

An Analysis of the Developmental Differences of Two Regional Political Movements from the Perspective of Conflict Resolution

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Abstract: Based on the theory of contentious politics, this paper takes the Gwangju Incident in South Korea and the Formosa Incident in Taiwan region as research cases. It conducts a comparative analysis from the perspectives of participants, conflict intensity and disposal methods, sorts out the developmental characteristics and internal differences of the two incidents, explores the underlying incentives for their evolution, and summarizes the effects of different governance models, so as to provide references and practical enlightenment for resolving social contradictions and improving social governance.

Keywords: Gwangju Incident; Formosa Incident; social governance; social contention

Comparison of Core Leading Figures

There exist prominent disparities in identity backgrounds and behavioral patterns among the core leaders of the two events. The Gwangju Incident was principally led by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam. Endowed with rich political experience and high social reputation, Kim Dae-jung had long been committed to the pursuit of democratic causes. Sharing consistent political convictions, Kim Young-sam cooperated closely with him to promote related democratic demands. The Formosa Incident took Huang Hsin-chieh as its core leader, and most participants were practitioners in the media industry. Possessing both political experience and extensive social influence, Huang Hsin-chieh mainly played the role of ideological leader and spiritual symbol of the movement [1].

The leading figures of the Gwangju Incident were professional politicians proficient in political games, while those of the Formosa Incident expressed opinions via public opinion platforms and gathered grassroots strength relying on social elite groups. Such identity differences directly led to distinct operational modes of the two social movements.

Comparison of Participant Groups

In terms of participant composition, the Gwangju Incident involved people from all walks of life, among whom young students constituted the main force. Being open-minded and politically enthusiastic, they were willing to take actions for their ideals. By contrast, the Formosa Incident had a smaller scale of participation. Most participants were closely associated with relevant journals, including editorial staff and supporters. A large number of non-party figures also took part in the movement to openly express their discontent with the local authorities.

Comparison of Casualties

With regard to casualties and conflict intensity, the Gwangju Incident brought about extremely severe consequences. Local authorities adopted tough violent suppression measures from the very beginning. Armed military and police forces clashed head-on with demonstrators during people's rights-defending activities, turning originally peaceful group petitions into fierce confrontations between civilians and troops. Official statistics showed that the incident left hundreds dead and thousands injured.

In contrast, the Formosa Incident developed in phases with intensified conflicts in the later stage. Despite frequent violent confrontations, its overall casualties were far fewer than those of the Gwangju Incident. The authorities mainly resorted to deterrence and warning, and only imposed severe crackdowns when the situation got out of control. Law enforcers adopted tough and peremptory measures with little willingness for negotiation. In the final stage, however, the government adopted a rational and impartial attitude and refrained from imposing severe punishments on relevant participants [2].

Enlightenment

Both types of social movements were initially underpinned by positive values. Their participants originally intended to strive for legitimate political rights and interests through rational peaceful petitions. However, the actual outcomes were far from their initial expectations. Intense conflicts of varying degrees broke out in the course of the two movements, accompanied by bloody clashes and adverse consequences. A review of these two typical events yields abundant practical implications.

Primarily, social governance must keep pace with the times and follow the objective laws of democratic development and social progress. In the Gwangju Uprising, local authorities stuck to conservative governance models, ignored reasonable public demands and adopted decisions against the trend of the times, which eventually intensified social contradictions and triggered large-scale mass protests [3].

Additionally, local governance authorities should face up to public appeals for interests, resolve social conflicts with scientific and pragmatic governance concepts, and properly handle group demands mainly through flexible communication and law-based measures. Meanwhile, relevant authorities should adhere to prudent and rational principles when handling social resistance incidents. Blindly adopting tough suppression and severe punishment measures can neither maintain long-term social and political stability, nor will it only accumulate social antagonism and leave hidden dangers for social governance.

Conversely, during the Formosa Incident, competent authorities adopted mild and rational disposal approaches, properly settled relevant involved personnel, effectively eased the confrontation between the government and the public, and successfully resolved potential social conflicts. Furthermore, governments ought to explore the underlying causes behind social resistance, accurately respond to people's practical needs, and resolve various social contradictions from the root.

Ultimately speaking, social resistance has become an indispensable part of modern social governance and boasts great research significance in grassroots social governance systems. As typical cases in the research of social resistance, these two incidents are of high value for comparative analysis and practical reference. A multi-dimensional comparison between them helps clarify the internal logic of social resistance behaviors and accurately grasp the evolution rules and development trends of mass demand incidents in contemporary society.

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