

2018

South Korean Nationalism and the Legacy of Park Chung Hee: How Nationalism Shaped Park's Agendas and the Future Korean Sociopolitical Landscape

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**South Korean Nationalism and the Legacy of Park Chung Hee:
How Nationalism Shaped Park's Agendas
and the Future Korean Sociopolitical Landscape**

Brandon L. Santos

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the MAE – History program

Chadron State College

Academic Advisor: Dr. Kurt E. Kinbacher

SOUTH KOREAN NATIONALISM AND THE LEGACY OF PARK CHUNG HEE:
HOW NATIONALISM SHAPED PARK'S AGENDAS AND THE FUTURE KOREAN
SOCIOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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Chadron State College, 2018

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Park Chung Hee (presidential term: 1961-1979) is, arguably, the most significant leader in the Korean Peninsula's modern history. His governance has many trademark elements that have been thoroughly analyzed. These include his economic plans and violent dealings against his political opposition. One often overlooked variable, however, is the significant traces of early Korean nationalism (1890s-1930s) that defined his regime. Park employed these ideas, although controversial, to completely change a nation that was teetering on the brink of destruction into what is now, one of the most well-known republics in the world – economically, technologically, and culturally. It is important, therefore, to investigate how early nationalism affected and shaped Park's tenure, and more importantly, how it still affects South Korea today.

There are two main nationalist ideologies that affected Park's rule. First are the teachings of early nineteenth century Korean nationalists, most prominently Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson. These philosophies gave Park the foundations to base his eventual

regime upon. Specifically, Sin and Choe's take on the *Tan 'gun* creation myth promoted that the Korean people are entitled to a prosperous and homogenized land. This was also one element of their *minjok* tenet – *minjok* loosely translating to “the Korean people.” It is an ethnonationalist philosophy implying that all Koreans and the lands from where they originated are bound together by blood. Second, Park took those theories and mixed them with a Social Darwinist, Neo-Confucian ideology, one modeled after what he learned from his brief Imperial Japanese military career; this is otherwise known as *bushido*. When fused together, these elements created a unique institution that was evident throughout every aspect of a Park-era South Korea.

It was not until the 1980s onwards that an affluent South Korean citizenry sought a more advanced republican-like polity. From this time on they out grew their need for Park-styled autocracy and nationalism. Through intense and daily mass protests, many of which ended in bloodshed, South Koreans infused old *minjok* nationalist themes with dissent; this union was called *minjung*. *Minjung* loosely translates to “mass people”, however during the protests the term was solidified under the definition of “the will of the [Korean] masses.” Therefore, *minjung* is now synonymous with South Korean-styled democracy. As a result, the end of the decade finally saw the last relic of Park's governance. His successor, Chun Doo-hwan, was ousted as South Korea ascended into the pantheon of highly developed democracies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all members of my committee, Dr. Kinbacher, Dr. Smith, and Dr. King, for taking the time to evaluate my thesis and portfolio. The information and feedback I received from their courses have expanded my critical analysis skills and teaching methodologies. Special thanks to my adviser, Dr. Kinbacher. Thank you for taking the time to help with my writing and early drafts. This made what should have been a long and strenuous project into one that was memorable and enjoyable. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends at home and in Korea. Thank you for giving me the motivation to finish.

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Introduction

South Korea's third president, former general, and strongman Park Chung Hee (1917-1979) is one of the most controversial figures in Korean history. Common opinions of the former president (term: 1961-1979) range from veneration to critical scorn with little to no middle ground. The former general was no stranger to controversy since his forceful takeover (*coup d'état*) of the presidency in 1961. Park's frequent use of brutal totalitarian measures, such as discarding due process of law and frequent torture of alleged dissenters, garnered him an infamous reputation. To add further antipathy, in 2016 his daughter and former president, Park Geun-hye, was impeached on corruption charges. Ultimately, a significant portion of modern Korean historians and younger generations aptly label the elder Park a power-hungry "dictator" who instilled a "reign of terror."¹

Park's fiscal accomplishments, however, receive praise by older generations and international spectators, especially in the developing world. Before Park's coup, South Korea came out of a civil war (1950-1953) in terrible shape economically, physically, and psychologically. Its position was so bleak that most global powers, including the US, labeled the South as "a hopeless case of poverty, social anomie, and political instability that was destined to lose in the inter-Korea competition to become the sole legitimate government of the entire Korean peoples."² Indeed, this is not an easy reputation to overcome.

¹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From "Land of the Morning Calm" to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 471.

² Taehyun Kim and Chang Jae Baik, "The Taming and Tamed by the United States," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 60.

The situation domestically was so dire that Park enacted swift, decisive, and efficient reforms – through side-stepping democratic procedures and *habeus corpus* rights – that resulted in international admiration. Within a generation, Park’s governance brought a war-torn and destitute Korea into global prosperity and prestige; and, therefore, it may be palpable to see why developing and emerging markets, such as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries, are attracted to Park’s autocratic, yet rapid, “developmental state” system.³

Sentiments about Park’s legacy are bipolar, and both Korean and international scholars have extensively examined the matter. Park’s leadership, economic programs, and contemporary sociopolitical perceptions are popular subjects for many historians, political scientists, and economists. The alleviation of poverty, the skillful navigation of Cold War politics, and the creation of a technocratic culture are trademarks of the Park Era. However, a less covered, yet equally important subject, centers around South Korean nationalism.

Park’s governance capitalized on five centuries worth of Korean nationalist culture. This deep tradition – learned during a brief World War II Japanese military career – consequently influenced a young Park and cemented his world view. The Park Era created a new nationalist culture that played a major role in his presidency. Even during his last years and after death, one mired in waning prestige, this type of nationalism shaped his legacy while deeply affecting his successors. Ultimately, modern

³ Jong-Sung You, “Transition from a Limited Access Order to an Open Access Order: The Case of South Korea,” in *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*, ed., Barry R. Weingast, Douglass C. North, John J. Wallis, and Steven B. Webb (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), PDF e-book, 294.

South Korean nationalist and patriotic sentiments still influence Park's legacy, good and bad, both domestically and abroad.

As for the setting and chronology, the thesis takes elements from Ancient Korea (Gojoseon) all the way until the present. The beginning of the timeline commences during the Gojoseon era (unknown-108 BCE). There is no specific date for the origins of Gojoseon; however, mythological tales place it as far back as 2333 BCE. After Gojoseon, the peninsula split into Three Kingdoms – Goguryeo (37B CE-668 CE), Baekje (18 BCE-660 CE), and Silla (57 BCE -935 CE).⁴

The Silla Kingdom eventually conquered the other kingdoms and united them under one banner: The Unified Silla (668-935 CE). Unified Silla held a majority of the peninsula for a while, but Goguryeo refugees resettled in the north and they later set the foundations for the Balhae Kingdom (698-926 CE) and the Later Goguryeo Kingdom (901-918CE). The Later Goguryeo would become Goryeo.⁵

After numerous border skirmishes, corrupt in-court politics, and northern nomadic invasions, the kingdoms fell, and a new entity emerged from the ashes, the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392 CE).⁶ This era is known for constant battles against Khitan-Manchurian and steppe tribes, and, as such, the battles culminated when Yuan Mongols annexed Goryeo (1270-1356 CE).⁷

In 1356, Goryeo gained back their rule as Mongol authority weakened; this was short lived (1356-1392 CE), however, as Goryeo finally exhausted themselves from

⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 32-42.

⁵ Ibid., 91.

⁶ Ibid., 122

⁷ Ibid., 165.

centuries of never-ending wars. Between 1388 and 1392 CE, a disgruntled general, Yi Seong-gye, and his troops rebelled against Goryeo elites and eventually usurped the throne to become Korea's last and longest-lived dynasty: The Joseon Dynasty.⁸

The Joseon era lasted for five centuries (1392-1897 CE) and is known as Korea's "renaissance" due to a meticulous bureaucracy and domestic technological innovations. This era is famously known for King Sejong the Great – the founder of the modern Korean alphabet, *hangul* – and the Imjin Wars of 1592 (The Japanese Invasion Wars of 1592).

Due to numerous wars, the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw an increasingly isolated Korea mirroring that of their Qing neighbors. Japanese neighbors to the south, however, modernized at an unprecedented pace under the rule of Emperor Meiji (1867-1912). Unbeknownst to Korea and Qing China, Meiji Japan and the Great Western Powers spelled the doom of East Asia's dynastic orders.⁹

The Fall of Joseon (1897) occurred due to numerous peasant revolts, aristocratic corruption, and a severely outdated socioeconomic structure.¹⁰ Instantaneously, a short-lived Korean Empire (1897-1910) was founded with the intent to modernize. This did not occur as Imperial Japan (1868-1945) set up their hegemony in the Pacific. Consequently, Korea was colonized and annexed by Japan; and aptly, this era is known as Colonial Korea (1910-1945).¹¹ During this period, more importantly, Park Chung Hee was born (1917-1979).

⁸ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 186.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 305, 348-356.

The end of World War II (1945) split Korea into two military government states, a Soviet-Chinese coalition backed North Korea, and an American-UN coalition backed South Korea. In 1946, Park came back to Korea after a short stint in the Imperial Japanese Army (1945-1946). The Koreans engaged in a bloody civil war (1950-1953) that ended in a stalemate (1953 Korean Armistice Agreement). Park quickly rose ranks during the Korean War and, now a general, enacted a coup on May 16, 1961.¹²

Park, now the executive and president of South Korea, held presidential elections in 1963, 1967, and 1971, winning each one; however, 1971 was a close contest. Consequently, Park suspended democratic procedures in 1972 by enacting the *Yushin* constitution. Park ruled for another seven years, and, in 1979, he was assassinated. His successor was military general Chun Doo-hwan, and like Park, enacted a coup in 1980 to gain leadership.¹³

In 1988, President Chun was ousted due to numerous urban protests and pressure from the international world. From 1988 to the present, the Sixth Republic of Korea was founded. This republic was the first to hold direct elections in the last sixteen years ago. South Koreans have since directly elected seven presidents since Park's death and Chun's ousting.¹⁴ For a better representation, Figures I and II are presented as a visual timeline and chronology of Park's nationalism.

¹² Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 407-420.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 422-425, 446-450.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 519-525.

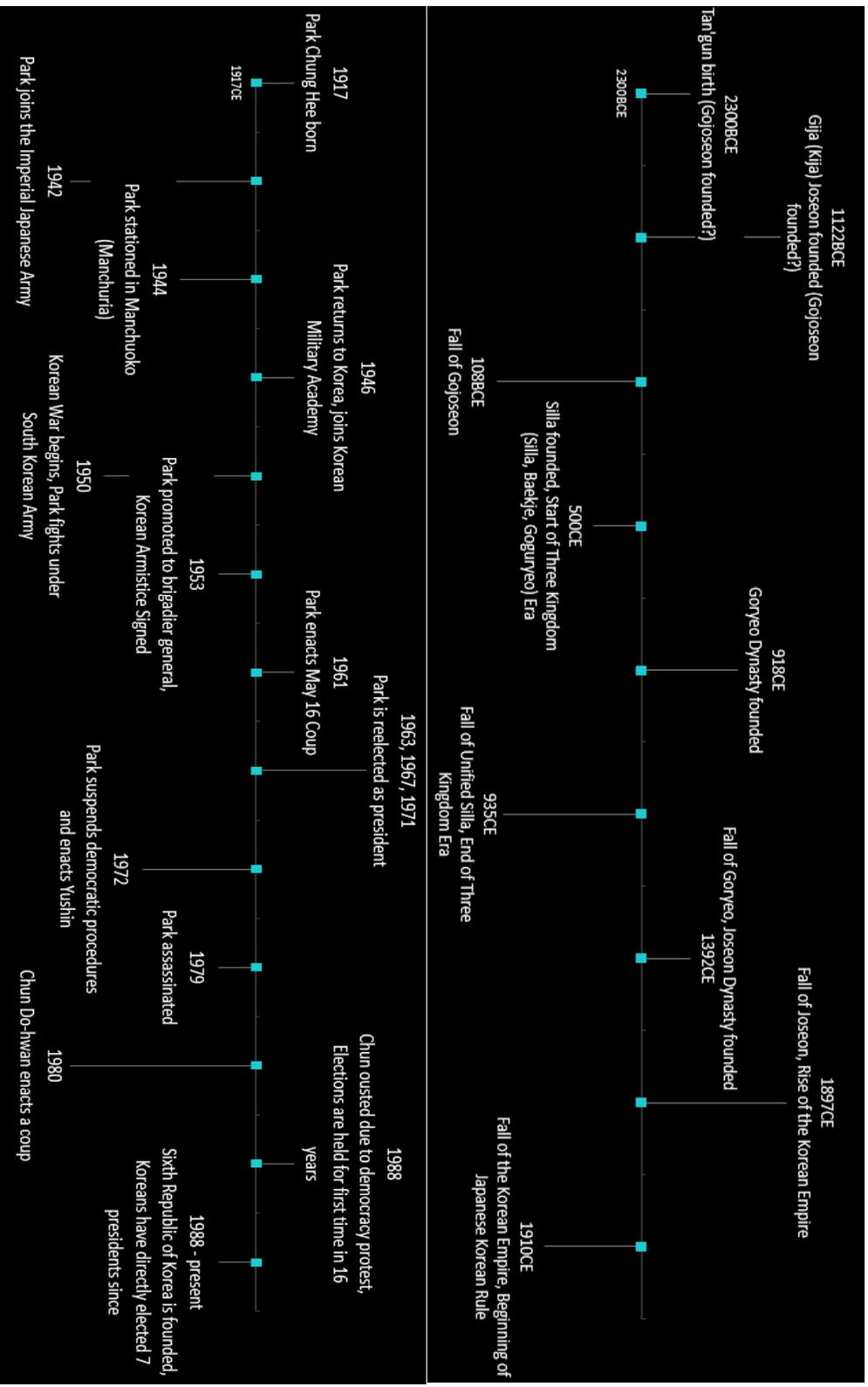


Figure 1. Chronology of thesis from 2300BCE to present. Timeline created by author. Not drawn to scale.

The thesis is structured accordingly: an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion; it is organized chronologically from 1910 to 2016. Chapter One is a literature review titled “Nationalism Before and During Park’s Tenure (1910-1979).” It starts before World War II and gives a brief history on nationalist origins. This era is important because it explains how five centuries of Joseon culture (1392-1897) influenced the founding fathers of the modern Korean states.¹⁵ Furthermore, the chapter establishes the individuals and institutions that shaped Park’s nationalist agendas and the sociological aspects that went into his reforms. Accordingly, Chapter Two analyzes and summarizes the materials in the first chapter.

Chapter Three is a literature review titled “Nationalism After Park’s Death (1980-1988).” It focuses on the effects that Park-styled nationalism had on his successors; particularly, on Chun Doo-hwan’s presidency (term: 1980-1987). Chun’s tenure is important, not only because of the similarities with Park’s government, but the consequences it had in birthing “New Nationalism” for a younger generation.¹⁶ Chapter Four follows up with an analysis.

Chapter Five is the final literature review titled “Park’s Legacy and Nationalism Today (1989 Onwards).” This chapter provides the framework for “New Nationalism.” Specifically, it details how old nationalism conflicts with modern nationalism and in turn shapes twenty-first century Koreans. Chapter Six, thus, is the final analysis with research

¹⁵ Korean academics place great significance on the Joseon Era. This era was noted for its numerous and meticulously written historical records. In public education curriculum, much of Korean history – from Korea’s legendary creation (2333 BCE’s creation myth) to the late nineteenth century – is derived from the many works of prominent Joseon scholars, such as the literati-scholar group *Sarim*. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 191.

¹⁶ John Lie and Myoungkyu Park, “South Korea in 2005: Economic Dynamism, Generational Conflict, and Social Transformations,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 1 (January/February 2006): 61.

ending with the 2016 impeachment of Park Chung Hee’s daughter, Park Geun-hye, and the protests surrounding her.

The research is composed with a mix of secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources include monographs, academic journals, newspaper articles, and textbooks – mostly in English but Korean sources are used as well. Primary materials include portions taken from South Korea’s constitution; speeches and letters from the Presidential Archives; and interviews from prominent opposition leaders and eyewitnesses. Visual aids are also provided and come in the form of graphs and charts with data extracted from polls and surveys; maps and images, both self-replicated and taken from sources; and self-made chronology timelines.

With help from colleagues, I include translations for data labels, transcript and speech passages, and excerpts from Korean-only monographs.¹⁷ Depending on the source’s translation methods, English Romanization interchangeably uses current Korea Revised Romanization (RRK) and older McCune Reischauer (MCR) systems.¹⁸

¹⁷ Special thanks to my colleagues Kwak Myung-gi and Choi Gu-hyung for assistance with research conducted in Korean, translations, and proofreading.

¹⁸ McCune Reischauer (MCR) was the first Korean Romanization system. It was implemented in 1937 by missionaries, historians, and translators George M. McCune and Edwin O. Reischauer. Due to the Korean language’s highly syllabic nature, the MCR system is noted for using apostrophes – hyphens in some cases – to denote syllables and phonetic markers. For example, 한글 is spelled “han’gŭl” and 박정희 is spelled “Pak (Bak) Chŏng’hŭi.” However, the South Korean government, in conjunction with the National Academy of the Korean Language and the Ministry of Tourism, recently adopted Revised Romanization of Korea (*Gugeoui romaja pyogibeop*, or RRK) in 2000. RRK loses MCR’s syllabic and phonetic markers, using spaces instead – hyphens in some cases – when translated. While not as phonetically accurate as MCR, the adoption is meant to simplify the learning of the Korean and English languages and to help promote easily accessible reading for visitors. For example, 평양 in MCR is spelled “P’yŏngyang (or P’yŏng’yang and P’yŏng-yang),” but in RRK it is simply “Pyongyang.” Additionally, “Pak (Bak) Chŏng’hŭi” is “Park Chung Hee” in RRK.

Name ordering follows the Chinese-influenced *hanja* writing order; accordingly, family names are first followed by given name.¹⁹ However, in footnotes, names are in American English order with family name last. For example, Kim Jinwung is Jinwung Kim in footnotes. The exceptions to this are the names of well-known Korean leaders, such as Park Chung Hee, Kim Il-sung, and Kim Dae-jung. As such, they are always referred to by family name first.

Additionally, some Chinese Romanization is present, and research uses the two most prominent systems, Wade-Giles and Pinyin. Wade-Giles is widely used in Taiwan (Republic of China) while Pinyin is employed in China (People's Republic of China). Likewise, some Romanized words are interchangeably used in accordance to the source's method; and in addition, Mandarin and Cantonese spellings are interchangeable depending on the source.²⁰

¹⁹ *Hanja* was Korea's first writing system and was taken from the Chinese script. While there is no specific date of origin, Chinese writing was introduced to the peninsula during the third century CE. The *Hangul* alphabet then replaced *hanja* script in the fifteenth century. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 63.

²⁰ For example, Chiang Kai-shek (Pinyin: Chiang Chieh-shih) and Kuomintang (Pinyin: Kuo-min Tang) are Cantonese Wade-Giles Romanizations while Mao Zedong (WG: Mao Tse-tung) and Deng Xiaoping (WG: Teng Hsiao-p'ing) are Romanized in Mandarin Pinyin.

Chapter I:

Literature Review – Nationalism Before and During Park's Tenure (1910-1979)

Korean nationalism is a complex subject with origins dating back thousands of years. This literature review begins in the early 1900s and introduces an analysis on Korea's ancient folklore origins and the pivotal *Tan 'gun* creation story. From there, the two pivotal forefathers of Korean nationalism, Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson, are examined as well. The timeline shifts to the birth of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and onto Park's life during the 1940s to the late 1960s. This section analyzes the ROK's first president, Rhee Syngman, and the philosophical aspects behinds Park's agenda. Finally, the literature provides a brief explanation of South Korea's economy – urban and rural – and the military ventures behind Park's Korea.

The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship

Roger L. Janelli researches the origins of Korean folklore and how it became a piece of modern nationalist history.¹ Janelli suggests that Colonial Korea (1910-1945) underwent a reassessment and reorientation of Korean folklore under Japanese Imperial reign. He also notes the similarities that Korean scholarship has with its Japanese counterparts. Janelli apprises that “Korean intellectuals obtained their introduction to modern scholarship through the Japanese.”² The Japanese, even though they rewrote history through their perspectives, influenced Korean scholars with the framework to create their version of twentieth-century nationalism.

However, there are challenges to those viewpoints and Janelli uses a 1978 anthology, *Han'guk minsok haksa* (The History of Korean Folklore), to show a counter-

¹ Roger L. Janelli is an East Asian languages and culture professor at Indiana University.

² Roger L. Janelli, “The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship,” *Journal of American Folklore* 99, no. 391 (Winter 1986): 25.

perspective on Japanese origins. According to *Han 'guk*, Korean folklore scholarship had its beginnings before the colonial era. Specifically, indigenous origins emerged during the seventeenth century when Joseon-Ming scholars ventured into the realms of mythology.³

Janelli's thesis centers around the different pedigrees used to influence modern day nationalism. He uses four prominent Korean nationalists – Choe Namson, Yi Nung-hwa, Son Chin-tae, and Song Sok-ha – as his case studies.⁴ Janelli emphasizes how their Eastern and Western educations influenced twentieth-century Korean scholarship. Simply put, Janelli's Korean variables are derived from Eastern and Western academic sources. Furthermore, Janelli details the actions of Choe and Yi. He notes that Korea's centuries-long tributary status with China greatly affected them.⁵ On a whole, Korean academia looked upon the tributary relationship positively. "It gave [Koreans] a sense of place. . . a place lower than that of China but higher than that of Japan."⁶ This stance, however, was critically questioned during the Japanese Imperial Era (1868-1945).⁷

Specifically, the way Japan – a lower status tributary state – upended a centuries-old institution and became the dominant force in the region was a paradox to early nationalists. Due to this, most Korean academic institutions – from elementary to higher education campuses – were forced to study and assimilate into Japanese cultural institutions. This included Japanese history, mythologies, and language.⁸

³ Janelli, 25.

⁴ In accordance with East Asian name ordering, family names (last name) are first followed by given names (first name).

⁵ Janelli, "Origins of Korean Folklore," 27.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Chizuko T. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namson's View of History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 1990): 794.

⁸ Janelli, "Origins of Korean Folklore," 34.

Additionally, Japanese traditional worldviews, such as Shinto shaman folklore, are also another important factor. However, Choe and Yi turned these institutions around and used them to start a new nationalist movement, later known as *Munhwa undong* (also known as the Cultural Movement and Cultural Nationalism). Instead of rallying around Japanese shamanistic folklore, Choe – later expanded by Yi – chose the *Tan'gun* tale as the archetype legend to rally behind. Janelli also suggests that *Tan'gun* was a perfect choice because of the similar shamanistic Shinto themes.⁹ In essence, both spiritual teachings emphasized that gods created people to serve in their land, thus tying the heavens, the people, and earth into one.

This had a profound effect not only for Choe and Yi but also on future folklore scholars, Son Chin-tae and Song Sok-ha. Although both scholars expanded on Korean folktales, Son and Song incorporated Western thought – through the teachings of early-British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor – to solidify *Tan'gun* as part of the Korean ethnic identity. Also, keep in mind that early anthropological frameworks were heavily centered on Social Darwinism. In short, Son and Song infused cultural homogeneity onto Korean folklore with the intention of separating the Korean race – one that was more ancient and purer – from their Japanese overlords.¹⁰

The article concludes in 1961, an era that marked the new political and academic alliance between the newly-made Republic of Korea and the United States. The union helped foster American anthropological methods – in particular, heavy public promotion of folklore through theater, books, and television – into a fusion of Japanese and British

⁹ Janelli, 34.

¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

intellectualism.¹¹ Janelli ties this to the impact it had on Park Chung Hee's rule. Explicitly, Park perceived outside threats, or any remnant of Chinese and Japanese culture, as destroying millennia's worth of Korean traditions. In turn, Park heavily encouraged public academia to focus on *Tan'gun* and other traditional stories, and hence, pushed similar nationalist agendas that Choe and early nationalists championed.¹²

The *Tan'gun* Story

According to the *Samguk Yusa*, the story of *Tan'gun* (*Dan'gun*) is told as a fable. The Heavenly King *Hwan'in* had a son, *Hwan'ung*. *Hwan'ung* wished to live among his father's earthly people. *Hwan'in* saw the ambition in his son's eyes and granted him his wish. *Hwan'ung* was then bestowed fertile land in the Myohang Mountains (located in North Korea); three heavenly treasures used to empower him with societal gifts – such as agriculture, art, and law; and three-thousand loyal followers.¹³

After years of happiness and wise governance, *Hwan'ung* was surprised to find a “she-bear” and “tigress” living alone in a cave together, both diligently praying to his father. Out of curiosity, he heard their pleas to become humans so that they may live in his kingdom under the benevolent rule of *Hwan'in* The Heavenly Father. *Hwan'ung*, however, chose to grant only one of them their wish and only if they could pass his test.

The test included eating mugworts and garlicks – considered holy foods in that region – for a hundred days straight. Both beasts ate the sacred foods but shortly after the tigress gave up and retired back into the cave. However, the she-bear continued to eat the

¹¹ Janelli, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³ *Samguk Yusa*, “Book One: Wonder I (the Founding of the Kingdoms),” trans, Tae-Hung Ha (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1972), PDF e-book, 32.

foods for twenty-one straight days even after she technically passed the test. Moved by this, *Hwan'ung* granted her wish and she became a woman; she was now known as *Ung'nyeo*.¹⁴

Even living under *Hwan'ung's* prosperous kingdom and among fellow humans, *Ung'nyeo* was still lonely and yearned to raise a child. The woman prayed to the Heavens again in hopes of becoming blessed with a baby. *Hwan'ung*, saddened by her sorrow and loneliness, heard her prayers and married her. The woman then bore his son and named him *Tan'gun*.¹⁵

In 2333 BCE, when *Tan'gun* came of age he was bestowed lands – under the guidance of *Hwan'in* and *Hwan'ung* – that extended over the peninsula and into the Manchurian regions. These lands would eventually become Gojoseon (2333-108 BCE). *Tan'gun* then ruled wisely, just like his father, for 1500 years until King Wu of the Chou Dynasty placed Kija on the throne (1122 BCE).¹⁶

By then *Tan'gun* was satisfied with the society he and his father built; this civilization would later become the Korean people. With his purpose fulfilled, *Tan'gun* moved to Asadal – a region located around the North Korean-Manchurian border – so that he may ascend onto the Heavens and be with his father and grandfather.

Nationalism According to Choe Namson

Choe Namson (1890-1957) was a leading Korean scholar and independence activist. Choe is credited with establishing, along with Sin Chaeho (1880-1936), modern

¹⁴ *Samguk Yusa*, 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Korean nationalism. In this context, modern nationalism emerged during Korea's Japanese colonial era (1910-1945) and continues to be built upon through reinterpretations of Choe and Sin's teachings.¹⁷ Professor Chizuko T. Allen's details these two prominent Korean scholars and their influence on nationalism. Allen's article mostly emphasizes Choe's works, and thus, structures it to reflect factors that influenced Choe's political stances.¹⁸

Allen describes the aspects that Chinese scholar and reformist Liang Qichao (1873-1929) had on a young Choe. Liang's pro-Social Darwinist stances played a large role in Choe's works. Liang argued that "white and yellow races" had the potential to be "world-historical people"; in other words, cultures who have the capacity to expand outward from their origin country can leave an impact on world history. In contrast, the "lesser historical people" were the opposite, as in cultures having little to no impact on world history. This is the reason stronger cultures subjugate weaker ones.¹⁹

Choe espoused views similar to Liang's thesis. In a 1917 issue of the Korean newspaper *Taehan maeil sinbo*, Choe wrote that "The modern age is the age of power in which the powerful survive while the weak perish . . . It is a competition of intelligence, physical fitness, material, economic, and organizational power."²⁰ This viewpoint is important because it highlights the emergence of Choe-inspired nationalism; more importantly, this new Korean nationalism was based on ethnic, cultural, and historical

¹⁷ Allen, "Northeast Asia," 788.

¹⁸ Chizuko T. Allen is an Asian-Pacific American professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa

¹⁹ Allen, "Northeast Asia," 789.

²⁰ Ibid.

supremacy. Put differently, ethnicity and ancient culture were primary variables that helped shape Park's nationalist agendas.

Choe's views were tested and radically altered during the 1910 Imperial Japanese annexation. Along the standards of Liang and Choe's early works, Koreans were now on the lower end of the Social Darwinist spectrum. They were the "lesser historical people" while the Imperial Japanese were "world-historical people." To combat this demotion, Choe looked to the ancient past for answers.

Social Darwinism implies that colonial Koreans were considered a weaker culture, therefore, Choe chose to study the earliest documents on Korean society to find his answers. He used the thirteenth century Korean-Chinese anthology *Samguk yusa* as the foundation for his new thesis; hence, Choe's argument relied on the strength of Korean antiquity. He used the creation tale of *Tan'gun* – orally passed down since 2300 BCE – to posit that ancient Korean culture (Gojoseon culture) is much older and robust than the culture of their Japanese counterparts.²¹

In other words, Japan was currently in a higher "world-historical position" than Korea due to their imperial dominance over the region. Historically, however, Japan's status pales in comparison to the longevity shown through the *Tan'gun* tale. Korean culture, therefore, has a more permanent position in world history and is in a higher "historical position" than Japan.²²

Furthermore, Allen analyzes Choe's evolution by comparing him to other Asian nationalist movements. Similar parallels from certain Southern Chinese and Manchurian cultures have *Tan'gun*-like symbolism. Allen argues that Korean nationalism, and to a

²¹ Allen, 794.

²² Ibid.

lesser extent the region surrounding it, was a byproduct of the era's Social Darwinist movement. Likewise, this was Choe's and future Korean nationalists' response to imperialism. They sought to place Korea – culturally and historically – above Japanese and Chinese counterparts by emphasizing and building upon their ancient history.²³

Nationalism According to Sin Chaeho

East Asian scholar Andre Schmid highlights an often overlooked, yet crucial, philosophy derived from Sin Chaeho.²⁴ As another leading nationalist, Sin's teachings have similar themes – emphasis on strong historical culture – as Choe Namson's. However, some principles are wholly distinct from other nationalists' ideas. Specifically, Sin linked race and nation as one; therefore, he was an opponent of state patriotism as these entities come and go. Instead, Sin promoted that a people's shared race, culture, and language were the most important elements in Korea's search for autonomy. Most importantly, he added a physical element to his philosophy. Similar to Zionist ideas about Israel, Sin was a strong advocate for ethnicity and land.²⁵

Sin implied that Koreans were now tied to the land that their ancestry lived on. This philosophy was known as *minjok*, one that easily complemented Choe's teachings. While folklore was Choe's primary philosophical vehicle, the peninsula and the past lands of Ancient Korea were Sin's driving force. A physical element to nationalism was

²³ Allen, 803.

²⁴ Andre Schmid is an East Asian Studies professor at the University of Toronto.

²⁵ Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

now present and magnified by Choe's spiritual folklore. Akin to the Daoist notion of Yin and Yang, Sin was Choe's "yin" and vice versa.²⁶

Schmid underscores that geography was Sin's key motif. The conventional narrative on what constituted Korean land was cemented during the Joseon era (1392-1897). Joseon academia implied that most of Korean history is relegated only to the peninsula.²⁷ However, seventeenth century Korean historian Yi Ik – an unorthodox Joseon historian who challenged Sinocentric teachings – also influenced Sin.²⁸ Through this effect, Sin endorsed, as put by Schmid, a "Manchurian Connection." Sin argued that Korean history, specifically the Gojoseon (circa 2000 BCE – 108 BCE), Buyeo Kingdom (circa 200 BCE – 494 CE), and Goguryeo (37BCE – 668 CE) eras, had strong connections to Manchuria.

The importance of Sin's *minjok* philosophy is the claim of extending the Korean nation outside the peninsula. An intended effect was that this new credence – now written under a new historical anthology called the *Toksa Sillon* – amplified Choe's *Tan'gun* folklore. In that tale, *Tan'gun* reigned exclusively over the lands of Manchuria and the peninsula. This was Sin's ethno-geographical teachings, and they were meant to promote Korean uniqueness and demote Sinitic influences. In contrast, the Ming-Joseon inspired Kija Joseon legend is a prime example of a Sinitically influenced tale that relegates Korean shamanistic origins.²⁹

²⁶ Schmid, 27.

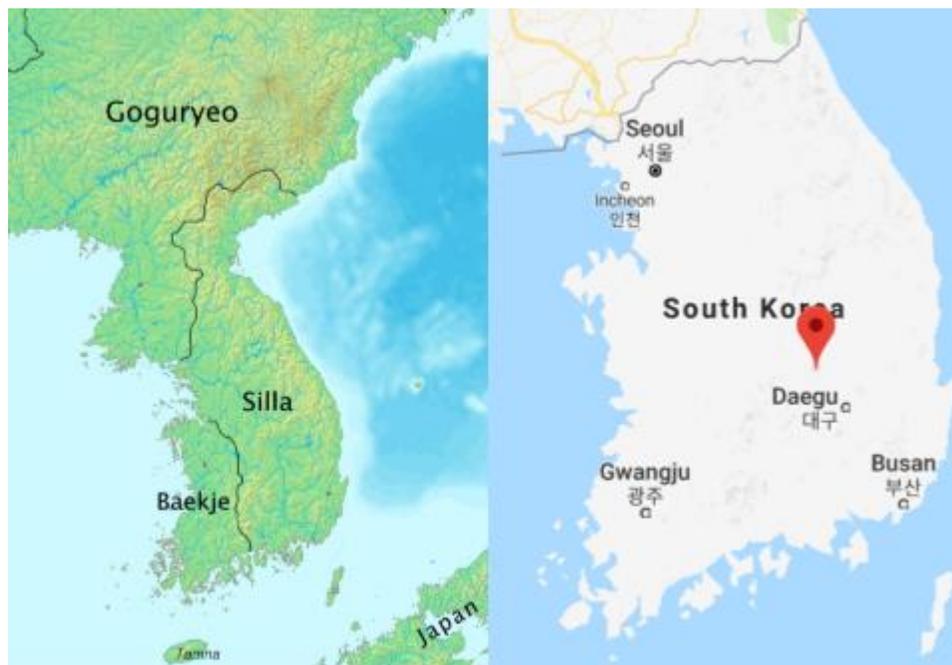
²⁷ Ibid., 29.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kija (Gija) Joseon is an alternative Sinocentric creation tale. The myth, found in the Chinese historical anthology *Samguk Yusa*, credits King Gija as the uncle of Shang Dynasty King Zhou. After the Zhou overtook the Shang (1042BCE), Gija fled to the Manchurian-Korean outskirts along with his close followers. Subsequently, Gija founded a new society based on the knowledge of Shang and Zhou institutions, thus Gija Joseon (Ancient Kija Korea) was established. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 12.

The conclusion focuses on the many reinterpretations of Sin’s teaching. Numerous scholars, future nationalists, and political leaders based their principles on Sin’s agendas, and none were more evident than a young Park. According to Schmid, Park’s regime “was eager to enlist a nationalist history for its own political purpose,” so that he could legitimize his forceful takeover of the government.³⁰

By doing so, Park’s academic administration dismissed the Manchurian aspects associated with *minjok*. Instead, Park reinterpreted the teachings of *Toksa Sillon* to focus more on the Three Kingdoms of Baekchae, Goguryeo, and Silla. Park specifically emphasized a victorious Silla Kingdom uniting the other two kingdoms into its realm. This was politically convenient for Park as his regime was birthed in the former Silla regions of Korea.³¹



Map 1.1. From left to right, a map of the Three Kingdoms and of modern-day South Korea. The right map has a marker placed on Gumi-si, the birthplace of Park Chung Hee. Source: (left) Wikimedia Commons; and (right) Google Maps.

³⁰ Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria,” 41.

³¹ It is noteworthy that Sin Chaeho and Park Chung Hee were born in former Silla territory.

The Importance of Korean Uniqueness

Janelli pointed out the importance that cultural homogeneity played for early nationalists, James B. Palais's research expands on Janelli's "unique" aspects.³² Palais's thesis centers on defining and labelling the importance of Korean "uniqueness."³³ "Uniqueness" in this context means the cultural and historical pride that was stripped away during the colonial era.³⁴

Palais notes that during Colonial Korea the Japanese government "forced [Korean academia] to accept the dogma of Japanese historical scholarship." The intended purpose was to promote Japanese cultural superiority while portraying the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) as "backwards and stagnate."³⁵ The Joseon Age is important because South Koreans hold this era as a cultural, academic, and technological zenith.³⁶ Joseon Korea saw a myriad of advancements in agriculture, commerce, and naval logistics that, according to modern South Korean historians, instilled "developments towards capitalism."³⁷

The majority of Palais's article postulates how nationalist themes, pioneered by leading intellectuals such as Choe Namson and Sin Chaeho, are a detriment in distinguishing Korean culture from the rest of the world. The reason being that South Korean's over adulation of the Joseon era – especially, the capitalism-inspired logistics and trade innovations – mirrors the histories of many Western nations. Furthermore, the

³² Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria," 41.

³³ James B. Palais was the chairman of Far Eastern and Russian Institute and Korean History Professor at the University of Washington.

³⁴ James B. Palais, "A Search for Korean Uniqueness," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 2 (December/January 1995): 409.

³⁵ Palais, 410.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 412.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

tendency to shun Chinese influences also weakens the credibility of modern Korean scholars. It is a well-known fact that the Sinosphere contributed immensely in the Asian continent's societal advancement, and therefore, should not be easily regulated.³⁸

Instead, Palais suggests that Korean historiography should focus and expand on the unique events occurred throughout its storied history. He concludes by listing exclusive events within the peninsula's long past.³⁹ Two prominent examples are the stability of the *yangban* and aristocratic system.⁴⁰ Specifically, he stresses how a distinct elite class held immense influence for a long and mostly uninterrupted span. Subsequently, this leads to the second example: the longevity of Korean dynasties. Korean dynastic eras were longer, more stable, and relatively more peaceful when compared to their Chinese and Japanese counterparts.⁴¹ Therefore, based on those grounds alone, gives Korean historians enough material to make a worthy case for global distinction.

The Nationalist Aspects of *Cheondogyo* and *Donghak*

Kirsten Bell focuses on the often-overlooked spiritual and religious movements inspired by nationalism. Bell examines a specific religious movement called *Cheondogyo* and its relationship with modern Korean nationalism. *Cheondogyo* is a religion based on

³⁸ Palais, 414.

³⁹ Ibid., 419.

⁴⁰ Joseon class structure was shaped like a pyramid with the emperor at the very top. Below the emperor were *yangban* who were composed of royalty, scholars, and military officials; below them were the *chungin* who were composed of artisan-skilled and professionally trained individuals, such as physicians, technicians, and translators; and below them were the *sangmin*, or peasantry, who were mostly agrarian. The bottom, or *cheonmin*, consisted of "unclean professions," such as butchers, jail-keepers, performers, and prostitutes. The only class lower than *cheonmin* were slaves (*noye*), indentured servants (*nobi*), and prisoners (*jwe'in*). See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 192.

⁴¹ Palais, "A Search for Korean Uniqueness," 424.

Donghak; these religions are an anti-foreigner neo-Confucian movement founded by Joseon activist Choe Je-u (1824-1864).⁴² *Cheondogyo*'s main principle emphasizes that to attain spiritual enlightenment, human equality for all classes must be achieved.

Cheondogyo began in 1860 and gained a plethora of followers during Korea's colonial era. The religion was appealing to the masses partly because it condemned economic abuses and corruption within the government.⁴³ Also known as the "*Donghak* Peasant Revolt of 1894," this movement was the culmination of decades of the *yangban*'s abuses against the peasantry. The rapid adoption of *Cheondogyo* by *sangmin* – impoverished commoners – was a byproduct of this revolution.

The importance of the revolution came in 1910 during Japanese occupation. Many of the former *Donghak* rebels transformed *Cheondogyo* into an ideological symbol of "indigenous nationalism." *Cheondogyo* and *Donghak* eventually became unique historical events that stood for rebellion against Japanese, Chinese, and Western influences.⁴⁴ Succinctly put, the *Donghak* movements created *Cheondogyo* and in turn transformed it into a symbol of rebellion against foreign subjugation.

The post-colonial era (1945-1960s) saw the return of *Cheondogyo* and *Donghak*; both North and South Korean states shaped the ideology to better suit each political agenda. For South Korea, the April Revolution of 1960 was a turning point.⁴⁵ The April Revolution had symbolic ties to the religious movement and played a hand in President

⁴² Kirsten Bell, "Cheondogyo and the Donghak Revolution: The (Un)making of a Religion," *Korea Journal* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 125.

⁴³ Bell, 127.

⁴⁴ Bell, 129.

⁴⁵ The April Revolution overthrew the First Republic of Korea (1948-1960) and forced Rhee Syngman to flee in exile. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 430.

Rhee Syngman's ousting in the same year. A year later in 1961, Park Chung Hee, through a military coup, took the reins of the government.

Park's first task was to modernize and stabilize South Korea. He shaped *Donghak* to help garner support for his developmental campaigns. Park combined the religion's "indigenous" aspects with his brand of "democratic, nationalistic, and modern political ideologies."⁴⁶ This led to a campaign to "revitalize" Korean culture. The revitalization created one of Park's core policies, *Minjokjeok minjujuui*, or "nationalist democracy," that began after Park's final consolidation during the 1963 presidential election.⁴⁷

Bell concludes that modern Koreans associate *Donghak* with – quoting Park from a 1970 speech – the "Koreanization of democracy" and the advancement of "principles not directly imported from any Western democracy."⁴⁸ Otherwise put, Park's campaign for absolute power was not only vindicated through questionable elections but by also tying indigenous philosophies with notions that foreign elements – this includes Western-styled democracy – are suspect and alien to Korean culture.⁴⁹

Monuments and Modernization: Park Chung Hee's Remaking of Yi Sunsin

Korean scholar Park Saeyoung critiques Park Chung Hee's philosophical conceptions, patriotic view, and nationalist agendas.⁵⁰ Although those concepts are

⁴⁶ "Indigenous" means a spiritual philosophy that was created on Korean soil and is unique only to that heritage. In contrast, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity are elements not native to the peninsula. See Kirsten Bell, "Cheondogyo," 127.

⁴⁷ Bell, "Cheondogyo," 129.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁹ Bell's conclusion analyzes the lasting effects. Even though *Cheondogyo* is a waning religion, its impact is forever known in Korean historiography. Alongside *Donghak*, the history of the religion is promoted by both North and South Korean Ministries of Culture and Tourism and is a testament to the peninsula's anti-Japanese legacy. See Kirsten Bell, 147.

⁵⁰ Saeyoung Park is a lecturer of Korean Studies at the University of Leiden, Netherlands.

orthodox in political rhetoric, Park Saeyoung analyzes a nuanced variable that played a role in early nationalism: symbolizing historical monuments.⁵¹ The monument in examination is of Admiral Yi Sunsin (1545-1598), also known as *Hyeonchungsa*, located in Asan, South Chungcheong (Chungcheongnam-do) Province.

For context, Admiral Yi is considered one of the two greatest Korean historical figures, the other being King Sejong (1397-1450) the inventor of the Korean alphabet (*hangul*). Yi became an admiral during the Imjin War against Japanese invaders (1592-1598). He is noted for his humble beginnings, having no formal naval education, and decisively defending the Korean coast from a vastly superior Japanese navy, all without losing a single battle in the process.⁵²

In 1962 President Park was obsessed with remodeling and venerating *Hyeonchungsa*. As part of his modernization campaigns, he sought to make the small and humble monument into a “mass spectacle.”⁵³ Park combined a new symbolic meaning to Yi’s monument – the strenuous task of modernization achieved through arduous work. Park noted that “[We] have such a great ancestor as [Yi Sunsin]. We have to work hard to follow his example.”⁵⁴ Thereby, tying the will of Admiral Yi to the people.

Park Saeyoung posits that Park’s obsession with Yi was situated within the troubled relationship the admiral had with Joseon and *yangban* elites.⁵⁵ Influenced by Sin Chaeho, Park sought to find the root causes of Korea’s failure during the humiliating

⁵¹ Saeyoung Park, “National Heroes and Monuments in South Korea: Patriotism, Modernization and Park Chung Hee’s Remaking of Yi Sunsin’s Shrine,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, no. 24 (June 2010): 1.

⁵² Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From “Land of the Morning Calm” to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 230.

⁵³ Saeyoung Park, “National Heroes and Monuments,” 2.

⁵⁴ Saeyoung Park, 9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

colonial era. Sin attributed that the failures were due to a corrupt, weak, and “effeminate” *yangban*.⁵⁶ Coincidentally, they were the very same elites that punished and demoted Admiral Yi due to in-court fighting. These stances, therefore, were heavily promoted by Park.⁵⁷

Furthermore, Saeyoung notes that Yi’s veneration was politically beneficial for the new Park regime as he aligned himself with the Admiral’s unwavering patriotism. More importantly, Park analogized a type of messiah-complex with Yi and himself. In Park Chung Hee’s view, Admiral Yi single-handedly saved Joseon Korea from total defeat. Unsurprisingly, the strongman conveniently left out information about crucial Chinese Ming reinforcements. In the end, Park emulated Yi by presenting himself as a redeemer to a beaten-down South Korea. Plainly put, Park was an “architect of national” and economic restoration; otherwise known as a “developmental dictator” to foreign analysts.⁵⁸

Saeyoung concludes by suggesting that “Park’s act of [creating a modern, national hero] was also a process of creating the image of a static singular and inferior Joseon past.”⁵⁹ Notably, the monument modernization campaigns harken back to Sin Chaeho’s *minjok* philosophy. Sin sought to demote Sinitic influences in Korean folklore, via the promotion of *Tangun*, while Park sought to ignore Ming contributions during the Imjin War. While these are two exclusively separate historical events, they both fall within similar anti-Sinitic themes.⁶⁰

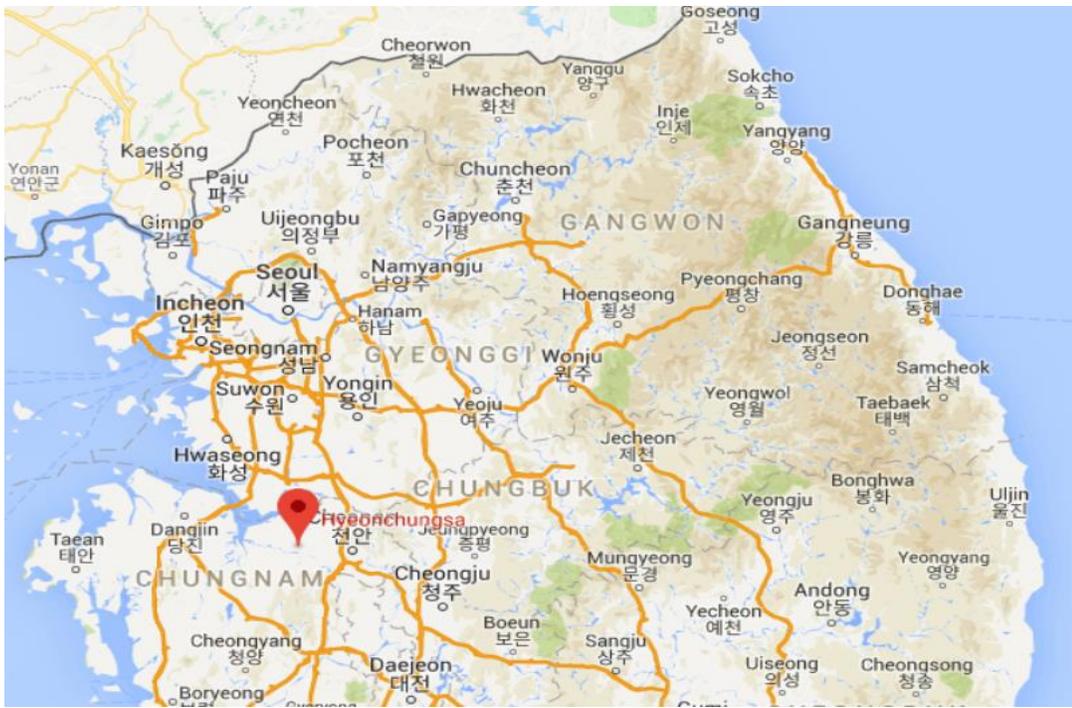
⁵⁶ Saeyoung Park, 13.

⁵⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 233.

⁵⁸ Park, “National Heroes and Monuments,” 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria,” 31.



Map 1.2. Location of Hyeonchungsa. The site is in Asan, Chungcheongnam Province (Chungnam). Source: Google Maps.



Figure 1.1. Temples and shrines located within the Hyeonchungsa site. Please note that the top right photo is a replica of Admiral Yi's Geobukseon ("spiked-turtle warship"). Source: Republic of Korea Ministry of Culture website.

***Yushin* Constitution, the New Political Economy, and the Kim Dae-Jung Affair**

Korean professor Han Sungjoo emphasizes that Park Chung Hee's main goal was to transform Korea from a "political democracy" into an "administrative democracy."⁶¹ Han's article, published in 1974, examines the events that led to one of South Korea's most politically volatile eras.⁶² "Administrative democracy" means after a presidential election, the executive should consolidate legislative and judicial powers – in so doing, going against the constitution – in order to streamline needed economic reforms.⁶³ Park's reelection in 1971 affirmed these stances, and thus, a new constitution was immediately drafted and put into effect.

The new charter was ratified in 1972 and named the Constitution for Revitalization Reforms (*Yushin honpop*), or more commonly known as *Yushin*. The constitution abolished presidential terms and gave all government powers – economic, military, judicial, and legislative – to the executive.⁶⁴ The consolidation helped Park enact economic reforms that resulted in astronomical GDP growth, about 10 percent annual average growth since 1973. One of the main policies that assisted in the boom was the reliance on low-interest Japanese and American loans.⁶⁵ This resulted in an international perspective that Korea was an economic success story – a once destitute and war-ravaged nation emerging from the ashes as a capitalist phoenix. Domestically, however, the *Yushin* era violently antagonized any form of dissent and opposition in order to achieve national affluency.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Sungjoo Han, "South Korea: The Political Economy of Dependency," *Asian Survey* 14, no. 1 (January 1974): 43.

⁶² Sungjoo Han is a Political Science Professor Emeritus at Korea University.

⁶³ Sungjoo Han, "Political Economy," 43.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

For example, and during the high-growth years, the “Kim Dae-Jung Affair” erupted after the 1971 presidential election. Opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung lost to Park in a hotly-contested election – the Park camp was accused of vote tampering by many protestors.⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, Park suspended the constitution, enacted *Yushin*, and Kim – fearing for his life – went into self-imposed exile. Immediately, Kim underwent an international tour to inform, lecture, and decry the “military dictatorship and tyranny” of Park’s regime.⁶⁸

As a result, mass student demonstrations erupted in a struggle to “restore democracy.”⁶⁹ Influential religious leaders later joined the protests, thereby embodying historical collaboration such as the *Donghak* movement.⁷⁰ In combination with Kim’s international tour, Park’s government received global scorn and embarrassment. The negative responses from South Korea’s two closest economic partners – America and Japan – threatened to halt sorely needed investment capital, thus endangering Park’s *Yushin* economic reforms.⁷¹

In retaliation, Park ordered the Korean CIA to kidnap Kim from his Tokyo hotel and return him to Seoul under treason charges. The abduction was successful; however, Japan’s Tanaka Cabinet was infuriated on grounds of sovereign encroachment. Consequently, Tanaka temporarily withheld \$1.3 billion of Japanese investment.⁷²

⁶⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 470.

⁶⁸ Sungjoo Han, “Political Economy,” 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Bell, “Cheondogyo,” 125.

⁷¹ Sungjoo Han, “Political Economy,” 50.

⁷² Ibid., 46.

Eventually, the Park government lessened Kim’s punishment to house arrest, thereby appeasing economic partners.

Nevertheless, the damage was already done both socially and politically.⁷³ As an unintended consequence, the Korean public noticed the strong fiscal dependency rooted in Japanese diplomatic relations. Above all, the scandal educed comparisons with Imperial Japan’s colonial domination; specifically, Park ordering encroachment on foreign lands, clandestine kidnappings, and life-threatening suppression. Therefore, Park’s image as a defender from external forces – in the vain of Admiral Yi – was forever tarnished.

Han concludes with a somber analysis on the consequences of *Yushin* and the “Kim Scandal.” Even with all the scandals, Han posits that since the 1970s marked an era of exceptional economic growth, “[the Park government] will be able to ride out the current wave of protests,” and perhaps save his image for years to come.⁷⁴



Figure 1.2. From left to right, 1971 campaign photos of Park Chung Hee and Kim Dae Jung. Please note how Park’s poster has no Chinese characters (*hanja*) while Kim’s poster has *hanja* above his *hangul* name (김대중). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

⁷³ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 471.

⁷⁴ Sungjoo Han, “Political Economy,” 47.

Clientelism and Similarities with the Japanese Economy

Park's agenda and Korean conglomerates are deeply connected and reliant on one another. This connection also brought political and socioeconomic contentions that are prevalent today. Korean scholar Nam Chang-hee published an article shortly after the 1992 presidential election describing these issues firsthand.⁷⁵ For context, the winner of the 1992 election was anti-corporatist candidate Kim Young-sam – one of Park Chung Hee's strongest and oldest opposition members. Nam focuses on one of President Kim's main political tenets, anti-corporatism, and briefly details the history that led to the dominance of Korean mega-corporations – better known as *chaebol*.⁷⁶

Nam starts by defining the keyword to his article, “clientelism.” Clientelism, also known as “the patron-client model,” is defined as favorable exchanges between a weaker and a stronger entity at the expense of the community. In Nam's case, the state is a “domineering patron,” *chaebol* is the “obedient client,” and the “community” are taxpayers and future generations.⁷⁷ It is also noteworthy that this is a “symbiotic relationship” according to economist Chong Ku-hyon.⁷⁸ Meaning, domineering and obedient positions may change back and forth at any time.

Nam gives a brief history of South Korea's political instability soon after the 1953 Armistice Agreement. He notes that compared to the North, the South had an arduous task of legitimizing itself. It had to cast itself as a better alternative than the North and the

⁷⁵ Chang-hee Nam is a Research Associate in the Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, Seoul.

⁷⁶ Chang-hee Nam, “South Korea's Big Business Clientelism in Democratic Reform,” *Asian Survey* 35, no. 4 (April 1995): 357.

⁷⁷ Nam, 357.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 361.

“hated Japanese” colonists.⁷⁹ Public illegitimacy arose due to President Rhee Syngman’s leniency towards “traitors.” They were usually collaborators and business elites who had ties to the Japanese and benefitted from colonial institutions. Rhee argued that learning from their expertise could help stabilize Korea politically and economically.⁸⁰ Accordingly, Korean nationalists and the Rhee Administration clashed, thereby weakening his rule and leading to the forceful takeover by General Park.

Before the coup, Park was a former Japanese Manchukuo (Manchuria) military officer educated through Imperial establishments. Likewise, Park was an admirer of Meiji reforms (1868-1912) – noted for rapidly modernizing Japan’s feudal society into a Great Power – and strongly supported “clientelistic industrial expansion” in conjunction with a strong “ultranationalistic samurai-military” ethic.

Otherwise put, Park supported a Meiji-style *zaibatsu* system – family-owned mega-corporations with strong state backing – mixed with *bushido* – a samurai ethic that emphasizes warrior strength over the weak. Moreover, Park accentuated the need for a paternal “Confucian style harmony” between military, businesses, and labor.⁸¹ In turn, Park’s fervent ideologies mixed with newly-acquired *Yushin* powers birthed the *chaebol* system. This birth cemented that “hated Japanese colonial institutions” were now heavily engrained into South Korea’s market economy and labor force.⁸²

The dominance of *chaebol* was a strong factor for South Korea’s astonishing twenty-five-year economic boom from 1972 up until the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. One *chaebol* practice that helped ensure guaranteed growth was the exploitation of heavy

⁷⁹ Nam, 359.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 357.

⁸² Ibid.

state-controlled ventures. This was also coupled with limitless funding through state-owned commercial banks. For example, massive and profitable infrastructure projects, such as dams and freeways, were sometimes exclusively given to instantaneously state-created *chaebol*, such as Pohang Steel. In turn, *chaebol* outsourced labor – both menial and specialized – to smaller firms for pennies-on-the-dollar.⁸³ They then reinvested the remaining funds into lucrative, yet risky, capital ventures such as high-interest loaning, thereby becoming financial institutions themselves.

These practices allowed most *chaebol* to severely undermine market wages intent on manufacturing high-priced goods at low-cost capital. In hindsight, this business model sounds immoral and perilous for consumers and laborers; however, during the economic boom, all players were rewarded. As *chaebol* grew in wealth, unemployment lowered, incumbent politicians grew in influence, and above all – and once inaccessible to the average Korean – an overabundance of consumer goods clothed, fed, and created leisure time on a massive scale.⁸⁴

In effect, *chaebol* corporations grew into monopolies that held unchecked powers over laborers and smaller firms. Since this was a “symbiotic relationship,” ruling party members had access to *chaebol* capital in the pursuit to fund their agendas. None was more pervasive than Park’s successor Chun Doo-hwan (1931-). Chun publicly sought *chaebol* resources to aid political allies and his economic policies.⁸⁵ Examples of

⁸³ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 48.

⁸⁴ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 48.

⁸⁵ Nam, “South Korea’s Big Business,” 361.

prominent *chaebol* who paid yearly allowances to Chun included Samsung, LG, and Hyundai.⁸⁶

Nam concludes on the changes that the Korean economy is currently undergoing; specifically, he refers to Kim Young-sam's 1992 presidential campaign and the generation that elected him. Kim's election is noted for weakening *chaebol* power – inclusive of “clientelism” – due to a more educated and politically active population. Nam posits that President Kim instilled much needed public confidence for Koreans to move to a more fair and prosperous market economy.⁸⁷



Figure 1.3. Syngman Rhee's official presidential portrait. Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 1.4. Chun Doo-hwan's official presidential portrait. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

⁸⁶ Chico Harlan, “South Korea Goes After the Fortune of Chun Doo-hwan, Its Last Military Strongman,” *Washington Post*, August 14, 2013.

⁸⁷ Nam, “South Korea's Big Business,” 366.

Syngman Rhee: The Importance of South Korea's First President

Keyes Beech published a newspaper article in 1960 shortly after Rhee Syngman's presidential abdication on April 26.⁸⁸ Beech wrote about the experiences of several student protesters, Baek Won-bai and Kim Byung-cheul, who supported ousting Rhee's regime. However, before Beech describes Rhee's downfall, he explains the circumstances that led to Rhee's former supporters abandoning him. First, Beech emphasizes the importance of American and UN aid propping up Rhee's failed presidency. Akin to a political experiment, America's primary goal was to invest \$2 billion in economic aid in the hopes of morphing an impoverished nation into a free-market "showcase of democracy."⁸⁹

Even with massive monetary aid, the newborn Republic of Korea was anything but an initial success. Instead it was more of a "one-party dictatorship which enforced the tyranny of the majority."⁹⁰ Accusations of Rhee's administration pocketing much of the international aid were numerous.⁹¹ All this culminated in 1956 after a close presidential election; Rhee won 56 percent of the vote against Cho Bong-am, an ex-communist, who was hanged after Rhee's inauguration. Furthermore, Rhee foresaw the great risk of losing the upcoming 1960 presidential election, and in mysterious circumstances, his electoral opponents died, thus causing him to run unopposed.⁹²

⁸⁸ Keyes Beech (1914-1990) was a Pulitzer Prize awarded journalist who covered the Korean War and the immediate aftermath.

⁸⁹ Keyes Beech, "The Downfall of Syngman Rhee," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 9, 1960, 101.

⁹⁰ Beech, 101.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 104

Fast-forward to Kim and Baek, these were two out of many young protesters who were infuriated over Rhee's transgressions. While Kim and Baek protested despotism, Beech notes the similarities that both students had with a young Rhee. From 1896 to 1904, the onset of Korea's colonial age, then-student Rhee protested – and later was imprisoned on charges of sedition – against Imperial Japanese and Russian influences.⁹³ These early ideologies later evolved into anti-communist stances, therefore suggesting that a younger Rhee shared some pro-democratic characteristics with that of his protesters.

Additionally, Beech explains how these protests culminated in March 1960 when government authorities killed student activists in the port town of Masan. Soon after, nationwide protests erupted with Seoul being at the heart of it all. Known as the April 19 Revolution, protestors stormed the Blue House – equivalent to the US White House – with Rhee barely escaping. Rhee's hand-picked successor Vice President Lee Ki-poong, known as the last remnant of the dictatorial regime, was equally ousted. Lee's family, assisted by his son Lee Kang-seok, committed suicide days later.⁹⁴

The conclusion deals with Rhee's exile in Hawaii and the risky predicament that the US put itself in by supporting a universally despised dictator. In other words, at the height of the Cold War Rhee's dictatorship caused a discomfort in a politically unstable part of Asia, thereby hurting democratic legitimacy within the continent.⁹⁵ However, US officials did comment that “[Americans] could also feel much better. . . that the Rhee regime was no longer on their conscience. . . [and] feel satisfaction over the fact that the

⁹³ Chong-sik Lee, *Syngman Rhee: The Prison Years of a Young Radical* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001), PDF e-book, 74.

⁹⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 428.

⁹⁵ Beech, “The Downfall of Syngman Rhee,” 106.

revolt against Rhee's dictatorship was not Communist-led but undertaken by those who wanted 'democracy like in America.'"⁹⁶ Therefore, in hindsight, the ousting of Rhee was also a relief for American officials.

The Pros and Cons of Korean Ethnic Nationalism

Yin Seow Jing details the impacts, both positive and negative, that ethnic nationalism has on contemporary South Korea.⁹⁷ Yin starts by reiterating the historical context behind the movement. She recounts *Tan 'gun* origins and how it gave "South Koreans a national identity" and justification for "ethnic homogeneity."⁹⁸ She also adds colonialism as a primary factor that inadvertently awakened Korean national pride. In her own words, "Japan, through her conquest of rule of Korea, caused the awakening and sustaining of Korean nationalism."⁹⁹

Midway through the article, Yin breaks down the positive and negative effects that "ethnic homogeneity" had on modernization. The pros came through the rapid development of industry and commerce, thus leading to the massive alleviation of poverty. She attributes this success, in part, to the universally agreed upon goal of poverty alleviation through any means necessary. In other words, because prominent leaders, such as then-general Park Chung Hee, strongly pushed for Korean "cultural [and economic] superiority," Koreans, in turn, were inspired to push their great nation into

⁹⁶ Beech, 106.

⁹⁷ Seow Jing Yin is an intern journalist at the Institute of Strategic & International Studies Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

⁹⁸ Seow Jing Yin, "Pride of the People: South Korea and Korean Nationalism," *Institute of Strategic & International Studies, Issue 8* (August 2013): 5.

⁹⁹ Yin, 5.

international prominence.¹⁰⁰ The cost of affluency, however, came through the iron-fisted and brutal rule of the Park and Chun Doo-hwan regimes.

The most notable aspect though was the effect it had on ethnic relations. The end of the article highlights the importance of a “common bloodline” that transcended socioeconomic classes. It gave Koreans a profound sense of pride and “exceptionalism” after decades of humiliating subjugation.¹⁰¹ Conversely, an accidental consequence was that it would “distance [Koreans] from others,” and that they would feel “a sense of duty to facilitate only their own people.”¹⁰² Thereby, the article’s conclusion is on a negative note warning how ethnic nationalism can disguise xenophobia as a societal norm.

A Disguised Consequence, Part I: Park’s Currency Reform

Australian Professor Kim Hyung-A posits that South Korea’s transformation under Park “was not a static but a dynamic set of institutional arrangements that continuously transformed during the years of the junta.”¹⁰³ Professor Kim, therefore, focuses on the complex and unorthodox state-building that occurred during General Park’s junta (1961-1963).¹⁰⁴ Specifically, Park’s reforms did not modernize the country instantaneously, but rather, there was an intricate step-by-step process. Furthermore, she explains the major reforms that contributed to these successes. Within those steps, of

¹⁰⁰ Yin, 7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Hyung-A Kim, “State Building: The Military Junta’s Path to Modernity through Administrative Reforms,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Hyung-A Kim is an Associate Professor of Korean Politics and History at Australia National University.

course, came unintended consequences, and one – scapegoating Chinese culture – that coincided with Park’s ethnic nationalism.

Kim lays out the two most prominent institutions credited for spearheading economic reforms, the Park-created Supreme Council of National Reconstruction (SCNR) and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). Under them were subordinate departments tasked with implementing policies within their respective jurisdiction. These institutions were the Ministries of Commerce & Industry (MCI), Finance (MOF), Home Affairs (MHA), and the Economic Planning Board (EPB).¹⁰⁵ The main agents of immediate politico-economic change, however, were the EPB, MOF, and KCIA.

One of Park’s major reforms was restructuring the all-but-worthless Korean currency, the Korean *hwan*.¹⁰⁶ To accomplish this, the KCIA and MOF collaborated with US President Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of State Dean Rusk in an effort to reintroduce a new US-pegged currency – the Korean *won* (KRW). This was intended to raise capital investment through new American, then later Japanese, backed loans. The reform failed initially as Korean officials miscalculated the distrust the average citizen had with banks. Thereby, the new currency exchanges were nonexistent as citizens sought to avoid most financial institutions.¹⁰⁷

Even though this was a miscalculation, KCIA and MOF officials – through census-taking measures – found out that most of the public hoarded massive amounts of

¹⁰⁵ Hyung-a Kim, “State Building”, 86.

¹⁰⁶ Please note that the current North and South Korean currencies share the same name.

¹⁰⁷ Hyung-a Kim, “State Building,” 86.

cash in personal household stashes.¹⁰⁸ All the more suspect was the notable size of the ethnic Chinese population living on Korean soil.¹⁰⁹ The amount of wealth and cash Korean-born Chinese held during a destitute era caught Park's attention. This new revelation later shaped Park's modernization policies, while concurrently sparking an anti-Chinese campaign.



Figure 1.5. From left to right, 1950s *hwan* and current-day *won* currencies. Please note the difference in icon representation. The *hwan* bills are plastered with Rhee Syngman photos while the *won* has no traces of presidential icons. For reference, the 1,000 (Yi Hwang), 5,000 (Yi I), and 50,000 (Shin Saimdang) bills are all Joseon-era *yangban* (Confucian *literati* and artists). The exception is the 10,000 won bill portraying King Sejong the Great. Source: Bank of Korea archives.

A Disguised Consequence, Part II: Park's Anti-Chinese Campaign

Chapter Two in Nadia Y. Kim's monograph mentions an indirect, albeit brief, outcome from Korean ethnic nationalism.¹¹⁰ Specifically, Kim describes Park Chung Hee's use of a pure Korean ideology to advance socioeconomic goals.¹¹¹ Kim begins the

¹⁰⁸ Hyung-a Kim, 103.

¹⁰⁹ There are rough population estimates for Chinese living within Korea as census records were destroyed during the wars (World War I to the Korean War). However, some scholars point to about 30,000 to 80,000 living within the peninsula right up until the late 1950s. See Young-ju Rhee, "Chinese Diaspora," 114

¹¹⁰ Nadia Y. Kim is a Professor of Sociology at Loyola Marymount University.

¹¹¹ Nadia Y. Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 25.

chapter with a brief history on Sin Chaeho and how he symbolized *Tan'gun* as a “homogenized bloodline” all Koreans shared. She also suggests that the modern utilization of this myth may have been influenced by Imperial Japanese propaganda, one centered on a pure and dominant Asian race.¹¹² This analogy is vital because Park used the tale as a symbol of Korean unity.

Culmination occurred during the 1960s and 1970s when the tale was revived as one of Park's tenets. In addition, Kim relates research from other Korean scholars to help link *Tan'gun* as a way to legitimize Park's authoritarian rule. Most notably, Park used the idea of a homogenized and hardworking ancestry to instill a common goal among a low-morale constituency. Subsequently, the support gathered was used to push xenophobic policies subtly disguised as protectionism.

Such examples were introduced after the MOF and KCIA failed at their task of currency reform.¹¹³ As noted, even though this was a premature failure, Park's junta noticed the rising affluence in Korea's small, yet prominent, Chinese community. Park's government was afraid of the notion that a very small group of prosperous foreign inhabitants could have the ability to garner considerable influence. Likewise, the fear of foreign elites – akin to former Imperial Japanese elites – living amongst Korean natives did not sit well with Park's nationalist agendas because it threatened to unravel his *minjok*-inspired platforms.¹¹⁴

Subsequently, this assumption birthed Park's most discriminatory policies. In conjunction with the MOF, EPB, and KCIA, Park ordered the confiscation of supposed

¹¹² Nadia Y. Kim, 9.

¹¹³ Hyung-A Kim, “State Building,” 86.

¹¹⁴ Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria,” 41.

hoarded cash. While this affected Korean citizens as well, the policy was meant to damage the finances of the Chinese community in order to coerce emigration out of Korea.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, these policies were created to diminish the Chinese influence – cultural and financial – that Park purportedly warned his Korean brethren of.

As a result, more anti-Chinese policies aimed to diminish these Sinitic influences were implemented. For example, Park pressured schools to discontinue teaching *hanja* – a Chinese script used as the main writing system before *hangul*.¹¹⁶ This climaxed in 1971 when Park officially banned *hanja*. A decree known as *Hangul Jeon-yong*, roughly translated to the “*Hangul-Only Policy*,” coupled with very strict Chinese immigration laws completed Park’s ethnonationalist campaigns.¹¹⁷

History of Korean Confucianism

Chung Chai-sik and Kim Jinwung explains the effects that Confucian traditions had in a modernizing Korea.¹¹⁸ Chung’s thesis sets out to answer how Confucianism evolved to “assume responsibility for maintaining the [Korean] collective identity,” and what the limits were in “articulating political and social programs” towards the goal of “creating a modern nation-state.”¹¹⁹ Simply put, both author’s give some context on the

¹¹⁵ Taehyun Kim and Chang Jae Baik, “The Taming and Tamed by the United States,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 76.

¹¹⁶ *Hangul* was invented in 1446 CE. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 189.

¹¹⁷ Il-pyo Hong, *Kukhoe Sog-ui Inmunhag*, [*Humanities in the National Assembly*] (Seoul, South Korea: *Joheun Ttang* [Good Land Publishers]), 2014, EPUB e-book, 69.

¹¹⁸ Chai-sik Chung is a Korean-American sociologist and theologian at Boston University; and Jinwung Kim is a Professor of Korean History at Kyungpook National University in Daegu, South Korea.

¹¹⁹ Confucianism is a Chinese social philosophy based on the teachings of the scholar Confucius (551-479 BCE). A major theme is the “natural order of things,” thus, the philosophy is filial, or paternalistic, in origin. A secular example is that rank determines social standing and duties. The higher a person is in the ladder the more respect, and therefore more power, is granted. See Patricia Buckley

history of Korea's Neo-Confucian ideologies, whereas Chung relates this to modern Korean nationalism.¹²⁰

Chung gives a succinct history – similarly, complementing Kim's composition – of Confucianism and its dispersion from China to the peninsula.¹²¹ The high culture and technologically advanced society, from Tang China (618-907 CE) to the Song (960-1279 CE) Dynasties, diffused onto the Kingdom of Goryeo (918-1392 CE).¹²² More importantly, high culture, through Chinese literary classics, spread among Goryeo literati elites.¹²³ In effect, Confucian morals and etiquette guided academic and royal statutes. Confucianism in Korea quickly became an elite philosophical order and was heavily propagated to *sangmin* and *cheonmin*, respectively known as the common and lowest classes.¹²⁴ As such, these classes were expected to fall in line with Confucian-inspired decrees.¹²⁵

Ebrey, *Illustrated History of China*, 42-49. On a national scale, the state – in Park's case, the executive and military – is the highest order; on an economic scale, the *chaebol* system guides finance and labor; and on a familial scale, the father guides the household.

¹²⁰ Chai-sik Chung, "Confucian Tradition and Nationalist Ideology in Korea," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 61.

¹²¹ Ebrey also gives a brief history on Neo-Confucianism. The sect arose when Southern Song (1127-1279 CE) scholars responded to the elite's emphasis on high culture and spiritual (*qi*) teachings. Moreover, mystical elements from Buddhism and Daoism – two other major Eastern creeds – influenced the new sect. The scholars sought to "revitalize" Confucianism from the bottom-up. The "revitalization" focused more on family and community life as opposed to focusing on high culture which alienated the common masses. Therefore, Neo-Confucianism can be defined as Confucian-inspired philosophies adapted for the practicalities of the community. See, Patricia Buckley Ebrey, 100, 152-154, and 163.

¹²² There was a gap period in Goryeo history as it was a vassal state to Yuan China during 1270-1356 CE. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 168.

¹²³ Elites were civic officers, scholars, and high-ranking military officials tasked with studying Chinese literature and technology. They were called *mun-ban* in the Goryeo era and set the foundation for *yangban*. See Jinwung Kim, 140.

¹²⁴ Southern Song Scholar Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) was the most influential of the new wave of Neo-Confucian scholars. Zhu's teachings – introduced to Korea during Yuan China's (1271-1368 CE) occupation – demoted the rigid bureaucratic elements espoused by elite administrators. In response, he prioritized self-learning and communal dependency as means to gain. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *History of China*, 152-154.

¹²⁵ Chung, "Confucian Tradition," 62.

Turning towards the dawn of the Joseon era (1392-1897CE), Korean Confucianism became an official state tenet – known as the Neo-Confucian sect *Ch'eng-chu* – used to guide the new society.¹²⁶ However, during the sixteenth century the disillusioned and maltreated lower classes gradually stepped away from the out-of-touch *Ch'eng-chu* philosophy. Likewise, most of the rural masses discovered other Neo-Confucian offshoots that aligned more with their everyday situations.

The most prominent of these ideologies was *silhak*. *Silhak* is a seventeenth-century Neo-Confucian doctrine – influenced by Song scholar Zhu Xi's (1130 CE – 1200 CE) teachings – that deemphasized spiritual elements promoted by *yangban* scholars. In response, *silhak* scholars focused on a more practical and “physical” approach.¹²⁷ Essentially, *silhak* encouraged equality through social, legal, and technological reform. Reforms included equal land distribution, taxation, and the study and exchange of agricultural sciences – usually from Chinese and Western sources.¹²⁸

Chung's thesis highlights that the most significant aspect of *silhak* was the deviation from centuries-old Chinese classics – teachings that were impractical to the uneducated masses.¹²⁹ Eventually, *silhak* evolved to become an aboriginal aspect of Korean culture that was born from the masses as a response to *yangban* stubbornness and unsympathetic rule.

¹²⁶ Chung, 62.

¹²⁷ *Yangban* Confucian elites focused more on the ritualistic aspects while *silhak* scholars, like Yi Ik (1681-1763 CE), emphasized knowledge that benefitted the masses. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 261.

¹²⁸ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 261.

¹²⁹ Chung, “Confucian Tradition,” 70.

The Importance of *Saemaul Undong*, Part I: The Foundations

Han Seung-Mi examines the hidden ideals within the New Community Movement (NCM). Known in Korean as *Saemaul undong* (1970-1980), the NCM was Park Chung Hee's second-most defining economic policy after the *chaebol* system.¹³⁰ Han's thesis focuses on Park and the NCM's "anti-elitist and populist ideals" and how they manifested into a native form of "state populism."¹³¹ Her research delves into characteristics that made the NCM popular with rural communities; these communities were the bedrock of Park's support. Additionally, she explains the successes, failures, ironies, and legacies left behind.

Han starts by giving a concise history behind NCM motifs. From 1945 to the early 1960s, a politically impotent South Korea failed to pass effective land and industry reforms. Most of the population were still agrarian, and unemployment – from the poor to the highly-skilled – was chronically high. The ruling Democratic Party (*Minjoo Dang*) – the opposition party of the recently-ousted President Rhee – enacted an Economic Development Plan in 1960.

The plan was modeled after India and prioritized "comparative advantage" in agricultural development; however, this was short lived and in May 16, 1961, General Park enacted his infamous military coup.¹³² Instead of following the Indian model, Park changed it to the "Japanese model," one that prioritized commodity inflation – in this

¹³⁰ Nam, "South Korea's Big Business Clientelism," 357.

¹³¹ Seung-Mi Han, "The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 70.

¹³² In this context, "comparative advantage" means agricultural products staying in line with global commodity prices.

case, the state artificially inflated the value of rice. Instantaneously, rice farming communities began to accumulate wealth.¹³³

Likewise, the NCM was incredibly popular with the agrarian public. Seeing this as an opportunity to push countryside economic and propaganda reforms, Park implemented “Japanese-style mental training.”¹³⁴ “Mental training” emphasized “Weberian” work ethics modeled by economist Ninoyama Ginjiro.¹³⁵ In other words, the “culture of poverty” and economic failures were attributed to “laziness, despair, and intemperance.”¹³⁶ As a cure, a strong executive leader, like a father, was needed to guide society towards a collective, ardent, and successful work ethic.

Park accomplished this by enacting five-year plans intended to modernize the countryside. Modernization included paved roads, telecommunications, public schooling, and the adoption of modern farming methods. Anecdotes even came to play as Park officials considered the replacement of thatched-roofing – considered synonymous with poverty – with tiled-roofing as a measure of success. In so doing, villages and towns that successfully completed the efforts were rewarded and overcompensated with extra aid; therefore, incentives to quickly modernize became a community’s main priority.¹³⁷

The NCM was such an initial success that it placed the government in an ironic predicament. During this era, urban lifestyle was considered a characteristic of the elites; cities held all the top university and civic jobs.¹³⁸ Consequently, as the rural communities

¹³³ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 73.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 74.

¹³⁵ Ninoyama Ginjiro (1787-1856), also known as Ninomiya Sontoku, was a nineteenth century Japanese agrarian philosopher and economist who emphasized communal investment. For example, setting up small rural banks with the sole purpose of investing and loaning towards agricultural endeavors like that of a farming credit union. See Conrad Totman, *Japan Before Perry*, 196.

¹³⁶ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 74.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 75.

developed so did their logistics. Newly-build highways connected many isolated towns with corresponding metropolises. In turn, the rising rural middle-classes migrated in droves to urban hotspots in the pursuit of educational opportunities for their children. Simply put, elite services were now in the grasp of once-impoverished farming families. This inadvertent effect, therefore, was just one variable that worked against Park's campaign; and this partly contributed to the NCM's downfall shortly after his death.¹³⁹



Figure 1.6. Pictured above are typical farming communities before the advent of the NCM. Please note the building style of the houses. Park officials considered thatched roofing synonymous with poverty. Source: Gyeonggi Province Saemaul Undong Museum.



Figure 1.7. Left, unpaved town roads before reforms. Right, Park Chung Hee (pictured in the very center front) along with technocrats surveying an NCM village. Source: Seoul Saemaul Undong Museum.

¹³⁹ Seung-Mi Han, 77.

The Importance of *Saemaul Undong*, Part II: The Relationship to Nationalism

It is important to stress that the NCM was not only an economic policy but an initiative cloaked in nationalist sentiments. Han labels the NCM as part of a campaign to push heavy urban and rural modernization. The intent was to subtly showcase support for state populism: in other words, display patriotism.¹⁴⁰ This ideology helped the NCM achieve its broad popularity among two different generations, the elderly and the youth. Heavy modernization was attributed to the “passionate youth” who led forth the strenuous labor while the elder generations led the administrative planning. This was, simply put, a community affair that emanated *bipan seryok*, an aura of “anti-governmental (anti-centralized) force.”¹⁴¹

Initially, this proved to be a perfect match as many rural communities rapidly developed. According to Korean economists and historians, the NCM and rural modernization was one major variable for South Korea’s economic miracle, better known as the “Miracle on the Han River.”¹⁴² However, these plans could not succeed on sheer work ethics alone. The NCM, along with its *chaebol* counterpart, greatly benefitted from American economic aid and Japanese factory investments.¹⁴³

More importantly and in-line with Park’s Neo-Confucian-inspired ideologies, the government gave local jurisdiction to communities. Village leaders distributed developmental resources while the youth fervently backed their leadership. Furthermore, Park’s promulgation of his *minjok*-inspired work ethics seemed to go in tandem with this labor structure. Put another way, the NCM created, intentionally or not, a new

¹⁴⁰ Seung-Mi Han, 79

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Kim and Baik, “The Taming and Tamed,” 72.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 75.

socioeconomic hierarchy – one conveniently based on a sequential order of power – that began with the highest authority, President Park.

Park then trickled-down power to lesser entities, in this case rural communities. These areas were led by elders who relayed tasks to younger laborers; explicitly, new *minjok* ethics were entrenched with Confucianism. This was now the official “national ethos” that Park’s Korea heavily relied on, akin to a top-down authoritarian power structure.¹⁴⁴

The Importance of *Saemaul Undong*, Part III: Confucian Ironies

The initial aftermath of the NCM clashed with Park’s moral ideologies. To give context, during the 1950s many farmers and influential village leaders sold their land – after a series of natural disasters – to the state’s newly-made Land Reform committee. In the pursuit of better opportunities, many of them migrated to the cities.¹⁴⁵ It is worth noting that not all village leaders, usually elderly in age and somewhat well-off, migrated to the cities. Some stayed behind in their locality to become NCM bureaucrats.¹⁴⁶

Shortly after the 1961 coup, Park noticed this trend and took advantage of it by restructuring Land Reform policies.¹⁴⁷ The intent was to expedite the buyout of land,

¹⁴⁴ Referring to Ebrey’s definition, Confucianism on a local scale has village elders guiding the communities.

¹⁴⁵ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 80.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Jong-Sung You from the *In the Shadow of Violence* monograph notes that land reform policies were instated before and after the Korean War (1948-1956) and during Rhee’s presidency. Reforms were under the guidance of American SCAP officials. Officials redistributed stolen lands from former Japanese elites and indiscriminately allocated them back to Korean workers regardless of socioeconomics and agrarian experience. You notes that these land were extremely unproductive due to postwar destruction and inexperienced landowners. See Jong-Sung You, “The Case for South Korea,” 298.

usually from desperate poverty-stricken landowners, at a fraction of the market-cost. In urgent need to get the NCM off the ground, the state immediately gave out – usually at interest-free contractual agreements – newly-bought land to ambitious “fresh faces.”¹⁴⁸

These “fresh faces” consisted of experienced, often young, agrarian tradesmen and farmers; likewise, this resulted in the movement’s successful start. Through state-backed initiatives – inflated rice prices and extra subsidies for higher annual yields – young landowners enthusiastically toiled in the fields; it was only a matter of time before they benefitted.¹⁴⁹ Eventually, and at little to no startup cost, a new rustic generation of laborers accrued a fine amount of wealth.¹⁵⁰

Due to the new prosperity and dependency on successful young laborers, Han posits that the NCM’s policies were an ironic ideology that clashed with Park’s “state populism.” She better defines this disparity as an “egalitarian ethos [colliding] with breathless mechanism of national mobilization.”¹⁵¹ In other words, the NCM was intended to raise the rural socioeconomic standards to levels set by their urban counterparts. Ironically, socioeconomic advancement successfully occurred for the younger generation while older generations – many of whom were now city-dwellers – were mired in poverty.

¹⁴⁸ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 80.

¹⁴⁹ Hyeseon Jeong, “Globalizing a Rural Past: The Conjunction of International Development Aid and South Korea’s Dictatorial Legacy,” *Geoforum* 86 (November 2016): 162.

¹⁵⁰ As mentioned, the NCM over-rewarded exceptional results. The rewards provided communities more state welfare, such as monetary, food, construction, and medical aid. Simultaneously, young farmers accrued a great amount of mutual influence as their communities flourished and relied on these subsidies. See Young Jo Lee, “The Countryside,” 360.

¹⁵¹ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 71.

Consequently, the countryside's millennium-old Confucian order, or "natural order of things" was severely upended.¹⁵² While there are other incremental variables that played into this upheaval, Han posits a striking concept. Village elders – Park's chosen NCM administrators – unknowingly had their powers severely undermined by wealthy young farmers.¹⁵³ Plainly speaking, age was now only a number, the filial era quickly passed, and young *nouveau-riche* ruled the towns. The class reversal did not eliminate all Confucian aspects, however. Patriarchal elements were still prevalent, and rural elites were usually young men while the poverty-stricken were elderly, women, and the disabled.

Nevertheless, the gerontocratic system that ruled the peninsula for a thousand years gave way to entrepreneurship. This meant that the average Korean youth had a way to climb the social ladder through meritocracy and hard work – a path difficult to pursue at an elderly age. This trend was not exclusive to the countryside either. In the booming cities across the nation, a new generation was gaining prominence through *chaebol*-guided entrepreneurship. Small-to-medium sized businesses flourished while public investment was high.¹⁵⁴ Seismic societal shifts were here to stay, even if it did collide with the old Confucian order.

¹⁵² Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43.

¹⁵³ Seung-Mi Han, "The New Community Movement," 79.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory W. Noble, "Industrial Policy in Key Developmental Sectors: South Korea versus Japan and Taiwan," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 606.

South Korea's Role in the Vietnam War, Part I: Park's Reasons

American and Western involvement in the Vietnam War (1955-1975) is a contentious issue; however, Kim Se Jin's article, written during the peak of the war (1970), details the positive impact that it had on a fledgling Republic of Korea (ROK).¹⁵⁵ Kim's posits that the Vietnam War's effects were mostly positive for South Koreans. The war bolstered an already burgeoning economy and garnered international prestige for ROK soldiers and hardworking Korean expatriates.¹⁵⁶

The background to South Korea's involvement began in 1965 when President Lyndon B. Johnson rapidly built up American presence in Southeast Asia.¹⁵⁷ America had a challenging time convincing other allies to commit to major armed supporting roles. However, the US found a close ally in the still-infant ROK, and more importantly, a confidant in President Park Chung-Hee.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, an all too eager Park sent 47,000 troops, from 1965 to 1973, to the narrow Southeast Asian nation; in doing so, the ROK was the largest contingent of non-American forces sent.¹⁵⁹

Kim, and drawing parallels to Kim Jinwung's analysis, gives three main reasons that Park was keen to aid America. First, Park's pro-American military occupation of the ROK complemented his anti-communist stance. In context, before US-UN Korean War intervention, North Korea easily overpowered the South. Undoubtedly, the northern communist military was still vastly superior – in terms of training, funding, and

¹⁵⁵ Se Jin Kim is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri.

¹⁵⁶ South Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War began in 1964 and ended in 1973.

¹⁵⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 450.

¹⁵⁸ Jinwung Kim, 450.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 451.

technology – to the ROK. Park knew of this embarrassing state and needed full US protection along the 38th Parallel (DMZ) border.¹⁶⁰

The second reason was to modernize the severely antiquated, undermanned, and underfunded ROK military. Because the country dedicated all its resources to modernizing industry, infrastructure, and commerce, military expenditures were minute. Park knew the ROK's strong commitment to the war entitled them unprecedented amounts of American military advisors, technology, and funding.¹⁶¹ Otherwise speaking, reforming the military into modern-day standards was too expensive for Park's government, so letting another government, the US, eagerly do the task was the perfect solution. Moreover, Park knew a strengthened military guaranteed security for his radical reforms.

Lastly, and more notably, Park knew the enormous economic benefits in transitioning Korea into a war-production economy.¹⁶² An abundance of zero-interest American loans were easily acquired as a result, and thus, played an important variable in Korea's economic boom. On a micro-economic level, newly-raised wages – for soldiers and expatriate civilians willing to work in a wartime environment – combined with a frugal mindset, allowed future accumulation of substantial savings for most Korean households.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Yong-Jick Kim, "The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum, 1974–1979," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra P. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 460.

¹⁶¹ Se Jin Kim, "South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam and Its Economic and Political Impact," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 6 (June 1970): 521.

¹⁶² Japan's post-war boom was largely propelled by becoming Asia's manufacturing hub during the Korean War. As such, this was a testament to Park on how wartime activities can benefit the economy. See Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 241.

¹⁶³ Min Yong Lee, "The Vietnam War: South Korea's Search for National Security," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim

As an effect, Korea's middle-class surge was partly based on the rural origins of many conscripted soldiers. The average soldier's salary, usually the whole annual wage, was remitted back to their farming communities. This scenario, dubbed the "Vietnam Income," coupled with the 1970s *Saemaul Undong* reforms, only amplified the value of transferred savings.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, this also played a slight variable in legitimizing the newly-circulated Korean *won* because international exchanges were more prevalent from the financial activities of many overseas Korean workers.¹⁶⁵

South Korea's Role in the Vietnam War, Part I: The Consequences

First and foremost, all of Park's visions, militarily and economically, were at their peak during the Vietnam War. The war was a success for South Korea on all fronts; the economy and per capita income flourished at an astronomical rate; and, at the same time, Park's military rapidly modernized into a formidable fighting force. As Kim notes, "both in terms of immediate and long-term effects, the Vietnam War represents the watershed of [South Korean] growth."¹⁶⁶ Concurrently, and behind the scenes, Park's political influence grew both domestically and internationally.

Domestically, Park's opposition eerily predicted that the rapid militarization and involvement "might transform South Korea into a garrison state in which the predominant position of the military could result in the permanent entrenchment of the

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 410.

¹⁶⁴ Se Jin Kim, "South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam," 523.

¹⁶⁵ Young Jo Lee, "The Countryside," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 355.

¹⁶⁶ Se Jin Kim, "South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam," 522.

military-oriented government of Chung-hee Park.”¹⁶⁷ However, the opposition’s voice fell on deaf ears as the National Assembly was dominated by Park’s political party, the *Minjoo gonghwadang*, known as the Democratic Republican Party (DRP).¹⁶⁸ Likewise, the war played a variable in consolidating the DRP’s decade-long legislative dominance while also cementing Park’s future electoral rubberstamps.¹⁶⁹

Internationally, Korean-American relations were closer than ever. Gone were the days when Americans viewed them as “just a burdensome military protectorate.”¹⁷⁰ When it came to Asian-Pacific affairs, Park’s ROK were now “friends, allies, and partners of free Asia.” To make matters better, the ROK were equal negotiating partners, in trade and military affairs, alongside the Japanese and Taiwanese.¹⁷¹ South Korea, furthermore, was now a powerhouse in Asia as was evident in 1966 when Seoul hosted the now-defunct Asian Pacific Conference (ASPAC).¹⁷² That leading role would later help the ROK build economic alliances around the continent, and, in turn, set the small peninsula up to become an exporting behemoth.¹⁷³

Most notably, Park – once thought of as an illegitimate strongman – was now one of Asia’s iconic twentieth century leaders.¹⁷⁴ Simultaneously, Park’s successful consolidation at home and America’s attention solely focused on Vietnam allowed him unchecked power. As such, the world “tried not to get in the way of Park in South Korean

¹⁶⁷ Se Jin Kim, 525.

¹⁶⁸ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 469.

¹⁶⁹ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea’s Involvement in Vietnam,” 526.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 529.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 530.

¹⁷² ASPAC only lasted until the early 1970s. It was one of many organizations that was a predecessor to the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN).

¹⁷³ Min Yong Lee, “The Vietnam War,” 425.

¹⁷⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 473.

domestic politics.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, the international community was mostly unaware, apathetic, or perhaps willfully ignorant towards Korean politics.

It is also worth noting that Korea’s Vietnamese endeavors, while mostly positive, had some negative effects as well. Alongside thousands of casualties, inflation and the annual cost of living – around 12 to 13 percent – shot up substantially.¹⁷⁶ Secondly, North and South Korean relations soured as diplomacy took a backseat to military competitiveness. Finally, Park’s power-hungry addiction to military-might eventually played a role in his death.¹⁷⁷

The Peak of the Park Era

The fall and death of Park Chung Hee (assassinated in October 26, 1979) is a controversial topic in Korean academia; nonetheless, it is a well-covered and debated subject. Topics such as why the regime fell, why a close confidant assassinated Park, and the volatile aftermath are all part of the lore that makes this one of the most infamous events in modern South Korean history. The monographs *The Park Chung Hee Era* and *A History of Korea* complement each other by giving an exhaustive take on this unpredictable time.¹⁷⁸

In October 17, 1972, Park enacted a “palace coup” by instating the infamous *Yushin* Constitution. Although another seven years took place before Park’s assassination, *Yushin* and the creation of the Fourth Republic (1972-1981) was the

¹⁷⁵ Min Yong Lee, “The Vietnam War,” 429.

¹⁷⁶ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam,” 531.

¹⁷⁷ Ezra F. Vogel, Byung-Kook Kim, and Jinwung Kim’s monographs have similar themes that imply that Park’s aggressive militarization played a variable in his death.

¹⁷⁸ Yong-Jick Kim, “The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum,” 457.

beginning of the end.¹⁷⁹ This era was the peak of Park's presidency as all opposition was effectively silenced, and support in rural communities was at an all-time high. Combined with the swift modernization of the armed forces and the rise of the new export-driven economy, it seemed as if Park's regime was invincible.¹⁸⁰

The Fall and Death of Park Chung Hee

The end of the 1970s revealed cracks in Park's political armor. Shortly after *Yushin*, the opposition, now known as the New Democratic Party (*Shin Minjoo-Dang*), slowly gained domestic and international support after Kim Dae-Jung was arrested. The fiasco that occurred over the "Kim Dae-Jung Affair" rattled protestors around the nation. Thousands of students, intellectuals, and urbanites – many of whom were geriatric and poverty stricken – protested daily. Dissent and dissatisfaction only amplified as Park's armed forces clashed, arrested, and tortured thousands of citizens.¹⁸¹

On the international end, the Vietnam Conflict was over, the Watergate Scandal concluded, and Jimmy Carter was elected US President in 1976. Without any more diplomatic interruptions, and partly due to the commotion caused by Kim Dae-Jung, the Carter Administration finally noticed the discord within the Korean peninsula. In turn, Carter threatened to withdraw US military aid and infantry divisions.¹⁸² The planned removal caused a panic not only within the Park regime but among the public as well.

¹⁷⁹ *A History of Korea* has a chronology that explains that the Third Republic of Korea (1963-1972) began shortly after the junta (1961-1962) when Park won a highly-contested and controversial election in 1963. The Fourth Republic (1972-1981) began shortly after *Yushin* was enacted (October 1972), and in turn, Park ran unopposed in the 1972 election. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 469-471, 492, and 609.

¹⁸⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 469.

¹⁸¹ Jinwung Kim, 470.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

While the ROK military were magnitudes better than what they were before the Vietnam War, they were still on the losing end against a triple entente – North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union – of antagonists.¹⁸³ Losing America’s support would leave them vulnerable and destroy all their hard-earned gains.

Perhaps the greatest hit to Park’s national prestige was the blow the economy took during the Oil Shocks. The first Oil Shock in 1973 shook the Korean economy, but Park’s efforts to secure cheap loans from the IMF, Japan, and America kept the flow of industry capital running smoothly.¹⁸⁴ However, the 1979 Oil Shock caused a global recession that South Korea was unable to avert. Due to Park’s image as an anti-democratic strongman, America and Japan were hesitant to publicly aid an autocratic regime, especially after the Western interventionist fiasco in Vietnam.¹⁸⁵

Misfortunes finally caught up with Park in October 26, 1979, also known as the “10.26 Incident.” During a cold autumn night in Seoul, Park’s best friend and KCIA director Kim Jae-kyu, after an intense dinner argument, shot and killed Park along with his chief bodyguard Cha Ji-chul. From the sudden military takeover in 1961 and until eighteen years later, the Park Era finally came to a sudden end. Nevertheless, even with Park’s death, political tranquility was still out of reach for the East Asian Republic.

* * *

The Park Era was most notable for the blood spilled during his radical reforms. Conversely, this period simultaneously laid the foundations that steered a penniless and lawless country into an orderly economic superpower. Ultimately, Park’s political and

¹⁸³ Yong-Jick Kim, “The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum,” 472.

¹⁸⁴ Noble, “Industrial Policy,” 605.

¹⁸⁵ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam,” 525.

economic agendas are still eternally-debated, however, there is no denying the enormous imprints he left on Korea and modern state-building agendas. Chapter II, therefore, sets to analyze the background and initial impressions of Park's new, unique, and heavy-handed state nationalism.

Chapter II:

Analysis – Nationalism Before and During Park's Tenure (1910-1979)

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were tumultuous for Korea; its economy, social structure and political system changed dramatically. These changes were largely due to confrontation with outside forces. Before Park Chung Hee's birth (1917-1979), Korea was in an era of wilderness. A millennia's worth of Middle Kingdom influence was coming to an end, and with that, an end to centuries-worth of cordial "tributary" relations with China.¹ The peninsula was shaken and permanently altered by the change of status quo.² This was no-more evident than through the actions of a newly dominant and industrialized Japan.

Roger Janelli posits that tribute systems gave the East Asian region a stratified order. In particular, "It gave [Koreans] a sense of place . . . a place lower than that of China but higher than that of Japan."³ The ascent of Imperial Japan (1868-1945), however, upended this age-old system, and therefore, laid the foundations for not only Korean nationalism but also the institutions that shaped Park's agendas.

Among Westerners, the tribute system may appear as an imbalanced convention wherein subordinates are coerced into submission; however, this was very advantageous for Korea. As Jinwung Kim notes, Ancient China looked upon "Choson (Korea)" as a utopia.⁴ From the early seventh century BCE, some Chinese kingdoms such as the Qi

¹ According to American University professor Ji-young Lee the words "tribute system" is a "Western invention." In Lee's monograph, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination*, there was no East Asian name for this "system." However, American Sinologist John King Fairbanks coined this term as he posits that this system is an extension of "Confucian hierarchic social order." In other words, China was on top of the world order while surrounding regions were its subordinates. See Ji-Young Lee, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination* (New York City: Columbia Press University, 2016), PDF e-book, 29.

² Roger L. Janelli, "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," *Journal of American Folklore* 99, no. 391 (Winter 1986): 25.

³ Janelli, 27.

⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From "Land of the Morning Calm" to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 12.

state, traded frequently with Gojoseon (*Tan'gun* Joseon), thereby suggesting a healthy flourishing economy amidst Zhou China's explosive warring era (1046-256 BCE). As further evident, Confucius (551-479 BCE) – no stranger to violence and war – referenced Old Joseon as a peaceful society even wishing to “lead a life there.”⁵ Therefore, the “Land of the Morning Calm” did not earn that name overnight. Throughout its ancient history Korea was known for order, stability, and peace. This is especially true considering that the peninsula is wedged between two regional powers, China and Japan.

Even more so, these were times when China and Japan had frequent domestic conflicts. Chinese dynasties had numerous splintering kingdoms, power-hungry commanders, and peasant revolts; while the Japanese, since the 1100s, had societies primarily set up to appease warlord governments and their *samurai* warriors.⁶ Contrastingly, Korean historical stability is palpable through the longevity of their dynasties, specifically over a thousand-year rule of the combined Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties (918-1897 CE). Finally, this longevity gave rise to another longstanding cultural phenomenon, the *yangban* aristocracy, which is central to Park's initial stances.

Yangban was a small yet extremely powerful group of elites who were a social class one step below the highest order, royal nobility. *Yangban* derived its foundation from Goryeo's veneration of academics (*literati*) and bureaucrats who were usually composed of Confucian scholars, civil servants, and royal eunuchs. During the Goryeo Age (918-1392 CE), the aristocracy was divided into two – at this time they were not called *yangban* but instead *mun-ban* (civil administrators and scholars) and *mu-ban*

⁵ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 12.

⁶ Conrad D. Totman, *Japan Before Perry: A Short History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), PDF e-book, 71.

(high-ranking military officials and politicians).⁷ However, in the Joseon era (1392-1897 CE), both classes naturally merged into one, *yangban*; likewise, through centuries of upper-class rule, *yangban* were entrenched in every aspect of Korean society. Simply put, *yangban* were extremely powerful elites that ruled Korea for a very long time.

This chapter, therefore, sets to contextualize the importance that Japanese imperialism and *yangban* culture had on early Korean nationalism. Not only did that institution influence a millennia's worth of peninsular culture, the impact greatly affected Park Chung Hee's tenure. Indeed, Park's initial tenure was deeply impacted by a millennia's worth of Korean history, so his sense of nationalism was deeply influenced by both *yangban* culture and Japanese imperialism, the latter culture deeply affected by Western ideas.

General Park, therefore, managed to blend components of both systems which allowed many Koreans to support him and many others to oppose him. Park's Korea, however, still needed to appear indigenous in the post-World War II era for his agendas to survive. Furthermore, Park's initial tenure came at a time when elites in the polity and business – during the Rhee Syngman era – were despised by the citizenry. Therefore, it is also important to contrast the impact that early nineteenth century nationalism, along with millennium-old *yangban* culture, had on Park's early agendas.

Ultimately, these nationalists played a role in shaping a young Park into what some scholars call a “developmental dictator.”⁸ You (Yu) Jong-Sung befittingly posits that the combination of such diverse teachings and histories ultimately culminated into a

⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 233.

⁸ Carter J. Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea: The Roots of Militarism, 1866–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), PDF e-book, 2.

new “developmental system” invented by Park.⁹ Subsequently, the second part of this chapter delves into the term “developmental dictator.” More specifically, what aspects of early nationalism contributed to making this term.

Part I

Early Korean Nationalism, Part I: The Forefathers

Sin (pronounced *Shin* or *Sheen*) Chaeho (1880-1936) and Choe (pronounced *Cheh* or *Ch'weh*) Namson (1890-1957) are considered the forefathers of both modern Korea and their respective state nationalism.¹⁰ But before Sin and Choe's works, it is important to examine the variables that affected their rhetoric and stances. Chizuko T. Allen and Roger Janelli argue that it was a mix of Japanese scholarship and Social Darwinism that gave the two Korean intellectuals their philosophical foundations.¹¹

Social Darwinism had a profound impact for both nationalists as this school was largely derived from modern Western teachings. Social Darwinism is defined as “the more robust human societies and cultures are the farther they can progress and survive into the future.” In other words, a “survival-of-the-fittest” society.¹² Likewise, Choe and Sin were well-versed with this branch of Western ideology; Choe, however, combined elements from Chinese nationalist Liang Qichao (1873-1929).

⁹ Jong-Sung You, “Transition from a Limited Access Order to an Open Access Order: The Case of South Korea,” in *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*, ed., Barry R. Weingast, Douglass C. North, John J. Wallis, and Steven B. Webb (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), PDF e-book, 294.

¹⁰ Chizuko T. Allen, “Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namson's View of History,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 1990): 794.

¹¹ Allen, 794.

¹² *Ibid.*, 789.

Similar to Korea's colonial predicament, Liang sought to explain China's loss of prestige in what is otherwise known as the "Century of Humiliation" (1840s-1940s). China, for the most part, was in ruin. The Qing recently fell, China fragmented into warlord regions, the Western Powers ransacked what little state funds they had, and Imperial Japan conquered the northeast territories.¹³

As a result, Liang's teachings shaped the tenets of both the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party; respectively, these are the future state-parties of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China.¹⁴ During the end of the nineteenth century Liang's version of Social Darwinism took a stranglehold over Asian scholarship, and it is safe to say that academia in both Japan and Korea was not immune to this trend.

Korea's colonial age was the turning point for all parties involved. Taking cues from their Western counterparts, Imperial Japan wasted no time in promoting their civilization as the dominant society in Asia. In turn, Japanese imperialists deemed Korean culture primitive and forced a pro-Japanese curriculum onto all academic institutions, from elementary school to tertiary education.¹⁵

From a foreigner's perspective, American socialite Isabel Anderson, during a 1910s tour of the Orient, recorded her thoughts on the shattering of the status quo:

The Japanese Governor-General, Count Terauchi, is a very strong and able man, and under his administration many improvements have been made in Korea. This has not always been done without friction between the **natives** and their **conquerors**, it must be confessed, but the results are certainly astonishing. The government has been reorganized, courts have been established, the laws have been revised, trade conditions have been

¹³ Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 67. The Great Western Powers are listed in no particular order: The United Kingdom, France, The United States, Italy, and Russia before the 1904 Russo-Japanese War.

¹⁴ Allen, "Northeast Asia," 789.

¹⁵ Janelli, "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," 34.

improved and commerce has increased. Agriculture has been encouraged by the opening of experiment stations, railroads have been constructed from the interior to the sea-coast, and harbors have been dredged and lighthouses erected.¹⁶

Anderson's thoughts on "conquerors" (the Japanese) and the conquered "natives" (the Koreans) corresponded with what the early twentieth century world knew, Korean society – as Liang would say – was made up lesser historical people."¹⁷ Therefore, it was not only in Japan's advantage to rule and exploit the peninsula, but it was in the world's interest.

Korean responses were similar as well. Choe made numerous references in a 1917 issue of the Korean newspaper *Taehan maeil sinbo*. Specifically, he wrote that the world is split into "world historical people" – societies that have the capacity to expand outward from their homelands – and "lesser historical people" – societies that have little to no impact on world history.¹⁸ This verified that leading Korean officials knew their culture was in a low-standing position.



Figure 2.1. Photos of Sin Chaeho (left) and Choe Namson (right). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁶ Isabel Anderson, *The Spell of Japan* (Boston: Page Company, 1920), PDF e-book, 15.

¹⁷ Allen, "Northeast Asia," 789.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Early Korean Nationalism, Part II: *Minjok*

Choe, Sin, and other Korean nationalists, as a way to elevate Koreans into “historical people,” responded to Social Darwinism by creating their own version based upon ancient historical elements. Korean, Chinese, Western, and even Japanese elements converged into the cornerstone of this new national credence. Korean nationalism was now known as *minjok* (pronounced *meen-joke*), roughly translated to “the people,” “the nation,” “the land,” and “the race.”¹⁹ *Minjok* is an all-encompassing tenet – it can cover religion, culture, language, art, and history – however, Sin specifically tied *minjok* to the historical lands of Korea.²⁰

Most notably, this tenet expanded beyond the modern geographic borders of the peninsula and into the Manchurian region – otherwise known as the borders of Gojoseon. Sin based this claim on Korea’s compelling Three Kingdoms history; particularly, the kingdoms of Goguryeo (37 BCE-668 CE) and Balhae (698-926 CE). These states covered the northern peninsula and most of Manchuria at one point.²¹ This claim was revolutionary for East Asian academia. It not only implied that people of the peninsula were part of the Korean ethnicity, but that the ancient lands in what would be known as Northeastern China were tied to Korean heritage.

Perhaps *minjok*’s most profound effect was the emphasis it put on an obscure creational myth. Because Korean history is ancient and diverse, especially during the Three Kingdoms era, it is entitled to a storied mythos. The Song China-Goryeo

¹⁹ Andre Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

²⁰ Schmid, 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

anthology, *Samguk Sagi* (published around 1145 CE) details different creation tales from each kingdom. For example, Silla had their own myth, the Pak (Park) Hyeokgeose Tale.²² The most prominent of the *Sagi* tales, however, is *Tan 'gun* (*Dan 'gun*). The myth of King *Tan 'gun* was relegated into obscurity during the Joseon era as *yangban* scholars dismissed Korea's shamanistic past for a more Sinocentric narrative.²³ Choe, nonetheless, took fascination with the tale because the setting for *Tan 'gun*'s kingdom was situated along the North Korean-Manchurian border.²⁴

Choe's rediscovery of *Tan 'gun*, along with Sin tying land to ethnicity, was the one-two punch needed to fuel future nationalists. The combination gave Koreans, as James B. Palais posits, a claim to "uniqueness" through the lens of an ancient and powerful history.²⁵ *Minjok* culture was now tied to deep antiquity that not even the superior Japanese Empire could lay claim to. To subjugated Koreans, the Imperialist efforts to suppress Manchurian-peninsular history, culture, and language was evidence that their Japanese overlords felt threatened by *minjok*.

As Nadia Y. Kim notes, Sin, Choe, and *Tan 'gun* created the notion of "ethnic nationalism," and that the imperialist's efforts to suppress this movement may have inadvertently fanned the flames for future Korean leaders.²⁶ Consequently, this notion

²² Jinwung Kim gives a brief history of Silla's creation myth. In 69 BCE Gojoseon refugees and tribal chiefs found a white horse that led them to a bright red egg. The egg immediately hatched and birthed a boy, Pak Hyeokgeose. Once the boy was of age he united various fighting tribes into one, *Saro* ("walled-town"). *Saro* later became the foundation of the Silla Kingdom. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 42.

²³ Ming China and Joseon Korea were close allies militarily, economically, culturally, and academically. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 208.

²⁴ Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria," 29.

²⁵ James B. Palais, "A Search for Korean Uniqueness," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 2 (December/January 1995): 410.

²⁶ Nadia Y. Kim, "Ethnonationality, 'Race,' and Color," in *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 25.

was later tempered and presented as political rhetoric by none other than President Park (1963-1979). *Minjok*'s greatest effect, however, was not politics but instead it instilled pride back to a country that was devastated, defeated, and humiliated for over half a century. Suitably, a young Park took this message to heart during his brief stint in *minjok* lands.



Map 2.1. From left to right, map of Gojoseon (circa 2000-108 BCE), Buyeo Kingdom (circa 200-494 CE), Goguryeo (37-668 CE), and Silla Kingdom (57-935 CE). Please note the circled areas are Korean-Manchurian regions. The square area, now known as Gumi-si, is where Park Chung Hee (1917-1979) was born. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Park the Young Soldier

In 1894, Korean reformists fed up with *yangban* class structure sought to abolish it in order to usher in the new Korean Empire (1897-1910). This, of course, was slow and met fierce resistance until Japanese takeover in 1910. It was in the efficient and ruthless hands of Imperialists that completed what reformists sought to do; however, this came at the cost of land and wealth confiscation from *yangban* elites and peasantry alike.²⁷ Simply put, the *yangban* elites were a thing of the past, and so was class structure; in its

²⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 394

place was universal poverty for most Koreans.²⁸ Likewise, this class dissolution permanently altered the Korean sociocultural landscape.

Canadian journalist F.A. McKenzie attested to the inevitable, yet brutally efficient, invasion. In February 1910, McKenzie saw the beginnings of Imperial annexation on the docks of Incheon. He reported that:

Those of us who stood on the frozen shores on that cold February night, looking at the trim and alert Japanese infantry, their figures revealed by the glowing coal and paraffin fires on the landing stage, knew that the old history of Korea was over and that a new era had begun.²⁹

While this era was vicious to all Koreans, it did, however present ample opportunities for youths willing to flex their muscles and learn the ways of Imperial *bushido*. Park, therefore, would be born into an era of might and viciousness; and likewise, this ideology permanently entrenched itself onto the soon-to-be Imperial officer.

In 1917, Park Chung Hee was born in Kameo, Colonial Korea (now known as Gumi-si, South Korea) to a former *yangban* family.³⁰ At this time, the effects of the Korean Empire (1897-1910) had come and gone and with it came the destruction of the old Korean social order by none other than his future Japanese idols. Park's fervent Imperial obsessions allowed him to self-learn Japanese language, culture, and etiquette at an alarming rate. With those skills, Park was accepted and trained under different Imperial institutions and academies. Most prominently, the military academy *Rikugun*

²⁸ Some royal and *yangban* elites – through connections, wealth, or famed industrial and commerce reputations – were granted land and property by Imperial officials. As such, while the *yangban* structure was dissolved, some former elites still held enormous influence and power. See Jinwung Kim, 394; and Jong-Sung You, “The Case of South Korea,” 299.

²⁹ F.A. McKenzie, *The Tragedy of Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), 107.

³⁰ Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), PDF e-book, 229.

Shikan Gakko in Tokyo. Included within the curriculum was a strong disdain for Joseon elitist history, one that related to the very social order Park's family was born into.³¹

To a young Park, he simply was not going to tolerate any “weak” elements, past and future. According to Carter J. Eckert, former Joseon aristocrats and *yangban* furiously resisted conscription either through sociopolitical connections, bribery, or by abandonment.³² Undoubtedly, this played into Imperial propaganda that Joseon and *yangban* elites were “weak and “effeminate.”³³ Furthermore, nationalists, such as Sin Chaeho, were well-known for their disdain of Joseon elitism as it was the very same *yangban* scholars that relegated Korean-made culture – as in culture unique to Korea with no Sino-Japanese elements – such as *Tan'gun*, in order to appease Ming allies.³⁴ This gave Imperialists, nationalists, and emasculated Koreans the sense that *yangban* were corrupt, parasitic, and self-serving; which, in turn, almost resulted in the decimation of Korean culture.

The importance of Park's Imperial military career and the influence towards his future nationalistic stances cannot be overstated. He served during a time when Korea was a shell of its former self, and more importantly, during an era where Choe and Sin's teachings were spreading among the peninsula. While Park never met any of his nationalist idols, the young lieutenant made many references to them, especially Sin, in his journals. As such, it is possible to posit this as a coincidence, however, such accord lends credence that Park knew well about early nationalists writing styles. For example,

³¹ Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 18.

³² Ibid.

³³ Saeyoung Park, “National Heroes and Monuments in South Korea: Patriotism, Modernization and Park Chung Hee's Remaking of Yi Sunsin's Shrine,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, no. 24 (June 2010): 13.

³⁴ Saeyoung Park, 13.

Park wholeheartedly referred to Korean individuals as a smaller portion “i” (lower-case “i”) compared to the larger picture “I” or “We” (capital “I” and “We”).³⁵ Moreover, even though Park spent his education and military career in a foreign land, it so happened that that part of his tenure was situated in the sacred lands – *Tan’gun* lands – Sin and Choe fervently elevated.

With Park’s Korean nationalism finally taking form, the determined soldier still needed to prove his mettle to Japanese officials, and, in 1944, Park abandoned the “effeminate” *yangban* culture and finally became an officer in the Manchukuo Imperial Army.³⁶ This was the beginning of Park’s political agendas; so therefore, it is important to analyze the principles that influenced his brief Japanese career.

Shogun Japan, Meiji Japan, and Imperial Japan were eras less than a century apart, so suitably, older customs merged into contemporary culture. Nam Chang-hee posits that the old *shogun* era of *bushido* – a *samurai* principle emphasizing strength over weakness – motivated Japanese servicemen.³⁷ Park was no exception, and as Nam examines, Imperial education and military training prepared him for a life of rigid loyalty and honor – similar to a *samurai* – at any means necessary. Additionally, this manifested as one of Park’s favorite lines, “We can do anything if we try.”³⁸

Park’s *bushido* mindset reverberated in the ideas of the nationalists he found so intriguing. Taking a cue from Social Darwinism, Park complemented Sin Chaeho’s

³⁵ Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 222. Examples of this type of writing are translated as such: “I am Park Chung Hee, and I am Korean. Me and my brethren, We are Korean.”

³⁶ Ezra F. Vogel, “Nation Rebuilders: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping, and Park Chung Hee,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 515.

³⁷ Chang-hee Nam, “South Korea’s Big Business Clientelism in Democratic Reform,” *Asian Survey* 35, no. 4 (April 1995): 357.

³⁸ Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 3.

teachings of the “strong over the weak” mentality that many Imperial soldiers passionately backed. In a February-March 1910 newspaper interview, Sin noted that:

Look around at this world! Why were the six great powers able so triumphantly and willfully to overrun the heavens and the earth? The answer is that their military power was strong.³⁹

Indeed, two different men, from two different regions, with two different upbringings were espousing similar *bushido*-like philosophies; this was no coincidence. Although, it is possible to chalk this up to the Social Darwinist sentiments of the time, it is safe to assume that during this military-heavy era “might makes right.” Furthermore, Park was tasked with suppressing Korean-Chinese guerillas – warfare considered dishonorable by Imperial standards – so his first armed foray was suppressing those deemed shameful by *bushido* morals.⁴⁰

Long before Park became a strongman, president, economic architect, and dictator, a 1917 *Taehan maeil sinbo* issue – the same one with Choe’s “world historical” remarks” – recorded Choe eerily foreshadowing Park’s political agenda:

The modern age is the age of power in which the powerful survive while the weak perish . . . It is a competition of intelligence, physical fitness, material, economic, and organizational power.⁴¹

Concurrently in Korea, *minjok* tenets like this were gaining a foothold. By the end of Park’s Imperial endeavors, Social Darwinist efforts like *minjok* took nationalism by storm. This undoubtedly influenced, along with Japanese experiences, Park’s future policies. As Andre Schmid succinctly puts it, “[Park] was eager to enlist a nationalist history for his own political purpose.”⁴²

³⁹ Eckert, 45.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 321.

⁴¹ Allen, “Northeast Asia,” 789.

⁴² Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 41.

In 1945, Park returned to Korea at the end of the Colonial Era and World War II. With his nationalist agenda cemented, along with the technocratic guidance he received in Imperial academies, the oncoming Korean War provided him the ample opportunity to display his *bushido* might on the world stage.



Figure 2.2. Park Chung Hee dressed in an Imperial Army officer uniform. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Park the Strongman

The Korean War (1950-1953) was a brutal conflict that had no conclusion – the Koreans are still in an ongoing war. Just like their colonial past, the Republic of Korea (ROK) came out of the struggle in a miserable situation. John F. Kennedy, the US president during Park’s first years as executive, was quoted in a National Security Council about the “hopelessness” in propping up the ROK’s government, military, and economy.⁴³ This begs an analysis as to why such a close ally initially looked upon South Korea as an incumbrance; and in hindsight, the answer lay in Park’s strengthening of American and Japanese relations.

In 1946, Park returned to the peninsula and attended Korean Military Academy in Seoul (*Yeokgeun Sagwan Hakkyo*). Park’s past military expertise allowed him to raise ranks quickly while assembling a devoted following of subordinates. In doing so, Park frequently clashed with South Korea’s first president Rhee Syngman (1875-1965). At one-point Rhee ordered Park’s execution for the crime of sedition; however, charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence and military prestige.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Park’s proficiencies were needed at the outbreak of the Korean War, and, in 1950, Park was promoted to ROK lieutenant. Park swiftly rose ranks during the three-year conflict and came out as a brigadier general. Within that timeframe, however, General Park befriended other *bushido*-minded military officials. Most

⁴³ John F. Kennedy, “Notes of the 485th Meeting of the National Security Council,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963, Northeast Asia*, (Washington DC: US Department of State, 1961), government report, 481.

⁴⁴ Yong-Sup Kim, “The May Sixteenth Military Coup,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 38.

prominently, Kim Jae-kyu – also Park’s best friend, fellow academy classmate, and future KCIA director – and Kim Jong-pil. Taking a cue from the *shogun-samurai* relationship, both individuals played a large role in helping Park consolidate power, and they stayed loyal to his regime until Jae-kyu assassinated him in 1979.⁴⁵

Between his return from Manchuria in 1946 and the end of the Korean War, the General amassed loyal followers and the military credentials needed to oust a frail government, whether the nation was ready or not. On May 16, 1961 (“5.16 Incident” in Korean), General Park enacted a swift military coup in what was perceived, according to Kim Hyung-a, as a “liberation” against “aristocrats and elites.”⁴⁶

The reason behind Park’s coup has been analyzed many times; however, a commonly agreed scapegoat lay within Rhee’s administration and his bureaucratic elites. As seen during Park’s Manchurian stint, former Imperialist propaganda relegated Joseon elites and *yangban* as corrupt and cowardly. Therefore, it was perfect timing that Park’s regime cut the cancer where it started. As such, anyone associated with Rhee was the ill to South Korea’s pathetic state.

For context, Rhee’s administration was mired in corruption and accusations of pocketing foreign aid were numerous.⁴⁷ Furthermore, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, a lawless “failed” country with a virtually non-existent government and economy.⁴⁸ To put it in a financial perspective, former Philippine

⁴⁵ Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 236.

⁴⁶ Hyung-A Kim, *Korea's Development Under Park Chung Hee: Rapid Industrialization, 1961-79* (Oxford: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 42.

⁴⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 426.

⁴⁸ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, “On Korea,” *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 221.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, during a 2005 ASEAN tour, compared the destitute past of South Korea to the Philippines's current situation:

In 1965, when the per capita income of Philippines was \$270, it was \$102 in South Korea. However, in 2005, when the per capita income of the Philippines was \$1,030, it was \$ 16,500 in South Korea. I admire President Park, who established the foundation of modernization, beating the other East Asian countries which used to be wealthier than South Korea.⁴⁹

Thus, it was no surprise that within one year the penniless house-of-cards known as the First and Second Republics of Korea (1948-1961) fell so fast under Rhee's tenure.

The beginning of Park's ascension was in the morning of May 16. Park made a broadcast to a group of anti-elitist soldiers and protestors:

We have been waiting for the civilian government to bring back order to the country. The Prime Minister and Ministers, however, are mired in corruption, leading the country to the verge of collapse. We shall rise up against the government to save the country. We can accomplish our goals without bloodshed. Let us join in this Revolutionary Army to save the country.⁵⁰

A couple hours later, the Park regime effortlessly took control of the government without any civilian resistance, and therefore, the General achieved a feat that most strongmen yearn for. Surely, Park's *bushido* military training prepared him for this moment.

With the deed done, the triumphant General ended the day with a public speech. Taken from a radio transcript, Park tried to reassure the public – and an anxious Kennedy Administration – that his actions were justified during an era of extreme Cold War volatility:

What lies behind a **coup** or **revolution**? (*Rephrasing the translation: Is what we did a coup or revolution?*) Well, for one thing, people

⁴⁹ Jin Yong Bae, *My Life, For the Country and its People* (Seattle: Amazon Publishing, 2016), Kindle edition, loc. 4234.

⁵⁰ Chung Hee Park, "Emergency Broadcast," *Korean Broadcasting Company*, television and radio broadcast, Seoul, May 16, 1961.

currently can't eat. Before all things, it is important to "fill the people's belly," then they can participate in civil rights and democracy. Once the people are "half-full," then we can start thinking clearly about democracy. Above all, we strive to develop a **revolution** that advances the nation so that we can take a step forward [into prosperity]. If this step fails, then it is a **coup**.⁵¹

Accordingly, onlookers and Koreans alike wondered whether Park's upheaval was like every other coup so common in that era; or, if it was a revolution not only for prosperity but for pride, patriotism, and more importantly, democracy.



Figure 2.3. Left picture, General Park (center front) with subordinates shortly after his successful takeover. Right, Park (very right) preparing to broadcast his speech in front of a weary public. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

* * *

The volatility in the Korean peninsula during the twentieth century birthed the nationalist teachings of Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson. The two scholars, thereby, influenced a new generation of Koreans, with none more evident than a young Korean Japanese military officer, Lieutenant Park Chung Hee. Through a series of adept military training, power grabs, and maneuvers, Park eventually became a general, at the same time amassing a large group of loyal followers. Importantly, the General created a unique form of Korean nationalism based on Sin-Choe teachings and Japanese *bushido* ethics.

⁵¹ Chung Hee Park, "Coup or Revolution?" speech, Addressing the Public After 5/16 Coup, Seoul, May 16, 1961.

Consequently, Park's coup in 1961 sets the foundation for the next section. Part II, therefore, examines the tenure of the "developmental dictator." The section introduces the reader to the peak of Park's *bushido* society, and more importantly, the society-shattering effects it had on South Korean socioeconomics, military, politics, and late twentieth century nationalism.

Part II

The former general enacted a coup in 1961 and consolidated his authority in one of the most efficient power grabs in modern history. Park was a general no more, instead he was an executive of a newly formed, corrupt, destitute, and barren republic. Park now led a country that was a victim of brutal colonialism, a civil war, and divisive Cold War politics. Under those circumstances, the strongman desperately sought to differentiate himself from years of ineffective, weak, and criminal leadership. The vehicles employed to drive such ambitions, therefore, are crucial variables used to better analyze the hidden motives and costs for Park's radical reforms.

Before Park could enact any wide-sweeping reforms, he first needed to get everybody on board. With unabated poverty, lawlessness, and starvation, loyalty to the state and to one cause was secondary to everyday survival. Furthermore, the newly formed republic under the Rhee administration had little to no economic or psychological cohesiveness. The only remnants left from Rhee's tenure were anti-communist agendas and civic corruption. In turn, public apathy and government distrust was the norm.⁵² To counter such indifferences, Park looked to age-old philosophies.

⁵² Keyes Beech, "The Downfall of Syngman Rhee," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 9, 1960, 101.

The Joseon era used Confucianism as the first official state tenet – known as *Ch'eng-chu* – likewise, the new executive sought to use this for his neo-nationalist campaigns.⁵³ Park, however, knew this tenet was corrupted and manipulated by Joseon officials, especially *yangban* elites, intent on subjugating lower-classes. Jinwung Kim succinctly sums up *yangban*-led Confucianism as enriching a tiny, powerful, “parasitic, privileged class.”⁵⁴ In order to step away from a tainted Joseon past, Park looked to the Neo-Confucian doctrines of Zhu Xi (1130-1200s CE) to guide his agenda.⁵⁵

The teachings of Zhu Xi influenced the seventeenth century Korean tenet *silhak*. *Silhak* was a more “practical” version of the old philosophy. Its main principles emphasized social equality acquired through tangible and physical actions. For example, *silhak* promoted Confucian aspects that propagated legal and technological advancements along with land reforms; put differently, it promoted reforms that helped the working classes. Moreover, *silhak* negates the “impractical” spiritual aspects that were heavily disseminated by the old order.⁵⁶ Ultimately, *silhak* was born because of the actions of an apathetic and weak *yangban* elite.⁵⁷

For the Park regime, this was the perfect basis to rally up a demoralized nation, one that also conveniently agreed with Sin’s *minjok* philosophy. Simply put, *silhak* was part of the land, the culture, and the people. Thus, the deviation away from *Ch'eng-chu*

⁵³ An expanded definition of Confucianism is a Chinese social philosophy based on the filial and paternalistic teachings of scholar Confucius (551-479 BCE). A major theme is the “natural order of things,” or respecting higher authority, like a father or boss. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *History of China*, 38.

⁵⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 191.

⁵⁵ Chai-sik Chung, “Confucian Tradition and Nationalist Ideology in Korea,” in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 61.

⁵⁶ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 261.

⁵⁷ Saeyoung Park, “National Heroes and Monuments,” 2.

and towards *silhak* is a palpable example that rebellion against an old ineffectual elite order – like Rhee’s administration – was meticulously planned by Park.⁵⁸

The next problem, however, was propagating this to the masses while at the same time sanitizing it of any Joseon elements. Park, therefore, had a predicament: enacting such a plan without raising comparisons to old *yangban* teachings. In addition, Park needed to instill one homogenized goal in order for his state-building agendas to come to fruition. This was certainly no simply task, and the answer to this complexity was found through the regime’s two most “practical” reforms: *chaebol* and *Saemaul Undong* (pronounced *jae-bowl* and *sae-maw-ool oon-dōng* respectively).⁵⁹

Park the Father, Part I

Without a doubt the most pressing issue on Park’s mind was economy. From the beginning, Park’s administration was obsessed with poverty and prosperity. According to a passage from his memoir, *To Build a Nation*, the moment after the coup Park thought:

[As soon as] I took over power as the leader of the revolutionary group on 16 May 1961, I felt, honestly speaking, as if I had been given a **pilfered household** or a **bankrupt firm** to manage . . . But I had to rise above this pessimism to rehabilitate the household. I had to break, once and for all, the vicious circle of poverty and economic stagnation.⁶⁰

The words “pilfered household” and “bankrupt firm” were central to Park’s rationale.

This may suggest that he looked upon the new economy as a Confucian-inspired home; and, like any good, strong, and dominate father, a loyal and respectful family was needed

⁵⁸ Bell, “Cheondogyo and the Donghak Revolution,” 125.

⁵⁹ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 48.

⁶⁰ Yong-ho Ch’oe and Wm. Theodore de Bary, “Chapter 36: Korea Since 1945,” in *Sources of Korean Tradition Vol. 2*, ed., Peter H. Lee (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 396.

for a household to prosper. Befittingly, Park's first reform, and perhaps his most signature decree, was restructuring the economy to become business, corporate, and export-friendly.

For Park, *chaebol* was not only a conglomerate and economic system, it was also an institution that espoused his Neo-Confucian ideals.⁶¹ The *chaebol* scheme did not, however, arrive overnight, nor was Park the inventor. *Chaebol* economics goes back farther than his time, and fittingly, the roots of *chaebol* are reminiscent of their Japanese forefather, *zaibatsu*.

Zaibatsu translates to “financial clique” and was the economic pillar of nineteenth century Meiji Reforms (1868-1912). These elite companies were state-guided and family-owned mega-corporations.⁶² They were once-prominent variables for Japan's instantaneous industrialization that eventually became the heart of the World War I and II economies.⁶³ Put in another way, *zaibatsu* were state-sanctioned monopolies whose labor, revenue, and profits were all under the discretion of the executive, or emperor.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Chaebol* loosely translates to “big conglomerates.” These corporations were initially family-operated and state-funded. Akin to modern American mega-corporations like Coca-Cola and Apple, *chaebol* may be considered the South Korean equivalent. Globally known *chaebol* include Samsung, LG Hyundai, and Kia. Lesser known conglomerates, albeit still prominent in East Asian markets, are SK Telecom and Lotte Brands. See Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 48.

⁶² Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97.

⁶³ Gordon, 98.

⁶⁴ Meiji officials sought to emulate the monopolies – such as Standard Oil and Carnegie Steel – of a Gilded Age America. These officials were staunch pro-business technocrats and were very suspect of labor movements. As seen during the American Progressive Era, these movements were backed by progressive politicians, such as Theodore Roosevelt, who were intent on dismantling monopolies. Contrastingly, the Meiji cabinet avoided these trends and instead sought to protect *zaibatsu* counterparts from any outside non-expert public interference. After World War II, however, American SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) officials despised the monopolistic and state-supported nature of *zaibatsu*. Consequently, General Douglas MacArthur ordered the dissolution of most major *zaibatsu* entities. However, some corporations restructured and are still under operation today; most notably, Mitsubishi. See Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 91, 143, and 231-236.

Park's Japanese education allowed him to merge old *zaibatsu* elements with his own brand of governance. Under the guidance of *bushido* ethics combined with *silhak* practicality, Park adapted *chaebol* to better suit the needs of an expanding economy and a restructuring Korean society. As Nam Chang-hee posits, this created an ethic that was akin to an "ultranationalistic *samurai*-military."⁶⁵ Nam coins this trend as "clientelistic industrial expansion," somewhat mirroring that of their *zaibatsu* predecessor.⁶⁶ Just like *zaibatsu*, Park's *chaebol* were under the complete guidance of the state.

The *chaebol* system, in its core, was a paternally guided system with "Confucian style harmony."⁶⁷ This meant that the new corporate economy was based on hierarchy. Park, the head of the government, was the highest entity in this pyramid-like structure. In turn, he guided and took care of *chaebol* – just like a father to his children – as long as they successfully led economic and labor reforms. Next, *chaebol* were responsible for the well-being, training, and employment of the citizenry – otherwise symbolized as taking care of their children. Therefore, it is possible to see the top-down authority within each institution. Simply put, each entity played some sort of fatherly role model.⁶⁸

Evidently, this was the Confucian aspect of the new *chaebol* economy: it was the physical half of Park's state-building efforts. The other half laid with *bushido* psychology, or as Nam posits the "patron-client model." This relationship is defined as favorable exchanges between weaker and stronger clients.⁶⁹ The "weaker client" was the entity with less wealth and power while the "stronger" one yielded more. Likewise,

⁶⁵ Chang-hee Nam, "South Korea's Big Business Clientelism in Democratic Reform," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 4 (April 1995): 357.

⁶⁶ Nam, 357.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 361.

chaebol held most of the power and had a commanding grip on the fabric of Korean society. Park, of course, was the key exception to this.

While Park's wealth paled in comparison to *chaebol* CEOs, that was irrelevant. Park's net worth was measured in a different iron-fisted currency, one that he had limitless access too. Meaning, no entity or institution was higher than his authority, *chaebol* wealth be damned. Chairman Park held the power of purse and authority over his *chaebol* children. Whoever performed the best – measured in export output and revenue – were rewarded accordingly with limitless state funding and deregulation.⁷⁰ These resources then trickled-down to employees as incentivized bonuses.

On the other end, whoever did not perform well, conglomerate, firm, or laborer, were left out to rot.⁷¹ This meant that underperforming and unmarketable employees – such as elderly, disabled, and, for a time, women – were left out of the economy.⁷² Akin to Social Darwinist ethics, Park's economy was now the “survival-of-the-fittest.”

Initially, this new economy was well received by the people. Even the most unsuspecting workers felt the positive effects of the “patron-client model.” In a journal entry dated on January 20, 1976, Park wrote about his encounter with an elevator conductor:

I asked the elevator conductor about her [monthly] salary. She showed a happy expression, saying that it was 44,000won (approx. 96USD in 1976 rates; 1USD = 484KRW) last year, but this year since January, it has been about 77,000won (~159USD) and including the monthly bonus, it would be, on average, 80,000won (~165USD). I thought that

⁷⁰ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 95.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist Mentalité,” in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 167.

she would be much more satisfied if her pay was doubled based on the present price index. I made up my mind to make more effort so that her wish could come true within four or five years.⁷³

This was music to Park's ears because it provided anecdotal proof that – at least to him – his Confucian-inspired economy was enriching not only the nation and conglomerates but the most menial of workers. In accordance to the “patron-client model,” the unsuspecting and joyous conductor benefitted from a weaker Confucian position.

This rehash of old *zaibatsu* and *bushido* ethics was so intriguing that even outsiders, such as American Diplomat Richard A. Ericson, Jr., could not help but notice Park's unorthodox governance. In a 1995 interview with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST), Ericson responded to a question about Park's leadership during his 1965-1968 tenure in Seoul:

The American press always portrayed [Park] as an autocratic little monster . . . [however], the point with Park was that he also had this burning intent to take Korea where he thought it should go and he had the conviction that he and he alone was the one who could do it. And you know, he may very well have been right.⁷⁴

Along with the elevator conductor, insights like this proved to Park that *bushido*'s “might-makes-right” ethics were working. Ambitious, strong, loyal – even weak – workers were benefitting from the mighty *chaebol* economy, and befittingly, Park was the mightiest of them all, rewarding or severely punishing all of his children.

⁷³ Bae, *My Life, For the Country and its People*, loc. 4776.

⁷⁴ Richard A. Ericson, “Interview: Ambassador Richard A. Ericson, Jr.,” by Charles S. Kennedy, *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, audio interview and transcript, March 27, 1995, PDF report, 118.

Park the Father, Part II

Park's "might-makes-right" *chaebol* economy started off with a bang. Once an agrarian nation, South Korea was evolving into an urban-centered manufacturing behemoth. Young and old Koreans from all over the nation were flocking to cities for lucrative factory and *chaebol* employment.⁷⁵ Since South Korean metropolises were booming due in part to new immigration, conversely, the countryside should be doing worse. However, under the new system, this was far from the truth. The countryside, like their urban counterparts, experienced tremendous growth due to Park's second radical reform, *Samaeul Undong* (1970s-1981), also known as the NCM.

During the *chaebol* reforms, rural growth was equitable to urban growth. From the same ADST interview, Ericson recollects Park's countryside experience and highlights the former general's motifs for his rustic agenda:

Being from rural areas himself, I think he paid more attention to that than people might have expected. There wasn't a lot of farm unrest. The farm income increased just as rapidly as urban.⁷⁶

Furthermore, Ericson mentions Park's philosophical and military background:

Plus, the fact that he is born a Confucian to start with. He is a rural Korean, not a sophisticated city guy, and his life work up until that time, after World War II, had been in the Korean army. And here is a guy who served, fought and existed all of his life in intensely hierarchical situations.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Hyung-A Kim, "Minjung Socioeconomic Responses to State-led Industrialization," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 42.

⁷⁶ Ericson, "Interview," 232.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

Ericson's emphasis on Park's Confucian and hierarchy-centered background is important. The *chaebol* and labor systems relied on these very same ideals. It is therefore safe to presume that these variables affected the NCM agenda.

Han Seung-Mi posits that the NCM campaigns were essentially "anti-elitist and populist ideals" that became Park's version – and therefore the rural community's version – of "state populism."⁷⁸ Yu Jong-Sung's thesis corroborates Han's argument. However, Yu adds that failed land reform acts that occurred during post-Korean War rebuilding (1948-1956) were a factor that affected the NCM.⁷⁹

For context, the *yangban* order virtually owned all property, including all aspects of agriculture, in Joseon Korea.⁸⁰ Likewise, during Japanese occupation, all land was confiscated under the Empire; however, some Imperial officials allowed certain *yangban* groups – usually owners who were proficient in industry and trade – to keep their land.⁸¹

Unsurprisingly, these landowners held immense power up until the Korean War. When post-war restructuring commenced, Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP) officials – carried out by the Rhee regime – blindly redistributed former Imperial stolen and *yangban* lands. Granted, this was regardless of whether new proprietors were experienced and skilled with agriculture or trade. This, of course, was one variable to South Korea's unproductivity before Park took the reins. As such, Park knew this system

⁷⁸ Seung-Mi Han, "The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 70.

⁷⁹ You, "The Case of South Korea," 294.

⁸⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 191.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 325.

was inadequate, so implementing the successes of *chaebol* “clientelism” – inclusive of all Confucian elements – was the solution to modernize the backwaters of Korea.⁸²

Park did exactly that, and according to prior Imperial elements, he pushed “Japanese mental training” on an ambitious countryside eager to gain the same riches seen in the cities.⁸³ However, the NCM incorporated other Eastern and Western aspects as well. These were based on the ideas of eighteenth century Japanese agrarian economist Ninoyama Ginjiro (1787-1856) and German sociologist Max Weber.⁸⁴ Park combined Ginjiro’s emphasis on community lending, investing, and frugality – a precursor to farming credit unions – with “Weberian mental training.”⁸⁵

Plainly put, the rustic and urban *chaebol* systems had the same homogenized goals, modernization and prosperity. The motifs and support behind them, however, were completely different. *Chaebol* lacked the communal elements of NCM. Whereas NCM followed Ginjiro’s teachings on collective investments, *chaebol* did not. For example, urban workers, many of them employed by *chaebol*, were expected to “invest” their labor and earnings through conglomerations and spending.⁸⁶

According to Kang Myung-koo, one vehicle used to spur urban investments was Western-styled consumerism.⁸⁷ Since Park’s Korea was now an export-oriented market, an overabundance of *chaebol* goods became available for Koreans to splurge on. In turn,

⁸² Nam, “Big Business Clientelism,” 361.

⁸³ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 73.

⁸⁴ Han expands on “Weberian mental training.” Specifically, the “culture of poverty” and economic failures were attributed to “lazy, miserable, and self-indulgent” workers. See Seung-Mi Han, 74.

⁸⁵ Seung-Mi Han, 73.

⁸⁶ Kang, “Compressed Modernization,” 167.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

a new urban psyche was born, “Developmentalist *Mentalité*.”⁸⁸ This term meant that urbanites were now following a hierarchy based on owning the latest and greatest consumer products. Granted, this was also mixed with the Confucian hierarchy that Park promoted. As Kang posits, the new consumer mindset eventually created a “hypercompetitive” and “rugged individualist” attitude that is still prevalent today.⁸⁹

In rural communities, *chaebol* culture was less prominent. The NCM’s goal were not centered on exporting, rather it was to rapidly turn the impoverished outskirts into productive farmlands. Interestingly, many villages were still stuck with Joseon-styled governance. Villages were still led by a form of oligarchy – village elders and leaders were put into prominent positions due to family name, ancestry, and Confucian piety.⁹⁰ This caused a flock of younger workers to abandon rural life in the pursuit of urban wealth.

To combat this, the NCM enacted reforms were based on meritocracy and self-reliance. Villagers willing to toil in the fields and rapidly build new infrastructure were rewarded by the state with limitless aid. This trait was seen by Park as “strong and self-sufficient” and was frankly unheard of in Korean history. For most of Korean history, farmers and peasants were generally considered powerless second-class citizens. In Goryeo and Joseon eras, they were known as *sangmin*, a social class roughly translated to “commoners.”⁹¹ In the NCM era, however, Park’s rural schemes bestowed youthful laborers with new wealth and power. Concurrently, elder village leaders – many of whom

⁸⁸ Kang, 180.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 181.

⁹⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 444.

⁹¹ Ibid., 201.

did not possess any practical skills for the NCM – were having their powers slowly undermined by a newly empowered and skilled workforce.⁹²

Oppositely, while urban areas were initially booming, the massive influx of migrants eventually created an oversaturated and overcompetitive market. To make matters worse, there was rarely any state welfare for hardworking city laborers. In reality, that duty was up to their “patrons,” better known as *chaebol*. Likewise, results were not as expected for a new generation of urban laborers as they were not heavily remunerated compared to their NCM counterparts.⁹³

That begs the question, “Did Park favor one constituency over the other?” Perhaps. Simply put, the NCM was in the same spirit as the “patron-client model”; but in this case, Park and the state was the “patron” and ambitious agrarian workers were highly favored “clients.”⁹⁴ Further evident of Park’s rural bias, the strongman was known to build and venerate historical figures who were mistreated by aristocratic elites. It was also no coincidence that these figures had a large peasantry support base.

For example, Park was obsessed with Admiral Yi Sunsin (1545-1598) who – in spite of massive achievements – was frequently demoted and humiliated by Joseon nobility and *yangban*. Propaganda related to the great admiral is evident today as numerous shrines, such as *Hyeongchungsa* in Asan-si, South Korea, were built in what was once pristine countryside.⁹⁵

⁹² Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement,” 80.

⁹³ Nam, “Big Business Clientelism,” 360.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁹⁵ Saeyoung Park, “National Heroes and Monuments,” 1. Please note that places like Asan-si were once strictly rural – only towns and villages present. Now many of these locations have grown into cities or have urban areas nearby.

Additionally, Park's impoverished rural upbringing affected his governance. As reiterated by Ericson's ADST comments, "He is a rural Korean, not a sophisticated city guy . . . I think he paid more attention to that."⁹⁶ Suffice it to say, the executive was obsessed with rural prosperity while loathing anything resembling an inch of poverty. To Park, national success was shown through the NCM's efficient dismantling of thatched roof, wooden villages – these are now called "traditional Korean villages" (*hanok maeul* and *min sok chon*); the mass erection of new *apateu* (apartment) buildings in major cities; the creation of the nation's first freeway (Seoul-Busan Gyeongbu Expressway); and a booming consumerist-export economy. These were all affirmations that his "might-makes-right" campaigns were the new spirit of the young republic.⁹⁷

The Cost

Unquestionably, Park's radical reforms boosted South Korea into global prominence. Poverty – urban and rural – was in the midst of alleviation, Korean brands were being bought all over the world, and the South surpassed their Northern brethren as the face for all things Korean.⁹⁸ But what was more of an anomaly was how Park, leader of a once destitute nation, raised up enough funds to pursue such sweeping economic and nationalist agendas. Just like any developing nation, the road to prosperity and global prominence came at a cost.

⁹⁶ Ericson, "Interview," 232.

⁹⁷ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 84.

⁹⁸ Kamiya Fuji, "The Korean Peninsula after Park Chung Hee," *Asian Survey* 20, no. 7 (July 1980): 744.

When Park took over the government in 1961, he knew that past governing methods under Rhee was inefficient, easily corruptible, and profitable only to a select few.⁹⁹ However, the Park regime did take notice of Rhee's emphasis on foreign – Japanese, American, and West German – technocrats. Rhee's administration, however, never had the chance to utilize such assistance because of mass protests, corruption charges, and embezzlement.¹⁰⁰

Sinophobia

On the surface, it is possible to assume that Park was accepting and pragmatic towards foreign influence. Park even said in a speech:

I don't care [what] the national origin of capital [is]. I welcome capital from the United States, West Germany, Italy, and other European countries. Even if it is Japanese capital, I don't care as long as it is used for the economic development of our country.¹⁰¹

As such, President Park wanted to normalize Japanese relations, enact training and internship programs with allies – primarily the U.S., West Germany, and Japan – and create export policies that strengthened numerous international trade treaties.¹⁰² However, when looking deeper, Park's agendas were tainted with overt xenophobia against Chinese culture.

Chinese-Korean relations date back millennia, but Park's two-decade regime and nativist populist campaigns effectively dismantled Sino influences from Korean society. For context, Seow Jing Yin posits that pre-Park South Korea (1946-1961) lacked any

⁹⁹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 429.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Chung-in Moon, "Modernization Strategy: Ideas and Influences," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 127.

¹⁰² Moon, "Modernization Strategy," 130.

nationalist and cultural cohesion. It was not common for the international spectators to consider North Korea as the true successor to the peninsula as their economy and government was, at that time, more stable than the South.¹⁰³

Consequently, Park obsessed over glorifying anti-elitist and nationalist icons, such as Admiral Yi's *Hyeongchungsa* and *Tan'gun*, in hopes of alleviating South Korea's inferiority complex. This campaign was nothing short of a success. Nadia Y. Kim suggests that Park brought back ethnic and national pride by skillfully tying Sin Chaeho's *Tan'gun* and "homogenized bloodlines" together.¹⁰⁴ Park, however, conveniently left out Northeastern Manchurian influences – inclusive of Tungusic, Khitan, and Han Chinese – that helped solidify the *Tan'gun* story.

Consequently, this also led to a campaign to "purify" Korean culture.¹⁰⁵ This not only meant removing Chinese elements from Korean history – Park even tried to abolish *hanja* from Korean academic program – but this also meant stamping out a tiny Chinese minority from the peninsula.¹⁰⁶ After a government finance audit led by the KCIA, officials found small but affluent Chinese communities. Just as quickly as Park stamped out Sino-influenced curriculums, this minority group had all their assets confiscated, and then they were deported. According to Kim Hyung-A, the anti-Sino campaigns displayed how far Park would go, socioeconomically and ethnically, to rebuild Korea in his image.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Fuji, "The Korean Peninsula," 745.

¹⁰⁴ Nadia Y. Kim, "Ethnonationality, 'Race,' and Color," 25.

¹⁰⁵ Nadia Y. Kim, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Il-pyo Hong, *Kukhoe Sog-ui Inmunhag*, [*Humanities in the National Assembly*] (Seoul, South Korea: *Joheun Ttang* [Good Land Publishers], 2014), EPUB e-book, 69.

¹⁰⁷ Hyung-A Kim, "State Building: The Military Junta's Path to Modernity through Administrative Reforms," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 123.

Japanese Relations and Compensation

Park's regime immediately implemented the foreign advising ideas set forth by Rhee. Since there was a familiarity with Imperial institutions, Park's technocrats used that knowledge to normalize relations with Korea's past adversary, the Japanese. Yi Tong-won, former Vice Chairman of the Korean Trade Association turned diplomat to Japan, knew the vitalness of securing trade deals and low-interest loans, especially with the world's strongest markets economies. In a government report to Park, Yi wrote:

What is lacking in natural resources and financial instruments can be made up through strategically timed diplomatic maneuvers. Foreign policy can either make or break a nation. If [the military junta] can concentrate on the strengthening of economic ties with the United States as much as the security ties, and on the normalization of relations with Japan, South Korea can secure large amounts of economic assistance in a timely manner. With the resources secured through diplomacy, I believe [the military junta] will have a chance at creating an economic miracle.¹⁰⁸

In return, Japan's Hayato Ikeda and Sato Eisaku cabinets (1960-1972) eagerly found these requests as an opportunity – as in showering Park with low-interest loans – for informal compensations for past atrocities.¹⁰⁹ As a gesture of good faith, the Park administration quietly swept colonial atrocities – such as maritime border disputes (Dokdo Conflict) and wartime sex slavery – under the rug.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Park's Korean-Japanese diplomacy opened the way for these economic alliances.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Yong-Jick Kim, "The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum, 1974–1979," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra P. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 436.

¹⁰⁹ Please note that the post-World War II Japanese government never made any formal apologies – unlike postwar Germany and war-time Nazism – for past war atrocities. See Yangmo Ku, "Japanese Policy on the Comfort Women Issue," 243.

¹¹⁰ Sungjoo Han, "Political Economy," 43.

¹¹¹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 449.

These stances infuriated the general population and is considered by scholars as the start of agitation against Park's two-decades long rule.¹¹² Also, this began urban and university protests – initially small at first – that would engulf Park's successors. Park, likewise, worried somewhat about these sentiments. On a West German tour in 1974, the dictator produced a speech on pragmatism while sidestepping motifs for Japanese alliances.

In the hopes of reassuring expatriate Koreans in West Germany about negative sentiments at home, he said:

I do not know if some of the students will complain about the president saying this, but I will definitely speak to some of our Korean students here today . . . What is the content of the Korea-Japan talks? [*Rephrase: Why are we bothering to reconcile with Japan?*] Well, what is the point of continuing to fight? . . . Since you are students, it's because you are worried about the future of Korea and for the future of our country.¹¹³

Furthermore, Park Tae-jun, another of Park's technocrats and a diplomat to Japan, wrote a public letter defending the administration:

Domestically, there are a lot of severe criticisms and oppositions saying that the government is attempting to get political funds, or the normalization between two countries is disgraceful. But we cannot always beg the US for wheat flour to barely survive. Is that the way to keep us noble? My belief is that there is no other way to build up national modernization without money. We might have to live up with more shames under the oppression of Japan, considerably long time, if we miss this opportunity only thinking about the disgraceful sides only.¹¹⁴

Indeed, when Tae-jun said “live up with more shames . . . considerably for a long time,” he inadvertently foreshadowed the deep anti-Japanese animosity that still envelops Korea

¹¹² Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 449.

¹¹³ Chung Hee Park, “President Park Speaks to Koreans in West Germany,” speech, European Diplomacy Tour, Hamburg, West Germany, May 20, 1974.

¹¹⁴ Bae, *My Life, For the Country and its People*, loc. 700.

today.¹¹⁵ Simply put, to many Koreans – and even for Park’s strongest supporters – Japanese normalizations, whether justified or not, sold out years of suffering and atrocities for billions in aid.

Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was a conflict that involved massive American support, financially and militarily; but unbeknownst to many, the second largest participant, in terms of soldiers and civilian workers, was none other than the newly modernized ROK military.¹¹⁶ The Vietnam War greatly affected Park’s early tenure as well. Specifically, Park’s regime knew the pitiful state of the outdated armed forces. In fact, the ROK military during the Korean War was looked upon as a “burdensome military protectorate.” Therefore, the problem and expenses of rapid military modernization plagued Park’s tenure.¹¹⁷ The solution, however, was to let another entity, the United States, do the modernization for them with the costs including full commitment of forces alongside American counterparts.

According to Kim Se Jin, this plan was such a success that it entitled the ROK military to unprecedented amounts of American military advisors, technology, and funding.¹¹⁸ Rapid militarization went off without a hitch, but more importantly, Park now had a top-tier battle-tested ROK military at his disposal. This meant that domestically, Park’s economic and political consolidation was not only complete but internationally

¹¹⁵ Yangmo Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances? Japanese Policy on the Comfort Women Issue,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015), 243.

¹¹⁶ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 451.

¹¹⁷ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea’s Involvement in Vietnam and Its Economic and Political Impact,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 6 (June 1970): 529.

¹¹⁸ Se Jin Kim, 521.

South Korea's military was a force to be reckoned with. Park showed the world just what *bushido* agendas could achieve.

At home, however, the cost for this mighty buildup alarmed Park's opposition. His opponents predicted that rapid militarization and involvement "might transform South Korea into a garrison state in which the predominant position of the military could result in the permanent entrenchment of the military-oriented government of Chung-hee Park."¹¹⁹ In hindsight this was true; Park and his party's near defeat in the 1971-1972 elections was the spark for the third and most significant cost.

Anti-democracy (Yushin)

Park's party, the Democratic Republicans (DRP), secured a tight victory in the 1971-1972 elections against longtime opposition Kim Dae-jung and the New Democratic Party. Nonetheless, this was the catalyst needed to scrap democratic elements from the government. In October 1972, the Park regime passed *Yushin*, an authoritarian constitution that translates to "renewal."¹²⁰ Along with a strengthened military and police force, the dictator enacted martial law and stamped out any democratic elements from the government. Legislative and judicial powers were now centralized into the executive branch. Elections hereafter were rubberstamps for Park and the DRP.¹²¹

In October 17, 1972 – dubbed "*Siwol Yushin*" – Park gave a speech on his plans to self-amend the constitution. The sweeping powers he passed were disguised under North-South unification goals. In the preamble, Park was clear that his might could not be tested:

¹¹⁹ Se Jin Kim, 525.

¹²⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 438.

¹²¹ Sungjoo Han, "South Korea: The Political Economy of Dependency," *Asian Survey* 14, no. 1 (January 1974): 43.

I am urging the unification of the Korean people in order to realize the desire of the nation that is the peaceful unification and to prepare the great battle for the formation of the forces of the national ethnic group that strongly supports today's historical task, I declare to the public an emergency action that halts the validity of some provisions of the two-month constitution.

My first goal is to immediately dismiss the National Assembly by 19:00 on October 17, 1972. In addition, I plan to suspend all rights and provisions of the current Constitution, such as suspension of political parties and religious activities.¹²²

The preamble was more than about unification. It meant Park could finally “prepare the great battle of the national ethnic group.”¹²³ This marked the culmination of years’ worth of *bushido* ethics, ethnic nationalism, and uniting the historical *Tan’gun* lands he was so familiar with. The “great battle,” however, was not with North Korea or any outside agent. In fact, the battle was to be staged at home against opposition, students, protestors, and religious leaders.¹²⁴

The worst was yet to come, and soon Park began a trend of silencing opposition in morbid ways. To flex his power, the regime regularly jailed, tortured, and executed dissidents. One of Park’s most infamous act was ordering KCIA officials to clandestinely kidnap opposition leader Kim Dae-jung from his Tokyo hotel.¹²⁵ In Kim’s 2000 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he recollects the lengths Park and his successors would go to silence any dissent:

¹²² Chung Hee Park, “Public Emergency Speech,” speech, 10.17 Declaration, Seoul, October 17, 1972.

¹²³ Chung Hee Park, *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Myung-Lim Park, “The *Chaeya*,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra P. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 390

¹²⁵ Sungjoo Han, “Political Economy,” 83.

Five times I faced near death at the hands of dictators, six years I spent in prison, and forty years I lived under house arrest or in exile and under constant surveillance.¹²⁶

Because Kim faced multiple dictator-led death threats, it was evident that *Yushin* normalized this trend and lived well past the Park regime, lasting until the end of the 1980s.

* * *

Since his youth, Park Chung Hee's obsession over early nationalism provided him the foundations for his eventual rule. However, this groundwork could not be made without the distortion of Sin and Choe's teachings. The *Tan 'gun* story, therefore, is a pivotal variable that provided the future strongman the framework to create his own unique nationalist state-building program. This agenda entrenched Korea for decades beginning in 1961 and culminating in 1972 when *Yushin* was enacted.

Even though all looked lost amidst a narrative of distorted *Tan 'gun* historiography, neo-Imperial nationalism, and *Yushin*'s almighty state authority, the public nevertheless looked back to history to find a voice. Initially small, students and religious leaders found hope in the Neo-Confucian Joseon sects, *silhak* – a tenet originally used by Park – and in an obscure Joseon Neo-Confucian faction known as *donghak*.¹²⁷ But just as protestors were finding a voice, Park was assassinated in 1979. Equally, Park did not see the effects that the hybrid sects brought forth. However, his successor, Chun Do-hwan, felt the full consequences of these changes.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Dae-jung Kim, "Kim Dae-jung - Nobel Acceptance Speech," speech, Nobel Lecture, Oslo, Norway, December 10, 2000.

¹²⁷ *Donghak* was initially a peasant revolution. See Kirsten Bell, "Cheondogyo," 125.

¹²⁸ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 475.

Chapter III:

Literature Review – Nationalism After Park's Death (1980-1988)

From the mid-1960s to 1972, President Park was at the peak of his tenure. Park's state-building and nationalist agendas were entrenched into all aspects of South Korean society. Furthermore, *bushido* might and *Yushin* solidified those institutions for the unforeseeable future. As such, the strongman was at the very top of the society he built in his image; but more importantly, no one was there to challenge his authority. However, in retrospect, just as quickly as Park took power, his reign was coming to an abrupt end. Unbeknownst to Park and his inner circle, one night would change everything the executive meticulously built; and immediately, his legacy and image would be put under the test by another strongman looking to further the agenda of the developmental dictator.

Reasons for Park Chung Hee's Death, Part I: Internal Reasons

Park's death made headlines worldwide and Keesing's Worldwide was one media outlet that documented the internal complications before Park's assassination.¹ The article's timeframe begins in August 1979 when Park "launched an offensive against the NDP (New Democratic Party) and Christian dissidents."² During that time there was a large Christian and labor rights resurgence. Numerous clergymen and religious leaders protested alongside workers' unions. They all opposed the extremely low wages of non-*chaebol* related trades – jobs that were not subsidized or owned by *chaebol* – while concurrently promoting the creation of basic labor rights.³ The resurgence was also a

¹ Keesing's Worldwide, "Assassination of President Park Chung Hee - Mr. Choi Kyu Hah Elected President - Cabinet Formed by Mr. Shin Hyon Hwack - Other Internal Developments, August 1979 to March 1980," *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, April 2, 1980, 30216.

² Keesing's Worldwide, 30216.

³ *A History of Korea* notes that Christian movements eventually protested with students to promote *minjung*, or open-democracy. In turn, a coalition-like alliance was created tying religion, labor, and democratic rights as one. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 495.

thorn in Park's side as an array of Christian denominations attracted and provided social welfare to many disenfranchised people. Many constituents were young, elderly, and agrarian outcasts who could not offer any practical skills for the *chaebol* and *Saemaul* systems.⁴

One other prominent group were female workers who were largely employed in textile, hospitality, and education services.⁵ In the textile industry, employees were paid so poorly, sometimes pay was withheld, that they joined Christian labor movements as a way to voice their struggles. With their support, female protestors staged numerous sit-ins in company dormitories and police compounds to show their opposition.

Things boiled over when seven female teachers from Seoul Christian Academy were arrested on charges of "pro-communist" activities. Leading international Christian groups, such as the Korean Catholic Church, responded by sponsoring various demonstrations around the nation. One notable group was the Catholic Farmers' Movement which Park accused of "creating class consciousness" due to the support they provided for textile laborers while they were on strike.⁶

The ruckus caused by diverse religious groups finally caught the ear of the NDP's Kim Young-sam (1927-2015), and more importantly, the international news media.⁷ In September 15, 1979, the *New York Times* caught wind of the events and scheduled an

⁴ Keesing's Worldwide, "Assassination of President Park Chung Hee," 30216.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kim Young-sam protested Park Chung Hee and Chun Do-hwan's regimes. From 1980 to 1985, Chun put him under house arrest and banned him from all political activities. He ran in 1987 for the presidency and lost. However, in 1993, he helped found the center-right New Korea Party (*Shin Hangukdang*) and defeated Kim Dae-jung to become the president. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 520.

interview with Kim. With a large international media platform, Kim played into the sympathetic ears of the Carter Administration.

Kim stated that “the time has come for the U.S. to make clear a choice between a dictatorial regime or the alienated majority who aspire to democracy.”⁸ Kim then skillfully chided Carter by tying the 1978 Iranian Revolution – one that occurred under Carter’s watch – to Korea’s situation. Kim pressured that “Iran was America’s supreme diplomatic disaster. I want the US embassy to avoid following the same track here.”⁹ Carter responded immediately by hitting Park where it hurt the most, the military and the economy. The US president threatened to take back military aid and ground troops from the peninsula while simultaneously influencing Japan to distance themselves from Park.¹⁰

These sudden turns of events did not bode well Park’s inner circle. Park’s fury with the mass protests, and eventually urban riots in Masan and Busan, foreshadowed the end for two of his closest confidants, KCIA Director Kim Jae-kyu and Chief Bodyguard Cha Ji-chul. In an act of internal betrayal, Cha slyly scapegoated Kim for his opposition to urban military crackdowns.¹¹ Although there are other variables that played a hand with Park’s loss of demeanor, Kim and Cha’s deadly feud is reputed to be the primary motive for Park’s death. Nevertheless, the events that occurred during the last months undoubtedly pushed his inner circle to the edge of paranoia and betrayal.

⁸ Keesing's Worldwide, “Assassination of President Park Chung Hee,” 30216.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Min Yong Lee, “The Vietnam War: South Korea’s Search for National Security,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 427.

¹¹ Jong-pil Kim, “Kim Jong-pil Remembers, Series 74: The Inside Story of the Park Chung Hee Killing,” by Park Bo-gyoon, *Korea JoongAng Daily*, November 3, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2fmhcQM>.

The Reasons for Park Chung Hee's Death, Part II: A First-hand Account

The *Korea Joong-Ang Daily* published an exposé thirty-six years after Park's assassination and interviewed firsthand witness Kim Jong-pil (born 1926). Being part of Park's entourage, Jong-pil fully recollects the night of Park's assassination.¹² The interview began with Kim Jong-pil recalling the confrontation he had with an agitated Kim Jae-kyu and Chief Presidential Secretary Kim Gye-won.¹³

Before the fateful dinner, Gye-won and Jae-kyu chatted in the Blue House corridors about Park's punitive ruling style. The conversation between Jae-kyu and Gye-won went as forth: "If we're too harsh in suppressing demonstrators there will be a huge backlash from the people. But the ruling Republican Party isn't giving Park the right advice."¹⁴ Jae-kyu alluded that party officials purposely gave Park wrong advice as a response to Cha Ji-chul's fear-mongering tactics. Jae-kyu's pleas went on deaf ears as Gye-won thought Jae-kyu was facetious, partly because of the rivalry Jae-kyu had with Cha. Jong-pil commented that "in hindsight, [maybe] Gye-won thought Jae-kyu meant to scare Ji-chul" in order to have Ji-chul ease up on protestor clampdowns.¹⁵

However, Jong-pil also mentioned "Park's disappointment" on Jae-kyu's recent actions. "President Park was mulling sacking Kim Jae-kyu," Jong-pil said. "[It was because] Jae-kyu had failed to control the opposition party and its chief, Kim Young-sam."¹⁶ Jong-pil also added that because of Ji-chul's "dirty tricks," Jae-gyu was "under

¹² Kim Jong-pil was a founder, alongside Director Kim Jae-kyu, of the KCIA. He also served as prime minister from 1971-1975 and 1998-2000

¹³ Jong-pil Kim, "The Inside Story."

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kim Young-sam (1927-2015) was the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP), Park's opposition, from 1974-1976 and 1979-1980. Similar to Kim Dae-Jung, he was put under executive-ordered house arrest in 1980. Kim later became South Korea's president from 1993-1998.

the illusion that he had lost credibility with Park.”¹⁷ To add more salt on the wound, Jae-gyu was Park’s best friend and had been loyal to him since their academy days. It comes to no surprise that Jae-gyu sat in depressed silence as Park scolded him about his lackluster performance. “I should have arrested Kim Young-sam,” followed by “the KCIA needs to be more threatening.” Reminiscing back to all the dirty work the KCIA did for Park, especially kidnapping Kim Dae-Jung in Tokyo. Jong-pil recalled that Jae-gyu left the dinner feeling slighted by Park’s ingratitude.

Jong-pil remembered the last major lines Cha said before the shootings, “None of those fools really meant to give up their seats. I will stop them with tanks if I have to. I don’t care if they’re lawmakers.”¹⁸ That’s when, as Jong-pil suspects, Jae-gyu left to retrieve his Walter PPK – the gun that was used to end Park and Cha’s life.¹⁹ Finally, Jae-kyu arrived back, screamed “Go to hell!” to both Park and Cha, and then shot Park to death until his gun jammed.²⁰ Cha then fled to the bathroom where Jae-kyu followed him; Cha was immediately killed by him. Both Jong-pil and Gye-won avoided Jae-kyu’s wrath by fleeing the premise before Cha was shot down.²¹ Shortly after, Jae-kyu was arrested and put on trial for his execution.²²

¹⁷ One of Ji-chul Cha’s “dirty tricks” was labelling Kim Jae-kyu as was weak and outdated, especially during the last erratic months of Park’s life. See Joo-Hong Kim in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 196.

¹⁸ From 1978-1979, all NDP politicians resigned their legislative seats to protest Park’s rule.

¹⁹ Jong-pil Kim, “The Inside Story.”

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kim Jong-pil also recollected the trial scene. He said that Kim Jae-kyu shot Park to stop his dictatorial reign, however, Jong-pil thought otherwise. Jong-pil assessed that if Jae-kyu planned to kill Park then he would have known how many bullets were in his Walter PPK. Therefore, as the gun jammed, Jong-pil indicated that the killing was a crime of “passion.” See Jong-pil Kim, “The Inside Story.”

Jong-pil concludes the interview with his own assessment. He commented that “Cha, whose job was to protect the president at all costs, had fled to the restroom,” while noticing the irony on how a power-hungry Cha died a coward. Jong-pil then ends on a Shakespearean note. He reminisced that eighteen years ago he and Park saw a fortune-teller who, as Jong-pil speculates, foreshadowed the event. “The fortune-teller told me and Park that his revolution would succeed and that his government would last about twenty years.”²³ Park left the séance happy; however, the mystic signaled Jong-pil to stay behind and said “I couldn’t say this to Park directly, but I saw that his end will not be good. It will come about in an ugly way.”²⁴ Jong-pil held that prediction close to his heart for eighteen years. In retrospect, Jong-pil knew from the start about Park’s “ugly” demise.

The Reasons for Park Chung Hee’s Death, Part III: Loss of Prestige

Domestic dissent and inner circle conflicts are the two most prominent contributors for Park’s death. However, one outside factor suggests an unorthodox, albeit very plausible, reason as to why Park’s last days were so volatile. Hong Sung-Gul posits an international relations debacle – one that is usually associated with the Pyongyang regime – that doomed the last days of Park, the buildup of nuclear arms.²⁵

Park’s interest in nuclear “super weapons” began in 1971. That same year Oh Won-chul, Park’s head developer of defense and chemical industries, began South

²³ Jong-pil Kim, “The Inside Story.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sung-Gul Hong is a Professor of Public Administration in Kookmin University, Seoul.

Korea's foray into nuclear armament.²⁶ Park constantly encouraged a reluctant Oh to consider the advantages and necessity of becoming a nuclear state. The background for Park's reasons may be summarized from one quote, "We need to free ourselves from dependency on U.S. military protection. . . . Can we develop nuclear weapons?"²⁷ This non-rhetorical question was regularly asked and even more so months before the volatility of Park's last days.

Park gave orders to Oh to add a nuclear program under the Agency for Defense Development. In turn, this created the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI), the organization intended to recruit top engineers.²⁸ Besides shifting away from US military dependency, Hong explains the other motifs that Park had to gain from going nuclear. Furthermore, he details the effects that American pressure had on a close Asian ally; these factors are, therefore, the basis for his thesis.

Hong breaks his thesis into two bullet points. First, the American agenda under the Nixon Doctrine made Park uneasy. Nixon's "Vietnamization" contradicted America's "full commitment (containment) policy" needed to keep South Korea safe in a region dominated by two communist superpowers – China and the Soviet Union.²⁹ Second, Park knew his fortunes were coming to an end since the Vietnam War was dwindling. Fearing that the US would renege – as in pulling out troops from the peninsula – on their assurance to protect South Korea, Park aggressively and clandestinely pursued nuclear

²⁶ Sung-Gul Hong, "The Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 483.

²⁷ Hong, 483.

²⁸ KAERI was also an international-oriented program and recruited advisors and nuclear technology from all over the world.

²⁹ Nixon's "Vietnamization" campaign assured American voters that most US service members would be slowly brought back from Asia.

technology. He even went as far as to hire Park Dong-sun, a wealthy Korean lobbyist, to bribe members of the US Congress to support his nuclear campaign.³⁰

Park's nuclear ambition came to a swift close after a series of missteps. Park and Oh severely underestimated American international intelligence. Most prominently, several French and Belgium nuclear scientists employed under Oh were on American espionage payrolls, thereby Park's program had double agents in it from the start.³¹ This not only soured relations with America and other Asian-Pacific allies, but this did more harm to Park's image during his final days.

Hong posits that the American public's lack of sympathy and news coverage after Park's death may have been partly due to this. Hong assesses that Park's covert attempts to acquire something as profound as weapons of mass destruction made him look foolish, dangerous, and unpredictable in the international community.³² Furthermore, it was revealed that Park still had ambitions of restarting the nuclear program a couple months before his death.³³

The article ends implying that after these revelations, Park's death may have been a relief for American officials. It comes to no surprise that immediately after Chun Do-hwan's coup in 1980, President Chun eagerly exposed Park's dormant nuclear ambitions.³⁴ This was done as a ploy to garner US approval due to the fear of getting forced out office by American officials. As such, Chun immediately dismantled the nuclear program, thereby resetting relations back to a good tone.

³⁰ Hong, "The Search for Deterrence," 485.

³¹ Ibid., 484.

³² Ibid., 486.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Immediate Aftermath on Nationalism

Fuji Kamiya's article was written a couple months after Park's 1979 death at the time of power consolidation enacted by General Chun Doo-hwan (1980).³⁵ Fuji highlights the immediate effects that occurred after the assassination. She also hypothesizes what the future holds for South Korea and its relationship, both politically and economically, within the East Asian region.

Fuji stresses that Park's two greatest achievements were "economic success" and South Korean regional "legitimacy."³⁶ Park's economic campaigns have been covered extensively, however, her take on Park's "national legitimacy" is an overlooked topic. The context behind this date to Rhee Syngman's tenure (1948-1960). Fuji posits that Rhee's vision, and therefore nationalism, was "anti-communism" and "anti-Japanese."³⁷ Rhee's lack of developmental planning was, therefore, the primary variable to the ROK's pathetic and illegitimate global status. International consensus considered North Korea (DPRK) as the "legitimate spokesman for Korean nationalism."³⁸ Hence, the DPRK was the *de facto* successor to be head of the peninsula after the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement.

The DPRK championed unification and "self-reliance" within the economy, military, and polity. The DPRK's "self-reliance" stance was later dubbed *juche*.³⁹ As

³⁵ Kamiya Fuji is a Professor of International Relations at Keio University, Tokyo.

³⁶ Kamiya Fuji, "The Korean Peninsula after Park Chung Hee," *Asian Survey* 20, no. 7 (July 1980): 744.

³⁷ Fuji, 744.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 745.

³⁹ *Juche* is a political ideology influenced by Stalinism. Kim Il-sung emphasized that the state should strengthen socialism from within and isolate itself from the pressures of the outside world. *Juche*'s political ideology eventually dispersed onto the economic system. *Juche* economics emphasizes diverting all capital – natural resources and human services – to the state. The purpose is to be as "self-sufficient" as possible and to minimize outside aid. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 457.

such, the ROK was automatically on the “defensive.”⁴⁰ This was evident as economy, infrastructure, and international relations were significantly better than the Rhee Era ROK. For example, the DPRK always led UN negotiations and unification plans.⁴¹ On the opposite side, Rhee snubbed most attempts for discussions as he was only concerned with receiving American-backed UN aid. But just as quick as Rhee’s ousting was, Park’s swift ascension dramatically changed South Korea’s fortunes.

During and after Park’s rule, the South grew increasingly confident on the world stage. The ROK swiftly overtook the DPRK’s economy while ROK actions in Vietnam displayed how far their military progressed since their “burdensome” days.⁴² Perhaps the most significant outcome was that the tables were finally turned. Park was able to shed the ROK’s “inferiority complex.” South Korea now led negotiations as they dictated the terms of unification. More importantly, the ROK was considered the sole successor of the peninsula.⁴³

On the Northern end, the DPRK suffered massive economic decline while tremendous foreign debts were never paid back.⁴⁴ This era also began the North’s descent into international isolation.⁴⁵ Oppositely, in the South, decisive autocratic leadership

⁴⁰ Fuji, 745.

⁴¹ Fuji notes that shortly after the Armistice Agreement, the DPRK even proposed unification through a federalism-type of system. See Kamiya Fuji, 745.

⁴² See Jin Kim, “South Korea’s Involvement in Vietnam and Its Economic and Political Impact,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 6 (June 1970): 529.

⁴³ Fuji, “The Korean Peninsula,” 745.

⁴⁴ The decline of North Korean economy began during the “First Seven-Year Plan” (1961-1970). There are two reasons why the decline occurred. First, Soviet aid, under Nikita Khrushchev, gradually declined due in part to the chaos under Mao’s 1960s Cultural Revolution. The resulting Sino-Soviet split (1956-1966) caused tension among the Kremlin, Beijing, and Pyongyang. As a result, Kim Il-sung’s teetering support of Mao was one variable that caused a drift between the Soviets and North Koreans. The second reason was heavy military expenditures topping up to 30 percent GNP at one point. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 460.

⁴⁵ Fuji also notes that the DPRK established trade relations with Japan but failed in expanding their economy due to Kim Il-sung’s “inflexibility” and the hinderance of a centralized *juche* economics. See Kamiya Fuji, 747.

mixed with free-market mechanics displayed to the world a new type of Korean nationalism. Fuji, however, does not mention the name of this “new nationalism” nor does she explain it. Nevertheless, in summary, Fuji’s analysis infers that *juche* nationalism was a catastrophic failure. The ROK was now “legit” as all things Korean-related relayed back to the vibrant southern-tipped nation.

Immediate Aftermath on Politics: Kim Dae-Jung’s Interview, Part I

Soon after General Chun’s military consolidation, Kim Dae-Jung (1924-2009) moved to the US to get away from Chun’s life-threatening regime. While on the international stage, Kim promoted the strengthening of direct democratic institutions. In an interview conducted by *World Policy Journal*, Kim outlined his plans for a more politically-open Korea.⁴⁶

The first part gives context behind the 1980 Gwangju Massacre. This event fueled Kim and fellow opposition leaders to bring their plight to the world stage. The interview is mostly a response for US action in promoting “social democracy” in the Third World.⁴⁷ However, Kim also critiques the role that the Reagan and Carter administrations played while simultaneously castigating Chun’s repressive policies.⁴⁸

Richard Falk, the interviewer, first acknowledges how Reagan took credit for Kim’s extradition to the US and then asks Kim’s opinion why he was released. Kim

⁴⁶ For context, Kim Dae-jung ran against President Park several times and survived Park’s KCIA kidnapping. Kim fled Korea after Chun placed an execution order on him. After Chun’s regime, and when Korea was more politically stable, he returned to campaign for the new center-left party *Deo Minjoo Dang*, or Democratic Party. He became the eighth President of South Korea from 1998 to 2003. In 2000, he won the Nobel Peace Prize. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 522-525.

⁴⁷ “Social democracy” in Kim’s case means democracy with universal participation.

⁴⁸ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, “On Korea,” *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 218.

reasons that it was politically convenient to “separate me physically from the Korean people,” so that Chun, supported by American diplomats, could “soothe” the agitated Korean public. Moreover, Chun wanted to repair his damaged image abroad in order to “secure [more] loans” from Japan.⁴⁹

Kim critiques America’s back-and-forth role upon his release. He acknowledges that Carter’s actions led to his release from prison, but only after Carter’s initially passive stance was criticized by other democratic nations. Kim claims that the Carter and UN administrations knew about the sociopolitical unrest and aggressive militarization during a post-Park Korea. Evidently, the two administrations stood silent as Chun carried out two coups in 1980.

Chun, additionally, went as far as to usurp US-backed military commands by ordering DMZ stationed ROK troops to combine with Jeolla Province divisions – a southern province where Gwangju is located – in order to clampdown on protestors. For a visual reference of troop movements please refer to Map 3.1. Kim suggests that this was a pivotal point for the American-Korean relations, as the public became “disappointed by America” for not intervening on the crackdown. Consequently, a vocal minority, mostly the youth, started an “Anti-American” campaign that culminated in 1987 during the Reagan Administration.⁵⁰

The next part of the interview notes that the Chun regime held Kim responsible for “instigating” the Gwangju Massacre.⁵¹ In response, Kim counterclaimed that Chun

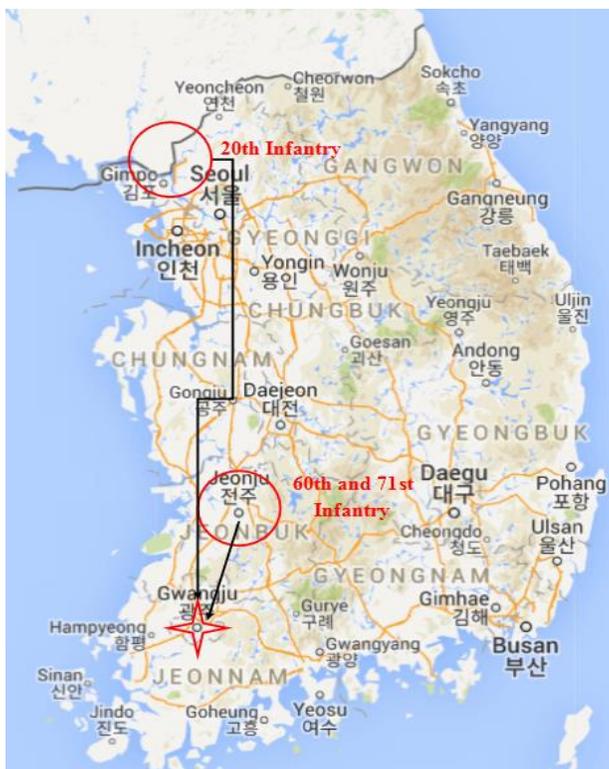
⁴⁹ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, 219.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 219.

⁵¹ The Gwangju Massacre occurred in the city of Gwangju on May 1980. What started as a pro-democracy movement quickly escalated when Chun declared martial law and sent military personnel to quell the uprising. The massacre ended with about 3,600 casualties, mostly students, with more than 150

often falsely accused many groups that do not fall in line with his agendas, including Christians and Buddhists.⁵² It comes to no surprise that Kim was accused of “inciting violence” and sentenced to death by Chun.⁵³

Finally, Kim ended this portion on a constructive note. He posits that overall the event had positive ramifications. Chun’s over-the-top and violent antagonism displayed that his regime was threatened by the democratic populist movement. Chun’s democratic antagonism only garnered Kim more international admiration, and because of this popularity, saved him from instant execution. Moreover, Kim reiterated that Gwangju’s greatest achievement was that it gave the alienated and violently oppressed a global voice.⁵⁴



Map 3.1. The infantry divisions and routes used to quell Gwangju protestors. Please note that the 20th Infantry Division – under the command of US General John A. Wickham – was the unit diverted away stationed DMZ orders. See John A. Wickham, “Chapter Seven: The Kwangju Tragedy,” 139. Source: Google Maps; lines and positioning made by author.

dead. About 300 government authorities were also injured with about 40 dead. However, casualty estimates come from Chun’s government, so the accuracy is disputed. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 474, and Myung-Lim Park in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 392.

⁵² Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 220.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 219.

Immediate Aftermath on Politics: Kim Dae-Jung's Interview, Part II

During the other half of the interview Falk asks Kim about his thoughts on Park's regime, his death, and how Park compares to Chun. First, Kim recollects the general attitude that the public felt for Park. Even though Kim and Park were long-time adversaries, Kim does acknowledge, albeit rather faintly, that "Park was responsible to some extent for Korean economic development."⁵⁵ However, Park was able to do so through the "exploitation of the people," as seen through "inequitable distribution of wealth and income." This was evident as Park's policies incurred high inflation that plagued the early 1980s economy.⁵⁶

Falk then asks Kim to compare Park's public approval with Chun's. Kim acknowledges that although mass dissent plagued the end of Park's life the public still saw him as "legit." The primary reason was that before the May 1961 coup South Korea was essentially a failed state. State failure was apocalyptic in proportion as law, order, and basic necessities were, for the most part, absent. When Park took charge, there was little to no opposition from the public. Kim reasons that Koreans "were sick and tired of disorder."⁵⁷

In comparison, Kim suggests that Chun was "illegitimate" in the eyes of the public. Even though Park initially forced his ascendance to the presidency, Park did win three elections, albeit with allegations of tampering.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, even with

⁵⁵ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 222.

⁵⁶ Inflation fluctuated between 9 and 15 percent in the early 1980s. Chun and technocratic lawmakers enacted harsh austerity to combat this. Seoul even froze budgets and withheld salaries and funds for public services. See Se-Jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 45-47.

⁵⁷ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 221.

⁵⁸ Park won the elections of 1963, 1967, and 1971. Afterwards, *Yushin* was enacted and presidential elections were only rubberstamps. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 468-471.

questionable elections, Park gave Koreans a little taste of democracy. The flirtation with direct elections only whetted the public's political appetite and was evident as opposition constantly protested Park's iron-gripped *Yushin* rule.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, a large proportion of the public "legitimized" Park as he brought order, economic growth, military strength, and cultural pride back to the South. On the other end, Chun brought none of those accomplishments to the table. Kim suggests that Chun never won any election and that he was riding off Park's legacy. Ironically, Chun also inherited Park's inflation problem, and that in turn, was one variable that overwhelmed his tenure.⁶⁰

Additionally, Kim hypothesizes the primary variable that caused the public's disdain for Chun was right after Park's assassination. Choi Kyu-hah immediately became acting president right after the Park's death.⁶¹ According to Kim, Choi proposed the idea of enacting open elections to help quell urban uprisings. Unfortunately, this was not meant to be as Chun took control through military force – mirroring Park's 1961 takeover – and thwarted all notions of free elections. This variable, according to Kim, trumped all the dramas that occurred to him and other opposition leaders.

Finally, Kim concludes the interview by summing up the two strongmen's legacies. Park's clash with the opposition was systematic as he methodically silenced prominent dissidents; simultaneously, Park raised the country's standard of living and

⁵⁹ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 222.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ For context, Choi Kyu-hah (1999-2006) was Park's foreign minister from 1964-1971 and prime minister from 1975-1979. Soon after Park's death, an electoral college election was held in December 6, 1979. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 474. Choi unanimously won, however, he was soon replaced by General Chun in the December 12 Coup. See Chung-in Moon and Byung-joon Jun in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 137.

installed law and order. On the other end, Chun was blunter, ineffective, and more personal when it came to dissent. He took away the one thing that affected all socioeconomic classes, an individual voice. When compared to Park, Chun only offered nothing but inflation and disorder.⁶²

Origins of *Minjung*, Part I: The Colonial Era

The ideas for *minjung* originated during Korea's colonial age. *Minjung* is a Korean word that means "mass of the people," and therefore, is a term that has been reinterpreted many times by scholars and politicians. Likewise, many movements sprouted because of it, thereby adding more complexity and confusion when defining the term.⁶³ *A History of Korea*, however, proposes a brief definition of the movement, "*Minjung* represents a majority of people who are presumably exploited by the numerically smaller ruling elite, particularly, the urban proletariat."⁶⁴ Basically, a mantra of the disenfranchised versus the well-off.

On the other hand, the monograph *South Korea's Minjung Movement* provides countless essays that explain other distinct characteristics. Kang Man'gil proposes an unorthodox definition that encompasses historical progression.⁶⁵ Kang proposes that *minjung* means a national movement stretched out into a three-period timeline. "[First], to maintain sovereignty in the face of the aggression of capitalistic powers; [second], to gain

⁶² Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 223.

⁶³ Man'gil Kang, "Contemporary Nationalist Movements and the Minjung," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 31.

⁶⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 495.

⁶⁵ Man'gil Kang is a professor of history at Koryo (Korea) University, Seoul.

liberation from colonial rule; and [third], to overcome division and reunify the nation.”⁶⁶
Essentially, this is a Marxist take on *minjung*.

Kang’s supports his thesis in chronological order. The first period began during Japanese occupation. He posits that the first mention of *minjung* was in 1919 when a national independence movement, dubbed “The Declaration of the Korean Revolution” (*Choson hyungmyung sununso*), erupted. The declaration was officially written in 1923 by nationalist Sin Chaeho. Sin wrote the declaration as a response to the actions committed by the extremist liberation group The Righteous Brotherhood (*Ui ryol dan*). The Brotherhood, although violent in their means, were “revolutionary” according to Sin.⁶⁷

Sin noted that the Brotherhood’s goal was “To preserve the existence of the Korean people, the Japanese robbers must be expelled; the only way to expel the Japanese is through revolution.”⁶⁸ Whether the revolution was violent or peaceful was never expanded on; nonetheless, Sin dubbed these axioms into larger themes called the “*Minjung* Revolution” and the “Direct Revolution.”⁶⁹

Kang emphasizes the effects that Sin had on the *minjung* movement. While not literally stated, it is implied that Sin was the grandfather of the movement because he incorporated many populist trends – such as national identity tied to ethnicity and land – with colonial independence. In Sin’s own words, “*minjung* are those who can neither live nor die according to their own will since they are . . . restricted in their liberty of

⁶⁶ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 31.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

action.”⁷⁰ Therefore, it is possible to see Marxist class struggles mixed with Sin’s teachings and early Korean democracy.

While Sin’s definition draws comparisons to other independence movements from other Imperial-ruled Asian countries, he distinguishes this movement to pertain only to ethnic Koreans on peninsula soil.⁷¹ Sin wrote that *minjung* participants are those “who continuously progress in order to fulfill their goal with the intention of not living . . . if they cannot expel the Japanese from [Korean land].”⁷² Mirroring the violence of The Righteous Brotherhood, Sin’s *minjung* meant a fight to the death in order to expel Japanese elements from Korea.

To sum it up, the origins of *minjung* are heavily tied to Sin Chaeho’s work and is even implied that he was the founder of the movement. The initial intent was to deny Japanese, and foreigner, rule on the Korean people, land, and culture. Therefore, *minjung* was an ethnic ideology that bordered on extremities, and therefore, corroborates with Professor Andre Schmid’s analysis on Sin’s ethnonationalism. Meaning, *minjung* went as far as to advocate a struggle to the death if Imperial Japan continued their rule on the peninsula.⁷³

⁷⁰ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 34.

⁷¹ The Treaty of 1905 (Treaty of Portsmouth) laid the foundation for Japan’s imperial ambition. Japan’s main colonies were in Korea, Manchuria (Manchukuo), and the Russian Far East. Imperial Japan would later expand onto the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 314.

⁷² Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 34.

⁷³ Andre Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

Origins of *Minjung*, Part II: Post-World War II and National Division

During the colonial age, *minjung* was an umbrella tenet focused on anyone who opposed Japanese rule. The people included in the movement were “intellectuals, workers, and petite bourgeoisies.”⁷⁴ Principally, the socioeconomic and political status of Koreans were secondary. The movement, therefore, squarely focused on Sin-inspired nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments.

The division of Korea in 1945 inadvertently split the *minjung* ideology. Originally, the movement meant liberation from Imperial overlords, but, after the division, *minjung* changed to incorporate a wide array of meanings many of which contradicted one another.⁷⁵ Consequently, North and South Korea had their own distinct connotations. Moreover, the Japanese invasion of China (early 1930s to 1946) also coincided with *minjung*. Due to the proximity and similar anti-Imperial themes, Chinese nationalist movements – both Kuomintang (KMT) and Communists (CPC) – influenced it.⁷⁶ As such, North Korea centered *minjung* around “workers and farmers,” similar to the CPC.⁷⁷ While in the South, it focused on “minor landowners and national capitalists,” similar to the KMT.⁷⁸

Sin voiced his observations by comparing that the national movement was emphasizing “European-style bourgeoisie.” This meant that European-parliamentary

⁷⁴ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 35.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁶ Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) was a prominent Chinese nationalist and the grandfather of both KMT and CCP movements. See Patricia Ebrey, *Illustrated History of China*, 265-267. As such, Sin Chaeo and other nationalists were exiled around the Manchurian and Chinese borders and may have been influenced by the writings of Sun and other Chinese nationalists. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 354.

⁷⁷ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

representation mixed with a modern industrialized market was an element of *minjung*.⁷⁹ On the other end of the political spectrum, the rise of bourgeois rule affected Korean laborers and communists. The concerns for the new communists were the unchecked powers that Japanese colonists and wealthy elites had.⁸⁰ Due to rising industrialization, powerful capitalist magnates – both Japanese and Korean in origins – exploited most laborers. Simply put, *minjung*, alongside its “European-style bourgeoisie” tenets, had both capitalist and Marxist aspects.

Even though *minjung* had right and left political components, the core of the movement focused on a people’s revolution against colonial struggle. More specifically, it meant that the Korean people, no matter political and socioeconomic affiliation, must fight to maintain their heritage, land, and culture against “foreigner thieves.”⁸¹

The Challenge in Defining *Minjung*, Part I

Since the days of its colonial conception, *minjung* incorporated many supporters from a diverse socioeconomic spectrum but took a dramatic shift in meaning during the turbulent Chun-ruled 1980s. Kim Hyung-A elaborates more on Kang Man’gil’s *minjung* analysis. Both authors agree that it is essentially a form of struggle for the oppressed; however, Kim notes the difficulty that researchers have in conceptualizing *minjung*.⁸² In

⁷⁹ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 36.

⁸⁰ Korea, during World Wars I and II, was used as a staging ground for Imperial forces to launch their attacks on the Chinese mainland. Therefore, industries, such as rail, mining and timber, were rapidly built and exploited. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 349.

⁸¹ Man’gil Kang, “Contemporary Nationalist Movements,” 35.

⁸² Hyung-A Kim, “Minjung Socioeconomic Responses to State-led Industrialization,” in *South Korea’s Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 39.

other words, the challenge of defining *minjung* can be summed up by identifying what the key concepts of minjung are and examining who the people that make it were.

Kim's essay ascribes two South Korean intellectuals, economist Park Hyon-chaе and sociologist Han Wansang, as the leading experts on *minjung* analysis. The first part is dedicated to Hyon-chaе's theories. Hyon-chaе's thesis centers on the keyword, "proletarianization." This term is defined as "an increase in the number of people who lack control over the means of production and survive by selling their labor power."⁸³ His analysis, therefore, takes on Marxist themes, and as such, is rooted in the 1970s when Park Chung Hee heavily industrialized the nation. In turn, Hyon-chaе attributes South Korea's dramatic post-1960s development as a shift into modern capitalism, and, hence, the beginnings of "proletarianization."⁸⁴

Before Hyon-chaе contextualizes "proletarianization," or contemporary *minjung*, as the three main players to the movement: farmers, laborers, and the urban poor.⁸⁵ Due to the desperation of finding new economic opportunities in a new capitalist society, Hyon-chaе's thesis is essentially a reinterpretation of Korea's socioeconomic ladder. The ladder begins with farmers, then devolves into laborers, and then into the urban poor who are considered the lowest of the economic classes.

Referring to Han Seung-mi's *Saemaul Undong* analysis, Hyon-chaе expands on Han's work by implementing that the mass urban migration of poor farmers is a primary

⁸³ Hyung-A Kim, "Minjung Socioeconomic Responses," 42.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁵ Park also notes that progressive intellectuals, specifically the ones who were prosecuted during Chun's crackdowns, were also part of *minjung*. However, intellectuals were a small proportion compared to other players. Therefore, his analysis focuses squarely on the other three. See Hyung-A Kim, 42.

variable.⁸⁶ While Han denotes that most of these farmers were elderly, Hyon-chae gives no reference to age.⁸⁷ However, he designates that most of the migrants only had an agrarian skillset, and, therefore, could not adjust themselves to an urban work setting.

Accordingly, farmers became poorer and fell down the socioeconomic ladder, thereby becoming urban laborers. The term “laborers” is also synonymous with low-waged – both blue and white-collar – menial workers.⁸⁸ Due to bare-bone labor laws and the dominant *chaebol* system, work exploitation was endemic. As a result, laborers disintegrated into the bottom of the stratum and became a new social class, the “urban poor.”⁸⁹

The urban poor takes up most of Hyon-chae’s theory. He expands on this class by redefining it into three categories. First were urban tradesman, many of whom were independent laborers scrounging for low-paid work. This is corroborated by economist Chang Se-jin as he notes that work contracts were outsourced by *chaebol* companies.⁹⁰ Second were industrial and small business workers many of whom were temporary and worked in hazardous fields such as the steel and chemical industries. Finally, the unemployed were the lowest of the classes and constituted the largest percentage of the urban poor. This group also came into prominence during the high-inflationary years of the Chun regime.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism,” *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 80.

⁸⁷ Hyung-A Kim, “Minjung Socioeconomic Responses,” 42.

⁸⁸ Hyon-chae defines white-collar workers as small shop-keepers. Also included are low-paid, mostly female, clerical workers, teachers, and nurses. See Hyung-A Kim, 42.

⁸⁹ Hyung-A Kim, “Minjung Socioeconomic Responses,” 43.

⁹⁰ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 48.

⁹¹ Hyung-A Kim, “Minjung Socioeconomic Responses,” 46.

Hyon-chaе concludes that the consequences of Korea’s rapid industrialization culminated in the 1980s. In doing so, this decade was characterized as the “era of proletarianization.” More specifically, the era was when both government and capitalist enterprises – mostly the *chaebol* system – severely exploited an already-downtrodden population. Due to the near-invincibility of the government, *chaebol* companies, and the military, most of the oppressed rallied to the only tool powerful enough to enact civil change, Western supported democracy.⁹²

***Minjung* as a Form of Popular Culture, Part I: The Origins**

Minjung is an ideology that encompasses a wide range of beliefs. While political and social tenets are commonly discussed, an overlooked area centers around popular culture themes. Choi Chungmoo uses this as a tool to help define *minjung*.⁹³

Choi begins by agreeing with other researchers that *minjung* is a form of anti-imperialist nationalism. However, Choi’s stance differ because *minjung* is further symbolized as a contemporary “struggle against a capitalistic world order.”⁹⁴ She assesses that *minjung* was an effect of Third World struggles.⁹⁵ Choi does not mention Soviet influence, rather, she places the skirmish as a sole byproduct of “[European]

⁹² Hyung-A Kim, “Minjung Socioeconomic Responses,” 46.

⁹³ Chungmoon Choi is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine.

⁹⁴ Chungmoon Choi, “The Minjung Culture Movement and the Construction of Popular Culture in Korea,” in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 106.

⁹⁵ The Eisenhower Administration (1953-1961) considered South Korea within the Third World sphere. Third World in this case was the Cold War definition of a neutral and non-aligned country being predisposed to join First World (USA and allies) or Second World (Soviet Union, Communist China, and allies). This was one primary factor as to why the US gave limitless aid to prop up Rhee’s presidency. See Taehyun Kim and Chang Jae Baik in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 60.

imperialistic nationalism and capitalism.”⁹⁶ In other words, South Korea’s newly industrialized capitalist society, and to an extent East Asian capitalism, is Western in origin.

Choi backs this claim by referring to Song Konho’s thesis, post-Korean War nationalism was distorted by “Western bourgeoisies.”⁹⁷ Song argued that Rhee Syngman’s regime (1948-1960) warped Korean nationalism to fit a Western image; it manifested into a “distorted bourgeois nationalism.”⁹⁸ This meant that Rhee’s goal for Korean society was to achieve a Western and American-like middle-class status. Simply put, Choi’s definition of *minjung* is an antithesis to Rhee’s version because it uses Marxist scholarly analysis.

Choi ties this as part of the “*minjung* culture movement” that erupted after the Korean War.⁹⁹ This theme gained prominence as Korean society was influenced by “[Western] market-oriented foreign culture.”¹⁰⁰ As a result, the new market-economy alienated people who did not have the resources to afford American-modeled education and lifestyles. Consequently, the estranged used media as a referendum against prevalent Western bourgeois themes; and eventually, the sentiments manifested in the form of theater.

During the chaotic years of Park Chung Hee’s death and Chun Doo-hwan’s rule (1979-1988), many forms of media – including staged dramas – were considered dissent

⁹⁶ Choi, “The Minjung Culture Movement,” 106.

⁹⁷ Konho Song (Song Geon-ho) along with Man’gil Kang are prominent *minjung* historians who formed the revisionist publishing house, The Historical Research Institute (HRI), in 1984. They also published the journal *Critique of History (Yoksa beepyong)* in the 1980s and the two-volume monograph *Korean Minjung History*.

⁹⁸ Choi, “The Minjung Culture Movement,” 106.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

and were therefore banned. Likewise, protestors, many of whom were young university students, voiced their oppression through underground theater ensembles. This form of demonstration caught on with the poor and rich alike as they could relate to strong anti-establishment themes.¹⁰¹ Due to a surge in popularity, many plays dispersed onto other forms of media outlets, such as poetry, novels, and comics (*manhwa*).

Minjung as a Form of Popular Culture, Part II: The Malttugi Skits and Ojeok

Choi highlights one area of theater that transcended socioeconomic statuses. The play *Malttugi* is part of a theatrical genre that gained prominence in the 1960s. The skits were aimed at critically representing the sacrosanct, yet ironically corrupt, *yangban* upper-class. The art employs the use of shaman-inspired masks and dances to portray lower-class skirmishes with corrupt-ruling elites.¹⁰² The plays are based upon an antihero slave, also named *Malttugi*, who ridicules the *yangban* elites through bawdy puns and obscenities.¹⁰³

During an age of heavy censorship, the main theme of *Malttugi* was ridiculing the corrupt and privileged through as much bombast and vulgarities as possible.

However, by the 1970s, *minjung* theatrics took on a whole different meaning. The

changes can be attributed to anti-Japanese and anti-imperialist playwright Kim Chiha

¹⁰¹ Choi, "The Minjung Culture Movement," 109.

¹⁰² *Malttugi* is a play within the *tal'chum* (masked dance) genre. *Tal'chum* is one of many forms of Korean folk-inspired dances. See Thomas Kern, "Cultural Performance and Political Regime Change," *Sociological Theory* 27, no. 3 (September 2009): 302. Furthermore, *tal'chum*'s origins are unknown; however, it may have originated as a byproduct of ancient shamanistic rituals (*chachaung*) and folk songs (*chapka*). Masked dances are such an important aspect of Korean art culture that it was designated and preserved as an "Intangible Cultural Property" (*Muhyeong Munhwajae*) under South Korea's 1962 Cultural Property Protection Law. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 278.

¹⁰³ Choi, "The Minjung Culture Movement," 110.

(born 1941). Kim's 1970 magnum opus *Ojeok* ("The Five Bandits") is a *pansori*-styled play largely influenced by *Malttugi* themes.¹⁰⁴

Ojeok is a production that uses an eighteenth-century Joseon backdrop, and on the surface, Kim's play looks like a Joseon satire; however, it has little to do with any period piece. Instead, *Ojeok* is a contemporary piece that criticizes Korea's military-backed *chaebol* culture. Kim symbolizes the "Five Bandits" as the president (Park Chung Hee and Chun), the military, *chaebol* conglomerates, and corrupt politicians. Likewise, all entities signed a deal with foreigners to industrialize and bring wealth to Korea. This was done, however, at the cost of the poor, elderly, and agrarian.¹⁰⁵ Fundamentally, *Ojeok* is a harsh critique of the state's military backed capitalism. Kim says, "ruling bourgeoisies – [Park, state authorities, and *chaebol*] – having exclusive access to wealth [and power]" signified the era that *minjung* artists represented.¹⁰⁶

Finally, *malttugi* and *pansori* performances were considered low culture art during the Joseon era but artists like Kim Chiha introduced the old form to a new generation. Instantaneously, Joseon theatrics caught the attention of the youth and, as a result, became synonymous with culture native to the peninsula. It is therefore common to see *malttugi* and *pansori* performed side-by-side with ancient Korean performances

¹⁰⁴ For context, the history of *pansori* starts with the translated term, "excess of sounds." It is a play on words that involves a variety of sounds clashing together. On the surface it is a musical storytelling that usually involves one singer and one drummer. The art form has its origins in the seventeenth-century Joseon Era. Lower-class performers, such as shamans and buskers, performed side-by-side on the streets, thereby creating an excess of noise to onlookers. Eventually, these performances merged into a "one-man show." In the eighteenth century, the art made its way onto higher culture as many *yangban* historians recorded their enjoyment of certain *pansori* plays, such as *Chunhyangga*. *Pansori*, along with its *tal'chum* counterpart, is one of Korea's national treasures, and part of the UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. See Haekyung Um, *Korean Musical Drama: P'ansori and the Making of Tradition in Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2013), PDF e-book, 30 and 33.

¹⁰⁵ Choi, "The Minjung Culture Movement," 112.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

such as shamanistic (*sin'gyo*) dances.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, *pansori* has become such an integral part of contemporary high culture that it has taken on a simpler and more operatic theme. It is common to see *pansori* plays inclusive of only a female opera singer and a man playing a drum (*soribuk*). Therefore, the bombast and vulgarities are replaced with a female performer singing a tale for the audience.¹⁰⁸

In summary, the mask-dance drama became an icon of the people's resistance and a new part of the *minjung* identity. This began in the 1960s when *Malttugi* plays critiqued upper-class elites; however, during the 1970s, Korean theater took on a whole new level of depth with Kim Chiha's *Ojeok* play. Kim's piece was one factor that helped change the *minjung* ideology into one that critiqued the state while simultaneously alluding to anti-imperialist (anti-foreigner) themes. Inadvertently, it also created a contemporary form of high culture for a newer generation.



Figure 3.1. Picture 1 and 2 are from the annual Mask Dance Festival in Andong, South Korea. Taken from the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism Department. Picture 3 is a mix of *malttugi* and *sin'gyo* (shaman) dances. Please note the person to the left is performing a *malttugi* dance similar to Picture 2. The person on the right is performing a shamanistic ritual. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁰⁷ Choi, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 112.



Figure 3.2. Picture 4 is a Joseon painting of *pansori* performers presenting in front of a *chungin* (middle class) audience. Picture 5 is a modern *pansori* play. *Pansori* usually consisted of only two performers, a singer (*sorikkun*) and a drummer (*gosu*). Note the differences in physical makeup. Joseon era performances stayed mostly true to the original form of two commoners – usually men – screaming and singing obscenities in front of an all-male audience. Contemporary performances have become more theatric in appearance and presentation. Modern *pansori* plays usually consist of a male drummer and female singer. As such, *pansori* has become more operatic in style – a female lead singing and acting a story – compared to their Joseon counterparts. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The Religious and Spiritual Tenets of 1980s *Minjung*

Minjung is more than a political ideology as it is also a principle that encompasses religious and spiritual teachings. Two major religious orders, Buddhism and Christianity, while immensely different from each other, all fall within *minjung*'s umbrella. Scholars Mun Chanju and Donald N. Clark highlight the contributions – in respective order – that Buddhism and Christianity had upon the movement.¹⁰⁹

Mun Chanju gives a brief history on concurrent Buddhist movements that happened during the 1980s *minjung* demonstrations.¹¹⁰ Likewise, Mun aptly names the movement “*Minjung* Buddhism” and sets its origins during the colonial era. He credits the *Jogye* Buddhist-monk Han Youngun (1879-1944) as the grandfather of the movement.¹¹¹ Han tied independence with Buddhist teachings and taught that “Buddhism

¹⁰⁹ Chanju Mun is a Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies in Coastal Carolina University; Donald N. Clark is a Professor of East Asian and Religious History in Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas.

¹¹⁰ Chanju Mun, “A Historical Introduction to *Minjung* (Liberation) Buddhism: A South Korean Version of Radical Buddhism in the 1980s,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no. 2 (April 2014): 265.

¹¹¹ Youngun Han also goes by his birth name, Han Yu-cheon, and also the pen name of

should no longer serve the oppressors but rather the oppressed.”¹¹² Han’s teachings alluded to the many Japanese soldiers who claimed they were Buddhists but were also incongruously staunch supporters of violent imperialism.¹¹³

Mun concludes that the violent imperial mindset carried over into contemporary times. Specifically, the aggressive state-sponsored crackdowns fueled *Minjung* Buddhists to be part of the urban dissent. This played a variable in Kim Jae-kyu’s decision to assassinate Park in 1979 – towards the end of Park’s tenure Kim became a staunch opponent against reckless suppression – while also contributing to the mass protests that toppled Chun’s presidency.¹¹⁴

Donald N. Clark’s analysis is like Mun’s essay as both deal with *minjung*’s religious themes. Instead of Buddhism, however, Clark focuses on the Christian aspects of the ideology, thereby also aptly naming the movement “*Minjung* Christianity.” The movement occurred during the 1960s *Yushin* era. The main players were the Vatican-supported Korean Catholic Association and the Protestant – comprised mostly of Presbyterians and Methodists – National Christian Council. While both sects have far-

“*Manhae*.” Han was part of the *Jogye* Order. This order traces its roots back to Unified Silla (668-935CE) and is part of the Mahayana Buddhist branch.

¹¹² Mun, “A Historical Introduction to Minjung,” 267.

¹¹³ It is noteworthy that Buddhism’s dispersion onto the Japanese islands at around the sixth century CE. Baekjae monks were tasked with spreading sutras to their trading partners. In that sense, Japanese “Classical Buddhism” has similarities to Korean Buddhism, which in turn, are all part of Mahayana Buddhism. Furthermore, “Classical Buddhism” branched off into Zen (Pinyin: *chan*, Korean: *seon*) Buddhism during the twelfth century. Zen focuses on “inner-enlightenment,” or that it is possible to achieve enlightenment through the individual’s self-actions. This form of Buddhism was widely adopted by samurai elite as it complemented personal *bushido* ethics. See Conrad D. Totman, *Japan Before Perry: A Short History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), PDF e-book, 94-96. Eventually, this sect, along with *bushido*, influenced many Imperial military personnel, concurrently conflicting with Han-inspired Korean Buddhism. See Chanju Mun, 109.

¹¹⁴ Mun, 281.

ranging theological differences, Clark contends that they came together as a response to Park's and Chun's elimination of suspected communists.¹¹⁵

One reason that both regimes scapegoated religious followers was due to the political events of the 1960s and 1970s. This was an era when Marxist independence movements commonly occurred in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Due to Christian groups' strong emphasis on social welfare, Clark postulates that Park and Chun associated Christians, and to an extent Buddhists, with supporting global socialist movements.¹¹⁶

A second intriguing, albeit very unorthodox, reason was that a diverse range of Christians sought to join *minjung* protestors because of Biblical history. Many Christians denoted *minjung* with the words suffer and struggle. *Minjung* Christians, therefore, likened their liberation efforts against Imperial Japan and the Park-Chun regimes to that of "Israelite *minjung*" people.¹¹⁷ Otherwise put, many Korean Christians equated Imperial Japan and South Korea's authoritarian era as the Biblical Egypt.

Clark analogizes this through Hebrew history: "the liberation of the Israelites (oppressed Koreans) from captivity in Egypt (Korea during the colonial age and during the Park-Chun era), their suffering during forty years of wandering in the desert (decades of political oppression and protesting), and their deliverance into the Promised Land (the future of living in an independent, democratic, and united Korea)" was all part of God's plan. To put it in another way, "God permitted the Hebrews (Koreans) to be oppressed,

¹¹⁵ Donald N. Clark, "Growth and Limitations of Minjung Christianity in South Korea," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 87.

¹¹⁶ Clark, 98.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

but when they finally took action (grueling life and death protesting), He delivered them to salvation (independence, democracy, and national unification).”¹¹⁸ Indeed, *Minjung* Christians had a cause to fight for similar to that of Moses.

Clark concludes that the actions of Korean Christian played a tantamount role in getting the protestors’ voices heard within the global Christian community. The needed attention and sympathy from Christian-majority nations – they were also conveniently pro-democratic – helped popularize *minjung*. Granted this was during a time when Cold War politics dominated world news. Finally, Clark notes that *Minjung* Christians lived to realize that two of their three goals were achieved: South Korean independence from authoritarianism and the establishment of a modern republican system; however, national unification is still yet to be seen.¹¹⁹

* * *

Even with Park Chung Hee’s death in 1979, the former strongman’s vision lived on. South Koreans, however, saw this an opportunity – through Choi Kyu-hah’s capitulation and promise of democratic elections – to resurrect republican representation. In hindsight, this was not meant to be. General Chun Doo-hwan enacted an instantaneous and unforeseen coup, similar to Park’s. Obsessed with Park’s *bushido* society, the newly-titled President Chun continued Park-policies backed by deadly violence and armed force. Thereby, the new dictator strengthened Park’s *chaebol* and Neo-Confucian institutions. The next chapter, therefore, seeks to analyze the background that Chun’s autocracy produced and the socioeconomic consequences that led to the prominence of the *minjung* movement.

¹¹⁸ Clark, 93.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 103.

Chapter IV:

Analysis – Nationalism After Park's Death (1980-1988)

Saemaul undong, the export-*chaebol* economies, *Yushin*, and *bushido*-based Neo-Confucianism were heavily entrenched in 1970s South Korea. Poverty was rapidly alleviated due in part to these heavy-handed policies.¹ Chairman Park did the unconceivable and turned his “bankrupt firm” into a prosperous corporation.² But just as suddenly as Park ascended in 1961, his reign abruptly ended when he was assassinated on October 26, 1979. The shooter was his best friend and KCIA director Kim Jae-kyu.³ While scholars debate the motives surrounding Kim’s unexpected slaying, it is possible to ascertain that domestic dissent during the late 1970s and inner circle conflicts were the two most prominent factors leading up to the killing.

Inner circle quarrels within regimes are nothing new, the events surrounding the assassination, however, beg an analysis. Kim Jong-pil (born 1926), and one of the founding members of the KCIA, was a firsthand witness and recalled Jae-kyu saying:

If we’re too harsh in suppressing the demonstrators in Busan and Masan [calling for democracy], there will be a huge backlash from the people down there. But the ruling Republican Party isn’t giving President Park the right advice because it fears Cha Ji-cheol (Park’s chief bodyguard). I am going to get rid of him today.⁴

The demonstrations in Busan and Masan, two major port cities in the southern regions, were just the beginning of what would become frequent, almost daily, protests and marked the 1980s as an era of extreme societal changes. This chapter accordingly seeks

¹ Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist *Mentalité*,” in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 168.

² Yong-ho Ch’oe and Wm. Theodore de Bary, “Chapter 36: Korea Since 1945,” in *Sources of Korean Tradition Vol. 2*, ed., Peter H. Lee (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 396.

³ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From “Land of the Morning Calm” to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 475.

⁴ Jong-pil Kim, “Kim Jong-pil Remembers, Series 74: The Inside Story of the Park Chung Hee Killing,” by Park Bo-gyoon, *Korea Joongang Daily*, November 3, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2fmhcQM>.

to explain the most prominent transformations of the post-Park 1980s, specifically, the causes behind them, how his successors handled such alterations, and which agendas from Park's era changed.

Major Players: Chun Doo-hwan and Kim Dae-jung

Koreans lived a decade under the anti-democratic *Yushin* government, and Park's death immediately created turmoil for politicians and citizens alike. Prime Minister Choi Kyu-ha (1919-2006) became acting president, but in October 1979, was later elected and served until August 1980.⁵ On the civilian side, Choi set plans to allow future presidential elections as a response to urban and student protests.

In a 1983 interview, longtime opposition leader Kim Dae-jung (1924-2009) noted the significance of these elections, "After Park's assassination in 1979, the Korean people entertained the dream of democratizing the nation."⁶ Granted, under Park the public did flirt with three direct democratic presidential elections – the 1963, 1967, and 1971 presidential elections – albeit with allegations of vote tampering.⁷ Nonetheless, according to Kim, these initial flirtations "legitimized" Park's government, at least until the 1972 *Yushin* decree.⁸

On the other end, however, politicians, military, and business elites, many of whom prospered under the *Yushin* government, felt threatened by direct elections. Due to this, Choi's presidency was short lived and was spent trying to quell vacuums among

⁵ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 477.

⁶ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, "On Korea," *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 220.

⁷ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 470.

⁸ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, Falk, "On Korea," 222.

government and business elites. The pivotal figure among them though was Major General Chun Doo-hwan (born 1931; presidency 1980-1988).⁹

General Chun knew the vulnerabilities that Park left behind, and, like any scheming tactician, he took advantage of those weaknesses. On December 12, 1979, Chun – taking a cue from Park’s 1961 coup – consolidated his power among military, business, and political power brokers. Chun enacted a coup and took over the government, dissolving the presidency and National Assembly in the process.¹⁰ Taken from a US Embassy report shortly after, Chun defended his actions as “a reply to the 12/12 incident was an accidental outgrowth of a legitimate effort to carry out his investigation of the assassination of President Park.”¹¹ Accordingly, this was just the first step in the lack of American oversight during Chun’s tenure.

Even the most powerful politicians and organizations were caught off guard by the coup. Major Park Jun-kwang, Chun’s subordinate during the coup, attested that:

In front of the most powerful organizations under the Park Chung-hee presidency, it surprised me how easily Chun gained control over them and how skillfully he took advantage of the circumstances. In an instant he seemed to have grown into a giant.¹²

The December Coup went off without a hitch and Chun emulated Park-like efficiency throughout the takeover. *Bushido* tactics, simply put, worked with Park’s coup and now with Chun’s.

⁹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 476.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ US, Department of State, Seoul Embassy, *United States Government Statement on the Events in Kwangju, Republic of Korea, in May 1980*, (Seoul: United States Information Service (USIS), 1989), 5.

¹² Gab-je Cho, “Excerpt from ‘The Birth of a Monster,’” *Cho Gab-Je The Investigative Reporter’s World*, accessed September 13, 2018, <http://www.chogabje.com/premium/book/view.asp?sCidx=51>.

Moreover, the international motives from both strongmen were uncanny. In a 1983 interview, Park and Chun's longtime opposition leader, Kim Dae-jung, suggested that:

The US government played some role in [creating both]. . . . In neither of the two coups that helped solidify [Park and Chun's] rule did the United States do anything to discourage the lawless actions of [both men].¹³

Because Park and Chun got away with such transgressions – without the reprimand from their closest geopolitical ally, the United States – Chun's regime was poised to copy Park's successes.

In hindsight however, this was where the similarities ended. The most glaring differences between the two strongmen was the public's preliminary passive emotional state. After Park's coup, a weary and apathetic Korean public did not possess the will to protest such sociopolitical volatilities. In the same interview, Kim Dae-jung, summed up that Park's initial support was due to “[Koreans] just being sick and tired of disorder.”¹⁴ Kim's statement somewhat corresponds with Park's radio transcripts about first “filling the people's belly.”¹⁵ This meant that both Kim and Park knew bringing basic societal necessities – law, order, and food – was tantamount in shaping a leader's agendas.

General Chun's regime, nevertheless, did not see any of Park's initial successes. Since the beginning of his forceful takeover, Chun's government was built on shaky foundations. First, South Korea was on the verge of achieving affluency. The country was modernizing at a rapid rate, thereby fulfilling the needs for basic necessities;

¹³ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 219.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Chung Hee Park, “Coup or Revolution?” Speech, Addressing the Public After 5.16 Coup, Seoul, May 16, 1961.

whereas, Park heavily capitalized on South Korean poverty. This was evident in the actions of a booming and educated middle class who now had the luxury of leisure activities, such as tourism, consumer shopping, and entertainment.¹⁶

Secondly, even though Korea was still a militarized state, law and order was achieved, and petty and financial crimes were rapidly diminishing. The average Korean could now walk to newly-built supermarkets and shopping malls without the fear of theft and assault. Furthermore, Koreans could now invest their growing wealth – earned through *chaebol* jobs and soldiers’ “Vietnam Income” remittances – without the worry of confiscation. In fact, state officials encouraged savings and investments through *chaebol*-owned banks.¹⁷

American expatriate worker and Seoul investment banker Scott E. Kalb testified to the changes that the average Korean was undergoing in the late 1980s:

It's no accident that everyone came out into the streets just as Korea had its biggest economic boom in five years. The more the standard of living improves, the more sophisticated the populace becomes, the more they demand a political system that matches their economic status. This was not a revolution so much as a **realization** of their status.¹⁸

Whether Park knew this “realization” and whether he accounted for it is speculation; however, Chun willfully and forcefully ignored the idea that affluency needs a more “advanced political system.” Indeed, the Korean public outgrew the need for strongmen –

¹⁶ Myung-koo Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 181.

¹⁷ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 59.

¹⁸ Susan Chira, “South Korea's Politics of Prosperity,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1987, 3003001.

inclusive of their nationalist vehicles – to guide them. In short, South Korean society, according to Kim Dae-jung, was now self-sufficient economically and psychologically.¹⁹

Chun’s ignorance was none more evident than in the consequences of the Busan-Masan (“Bu-Ma” for short) Democratic Protests (October 16-20, 1979). This occurred during the last month of Park’s life, so the late dictator never lived to see the consequences; that experience, however, was fully felt by Chun’s regimes.²⁰ Bu-Ma was simply the precursor to intense daily protesting. These actions were some of the catalysts that warned Chun of his demise; a response to three-decades worth of autocratic governance; and more importantly, the spark that shot *minjung* to prominence.

***Minjung*, Part I: Origins**

Minjok was defined by Sin Chaeho as “the people.” Park took these tenets and effectively shaped them to build South Korea in his image. *Minjok* is essentially an all-encompassing principle created specifically for the Korean people; therefore, all Koreans are entitled to use it no matter their socioeconomic and political status.²¹ During the last days of the Park era and throughout Chun’s reign, Koreans took Sin’s *minjok* and created a new movement that served the public’s interests. The name of the movement is *minjung* (pronounced *meen-joong*) and is synonymous with the word democracy.²²

¹⁹ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 222.

²⁰ Bu-Ma Preservation Organization, *What is Bu-Ma: The Facts Behind the Protests* (Seoul: Bu-Ma Documentation and Preservation Organization), <http://www.buma.go.kr/subpage.php?p=m31>.

²¹ Andre Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch’aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

²² George Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century, Volume 1* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), PDF e-book, 277.

It is possible to see the similarities with Park's *minjok* agendas and how that inadvertently influenced *minjung* movements. Nadia Y. Kim posits that Park's *minjok* used the idea of a homogenized and hardworking ancestry to instill a common goal among a low-morale constituency.²³ Kim Jinwung's definition by comparison is a movement for the "common people, as opposed to a ruling elite . . . *minjung* represents a majority of people who are presumably exploited by the numerically smaller ruling elite."²⁴ Kang Man'gil proposes a more unorthodox meaning to the 1980s movement. Kang posits that *minjung* began well before the 1980s, that it was developed in three periods, and had its origins in the short-lived Korean Empire era. Kang defined it as:

[First], to maintain sovereignty in the face of the aggression of capitalistic powers; [second], to gain liberation from colonial rule; and [third], to overcome division and reunify the nation.²⁵

When all definitions are combined then it is reasonable to look at *minjung* and *minjok* as one entity; it is a yin to a yang meant to restore sovereignty from "foreign powers" and give that power back to the "low-morale" public.

Park, however, altered Sin's *minjok* ideologies so that he could restore his version of sovereignty back to the Korean people. For example, during the late 1970s, Park was slowly alienating himself from American allies due to *Yushin*-influenced crackdowns and ambitions for nuclear armament.²⁶ Furthermore, President Carter's soft-power approach

²³ Nadia Y. Kim, "Ethnonationality, 'Race,' and Color," in *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 25.

²⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 495.

²⁵ Man'gil Kang, "Contemporary Nationalist Movements and the Minjung," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 31.

²⁶ Sung-Gul Hong, "The Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Ezra F. Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 483.

also meant withdrawing most US troops and aid to an already industrialized and modernized South Korea – at least in the standards of Third World development. In comparison, protestors during the Chun era sought their own sovereignty from what they perceived as foreign interference, particularly from American Cold War politics. This, of course, did not sit well with the new dictator.²⁷

Chun was no stranger to appeasing Western allies. His regime sought to better relations with the US by pandering to the demands of the Reagan Administration. According to Kim Jinwung, the 1980s were a “return to the honeymoon period” for American-Korean relations.²⁸ Likewise, Chun showed adept statesmanship, and as a result, Reagan officials overlooked Korean sociopolitical issues.²⁹

While lauded by the Reagan administration and Cold War analysts, Chun's appeasement strategy was not received well in the peninsula.³⁰ As taken from Chun's 1981 visit to the White House:

I am happy to say that President Reagan gave me firm assurances that the United States has no intention of withdrawing the American forces in Korea. I am pleased that the present level of United States military presence in Korea will be maintained.³¹

Along with Chun's willingness to dismantle Park's nuclear programs, this pro-military position cooled tensions with the ROK's Pacific allies. The Korean public, however, was already exhausted from an overmilitarized state. The fact that a foreign military power

²⁷ Hong, 485.

²⁸ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 498.

²⁹ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 291.

³⁰ Hong, “The Search for Deterrence,” 486.

³¹ Doo-hwan Chun and Ronald Reagan, “Remarks of President Reagan and President Chun Doo Hwan of the Republic of Korea Following Their Meetings,” speech, ROK President Visit to the White House, Washington DC, February 2, 1981.

supported this, even though it promised to reduce troops, was cause for concern.³² It is therefore possible to deduce that the new “foreign elements” *minjung* was concerned about – in this case American armed forces – showed similarities to Park’s anti-foreigner campaigns. However, instead of expelling those elements, like how Park enacted Sino-phobic campaigns, Chun’s Korea embraced and entrenched themselves in it.

Framed differently, after the use of military force in the Bu-Ma Protests, Koreans were rightfully weary of the deadly precedent set by Park. In retrospect, Chun’s regime was not scared to regularly employ these same tactics. Simply put, American military support and foreign aid antagonized *minjung* protestors because it amplified and encouraged the atrocities committed by Chun.³³

Ultimately, the initial phase of *minjung* can be defined in one sentence: It was a counter-ideology to decades worth of Park-led *bushido* and Neo-Confucian governance and, more importantly, to Chun’s abuse of foreign powers. The reason why it took off during the 1970s and 1980s was, as Kim Dae-jung puts it, Chun was not as “calculated and systemic” as Park.³⁴ Chun was reckless with Park-styled *bushido* power and his frequent brutality showed it. No one – least of all the US – was there to stop him. He was a powerful schoolyard bully with no authorities to admonish him.

***Minjung*, Part II: The Gwangju Massacre and Beyond**

Bu-Ma was still fresh in the minds of Koreans, and concurrently, *minjung* was in the midst of an identity crisis. Out of necessity, *minjung* had to look back to the same

³² Troop reduction began during President Nixon’s “Vietnamization” campaign and was further promoted by the Carter administration. See Sung-Gul Hong, “The Search for Deterrence,” 485.

³³ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 500.

³⁴ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 223.

minjok creeds that Park once used for his benefit, but this time it was to serve the public. Protestors were now espousing *minjung* tenets in support of democratic elections. Importantly, these protestors initially came from a diverse constituency derived from university students, urban blue-collar laborers, Buddhists, and Christians. They were later joined by the elderly, women, and white-collar workers.³⁵ Therefore, it is important to examine the first major consequence from Chun's clash with *minjung* diversity.

As with most demonstrations, violence and volatility is a real possibility; *minjung* was no exception. The Gwangju Massacre (also known as the Gwangju Uprising and Democratization Movement) began on May 18, 1980 and lasted about nine to ten days. University students from around the nation gathered to protest Chun's December 1979 coup. As such, once Chun consolidated his power, he enacted martial law. Just as quickly as protestors gathered around city halls and university campuses, so did armed government forces. This was none more evident than in Chonnam University in Gwangju City.

What began with local authorities trying to disperse campus protestors, escalated when authorities started arresting and beating student dissenters. Everything culminated when ROK soldiers clubbed a deaf bystander, Kim Gyeon-cheol, to death. News of the death quickly spread around the country and mass protest tens of thousands of participants erupted as a result. Similarly, Chun ordered more ROK forces to deal with the matter. In the end, an estimated – there are no official records as Chun destroyed them all – 3,000 casualties befell the small city with at least 150 to 500 students and 40 government authorities dead.³⁶

³⁵ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 290.

³⁶ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 476.

Minjung started in the most tragic way possible. Blood was shed; *de facto minjung* leader Kim Dae-jung was imprisoned and charged for inciting the crime; protestors were immediately incarcerated, tortured, and executed; and Chun's regime continued the deadly antagonism for eight more years. Compared to Park's *minjok-bushido* ethics – known to onlookers as the foundations for South Korea's prosperity – *minjung*'s democratic nationalism looked like a failed experiment.³⁷ Bluntly put, *minjung* looked like a pathetic counterpart for Park's Social Darwinist society.

For the Korean public, however, this was far from a weakness. The ferocity and brutality of Chun's repressive tactics verified one thing, if *minjung* was weak and a failure then the almighty Chun and his upper echelons should not be bothered by it. Kim Dae-jung reiterated this as his role as *minjung* leader. Kim's main goal was to voice the will of the people, and therefore:

The regime is afraid of any remark I may make . . . the fact that the Korean media are prohibited from reporting my name, is clear evidence that the government knows the great majority no longer believe its fabrication.³⁸

So, in the physical sense, *minjung* failed miserably; there was no way to match the authoritative powers of the armed forces. Nevertheless, this new type of nationalism was winning over the hearts and minds of the people, and more importantly, it was winning a war for Korea's spirit and culture.

Minjung Spirituality

While Kim was detained, Chun – just like Park – ordered an execution. However, Gwangju's tragedy propelled Kim and the dissenting public into international

³⁷ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmentalist Mentalité," 172.

³⁸ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 221.

prominence, and as a result, Chun instead put Kim under indefinite house arrest. Interestingly, one overlooked factor for sentence leniency was Kim's religion.

During the 1980s, Christianity was gaining a foothold and it so happened that Kim was a Roman Catholic – as with thousands of other dissenters – protesting alongside Korean Protestants.³⁹ Kim tied *minjung* to the new spiritual movements taking over the peninsula, in spite of Chun's efforts to repress them:

Christianity, as an influential spiritual force, has taken root in Korea and has strengthened the democratic movement. Of particular value are the Christian beliefs that all people, men and women, have rights and that the dignity of all, regardless of wealth or educational status, is sacrosanct.⁴⁰

This verified that Christian and *minjung* polemics fit together side-by-side. The “universal sacrosanct” that Kim posited was a stark contrast to the *bushido* Neo-Confucianism promoted by Park and Chun. The disparity of the ideologies was so bipolar and extreme that it was no coincidence global Christian and Catholic organizations, such as the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, pressured Western leaders to pay attention to the plight of the few.⁴¹

Minjung Culture

While *minjung* was making waves in the spiritual community, culturally it was shifting literature, art, and media away from decades of Park-Chun suppression. This was no more evident than in pop culture. Choi Chungmoo posits that *minjung*'s contribution

³⁹ The dominant religions for most of Korean history was shamanism (*Sin'gyo*), Buddhism (*Bul'gyo*), and Confucianism (*Yu'gyo*); therefore, Christianity in Korea is a fairly new concept. It was introduced through Catholicism during the early seventeenth century of the Joseon era. Christianity remained relatively benign until post-World War II reconstruction. Due in part from Korean expatriate's exposure to Western Christian churches, Catholicism and Protestantism boomed during the 1970s to 2000s. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 283; and Donald N. Clark, “Growth and Limitations of Minjung Christianity,” 87.

⁴⁰ Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 232.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

to Korean culture – and therefore her definition – was a “struggle against a capitalistic world order,” one that was created by Park and spearheaded by Chun.⁴² The sufferers, accordingly, used pop culture as a form of dissent and to help spread their message far and wide.

Choi’s thesis is unique because she combines elements from Kang Man’gil thesis along with Song Konho, both of whom are prominent *minjung* historians. Choi posits that Korean nationalism in its rawest form – as in Sin and Choe’s original teachings – is all about the exploited Korean masses. However, Rhee and Park “twisted and distorted” it to fit a Western image. In other words, Korean nationalism became a “distorted bourgeois nationalism” that dictators, from Rhee to Park to Chun, used to effectively manipulate and exploit their Korean brethren.⁴³ *Minjung* pop culture was, therefore, a response to what Korean nationalism had become.

Minjung’s pop culture presence was most tangible in theater form. *Minjung* artists and protestors, such as playwright Kim Chiha, cleverly looked back into Joseon past to make a statement against ruling elites. Granted, Joseon history was demonized as weak and “parasitic” by Imperial academics and Park.⁴⁴ Suffice it to say, this art form did not sit well with Chun’s mighty dictatorship.

Now the tables were turned, *minjung* artists labeled former Park elites, along with Chun’s regime, as part of the weak and parasitic *yangban* class. For example, Kim

⁴² Chungmoon Choi, “The Minjung Culture Movement and the Construction of Popular Culture in Korea,” in *South Korea’s Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 106.

⁴³ Choi, 106.

⁴⁴ Chai-sik Chung, “Confucian Tradition and Nationalist Ideology in Korea,” in *South Korea’s Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 61.

Chiha's *Ojeok* ("The Five Bandits") play used *pansori* and *malttugi* theatrics – these were prominent art styles in the Joseon era – in an effort to criticize Park-Chun's military state, the *chaebol* oligarchy, and corrupt politicians.⁴⁵ But perhaps the most prominent subject matter from *minjung* art was its anti-Japanese themes.

It was a known fact that Park was an admirer of Imperial Japanese institutions and heavily relied on Japanese aid; in addition, Chun continued a lot of Park's pro-*Nippon* policies. *Minjung* anti-Japanese themes, therefore, quickly became popular with the masses. Underground artists took the repressed and pent up rage from decades of past Imperial atrocities – Park and Chun suppressed these concerns through state-owned media – and created themes of "Japanophiles" selling out Koreans for wealth.⁴⁶ In the end, this created a narrative that implied that there was a Japanese elitist culture entrenched in the polity and that *minjung* was the antithesis to this.



Figure 4.1. Left, ROK special forces heading towards Busan during the Bu-Ma Protests. Right, a memorial from Gwangju Memorial Park reenacting students carrying a protestor to safety during the Gwangju Uprising. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

⁴⁵ Choi, "The Minjung Culture Movement," 110.

⁴⁶ Choi, 112. Please note that many of the past Imperial atrocities were committed during the late 1890s to the end of World of War II. Examples of these crimes include forced sexual slavery, indentured servitude, the destruction of Korean cultural relics, assassination of prominent royalty and political leaders, and unauthorized territorial acquisitions, like Dokdo islands. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 330-335.

* * *

Before Chun's reign, various *minjung* definitions developed that were a result from the chaos of the 1979 Bu-Ma Protests. At first, *minjung* was a disorganized movement devoid of a solid meaning. However, the pandemonium from Chun's 1980 coup and his deadly actions in Gwangju during the same year tempered *minjung*. The new movement showed signs of solidifying the basis of *minjung* nationalism. More importantly, this was nationalism catered for a newer affluent and more educated generation.

In the end, *minjung* protests coalesced into one major theme: dissent against an entrenched elite who were likened to neo-*yangban* exploiting the masses. The only way for *minjung* to combat elitism was to use a tool so heavily repressed by elitists: democracy. Subsequently, Chapter Six details these collisions and how it played into Chun's demise. More specifically, it examines external variables, such as socioeconomics and international pressure, that affected *minjung*. Lastly, the chronology shifts into more contemporary times (1990s-2016) as it examines the legacy *minjung* had on Park's legacy and what nationalism means in the 2000s and beyond.

Chapter V:

Literature Review – Park’s Legacy and Nationalism Today (1989 Onwards)

Park's sudden death in 1979 signified one thing, the 1980s was up for grabs for anyone willing to flex their *bushido* strength, and from that power vacuum arose General Chun Doo-hwan. As such, the new strongman showed no signs of changing the status quo Park meticulously built. However, in the early 1980s and born through the ashes of Chun's chaos, a new type of Korean nationalism – dubbed *minjung* – arose. This ideology was a sharp antithesis to Chun's regime and Park's *bushido-chaebol* society; and, while originally weak, *minjung* would take about a decade to gain the needed power to topple *bushido* nationalism once and for all.

The Fall of Chun Doo Hwan, Part I: Inspiration and Timing

Many scholars agree that the 1980 Gwangju Massacre (The Gwangju Uprising) was the catalyst that began President Chun's long descent; however, it would take almost a decade (1980-1988) before he resigned. This era was known for frequent university and urban protests, but the 1987 June Uprising (June Struggle) stands out as the final facilitator that marked the end of Chun's regime.¹ The event was so pivotal that it resulted in South Korea finally stepping away from decades-long autocracies.²

George Katsiaficas's monograph details the last days of Chun's tenure. Katsiaficas begins by emphasizing the size of the June protests compared to its Gwangju counterpart.³ The Gwangju Massacre, although large due to causalities, was

¹ George Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century, Volume 1* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), PDF e-book, 278.

² Autocracy began in 1971 after Park Chung Hee enacted *Yushin*, thereby effectively ending all forms of presidential elections. The era from 1979 to 1987 was, additionally, the era of Chun's tenure; likewise, it was also absent of elections. However, 1988 finally saw South Korea's first presidential election in sixteen years.

³ George Katsiaficas was a Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences in Wentworth Institute of Technology. He is currently a visiting professor at Gwangju University, South Korea.

decentralized in leadership, and therefore, an accurate estimate of participants is difficult to assess.⁴ However, the leadership in the June Uprising was more concrete and data collection was more effective. The total tally within a three-week span, according to Historian Kang Man'gil, was close to five million protestors.⁵

South Koreans are no strangers to mass protests and the population size was only the tip of the iceberg. What made this protest different though, and more conclusive in results, was the leadership, organization, and the time of occurrence. The uprising even crossed international boundaries as it was strongly influenced by Korea's Southeast Asian neighbors, the Filipinos. The toppling of the Ferdinand Marcos regime (1965-1986) was a large inspiration for iconic protest leaders, such as Kim Dae-Jung, that it aided them in enacting similar revolts.⁶

Furthermore, the waning Cold War era gave Koreans an opportune moment to cause an international uproar.⁷ Anti-autocratic and pro-democratic proponents came from both left and right of the political spectrum. These organizations were also spiritually diverse and included a coalition of secular and religious unions, and, moreover, participants came from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Due to such diverse

⁴ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 277.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁶ Ferdinand Marcos (1917-1989) was the antithesis to Park and other "successful" autocrats. Successful in this case means authoritarian use of powers to divert and invest foreign capital in the hopes of modernizing and raising a country's standard of living. After Filipino independence in 1946, the archipelago nation was in a prime position, along with Japan, to be Asia's main manufacturing hub; however, years of mismanagement and corruption ruined it. Everything culminated when Marcos was elected in 1965. Martial law, suspension of *habeus corpus*, overborrowing of foreign capital, reckless spending on incomplete state projects, and massive funneling of public funds to party allies and families signified his tenure. Transparency International labeled Marcos and his wife Imelda as the "second-most successful kleptocrats" in modern history. See Paul D. Hutchcroft in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 543.

⁷ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 280.

representation, South Korea's plight finally caught the attention of America and the Western World.⁸

The Fall of Chun Doo Hwan, Part II: The Beginnings

Decades of Western indifference towards Korean politics culminated when Kim Dae-Jung called out the back-and-forth policies of both the Carter and Reagan administrations.⁹ Kim's wakeup call to South Korea's allies was in response to numerous protestor casualties, many of whom were students and religious pacifists from the Buddhist community. But perhaps what caught the full attention of the Reagan Administration were the deaths of university students Park Jong-chol and Lee Han-yol.¹⁰

The death of Park Jong-chol (1964-1987) caught the attention of many influential news outlets including the *New York Times*. Jong-chol was one of many dissenters, since Park Chung Hee's tenure, who was imprisoned and tortured to death. However, what made his death significant was the carelessness in which Chun operated.¹¹ Chun's violent and carefree attitude with handling dissent caught up with him when security forces could not subdue the millions of protestors inquiring about Jong-chol's fate.

⁸ Katsiaficas, 283.

⁹ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, "On Korea," *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 218.

¹⁰ An issue of the *New York Times* printed on January 31, 1987, reported that Jong-chol Park was a linguistics student at Seoul National University. In January of that year, Park was arrested for anti-government activities. In January 14, police interrogated him with the hope of obtaining the whereabouts of a campus radical leader. This led to repeated torture with personnel "dunking" his head in a tub to simulate drowning. Park's throat was crushed against the rim of the tub and he suffocated shortly after.

¹¹ Kim Dae-Jung alluded that Park Chung Hee was a better statesman and more politically adept than Chun. Park survived numerous fiascos, such as Kim's kidnapping, while managing to divert international politics away. Kim also commented that Chun was more "personal" in demeanor which may have been a result of the insecurities towards chasing Park's achievements. See Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, "On Korea," 219-221.

Jong-chol's death was also a wakeup call to the public. Protestors finally knew of the brutal and secretive measures Chun was willing to undergo to silence them. While this type of cruelty brought millions into the cities to protest, it also brought many different, often clashing, objectives. This fracture was detrimental in achieving pro-democratic goals, and therefore, after Chun's brutal suppression, a sense of unity was crucial for survival.

Evangelical Reverend Oh Choong-il (born 1940) knew of this predicament and became one of the lead promoters for a unified body. Oh was familiar with the problems that disunity – as in protesting without a single concrete goal – caused during the Gwangju Massacre; and in turn, the Reverend was quick to act. In May 27, 1987, Oh and leading representatives created the National Coalition for a Democratic Constitution (NCDC or *Kukbon*).¹² This was the primary organization that united leaders from all factions into one common cause.¹³

Just as swiftly as they were made, *Kukbon* planned simultaneous national protests, mostly occurring in major urban areas, on June 10. *Kukbon*'s primary goal was to end autocracy and enact immediate, legitimate, and universal suffrage. The organization also incorporated the “guarantee of the basic rights of workers, farmers, and urban poor” as well as the “rectification” of the *chaebol* economy in order to better serve the people.

¹² Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 282.

¹³ Katsiaficas notes that the coalition included representatives from “Christians, Buddhists, blue-collar workers, farmers, urban poor, women, youth, artists, writers, professors, lawyers, families of arrested activist groups, politicians, regional movements, *Chaeya* (antigovernment activists), and reunification supporters.” Katsiaficas mentions that many leaders, protestors, and politicians were pro-American, however, radical anti-American units did make their way into *Kukbon*. Most of the radicals were university students and communist advocates; this resulted in many extreme requests, such as severing ties with the Western World. Consequently, in-organization clashes erupted which caused many *Kukbon* leaders to dismiss and drown their pleas. See George Katsiaficas, 283-284 and 301.

This ideology was enough to integrate a majority of the Korean public.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Oh and *Kukbon* leaders underestimated the volatility that would occur when they left out the demands of radical university students.

The Fall of Chun Doo Hwan, Part III: The Death of Lee Han-yol

State authorities found out the days wherein *Kukbon* was set to enact mass protests plans and quickly moved to stop all participants. In turn, student protestors lost patience with *Kukbon*-methods. On June 2, most university campuses took matters into their own hands, and the results were premeditated police clashes. Most notably, Korea University student and lead activist Lee In-young was arrested.

This was an initial blow to the youth movements – a coalition *Kukbon* fought hard to unite – and resulted in enraging most campuses. Police proceeded to universities with hopes of quelling protestors by using beatings and tear gas. To the surprise of state authorities and *Kukbon* activists alike, hundreds of thousands of students were willing to risk serious injuries, life imprisonment, torture, and death.¹⁵

On June 8, student protests culminated when Yonsei University student Lee Han-yol was struck on the head with a tear-gas cannister; he ended up in a coma and died shortly thereafter. The efforts at which Chun silenced media and domestic travel were astounding; nonetheless, news of Lee's death traveled like wildfire. Not only were urban Koreans informed, those in towns and even villages knew of the death.¹⁶ It was only a matter of time before international audiences took notice.

¹⁴ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 284.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

The Fall of Chun Doo Hwan, Part IV: The Final Straw

State officials placed the sole blame on *Kukbon*. On June 10, and fearing for their lives, *Kukbon* leaders congregated at an Anglican church located in the heart of the Seoul protests. If they were going to die, then their deaths had to be heard by the millions surrounding them. Soon afterwards, police barricaded and enclosed the leaders in, it appeared as if *Kukbon*'s time was up. Miraculously, local travelers spotted the organization's dire predicament, and just like Lee's death, the news spread nonstop.¹⁷ Additionally, on the same day a multitude of protests were to take place, *Kukbon*, students, international observers, and state authorities had no idea what was going to happen.

Open-ended questions arose from everyone involved: Were the protests still happening? Was this the final straw that held Korea together? Will the army and the millions of protestors engulf the country in flames? More importantly, were Chun and the protestors willing to destroy a country Koreans sacrificed so much for? Dubbed "D-Day," and with embassies on high alert, Reverend Oh and *Kukbon* leaders decided that this was Korea's only chance for real democratic change. *Kukbon* rang the church's bell forty-nine times signaling to all of Seoul that the plan was on; shortly afterwards, police stormed the church and arrested all members.¹⁸

The immediate effects were earth-shattering. State authorities could not contain the millions of protestors in Korea's largest metropolises. White-collar workers, who were once on the sidelines, joined the protests. This group – garbed in expensive suits –

¹⁷ Katsiaficas, 287.

¹⁸ Katsiaficas notes that forty-nine rings were the signal for death and to start protests with or without them. This number is a reference to Korean Buddhist burial rituals where bells would ring forty-nine times during the closing of the funeral. See George Katsiaficas, 287.

fought with as much viciousness as the rest of the crowd. Witnesses even recounted this group throwing office supplies, along with Molotov cocktails and flaming toilet paper, at authorities. Thus, spectators took notice of this unorthodoxy and aptly dubbed them the “the necktie brigade.”¹⁹ Finally, everything concluded when Seoul protestors coalesced around Myeongdong Cathedral. The once peaceful church was now a symbol of ferociousness.

On June 16, pro-American protestors pleaded to U.S. officials for help but were immediately snubbed by the Reagan Administration. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage said “Frankly, we’re really busy,” referring to America’s simultaneous endeavors in Kuwait and the Iran-Contra Affair blowback.²⁰ Consequently, and with the attention of the *New York Times*, burning effigies in the likeness of President Reagan erupted in Myeongdong.

Alongside the effigies, police finally ran out of riot suppressing gear. Protestors disarmed depleted authorities, stripped them of their vestments, and released the humiliated police force back into the public. The goal of the dissent was not to kill fellow Koreans – no matter the affiliation – but to give Chun an ultimatum that the public is stronger than any state power.²¹ In short, anti-Americanism was at an all-time high while US interventionism was nowhere to be found.

Chun took this as a sign for unabashed executive power and planned to divert ROK military to aid police. Many things can be said about American inaction, but military indecisiveness is not one of them; ROK forces were under strict US orders not to

¹⁹ Katsiaficas, *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings*, 290.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

²¹ *Ibid.*

engage or leave any posts.²² Chun easily disobeyed and mobilized forces on June 18, and with that, the last straw for American officials. On June 20, Secretary of State George P. Schultz arrived in Seoul to demand an instant resolution. At the same time, the Department of Defense threatened all ROK forces with imprisonment if they usurped US orders.²³

The clashes with state officials lasted until June 26 and was dubbed the “Showdown.” Once thought of as impossible, the Korean public finally saw Chun in an aura of impotency. With the end of American indecisiveness, state authority was finally exhausted. As a last-ditch effort, Chun ordered the use of live ammunition; however, police officials finally had enough of the chaos. With stations burning around the nation, authorities gave up fighting with their Korean brethren. In the end, thousands of security personnel joined the protests and called on Chun to step down.²⁴

On June 29, after a decade of executive abuses, the rule of President Chun was no more. Under the extreme pressure of the U.S. and an inevitable coup d’état, Chun capitulated to *Kukbon* demands. The Reagan Administration, shocked by a close ally’s strong anti-American sentiment and the destruction that occurred under their watch, called for the guidance of leaders, such as Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Young-sam, to help repair the nation.²⁵

²² Dae-jung Kim, Tanter, and Falk, “On Korea,” 236.

²³ Katsiaficas, *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings*, 294.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

A Comparative View, Part I: The Four Leaders

General Park Chung Hee “inherited” a country that was in calamity economically, politically, and socially.²⁶ But before Park’s legacy can be analyzed it is important to analyze how his tenure and the circumstances surrounding it compares to other dictatorial leaders. Correspondingly, many academics address three other Asian leaders in the same limelight as Park. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) of Turkey, Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015) of Singapore, and Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) were all autocratic leaders who, just like Park, ruled during times of extreme crises. Ezra F. Vogel, therefore, compares Park’s career and legacy with these three counterparts.²⁷

Vogel describes the history behind each leader’s inherited crisis beginning with Ataturk. Ataturk was notable for taking the reins of a beaten down post-Ottoman Empire Turkey (1922) and propelling it into modernization. Ataturk accomplished this by adopting institutions from the Great Western Powers – the very same powers that defeated the once-powerful Ottomans.

On the Malaysian Peninsula, Lee Kuan Yew took the helm of an ethnically tense former colonial nation.²⁸ Before the birth of the Republic of Singapore (1965), Malaysian Singapore (1963-1965) was a desolate city-state devoid of any functioning logistics,

²⁶ Ezra F. Vogel, “Nation Rebuilders: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping, and Park Chung Hee,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 513.

²⁷ Ezra F. Vogel is a Professor Emeritus of the Social Sciences at Harvard University.

²⁸ Initially, Singapore was a maritime dock in the Johor Sultanate (1528-1819). From 1819-1963, Singapore was under British colonial control. However, in 1942-1945 Imperial Japan briefly occupied the harbor city. In 1963, Britain granted the Federation of Malaya (1948-1963) complete administration over the city. In 1964, a race riot occurred in Singapore, then part of the Federation of Malaysia. The riot was caused by socioeconomic and religious hostilities between ethnic Chinese, Malaysians, and Indonesians. Consequently, the Malayan legislature voted Singapore out. See Ezra F. Vogel, 516, 524-526, and 529.

security, economy, and infrastructure. Just like Park, Lee turned that around in a lifetime, and as a result, became one of the most highly developed (HDI) nations in the world.

Likewise, in 1978, Deng Xiaoping took a “failed state” – one that was devastated by the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) – and enacted economic liberalizations that resulted in state-guided capitalism. This is also famously known as Deng’s version of “socialism (or capitalism) with Chinese attributes.”²⁹ Taking cues from Park’s *chaebol* project, this economic system projected the PRC into a global powerhouse.

Although these four leaders had some socioeconomic similarities, in the political realm, all had mirror-like governance. Each leader had long uninterrupted tenures where democracy was secondary to economic and industrial reforms. Plausibly, this means that each leader preferred autocratic governance to quickly consolidate power, pass uninterrupted legislation, and to entrench their respective nations with single goals.

More importantly, the greatest binding variable was a deep history of suffering endured through imperialism and Western interference.³⁰ Nevertheless, while all four leaders denounced foreign influences and colonization, they were perceptive enough to predict that the modern world was one dominated by Western institutions – and additionally, in Park’s case, Japanese institutions.³¹

²⁹ Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), Kindle Edition, 333.

³⁰ Vogel, “Nation Rebuilders,” 515.

³¹ Vogel’s explains that robust Western institutions originated from imperialism; meaning, these institutions were created through a long, arduous, and brutal exploitation of weaker countries. Since Western and Japanese powers went through these phases, it was in each leader’s best interest to copy them, through technology, industry, and economy, instead of playing catch-up. All four leaders had no economic and business experience; however, they were keen to hire technocrats – many of them foreigners – to assist and directly lead them into rapid modernization. See Ezra F. Vogel, 515.

A Comparative View, Part II: Background and Careers

Historical experiences are a crucial factor in shaping a leader's motifs, and one factor that affects governance is conflict. Park, Ataturk, Deng, and Lee lived through their fair share of political and social skirmishes. Except for Lee, all leaders had some form of military background.

Ataturk and Park were both officers who had prestigious military educations.³² In 1905, Ataturk graduated from the Ottoman Military Staff College in Constantinople. In 1942, Park graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy (*Rikugun Shikan Gakko*) in Tokyo.³³ In addition to military higher education, both men fought in wartime environments. Ataturk saw frequent combat in wars leading to World War I and the Turkish Independence War. Park fought under the Japanese banner suppressing guerilla activities near the Korean border. Most notably, however, both men were well-versed with governing styles used by Imperialists and the Great Powers.

Deng had no formal military education; however, he was initially trained in guerilla tactics by Soviet advisors (late 1920s) and in 1934 by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).³⁴ Most remarkably, Deng survived Mao's infamous

³² Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 522.

³³ Shortly after attaining higher educations, Ataturk fought in numerous early-twentieth century warfare. Most notable are the Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), and the World War I Middle Eastern Theater (1914-1918). Ataturk rose into prominence as he led independence movements that resulted in the Turkish Independence War (1911-1922). Accordingly, he also became one of the main founders of the Republic of Turkey. As for Park, he briefly fought in the Imperial Manchukuo campaigns, from 1944 to 1946, against Chinese and Korean saboteurs. Afterwards, Park returned to Korea in 1946 to attend Korea Military Academy (*Hwarangdae*) in Seoul. During the Korean War (1950-1953), Park started as an officer and swiftly rose ranks to brigadier general. See Ezra F. Vogel, 515, 518, and 522.

³⁴ Deng, alongside Mao and early CCP officials, endured the Long March (1934-1936) against Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang Nationalists (KMT). The Long March was the closest the KMT got to exterminating the CCP. The CCP evaded Chiang's forces by retreating to the outskirts of Northern China. During World War II, the CCP and KMT temporarily joined forces to fight Imperial Japan (1937-1945). After the war, the second phase of the Chinese Civil War escalated (1945-1949) where Deng was Red

Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and in-party purges. Due to the extremities of the Mao Era, Deng knew first-hand that not adapting to a rapidly changing world and shunning foreign innovation was detrimental to Chinese development.³⁵

Lee Kuan Yew, the most scholarly of the other three, had no military training or combatant experience. Instead, Lee studied law and politics in world-renowned universities including Cambridge.³⁶ He was well-versed in British common law and was adept at stirring effective dissent through legal and civil means. Lee was also no stranger to violent sociopolitical conflicts; he survived numerous riots from all sides of the political spheres.³⁷ Similar to all three, Lee was thrust into an executive position during a time of extreme vulnerability.

Army vice-chairman and propaganda chief. He was noted for playing a large role in securing peasantry support towards communist causes. In turn, the KMT lost Chinese public backing and were routed to Taiwan in 1949. See Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 254-255; and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *History of China*, 263 and 287-289.

³⁵ China during the Mao Era (1950s-1976) was a “failed state.” During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), Chinese industry focused solely on making steel through questionable methods. A large portion of the agrarian population was diverted to small community-ran steel mills, and consequently, grain and consumable industry was diverted. Also known as “collectivization,” this was the main variable for the Great Chinese Famine (1959-1961) and resulted in the deaths of 15 to 30 million people. Mao lost prestige and party-power after this catastrophe while Deng started to rise ranks bolstered by his radical reforms. Such reforms included commerce and economic decentralization and emergency foreign aid assistance. Mao’s influence among the polity faded but his support with the youth was high, thereby resulting in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The movement was known for the creation of the Red Guards, consisted mostly of high school and university students, many of whom purged and killed Mao’s dissidents; this included top military and political officials. Deng was one of many Party elites who were purged; however, his public persona was strong enough to avoid death, instead he was put under house arrest. See Westad, 333-341 and 353-361; and Ebrey, 308-310 and 314-319.

³⁶ Vogel, “Nation Rebuilders,” 523.

³⁷ The first riot Lee experienced was the May 1954 Riots caused by the British enactment of colonial conscription laws. Lee and other intellectuals created the People’s Action Party (PAP) as a response. Initially, the party aligned itself with Marxist independence ideologies but gradually shifted away as Lee promoted the use of Western institutions – mainly commerce and trade – for development. Singapore’s vulnerability came when Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (1903-1990), expelled them in 1965. Consequently, Singapore’s initial years were mired by the activities of extremist factions. Threats from in-party communists, Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic radicals, and anarchists were numerous. In addition, the lack of material resources – ranging from food, potable water, and commodities – and human capital, such as skilled and educated workers, threatened to topple the infant city-state. See Ezra F. Vogel in *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 516, 524-526, and 529.

Vogel thoroughly details all four leaders' backgrounds, however, his main emphasis, and therefore conclusion, is comparing their strikingly volatile nationalist origins.³⁸ Each leader's respective nation was in their infancy before they were thrust into prominence. In summary, Park's Korea was born through a military coup based on the rejection of ineffective leadership; Deng's China was born through the turmoil of the Mao Era; Ataturk's Turkey was born from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire; and finally, Lee's Singapore was born through Malaysian eviction.

A Comparative View, Part III: Distinguishing Park's Korea

Vogel assesses that the initial leadership of Park differed greatly from the others. One aspect Park did not have in common was that he was neither elected nor was he ever known for his deep-seated patriotism. Starting with Ataturk, he was a hero of the Turkish Independence War, and likewise, was the head of the dominant independence-nationalist party, the Republican People's Party. In turn, he had major backing from both party officials and the public which resulted in his swift 1938 election as the first president of the Republic of Turkey.³⁹

Lee was a major figure of the People's Action Party during and after Singapore's brief stint in the Malaya Federation (1963-1965). Similar to Ataturk, Lee had the backing of his party and became the party's prime minister in 1959. His leadership was also extended and solidified shortly after Malaysian expulsion in 1965. Lee stands out as being the only executive to see the full extent of his nation's progress as he lived well into the twenty-first century.

³⁸ Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 534.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 523.

Deng, however, did not go through initial democratic-like elections. Instead, Deng was a prominent figure in the CCP with a long and storied history of survival alongside Mao. In 1978, Deng was released from confinement and repeated another quick rise within CCP ranks. During his ascension, he cleverly, and clandestinely, consolidated party power under his faction. Concurrently, Deng managed to oust major figures with close ties to Mao's disastrous socioeconomic policies.⁴⁰ After the power struggle, Deng promptly replaced Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, in 1982, thereby becoming the CCP's premier leader.⁴¹

Vogel grounds his analysis on the term "legitimacy." Essentially, Ataturk, Lee, and Deng were "legit" among their respective constituencies. Whether it be through elections or party support, the three leaders systematically used the political system to climb their way into leadership. Park, on the other end, inverted their methodologies. Instead, Park took control of Korea through force, a force that was eerily similar to many strongmen of that era.⁴²

⁴⁰ "Gang of Four" was Deng's most dangerous opposition. The Gang was a political faction composed of former elite-CCP officials, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wang Hongwen, and Mao's widow – Jiang Qing. They were created during the Cultural Revolution with Jiang Qing leading the faction. After consolidating enormous power using the Red Guards – the Guards systematically purged the Gang's in-party opposition – Mao unexpectedly died in 1976. The Gang saw this as an opportunity to seize the government. However, a power struggle between Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng (1921-2008), resulted in Hua and a Deng-led CCP arresting them. In 1981, all four were convicted of usurping power during the Revolution, along with the prosecution of hundreds of thousands of innocents. This resulted in lifetime imprisonment for all members. See Westad, 294-296; and Ebrey, 333-334.

⁴¹ Mao had a tenuous relationship with Hua. Mao was quoted saying that Hua's only attractive quality was his "oafish loyalty." While Hua was initially praised for his quick expulsion of hardliners, such as the Gang of Four, CCP elites became distressed over Hua's lack of developmental planning. Fearing a return to revolutionary days, party and military officials quickly disposed of Hua through nonviolent means. See Westad, 371-372.

⁴² Other comparable prominent strongmen are Chile's Augusto Pinochet (coup enacted in 1973) and Mexico's Porfirio Diaz to Cardenas Calles (1910-1936). See *The Park Chung Hee Era*, 582.

Furthermore, Vogel labels Park’s rise to power and his legacy as the “most controversial” out of the three.⁴³ The forceful takeover of the government only scratches the surface of controversy. During a time of intense Korean-Japanese animosity, Park’s career and upbringing left a disdain for him in modern Korean historiography.⁴⁴ Park’s “Japanophile” background is substantiated through his Imperial tenure as an officer and pro-*Nippon* reform policies. Furthermore, Park’s relegation of Imperial World War II atrocities in favor of economic policies bestows him a mixed legacy, one of grand adoration or bitter scorn with little-to-no middle ground.⁴⁵



Figure 5.1. From left to right, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1919, Deng Xiaoping in 1979, and Lee Kuan Yew in 2002. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

⁴³ Vogel, “Nation Rebuilders,” 541.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 538.

⁴⁵ Imperial Japanese atrocities included sexual slavery (also known as the “comfort women issue”), human experimentation, and forced relocation into Manchurian concentration camps. Additionally, the recollection of Meiji-era infractions, such as the assassination of Empress Myeongseong (1851-1895) and maritime (Dokdo) border disputes, also strained contemporary Korean-Japanese relations. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 308 and 349.

Park's Economic Legacy, Part I

Park Chung Hee's achievements are a contentious theme for modern Korean scholars. The debate about Park's over-excessive use and abuse of executive power and whether it was worth the result – a highly developed South Korea – is an eternally debated topic. The keyword among academics, however, is the word “excess,” and therefore, Professor Kang Myung-koo and Economist Chang Se-jin analyze and breakdown this term through the perspective of the average South Korean.⁴⁶

Kang's research involves Park's economic system and the larger picture of what it all meant. To put it in his own words, Kang's thesis explores, “how a developmentalist *mentalité* formed in the family system, during the Park Era” and “how this is related to the formation of individual and collective identities.”⁴⁷ On the other end, Chang's research is a quantitative supplement to Kang's analysis and involves the dissection of industrial growth and the effects it had on the standard of living.

Noting the importance of Parks Five-Year Plans (1962-1986), Kang splits up Korean economic growth into five-year intervals. He quantifies the total GNP averages for each period and concludes that total GNP growth amplified at 200-fold. Numerically, GNP grew from \$2.3 billion in 1962 to \$458 billion in 1995. While total tally is important, Kang emphasizes that per capita growth is more significant due to the wealth achieved by the average household. Per capita GNP sat at \$87 and exploded to \$10,076

⁴⁶ Myung-koo Kang is a Professor of Political Science in City University of New York (CUNY).

⁴⁷ Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist *Mentalité*,” in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 167.

over the same period. On average, growth achieved an annual rate of 8.38 percent within three decades.⁴⁸

Kang uses plenty of line graphs to visually represent an upward trajectory of this data. This skyward trend symbolizes the instantaneous wealth achieved by the average household. Kang accentuates that this growth was never seen in modern economic history. While Korea's East Asian neighbors – Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore – achieved similar spurts, the magnitude of GNP progress and the rapid alleviation of decades-long poverty was unheard of at the time.⁴⁹

Kang's research, moreover, breaks this affluent trend into two tiers. The first category explains the "collective identities" of Korea's business mindset; and the second analyzes those same identities in a familial and individual setting. In other words, it explores the sudden prosperity that affected Korea's cultural, fiscal, and national psyche. Additionally, Graphs 5.1 to 5.3 are presented to better situate Kang and Chang's data.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmentalist Mentalité," 168.

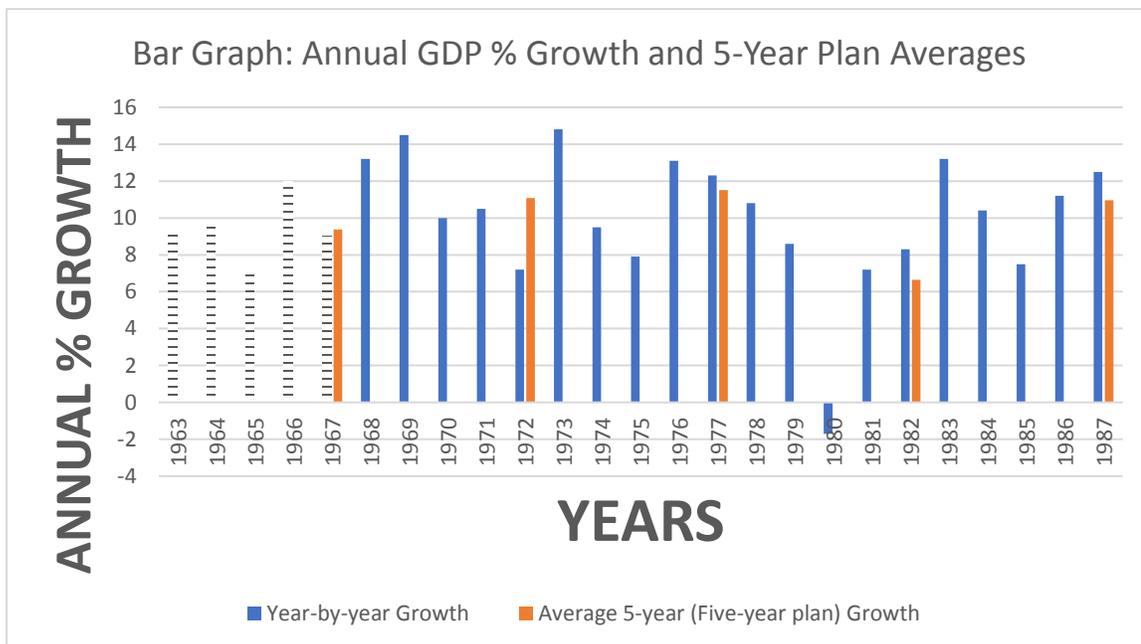
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁵⁰ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 310.

Disclaimer: The graphs shown are replicated by the author to depict a summarized view of Kang's data. Please note that Kang uses official World Bank data; however, data only goes back to 1968. Data from 1961 to 1967 were not officially recorded but the Bank of Korea (BOK) recently provided rough estimates. All data was combined to show a larger and more complete representation.

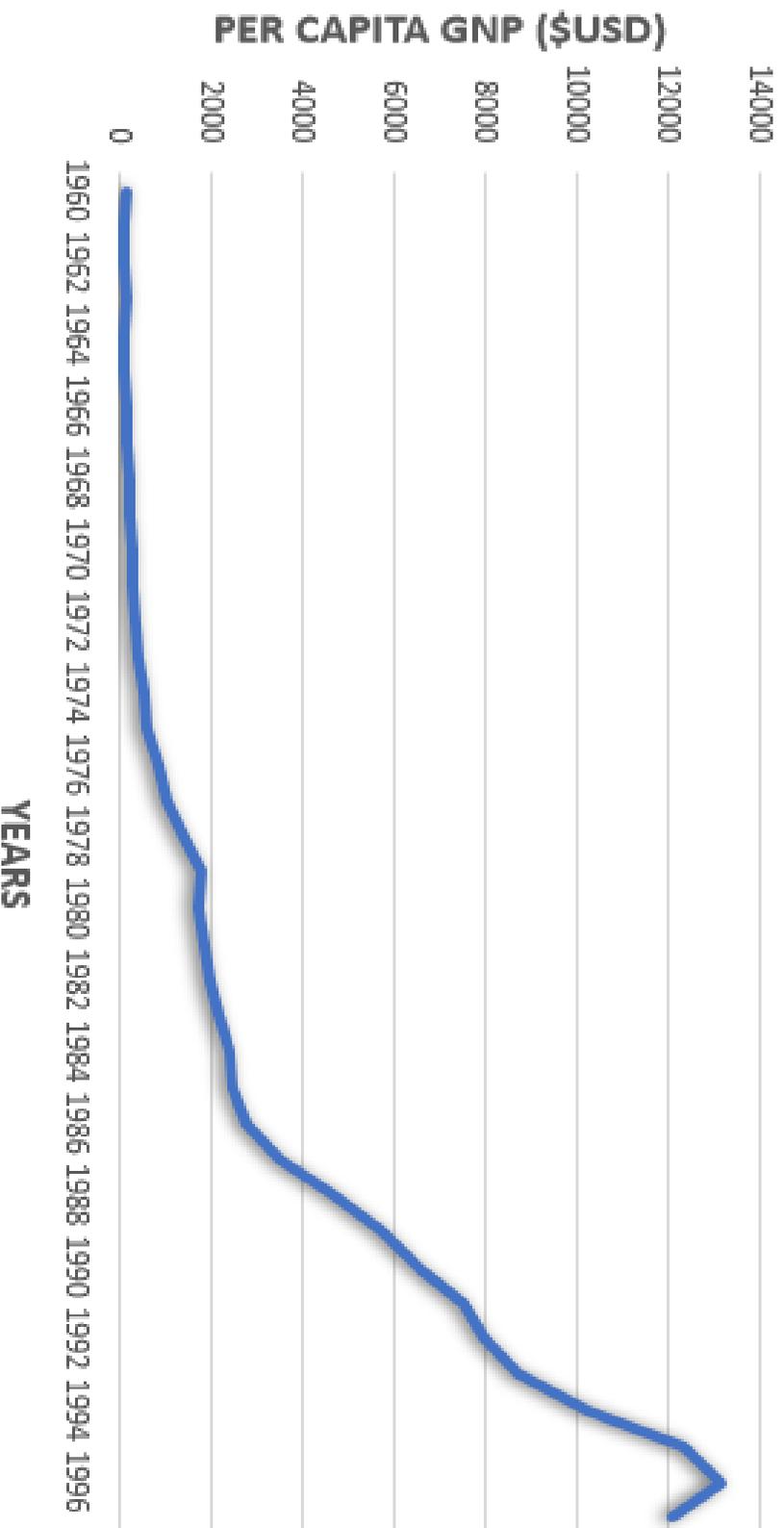


Graph 5.1. The graph plots yearly growth from 1963-97. Please note the dotted lines are estimated figures taken from the Bank of Korea (BOK) while the rest are taken from the World Bank. Source: Se Jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 309-310; the World Bank archives; and the Bank of Korea archives.



Graph 5.2. The same data was used from Graph 5.1 but in a bar graph form; in addition, Five-year Plan averages are visualized alongside “Year-by-year” data. Please note that the serrated bars from 1963-67 are estimated data taken from the BOK while the rest are from the World Bank. Se Jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 309-310; the World Bank archives; and the Bank of Korea archives.

South Korean Per Capita GNP (USD): 1960-1997



Graph 5.3. Shown is a per capita GNP line graph. Please note that data from 1960 to 1997 was officially recorded by the World Bank, whereas Graphs 5.1 and 5.2 use BOK data from 1963 to 1967. See Jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 309-310; the World Bank archives; and the Bank of Korea archives.

Park's Economic Legacy, Part II – Park's *Chaebol* Legacy

Instantaneous growth plays a huge role on legacies and nationalist trends. On the surface, Park's heavy support for *chaebol* policies are credited for the boom that ushered South Korean prosperity. However, deep within that system lies a hidden enterprise, one that helped *chaebol* succeed worldwide. Kang surmises that the “state-mobilized developmental model” – the core of the *chaebol* system – was a fervent bid to flood the markets domestically, and more importantly, globally, with “quantity rather than quality” made products.⁵¹

The “quantity-over-quality” model emphasized sheer volume of sales rather than long term appreciation. Getting Korean-made products into international households was more important than gaining prestige in the market place. This is further corroborated by Chang's research in *The Rise and Fall of Chaebols*. According to both Chang and Kang, South Korea's full entrance into the market, around the 1970s, occurred during an era when Japanese and German products dominated global trade.⁵²

In a bid to emulate these exporting powerhouses, *chaebol* companies fervently followed them into the same saturated industries. Specifically, rising prices for Japanese-German automobiles, electronics, and appliances left cash-strapped consumers priced out of the market. Accordingly, *chaebol* found these gaps as an opportunity; and consequently, a new business model was quickly adapted and implemented. However, those ambitions were not without its shortcomings.⁵³

⁵¹ Myung-koo Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 168.

⁵² Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 34.

⁵³ Chang and Kang note that *chaebol* ventures emphasized trade diversity in a bid to see which endeavors could survive or fail. Along with well-known automotive (Hyundai and Kia) and electronic-appliance (Samsung and LG) industries, *chaebol* undertook lesser-known fields such as semiconductors

Korean industries were still in their infancy upon entrance, and likewise, inexperience is detrimental to the quality and integrity of a product.⁵⁴ Initially, rapid adoption of Korean goods in North American markets was a positive sign that the new *chaebol* scheme worked. The cheap price-tag and abundance of diverse products challenged foreign competitor rates. This came at a cost, however, as many consumer complaints arose – criticisms about product lifespan and defectiveness were common. Multinational business watchdogs, such as the Better Business Bureau, sharply criticized the integrity, in labor and quality, that *chaebol* promoted. In turn, analysts were quick to label the flooding of the market akin to an inverse “pump-and-dump” scheme.⁵⁵

Due to these “pump-and-dump” tactics, Korean products were known to be of cheap and subpar quality when compared to Japanese and German products. Nonetheless, Chang accentuates that *chaebol* motives were to frantically gain a foothold in global markets no matter the ramifications.⁵⁶ Additionally, an unintended side-effect also occurred, one that *chaebol* CEO’s could not have predicted.

(SK Hynix) and steel production (POSCO). Chang also mentions that Taiwanese and Singaporean companies concurrently competed with similar industries, mainly in semiconductors and transistor chips. This led to even more diversification as *chaebol* entered more specialized and less saturated fields. Such industries include organic chemicals (Hanwha Chemicals), tire production (Hankook Tires), and offshore rigging (STX Offshore and Shipbuilding). See Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 85-88 and 114-116.

⁵⁴ Yu C. Huang and Yao J. Cheng, “Stock Manipulation and Its Effects: Pump and Dump versus Stabilization,” *Review of Quantitative Finance and Accounting* 44, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 792.

⁵⁵ According to Chinese economists Yu Huang and Yao Cheng, a “pump-and-dump” is an illegal equity scheme where a company artificially raises their stock price in a bid to entice unbeknownst outside investors. The sudden initial rise triggers mass buying, and the result is an exorbitant price tag enacted through the illusion of hot-buying trends. Once the stock price is high enough, company insiders then “dump,” or sell-off, all their positions, thereby securing profits and flooding the market with now-worthless equities. In the *chaebol* case, instead of artificially raising product prices, *chaebol* flooded the market to drastically depreciate prices. Thereby, “pumping” means filling the market with an overabundance of cheap goods until overall prices lower. However, “dumping” – or leaving the market after profits – does not occur, instead Korean companies doubled down on exports. This caused many international and domestic competitors to shut down due to the futility in competing with such low prices. See Yu C. Huang and Yao J. Cheng, “Stock Manipulation,” 795-797.

⁵⁶ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 84.

Chaebol mass exporting strategies undoubtedly succeeded in bolstering their presence around the world, but there was an ironic and unintended twist – mediocre product quality inadvertently strengthened the image of other competitors’ products.⁵⁷ While more expensive, consumer confidence towards non-Korean products – particularly Japanese – rose as they felt their price-to-quality ratio was substantially better than *chaebol* quality. Essentially, early *chaebol* undercutting schemes accidentally labeled Japanese merchandise as a “better bang for the buck.”⁵⁸

Nevertheless, *chaebol* tactics were heavily used during the latter half of Park’s tenure (1975-1979) and well until the end of President Chun’s regime (1980-1988). Perhaps the greatest consequence of these heavy-handed practices was the influence it garnered in future exporting methods. The effects that *chaebol* had on a newly market-liberalized China was enormous.⁵⁹ Similarly, China took this design and amplified it on a mammoth scale – one that affects markets today.⁶⁰

Park’s Economic Legacy, Part II – The *Chaebol*’s Effects on the Average Korean

Chaebol legacy was for the most part innovative as a developing model. However, many overlooked the impact it had on the Korean psyche. Kang analyzes these effects in what he coins as “developmentalist *mentalité*.” He defines this term as “a state

⁵⁷ Chang, 84.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁹ Chang mentions Chinese business practices being similar to Korean, Taiwanese, and Singaporean models. State-owned (state-guided) companies, like *chaebol*, were entities that enacted these exporting tactics. These companies initially used cheap labor, well below market value, to flood the market. Additionally, the Chinese combined long-term, low-floating currencies to help depress labor prices, and thereby enticed foreign companies to use them as a cheap manufacturing base. Oversight committees, such as the World Trade Organization, accuse China of purposely keeping currency low and blocking labor (capital) inflation in order to undercut world markets. See Se-jin Chang, 47 and 76-77.

⁶⁰ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 261.

of mind, behavioral style, and a structure of feeling that infatuates most South Koreans.”⁶¹ Kang designates this term as all-encompassing, pertaining to business, political, familial, and individual ethics.

Business and political psyches are evident through the term “infatuation.” “Infatuation” in this case means an obsession on “administrative efficiencies” – in both companies and the polity – that bolsters “rapid economic development.” Simply put, wealth accumulation was, and still is, the name of the game; meanwhile administering growth initiatives is the only goal of bureaucracy.⁶²

Development is also linked to Korea’s Confucian roots that consequently merged politics, *chaebol*, and individual ranks as inseparable entities.⁶³ Kang postulates that this relationship created a “vertical loyalty” mobilization.⁶⁴ Contextually, this meant that companies that performed well were rewarded with more state funds and contract prioritization. This is very similar to a kind of “Confucian favoritism.”⁶⁵

All players in the system were affected by this “favoritism,” however the average Korean worker and consumer felt the shocks more deeply than the ruling elites. Kang suggests that the “individual identities” of this group were modeled after the business-polity psyche. Paraphrasing sociologist Yim Huisop (Im Hee-seop), Kang sums up the newly inherited psyche as “South Koreans having a strong class consciousness because

⁶¹ Myung-koo Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 167.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶³ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism,” *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 80.

⁶⁴ Myung-koo Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 176.

⁶⁵ Since Confucianism is patriarchal, this scenario would be similar to a father (Park, Chun, and the polity) favoring exceptional children (*chaebol* that performed financially well and exceeded export quotas) by rewarding them with praise and gifts (state funds, long term labor contracts, and deregulation).

they understand and organize human relations and social ethics in order of rank.”⁶⁶ In other words, the bureaucratic *chaebol* culture dispersed onto the citizenry’s professional and societal ranks; “Confucian favoritism” and the public were indivisible. Suitably, this begs an analysis on how the average citizen can climb the new Confucian socioeconomic ladder.⁶⁷

Kang identifies materialism and consumerism as the tools of achievement.⁶⁸ The new consumerist culture was a byproduct of the frantic production quotas levied onto the export economy. This new culture mirrored the worldviews of Korea’s Western allies, specifically American consumerism. Not only was Korea producing *en masse* for international markets, but domestically, never-before-seen surpluses of food, electronics, automobiles, and fashion were readily available to the public. Once foreign to Korean society, supermarkets, department stores, shopping malls, and tourist hotels sprouted all over the nation.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Myung-koo Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 180.

⁶⁷ To give a historical comparison, since the introduction of the market economy, modernization, and *chaebol* reforms Korean lifestyle underwent a momentous transformation. Drawing comparisons to Japan’s post-World War II construction, Andrew Gordon mentions *danchi*, or public housing initiatives, enacted shortly after the war. See Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 257. Similarly, the days of living among immediate, extended, and in-law families within a communal village-town (*hanok maeul* and *min sok chon*) and under a thatched-roof house were a distant memory. Park’s many Five-Year Plans (1962-1976) incentivized rapid urban migration through the creation of public housing policies. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 444. In 1962, Park created the Korea National Housing Corporation (*Hanguk toji jutaeg gongsa*), better known as KNHC or LH. See Hye-hoon Lee and ROK National Assembly, *Korea Land & Housing Act*. Since many rural workers flocked to urban areas in hope of securing lucrative industrial jobs, the KNHC was responsible – through the mass construction of apartment towns – for finding affordable and government-subsidized housing. Interestingly, this new trend had no Korean language origin, so new “Konglish” – a portmanteau of Korean and English – words were created. Terms such as *apateu* (apartments) and *opiseutel* (office-studio rooms) coined these trends and are now real estate vernacular.

⁶⁸ Shortly after Park’s death (1979), a change in demographics was evident. The 1980 Census Bureau recorded a prevalence of a large middle and upper-class populations; affluency was now commonplace. See Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 310.

⁶⁹ Myung-Kang, “Developmentalist Mentalité,” 181.

Analogous to winning the lottery, an over-excess of spending was commonplace. This new arrangement was in part a variable that propelled the market economy to new heights. The biggest consequence, however, was that it also instilled an “excessive, rugged individualism.”⁷⁰ Yim Huisop suggests that this mentality took over the “self-reliant” and “strong self-defensive” lifestyle of the olden days.⁷¹ Kang concludes that this individualist mindset was the core of the “developmentalist *mentalité*,” and for better or worse, resulted in the hypercompetitive “achievement-centered behaviors” that are prevalent today.⁷²

The New Korean Generation, Part I: *Chaebol* Reforms

Chaebol reforms were one of the most defining features of the 1980s to 2000s; this era was synonymous with “Korean market liberalization.” According to Economist Chang Se-jin, *chaebol* liberalization in Korean economic terms meant the full privatization of state-guided conglomerates.⁷³ Liberalization slowly began under President Chun’s far-right political party, *Minju jeonguidang* (DJP); revised during Roh Tae-woo’s non-affiliated independent party (term: 1988-1993); and then further

⁷⁰ Myung-koo Kang, 181.

⁷¹ Yim posits that during the chaos of the Imperial and Korean War eras (1910-1953) a communal attitude of self-defense and reliance defined the Korean psyche. Due to the constant threat of death and enslavement, Koreans had no choice but to band together in order to survive. However, as affluency was achieved, that conviction slowly gave way to a materialistic individual mindset. See Myung-koo Kang, 180.

⁷² “Hypercompetitive” in this sense is all encompassing. It refers to modern South Korean over-competition in the job market, higher education, student endeavors, business ranks, and owning the latest market trends. Moreover, this extends to “national competition,” or competing with Asian counterparts on global education, healthcare, standards of living, and ease-of-doing business ranks.

⁷³ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 58.

accelerated under Kim Dae-jung (term: 1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun's (term: 2003-2008) center-left *Minju dang* (commonly known in English as "Minjoo").⁷⁴

Before liberalization, Chang paraphrased the booming economy as "Korea being a victim of their own success." Initially, the DJP's platform heavily supported Park-inspired *chaebol* economics. However, Korea's swift GNP rise, along with large looming international loans, created a severe inflationary problem. This discrepancy led America, one of Korea's largest creditors, to take notice and instigated that *chaebol* success came at the expense of US manufacturing. After Park's nuclear program fiasco, Chun and the DJP were quick to appease American officials.⁷⁵ The pressure amidst a threatened trade war and forced loan repayments resulted in the easing of two-decades worth of protectionist policies.⁷⁶

Since state, labor, and *chaebol* were highly dependent on another – arguably one entity – any changes on a macro level severely affected the micro level, and vice versa. Coupled with easing foreign trade policies and more aggressive militant-like protests, labor unions experienced renewed vigor. After the success of the 1987 democracy

⁷⁴ From the 1980s to 2010s Korean political parties often changed and merged with one another. The start of a major conservative party began in 1963 when Park Chung-hee created *Minju gonghwadang* (Democratic Republican Party, or DRP). But, when Chun took office in 1980 he dissolved DRP and merged prominent DRP technocrats into his own party, the Democrat Justice Party (DJP). Roh Tae-woo was originally in the DJP but after the 1987 presidential elections Roh opted to be an independent president. However, DJP merged with other prominent pro-business factions. They later called themselves *Jayuhan gukdang* (Liberty Korea Party, or LKP). LKP then changed their name to the more current and commonly known *Saenuri*, or Grand National Party. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 435, 469-479, 485, and 521-538.

⁷⁵ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 57.

⁷⁶ Chang also notes that "liberalization" and anti-protectionist policies meant that the state could not fund *chaebol* and make direct business decisions anymore. The result was many *chaebol* "going public" by opening shares in the Korean stock exchange (KOSPI and KOSDAQ). Chang's monograph defines macroeconomics as the changes – through legislation or external factors – affecting the polity and nation. Microeconomics mean changes that affect the individual, local business, and *chaebol*. See Se-jin Chang, 169, 189, and 236.

movements, the newly-elected Roh Tae-woo ran on a platform that gave into union-labor demands that resulted in instantaneous conglomerate regulations.⁷⁷ The immediate rise of factory and service wages was an initial success for left-wing movements and was partly a factor that eased public tension after the 1987 June Uprising.

The consequence of higher wages, both in blue and white-collar sectors, correlated to higher priced end-products. The end of the 1980s and the early 1990s saw Park's cheap export schemes implode from within; and just as rapidly as it was enacted in the 1960s, two decades later saw the sudden collapse of the model. Lackluster *chaebol* products lost their low-priced competitive edge. They now faced top-tier foreign products competing on the same price platform. Nonetheless, *chaebol*'s "cheap exporting innovations" lived on as the forthcoming Chinese economic boom easily took over the vacuum left behind.⁷⁸

The New Korean Generation, Part II: A New Economic Shift

Historian Jinwung Kim, Sociologists John Lie, and Park Myoung-kyu analyze the contemporary Korean generation.⁷⁹ Even though their research was written in the mid-

⁷⁷ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 62.

⁷⁸ Chang and Jinwung Kim detail the political consequences of high labor costs. Chinese mass exports and higher Korean wages amplified the effects of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. The result was devastating for Korean employment. An abnormally high unemployment rate and a slow recovery plagued the end of the 1990s. This partly contributed to the rise of a new right wing, pro-business (pro-*chaebol*) party, *Saenuri*. Much of *Saenuri* legislation focused on abolishing Minjoo-implemented *chaebol* reforms. The results were deregulated hiring standards, especially with wages and overtime. This meant that *chaebol* were now empowered again to hire a new generation of laborers for lower capital. *Saenuri* prominence peaked in the late-2000s when former *chaebol* (Hyundai Construction) CEO Lee Myung-bak (term: 2008-2013) was elected president. Furthermore, *Saenuri* gained international fame among Asia when Park Chung-hee's daughter, Park Geun-hye (term: 2013-2017), won the 2012 presidential election. See Se-jin Chang, 101 and 190; and Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 522-524, 527, and 528.

⁷⁹ John Lie is a professor of sociology at University of California, Berkeley. Myoung-kyu Park is a professor of sociology at Seoul National University.

2000s, much of it still holds up.⁸⁰ Kim's last chapter in his monograph expands on the achievements and challenges that both Korean states are still undergoing with Lie and Park concurring on a similar basis.⁸¹ Lie and Park, however, emphasize more on the effects that post-Cold War culture and the 1997 Asian Crisis had on today's South Korean youths.

Lie and Park use the consequences from Dr. Hwang Woo Suk's work as an introduction.⁸² Even though Dr. Hwang's work was a scandal – dubbed by Western media as “The Dr. Hwang Scandal” – the authors posit that this was still a major event as it signaled Korea's instantaneous entrance into biotechnology research. This exhibited that within three decades a country that once relied on horses for plowing and oil lamps for lighting now had the resources to try and compete for groundbreaking future innovation. They further suggest that the entry into the Tech Age, while mired by a scandal, cemented Korea's place as an “emerging soft power.”⁸³

These achievements set the context of Lie and Park's thesis. The authors accentuate that Korea's entrance into advanced technology research – not only in biotech but also in telecommunications, medical technology, and robotics – and the export of

⁸⁰ John Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005: Economic Dynamism, Generational Conflict, and Social Transformations,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 1 (January/February 2006): 56.

⁸¹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From “Land of the Morning Calm” to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 519.

⁸² Dr. Hwang was a biotechnology and veterinarian researcher for Seoul National University (SNU). Hwang and his research lab shot into prominence in 2004 when his team claimed that they successfully cloned human embryonic stem cells. Hwang became an overnight celebrity and was praised by Korean media as the “Pride of Korea.” However, in 2005 the academic journal *Nature*, investigated his claims and found out the contrary. *Nature* accused Hwang of ethically violating research laws – Hwang stole and obtained embryonic eggs from the black market – while creating fraudulent data. Hwang initially denied the allegations, but further government investigations proved *Nature* right. Hwang was dismissed from SNU, charged with embezzlement and ethics law violation, and served a two-year prison sentence. See John Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005,” 56-58; and Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 549-551.

⁸³ Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005,” 56.

Korean popular culture, also known as *hallyu* are telltale signs that a country has achieved highly developed status.⁸⁴ For context, Lie and Park base their definitions of “soft power” on prior American and British achievements.⁸⁵

Korea’s ascension into affluency reinforced their global influence, however, Lie and Park posit that this achievement came at a price for the younger generations.⁸⁶ The authors mention the effects that the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis had on the peninsula.⁸⁷ This was a significant event as it signaled to Korean lawmakers and entrepreneurs that there was an overreliance on a manufacturing economy. As a remedy, government and

⁸⁴ *Hallyu* roughly translates to “Korean Wave.” *Hallyu* is a term used to coin the Korean popular culture phenomena; it is also a blanket word to include all forms of media and fashion trends. *Hallyu* includes K-pop music, TV soap operas, movies, and novels. In more recent years, internet comics (*manhwa*, or better known in Konglish as *webtoon*), and competitive online gaming (e-sports) are now a staple of *hallyu*. The authors posit that Korea was “long an importer of Western popular culture, especially American popular culture,” but now *hallyu* is part of “New Nationalism.” As *hallyu* media became more prominent with the youth, young Koreans viewed this as a form of national pride. While American media still has a large presence in South Korean culture, mainly in movies, *hallyu* media has consistently topped sales charts in the tiny peninsula, easily eclipsing their Western counterparts. Furthermore, *hallyu*’s international success – also topping Japanese, Chinese, and Southeast Asian media charts – is a sign of a successful “soft” approach. See Jinwung Kim, 553-554; and John Lie and Myung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005,” 61.

⁸⁵ In this context, “Soft Power” means the use of cultural and economic institutions to influence global decisions. “Hard Power” is the use of coercive institutions, such as military action, to influence decision-making.

⁸⁶ The generations that Lie and Park analyze are post-baby boomers, or Generation X and Y. Specifically, Generation X (born from early 1970s to the early 1980s) who experienced the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and, thereafter, the current millennial Generation Y (born from the mid-1980s to late 1990s).

⁸⁷ The effects that the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis had on Korea was nearly-catastrophic. The crisis began in Thailand and was an effect of risky credit-swapping. Thailand was known at the time for having an economic boom fueled by a mass influx of Asian capital. Many ASEAN and Asian Tiger members (Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea) participated in such exchanges. Much of the new foreign capital was converted into Thai Baht and used to fund many ambitious projects that were often unregulated and had little leverage. Shortly after, a perfect storm of worldwide market changes occurred. The Crisis was a result from US Dollar and Japanese Yen depreciation (known as “quantitative easing”); followed by US Federal Reserve rate inflation; emerging-markets currency overvaluation; and the sharp decline of technology sector commodities – such as semiconductors and microchips. As such, ambitious projects fell through on the lack of credit, and likewise, many investors lost all capital. The result was a deep recession felt by all international economies invested within Southeast Asia. More importantly, the crisis displayed the cracks of the state-*chaebol* system. Since both entities were synonymous with each other, the bankruptcy of one company, such as Daewoo, had tremendous impact on government revenue and public welfare. See Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 3-9; and Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 523-524.

business leaders stressed the importance of shifting to a service-oriented economy. In other words, Korean economists insisted that “innovation through leading-edge telecommunications and information technology” was the future, and not manufacturing.⁸⁸

The new economic changes had the most impact on the labor level. Since the heydays of the *chaebol* export boom (1970s to 1988), Korea’s global competitiveness was rapidly vanishing. Newly-liberalized Chinese markets were taking the export world by storm. Taking a cue from their Korean neighbors, China now held the premier advantage with cheap labor, worker surplus, and new factory infrastructure. China was now set to bestow the world an even more glut of cheap goods.⁸⁹

Lie and Park conclude that this predicament had enormous ramifications on the Korean psyche. Once a national pride for Korean laborers and leaders, the manufacturing economy was bleeding money. To further salt the wound, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis threatened the prosperity that Koreans worked so hard for. Appropriately, this begs an analysis as to how a nation can survive crises after crises and come out stronger. That answer was taken to heart by President Roh Moo-hyun (1946-2009) and his support for a newer tech-driven generation.

The New Korean Generation, Part III – Generation X

The parents of Generation X contributed to Korea’s accumulation of wealth, but it was their children that experienced a Korea in a near-depression-like collapse.

Politicians, laborers, business leaders, and innovators were forced to adapt to a new

⁸⁸ Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005,” 57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

globalized market. The result was a technology-driven campaign that focused on the quality of infrastructure, logistics, communication, and product superiority.

The Asian Crisis largely impacted *chaebol* exporting tactics. While exporting was still important to the conglomerates, the fanaticism of Park's "export-dumping" schemes did not hold up in a more connected market.⁹⁰ The advent of dirt-cheap Chinese exports caused politicians and business leaders to work around that. Once a laughing stock due to lackluster quality, Korean leaders quickly passed *chaebol* quality-control regulations. Now that *chaebol* brands were known throughout the world, albeit with a bad reputation, it was up to conglomerates to combine product quality and affordability, a tactic that their Japanese counterparts perfected.⁹¹

A new technology-driven government – enacted during the end of Kim Dae-jung's administration (term: 1998-2003) – was one of President Roh's top priorities. The blueprints were laid for the next generation to follow; and this was the next phase of the economy.⁹² Because of this, Korea became the most "wired country" in the world and one of the most invested research and development markets.⁹³ Internationally, the most

⁹⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 544.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 546.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 528.

⁹³ In 1999, Korea's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology created the Korean Education and Research Information Service (*Hanguk kyo yeuk hakseul bowun*, or KERIS). One of KERIS's objectives was to enact Bill #3848. The purpose of the legislation was to rapidly install and update national communication infrastructure. Initially, telecommunications such as landlines and phone towers were prioritized but in the mid-2000s; however, broadband became the focus later on. In turn, government-subsidized "internet highways" were built throughout the tiny nation. KERIS then "loaned" out broadband access to prominent telecom *chaebol* (SK Telecom, KT Olleh, LG U+). The result was near-universal access, fast reliable speeds, and the world's most competitive rates. Korea's investment in telecom technology was so successful that IT thinktanks, such as the United Nation's IT Union, consistently rank Korean internet as the fastest in the world. Additionally, the price-to-speed ratio fare even better with monthly prices being a fraction the cost compared to other highly-developed peers (USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, Taiwan, and Japan). See Kilnam Chon et al., *Brief History of the Internet*, 4-6, and 9; and Jinwung Kim, 545 and 549.

noticeable effect was the astounding rise of *chaebol* product quality. Once playing catch-up to Japanese companies, quality-control and technology initiatives eventually propelled Korean goods above the sales of their staunchest top-tier competitors, such as Sony and Apple.⁹⁴

In conclusion, Korea's technological ambitions shifted the outdated export culture into an "R&D culture," colloquially known as "the faster, the better culture."⁹⁵ The shift was due in part to China's preeminence as the world's exporting giant coupled with the effects of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Korean leaders decided that instead of competing in a losing game, it was better to challenge the quality-to-price market as seen with Japanese counterparts. This was accomplished by heavily investing in technology, research, and innovation. In essence, Korea never lost their trading culture but rather research and innovation were exported instead of cheap overproduced goods.

The New Korean Generation, Part IV: A Shift in Generations

Park Myung-kyu and John Lie finish their research with an analysis on South Korean "New Nationalism" and "Post-Traditional Society."⁹⁶ These terms are set post-Cold War (1991 to present) and are used to examine the sentiments of Generations X and Y. Park and Lie give a brief historical explanation on the nationalist sentiments of past generations. The authors posit that before this era Cold War paranoia against North Korean conspirators and saboteurs was a prominent theme.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Mario Glowik, *Market Entry Strategies: Internationalization Theories, Network Concepts and Cases of Asian firms: LG Electronics, Panasonic, Samsung, Sharp, Sony and TCL China* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), PDF e-book, section 2.6.1.3.4.

⁹⁵ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 549.

⁹⁶ Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, "South Korea in 2005," 61.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

South Korean Cold War nationalism incorporated a wide-array of ideologies. This meant that Park Chung Hee's generation were generally pro-big business, pro-American, anti-North Korean, anti-communist, and, to an extent, pro-Japanese. Park and technocrats promoted and relied on these ideologies to garner support for South Korea's development.⁹⁸ The older generations, who were mostly agricultural and urban factory workers, strongly supported Park. Likewise, Lie and Park compare this generation to their children and grandchildren. In other words, the last part of the authors' analysis examines the large generational gap among these three groups.⁹⁹

While Park's generation contributed to Korea's rapid development, they are gradually fading away as most of them are retirees. Many are well past their sixties with a good portion situated in the eighties onward.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, there is a change in demographics and composure of the Korea's legislative branch, the National Assembly (NA). In 2004, a momentous replacement occurred, 63 percent of NA members were composed of new first-time elected politicians while 43 percent of them were aged in their thirties to forties.¹⁰¹

Lie and Park correlate that a younger voter demographic was wholly responsible for the shift in sociopolitical views, thereby resulting in newer politicians mirroring ideologies of their younger constituency. These new sociopolitical sentiments are coined

⁹⁸ These sentiments are in reference to American support through military and economic aid. Japanese support refers to low interest loans and emulation of exporting tactics.

⁹⁹ Lie and Myung-kyu Park, "South Korea in 2005," 61.

¹⁰⁰ According to reports conducted by the EU's EuroParl, Yonhap news, and Gallup Korea, the 2012 Presidential Election conducted a voter demographic survey. They concluded a large turnout of elderly voters overwhelmingly voted for Park Chung Hee's daughter, Park Geun-hye. Ages ranged from 50 to 90 years of age. See Gallup Korea, *Gallup Korea Daily Opinion No. 174 - August 4-6, 2015 (Week 1)*, (Seoul: Gallup Publishing, 2015); and European Parliament, Lukas Gajdos, and Roberto Bendini, *Quick Policy Insight*.

¹⁰¹ Lie and Myung-kyu Park, "South Korea in 2005," 60.

“New Nationalism” and include national pride in the recent *hallyu* phenomena and a warming of relations towards their Northern brethren.¹⁰² Equally, younger Koreans view anti-communist sentiments as largely a vestige of a bygone Cold War era. Expectedly, the youth also strongly support more progressive *Minjoo* politicians, such as Presidents Kim Dae-jung (1924-2009) and Roh Moo-hyun (1945-2009), who are arguably forefathers of “New Nationalism.”¹⁰³

To show how much newer political establishments inversed Park and Chun era politics, Lie, Park Myung-kyu, and Historian Jinwung Kim underlined one of *Minjoo*’s trademark policies, the “Sunshine Policy.”¹⁰⁴ Policies such as these and Korea’s endeavors into R&D and popular culture, are all aspects of a maturing highly developed nation, and more importantly, a “softer” approach to global influence.

In retrospect, the authors associate Park era nationalism as more in line to a “hard power” stance. The current generation, however, relegates that stance as a remnant of Korea’s turbulent past, a past that caused tremendous growth and prosperity alongside immense suffering. Moreover, South Korean power now lies in its “soft” approach to international influence as easing of Northern relations, the exporting of quality products, and *hallyu* are key to growing South Korea’s global prestige.

¹⁰² Lie and Myoung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005,” 61.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ The Sunshine Policy, implemented in 2000, is a warming of North and South Korean relations. As a result, Kaesung Industrial Complex – located on the DMZ border – was created to engage in trade and relief efforts with North Korea. Kim Dae-jung won a Nobel Peace Prize the same year for his efforts in passing the policy. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 577-580.

The New Korean Generation, Part V: Transition to an Open Access Order (OAO)

You (Yu) Jong-Sung implements economist Douglass North's Access Order (AO) theory to explain the rapid rise of South Korean development.¹⁰⁵ Yu posits that Korea's rise to an Open Access Order (OAO) occurred after Chun's ousting in 1987.¹⁰⁶ More importantly, Yu emphasizes that the 1980s democracy movements, *chaebol* reforms, and Korea's "survival" of two profound recessions – the 1997 Asian Crisis and the 2008 Financial Crisis – are OAO trademarks that prove an ongoing robustness in South Korean society.¹⁰⁷

The bulk of Yu's research is set in the early 1980s to early 2000s; however, the most important period is 1997 to the present. Yu labels this timeframe as the "Transition to OAO" era.¹⁰⁸ He signifies this period as an effect of the "Korean democratic renaissance" that was largely a result from the successful 1987 protests. From 1988 to 1997, Koreans saw center-left opposition dominate the legislative and executive branches of the government. Alongside political change, Koreans saw rapid *chaebol* dismantling

¹⁰⁵ Jong-Sung You is a Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Australia National University.

¹⁰⁶ The AO framework is a groundbreaking theory used to explain how certain countries grow into highly developed nations while others falter. The theory suggests that Limited Access Order societies (LAOs) are synonymous with developing countries while Open Access Orders (OAOs) equate to highly developed countries; therefore, OAO status is the end goal for all LAOs. OAO nations are largely Western in origin and all have characteristics of British-inspired institutions. For example, "role model" nations are exemplified through the U.S., U.K, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. OAO characteristics include stable property and human rights, a strong market economy, a large middle class inclusive of high GNP capital, frequent and fair elections, open access to public education, bureaucratic powers split between executives and legislators, and a polity consisting of competing parties. NWWW includes South Korea in their monograph since it is one of the few OAO nations outside the Western sphere. Other non-Western OAOs include Japan and Taiwan. See Barry R. Weingast et al, *In the Shadow of Violence*, 3-10.

¹⁰⁷ Jong-Sung You, "Transition from a Limited Access Order to an Open Access Order: The Case of South Korea," in *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*, ed., Barry R. Weingast et al, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), PDF e-book, 293.

¹⁰⁸ You, 308.

and regulation coinciding with steady economic growth. The 1997 Asian Crisis, however, tested the resolve of those gains.¹⁰⁹

The election of Kim Dae-jung in 1998 proved a turning point. Although, Kim was elected in what should have been a clear-cut victory for the “Asian Nelson Mandela,” it was instead a closely contested race largely affected by the pessimism surrounding the financial crisis.¹¹⁰ While Kim and his *Minjoo* Party still had a strong voice in the government, a span of ten years saw the new center-right *Saenuri* Party gradually gain a foothold in the NA. In 2008, former Hyundai Construction CEO and *Saenuri* leader, Lee Myung-bak (born 1941), was elected president. Yu further accentuates this decade as the moment Korea cemented their OAO status.

The significance of this bureaucratic change was that Korea underwent “two changes of government, from conservative to liberal (1998) and from liberal to conservative (2008), thereby satisfying the so-called two turn over test for democratic consolidation.”¹¹¹ In contrast, the era from 1960s to the 1980s were known for violent consolidation – Park and Chun’s coup and electoral dissolution – through executive-led military intimidation. Yu adds that Korean societal robustness underwent “military restraint in both elections” and came out even stronger.¹¹² He concludes that Korea’s near-miraculous democratic emergence promptly completed NWWW’s “three doorstep conditions.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ You, 308.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Expanding on NWWW’s theory, developing countries need to undergo a LAO to OAO process but within that process are subsets of requirements. Going in order, a country begins as a Fragile LAO and evolves into a Basic LAO, then finally into a Mature LAO. A Mature LAO needs to undergo “three doorstep conditions” to advance to an OAO. First, a “rule of law for elites” needs to be present to

In summary, key democratic events were a gateway to Korea's entrance into highly developed territory.¹¹⁴ The 1980s protests, the 1990s executive and legislative transitions, and the 1997 and 2008 Financial Crises were testing grounds to see whether Koreans had what it takes to join the few select nations representing affluency, stability, and global prestige.

The New Korean Generation, Part VI: Korean Educational Culture

Korea entered OAO status during the late 1990s. Yu Jong-Sung analyzes this achievement from a sociopolitical viewpoint; however, Yoon Bang-Soon highlights the consequences that Park Chung Hee's technocratic culture had on modern Korean education.¹¹⁵ Specifically, Yoon's thesis addresses the effects that Park-led (state-led) overeducation initiatives had during the period of 1966 to the 1990s. She coins this cultural phenomenon as a "Reverse Brain Drain (RBD)."¹¹⁶

Yoon's research begins with a brief history of Korean "brain drain."¹¹⁷ Shortly after the Korean War (1953) and until the mid-1960s, an influx of Korean refugees from

keep unchecked powers in line. Second, "perpetual lived forms of elite organizations" pertains to both government and private organizations. This step means societal organizations live well-passed a founder's, or leader's, lifespan. These are usually elite organizations, such as prominent political parties and business entities, that keep legislative and economic order intact. Third, "consolidated control of the organizations with violence capacity (VC)" means public representation of state authorities. In other words, democratic representation controls armed actions. "Violence capable" entities include the military and police forces. See Barry R. Weingast et al, 17-19.

¹¹⁴ You fails to expand on the crucial peripheral role the US had in keeping Chun and ROK troops in line. The Reagan Administration, consisting of the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, were a large reason Chun could not use the military to quell dissent. If occurred, Korea would regress back into LAO status as "doorstep one and three" warns against autocrats gaining a monopoly on "violence capable" entities. See Jong-Sung You, 297 and 307-310.

¹¹⁵ Bang-Soon Yoon is a Professor of Political Science at Central Washington University.

¹¹⁶ Bang-Song Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain in South Korea: State-led Model," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 5.

¹¹⁷ NWWW defines "brain drain," also known as "human flight capital," is an emigration problem commonly found in unstable developing countries. Unstable in this context means societies

war-torn country sides and razed cities emigrated all over the world, most notably to the US.¹¹⁸ Beginning under President Rhee, a large portion of tertiary students were sent to pursue overseas training in science and engineering.¹¹⁹ The 1964 census taken by the Korean Ministry of Education reported that 91.4 percent of those students had chosen the US for their studies abroad. Many would later claim residency and permanently stayed in America.¹²⁰

Park took swift notice of the discrepancy and in 1966 began Korea's first attempt of "systematic repatriation"; the Korean Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) was created as a result.¹²¹ KIST began recruiting top academics from the US and West Germany to help lead heavy multidisciplinary R&D agendas. Due to Park's close relationship with the two countries, KIST created joint exchange ventures with them. This endeavor was successful due to all three participant countries' strict contractual limits on work-student visas. Once a student or professional was finished training in the

plagued by massive corruption and crime that results in stagnant and regressing economies. Due to this, mass refugee emigration to more stable and developed countries commonly occur. Within the migration trend is an influx of highly skilled laborers and academics. Also known as "intellectual refugees," these individuals post a "net benefit" usually through fulfilling skilled labor shortages, training, and innovation for their host countries. "Brain drain" individuals usually do not immigrate back to their home country, thus causing the former country to regress even further. See Barry R. Weingast et al, 1 and 224; and Bang-Song Yoon, 5-6.

¹¹⁸ The U.S. has the second-most Korean immigrants next to China, thereby making it the largest Korean population outside Asia. See Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Jaee Dongpo Hyeonhwang* [*Overseas Korean Diaspora*], 14.

¹¹⁹ President Rhee and Park instituted Korean emigration initiatives to the US and other Western countries in the late 1950s to early 1960s. They hoped that training many prominent students would later lead to fulfilling shortages in skilled and technical positions. Such shortages included healthcare, finance, engineering, sciences, trade skills, and foreign language educators. However, Yoon mentions that this backfired on Rhee and initially with Park as many Korean students requested, and were commonly granted, an indefinite length of stay in the US. Many would later become American scientists and PhD candidates for prominent universities, such as the University of California campuses. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 438; and Jong-Sung You in *In the Shadow of Violence*, 299-300; and Ivan Hubert Light and Edna Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Koreans in Los Angeles, 1965-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), PDF e-book, 105-106.

¹²⁰ Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain," 6.

¹²¹ Ibid.

host country, American, West German, and South Korean immigration departments kept a close tab on them until eventual repatriation.¹²²

Historians Moon Chung-in and Byung-joon Jun quote Park's pragmatic stance on immigration, "I don't care [what] the national origin of capital [is]. I welcome capital from the United States, West Germany, Italy, and other European countries. Even if it is Japanese capital, I don't care as long as it is used for the economic development of our country."¹²³ To obtain this needed capital, a "carrot-and-stick" tactic was used to entice a hungry goal-driven citizenry. Park correlated and fervently promoted patriotism, prestige, and lucrative job opportunities, mostly within government and *chaebol* careers; and this in turn, bolstered already successful KIST initiatives.¹²⁴

Expatriate Koreans were now eager to bring foreign-learned skills back to the motherland, and accordingly, this resulted in the RBD phenomena. The chance to obtain these once abundant positions profoundly altered the educational culture of future Koreans. Simply put, frequent and efficient repatriation, along with domestic emphasis on higher education, bestowed Korea with an overabundance of advanced degree holders and, for better and worse, altered future career aspects for Korean youths. Due to this abundance, an old joke among Korean academia was created, "PhD holders are a 'dime a dozen.'"¹²⁵

¹²² Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain," 8.

¹²³ Chung-in Moon, "Modernization Strategy: Ideas and Influences," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 127.

¹²⁴ Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain in South Korea," 9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

The Candlelight Revolution

The Candlelight Revolution (*Chotbul hangjaeng*), also known as the 2016-2017 South Korean Protests, was one of the most significant events in modern Korean history.¹²⁶ Beginning from October 2016 to March 2017, the South Korean government underwent a society-shattering scandal perpetrated by President Park Geun-hye (born 1952), daughter of Park Chung Hee, and her closest confidants.¹²⁷ John Delury and Alexis Dudden's articles, both written within a month of each other and published in the same academic journal, detail the context leading up to the scandal and the consequences that it had on modern Korean politics.¹²⁸

Delury's thesis is told in question form, "What does it take to peacefully remove a democratically elected president from power?" Delury credits "idealistic students, intrepid journalists, invigorated parliamentarians, and outraged urbanites." He also labels them as "traditional forces of dissent."¹²⁹ On the other end, Dudden's thesis is similar to Delury's. However, instead of focusing on the agents of dissent – Dudden also credits

¹²⁶ The name "Candlelight" comes from the theme of protestors bringing candles or small bulbs to the demonstrations. Candles are symbolic for transparency or shining a light on the secrecy of Park Geun-hye's corruption.

¹²⁷ A brief bio on Park Geun-hye is given for context. Geun-hye was born in 1952 and was the first female president of South Korea from 2012 until her impeachment in 2016. She ran as a candidate under the center-right *Saenuri* Party in the 2007 Presidential Election. However, Park lost the primaries to former member Lee Myung Bak. In 2011, Geun-hye rose to prominence as she was elected into the National Assembly while concurrently rising to a *Saenuri* leader. A year later, Park won the 2012 election against center-left *Minjoo* candidate Moon Jae-in – Moon, however, is now the current president since 2017 – but not without controversy. Evidence of election tampering mounted as *Minjoo* and Seoul Metro authorities found intervention conducted by the National Intelligence Service (NIS), a successor to Park Chung Hee's KCIA. Nonetheless, insufficient evidence resulted in the case being dropped. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 534-535; and Barbara Demick and Jung-yoon Choi, "South Korea Elects First Female President," *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/19/world/la-fg-south-korea-park-20121220>.

¹²⁸ John Delury is an Associate Professor of Chinese Studies at Yonsei University, Seoul. Alexis Dudden is a Professor of History at the University of Connecticut.

¹²⁹ John Delury, "The Candlelight Revolution," *Dissent* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 98.

“traditional forces” for toppling Park Geun-hye – she focuses on the major players behind the scandal and how they affected current Korean society.¹³⁰

Both authors begin on the same note, Park Geun-hye’s close friend, Choi Soon-sil (born 1956), was the person who ignited the investigations behind the scandal.¹³¹ Delury reports how fast investigative journalism and a digitally connected population were inquiring about any “backchannel” and illegal dealings.¹³² He further adds that initially there was a slow response from bureaucrats and authorities.

Specifically, some *Minjoo* and *Saenuri* politicians were reluctant to pursue allegations due to party and business ties with the implicated suspects. This was also compounded by the near-impossible impeachment process.¹³³ However, after deliberation

¹³⁰ Alexis Dudden, “Revolution by Candlelight: How South Koreans Toppled a Government,” *Dissent* 64, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 86.

¹³¹ Choi Soon-sil is the daughter of Korean cult leader Choi Tae-min (1912-1994). Tae-min created a religious cult, *Yongsae gyo*, that incorporated elements from Shamanism (*Sin gyo*), Buddhism (*Bul gyo*), and Christianity (*Kidok gyo*). In 1974, Tae-min’s cult gained fame for claims of supernatural psychic communication. The same year a North Korean sympathizer attempted to assassinate Park Chung Hee while he gave a speech out in the open. The assassin failed, however Park’s wife, Yuk Young-soo, was accidentally killed during the fallout. Immediately, Tae-min’s “psychic ability” to speak with the dead caught Park’s attention and a friendship was born. Equally, Geun-hye and Soon-sil became close friends – even attending college together at one point – as Soon-sil took the motherly gap that Yuk once filled. In 2016, Soon-sil became a prime suspect when she and her business firm cleaned up and moved to new offices. Samsung tablets were recklessly thrown away and journalists found caches of incriminating evidence that pointed her and Geun-hye in approving secret backdoor deals. Immediate public backlash occurred as journalists spread the news internationally. Dudden coined this scandal “Choi-Soon-sil-gate” while Western media outlets, like the UK’s *Telegraph*, labeled it “The Korean Rasputin Scandal” and “The Korean Shaman Scandal.” See John Delury, 98-99; Alexis Dudden, 86-88; and Seok Hwai Lee, “The Most Powerful Person in South Korea,” *Straits Times*.

¹³² Furthermore, Choi Soon-sil had a real estate business firm before and during Park Geun-hye’s presidency. The tablets revealed Park funneling public funds to not only Choi’s firm but to other prominent business magnates. Bookkeeping data revealed bribes traced back to prominent *chaebol* magnate and Samsung Vice CEO Lee Jae-yong. Jae-yong is the eldest son of CEO Lee Gun-hee, aptly coined “The Prince of Samsung.” Furthermore, Choi also bribed Park officials to influence Seoul’s Ewha Women’s University admissions – one of the world’s largest and most prestigious all-women universities – to accept her daughter and inflate her grades. In February 2018, Choi was found guilty for abuse of power and bribery. She was fined 16 million USD and sentenced to twenty years in prison. In February 2017, Lee Jae-yong was sentenced five years in prison for bribery. However, in February 2018 he was released due to a successful suspension request. See John Delury, 98-99; Dudden, 86-88; and Seok Hwai Lee, “Most Powerful Person in South Korea,” *Straits Times*.

¹³³ The South Korean impeachment process needs a two-thirds majority vote from the three

and pressure from outside variables – the public and international media – politicians chose to do an internal investigation, albeit at a slow pace.

Dudden’s article accentuates the crucial initial actions that university students played. Specifically, during the timeframe of bureaucratic apathy, student protests were fueled by the transgressions committed by Choi. While there was a myriad of other reasons for massive student agitation, Dudden alludes that Park and Choi’s misdeeds conflicted with Korea’s fervent education and work cultures; this amplified the resentment of millions of hardworking students and white-collar workers.¹³⁴ Students felt

hundred-member National Assembly (NA). Afterwards, the nine-member Constitutional Court (Supreme Court of Korea) needs over a simple majority – minimum six members in support of impeachment – to uphold the impeachment as legitimate. See Article 111.1 in the ROK Constitution. At the time of the scandal *Saenuri* and right-leaning factions composed over 50 percent of the NA. The Supreme Court was split evenly with left, right, and independent-leaning judges. Politicians initially rebuffed protests as they thought this task was impossible. However, a year of protests resulted in overwhelming bipartisan support. A 234 out of 300 NA vote passed followed by a unanimous 9-0 Supreme Court decision in favor of upholding impeachment.

¹³⁴ For context, Korean public schooling begins from elementary (kindergarten to sixth grade), to middle school (grades first to third; otherwise known as seventh to ninth grade in America), and finishes in high school (grades first to third; otherwise known as tenth to twelfth grade). While the in-school hours are similar to American schooling – about five to six hours daily attendance – the after-school curriculum adds an additional three to seven hours. Most students attend after-school academies (*hagwon*), or in a more denigrating term “cram schools,” that cater to *suneung* (colloquially known as the “Korean SATs”) subjects (math, reading, science, and English). According to a 2009 statistics research by University of Illinois, 87.4 percent of elementary students attend *hagwon*; followed by 74.3 percent of middle schoolers; and 53.8 percent of high schoolers. Post-university *hagwon* attendance is an exceptional case as most participants attend campuses catered to tier-based *chaebol* and civil service exams. Reminiscent of Goryeo-Joseon (918-1897 CE) government exams (*gwageo*), civil service testing pertains to all state-funded jobs, such as military officers, educators, first-responders, and administrators. *Chaebol* testing pertains to entry-level jobs, such as paid interns who have the potential to rise into management positions. Both exams are called *Kodeung gosi* (“fifth to seventh -- the highest levels -- tier exams”) and consist of advanced math, science, reading, English, and other career-related subjects. Due to the hypercompetition for these jobs, entire city districts, such as Seoul’s Noryangjin, have economies centered on educating, feeding, and housing *gosi* students (*gosi hakseng*). Likewise, this was unique to Korean society so “Konglish” terms arose from it. For example, *gositel* are dorm-guesthouses meant to shelter exam students. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 551-553; Jin-lee Jung, “Supplemental Education in Korea,” 1-2; and Bo-eun Kim, “Jobseekers Drawn to Civil Servant Exams,” *Korea Times*.

a resurgence of “cronyism” reminiscent of Park Chung Hee’s and Chun’s *chaebol* state.¹³⁵ Delury aptly concurs and labels this resurgence as an “imperial presidency.”¹³⁶

Delury and Dudden also suggest that bureaucrats’ preliminary indifferences were superseded by the fear of repeating the 1980s democracy movements, one where students from the same campuses enacted nationwide revolts and riots. Equally, both authors concur that the Candlelight Protests were situated in a perfect time just like their 1980s brethren. Akin to the global popularity of the 1980s protests, factors such as the 2015-2016 US Presidential Campaigns and the Brexit vote satiated the Western world’s appetite towards the election process. Therefore, it struck a strong interest when Western media found that a tiny country known for technology, orderly conduct, and a strong Pacific alliance could amass millions of demonstrators while enduring year-long civil protests.¹³⁷

Both articles conclude on the international community’s praise for the demonstration’s nonviolent and efficient nature; however, both stop short of mentioning the future challenges of the Korean sociopolitical sphere. Dudden, however, gives a brief projection on Korea’s 2018 direction. Dudden’s conclusion is highly critical of the Trump administration due to the antagonistic “fire and fury” stance towards North Korea.¹³⁸ She suggests that this is an antithesis to South Korea’s peaceful rhetoric. Additionally, Dudden casts the recently-elected South Korean President Moon Jae-in as a disciplined but cooperative leader in contrast to Trump’s “reckless” diplomacy.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Dudden, “Revolution by Candlelight,” 89.

¹³⁶ Delury, “The Candlelight Revolution,” 97.

¹³⁷ Delury and Dudden label the Candlelight Revolutions “peaceful.” Peaceful in this context means virtually no property damages and no reported injuries and deaths. See Dudden, 89; and Delury, 96-97.

¹³⁸ Dudden, “Revolution by Candlelight,” 91.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

In short, the protests were a success and arguably surpassed the 1980s movements in efficiency and international adulation. The level of swift organization, mass participation, and peacefulness cemented Korea as a role model for twenty-first century civil dissent.

Park Chung Hee's Approval

A Korean Gallup poll conducted in August 2015 followed by a September 2015 *Diplomat* article highlights sentiments harbored for past South Korean presidents since Rhee Syngman's (Lee Seung-man) election in 1948 and until Lee Myung-bak's final year in 2012.¹⁴⁰ The polls include a total of eight presidential choices, thereby comprising executives who were directly voted on while disregarding any "acting presidents."¹⁴¹ The presidents included in the survey are, in no specific order, Roh Moo-hyun, Roh Tae-woo, Park Chung Hee, Kim Dae-jung, Rhee Syngman, Chun Doo-hwan, Kim Young-sam, and Lee Myung-bak.¹⁴²

Gallup's methodology includes a sample population of two-thousand anonymous voters aged nineteen to over sixty.¹⁴³ The response method was conducted through

¹⁴⁰ Gallup Korea is an extension of Gallup Analytics (Gallup, Inc.). Gallup, Inc. is a premier international polling thinktank. Their main objective is to quantitatively analyze sociopolitical trends. They are noted for their extensive research on vote polling and leadership approval ratings. Furthermore, Gallup Korea's research mixes Korean and English together, therefore translation may be needed in some areas.

¹⁴¹ Gallup Korea, *Gallup Korea Daily Opinion No. 174 - August 4-6, 2015 (Week 1)*, (Seoul: Gallup Publishing, 2015), PDF report, 9.

¹⁴² Article 71 in the Republic of Korea Constitution states that the "Prime Minister or the members of the State Council in the order of priority . . . shall act as president in case of vacancy or incapacitation of duties." Article 2 states "The first presidential election shall be held not later than forty days before the Constitution enters force." Therefore, when a president is incapacitated due to death, resignation, or court proceedings – such as Park Chung Hee, Chun Doo-hwan, and Park Geun-hye – the PM becomes "acting president" for no more than forty days. Within that timeframe snap elections are held to allow citizens to directly vote for the next successor.

¹⁴³ In Chapter II, Article 15 of South Korea's "Public Official Election Act," the minimum age

telephone, MMS texting, and paper ballots. The survey questions included presidential job performance evaluation, reasons for positivity/negativity, and the voter's party affiliation. Gallup concluded that Park Chung Hee – with 44 percent of the votes – did the “best job leading the country after liberation.” Roh Moo-hyun followed with 24 percent, then Kim Dae-jung with 14 percent. The rest had an irrelevant 3 to 0.1 percent positive response rate.¹⁴⁴

In context to presidential policies, 67 percent responded that Park “did many good things.” This is compared to the next two highly rated presidents, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, both scoring 50 to 54 percent respectively. Within that question were also subsets of policies that responders marked as “good things.” Park received an enormous 52 percent for “economic development” – alluding to *chaebol* and industrialization reforms – followed by the “New Village Movement (*Saemaul undong*), and 12 percent for “improving the general public's standard of living.”¹⁴⁵

Inversely, Gallup also asked “which presidential acts were the wrong things.” Park overwhelmingly received 84 percent of the votes, with 74 percent towards *Yushin* constitutional laws and 10 percent for the 1961 coup. These transgressions easily eclipsed Chun's democracy crackdowns, which hovered around 7 percent. However, if considering the Gwangju Crackdowns as democratic oppression – these were categorized separately – then the number rises to 20 percent.¹⁴⁶

to vote for all public officials is nineteen. It is also worth noting that Korean ages are based on the lunar calendar along with counting womb development as one age year. Meaning, there is a discrepancy of about one age-year compared to Western age-dating. Therefore, the minimum voting, conscription, and legal age of nineteen is equivalent to eighteen in America.

¹⁴⁴ Gallup Korea, *Gallup Korea Daily Opinion No. 174*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

As this was strictly a statistical survey, Gallop did not include a conclusion. Steven Denney, however, analyzed the Gallop results and compared it to other past polls.¹⁴⁷ Denney's conclusion concurs with other academics in regard to Park's legacy, it is highly divisive and "mixed" at best.¹⁴⁸ He compares Park's legacy to Taiwan's Chiang Kai-shek and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew. Along with mixed feelings, Denney denotes that Park, Chiang, and Lee are highly successful "non-benevolent developmental dictators."¹⁴⁹ Successful in this context means raising the standard of living.

In the same year, Denny analyzes a Seoul University poll, in conjunction with the Korean newspaper *Joongang Ilbo*. The poll concluded on a similar basis, Park's "economic growth" positively overwhelmed his "questionable" political actions. Unfortunately, the weaknesses of both polls come from the lack of linking demographics. For example, the presidential "good/bad policies" survey lacked characteristics, such as age, household income, and region.¹⁵⁰

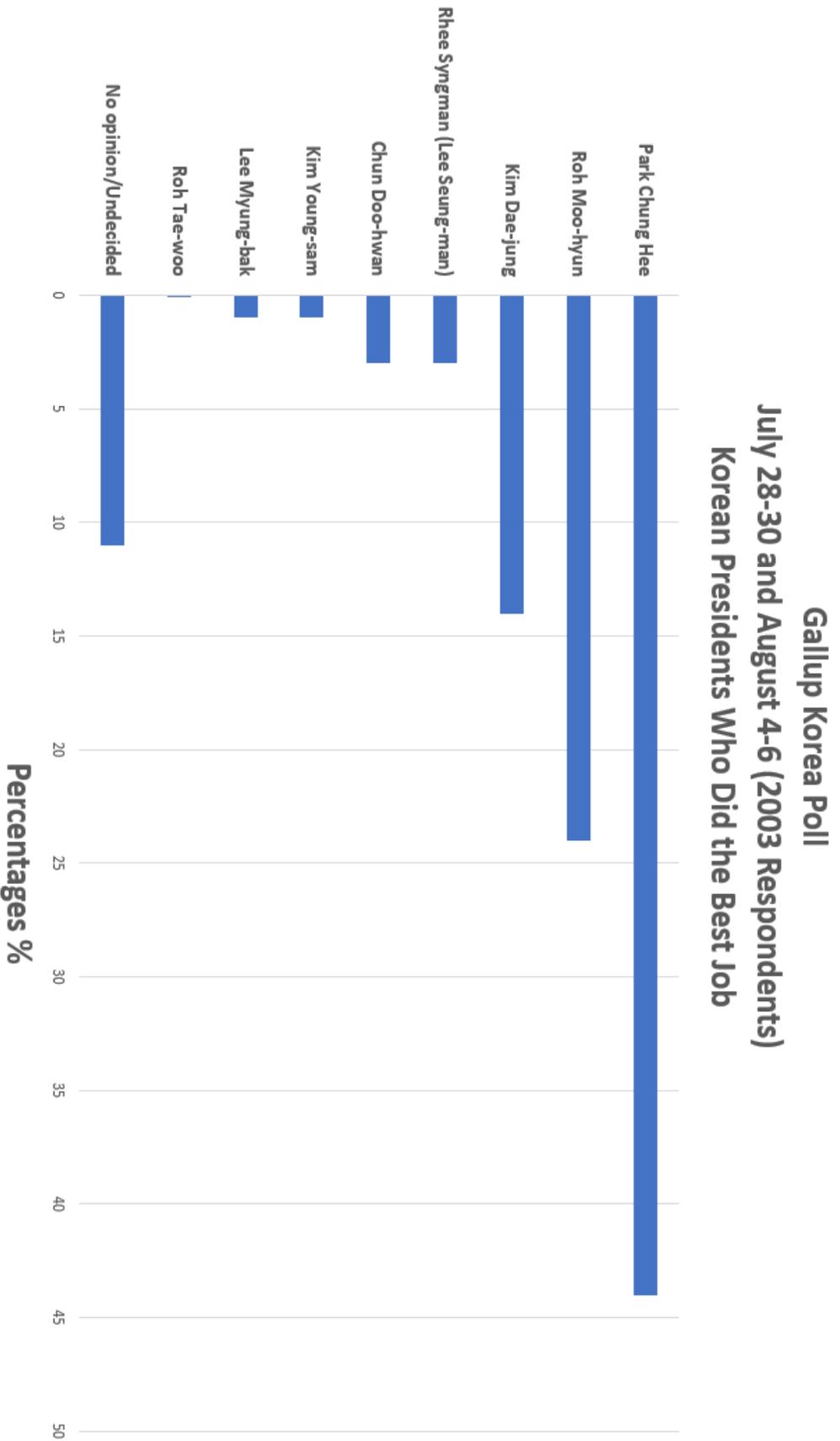
In other words, presidential legacies and public policy sentiments are evaluated as independent and wholly separate entities, thereby missing any linking features, like what age groups and income brackets support Park and which ones do not. Graphs 5.4 to 5.8, furthermore, help visualize Gallup's analysis with data taken and translated from the Korean Gallup survey.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Denney is a Professor of Global Affairs in the University of Toronto.

¹⁴⁸ Steven Denney, "The Mixed Legacy of a South Korean Dictator," *Diplomat*, September 17, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/the-mixed-legacy-of-a-south-korean-dictator/>.

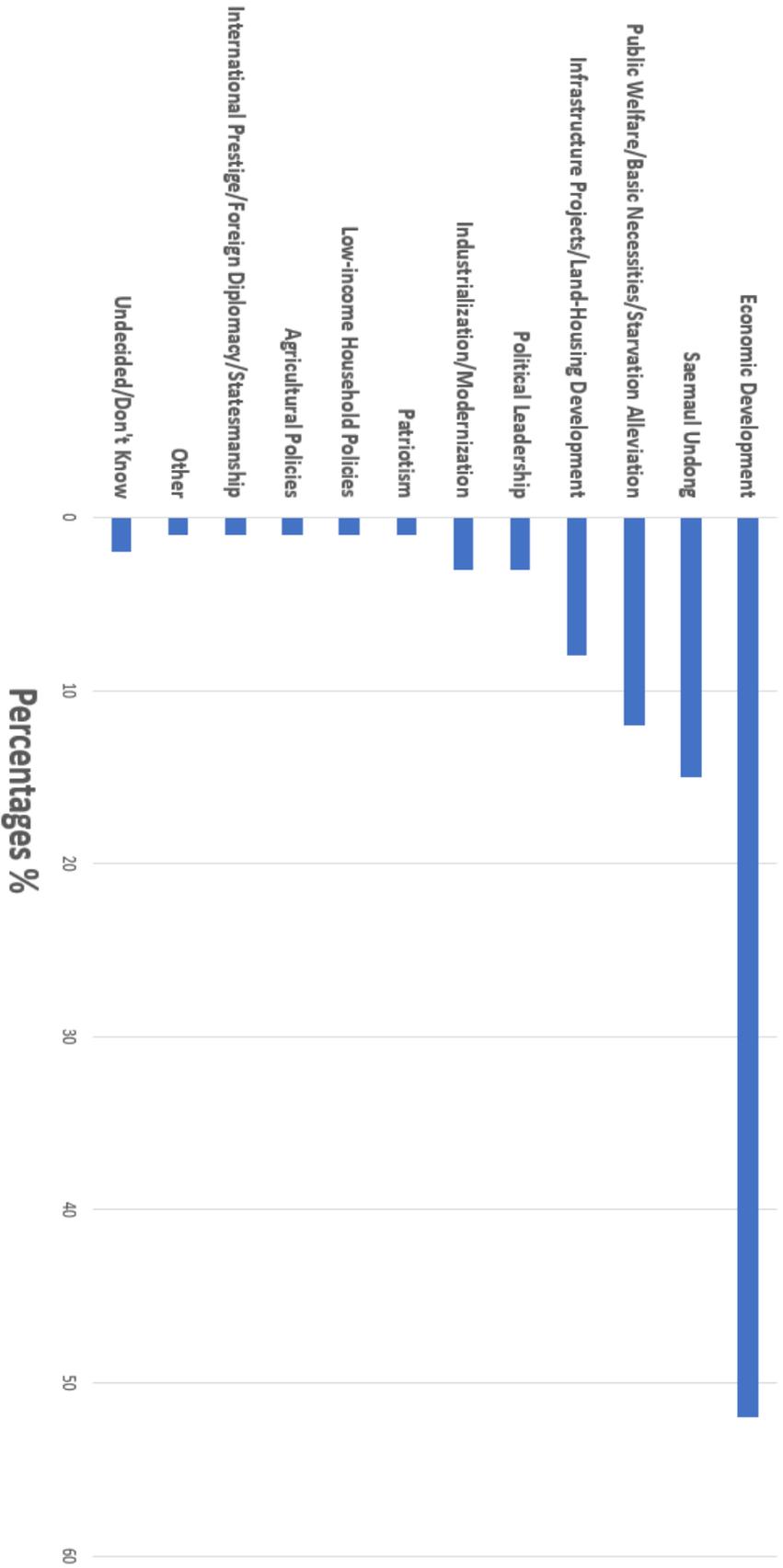
¹⁴⁹ Denny, "Mixed Legacy," *Diplomat*.

¹⁵⁰ The 2015 Gallup poll also had an independent survey to complement "the best South Korean leader since 1945" poll. This poll was in relation to Park Geun-hye and *Saenuri* approval ratings. The demographics are as followed, people aged 50s to 80s had a 60 to 70 percent support of Park Chung Hee. Additionally, they were categorized on which candidate and party they supported in the 2012 elections. Over 65 percent of them supported Park Geun-hye and her *Saenuri* colleagues. See Gallup Korea, *Gallup Korea Daily Opinion No. 174*.



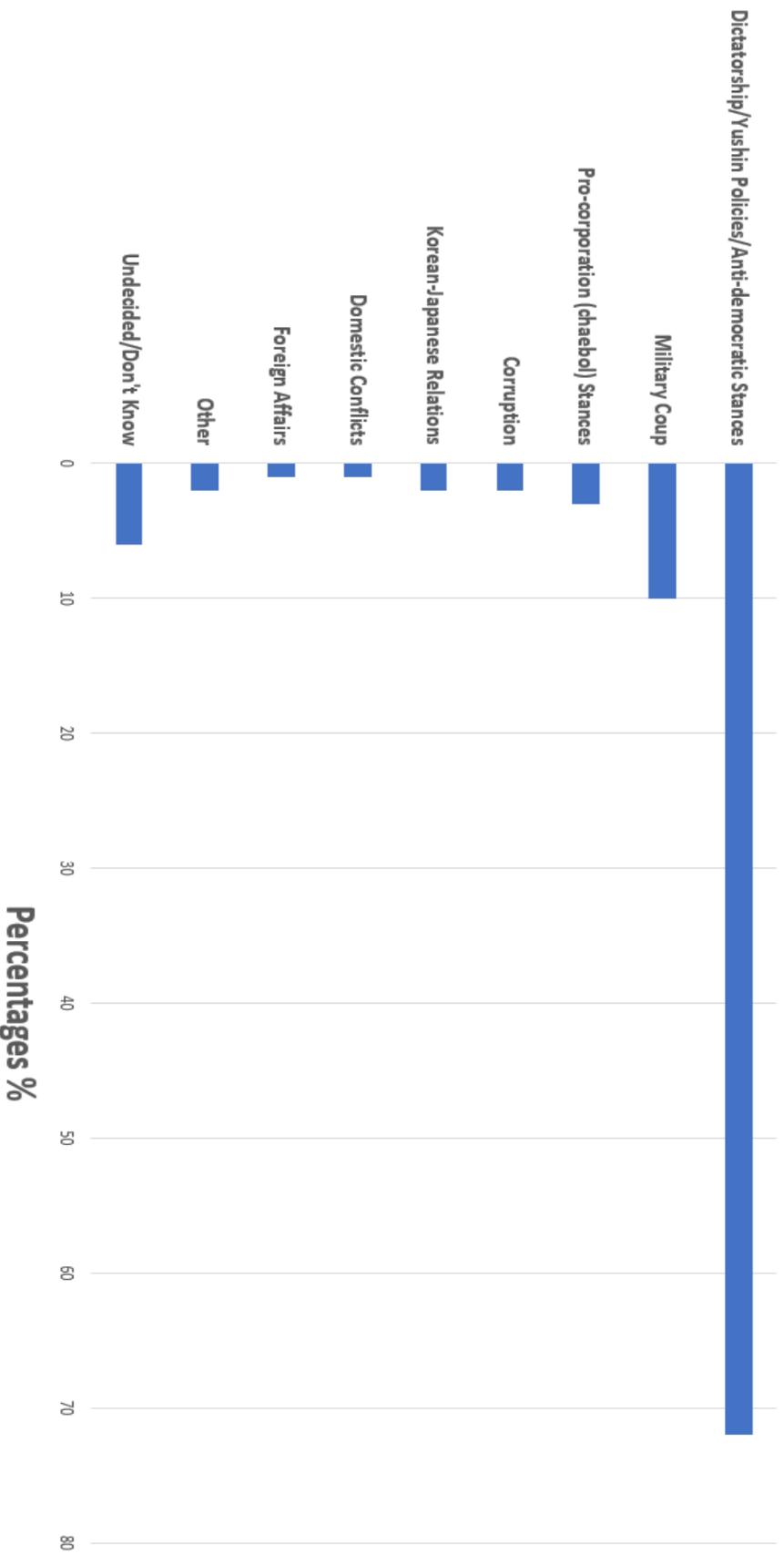
Graph 5.4. Source: Gallup Korea, “Korean Presidents Who Did the Best Job.” Graph by author.

July 2015 5-week Gallup Poll (667 Respondents): What Park Chung Hee "Did Right"



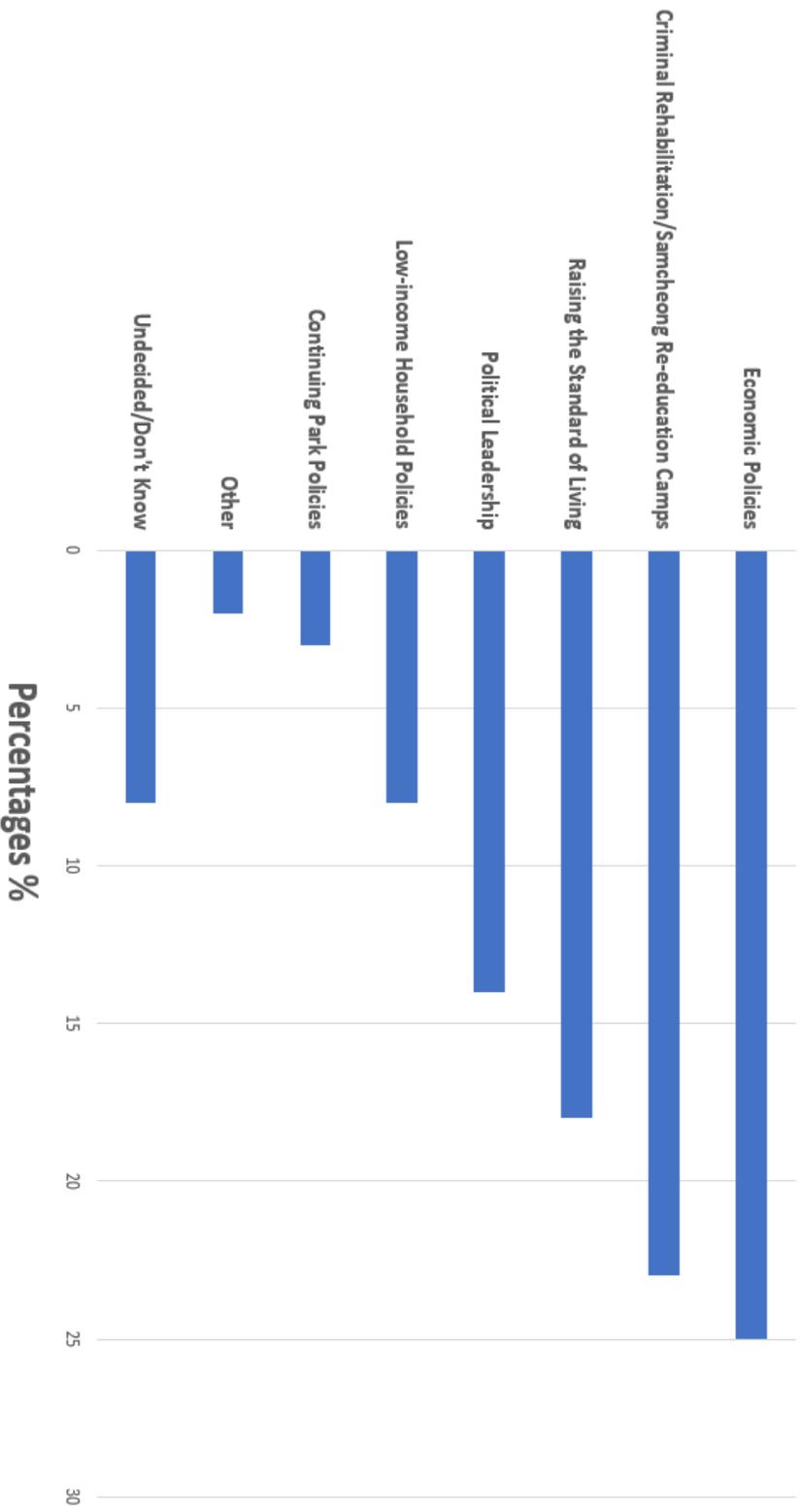
Graph 5.5. Source: Gallup Korea, "What Park Chung Hee Did Right." Graph by author.

July 2015 5-week Gallup Poll (667 Respondents): What Park Chung Hee "Did Wrong"



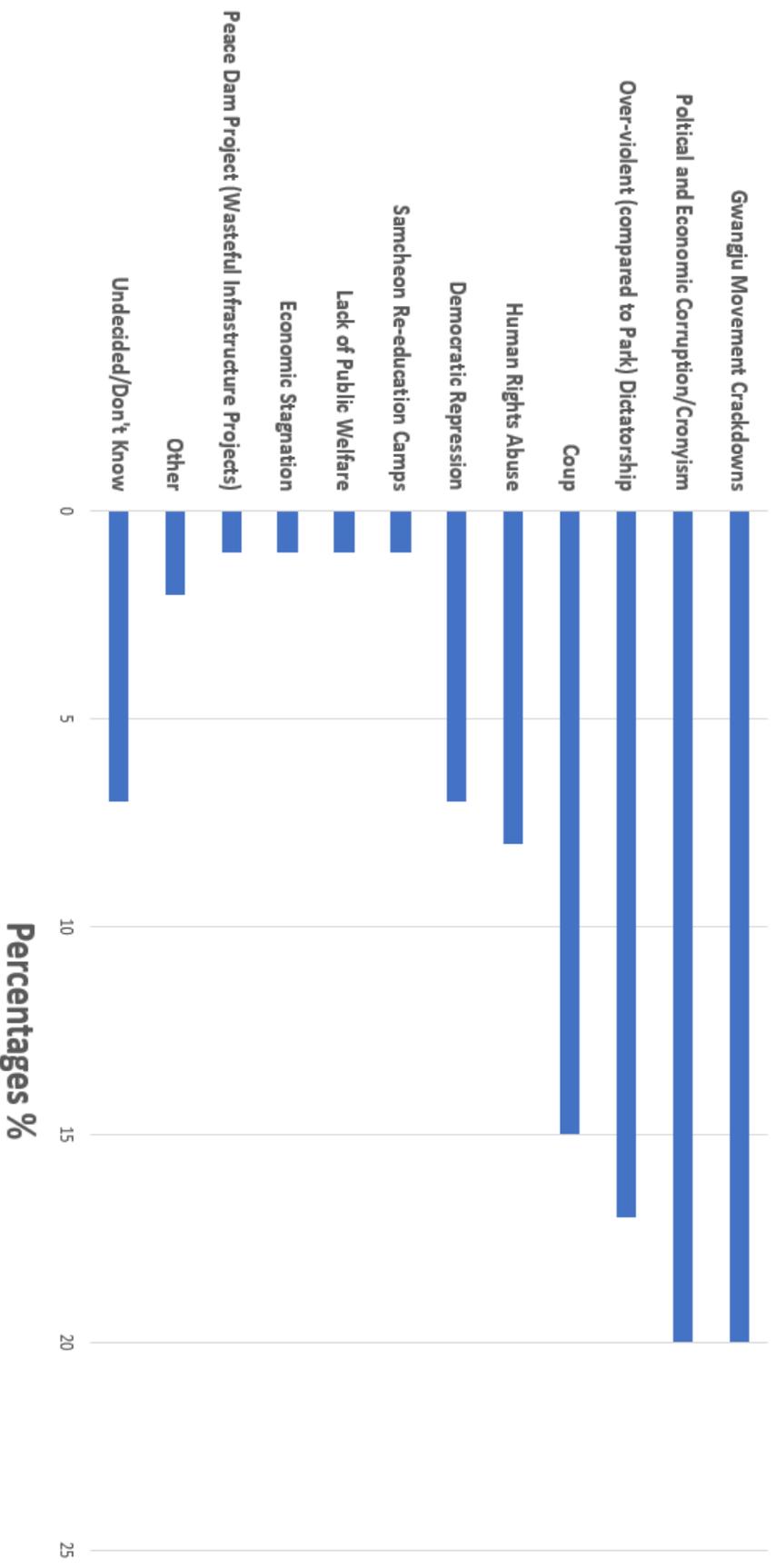
Graph 5.6. Source: Gallup Korea, "What Park Chung Hee Did Wrong." Graph by author.

**July 2015 5-week Gallup Poll (160 Respondents):
What Chun Doo-hwan "Did Right"**



Graph 5.7. Source: Gallup Korea, "What Chun Doo-hwan Did Right." Graph by author.

July 2015 5-week Gallup Poll (602 Respondents): What Chun Doo-hwan "Did Wrong"



Graph 5.8. Source: Gallup Korea, "What Chun Doo-hwan Did Wrong." Graph by author.

The Dokdo Islands Dispute, Part I

Authors Lee Seokwoo, Lee Hee Eun, Harry N. Scheiber, and Jon M. Van Dyke research the historical and legal analyses behind the Dokdo Islands dispute.¹⁵¹ The authors' essays introduce the territorial clashes between Korea – inclusive of both North and South – and Japan.¹⁵² Seokwoo and Hee Eun's research is a brief historical overview on the origins of the conflict. Whereas, Scheiber and Van Dyke follow up by describing the legal disputes behind them; they are particularly interested in the treaties and international negotiations that led to such contentions.

Seokwoo and Hee Eun label Dokdo as one of the last vestiges from Japan's colonial age (1895-1945). The authors also suggest that the issue is similar to Japan's claim on Russian Northern Territories (Kurile Islands) and Chinese-Taiwanese Senkaku Islands (Diaoyudao Islands). All three case studies share the theme of unresolved World War II negotiations; additionally, Dokdo is seen as more of a victim due to direct and ineffectual US-Pacific oversight.

Japan's claim to Dokdo officially began in 1905 when the Shimane Prefecture – located in Honshu island near Hiroshima – incorporated most territories surrounding the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Japan's 1905 claim was an effect from their decisive victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).¹⁵³ The result was international acknowledgement

¹⁵¹ Seokwoo Lee is a Professor of International Law at Inha University, Incheon; Hee Eun Lee is an Associate Dean and Professor of Law at Handong International Law School, Pohang; Harry N. Scheiber is a Professor of Law and History at University of California, Berkeley; and Jon M. Van Dyke is a Professor of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

¹⁵² "Dokdo" is the Korean term for the islands while "Takeshima" is the Japanese label. The UN also labels them "Liancourt Rocks." The tiny islands are situated in the East Sea (Japan Sea) located east of South Korea's Gangwon province and North of Japan's Honshu island. It is also worth noting that the name "East Sea" is also a similarly contentious issue. Likewise, Japanese label the sea "Sea of Japan (Japan Sea)" while Koreans and the UN label it "East Sea."

¹⁵³ The Russo-Japanese War occurred during the peak of Japan's Meiji Reforms (1868-1912). Japan's decisive military victory is partly attributed to the successful naval battles led by Admiral Togo

(The Treaty of Portsmouth) for Japan's East Asian protectorate rights. Initially, Dokdo was not mentioned as a territory, however, Japanese officials eventually labeled the islands as *terra nullius*. In other words, Dokdo was an uninhabited area – perhaps unknown to pre-twentieth century Western-Japanese cartographers – and by default was in Japan's sphere of influence.¹⁵⁴

The timeline shifts to the aftermath of Japan's August 1945 surrender and the effects from the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. After former Imperial territories gained independence, the treaty sought to conclude compensation and reparation claims. While land reforms and infrastructure remuneration were addressed in the former colonies, Dokdo was overlooked once again. Because of this, Dokdo's ownership has been a strain on Korean-Japanese relations for more than five decades.¹⁵⁵

The authors conclude by outlining four points describing the issue from a Korean perspective. First, the issue at heart is about past Japanese aggression lingering on until contemporary times. Second, Imperial Japan's takeover of the Korean peninsula is further exacerbated by the violent use of military force to incorporate remote islands. Moreover, Dokdo's spanning reach in the East Sea was used to benefit Japanese military and commercial ventures at the expense of Koreans. Befittingly, modern Korean academia emphasizes the last two points.

Heihachiro, labeled by Western media as the "Asian Horatio Nelson." The war quickly ended in one year resulting in the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth. The Treaty was administered by Theodore Roosevelt, who won a Nobel Peace Prize from it, and put an end to Russian expansionism while signaling Japan's hegemony in Asia. This status gave Japan exclusive protectorate rights over Korea and Manchuria, thereby signaling the beginning of the Imperial Era. See Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 121.

¹⁵⁴ Seokwoo Lee and Hee Eun Lee, "Chapter I: Overview – Dokdo: Historical Appraisal and International Justice" in *Dokdo: Historical Appraisal and International Justice* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2011), PDF e-book, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Seokwoo Lee and Hee Eun Lee, 2.

Third, Korea has a “tremendous amount” of historical evidence, and more importantly, ancient records mentioning sparse occupation.¹⁵⁶ Lastly, modern Japanese scholarship still perpetrates past aggressions in a “nationalistic tone.”¹⁵⁷ For example, memorials like the Yasukuni Shrine and “textbook distortions” offer no apologies for past transgressions of international order; this is compared to Germany’s full contrition regarding Nazism. The diminutive references towards Imperial war crimes and military aggression are meant to justify past wrongdoings and to “promote” a “distorted version” of patriotism and nationalism.¹⁵⁸

The Dokdo Islands Dispute, Part II

Scheiber and Van Dyke’s essay focus on the diplomatic and legal aspects of Dokdo. Scheiber’s basis is that Korea has a very strong claim to the islands, and, if an “international tribunal were to adjudicate the dispute, Korea would likely prevail.”¹⁵⁹ He

¹⁵⁶ The Goryeo-Song (*circa* 1145CE) book *Samguk Sagi* is an anthology of historical documents detailing Korea’s Three Kingdom Era, otherwise known as the histories of Baekjae, Silla, and Goguryeo (57BCE – 668CE). The anthology contains manuscripts and maps describing the “State of Usan-guk.” Usan-guk was founded and ruled by Silla general Kim Isabu (ruled during the 6th century CE). *Samguk* includes maps of Usan-guk with islands spread east of Ulleung-do Island, South Korea. Due to these, Korean historiography asserts that Kim Isabu incorporated Dokdo into his rule centuries before Japan first laid eyes on the rock islands. See Seokwoo Lee and Hee Eun Lee, “Chapter I: Overview – Dokdo,” 1-4; and Northeast Asian History Foundation (NAHF), *Dokdo*, 24 and 55.

¹⁵⁷ Seokwoo Lee and Hee Eun Lee, “Chapter I: Overview – Dokdo,” 2.

¹⁵⁸ The Yasukuni Shrine (*Yasukuni Jinja*) is a Shinto memorial constructed in 1869 by the Meiji Emperor. The shrine commemorates individuals, soldiers and civilians, who died while serving Japan, and came under controversy after World War II. Japanese officials decided to enshrine most soldiers that served in World War II and beyond. This included war criminals found guilty by the 1946 International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). The most infamous official was former Imperial Army General and Prime Minister Hideki Tojo (1884-1948). The IMTFE found him guilty of being a leader in enacting “aggressive war tactics against various nations” and the inhumane treatment of war prisoners and civilians. Tojo was also found guilty of contributing to the massacre of millions mostly located in Manchuria and Korea; he was later executed by hanging. See Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 601; and Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 137 and 230.

¹⁵⁹ Harry N. Scheiber, “Chapter II - Legalism, Geopolitics, and Morality: Perspectives from Law and History on War Guilt in Relation to the Dokdo Island Controversy,” in *Dokdo: Historical Appraisal and International Justice*, ed., Seokwoo Lee and Hee Eun Lee (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishers,

explains that the Dokdo issue is mostly resolved as most international legal entities attribute the islands as Korean territory. However, a concrete conclusion is yet to be as the legal world awaits Japan's official recognition of Dokdo as Korean territory.¹⁶⁰

Scheiber furthermore expands on Dokdo litigation by criticizing two of Japan's "conventional legal frameworks," ones that are still used today. First, the *terra nullius* argument cites that Imperial Japan was in their rights to incorporate unclaimed or undiscovered territory. However, this argument is rendered moot by many ancient documents, such as *Samguk Sagi*, alongside other recorded recollections from medieval trading vessels. Plainly put, a meticulously recorded history strongly disavows *terra nullius*. Moreover, Japan's use of this argument further cements Imperial history as a "progression" that forced "Korea into a subservient status" intent on being "exploitative" through "cruel rule."¹⁶¹

Secondly, the vague territorial borders created by the San Francisco Peace Treaty is used by the Japanese government as a defense. Scheiber notes that Korea's exclusion from treaty negotiations renders it impotent under current laws. If international courts were to resolve the issue now, Korea's past omission would allow the treaty to be thrown out under outdated clauses.¹⁶²

Subsequently, Scheiber posits that historical context was a crucial variable that may have avoided the conflict altogether.¹⁶³ Scheiber and Van Dyke attribute the United

2011), PDF e-book, 13.

¹⁶⁰ Scheiber., 17.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶² Ibid., 17.

¹⁶³ Scheiber and Van Dyke note that Korea's exclusion is attributed to a variety of variables. The most prominent is General Douglas MacArthur's sympathetic views towards a war-torn Japan. MacArthur's sentiments created a protective screen for Japanese negotiators. Furthermore, while the Korean War was escalating in 1950, MacArthur was under the role of Supreme Commander for the

States' ineffectual attitude as a primary variable for American officials staying on the sidelines; equally, their motives are also up for debate. One prominent reason was that high-ranking US bureaucrats were distracted with Cold War Korean border clashes – later escalating into the Korean War – and could not be bothered with resolving such isolated claims. Subsequently, Japanese negotiators took advantage of the distraction and excluded “Takehima Island” as part of the territorial compensation clauses.¹⁶⁴

Conversely, in exercising their right to exclude “Takehima Island,” Japan inadvertently forced themselves to agree to all terms set forth by the 1943 Cairo Conference and the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation.¹⁶⁵ The clause in the Cairo Conference states that “Japan will be . . . expelled from all other territories [inclusive of all Pacific islands].” The Potsdam clause further cements these ultimatums by “limiting Japanese sovereignty limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and to such *minor islands* as we determine.”¹⁶⁶ The “minor islands” label is accentuated as this term is subject to changing times, thereby entailing that Japan should reevaluate all claims, through UN oversight, to any contested islands.

In summary, postwar Japanese negotiators cleverly conveyed initial negotiations in their favor, but, due to the outdated and arbitrary nature of such clauses, current

Allied Powers (SCAP). One of the SCAP's tasks was to transform Japan into a manufacturing hub to help provide a stable supply line for Pacific forces in Korea, and later Vietnam. Due to this, the SCAP overlooked – whether intentionally or out of ignorance is up for debate – wartime issues, such as Dokdo disputes and sex slavery (“comfort women”). Building Japan's new economy and without any hinderances was the main priority. See Andrew Gordon, 282; and Jinwung Kim, 349-350 and 257.

¹⁶⁴ Scheiber, “Chapter II - Legalism, Geopolitics, and Morality,” 24.

¹⁶⁵ The Cairo Conference and Potsdam Proclamation were conferences that outlined Japan's terms of unconditional surrender. Explicitly, these conferences demanded that Japan give back all lands taken during World War II and to abolish any form of enslavement and indentured servitude among affected regions. The conferences were led by Allied forces; however, the only Asian power present was China's Nationalist Government (Kuomintang) represented by Chiang Kai-shek. Korea was, therefore, left out of crucial negotiations that dictated the future of the peninsula. See Harry N. Scheiber, 19-21.

¹⁶⁶ Scheiber, “Chapter II - Legalism, Geopolitics, and Morality,” 19.

international courts can easily discard them. Furthermore, Van Dyke warns that in hindsight Korea's exclusion from vital negotiations left out needed historical context – such as almost a millennium worth of recorded ventures – that may have swayed General MacArthur, also known as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), into a more sympathetic role. This ultimately doomed what should have been a small issue into decades worth of antagonism and fervent nationalist propaganda perpetrated by both Korean and Japanese politicians.¹⁶⁷ Figure 5.2 and Maps 5.1 and 5.2 contain pictures, translations, and geography to help visualize the conflict.

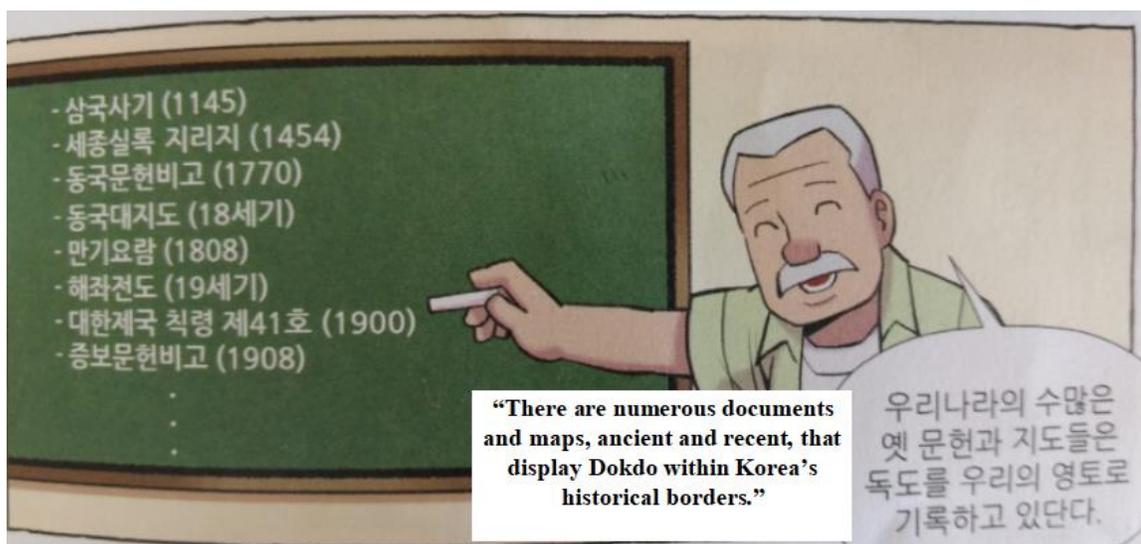
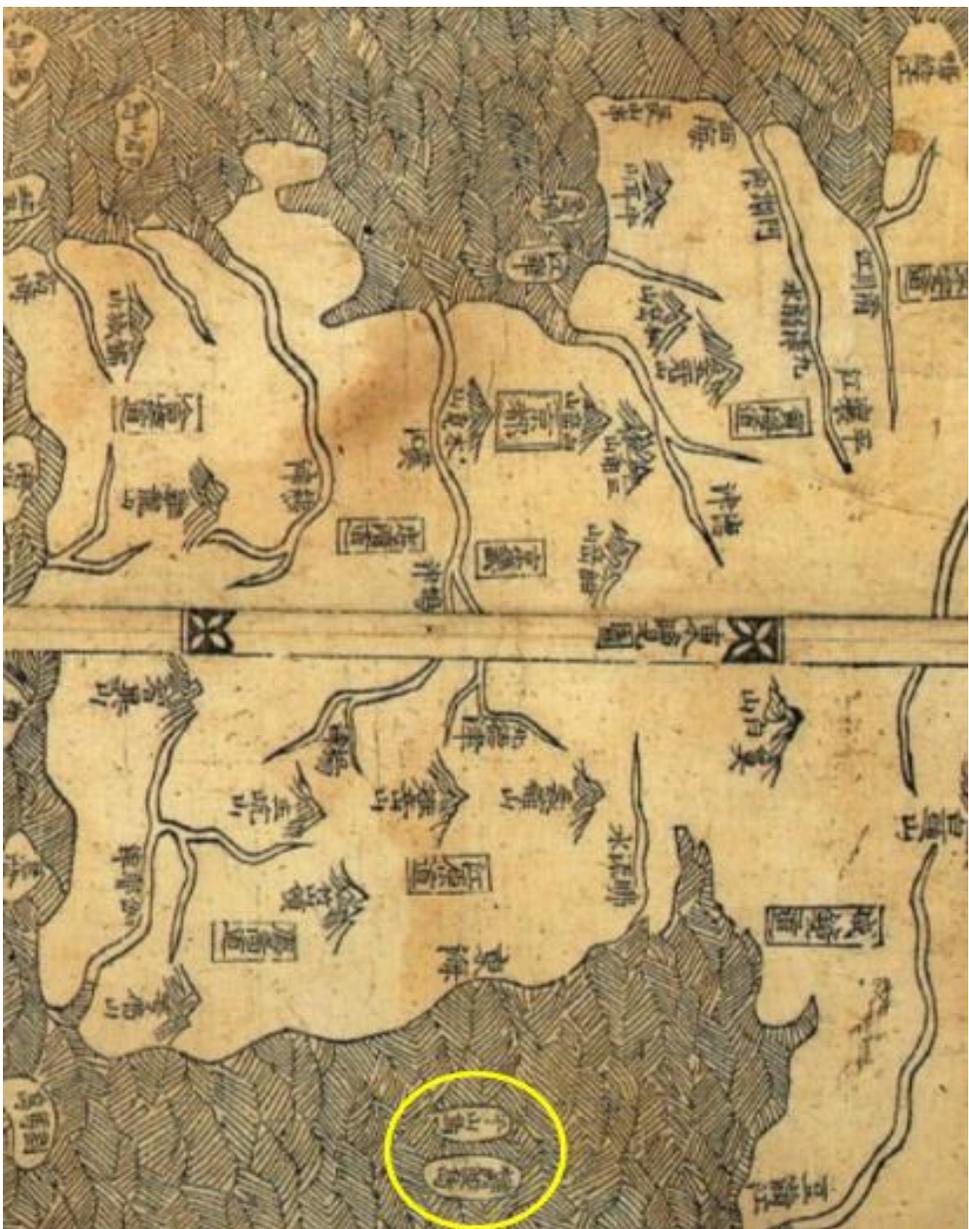
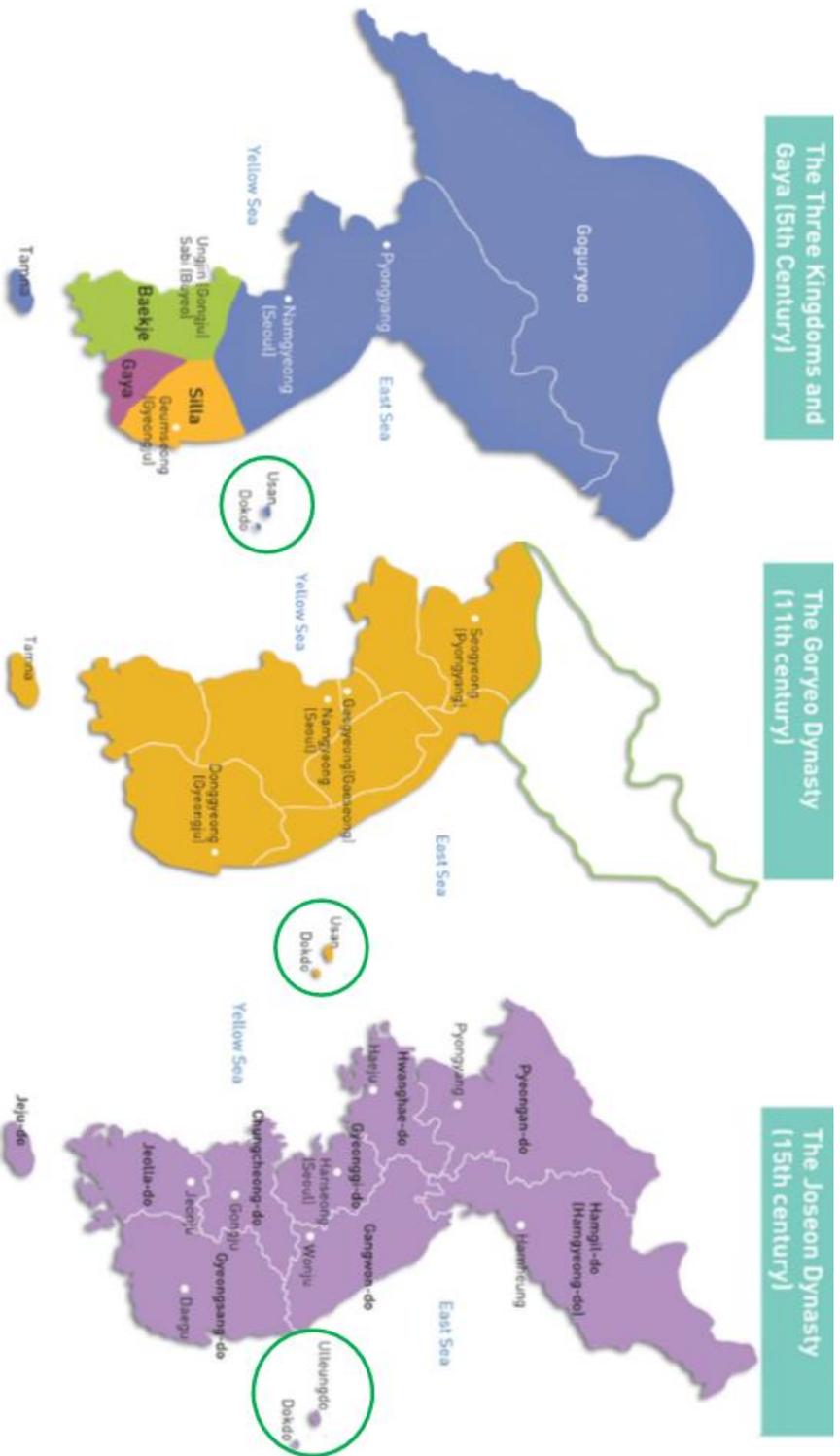


Figure 5.2. Pictured is a translated excerpt taken from the government textbook *Yeogi-neun Dokdo*. Please note the top source labelled “삼국사기 (1145)” is the Goryeo-Song anthology *Samguk Sagi*. Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation (NAHF), *Yeogi-neun Dokdo*, 55.

¹⁶⁷ During Roh Moo-hyun's presidency (term: 2003-2008) Korean public-school curriculum, from primary to secondary, required students to study Dokdo history. Likewise, Japanese curriculum includes “Takeshima” claims while disregarding ancient Goryeo-Song history. In 2008, the conflict escalated when Korean officials temporarily recalled the Japanese ambassador in Seoul as an attempt to protest the whitewashing of history. See Jon M. Van Dyke, “Chapter III,” in *Dokdo: Historical Appraisal and International Justice*, 39; and Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 326 and 357.



Map 5.1. Pictured is a copy of a map from *Samguk Sagi*. Circled are the islands of Usan-guk (Ulleung-do and Dokdo).
Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Map 5.2 Pictured are three maps from 500 to 1500CE with the historical lands – also taken from *Samguk Sagi* sources – of Ulsan-guk and Dokdo circled.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The “Comfort Women” Issue, Part I: Masculine Perspectives

Watanabe Kazuko analyzes how East Asian patriarchy influenced the “comfort system.”¹⁶⁸ Starting from 1918 and ending in 2000, Watanabe gives a brief history of Japan’s prostitution system.¹⁶⁹ She posits that the primary variable in Japanese sex culture are the impenitent positions instilled by “Confucian patriarchal culture.”¹⁷⁰ She also adds that “Confucianism had taught [women] that [their chastity] was more valuable than their lives.”¹⁷¹ Consequently, this created a “chastity myth” that collectively bound both men and women.¹⁷²

The myth was not only tied to women but also to men. Men were stigmatized with hyperactive libidos while a woman’s worth was acquiescent to their virginity. Moreover, men – fathers, brothers, and husbands – whose loved ones were “deflowered” were branded as weak protectors under the same system and, therefore, were subject to be led by more dominant men.¹⁷³

Another factor that amplified patriarchal culture was wealth. Watanabe notes that “‘Wealthy Japan’ has become the most notorious country in the world for recruiting and exploiting women.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, as Japan’s wealth flourished so did the normalization of the sex industry.¹⁷⁵ Watanabe posits that during the “First Wealthy Era

¹⁶⁸ Kazuko Watanabe was a Roman Catholic nun and professor at Notre Dame Seishin University, Okayama.

¹⁶⁹ Kazuko Watanabe, “Trafficking in Women’s Bodies, Then and Now: The Issue of Military ‘Comfort Women,’” *Peace & Change* 20, no. 4 (1995): 22.

¹⁷⁰ Watanabe mentions that Confucianism is a cultural set of laws originating from Ancient China that spread throughout East Asia. She mentions that it is highly patriarchal due to the power position originating from fatherly figures. Thereby, women, especially the youth, are relegated to a submissive position.

¹⁷¹ Watanabe, “Trafficking in Women’s Bodies,” 22.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷⁵ “Wealthy Japan” is a two-era dichotomy. The first era of prosperity began during the end of

(1912-1945)” Japan’s strong Confucian culture – manifested through military, business, and civilian spheres – was a benefactor that created the “comfort system.”¹⁷⁶ Moreover, the SCAP’s oversight and punishment system during Japan’s post-World War II recovery (1945-1952) was collectively lenient. Such clemency still lingers on the current polity’s agenda, one that mostly consist of males.

This mentality ultimately carried over into the “Second Wealthy Era (1960s-1991),” a period known for Japan’s ascension as an economic superpower. Concurrently, domestic sex industries, such as local red-light districts, and international sex tourism flourished. When collectively combined, Watanabe posits that this is a strong motif for modern Japanese culture’s “non-recognition of past crimes” or, in other words, insensitivity and willful ignorance of wartime sexual abuse.¹⁷⁷

Watanabe’s emphasizes that in 2000 and beyond Japan shows some signs of capitulating to international pressure; she labels this era as part of Japan’s “instrumentalist nature.” This post-modern nature was achieved through “women’s

the Meiji Emperor’s reign until the World War II (1912-1945). The second era began shortly after the SCAP’s exit and lasted until the Japanese Real Estate Asset Burst (1960s-1991). See Watanabe, 26-27.

¹⁷⁶ For contextual history, the “comfort system” officially began in 1932 when Imperial military clashed with Chinese officials in Shanghai. The “Shanghai Incident” prompted Japanese authorities to quickly set up more bases and civilian outposts around colonies and protectorates. Nearby, sprawling entertainment districts appeared overnight. Expatriate Japanese – consisted of military, civilian, and government officials – used these districts for their leisurely activities, most notably, gambling and nightlife. According to official records from Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, local women were “recruited” to become “hostesses, entertainers, and waitresses.” As a result, these districts were known as “comfort stations” with the sole intention of providing hospitality services. Equally, female workers were colloquially known as “comfort women.” After the 1945 Japanese surrender, US officials published a report, *Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces*, detailing a large government sponsored “brothel system” that “recruited, coerced, and forced” colonial subjects solely for prostitution with little to no compensation. See Toshiyuki Tanaka, *Japan’s Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation* (London: Routledge, 2007), PDF e-book, 1-10, 84, and 103.

¹⁷⁷ Yangmo Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances? Japanese Policy on the Comfort Women Issue,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015), 243.

collective voices” becoming a “great force for [contrite] changes.”¹⁷⁸ Watanabe concludes that Confucian patriarchy still affects the government’s perturbed apologetic responses. Additionally, her solution involves NGOs playing a bigger role in informing the public about the plight of “comfort victims.”¹⁷⁹

The “Comfort Women” Issue, Part II: Japan’s Stance on Contrition

Ku Yangmo focuses on Japan’s apologetic stances towards the “comfort system.” Ku attempts to answer the question as to “why Japanese behaviors differ over time in addressing apologies and compensation.”¹⁸⁰ His research centers mostly on quantitative deduction. Ku sets up a three-tier case study using causal theory in which he analyzes and correlates various dependent (DV) and independent variables (IV) through a chronologically leveled setting.¹⁸¹

The first tier of the study involves government “contrition responses.” This is Ku’s DV (outcome variable) while the IVs are geopolitical and economical eras.¹⁸² He labels his outcome variables on a three-level response: “no contrition, shallow contrition, and deep contrition.”¹⁸³ Ku’s second tier evaluation identifies a dichotomous IV labelled as a “strong or weak transnational activism power (TPA).”¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ Watanabe, “Trafficking in Women's Bodies,” 29.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances,” 243.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 243

¹⁸² Ibid., 245.

¹⁸³ “No contrition” means no acknowledgement and no compensation for past crimes. “Shallow contrition” means unofficial acknowledgement by some politicians; however, public references – represented through government textbooks and reports – are non-existent. Also, some form of compensation, usually aid funneled through Japanese NGOs, is present. “Deep contrition” means full government recognition of crimes and reparations through government funds for affected victims.

¹⁸⁴ Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances,” 247.

TPA is defined as progressive or conservative political cooperation among activists, nationalists, and NGOs. TPA may also include international laws, such as the Rome Statute.¹⁸⁵ Ku categorizes “strong TPA” as a “progressively ruled government body with low nationalist priorities and high social justice policies.” A “weak TPA” is a conservative government with high nationalism and low social justice priorities.¹⁸⁶ Ku’s conclusion, or third tier analysis, combines and evaluates all variables from the first and second tier.

The third-tier analysis uses two axes of IVs. The first axis is arranged in four levels and split among four chronological decades starting from the 1950s and ending in the mid-2000s. Ku chose these eras due to the importance they had in catering to “Instrumentalism.” “Instrumentalism” is defined as a “state taking interest in contrite stances when there is a security and/or economic advantage as a result.”¹⁸⁷ The second axis consists of labels portraying TPA sentiments and the various degrees of “Instrumentalism.”

Ku’s data depicts the 1950s to 1980s as a conservatively-ruled era that held “no contrition” stances. This is further amplified by low geo-economic interests from former “comfort-system countries.” However, the years between 1991 to the mid-2000s show the government shifting their stance from “no contrition” to “shallow contrition.” This is due to the rising fiscal and military positions posed from South Korea, China, and

¹⁸⁵ The Rome Statute is an international treaty passed in 1998. The treaty created the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is a successor to the UN’s International Crimes Department. The goal of the ICC is to hold responsible and punish entities responsible for “crimes against humanity.” Crimes include genocide and war atrocities. However, the term “atrocities” is not concretely defined due to the changing nature in defining what constitutes the act. See Carmen M. Argibay, “Sexual Slavery,” 379, 385.

¹⁸⁶ Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances,” 247.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 246.

Taiwan. In addition, North Korean security threats among nearby Japanese borders further affected the shift away from “no contrition.”¹⁸⁸ Conversely, apologetic measures have largely been ignored for countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia who have lower geopolitical influence compared to their East Asian counterparts.

The article ends with Ku acknowledging change, albeit very slowly, due to regional and economic factors shifting away from Japanese interests. However, the most recent twelve-year span data suggests that apologetic stances regressed quickly during some periods of conservatively-ruled legislative and judicial branches. This may suggest that international policies and condemnation have little influence over government stances when compared to geo-economic variables.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, Ku posits that the modern resurgence of Japanese conservatism – seen through Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – may “dampen transnational factors;” or in other words, apologetic stances will most likely regress or be ignored under LDP leadership.¹⁹⁰ Figure 5.3 provides a chart to better situate Ku’s variables.

	Hypotheses and predictions		Actual outcome
	<u>Instrumentalism</u>	<u>TPA Model</u>	
1950s-1960s	No contrition	No contrition	No contrition
1970s-1980s	Shallow contrition	No contrition	No contrition
1991-1995	Deep contrition	Shallow contrition	Shallow contrition
1996-mid-2000s	Shallow contrition	No contrition	Shallow and no contrition

Figure 5.3. Ku’s independent and dependent variable alongside hypotheses from other scholars. Chart made by author. Source: Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances,” 246-248.

¹⁸⁸ Ku, “National Interest or Transnational Alliances,” 264. “Comfort-system countries” include Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

* * *

Park's *bushido* society was alive and well through his successor, Chun Doo-hwan; and for a moment, it looked as if Chun's use of Park-styled governance would hold up. South Korea in the 1970s and 1980s was a booming society, abject poverty was abated, and a new Western-modeled consumerist culture immersed a thriving middle-class. This rags-to-riches story, nevertheless, came at a high cost. At the same time, Chun engulfed the nation by amplifying Park-styled autocracy, thinking that this was the reason South Korean society was booming and that he can get away with all power projections.

Behind-the-scenes, however, a new form of nationalism was solidifying as a result. *Minjung* nationalism was a response to Chun's oppressive regime. Starting in 1979, as a result from the Busan-Masan protests, this ideology formed through student protests and was an initial failure – with Chun's forces easily suppressing any dissent through violent means. However, within a decade, *minjung* used democracy as a vehicle while incorporating a big-tent philosophy. People from all walks of life, inclusive of the disenfranchised, used *minjung* nationalism to promote universal suffrage and to vent decades of pent-up rage against elderly poverty, gender income inequalities, and ignored wartime atrocities.

The next section, therefore, finishes the timeline by analyzing the events that led to *minjung* and to Chun's eventual demise. Moreover, modern-day realities of both Park and *minjung* nationalism are assessed side-by-side with current events, ones that are eerily similar to the Park-Chun era.

Chapter VI:

Analysis – Park’s Legacy and Nationalism Today (1989 Onwards)

Chun's Doo-hwan's rule was in its eighth year and the dictator showed no signs of stopping. The decade was mired in constant, often violent demonstrations, but no matter how volatile the decade was *minjung* flames kept burning. Within nine years since the Bu-Ma and Gwangju Protests (1979-1988), *minjung* became a solidified ideology with a single end goal: the implementation of direct democratic elections. Similarly, the primary variable that ousted Chun was overwhelming, massive, and diverse public protests; however, there are additional factors, such as popular culture, religion, and American response, that played an important role in shaping *minjung* nationalism from the late 1980s onwards.

The first part of this chapter, therefore, seeks to explain the outside factors that influenced *minjung* in the 1980s and how that set the foundations for contemporary South Korean nationalism. The external variables examined are the socioeconomic events that occurred domestically and internationally. Subsequently, these actions led to the culmination of *minjung* nationalism during the 1987 June Struggle. Prerequisite events leading up to June are therefore examined as well. Specifically, spiritual and feminist roles are reanalyzed as imperative factors that contributed to Chun's removal and *minjung*'s ascension.

The second part takes some of these foundations, correlates them to modern times (1990s-2010s), and concludes by exploring the future of South Korean nationalism. In other words, it will discuss the role of *minjung* in the post-Chun era and the effects that it may have on future generations. Accordingly, Park's legacy is examined to determine which vestiges of Park nationalism stick around today and whether they still impact modern Korean government and society.

Part I: The End of the Chun Era

Chun's Economy

The 1960s to 1990s are dubbed “The Miracle on the Han River” due to South Korea’s exponential economic growth.¹ However, the term “miracle” is a misnomer that suggests an unseen force bestowed South Koreans with sudden wealth; this would be akin to winning the lottery. Undoubtedly, Park’s economic reforms and a determined citizenry were key forces behind the miracle, and this, of course, did not happen smoothly.

Park’s economy during his last days was firing on all cylinders partly due to a series of Five-Year Plans (1962-1986). However, the years 1979-1981 were tumultuous politically and economically.² This was due to Park’s death and the subsequent vacuum that occurred; most prominently, this void caused the Korean market to crash. Hence, in the first time since 1962, South Koreans experienced negative growth and uncontrolled inflation.³

Chaebol companies, on the other hand, were still undergoing what Park intended them to do, mass exporting, and by this standard, *chaebol* was extremely successful.⁴ This tactic required tremendous amounts of capital, and, befittingly, high profits are needed to sustain it. *Chaebol* economics did the exact opposite, revenue, sales volumes,

¹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From “Land of the Morning Calm” to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 442.

² Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist *Mentalité*,” in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 167.

³ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam and Its Economic and Political Impact,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 6 (June 1970): 525.

⁴ Sungjoo Han, “South Korea: The Political Economy of Dependency,” *Asian Survey* 14, no. 1 (January 1974): 50.

and export quotas were easily achieved but profits were nowhere to be seen. Instead, Park's administration was highly adept at securing low-interest loans from the US, Japan, and the IMF, which, in turn, sustained the export economy.⁵

Chun's regime, on the other end, did not begin with the head start that Park's did. Rather, it was during Park's last year where the cracks of the *chaebol* economy showed. Park's slow alienation from Western allies due to his nuclear armament programs and opposition crackdowns diminished his access to these loans. Furthermore, this was exacerbated by the 1979 Oil Shock and aggressive "pump and dump" exporting.⁶

As reported from a 1990 US Embassy report, Americans business leaders from the Park-Chun era were suspicious of the *chaebol* economy:

In the mid-1970s, the Korean economy displayed significant growth and began to compete with the U.S. for international markets. In response to aggressive Korean economic ventures, the U.S. began to demand fair market access in Korea. In the 1980s this economic competition caused serious friction as American trade and budget deficits rose to an all-time high. To reduce the trade deficits, the U.S. pressured for access to the Korean market.⁷

Chun eventually caved to US trade pressures, thereby opening some markets to American companies; however, the damage was done. South Koreans saw the first hiccup in their newly modernized market and the state of reliance that *bushido* economics was based on.⁸

Just like the Bu-Ma protests, Park never saw the consequences of the 1979-1980 crash; Chun did, however. People were starting to see the facade behind *bushido*

⁵ Han, "Political Economy," 55.

⁶ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 34.

⁷ Myung H. Kim and James R. Corcoran, *US-ROK Frictions: Causes for Anti-Americanism*, government report (Pennsylvania: US Army War College, 1990), 20.

⁸ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 57.

nationalism. For example, *bushido* economy emphasized financial autonomy through sheer will and strength; however, the absence of cheap loans made this anything but independent. *Chaebol* CEOs, employees, and the public saw just how dependent their economy was on global factors as inflation skyrocketed upwards to 25 percent while household wealth stagnated.⁹ In short, Chun's initial economic tenure can be summed up in one sentence: the *chaebol* and *bushido* economy were nothing but a paper tiger.¹⁰

Christianity and Women

The months leading up to the landmark "June Struggle" saw the culmination of a decade's worth of protests. The last transformation of *minjung* nationalism was in sight, and not even the protestors knew what would become of it. While the protests were initially carried out by university students, the urban poor, and artists, Chun's handling of the economy – in particular, the dismantling of *Saemaul undong* in the early 1980s – garnered the anger of one of Park's most loyal constituents, the rural population.¹¹

For context, Chun's administration diverted *Saemaul* funds, among many other Park era programs, from rural communities due to the economic turbulence of the 1980s. Likewise, village communities felt the oncoming economic pressure – accumulated wealth vanishing overnight – and emigrated to metropolises as a result. Still, their

⁹ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 57.

¹⁰ To combat this, Chun's Chief of the Ministry of Economics, Kim Jae-ik (1938-1983), freed up large amounts of capital from chemical and agricultural industries, two areas that heavily contributed to *Saemaul undong*'s successes. See Kihwan Kim, "Kim Jae-Ik: His Life and Contributions," xii. Consequently, this stopped inflation, but also revealed the weaknesses of the "clientelist model." Economist Nam Chang-hee and Chong Ku-hyun succinctly sums up the 1980s economy as a "symbiotic relationship." Meaning, due to the intimate connection between the state, *chaebol*, and *Saemaul undong*, when Kim passed said austerity measures not only did communities feel the pressure so did *chaebol*, investors, and government coffers as well. See Chang-hee Nam, "South Korea's Big Business Clientelism," 357.

¹¹ Keesing's Worldwide, "Assassination of President Park Chung Hee - Mr. Choi Kyu Hah elected President - Cabinet formed by Mr. Shin Hyon Hwack - Other Internal Developments, August 1979 to March 1980," *Keesing's World Events April 1980*, April 2, 1980, 30216.

poverty followed them to the cities. What the former villagers did gain, however, was a newfound appreciation for spiritual comfort. Consequently, a burgeoning and relatively new urban community came from those same villages, and surprisingly, women constituted a good portion of it.¹²

These female villagers, who were once relegated to housework and family life, emigrated to urban areas in droves with the hopes of providing for their impoverished families.¹³ This group, although still a minority, was paid severely low wages. Usually, women were relegated to menial positions in healthcare, clerical, hospitality, and textile services.¹⁴ Nevertheless, no matter their position many of those women shared one thing in common, Christianity.

The power of the burgeoning Christian movement cannot be understated. It not only affected the *minjung* movement and its leaders, such as Kim Dae-jung, it also inadvertently gave a voice to the disenfranchised, including female laborers, the elderly, and the disabled. One such woman, among many others, was Song Hyo Soon. Song lived in a fatherless household with her disabled mother and younger siblings. She also came from an impoverished village that did not see the effects of *Saemaul undong*. In the late 1970s, at the age of sixteen, she migrated to the city intent on working in a factory as the family's sole bread earner.¹⁵

¹² George Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, Volume 1: South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century Volume 1* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), PDF e-book, 284.

¹³ While it is hard to get an accurate estimate of women urban migration, there is data showing increasing female secondary-industry employment – in this case warehousing and manufacturing. From 1963 there was about 186,000 employed female urban workers; however, in 1980 that figure rose six-folds to 1,166,000. The research also suggests that many of these workers were young and unskilled, usually emigrating from nearby farming provinces. See Kyung A. Park, “Women and Development,” 131-133.

¹⁴ George Katsiaficas, 284.

¹⁵ Soon-Hwa Sun, “Women, Work and Theology in Korea,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 129.

Ms. Song was fired from her factory job after filing a complaint to the Labor Bureau after years of dangerous working conditions. Immediately, she banded together with other affected women and found solace in spirituality. Not only did Song voice the plight of her recently terminated female coworkers but also the sentiments of the nation's oppressed. Song wrote:

[She and her friends] rented a room near the factory to continue the fight. The first night, ten women sat together to have dinner. Since they did not have a table, they used the floor. One of them said grace: "Oh, God, we will trust you and depend on you even in the most difficult situations. Please take care of us and keep us from giving up and from compromising with injustice." **They sang a protest hymn often sung by Christians and students**, and cried.¹⁶

The hymn's appeal with both students and Christians was not an act of coincidence; rather, this was the core of *minjung* nationalism. Korean citizens from all walks of life shared Song's feelings, and towards the end of the 1980s, realized they were living in an elitist society – a society Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson warned about. Ironically, this society was also one General Park sought to destroy when he took over Rhee's oligarchic government in the 1960s.¹⁷

In short, Park and Chun's Social Darwinist society expected the weak, pathetic, and oppressed to sit out during an era known for vibrant growth and wealth accumulation – and for a time, this was the norm. As Song's story attests, women were just one of many minority groups that were marginalized in order for South Korea to flourish. However, it was this group, alongside university students and many other activists, that also played an important role towards universal democracy.

¹⁶ Sun, 130.

¹⁷ Saeyoung Park, "National Heroes and Monuments in South Korea: Patriotism, Modernization and Park Chung Hee's Remaking of Yi Sunsin's Shrine," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 8, no. 24 (June 2010): 2.

Eventually, most oppressed groups came together under similar causes felt by Song. These groups contributed just as much sweat and blood for South Korean prosperity, so the understanding that Park and Chun's society sidelined them was an infuriating notion. This realization, in turn, allowed Koreans to go back to their *minjok* roots; or put otherwise, Korea's psyche was now in sync with Sin and Choe's teachings.¹⁸ After three decades of twisted *minjok* agendas, the vicious circle was over, and, as Choe puts it, Koreans were together again. Just as Koreans had to band together to fend off the wrath of Imperial Japan, Koreans were bounded once again with one end goal: to survive and replace Chun's deadly fury with democracy.¹⁹

Kang Myung-koo ties these survivalist propensities to Park-inspired "Developmentalist *Mentalite*." Kang relates these principles to the teachings of sociologist Yim Huisop that "South Koreans [due to strong class consciousness] have a tendency to understand and organize human relations and social ethics in order of rank."²⁰ While this may have been true for most of the 1970s and 1980s, 1987 was very different. As attested by Ms. Song and reverberated by Christian leaders and *minjung* protestors, 1987 was the year that the teachings of early Korean nationalists were heard by the citizenry. Hence, and for a short time, political, gender, religious, and socioeconomic lines were transcended in order to accomplish the impossible.²¹

¹⁸ Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

¹⁹ Andre Schmid, 29.

²⁰ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmental Mentalite," 180.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

Kukbon

A common superhero plot is when each hero wields an extremely different but beneficial set of skills with one goal in mind: to stop evil. Working together to achieve this is difficult, sometimes violent, as egos may get in the way. The heroes may also clash on occasion, failing to stop evil as a result. However, usually at the very end, success is eventually achieved after each hero ignores their differences and convenes together for the greater good. Colloquially speaking, this plotline draws many comparisons with *Kukbon* and the June Struggle.

Kukbon (pronounced *gook-bōn*) was an organization consisting of the best that *minjung* offered. It was diverse in nature and had a will that could not be broken even with the worst of beatings. Most notably, *Kukbon* was comprised of protest leaders from all different parts of the nation. Some groups included were blue-collar workers, doctors, women, farmers, artists, and religious leaders from different sects – notably Christian and Buddhist.²² As late as the mid-1980s, these groups had little connection with each other, each assembly having their own set of sociopolitical goals of course.²³

Minjung diversity, however, was not new and was a detriment eight years prior during the Bu-Ma and Gwangju Protests. The lack of leadership and discipline led to spontaneous and broken nationwide protest, and suffice it to say, not much was accomplished. Leaders knew that if this was repeated, more tragedy would occur. Likewise, Park and Chun officials knew this tactic very well, and, taking a cue from the KCIA playbook, their plan was to always divide and conquer.²⁴

²² Katsiaticas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 282.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jong-pil Kim, “Kim Jong-pil Remembers, Series 74: The Inside Story of the Park Chung Hee

One way that Park effectively divided the opposition's strength was by installing a Neo-Confucian hierarchy in every aspect of society, from business to farming and to consumerism.²⁵ Chun's regime effectively copied this for most of the 1980s; however, 1987 saw the last of it. Protestors finally figured out that division among them worked terrifyingly well for elitists, and more so, it had a solidifying a grip over *minjok* principles. *Kukbon* sought to counter this through experienced leadership, rigid discipline, timed and organized mass protesting, and a fight to the death attitude.

The leaders chosen for this task were the experienced and meticulous Reverend Oh Choong-il and the compassionate – yet orderly – Buddhist monk Gi Son. The headquarters chosen was Myeongdong Cathedral in Seoul; the frontline soldiers were thousands of desperate, yet passionate, university students; and their moral and physical support were millions of protesters nationwide. Finally, the chosen date to start mass protests was around the anniversary of the Gwangju Massacre, May 18.²⁶ *Kukbon* was finally solidified and became a force to be reckoned with. Three-decade's worth of *bushido* agendas finally met their match, and, in June, South Korean society and *minjung* nationalism took center stage.

The June Struggle

The June Struggle is recorded as an event that lasted about nineteen days, from June 10 to June 29, but actual protesting began in late May. The May-June protests were a constant back-and-forth with state authorities – and encounters were often violent with

Killing.” Interview by Park Bo-gyoon, *Korea Joongang Daily*, November 3, 2015, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3011054>.

²⁵ Seung-Mi Han, “The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism,” *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 70.

²⁶ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 281.

no end in sight. This did not matter as millions of protestors felt an aura of invincibility – in part due to *Kukbon*'s leadership. Likewise, and to the befuddlement of state authorities, many activists were willfully arrested, tortured, and beaten just to make a statement. The turning point, however, was when two university students, Park Jong-chol and Lee Han-yol, were killed.²⁷ Koreans, having had enough of senseless killings, were in a furor.

The month of June saw urban areas – the center of Korean finance and manufacturing – halt completely. Unexpectedly too, *chaebol* white-collar workers – the last urban support of the Park-Chun era – were fed up with the protests. Granted, this group had a lot to lose, such as gainful and well-paid employment, but nevertheless, the deaths of the two students along with Chun's slow capitulation to Western markets revealed the dictator and *chaebol*'s true intentions.²⁸

Worded differently, the Park-Chun economy only cared about the elites at home and abroad. If the elites were willing to easily stamp out two students, then anyone was fair game in this dog-eat-dog society. Akin to a pre-Park Korea, the law and order that *bushido* emphasized, and arguably achieved, vanished overnight with the deaths of the two students. Koreans from just about every corner and walks of life participated in the protests.

What a sight to behold as well. Taxi drivers to expensive-suited employees – dubbed the “necktie brigade” – were all participating in destroying police precincts, military outposts, and government offices.²⁹ Furthermore, spectators at home and abroad

²⁷ Katsiaticas, 286.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

saw that Koreans were not only willing to sacrifice their well-being but the wealth and prosperity they gruelingly built from scratch.³⁰ Nevertheless, and even to the doubt of *Kukbon* leaders, the citizenry kept their composure and order, destruction was kept mostly to state facilities and casualties were low.

One American correspondent, Michael Breen, was taken aback by the ferocity – yet well-ordered nature – of the protests:

Drivers blared their horns as a gesture of support. Police saturated protesters with tear gas. They escaped through alleys and regrouped. Shopkeepers pulled down their shutters but opened them to rescue stragglers spluttering from the gas. The battle line kept shifting. The rubble of street warfare was everywhere. Fist-sized chunks of paving stone littered main thoroughfares. But there was an order. No shops smashed, no cars overturned, nothing burned, and miraculously, no one killed.³¹

Indeed, not an easy feat to achieve, and it only proved that June protestors were not willing to stoop to Park-Chun *bushido* tactics.

On the contrary, Sin and Choe's *minjok* ethics emphasized not to harm their Korean brethren.³² The month of June, therefore, signaled the beginnings of South Korea's entrance into a highly developed democracy. For the citizenry, however, it proved that *minjung*'s raw strength lied in the compassion for their land, culture, and people – and not in Park's might-makes-right principles. Otherwise put, *minjung* is *minjok*, and vice versa. The Chun era personified the last remnant of Park's agendas and now they were both a thing of the past.

³⁰ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, "On Korea," *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 236.

³¹ Michael Breen, "Democracy Protests," in *Korea Witness: 135 Years of War, Crisis and News in the Land of the Morning Calm*, ed., Donald Kirk and Sang-Hun Choe (Seoul: Eun Haeng Namu, 2006), PDF e-book, 264.

³² Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

* * *

It has been thirty years since Park Chung-hee shaped Korea into his image. Park's "developmental dictatorship" undoubtedly changed Korea's socioeconomic and cultural landscape; however, that was a bygone era. Gone was the age of *bushido*'s extreme Social Darwinism and authoritarianism. This change was accomplished by *minjung*, a movement that installed *minjok*'s unaltered form back to Korean society. When this was achieved, modern Korean nationalism was changed forever. In front of it, was a new societal frontier. Part II, thereby, seeks to explain what that new frontier is and the elements – old and new – that shaped modern Korean's patriotism and love for their country.



Figure 6.1. Left, the flag (*Taeguk-gi*) of the Korean Empire (1898-1910). Right, the flag (also named *Taeguk-gi*) of South Korea pictured in the photo "*Minju juui yeo Mansae!*" (Dear Democracy!). This is the most iconic photo of the June Protests and was taken by photographer Koh Myung-Jin. Please note the similarities of both flags and that Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson were both born during the short-lived Empire. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Part II

Half a year into 1988, the *minjung* movement was on the brink of success. With millions of protestors nationwide, state authorities were exhausted and literally out of riot suppressing gear. In desperation, Chun Doo-hwan ordered the use of live munitions. The police force, however, finally realized that Chun's madness had no bounds and disobeyed his orders.³³ Concurrently, cities were in an anti-American furor over the lack of oversight, simultaneously burning handmade Reagan dummies; as a result, embassies and consulates went on lockdown.³⁴

A 1990 US government report succinctly summed their surprise *minjung*'s anti-American attitudes:

The young generations [generations born in the late 1960s to 1970s] are more nationalistic because they have not personally witnessed U.S. contributions to liberation in 1945 and to the Korean War in 1950. But they do recall the questionable role of the U.S. in the Kwangju incident in 1980 and the continuing U.S. pressure for market access during the 1980s. To this younger generation, the U.S. is just another country out to fulfill its own interests.³⁵

American “contributions” since 1945 to post-Korean War, therefore, were – and to the dismay of young *minjung* nationalists – a necessity. South Korea, as John F. Kennedy pointed, was a “hopeless” cause while military officials labelled the ROK as “burdensome protectorate.”³⁶ However, in the 1980s, American sentiments unexpectedly mirrored that past.

³³ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 289.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁵ Myung H. Kim and Corcoran, *US-ROK Frictions*, 28.

³⁶ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea's Involvement in Vietnam,” 529.

Just a couple days before the June Protests, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage snubbed any involvement in Korean political affairs simply saying that “Frankly, we’re really busy.”³⁷ Thinking America would overlook all actions – thereby, evoking Bu-Ma and Gwangju results – Chun ordered ROK troops to the cities as a last-ditch effort to suppress the chaos. ROK troops were nonetheless under the guidance of US General John A. Wickham, Jr. The American General immediately dismissed Chun’s order on grounds of usurpation, threatening imprisonment for any ROK personnel willing to follow the dictator’s lead.³⁸

America’s blind eye was no more, the Reagan Administration’s panic over losing such a close economic and military ally caused the US Secretary of State to demand a resolution to the *minjung* protests. On July 10, 1987, Chun resigned from the presidency, and with that the last vestige of Park-era governance was finished. *Minjung* finally succeeded and democracy was immediately enacted on a national and local scale; Koreans from all walks of life could now vote for their fates.³⁹

With *Minjung* protesting over it was time to rebuild. The ideology succeeded but now the need for the movement was in question. While *minjung* never went away, as it was part of *minjok* ethics, the new sociopolitical frontier Korea was thrust into took precedent over people’s everyday affairs. This next part, therefore, seeks to explain the characteristics of that frontier. Specifically, what institutions took over *bushido* nationalism; and the affects that Park and *minjung* still have on Korea today.

³⁷ Katsiaficas, *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings*, 291.

³⁸ John A. Wickham, “Chapter Seven: The Kwangju Tragedy,” in *Korea on the Brink: From the 12/12 Incident to the Kwangju Uprising, 1979-1980* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1999), Kindle edition, 172.

³⁹ Katsiaficas, *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings*, 294.

Park's Legacy at Home

After months of exhausting most state resources on protestors, along with pressure from American allies, Chun Doo-hwan's reign ended; Chun resigned on February 1988.⁴⁰ The last elements of the Park era gone. With Park's agendas at a close, analysts from Korea and the world were soon voicing their critiques of Park.

Domestically, Koreans had a mixed view of Park after Chun's ousting. *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper editor Lee Young Duk gave a lukewarm comment on Park's governance:

We criticized Park Chung Hee because we saw things through the prism of American democracy and human rights. But if we had had American democracy in the 1960's, would we have achieved this much? Perhaps Park Chung Hee's approach was better suited to the public consciousness of the time.⁴¹

This was further reiterated by former US American-Korean ambassador Richard A.

Ericson, Jr., in a 1995 interview. Ericson recalled Congress's sentiments towards Park:

Americans did not expect this kind of thing to happen [in reference to Park's human rights violations]. This went against all of our values, all of our instincts, etc. And that it could not help but fail to influence attitudes in significant sectors of the American public, including the Congress, and the media, to develop anti-ROK government attitudes. . . .⁴² The American press always portrayed [Park] as an autocratic little monster.⁴³

In short, *minjung* not only ousted Chun but tarnished Park's legacy at home and abroad.

However, Park's unorthodox governance, while heavily criticized, strongly influenced the developing world until this day.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings*, 294.

⁴¹ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Ruthless Ex-Dictator Getting Credit for South Korea's Rise," *New York Times*, November 24, 1995, 00018.

⁴² Richard A. Ericson, "Interview: Ambassador Richard A. Ericson, Jr.," by Charles S. Kennedy, *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, audio interview and transcript, March 27, 1995, PDF report, 193.

⁴³ Ericson, 118.

⁴⁴ Ezra F. Vogel, "Nation Builders: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping,

Modern Times: A New Frontier

Since the pinnacle of South Korean dissidence was over, the reinvigorated East Asian republic was moving towards a new future. Elections were held immediately on a presidential and representative level, and this time elections were strictly monitored for integrity. Many thought the next president was to be *minjung* leader Kim Dae-jung; however, another progressive candidate, Kim Young-sam, split the vote. To the chagrin of *minjung* activists, South Korea's next president was Chun's original successor Roh Tae-woo (term: 1988-1993).⁴⁵

Even though President Roh briefly led Chun's former political party, the Democratic Justice Party, the National Assembly (NA) saw majority gains from the progressive *Minju Dang*. As such, Roh's presidency was hamstrung and tarnished from past Chun atrocities; and, as an effect, he capitulated leadership to the progressive-led NA.⁴⁶ Some of Roh's legislative retreats led to the beginning of *chaebol* regulations, creation of safety oversight departments, and more union representation in the workforce.⁴⁷

The Roh era also marked South Korea's entrance into highly developed economic territory; similarly, it was undergoing the challenges that comes with the ascension: cyclical recessions, high labor costs, and a switch from export to service-oriented markets. As Kang Myung-koo posits, "developmental *mentalite*" was the new society, one that mirrored Korea's Western allies.⁴⁸ *Minjung* seemed to be forgotten as the

and Park Chung Hee," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 513.

⁴⁵ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 479.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 483.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

⁴⁸ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmentalist Mentalite," 167.

standard of living was rising and Koreans were now participating in a new hypercompetitive environment.

Furthermore, Kim Jinwung details the very fabric of modern South Korea as an “egalitarian and individualist” society still heavily engrained with “Confucian hierarchy” especially in private affairs.⁴⁹ Therefore, while Koreans were now past Park’s might-makes-right governance, elements of *bushido* were evident through the hypercompetitive nature of consumerism and class status – inclusive of job position, education attainment, and owning the latest luxury items. In short, the socioeconomic lines that *minjung* transcended was back and possibly more entrenched in people’s everyday lives. Otherwise put, *bushido* culture was gone but Park-style Neo-Confucian nationalism was still prevalent in the new consumer culture.

Nevertheless, that did not matter much to post-*minjung* Koreans. They were experiencing a renaissance of republican representation, lessening restrictions on political speech, and worker empowerment. In short, Koreans were enjoying the pleasures of a highly developed life. *Minjung* protesting, therefore, completed its objectives, and the time of intense political actions were over. In hindsight, however, this was far from the truth as the ghosts of Park and *minjung* never died but instead were dormant, waiting to strike when least expected.

After Roh’s tenure, the next presidents consisted of former *minjung* leaders, most notably, Kim Dae-jung (term: 1998-2003).⁵⁰ Kim’s presidency started on shaky grounds due to the 1997 recession; however, his tenure was known for shifting South Korea into

⁴⁹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 547.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 528.

the digital age.⁵¹ Furthermore, Kim and a newer generation of Koreans took Park's *bushido*-styled technocracy and tempered it. The overemphasis on educational attainment carried over so successfully that Yoon Bang-Song posits that there was a "reverse brain drain (RBD)" engrained into Korean culture.⁵² Eventually, this gave way to the hypercompetitive "developmental *mentelite*" generation and may have exacerbated this social phenomenon.⁵³

In summary, RBD was a product of Park's technocracy – a vestige of *bushido* academic culture – which instilled a new generation of youths to fervently compete in all things academic and materialistic. Nevertheless, these were mostly positive outcomes as South Korea turned into a "soft superpower."⁵⁴ *Chaebol* products were now high in quality and outselling global competitors such as Sony; Korean broadband and telecommunications led the world in innovation; new wave Korean pop culture (*hallyu*) dominated media charts worldwide; and Korean biotechnology research was prevalent worldwide.⁵⁵

Ghost of Minjung

According to You Jung-sung, South Korea was now in the pantheon of highly developed "OAO" territory. Koreans proved that their society and economy were robust enough to undergo landmark events that would destroy most developing nations. The East Asian republic survived numerous society-shattering protests, raised its HDI, and

⁵¹ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 528.

⁵² Bang-Song Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain in South Korea: State-led Model," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 5.

⁵³ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmentalist Mentalite," 167.

⁵⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 528.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

endured two recessions.⁵⁶ Likewise, Koreans rightfully enjoyed a lifestyle afforded to a few select countries with the tumultuous era of Park and *minjung* now relegated to museums and textbooks. Therefore, a new generation of Koreans may have forgotten, or perhaps willfully ignored, their developing past; but in 2012, Park's ghost reemerged once again when his daughter, Park Geun-hye (pronounced *Pawk Geun Hey*) was elected to the presidency.⁵⁷

The younger Park's ascension, however, did not come overnight but was foretold through *minjung* past. A newly empowered center-right party, *Saenuri*, gained prominence during the 1997 Financial Crash. Arguably, their strict austerity measures and deregulation of *chaebol* labor laws helped Korea survive their greatest economic challenge since the Korean War. To prove this, Geun-hye's predecessor and former *chaebol* executive – CEO of Hyundai Engineering and Construction – Lee Myung-bak (term: 2008-2013) was easily elected in 2007.⁵⁸ Consequently, his resignation as *Saenuri* leader allowed for Geun-hye to take his former position; once Lee finished his term, Geun-hye won the presidency in a hotly-contested election.

Park Geun-hye's presidency started out controversially and was mired in allegations of corruption. However, in 2016, accusations culminated when evidence of bribery and "Rasputin-like" control over the executive surfaced between Geun-hye and her best friend Choi Soon-sil.⁵⁹ Dubbed "Choi-Soon-Sil-gate," comparisons of Park-Chun elitism resurfaced, thereby signaling that some ghosts never die. As such, Geun-

⁵⁶ Jong-Sung You, "Transition from a Limited Access Order to an Open Access Order: The Case of South Korea," in *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*, ed., Barry R. Weingast, et al (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), PDF e-book, 293.

⁵⁷ John Delury, "The Candlelight Revolution," *Dissent* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 98.

⁵⁸ You, "The Case of South Korea," 293.

⁵⁹ Delury, "The Candlelight Revolution," 98.

hye's years of avoiding corruption charges signaled one thing: perhaps the new Korean generation forgot their *minjung* roots.

On the contrary, just like a yin to a yang, Park and *minjung* could not exist without one another. Consequently, *minjung*'s ghost resurfaced through the citizenry's rage, emotion's mirroring the ferocity of the 1980s.⁶⁰ Immediately, protesters, young and old, took to the streets by the millions. As a result, the 2016 Candlelight Protests erupted. Protestors nationwide occupied city halls, legislative houses, and the president's residence – the Blue House.⁶¹

The significance of these protests harkened back to Sin and Choe's teachings. New generations of Koreans were living through a “developmental *mentalite*” society divided by status and materialism; however, the Candlelight Protests transcended these lines, and, for a moment, Koreans were now one entity united – they were *minjok*. Ultimately, the Candlelight Protests succeeded, and the younger Park was impeached and arrested under corruption charges.⁶²

Perhaps most notably however, newer generations outdid their *minjung* forefathers. Gone were the days of state-authorized beatings and the burning of government facilities. Whether other republics knew it or not, the Candlelight Protests proved to the world that modern South Korean nationalism was synonymous with peaceful and effective mass protesting.

⁶⁰ Alexis Dudden, “Revolution by Candlelight: How South Koreans Toppled a Government,” *Dissent* 64, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 86.

⁶¹ Dudden, 90.

⁶² Delury, “The Candlelight Revolution,” 97.

Park's Legacy Abroad

Singapore and 1980s China (People's Republic of China) saw similar rapidly developing eras equivalent to their South Korean neighbors. The leaders of these two nations were Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015) and China's Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997). Just like Park, they both ruled uncontested for decades by relegating and suppressing democratic institutions. But more importantly, all three leaders followed a state-building blueprint echoing Park's "developmental dictatorship."⁶³

Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew

On the surface Park Chung Hee's and Lee Kuan Yew seem contrasted from each other. Park's agendas were based on Imperial *bushido* institutions while Lee used British governance. However, when looking closer, the mentality behind their state agendas were almost identical. When it came to economics, in particular foreign markets, Park and Lee obsessed over copying the technocratic governance of exporting giants, Japan and West Germany. Ezra F. Vogel analyzed these comparisons by explaining how both men skillfully acquired all the "help and guarantee needed, through foreign assistance, in achieving economic growth."⁶⁴

Primary sources on Lee are not found in Vogel's analysis; however, using sources taken from Lee's own interviews and memoirs better situates the similarities that the Singapore leader had with Park-like technocracy. In a 1979 interview Lee said:

Workers [in Singapore] were not as proud of or as skilled in their jobs compared to the Japanese or the Germans . . . Then you have to educate rigorously and train a whole generation of skilled, intelligent, knowledgeable people who can be productive.⁶⁵

⁶³ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 494.

⁶⁴ Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 513.

⁶⁵ Izumi Ohno and Daniel Kitaw, *Chapter 3: Productivity Movement in Singapore* (Tokyo: Japan International Cooperation Agency - JICA/GRIPS Development Forum, 2011), PDF report, 52

Furthermore, to achieve this highly educated and capable workforce, both men used elements taken from Neo-Confucian principles to instill some form of societal and psychological order.

As evident in Lee's 1998 memoirs *The Singapore Story*, the former prime minister gave an unapologetic take on his top-down leadership, "Between being loved and being feared, I have always believed Machiavelli was right. If nobody is afraid of me, I'm meaningless."⁶⁶ Furthermore, Lee's analysis on non-Eastern societies are highly reminiscent of Park's law and order mentality:

The erosion of the moral underpinnings of Western society which having lost its "ethical basis" had to accept guns, drugs, violent crime, vagrancy, unbecoming behavior in public – in sum the breakdown of civil society.⁶⁷

Without a doubt, Park and Lee emphasized Eastern-styled patriarchal leadership among their "households."⁶⁸ Lee even stated that: "The ruler or the government does not try to provide for a person what the family best provides," and just like their economies, both men wanted rigid stratified order in the citizenry's private lives.⁶⁹

In fact, these polemics came about through the anarchic beginnings of both nations.⁷⁰ Lee further reiterated that modern Singaporean prosperity was achieved because of the state's draconian intervention of lawlessness:

⁶⁶ Kuan Yew Lee, *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 1999), PDF e-book, 471.

⁶⁷ Kuan Yew Lee, "Culture Is Destiny; A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew," interview by Fareed Zakaria, *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (March/April 1994): 114.

⁶⁸ Yong-ho Ch'oe and Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Chapter 36: Korea Since 1945," in *Sources of Korean Tradition Vol. 2*, ed., Peter H. Lee (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 396.

⁶⁹ Kuan Yew Lee, "Culture Is Destiny," 118.

⁷⁰ Federation of Malaya parliament voted out Singapore in 1965 and left only backwater swamps and infrastructure-less land as severance. South Korea was destroyed by multiple wars and was mired in political and economic corruption for decades. Hence, the chaotic new state-building

[Singaporeans achieved] a well-ordered society so that they can have maximum enjoyment of their freedoms. This freedom can only exist in an ordered state and not in a natural state of contention and anarchy.⁷¹

Using Confucian-inspired agendas, both leaders' nationalistic leadership was birthed through chaos, and as a result, state prosperity was achieved.

No matter the similarities, however, the two executives never met and whether each dictator's government influenced the other is speculation. In the end, instead of discussing which agendas affected one another, it is better to posit that Neo-Confucian nationalism transcends political borderlines. As Lee succinctly analogizes, Park's familial socioeconomic perspectives falls in line with what "the family best provides," no other entity – government and business – can take that place.⁷²

China's Deng Xiaoping

Deng Xiaoping (pronounced *Dung Shou'ping*), on the other end, was more open – and praiseful – about copying Park's state-building campaigns. Harvard University's Senior US researcher William Overholt met with Park and Deng officials in the 1970s and 1980s. Mr. Overholt, during an interview with the Korean newspaper *Munhwa ilbo*, gave his analysis on both dictators:

President Park Chung-hee carefully observed his efforts to develop the economy through the *Saemaul* Movement. At the time, there were many demonstrations by students criticizing Park's dictatorship, and I was deeply troubled by the Korean debate over the issue of economic development and democratization. Later, when I went to China, China was in the same worry. I think Deng Xiaoping copied the development strategy of Korea, the "Park Chung Hee model" as it is.⁷³

relationships between them. See Ezra F. Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 513.

⁷¹ Justin Wm. Moyer, "How Lee Kuan Yew Made Singapore Strong: Family Values," *New York Times*, March 23, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/03/23/how-lee-kuan-yew-made-singapore-strong-family-values/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.467409bc8ecd.

⁷² Kuan Yew Lee, "Culture Is Destiny," 118.

⁷³ William Overholt, "Deng Xiaoping's Development and Imitating the 'Park Chung Hee Model'," by Mi-sook Lee, *Munhwa Ilbo*, May 31, 2011, <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2011053101030632307002>.

Park's *bushido*-infused state-building certainly had an impact on Deng's developmental agendas that it was even dubbed the "Park Chung Hee Model." Furthermore, Harvard colleague Ezra F. Vogel expanded on the "Park Model" during a lecture at the 33rd Korea Foundation Forum:

Just as Deng Xiaoping **rescued** China from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and transformed his country into a global economic power, I think Korea of today wouldn't be here if it were not for Park Chung-hee.⁷⁴

The "Park Model," therefore, suggests that strongmen – and whatever nationalist vehicles they need – are needed to "rescue" their countries at critical junctions. Rescue in this case meant rapidly building a springboard to shoot the state into prosperity.

For Park, the critical eras include Korea's destitution after the colonial era and through the Korean War (1895-1953); for Deng, it was after Mao's perilous Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution Campaigns (1958-1976).⁷⁵ As such, the results for both nations were uncanny – instantaneous economic growth and societal order, albeit through heavy authoritarian means. This was due in part to their pragmatic stances after decades of political and socioeconomic ineffectiveness.

The key for both leaders was pragmatism. Deng famously analogized this in relation to China's overnight market liberalization, "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice."⁷⁶ When compared to Park's stances on capital loan attainment, then it is easy correlate Yoon Bang-Song's research with Vogel's.⁷⁷ In other

⁷⁴ Ezra F. Vogel "A Prism on Today's East Asia for Western Intellectuals," lecture, Ezra Vogel, Guest Speaker, 33rd KF Forum, Seoul, March 16, 2011.

⁷⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), Kindle Edition, 333.

⁷⁶ Hung Li, *China's Political Situation and the Power Struggle in Peking* (Shanghai: Lung Men Press, 1977), PDF e-book, 107.

⁷⁷ Yoon, "Reverse Brain Drain in South Korea," 9.

words, *bushido* nationalism requires practicality, as seen through the Meiji emperor and Park's adoption of Western institutions. Of course, that comes at a high cost.

The cost being strict autocratic rule while violently antagonizing opponents and drawing the angst of their respective constituents. In Park's case, *Yushin* decrees, violently suppressing opposition, and alienating close anti-Japanese constituents. For Deng, similarly censoring dissent while shunning hardline communist elites – in the case of market liberalization.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, pragmatism is in both of their blood and is easily their most observable trait.

However, there is also a more engrained and darker trait that Park and Deng share, one that goes against the very grain of modern *minjung* nationalism. Their Singaporean counterpart, Lee Kuan Yew, has been labelled a “benevolent dictator” due to his less violent means of suppressing dissidence but, in contrast, Deng and Park used much different tactics during the Tiananmen Massacre and the Bu-Ma Protests. Ultimately, this meant that both chairmen suppression tactics transcended time. Coincidentally, the 1989 Tiananmen Protests erupted shortly after the 1987 June Struggle.

More importantly, it was a protest enacted by university students reminiscent of *minjung* objectives. Even though each nation's protestors had their own goals, some goals did coincide with each other. For example, citizens demanded democratic accountability for hardline politicians and reformation of China's dependency on state-

⁷⁸ Chung-in Moon, “Modernization Strategy: Ideas and Influences,” in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 127.

owned company finances. Tiananmen, therefore, was a fight against political and business elites just like its *minjung* counterpart.⁷⁹

Park and *minjung* nationalism are the opposite of one another, yet they are still one entity. In other words, Park's legacy at home and abroad are seen through the eyes of *minjung*, and vice versa. From a Singaporean viewpoint, Park and *minjung* are reminiscent of the Neo-Confucian hierarchy so deeply entrenched in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, the technocratic culture learned from decades of foreign interaction were what Park and Lee envisioned and is still very prevalent today. Consequently, a high standard of living was achieved by both nations; therefore, this may be construed by spectators as a positive outcome due to autocratic leadership.

From a Chinese viewpoint, Deng's pragmatism coincided with Park's willingness to expand the country's market economy, and, to an extent, be led by foreigners. As a result, Chinese development mirrors Park's "developmental dictatorship" system resulting in astronomical poverty alleviation. Even more evident is that Korean economist Chang Se-jin and many Western counterparts go as far as to label China's export economy an exact mirror of Park's *chaebol*-export system but on a massive scale.⁸⁰

On the other hand, the practicality in *minjung* was securing a single cause that all Koreans could support. Unfortunately, the Chinese case study shows the darker side of South Korean nationalism as well. *Minjung*'s struggle was tragically repeated during the Tiananmen Square massacre with adverse results – the continuation of strict autocratic governance.

⁷⁹ Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 526 and 540.

⁸⁰ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 86.

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The end of Chun's reign was one of the last pieces needed to thrust South Korea into a highly developed society. Hereafter, direct elections for presidents and representatives allowed Koreans to control their fates unimpeded for the first time since the inception of their young republic. The ghosts of Park Chung Hee and *minjung*, therefore, were relegated to the annals of history. Furthermore, the "developmental dictatorship" blueprint Park created garnered interest from other state-building executives. Leaders from Singapore to China displayed many similarities to Park's unorthodox governance and nationalism, thereby ensuring that his agendas live on outside Korea.

However, Park's ghost still haunted the peninsula and was resurrected when his daughter, Park Geun-hye, was elected in 2013. The ghosts of *minjung* revived alongside Geun-hye amid a flurry of corruption charges and claims of oligarchic governance – mirroring her father's tenure. As a result, the 2016 Candlelight Protests and the younger Park's impeachment was a testament that South Korea's strongman past and *minjung* are one entity.

Ultimately, there are still elements of Park's Neo-Confucian hierarchy in Korea. Three decades of *bushido* and Social Darwinist cultures are still heavily entrenched in modern society. However, *minjung* tempered those entities by focusing those elements strictly on technological innovations, high-quality education, and burgeoning a popular culture scene. Indeed, South Koreans came a long way from a past riddled with destitution, violence, and autocracy. In the end, Koreans from all walks of life painstakingly earned their status as an OAO power.

Final Conclusion:

Park Chung Hee's Nationalism in Perspective

A Gallup Poll conducted in August 2015 surveyed voters aged 19 to 55 about which “Korean President Did the Best Job.” Park Chung Hee received about 44 percent of the votes; Kim Dae-Jung received about 14 percent; and Chun Doo-hwan garnered 3 percent.¹ These three presidents were the main figures of the *bushido* and *minjung* movements. Therefore, it comes to no surprise that Chun placed close to last in the poll due to the overwhelming protests and international condemnation that engulfed his presidency.

Park’s Gallup support, however, has some significance. Even with the volatility during the *Yushin* decree until his death (1972-1979), Park’s administration received overwhelming support from a range of survey-takers citing economics, *Saemaul undong*, and poverty alleviation as his greatest accomplishments. On the other end, Park’s greatest transgressions – titled “What He Did Wrong” and receiving more than 70 percent – was *Yushin* and democratic suppression.²

Clearly, when coupled with Kang Myung-koo’s “Developmental *Mentalite*” theory, it is possible to surmise that Park’s Neo-Confucian *bushido* agenda is generally viewed favorably among current voters. In fact, Park’s *bushido* society, inclusive of *chaebol* economics, brought South Koreans rapid wealth and a higher standard of living, and due to that, it is received positively by most voters.

Of course, economic growth came at a significant cost. Park’s governance capitalized on five centuries worth of Korean nationalist history combined with the deadly Social Darwinist culture of the Imperial Japanese military. For better or worse,

¹ Gallup Korea, *Gallup Korea Daily Opinion No. 174 - August 4-6, 2015 (Week 1)* (Seoul: Gallup Publishing, 2015), PDF report, 9.

² Gallup Korea, 10.

Park-era nationalism turned contemporary South Korea into an autocratic, highly stratified, affluent, and materialistic-oriented society.³ In so doing, it perfectly falls in line with Kang's thesis and further cements Park with the title of "Developmental Dictator."⁴

On the other end, Park's *Yushin* tactics were almost universally despised; and therefore, lends credence that *minjung* was a byproduct of *bushido*.⁵ This ideological gap verifies one thing: from the 1900s to now, South Korean nationalism cannot be situated in one single solid timeline. Referring to Figure II in the Introduction, it is a timeline with a main branch, *minjok*, that deviates into two main branches, *bushido* and *minjung*. Ultimately, only one branch, *minjok*, returns into the main timeline. Therefore, the next conclusion seeks to combine all aspects of Park and *minjung* nationalism into an organized timeline inclusive of point of divergences and convergences.

Timeline of South Korean Nationalism from 1900s to 2016

In the early 1900s, Sin Chaeho and Choe Namson, as a response to Imperial Japan's takeover, laid the foundation for Korean nationalism; the tenet they advanced became what is known as *minjok*.⁶ *Minjok* is an ideology that means Koreans are bound to one another by blood and land. Sin and Choe's ethnic blood-land theory was based on the ancient accounts mentioned in the *Tan'gun* creation story.⁷ In particular, the ancient

³ Myung-koo Kang, "Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist *Mentalité*," in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 167.

⁴ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea: From "Land of the Morning Calm" to States in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 494.

⁵ Kenneth M. Wells, "The Cultural Construction of Korean History," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 24.

⁶ Roger L. Janelli, "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," *Journal of American Folklore* 99, no. 391 (Winter 1986): 25.

⁷ Andre Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 27.

lands that King *Tan'gun* ruled over extended past the peninsula and into a chunk of Southern Manchuria; this was known as Gojoseon (Ancient Korea).⁸ Therefore, Koreans from the tip of the peninsula to Manchuria were all one entity bound by ethnicity and culture.

In 1944, a young Park Chung Hee was a Japanese Imperial officer stationed along the Manchurian-North Korean border.⁹ This location is crucial because Park became infatuated with both Imperial institutions and Sin-Choe teachings. Park took these elements and created his own version of nationalism. From the Imperial end, Park took Meiji institutions and Japanese *bushido* ethics and fused them with Korean nationalism.¹⁰ The result was a neo-nationalist take on Sin-Choe ideologies. Meaning, Park's Korean brethren were entitled to live in their war-ravaged lands but with one big difference, ethnic Koreans were obligated to steer those lands into prosperity and into a "world historical society."¹¹

But before Park could enact his societal takeover, South Korea was ruled under another dictatorship by the American-backed Rhee Syngman. This regime lasted from 1948 to 1960. Rhee's tenure can be summed up as an entrenched oligarchy that promoted an elitist socioeconomic structure. Along with Rhee, the oligarchs consisted of corrupt government officials and business owners who usually benefited from prewar

⁸ *Samguk Yusa*, "Book One: Wonder I (the Founding of the Kingdoms)," trans., Tae-Hung Ha (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1972), PDF e-book, 32.

⁹ Carter J. Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea: The Roots of Militarism, 1866–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), PDF e-book, 41.

¹⁰ Eckert, 222.

¹¹ Chizuko T. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namson's View of History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 1990): 789.

connections. Park used this to his advantage when Rhee was ousted in 1960 due to protests from the students and the poor.¹²

General Park swiftly labelled Rhee's ruling philosophy as an effeminate and tainted adaptation of Sin and Choe's version. Rhee's Korea, therefore, was weak in General Park's eyes. It did not stay true to the pure-blooded strength posited by Sin and Choe's *Tan'gun* thesis.¹³ Park's answer to Korea's pathetic state was to install *bushido* onto every aspect of his society. In a blink of an eye, the General masterfully enacted his blueprint from the polity all the way to the countryside; this was the "Developmental Dictator" at his finest.¹⁴

The vehicles Park used were Meiji *zaibatsu* (family-owned conglomerates) economics – disguised and renamed as *chaebol* – mixed with an intrusive, yet independent, form of Confucianism.¹⁵ This unique neo-Confucian nationalism established a rigid hierarchy with Park situated at the highest position; and the polity, consisting of technocrats, were next in line.¹⁶ Below them were *chaebol* institutions who dictated the policies of the next in line: the newly-urbanized population.¹⁷ *Chaebol* are mega-corporations that, with limitless state resources, were tasked with creating a booming

¹² Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 430.

¹³ Chizuko T. Allen, "Northeast Asia Centered Around Korea: Ch'oe Namson's View of History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (November 1990): 794.

¹⁴ Chang-hee Nam, "South Korea's Big Business Clientelism in Democratic Reform," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 4 (April 1995): 357.

¹⁵ Nam, "Big Business Clientelism," 357.

¹⁶ Myung-koo Kang, "Compressed Modernization and the Formation of a Developmentalist *Mentalité*," in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy, & Cultural Influence*, ed., Clark W. Sorensen and Hyung-A Kim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 168.

¹⁷ Se-jin Chang, *Financial Crisis and Transformation of Korean Business Groups: The Rise and Fall of Chaebols* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), PDF e-book, 48.

market economy. As such, these conglomerates held immense power over newly-trained professionals and unskilled laborers alike.¹⁸

The countryside, however, was different and could be considered a separate entity.¹⁹ For context, before Park's rule the countryside was ruled by a feudal-like system led by elderly *yangban* landowners.²⁰ But now, in barren rustic villages and towns, Park officials gifted youthful farmers with cheap lands. The state supported these farmers through the *Saemaul Undong* program, and instantaneously, upended centuries of entrenched caste order in favor of meritocracy. Essentially, this program provided limitless subsidies and employment to whoever could modernize infrastructure and outperform produce quotas.²¹ Likewise, this rural and young constituency held immense wealth and power and were essentially the head patriarchs of their domains.

In a nutshell, this was Park's Korea. South Korea was a brand-new and dynamic top-down pyramidal authoritarian system where the executive was the strongest entity. Park fathered a young and reinvigorated state, economy, and countryside. This was *bushido* Confucianism and state nationalism in perfect motion.²² Furthermore, a hierarchy chart is presented in Figure III to help visualize the structure.

¹⁸ Chang, *Financial Crisis*, 48

¹⁹ Seung-Mi Han, "The New Community Movement: Park Chung Hee and the Making of State Populism," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 70.

²⁰ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 233.

²¹ Chung-in Moon and Byung-joon Jun, "Modernization Strategy: Ideas and Influences," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 128.

²² Eckert, *Park Chung Hee and Modern Korea*, 270.

Park Chung Hee's Neo-Confucian Hierarchy

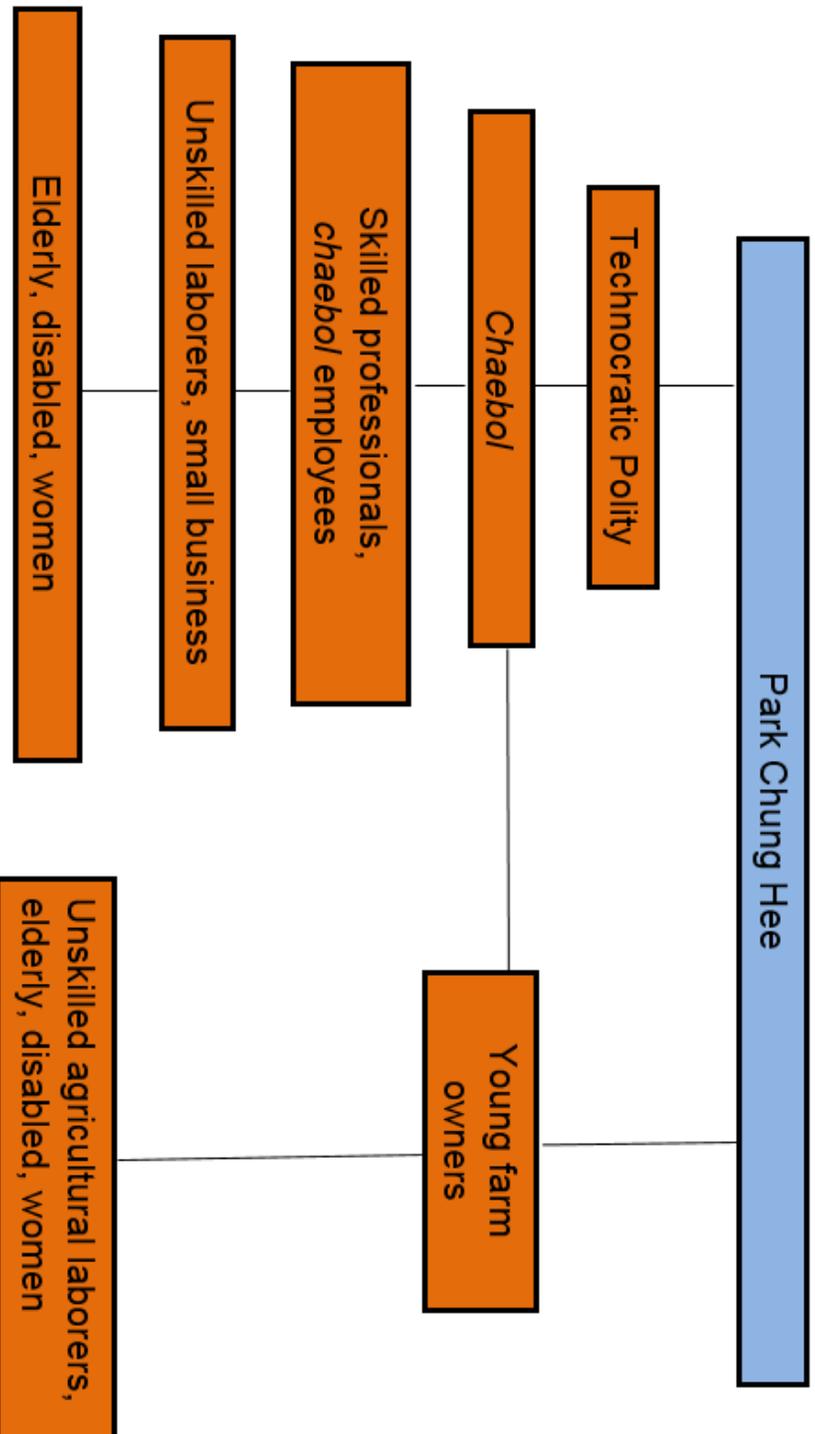


Figure III. Park's pyramid-like class structure. Chart by author. Source: Chang-hee Nam, "Big Business Clientelism," 357-361; and Seung-Mi Han, "New Community Movement," 70-74.

Park's nationalist agendas were initially successful. In a decade, from 1961 to 1971, Park's Korea saw tremendous growth, industrialization, and the growth of a booming middle class; however, with those affluent trends also came the need for more advanced governance and representation.²³ In the 1971-1972 elections, Park and his party, the Democratic Republicans, won a close election against the opposition; and thus, Park saw the first signs of his *bushido* state being taken away from him.²⁴ Accordingly, Executive Park instituted the authoritarian *Yushin* constitution, thereby cementing *bushido* as South Korea's permanent nationalist institution. This, in turn, began the era of strict autocratic governance that ultimately ended with Park's assassination in 1979.²⁵

As a response, a new nationalist ideology was birthed from 1979 onwards. Frequent student protests, starting with the 1979 Bu-Ma massacre, began the ideology that is now known as *minjung* nationalism. Initially, this movement was void of any solid goal, with different factions protesting differing goals. As such, *minjung* dissent was doomed to fail and was usually suppressed through violent means.²⁶

Although an initial failure, *minjung* nationalism only grew stronger and more disciplined during the 1980s. The main catalyst for this growth were the policies of Park's successor, General Chun Doo-hwan. Chun, from 1980 to 1987, amplified the *bushido* culture left in Park's absence in order to eradicate *minjung* and continue *Yushin*-like autocracy – and this tactic worked very well.²⁷ Chun kept a strong grip on the

²³ Myung-koo Kang, "Developmentalist Mentalité," 181.

²⁴ Sungjoo Han, "South Korea: The Political Economy of Dependency," *Asian Survey* 14, no. 1 (January 1974): 44.

²⁵ Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 433.

²⁶ Chungmoon Choi, "The Minjung Culture Movement and the Construction of Popular Culture in Korea," in *South Korea's Minjung Movement: The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, ed., Kenneth M. Wells (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), PDF e-book, 106.

²⁷ Ezra F. Vogel, "Nation Builders: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping,

government and *chaebol* kept a strong grip on the market. In short, it appeared as if Chun was poised to be the next Park showering Korea with wealth while keeping ultimate power. In hindsight, however, Chun became the president that ended *bushido* nationalism.

In late 1987, *minjung* took a final solidified form after the tragic results of the Gwangju Massacre.²⁸ The new nationalism combined years of diversity and conflicts into one package, it was an antithesis to Park-Chun *bushido* and *chaebol* culture. *Minjung* now emphasized universal democracy among the oppressed – such as the elderly, poor, and women; but more importantly, *minjung* accentuated unity and strength among all Koreans.²⁹ Even with the intense urban protests, *minjung* protestors miraculously survived suppression without breaking into factions. This meant that Sin and Choe's teachings were back in their rawest form and were fully manifested after three decades of manipulation by Park and Chun. Simply put, Sin and Choe's *minjok* manifested itself through *minjung*; both ideologies were one.³⁰

In 1988 and beyond, *minjung* nationalism accomplished its goal, Chun resigned, and the last vestiges of Park's *bushido* state were over. *Minjung* was the new state ideology as Koreans could now vote for their fates in frequent and open elections. *Minjok* nationalism was short-lived, however, due to the completion of its goals. Likewise, Koreans questioned the need for it as they rightfully enjoyed their hard-earned affluent

and Park Chung Hee," in *The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*, ed., Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 513.

²⁸ Dae-jung Kim, Richard Tanter, and Richard Falk, "On Korea," *World Policy Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1983): 218.

²⁹ George Katsiaficas, *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, Volume 1: South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century Volume 1* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), PDF e-book, 282.

³⁰ Schmid, "Rediscovering Manchuria," 27.

status (OAO status).³¹ Bluntly put, South Koreans were now in a good spot and went back to their “developmental *mentelite*.”³²

* * *

One thing can be said about Park-styled nationalism: the ideology accomplished all the strongman’s state-building agendas. The “developmental dictator” rightfully earned his title because South Korean society became fully modernized and prosperous under a *bushido* blueprint. Middle-class affluence was in the reach of millions, but it was granted only if the aspiring population played by Park’s rules. Consequently, and just like Western counterparts, Park’s Korea during the booming 1970s and 1980s was influenced by wealth and materialism resulting in the stratification of Korean society.³³

Kang Myung-koo and Kim Jinwung posit, that Sin, Choe, *minjok*, and *minjung* were now relegated to textbooks and museums as future generations focused their attention on South Korea’s growing “soft-power” status.³⁴ Meaning, combined with consumerism, South Koreans were a “credential-fixated” society. “Stratification,” therefore, was not only present in material wealth but also in a socioeconomic realm wholly influenced by a technocratic and Confucian-hierarchal past.³⁵

³¹ Jong-Sung You, “Transition from a Limited Access Order to an Open Access Order: The Case of South Korea,” in *In the Shadow of Violence: Politics, Economics, and the Problems of Development*, ed., Barry R. Weingast, et al (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), PDF e-book, 293.

³² Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization,” 167.

³³ Ibid. Please note that Korean society has always been segmented through royal and *yangban* hierarchies. However, post-1960s South Korean saw class structure heavily dictated on the whims of materialist and consumerist trends for the first time.

³⁴ John Lie and Myung-kyu Park, “South Korea in 2005: Economic Dynamism, Generational Conflict, and Social Transformations,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 1 (January/February 2006): 61.

³⁵ Myung-koo Kang, “Compressed Modernization,” 168; and Jinwung Kim, *A History of Korea*, 551-553.

However, ghosts never die, and to show the resilience of early Korean nationalism, *minjok* appeared once again in 2016. Remnants of Sin and Choe’s teachings were needed when Park’s daughter, Park Geun-hye, became president in 2012.³⁶ Like Park and Chun, the younger Park’s presidency was mired in political corruption and cronyism. Her offenses were so apparent that protests by the millions of Koreans – dubbed the “2016 Candlelight Protests” – from all socioeconomic classes erupted overnight.³⁷ This time, however, things were very different. *Minjung* ascended from its volatile past and became a brand-new entity. It became one with *minjok* once again, and now the whole world was watching. Simply put, Sin and Choe’s *minjok* engulfed not only the peninsula but the world.

The days of mass beatings and destruction of government facilities were gone. *Minjung* was now a peaceful, yet very effective, tool used to combat the ghosts of *bushido* past.³⁸ Just like the 1987 counterparts, *minjung* accomplished its goal again – Park’s daughter was swiftly impeached in December 2016. *Minjok* nationalism, therefore, transcended socioeconomics and “developmental *mentelite*” boundaries. Even though the younger generations may have forgotten their *minjok* and *minjung* roots, one thing was clear about the Candlelight Protests: *minjok* is in the blood of all Koreans, and thus, could never be forgotten.³⁹

In the end, Park Chung Hee not only left a permanent mark on the Korean cultural and economic landscapes, but he also left a strong impression on global state-building

³⁶ John Delury, “The Candlelight Revolution,” *Dissent* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 98.

³⁷ Alexis Dudden, “Revolution by Candlelight: How South Koreans Toppled a Government,” *Dissent* 64, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 86.

³⁸ Dudden, 90.

³⁹ Schmid, “Rediscovering Manchuria,” 27.

agendas. From Singapore to China and to developing nations all over, remnants of Park's Neo-Confucian *bushido* nationalism can be seen by any leader wishing – in the pursuit of societal affluency – to study the developmental dictator's blueprints.⁴⁰ Whether the costs for state-building success is worth it in the end is, of course, up to the individual; however, one thing is for sure, Park's nationalist agendas will forever be a divisive issue for future Korean generations, politicians, and scholars alike.

⁴⁰ Vogel, "Nation Rebuilders," 515.

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