as the assembly's term expired in 1992. In addition, another president Roh Moo-hyun exercised his veto power over the four controversial acts which had been also unilaterally passed by the opposition power. One of them was killed in the house re-vote, another survived, while the remaining two were abrogated without reconsideration, as the particular legislature came to expire in May 2004.

Most of the bills vetoed by the president were either killed in the house reconsideration process or compromised to the acceptance of rival camps.<sup>16)</sup> In this regard, the presidential veto served as a safety valve to properly check the excessive oppositionist offensives, contributing to the survival of the Korean presidentialism.

### 3) Acceptance of Divided Government As a Normal and Plausible One

In the presidential system, it is plausible both theoretically and realistically for the opposition to hold more seats in the house than the government party. This will have no meaning in the parliamentary regime where a government party or parties (in case of a coalition) always keep an absolute majority, as mentioned earlier.

In fact, divided governments are found in many countries. For example, the American Congress is a typical one where, although the opposition dominated both houses on many occasions, the presidentialist polity has been firmly standing. Actually, the American presidentialism has coexisted with the opposition-dominated Congress over the 'longer' period of time (Lee 2004, 2-3). To be specific, in the post-war period (1945 to 2008), eight American presidents (Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, H. Bush, Clinton, and W. Bush) were in cohabitation under divided government over the

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15) Article 53(Paragraph 4) of the Constitution stipulates that "Upon the presidential request for reconsideration of a bill, the National Assembly shall reconsider it, and if the National Assembly repasses the bill in original form with attendance of more than a half of all the members and with a concurrent vote of two-thirds or more of the members present, it shall become a law."

16) A single vetoed bill, "Act on Appointment of Special Prosecutor to Investigate the Alleged Irregularities of the Presidential Aids", became a law with partial compromise by the ruling side.

38 years (out of 64 years) in series, while only four(Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, and W. Bush) were under unified government merely for 26 years(Congressional Quarterly Inc. 2003, 468-470). It evidences that divided government is quite 'normal' and even 'natural' in the presidential system of government in America.

On the other hand, as for the outcomes of the divided governments in Korea, the finding is that basically there is no significant differentiation between the unified and divided governments in terms of bill passage(Park 1993, 179-181). That is to say, higher productivity was found during the unified government in some cases—the 14th, and the first half of the 15th Assembly—, while rather higher during the divided governments in the other cases—the 13th and 15th Assembly (Park1992, 102).

Besides, there is a positive sphere that the divided government created in association with legislative institution-building. That is, during the first-ever divided government in 1989, equitable distribution was initiated for the first time among the legislative participants over the house leadership positions such as speakership, vice speakerships and committee chairs, and so on<sup>17)</sup>. This unprecedented share among the participating parties became a root culture now in the Korean legislature.

In this regard, it is assumed that divided government, or the opposition-dominant legislature in the presidentialist regime, is neither 'abnormal' nor 'aberrant' but might be something 'plausible'. In conclusion, it might be rather wise to simply recognize the condition of divided government as it is, and seek some possible remedies which are reasonable and justifiable within the systemic framework without going beyond it.

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17) In case of the 13th National Assembly, out of 16 standing and seven ad hoc committees, only nine chairmanships went to the ruling DJP in July 1989, while the remaining 14 turned to the three opposition parties, i.e., six to the Party for Peace and Democracy(PPD), five to the Reunification Democratic Party (RDP), and three to the New Democratic Republican Party(NDRP).

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## 한국대통령제에 있어서 분점정부의 생존가능성

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한국은 1960~1961년도 간의 일시적인 기간을 제외하고는 1948년 이래 지금까지 헌정사상 줄곧 대통령제를 채택, 실시해 오고 있다. 그러나 한국 대통령제는 예상외로 여러 차례 분점정부(또는 여소야대 국회)가 나타남에 따라 큰 시련에 직면해 왔다. 1988년에 시작하여 지금까지 국회는 모두 네 차례, 합산하여 9년여의 기간동안 여소야대라는 역전(逆轉)정국에 놓여진 바 있다. 이 기간동안 3명의 대통령(노태우, 김대중, 노무현)이 분점정부를 경험하게 되었고, 그 때마다 야당우위의 정국에서 벗어나고자 갖가지 정치적 술책을 시도하였다.

한국과 같은 정치토양에서 의회정치의 기본 틀을 해치지 않고 과연 분점정부가 생존 가능할 것인가? 강력한 대통령제 하의 한국에서 분점정부가 궁극적으로 생존 가능한 체제인가?

이 논문은 한국정치 풍토에서 분점정부가 대통령제와 양립할 수 있는가의 여부에 초점을 둔다. 그리고 위의 질문들에 답하기 위하여 이 논문은 한국에서의 4차례 분점정부의 사례를 조사하고, 이를 탈피하기 위해 취해진 '좋고 나쁜' 갖가지 정치적 조치들을 분석 평가하며, 결론적으로 현실적으로 가장 현명하고 바람직한 처방을 제시한다.

**주제어:** 대통령제, 국회, 여소야대, 분점정부, 여야 대결, 의회정치, 의회의 갈등관리