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If At First You Don't Succeed: The Puzzle of South Korea's Democratic Transition

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In October 1979, the conditions were ripe for a transition to democracy in South Korea, also known as the Republic of Korea (ROK). After two decades of stunning economic growth, the plunge toward recession had begun. Labor unions launched a wave of strikes and demonstrations. Korean students also filled the streets in protest, their numbers swollen by the expansion of the universities during decades of rapid growth. South Korean churches also lent their support to the movement. Finally, the workers, students and clergymen were joined by the parliamentary opposition, which had maintained a certain prestige in spite of its negligible power under the dictatorship of Park Chung Hee. Although the United States customarily favored stability in South Korea, the Carter administration resented the Park dictatorship, both because of its human rights violations and its apparent efforts to bribe American legislators. Under pressure, the Park dictatorship found itself beset by internal divisions, with hard-liners calling for the use of force and soft-liners advocating a measure of compromise with the protesters. This division culminated in the assassination of Park by his own intelligence chief. The reins of power then passed to a provisional government that committed itself to democratic elections and the protection of civil liberties. Yet just six months later, Gen. Chun Doo Hwan, a protégé of Park, violently consolidated his control of the government, ushering in another seven years of dictatorship.

In June of 1987, Chun Doo Hwan found himself in a situation that would have been familiar to Park. Labor unrest was on the rise. Student protests had become widespread and increasingly violent. Church leaders insisted that democracy was a moral imperative. The parliamentary opposition demanded free and fair elections. Yet Chun had several advantages that his predecessor lacked. The economy was growing by leaps and bounds, often by more than ten percent each year. The regime was united, with no prospect of any fatal division. Chun also had an excellent relationship with President Reagan, who hosted Chun at the White House as recently as 1985. In spite of such advantages, Chun surrendered to the protesters' demand for free and fair elections and for the restoration of civil liberties. The elections took place in December 1987, after a vigorous campaign. For two decades now, free and fair elections have taken place as scheduled. Civil liberties have also become a fixture, although room for improvement remains. South Korea is now a full democracy.

The puzzle that remains is why South Korea became a democracy specifically in 1987, even though the prospects for a transition were so much more favorable in 1979. One answer to this question is that in 1987 Chun Doo Hwan was no longer prepared to defend his prerogatives with violence. Although correct, that answer only begs the question. Why didn't Chun resort to violence in 1987, when it seems plain that he could have done so if he had wished? There is now considerable evidence that, at the height of the protests, Chun ordered the deployment of battle-ready troops to numerous cities in

South Korea. Yet several hours after giving the order, Chun suspended the deployment. How can one explain this equivocation?

Three factors seem to account best for the failed transition of 1979-1980 and the success of 1987. First, the personal situation and interests of both Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo, his second-in-command, had changed significantly over the years. In 1979-1980, both men were ambitious young generals whose mentor and patron, President Park, had just been assassinated and his power handed over to unreliable civilians. Thus, they had no qualms about resorting to violence to consolidate their hold on power. By 1987, Chun was a political veteran who had presided over a return to the spectacular growth rates of the Park era. Chun was determined to cement his legacy with two final achievements that would distinguish him from all of his predecessors. First, he intended to preside over the first peaceful transfer of power in the history of the ROK. Second, he intended to secure an unprecedented measure of international respect for South Korea by hosting the 1988 Summer Olympics. As heir apparent, Roh had similar hopes. As Minister of Sport during Chun's first years as president, Roh led the campaign that persuaded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to award South Korea the 1988 Summer Games. Both Chun and Roh understood that significant political violence in the summer of 1987 might have dashed their hopes of hosting the 1988 Summer Games. While preferring simply to inherit power from Chun rather than facing competition, Roh came to recognize that his chances of victory in a free and fair election were quite substantial, given a divided opposition. Although neither Chun nor Roh wanted to surrender to the demands of a protest movement they deeply resented, they recognized that doing so was in their own best interest, whereas resorting to violence might destroy all that they had worked for.

A second factor that accounts for the different outcomes in 1979-1980 and 1987 is the increased unity of the protest movement. The four main constituents of the movement – students, labor unions, churches and the parliamentary opposition – were the same during both transitions. In both instances, these constituents sought to establish peak organizations that would effectively coordinate the strategy and resources of the movement. In 1979-1980, these peak organizations never achieved sufficient unity or solidarity. The movement during the period remained an extension of the *chaeya*¹ movement of the 1970s, which had been based on the personal commitments and networks of intellectuals, religious dignitaries and political leaders. In 1987, by contrast, movement constituents successfully formed and operated common peak organizations to consolidate and coordinate various protest activities. The grand coalition and collaboration between movement groups and opposition parties became possible partly by virtue of learning from the mistakes they had made during the previous transition.

The third factor that explains the regression to authoritarianism in 1980 and the success of democratization in 1987 is the contrast between how the Carter administration and the Reagan administration approached both US-ROK diplomacy and the challenge of democracy promotion. Although strongly committed to human rights, the Carter administration hesitated to challenge the legitimacy of authoritarian governments,

¹ The literal meaning of “*chaeya*” is “out in the field” or “in the opposition.”

preferring to focus on preventing specific actions, such as torture and unjust imprisonment. Thus, while the Carter administration welcomed the democratic opening of 1979 and lent its support to the interim government, the administration shied away from an active effort to ensure the transition's success. Initially, the Reagan administration rejected democracy promotion in principle, preferring to focus on the solidarity of anti-Communist governments, both authoritarian and democratic. Yet over time, the administration came to favor democratic transitions even at the expense of strongly anti-Communist dictatorships. Thus, at a critical moment in 1987, President Reagan sent a personal letter to Chun Doo Hwan, insisting that Chun find a peaceful solution to the prevailing crisis. Ironically, Reagan's word carried considerable weight precisely because Reagan had embraced Chun without hesitation during the early and uncertain days of his regime.

Section 1: Defining Transitional Success or Failure

There is little controversy about the correct dating of South Korea's transitions during the "third wave" of democratization. The transition began when the dictatorship of Park Chung Hee faltered in the summer of 1979 and broke down with Park's assassination a few months later, on October 26 of that year. After the assassination, a pro-democracy Prime Minister Choi Kyu Ha assumed the role of acting president and formed a transitional government. On November 10, Choi announced that the constitution would be amended "to promote democracy" and that new elections would be held. In addition, Choi revoked many of the "emergency decrees" issued by Park and restored the civil rights of Park's rivals, such as former president Yun Po Sun and opposition leader Kim Dae Jung.

The transition suffered its first setback on December 12, when Maj. Gen. Chun Doo Hwan and Maj. Gen. Roh Tae Woo, in concert with other members of their secret military society, the *Hanahoe*, launched a rapid and violent operation to arrest the Army's pro-democracy chief of staff, Gen. Chung Seung Hwa. As a result of this coup within the armed forces, Chun assumed control of the ROK military. Even so, the interim government of Choi Kyu Ha continued to prepare for elections and a full democratic transition. At the same time, Chun quietly began to consolidate his control of the government, essentially reducing Choi and the other civilians to a set of figureheads. On April 14, 1980, Chun assumed control of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), an action rendered illegal by Chun's refusal to resign from the military. Chun's appointment as head of the KCIA touched off a violent wave of student demonstrations, calling for his ouster from government. The protests culminated on May 15, when 70-100 thousand students demonstrated in the heart of Seoul. This protest allowed Chun to pressure the civilian government into a declaration of martial law, effective on May 17 throughout the country. On May 18, Chun suspended all political activity, closed the universities and arrested prominent rivals such as Kim Dae Jung. Martial law brought an end to the protests, except in Kwangju, where an uprising took control of the city from government forces. On May 27, a brutal assault by 20,000 military personnel restored control of the city to Chun. The events in Kwangju marked the end of any effective

resistance to Chun's control. In the months after the uprising, Chun went through the motions of amending the constitution and engineering his election as president by an electoral college of regime loyalists. Chun also resigned from the military to become a nominal civilian.

It is hard to say whether Chun's takeover represented a restoration of the pre-transition regime or the establishment of a new dictatorship. In light of Park's role as a mentor and patron of both Chun and his inner circle of advisors, there is good reason to think of Chun's government as another incarnation of the Park regime. On the other hand, the violence of the transition and the perceived need for a new façade of legality suggests that there was significant discontinuity between the rule of Chun and that of Park. Ultimately, the question of continuity is more semantic than substantive, although it may complicate any quantitative studies of regime endurance or persistence.

The pivotal date associated with South Korea's second and more successful transition to democracy is June 29, 1987, the date on which Roh Tae Woo announced the government's acceptance of the protesters' demands for direct presidential elections and the restoration of civil liberties. According to the constitution imposed by Chun in 1980, the president of the republic would serve a single, non-renewable term of seven years in office. In light of Chun's continual assertions that he would step down from office on schedule, South Koreans expected 1987 to be the critical year in which the succession process would be defined. Initially, the National Assembly served as the forum in which the succession process was debated. On February 12, 1985, legislative elections dramatically strengthened the opposition's ranks in the Assembly. The balloting process was fair, although the government's unusual process for distributing of mandates enabled it to preserve its majority in spite of receiving only 35 percent of the vote. On February 12, 1986, the opposition marked the anniversary of the election by launching a campaign to revise Chun's imposed constitution. After extensive protests and rioting, Chun compromised in April by allowing the formation of a special committee in the National Assembly to propose a set of constitutional revisions. The committee's negotiations dragged on for almost a year, at which point Chun declared the suspension of the process on April 13, 1987. As it had in 1980, an electoral college would choose the next president. Antagonism toward the regime intensified with the revelation on May 18 that a student at Seoul National University had been tortured to death in January during a police interrogation and that the regime had covered up its responsibility.

The succession crisis came to a head on June 10, 1987, when Chun nominated Roh Tae Woo as the ruling party's candidate for president. That same day, violent protests erupted across the nation. Riot police attacked the protesters with clubs, tear gas and water cannons. Protesters attacked the police with fists, blunt objects and gasoline bombs. The battles raged in the streets one day after the next. Global media attention focused on South Korea. On June 19, the American ambassador in Seoul presented Chun with a personal letter from President Reagan calling for a non-violent response to the crisis. The rioting continued for another ten days with no end in sight until Roh Tae Woo suddenly announced on June 29 that the government would accept the protesters' demands. The intensity of the protests immediately diminished. For the next several months, both the

government and the opposition focused on the presidential elections scheduled for December 16. Roh prevailed with 35.64 percent of the vote, in large part because the opposition failed to unite behind a single candidate, splitting its support between Kim Young Sam (28.03 percent) and Kim Dae Jung (27.04 percent). Initially, both Kims responded to their defeat by alleging a corruption of the vote, yet the charges were soon withdrawn.

It is harder to identify the closing date of Korea's transition to democracy than it is to identify the climax of the process. The electoral system faced no challenges to its viability after 1987. Civil liberties rapidly expanded. Nonetheless, the presidency remained in the hands of an ex-general who played an integral role in the previous dictatorship. In 1992, democracy activist Kim Young Sam prevailed in the presidential elections by forging an alliance with Roh. Kim's harsher critics considered this alliance both a betrayal of the democratic cause and an indication that ex-generals such as Roh still held the balance of power. Nonetheless, Kim moved aggressively to implement democratic reforms. In 1996, a South Korean court convicted both Chun and Roh of treason and mutiny, sentencing Chun to death and Roh to many years in prison. In 1997, Kim Dae Jung prevailed in the third free presidential election. Kim's inauguration resolved any final concerns that South Korea had yet to finalize its democratic transition. As president-elect, Kim pardoned both Chun and Roh.

Section 2: Domestic Variables

- I. **Long term, structural factors.** From the founding of the ROK in 1948 until its transition to democracy in 1987, the life expectancy of its political regimes was relatively poor. Even though the South Korean economy underwent a profound transformation during this period – from one of agrarian poverty to one of industrial prosperity – its political regimes remained unstable. Democratic regimes lacked resilience because they had no defense against either the military itself or against an authoritarian chief executive who enjoyed the support of the military. Yet South Korea's authoritarian regimes lacked resilience, as well, because of the people's enduring resistance to dictatorship.

South Korean politics bore the imprint of the United States' post-World War II occupation, just as North Korean politics bore the imprint of the Soviet occupation. The arrival of Allied forces in 1945 brought an end to 35 years of Japanese colonialism on the Korean peninsula. American forces occupied the peninsula south of the 38th parallel, whereas Soviet forces held the territory north of that line. As in Germany, the onset of the Cold War resulted in the emergence of two separate republics, each one diplomatically aligned with its respective occupying power.

On May 10, 1948, Koreans on the southern half of the peninsula cast their votes in a US-supervised election. Before the election, on April 5, the US commander in Korea, Lt. Gen. John R. Hodge issued a "Proclamation on the Rights of the Korean People" very similar both to the American Bill of Rights and the chapter on rights and duties

of the US-drafted Japanese Constitution. Hodge's proclamation declared, among other things, that all Koreans "are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under the law, and no privileges of sex, birth, occupation or creed are recognized." Hodge's proclamation influenced the constitution adopted by the newly-elected National Assembly on July 12. However, the Koreans responsible for drafting the constitution were already inclined in a democratic direction as a result of the Allied victory in World War II and the imperative of distinguishing South Korea from its communist counterpart in the north. On August 15, 1948, the ROK was officially founded by President Syngman Rhee, winner of an election within the Assembly. Rhee was a veteran nationalist who had spent many years in the United States but rarely gotten along well with American policymakers.

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 seriously eroded the democratic nature of the South Korean republic. Although technically there was no change of regime, the ROK was no longer governed as before. Increasingly, Rhee ruled with total disregard for the Assembly. His own administration resembled more and more what one scholar has described as a "dynastic court" of the pre-colonial era.² On July 7, 1952, Rhee forced through a constitutional amendment mandating the direct, popular election of the president. Meeting under martial law in a building surrounded by military police, the Assembly had no ability to resist. Rhee prevailed in the first direct election and then ensured the passage of a second amendment that lifted the prohibition on presidents serving more than two terms in office. In 1956, Rhee prevailed in a second direct election. However, opposition candidate Chang Myon (John M. Chang) won the vice-presidency, indicating that Rhee did not enjoy the powers of a true autocrat. Throughout the 1950s, South Koreans lived under a hybrid regime with both democratic and authoritarian characteristics.

The Rhee regime came to a sudden and violent end as a result of the president's brazen rigging of the elections held on March 15, 1960. On April 11, a resident of the city of Masan discovered the corpse of a nineteen-year-old student with a tear gas canister in his eye socket. Rioting broke out in Masan along with anti-government actions in other major cities. On April 19, 100,000 protesters battled police in Seoul, resulting in the death of more than 120 protesters and the declaration of martial law. Although President Rhee called on the military to restore order, the protests spread to every major city in South Korea. On April 26, Rhee resigned, making way for an interim government and new elections. A pivotal factor in the events that culminated in Rhee's resignation was that the population of student protesters grew rapidly after the war. In 1945, there were approximately 120,000 middle school, high school and university-level students in the south. In 1960, the student population had grown to more than 900,000.

The democratic opening that followed Rhee's departure was only short-lived. The elections of July 29, 1960 led to Chang Myon's ascension as premier at the head of a deeply divided bloc in the National Assembly which ultimately split into two separate parties. Although Chang had ambitious plans for confronting poverty and economic

² Oh 1999:40.

stagnation, his government came to an abrupt end as a result of a military coup on May 16, 1961 led by a young general named Park Chung Hee. The size and resources of the military were extensive, as a result of the constant threat from the north. Park's coup grew out of his frustration with senior generals he considered to be both corrupt and complacent. His coup represented a bid for personal power, not an ideological statement. Park sought to cement his authority by dramatically revising the constitution to enhance his powers as president at the expense of the legislative and judicial branches of government. Then, after more than two years in power, Park suddenly called for elections. In spite of the considerable benefits of incumbency, Park only prevailed over his opponent by the razor-thin margin of 42.6 percent to 41.2 percent. Once again, South Koreans came to live under a hybrid regime that had significant characteristics of both democracy and dictatorship.

Park served continuously as president for more than 18 years, until his assassination in 1979. Park was re-elected in 1967 and then followed Syngman Rhee's precedent of amending the constitution in order to allow himself to seek a third term in office, which he did successfully in 1971. Then, on October 17, 1972, Park unexpectedly declared martial law, dissolved the National Assembly, banned political parties and closed the universities. Shortly thereafter, Park promulgated a new constitution that legitimized his extraordinary powers and allowed him to serve as president indefinitely. Park referred to the document as *Yusin* or "revitalizing reform" constitution, and the final period of his rule has come to be known as the *Yusin* period.

The South Korean economy grew both rapidly and consistently during Park's tenure as president. Park's ambitions for the economy were expressed in the official five-year plans that his administration published. Beginning with the second five-year plan, there was a strong focus on promoting exports. In order to ensure the growth of target industries, the government facilitated their access to resources and capital while favoring them with credits and loans. Thus, although the economy remained entirely in private hands, it was dominated by massive conglomerates known as *chaebol*, which had intimate relationships with the government. Although the government made an aggressive effort to keep wages as low as possible in order to promote manufacturing, the economy grew so much that South Korea rapidly transformed itself into a middle-class nation. In 1961, the year of the coup that brought Park to power, South Korea had a per capita GDP of \$82. In 1972, at the beginning of the *Yusin* era, South Korea's per capita GDP was already \$318.³ In 1980, the year of the failed transition to democracy that followed Park's death, per capita GDP was \$2,588, measured in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). The comparable figure for 1987, the year of democratic transition, was \$5,750. The comparable figure today is \$23,926.⁴

³ These are official figures in current dollars (*i.e.*, unadjusted for inflation) provided by the Bank of Korea and Economic Planning Board (cited by Oh 1996:62).

⁴ Figures taken from the IMF's *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2007. PPP figures are not adjusted for inflation. In real terms, PPP per capita income grew by approximately one-third between 1980 and 1987. Current PPP per capita income is approximately 70% greater than it was in 1987.

By the time of Park's death, the middle class was poised to become the majority in South Korea. Its precise numbers varied depending on the methodology of those conducting the surveys, but the results were consistent. Under Chun Doo Hwan, the ranks of the middle class continued to expand. One prominent survey, conducted in late 1986, indicated that an overwhelming majority of the middle-class harbored a strong preference for democratization. More than 80% favored the defense of human rights even at the cost of slower economic growth.⁵ There was also a strong wage-earning class in South Korea, many of whose members were also part of the middle-class. These wage-earners comprised the rank and file of the labor movement that contributed significantly to widespread protests both during the failed transition of 1979-1980 and the successful transition of 1987.

II. Short-term, precipitating factors

A. Weakening of the autocratic regime. After more than a decade and a half of continuous and rapid growth, a brief interval of economic turbulence sparked a process that led to the demise of the Park dictatorship. In contrast, the democratic transition of 1987 had its immediate origins in a debate about the politics of transition. When Chun Doo Hwan indicated that the only transition possible would be from one authoritarian government to another, there was a popular mobilization that brought down the regime.

As a rapidly industrializing nation, South Korea suffered greatly from the sharp rise in oil prices that began in 1979. The rising price of oil drove prices higher throughout the South Korean economy, damaging the welfare of millions of wage-earners who were ill equipped to deal with inflation. For the year as a whole, South Korea still managed to register 7 percent economic growth, a relatively impressive figure, although somewhat diminished from the double-digit figures of the previous three years. However, the economy as a whole was on a downward slope by late 1979, rushing headlong toward a deep recession in 1980, when the economy contracted by 4.8 percent. The economic decline mobilized protests against the regime.

On August 9, 1979, almost 200 unemployed female workers from a shuttered textile-apparel plant staged a hunger strike and sit-in at the headquarters of the New Democratic Party (NDP). The former employees of the Y.H. Industrial Group chose the NDP headquarters because the once-tame opposition party had recently elected uncompromising Kim Young Sam as its leader. Immediately, Kim launched an aggressive effort to bring democracy back to South Korea. In spite of the workers' hope that the NDP headquarters would serve as a sort of sanctuary, one thousand riot police assaulted the building on the third night of the sit-in. In the melee, one of the workers was killed and close to one hundred workers, NDP officials and reporters were injured. In short order, the incident backfired on the regime, allowing Kim Young Sam to escalate his campaign for democracy. The government retaliated

⁵ For an overview of research about the South Korean middle class, see Oh 1996:66-73.

against Kim in October by having its bloc in the National Assembly vote to expel Kim from the body. However, the bloc was only able to accomplish this maneuver by physically preventing the opposition from entering the Assembly hall to vote against the measure. Once again, the government's tactics generated a far more powerful backlash. Mass protests broke out in Kim's hometown of Pusan and quickly spread to Masan and other cities. In order to restore its control, the government had to declare martial law in Pusan and put Masan and other cities under garrison decree.

The proliferation of resistance provoked a fatal split within the innermost circle of the regime. The split was essentially tactical and did not reflect any deeper divisions, whether regional, ideological or otherwise. The tactical question at hand was whether to respond to the pro-democracy movement with intensified force or with an offer of compromise. The main advocate of force was Cha Chi Chol, head of the presidential bodyguard. The main advocate of compromise was Kim Chae Kyu, head of the KCIA. The debate between Cha and Kim was one of individuals, rather than a conflict between hard- and softline factions within the governing elite. On the evening of October 26, 1979, Kim and Cha had dinner with President Park. The discussion at dinner led Kim to believe that Park had come down decisively in favor of Cha's hardline approach. In desperation, Kim paid a brief visit to his nearby office, returning with a .38 Smith & Wesson hidden in his pocket. Back in the dining room, Kim shot both Park and Cha at point-blank range. When his gun jammed, he borrowed another .38 from one of his guards to finish off the victims. Within days, a transition government was in place and had initiated a transition to democracy.⁶

If not for the extraordinary events on the night of October 26, the Park regime might very well have survived. It had tremendous resources at its disposal and was unaffected by divisions except at the very top. The regime's demise illustrates how the unpredictable behavior of key individuals may exert a decisive influence on the process of democratization.

Whereas economic turmoil played a direct role in subverting the authority of the Park Chung Hee dictatorship, economic recovery and rapid growth helped set the stage for the democratic transition of 1987. Although the brutal suppression of the uprising in Kwangju crushed the last of the active resistance to the authority of Chun Doo Hwan, the perilous state of the economy still concerned the new dictator. However, a recovery began in short order as the price of oil began to fall precipitously and Chun continued to implement the measures that had worked so well under his predecessor. In 1983, the South Korean economy registered its first year of double-digit growth since onset of the oil crisis in 1979. Inflation fell to 3.4 percent, down from almost 30 percent in 1980. Since the events in Kwangju, there had been relative quiet on the political front. To enforce that passivity, the government enacted a new array of laws designed to limit freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and labor rights. Chun had also sought and secured the strong support of the United States government, culminating in the highly publicized visit of President Reagan to South Korea in November 1983. Confident in his authority, Chun pardoned or rehabilitated hundreds

⁶ The most detailed account of these events in English can be found in Oberdorfer 1997:109-111.

of political prisoners, lifted the ban on political activity by more than 200 opposition figures, and allowed more than one thousand students expelled for political reasons to return to their universities.

In order to enhance his image both at home and abroad, Chun sought to construct a persuasive democratic façade that would mitigate the perception that he and his allies had shot their way into power. The next major step in this process would consist of legislative elections in early 1985. Apparently, Chun hoped that the Democratic Justice Party (DJP), the regime's proxy in the legislature, would win a legitimate victory at the polls on the strength of the country's economic recovery and the national pride generated by South Korea's designation as the host of the 1988 Olympic Summer Games. At the same time, Chun hedged his bets by imposing an unusual formula for the distribution of seats in the Assembly. Although a majority of seats would be awarded on the basis of proportional representation, a large bloc was reserved for whichever party secured a plurality at the polls. In effect, this system ensured that a small plurality at the polls would be translated into a commanding majority in the legislature. Furthermore, Chun sought to divide the opposition by sponsoring tame opposition parties that would divide the anti-Chun vote. As expected, this maneuver allowed the DJP to achieve a plurality with only 35 percent of the vote to the 29 percent of the New Korea Democratic Party (NKDP), founded just months before the election by Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam. Yet in the court of public opinion, the election represented a massive victory for the NKDP and the two Kims. Losing by only 6 percent on a playing field tilted so heavily toward the government was perceived as a remarkable achievement. Turnout at the polls was 84.6 percent, the highest in thirty years. Thus, the electorate interpreted the results as an authentic expression of the will of the people. Finally, there were sizable defections in the Assembly from the tame opposition parties to the NKDP.

Chun clearly understood that his electoral gambit was a failure. In response, he shifted his strategy to one of delay and evasion. Both Chun and his opponents knew that the decisive struggle of the next three years would be over the process of selecting Chun's successor. From the very beginning of time in office, Chun often spoke of his determination to step down after serving a single seven-year term, as mandated by the constitution. Not surprisingly, the opposition assumed that Chun would follow the precedent of Rhee and Park by amending the constitution as necessary in order to extend his rule indefinitely. However, both Chun was deeply disturbed by the violent end of the Park dictatorship. Instead of indefinite rule, Chun sought to preside over the first orderly transfer of power in the history of the ROK. During his rapid ascent through the ranks of the military, Chun arranged for Roh Tae Woo, his closest ally, to fill almost every post he vacated. Now Chun wanted Roh to follow him as president. Initially, Chun may have hoped that Roh would prevail in at least a semi-free election, yet after February 1985, the risks of such an approach became unacceptable.

From February 1985 until the moment of transition in June 1987, the first priority of the opposition was to revise the constitution in order to allow for the direct, popular

election of the next president. According to the status quo, an electoral college over which the opposition had negligible control would select the next president. It was this system that ensured Chun's appointment as president in 1980. If his strategy of delay and evasion were successful, Chun could ensure Roh's election by a similar hand-picked college. Initially, the two Kims hoped that they could work through the Assembly and the constitutional process to secure the necessary amendments. They persisted for almost a year before acknowledging their failure. On the first anniversary of the 1985 election, the NKDP launched a nationwide campaign to collect 10 million signatures in support of revision. At the time, the entire electorate consisted of only 20 million voters. The campaign's progress was so rapid, however, that the regime responded with a barrage of raids and arrests designed to disrupt the effort. When this effort failed, Chun returned to his strategy of evasion and delay, allowing the formation of a Special Committee on Constitutional Revision within the National Assembly. The committee deliberated for almost a year, as Chun's representatives offered various concessions short of an actual presidential election. In addition to wasting time, these proposals sometimes had the effect of dividing the opposition, as different factions debated whether to accept a given proposal. Yet in the end, the core of the opposition, led by the two Kims, stayed united.

At this point, Chun decided to test whether the opposition still had enough popular support to merit concessions. On April 13, 1987, he suspended the negotiations of the Committee on Constitutional Revision. The opposition would be allowed to take up the issue again, but only after the 1988 Summer Games. In the interim, an electoral college would choose Chun's successor. Even though Chun had effectively announced a seven-year extension of authoritarian government, the streets remained relatively calm. Then, on May 18, the government admitted that, four months earlier, the police had tortured to death a student named Park Chong Chul, then covered up their responsibility for his murder. This revelation provoked intense anger, especially among the middle class, but the regime remained in control. Faring well, Chun sought to cement his victory by announcing on June 10 that the DJP would nominate Roh Tae Woo to become the next president. This time, the opposition exploded. Violent protests erupted across South Korea on the day of Chun's announcement. Led by students, the crowds attacked the police with their fists, with blunt objects and with improvised explosives such as gasoline bombs. The police responded with nightsticks and tear gas, clouds of which rolled through the streets of South Korea. The two Kims called for non-violent protests against the regime, of which there were many, yet it was student violence that pushed the regime to the brink. In spite of their fury, the protests and riots resulted in few fatalities on either side. Yet the police were rapidly becoming exhausted, whereas the students' numbers and energy seemed inexhaustible. Chun still had the option of mobilizing the armed forces, yet this approach carried with the risk of extreme violence, perhaps bloodier than the Kwangju Uprising of 1980. Nine days into the riots, Chun issued an order for mobilization but rescinded it later that day. As the riots surged into their third week, Chun accepted that he would have to surrender to the protesters' principal demands: direct presidential elections and the restoration of civil liberties.

On June 29, 1987, Roh Tae Woo announced that the government would accept the protesters' demands. This marked the moment of transition, when the regime accepted that a new system of government would be put in place in South Korea. Yet from Chun and Roh's perspective, their government had lost the battle in order to win the war. It was public knowledge that both Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung considered themselves to be the democratic opposition's natural candidate for president. As Chun and Roh correctly calculated, the Kims would split the opposition vote, allowing Roh to prevail with a small plurality. In the months leading up to the presidential vote in December, the opposition sought to reconcile its two candidates and produce a unified ticket, but to no avail. In the meantime, the constitution was revised to replace the electoral college with a single round of voting for president. Had the opposition insisted on a two-round election, in which the top two finishers in the first round had to compete in a run-off, one of the Kims would presumably have prevailed. But the opposition showed no interest, allowing Roh to prevail with 35.64 percent of the vote, just several percentage points more than each of the two Kims.

B. Organized opposition. In both 1979 and 1987, South Korea's authoritarian regimes had to face down broad and deep coalitions committed to a democratic opening. In both instances, the pro-democracy coalitions had an extensive capability for mass mobilization as a result of student and labor union support. Both coalitions also had strong roots in other sectors of civil society capable of providing moral support and leadership. Both coalitions also benefited from a good measure of ideological unity focused on a commitment to liberal democracy, even though such visions of democracy ranged from the bourgeois to the socialist. One significant difference between the two coalitions was organizational. In 1979, the diverse array of groups that comprised the pro-democratic coalition, or *chaeya*, struggled to establish peak organizations that could coordinate the coalition's efforts. In 1987, the effort to establish national umbrella organizations was far more effective. A second critical difference between the two coalitions was the challenge they faced. Initially, the challenge was similar. Both coalitions sought to bring down authoritarian regimes led by former generals. Both coalitions succeeded (although it is hard to know what the outcome would have been in 1979 had Kim Chae Kyu not assassinated Park Chung Hee). After the fall of the *ancien regime*, the respective challenges faced by the two coalitions diverged. In 1987, the struggle largely ended with Chun and Roh's capitulation to the opposition's demands. In 1979, the opposition still had to contend with a bloody-minded military determined to restore its exclusive control by any means necessary, including the slaughter of hundreds of civilians. This challenge was more than it could bear, at least in the short-term. Yet over the longer term, the coalition of 1979-1980 was not deterred. Seven years later, many of the same individuals would return to challenge the regime and force a transition to democracy.

The first *chaeya* began to emerge in the early 1970s, after Park imposed the *Yusin* Constitution. In November 1974, the National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy was founded. It was followed in 1978 and 1979 by the National Coalition for Democracy and the National Coalition for Democracy and Reunification. The organizations participating in these *chaeya* associations included "religious groups

(for example, the Catholic Priests' Association for Justice), intellectual groups such as the Council of Dismissed Professors, human rights organizations like the Korean Council for the Human Rights Movement, and writers' groups (the Council of Writers for Practicing Freedom, for instance).⁷ The leadership of the *chaeya* in the 1970s included "former politicians, religious leaders, scholars, and other professionals and were widely respected for their morality, integrity, experience and caliber."⁸

The *chaeya*, the representatives of civil society, enjoyed a cooperative relationship with the political opposition, principally the NDP under the leadership of Kim Young Sam. However, "the cooperation and alignment between civil society and political society was not through institutionalized channels such as joint organizations. It was aligned instead through individual connections and commitments. Furthermore the main cooperation occurred between religious leaders and opposition party politicians."⁹ In contrast student groups and labor unions had few close links with the NDP. This notable absence represented a significant organizational flaw, since the students and the unions were so critical to the mass mobilization that threatened the dictatorship. Fortunately, the students and the union did maintain relatively strong links with religious organizations. Forums for church-student cooperation included the Korea Student Christian Federation, the Korean Ecumenical Youth Council, and the Korean Christian Academy. The churches and the unions came together under the aegis of groups such as the Young Catholic Workers and the Urban Industrial Mission. Soon, "the church became a guardian of young full-time dissidents, mostly composed of expelled students from colleges and universities, and a care-provider for labor activists."¹⁰ Students also interacted with workers in forums such as the "night schools" that the students set up near factory towns. Initially, the night schools focused on the workers' unmet desire for higher education. Over time, the schools' focus shifted to consciousness-raising programs tailored to the workers. All together, "the church-student and church-labor alignments, together with the already developing student-labor alignment, constituted a triple solidarity of students, laborers, and churches."¹¹

The sudden assassination of Park Chung Hee disoriented the opposition. In the face of uncertainty, the opposition paused to rethink its strategy. As the failed transition of 1960-1961 indicated, the departure of a dictator hardly ensured a successful transition to democracy. Applying that lesson to the context of 1979, the opposition focused on demanding that the post-*Yusin* interim government fully dismantle the dictatorship and allow a real transition to democracy. In terms of this objective, the opposition met with considerable success, yet they were not prepared for the subtle way in which Chun Doo Hwan would amass his power. Only in April 1980, when Chun took the

⁷ Kim 2000:59.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kim 2000:73.

¹⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹¹ Ibid. 61. Later, the three pillars of the triple solidarity would come to identify themselves as the "people's movement camp (*minjung undonggwon*)" and to play a critical role in the 1987 transition.

brazenly illegal step of appointing himself, an active duty soldier, as head of the KCIA, did the opposition turn its fury on Chun. Marchers filled the streets once again, culminating on May 15, when 70-100 thousand students from thirty-five universities mounted an aggressive demonstration in the heart of Seoul. Two days later, the civilian government, under intense pressure from the military, put all of South Korea under martial law. On May 18, the military prohibited all political activities, closed universities and arrested prominent opposition figures such as Kim Dae Jung. Resistance diminished sharply except in the city of Kwangju. Even though Chun dispatched the military to put down the Kwangju protest, the pro-democracy coalition beat back those forces and then mounted a full-scale insurrection, attacking police stations, arming themselves and establishing control of the city. Although the demonstrators sought to negotiate a truce, Chun ordered a second and more brutal assault that broke the resistance and re-occupied Kwangju on May 27. The slaughter marked the end of effective resistance to Chun's assertion of power, at least for a few years.¹²

Civil society began to reawaken when Chun Doo Hwan's confidence led him to relax various restrictions on political activity in 1983. In 1984, two peak organizations emerged – the Coalition of Movement for People and Democracy (CPMD) and the National Congress for Democracy and Reunification (NCDR). Whereas the former emphasized the “mass line” and class-based struggle, the latter “consisted of intellectuals and religious leaders who were politically moderate.”¹³ In March 1985, these two organizations combined to form the People's Movement Coalition for Democracy and Reunification (PMCDR). The unity of the opposition also benefited strongly from the decision of student groups, such as the Youth Coalition for Democracy Movement (YCDM), to explicitly support the two Kims' NKDP in advance of the 1985 legislative elections. This was the first time since the early 1960s that students identified themselves with a political party. Vigorous student activism during the campaign period helped the NKDP achieve its critical breakthrough in the 1985 election.

After the election, the alliance between civil society and the elected opposition briefly moved to the sidelines while the NKDP tested the regime's willingness to let the Assembly revise the constitution. Then, in late 1985, the NKDP and the PMCDR began readying their campaign to collect ten million signatures in support of revising the constitution. Together, they formed the National Coalition for Democracy Movement (NCDM). This tight alliance allowed the pro-democracy coalition to prevail when the government sought to disrupt the ten million signature campaign with a barrage of raids and arrests. Such tactics were met with mass rallies that forced the government back onto the defensive. The pro-democracy coalition faltered, however, when Chun offered to let the Assembly form its Special Committee on

¹² There has been persistent disagreement about the number of civilian fatalities in Kwangju. Whereas government figures put the number at under 200, human rights organizations long insisted that the real death toll was as high as 2,000. Recent research suggests that the actual toll may have been approximately 300. See Cumings 1997:377-78; Lewis 2002:69-71.

¹³ Kim 2000:84.

Constitutional Revision. When the NKDP accepted this offer, the PMCDR bolted the NCDM while characterizing the NKDP's decision as "conciliatory and opportunistic."¹⁴ The pro-democracy coalition regained its momentum when Chun suspended the Special Committee's negotiations in April 1987. Now the movement organizations and the political opposition would launch their decisive effort to end authoritarianism in South Korea. These forces came together in a new peak organization, known as the National Movement Headquarters for Democratic Change (NMHDC). In the critical period between June 10 and June 29, 1987, the NMHDC's organized several massive demonstrations, including the June 26 Peace Parade that mobilized one million protesters across South Korea. Three days later, Roh Tae Woo announced that the government would surrender to the opposition's demands.

C. Pacts and Old Elites. South Korea's transition to democracy was rather unusual in the sense that there were no real "losers" in the process. Although embarrassed by his surrender to the opposition's demands, Chun achieved his critical objectives of presiding over the first orderly transfer of power in the history ROK while retaining that power in the hands of a reliable ex-general, namely Roh. Whereas transitions often involve such a thorough repudiation of the *ancien regime* that its leaders have no hope of preserving their interests via largely democratic means, Chun and Roh commanded enough authentic popular support to benefit from South Korea's transition. In addition, their success relied on quarreling within the highest circles of the opposition and a convenient voting system that allowed for the election of a minority president. It is impossible to know but important to ask whether Chun and Roh, in the absence of such advantages, would have mobilized the armed forces to defend their privileges by any means necessary.

As a result of this unusual aspect of the South Korean transition, the dominant pacting literature is mostly irrelevant to analyzing it. The elites were not divided between "hardliners" and "softliners." They stayed united and rationally calculated that they could achieve their critical objectives within the confines of the democratic reforms demanded by the opposition. To an extent, the new system protected some of the institutional and personal prerogatives of the ousted elite. With Roh as chief executive, the opposition would have only a limited ability to investigate and punish the misdeeds of Chun, Roh and other key figures. Yet once Roh left office, the leaders of the old regime became vulnerable. Most notably, in 1996, a South Korean court convicted Chun and Roh of treason, mutiny and other crimes. A host of lesser figures were also convicted of various crimes. The court sentenced Chun to death and Roh to many years in prison, although Kim Dae Jung pardoned them after his victory in the 1997 presidential election. Even so, Chun and Roh did not recover their vast wealth that the courts had confiscated because of its tainted origins. Would Chun and Roh still have acquiesced in the transition of 1987 if they had anticipated their later humiliation under an opposition government? It is very hard to say. In effect, this question demands a precise statement of exactly how much a democratic opposition can demand while preserving the consensual and non-violent character of a transition. To generalize on the basis of the South Korean experience would be premature.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

Section 3: External Variables

Regime change in South Korea has always reflected the influence of American diplomacy alongside the imperatives of South Korean domestic politics. Since the founding of the ROK, South Korean actors have initiated every transition from one regime to another. South Korean actors have also exerted the greatest influence on the course and outcome of those transitions. Yet American decisions, expressed both in terms of actions and acts of omission, have made certain outcomes far more or far less probable than they would have been otherwise.

The texture of South Korean politics has always reflected the ROK's deep alliance with the United States, which has entailed the constant presence of tens of thousands of American military personnel on South Korean territory. In exchange for the assurance provided by the constant presence of US forces, the ROK allowed its own forces to remain under US command, so as to facilitate a joint response in the event of external aggression. The rules and regulations associated with this joint command arrangement have complicated – although hardly prevented – the efforts of the ROK military to change the course of South Korean politics. Less visibly, the desirability of preserving a strong alliance with the United States has led South Korea's presidents to carefully consider the potential American response to any actions that might have a dramatic impact on the domestic front.

In part, the different outcomes of the South Korean transitions in 1979-1980 and 1987 are attributable to the strong contrast between the approaches to those transitions taken by the Carter administration in 1979-1980 and the Reagan administration in 1987. While the Carter administration welcomed the democratic opening of 1979 and lent its support to the interim government, the administration shied away from an active effort to ensure the transition's success. The turbulence of the US-ROK relationship in 1977 and 1978 – and the resulting embarrassment suffered by the Carter administration – made an active approach less attractive. In addition, the crisis in US-Iranian relations made the administration extremely averse to any course of action that risked further instability. The Reagan administration approached the US-ROK relationship from a very different perspective. Initially, the Reagan administration rejected democracy promotion in principle, preferring to focus on the solidarity of anti-Communist governments, both authoritarian and democratic. As a result, Reagan developed a relationship of trust and confidence with Chun Doo Hwan. Yet over time, the administration came to favor democratic transitions even at the expense of strongly anti-Communist dictatorships. Thus, at a critical moment in 1987, President Reagan sent a personal letter to Chun Doo Hwan, insisting that Chun find a peaceful solution to the prevailing crisis. Ironically, Reagan's word carried considerable weight precisely because Reagan had embraced Chun without hesitation during the early and uncertain days of his regime.

The mutual antagonism of Jimmy Carter and Park Chung Hee resulted in a low point in US-ROK relations. As a candidate for president, Carter spoke in favor of a phased

withdrawal of US forces from Korea, planned in consultation with both the ROK and Japan. Carter antagonized the Park government in particular by describing its human rights violations as “repugnant.” As a result of both their own wishful thinking and the reassurance of high-ranking US officers, Park and his advisers expected no sudden changes in the US-ROK security relationship. Yet during his first months in the White House, Carter announced a schedule for the withdrawal of all US combat forces within 4-5 years. The humiliation for Park was considerable. Yet in the end, there were no significant withdrawals. Intense opposition in Congress, from both Democrats and Republicans, forced Carter to abandon his plans quietly. Also during Carter’s first two years in the White House, the US-ROK relationship suffered as a result of congressional investigations into the influence-buying operations of South Korean businessman Park Tong Son. After the Department of Justice indicted Park on thirty-six counts of bribery and similar offenses, Carter requested his extradition. Park Chung Hee refused. President Park also denied that he had any knowledge of Park Tong Son’s activities, although that denial lacked credibility. Ultimately, Park Tong Son testified in exchange for immunity. The legal ramifications of the scandal were minimal, yet once again both presidents felt insulted by the other.¹⁵

The United States’ immediate response to the death of Park Chung Hee consisted of a coordinated effort to deter North Korea from taking advantage of potential instability in the South while reassuring the ROK that the United States’ remained firmly committed to its security. With regard to the ROK’s domestic politics, the United States sought to present itself as unobtrusive, but supportive of reform. Two days after Park’s assassination, William Gleysteen, the US ambassador in Seoul, sent a cable to Washington elaborating his preferred approach. He wrote:

“I urge that we resist the temptation to suggest architectural designs to the Koreans in favor of: (A) providing reassurance against the threat from the North, (B) urging the observance of ‘constitutional processes’ and (C) gently working through all channels toward political liberalization. We should avoid critical public comment or punishing actions unless and until the new regime has blotted its copybook.”

The challenge facing the United States was how to favor liberalization both gently and effectively when the partisans of authoritarianism imposed no such restraints on themselves. Chun and Roh’s violent takeover of the ROK military on December 12, 1979 represented the first test of the United States’ good intentions. Gen. John Wickham, the US commander in Korea, was furious because Chun and Roh had brazenly ignored their obligation to inform the national headquarters before effecting the movement of troops. Yet the only price Chun had to pay for his actions was to sit through a lecture from Amb. Gleysteen and Gen. Wickham two days after the takeover. According to the cable Gleysteen sent back to Washington, the ambassador told Chun “bluntly and directly” that his actions had threatened the ROK’s progress toward freedom and stability. Gleysteen

¹⁵ Lee 2006:81-102. Lee provides the most detailed and thoroughly researched account of US-ROK relations under Carter.

then informed the State Department that “Chon [*sic*] understood our message clearly.”¹⁶ Gen. Wickham was less confident. He reported back to the Pentagon that “Chun impressed me as a ruthlessly ambitious, scheming and forceful man who believes he is destined to wear the purple [presidential sash]...He is on the make, has a taste for power, and knows how to use it.” Nonetheless, Wickham argued for a “hands-off-response” because he neither believed that it was Washington’s place to interfere in Korean domestic politics nor that Washington could do so effectively.¹⁷ In January and February 1980, Wickham and Gleysteen gave some consideration to supporting a counter-coup within the military by anti-Chun generals, but ultimately decided against it. By March, Gleysteen had even begun to defend Chun, reporting back that the United States “should resist oversimplifying Korean politics by making Chun Doo Hwan the sinister source of all evil.”¹⁸ Even after Chun imposed nation-wide martial law in May, the United States hesitated to question his authority. Meeting on May 22, 1980, in the midst of the violence in Kwangju, the National Security Council decided that the American approach to the ROK government should entail “in the short term support, in the longer term pressure for political evolution.”¹⁹ A memo for the national security adviser prepared the day before the meeting laid out the justification for this approach in greater detail. It listed the United States’ objectives in South Korea as:

1. Maintain security on the Korean peninsula and strategic stability in Northeast Asia. (Do not contribute to “another Iran” – a big Congressional concern.)
2. Express a carefully calibrated degree of disapproval, public and private, towards recent events in Korea. (But not in a way which could contribute to instability by suggesting we are encouraging opposition to the Government.)²⁰

Despite having been confident that the defense of human rights could enhance American security, the Carter administration had now succumbed to the fear that the defense of human rights would damage American security.²¹ Ironically, the Carter administration found itself in a position where defending human rights might “contribute to instability” precisely because it had done so little to strengthen democracy and deter a military coup in the months after Park’s assassination.

¹⁶ Cable – Seoul to Washington, 15 Dec 1979, Doc. CK3100116064 in the Declassified Documents Reference System (hereafter DDRS). The DDRS is an online database designed to facilitate access to documents declassified by the Federal Government. See: <http://www.gale.com/servlet/ItemDetailServlet?region=9&imprint=000&titleCode=INFO8&type=4&id=172030>.

¹⁷ Wickham 2000:64-65, 114-118.

¹⁸ Cable – Seoul to Washington, 17 Mar 1980, DDRS – Doc. CK3100128699.

¹⁹ NSC Memorandum – “Summary of Conclusions”, n.d.. Cited by Oberdorfer (1997:129)

²⁰ Memo – Gregg to Brzezinski, 21 May 1980, DDRS – Doc. CK3100466142.

²¹ South Korean movement activists almost unanimously point out that the US government’s support for Chun after Kwangju – in addition to the widespread speculation in South Korea that the US might have endorsed or condoned the massacre – was the main reason for the consequential alignment of democracy movement and anti-Americanism. After Kwangju, democracy movement in South Korea took an unambiguously anti-American tone. Authors’ interviews with Ki Pyo Chang, Hee Yeon Cho, Sei Ung Ham, Dong Choon Kim, and Chung Il Oh.

In its final months in office, the Carter administration co-operated with incoming Reagan administration officials to save the life of Kim Dae Jung, who had been sentenced to death for his dissidence against Chun's new regime. The surprising instance of co-operation effectively illustrates how little difference remained between the Carter and Reagan approaches, even though Carter embraced human rights in principle whereas Reagan prioritized anti-Communism. In August 1980, Carter wrote a private and impassioned letter to Chun asking him to spare Kim's life.²² This effort to save an individual without challenging the system responsible for his repression had become characteristic of Carter's human rights initiatives. Also characteristically, the Reagan administration sought to save Kim's life because of outside pressure, not because of an actual concern for Kim. Richard Allen, the incoming National Security Adviser, recognized that Kim's death would provoke outrage at home and abroad. In the midst of such outrage, it would become impossible for the United States to help Chun consolidate his four-month-old regime, strengthen the US-ROK security relationship and prevent North Korea from taking advantage of tensions in the West. Thus, Allen negotiated a reprieve for Kim in exchange for an invitation for Chun to visit the White House. According to Richard Armitage, who served as a member of Reagan's transition team in the months before his inauguration, "It was an easy deal." Both sides were willing to compromise in order to promote their shared interest in a stronger US-ROK relationship.²³ On January 21, 1981, the day after Reagan's inauguration, the administration announced that Chun would soon be arriving for a visit. Less than two weeks later, Chun became the first head of state to visit Reagan at the White House.²⁴

In June 1982, Reagan reversed his public stand against democracy promotion. In a speech before the British Parliament, Reagan described the spread of democracy across the globe as essential to the free world's ultimate victory over Communism. Reagan also observed that democracy rested on a broad foundation of rights and liberties, not just on fair elections. The practical implication of Reagan's new stance was the founding, in 1983, of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Even so, few journalists or scholars – let alone Democrats – attributed much credibility to Reagan's claim that the United States would oppose not just dictatorships of the left but also of the right. However, archival evidence suggests that Reagan, as usual, meant exactly what he said in public, but did not have a clear sense of how to implement the sweeping commitment he had made.²⁵

²² Letter – Carter to Chun, August 1980, DDRS – DDRS Doc. CK3100117778. See also Zbigniew Brzezinski's memo to Carter from September 1980 (DDRS Doc. CK3100499249).

²³ Authors' interview with Richard Armitage, 29 Apr 2008, Arlington VA.

²⁴ In public, the Reagan administration denied that it had offered the ROK any incentive to spare Kim's life. This was not wholly untrue, since Reagan and his advisers had always intended to welcome to Washington the most prominent of the right-wing dictators from which Carter had kept his distance. Thus, in a sense, Allen negotiated a concession from the South Koreans in exchange for an invitation that would have been extended in any event.

²⁵ Adesnik 2006, *passim*. Although little noticed either at the time or thereafter, Reagan's conversion to the democratic cause came in response to the unexpected success of free elections in El Salvador, a small country that had an outsized influence on Reagan's thinking about global politics. (See Adesnik 2006:164-214.)

In the months before Reagan's visit to South Korea in November 1983, there was little discussion of how his new commitment to democracy promotion would affect his close relationship with Chun Doo Hwan. In the weeks just prior to Reagan's departure, the White House focused its energy on arms control issues that threatened to divide the United States from Western Europe. This brief interval was a memorable one for Robert McFarlane, who had just been promoted to national security adviser.²⁶ Richard Armitage, then serving as the Pentagon executive responsible for military relations with the Asia-Pacific region, recalls that political reform in South Korea was not a major concern at the time.²⁷ Speaking before the National Assembly in Seoul, Reagan withheld direct criticism of the regime but firmly insisted that democracy was the goal toward which South Korea must strive in spite of the ever-present threat from the North. The American president declared that,

The development of democratic political institutions is the surest means to build the national consensus that is the foundation of true security... We welcome President Chun's farsighted plans for a constitutional transfer of power in 1988... Now, this will not be a simple process because of the ever-present threat from the North. But I wish to assure you once again of America's unwavering support and the high regard of democratic peoples everywhere as you take the bold and necessary steps toward political development.²⁸

Top journalists were divided about whether or not Reagan could possibly have meant what he said. A *Washington Post* editorial asserted that only a satirist could have praised Chun's "farsighted plans for a constitutional transfer of power." The *Post* also observed that Reagan met with no prominent dissidents during his time in South Korea. In contrast, the top headline in the *New York Times*' November 12 edition announced "Reagan Bids Seoul Seek Democracy; Denounces North."²⁹ The State Department's internal summaries of Reagan's discussions with Chun show that Reagan expressed his clear support for liberalization. In a preparatory memo for the meeting, Robert McFarlane informed Reagan that "your second meeting with President Chun should focus on political liberalization and economic issues. Although Chun will not welcome a discussion of the Korean domestic political situation, he will expect you to refer to it and to express support for further liberalization."³⁰

McFarlane recalls that Reagan's polite and friendly manner softened the pro-democracy message given to Chun. According to McFarlane, "President Reagan's tendency was... to never lecture an ally." Reagan's emphasis remained on the brutality and unpredictability of North Korea and its Soviet patrons. Moreover, Reagan "wanted

²⁶ Authors' interview with Robert McFarlane, 28 Apr 2008, Arlington VA. McFarlane's predecessor was William "Judge" Clark. McFarlane had served as Clark's deputy.

²⁷ Authors' interview with Armitage. Armitage's title was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

²⁸ Public Papers of the President – Ronald Reagan (hereafter PP-RR), 12 Nov 1984, "Address".

²⁹ *Washington Post* (WP), 12 Nov 1983:A1; 15 Nov 1983:A14. *New York Times* (NYT), 12 Nov 1983:A1; 15 Nov 1983:A5.

³⁰ Memo – McFarlane to Reagan, 5 Nov 1983, DDRS Doc. CK3100497051.

this to be a visit without rancor in any way, or seeming to hector the government.”³¹ Surprisingly, Chun did not resist a discussion of political reform. Instead, the South Korean president told Reagan that the ROK’s turbulent postwar history had led “the people [to] believe that a change of presidents is only possible through violence. This is a very dangerous way of thinking...My term is scheduled to end in 1988 and it will.”³² Of course, Chun did not specify how his successor would be chosen, nor is there any indication that Reagan pressed for a clarification.

The tension between Reagan’s friendship with Chun and his commitment to democracy promotion did not flare up again until just before South Korea’s legislative elections in February 1985. Days before the election, Kim Dae Jung returned to South Korea from his exile in the United States. Kim arrived with an entourage of prestigious American observers, including scholars, retired diplomats and Democratic members of Congress. The observers’ purpose was to prevent Kim from sharing the fate of Filipino opposition leader Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, who was murdered on the tarmac of the Manila airport after his return from exile in the United States. Although Kim arrived safely, ROK security officers beat and threw to the ground a number of the American observers.³³ Reagan told journalists that the melee had resulted from “bad judgment on both sides” and that the incident “tended to hide the fact that Korea, South Korea, has made great strides toward democracy...Their democracy is working.”³⁴ Yet as the *Washington Post* pointed out, the assault on Kim’s entourage took place just one day after Reagan had declared in his State of the Union address that “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is the universal right of all God’s children...our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy, and to communicate these ideals everywhere we can.” If so, then the assault on Kim’s entourage was an assault on the principles that Reagan had so passionately sworn to defend. And so, the *Post* asked, “What is [Reagan] going to do about it?”³⁵ Just four days later, after the NKDP’s stunning performance in the legislative elections, the *Post* offered Reagan an apology. Its editors asked,

Did some of us perhaps give too much importance to the well-publicized drama of Kim Dae Jung’s return? The image of him as a banned and abused politician seems not to square with the reality of the leeway offered his party in the campaign and with its success at the polls...It remains, however, that President Chun, partly in response to American “quiet diplomacy,” has been opening up the system somewhat: releasing prisoners, readmitting banned people to academic and political life.³⁶

³¹ Authors’ interview with Robert McFarlane, 28 Apr 2008, Arlington VA.

³² Memo – Wolfowitz to Shultz, 19 Nov 1983, National Security Archive – South Korea Collection (hereafter NSA/Korea). In contrast to the Archive’s extensive online and microform holdings, the NSA/Korea collection is available only to on-site visitors.

³³ Cumings 1997:381. Cumings, a historian at the University of Chicago, was one of the members of Kim’s entourage. Initial reports claimed that the officers had beaten Kim as well, but Kim later said that this wasn’t so. (NYT, 8 Feb 1985:A1)

³⁴ PP-RR, 11 Feb 1985, “Interview”.

³⁵ WP, 11 Feb 1985:A22.

³⁶ WP, 15 Feb 1985:A24.

It is unknown whether Reagan even understood that legislative elections were about to take place when he said of the South Koreans that “Their democracy is working.” Nonetheless, the elections validated Reagan’s confidence that change was underway. In April, Chun visited the White House for a second time, where Reagan praised “the steps his government has taken to further promote freedom and democracy.”³⁷ This time, there were no negative editorials and Chun’s visit didn’t even make the front page of either the *Post* or the *Times*.

Reagan demonstrated no apparent interest in the protracted negotiations over the presidential succession process that consumed South Korea politics in late 1986 and early 1987. Mid-ranking officials in the administration monitored the negotiations carefully, however. Gaston Sigur, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, actively sought to extract concessions from Chun’s regime. On February 6, 1987, during a public address in New York devoted entirely to the situation in South Korea, Sigur declared that the time had come for the military’s permanent withdrawal from the nation’s politics. According to Sigur, the security of the ROK in the midst of constant threats from the North demanded a popular government no less than it did a strong army.³⁸ Somewhat recklessly, Sigur delivered his address without prior approval from any of his superiors. At first, Secretary of State George Shultz was outraged by Sigur’s insubordination. Yet just a few weeks later, when Shultz visited Seoul to meet with Chun, Shultz said of Sigur’s speech that “every sentence, every word, every comma is the policy of our government.”³⁹ In public, Shultz was less animated but no less firm. At a press conference following his discussions with Chun, Shultz announced that “The United States, as a friend and ally, supports the aspirations of all Koreans for continuing political development, respect for basic human rights and free and fair elections.”⁴⁰ The lack of coordination between Sigur and Shultz had the potential to do serious damage to the American effort to facilitate a transition. The previous year, during the transition to democracy in the Philippines, dictator Ferdinand Marcos constantly sought indications that the pronouncements of lesser officials did not reflect the thinking of their superiors. When Marcos discovered such indications, he became increasingly intransigent. Recognizing this precedent, one influential congressman suggested that Reagan publicly indicate his support for a transition to democracy in South Korea. No such indication was forthcoming.

In the spring of 1987, Washington paid little attention to the situation in South Korea, in part because the capital was consumed with the scandal known as Iran-contra. In Seoul, however, US Ambassador James Lilley sought to lay the foundation for gradual reform without compromising the ROK’s stability. In November 1986, Lilley had replaced Amb. Richard “Dixie” Walker, Reagan’s first ambassador to Seoul. Walker was

³⁷ PP-RR, 26 Apr 1985, “Remarks Following Discussions”.

³⁸ American Foreign Policy – Current Documents (hereafter AFP-CD), 6 Feb 1987, Doc. 366. Sigur ensured greater exposure for his address by delivering it on the day before a memorial service for Park Chong Chol, the student who had died in police custody.

³⁹ Oberdorfer 1997:166.

⁴⁰ NYT, 7 Mar 1987:A3.

a staunch advocate of close relations between the US and ROK governments. Walker also had a habit of making flippant remarks that antagonized his critics. According to Don Oberdorfer, the *Washington Post*'s correspondent for Northeast Asia at the time, "Dixie [Walker], he was not the easiest person for a correspondent to deal with...He had his own agenda, so to speak...He was a decent guy, he was a kind of avuncular figure... I never had the sense he was telling me what he was really thinking."⁴¹ Amb. Lilley recalls that Walker was unpopular with the professional diplomats at the US embassy in Seoul and that even State Department officials in Washington "took hard hits" at Walker. In addition, Walker bore the resentment of prominent scholars of East Asian affairs in the United States, who were fierce critics of the Chun dictatorship.⁴² Upon his arrival in Seoul, Amb. Lilley was scarcely more popular than his predecessor. Most of Walker's critics objected to Lilley's appointment as ambassador, in the expectation that his diplomacy would resemble Walker's.⁴³

During the process of his confirmation as ambassador, Lilley came to the conclusion that "Voices from the legislative corridors of Washington as well as from the halls of the State Department were pushing, loudly and crudely, for the primacy of democracy in the South Korean equation." Lilley resented those who insisted that the pursuit of security and reform were mutually exclusive. Among those he singled out was Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), who asked Lilley at his confirmation hearings, "What do you place first: security or democracy?"⁴⁴ Lilley's approach to the US-ROK relationship stood in contrast to the approach of both his subordinates at the embassy and his superior in Washington, Gaston Sigur. Whereas Sigur made a point of visiting Kim Dae Jung on all of his trips to Korea, Lilley resisted the pressure to meet with Kim during his first months as US ambassador in Seoul. Lilley recalls that many of his colleagues wanted him to follow the example set by Amb. Harry Barnes, a forceful advocate of democracy and human rights during his tenure in a number of South American capitals in the 1980s.⁴⁵

In the final weeks before the explosion of protests and riots that brought down the dictatorship, Sigur and Lilley continued to serve as the two faces of American diplomacy in South Korea. Although not apparently by design, Sigur and Lilley performed a sort of "good cop, bad cop" routine, in which the Assistant Secretary demanded concessions from the regime while the Ambassador assured Chun and Roh of America's friendship. During his several visits to Seoul in this period, Sigur continued to make a point of meeting with Kim Dae Jung, who remained under house arrest at the time. On one occasion, the government sought to intimidate Sigur by having the security detail guarding Kim's house rock Sigur's car so hard that it almost flipped over. Lilley describes this as "a scare tactic of the crudest form." Yet rather than granting Sigur's

⁴¹ Authors' interview with Oberdorfer, 28 Apr 2008, Washington DC.

⁴² Authors' interview with James Lilley, 28 Apr 2008, Washington DC. Amb. Walker passed away in 2003. He himself was a scholar of East Asian affairs who received his doctorate from Yale in 1950 and continued to teach at the university until 1957. Lilley recalled that the East Asia faculty at Yale were the most vocal critics of Walker in the 1980s.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ James Lilley (with Jeffrey Lilley), *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 265-266.

⁴⁵ Authors' interview with Lilley.

requests to join the Assistant Secretary for his meetings with Kim Dae Jung, Lilley held back. He later wrote that,

“I kept more quiet about my work, reassuring leaders that they had US support and then making sure they understood our hope that democratic change would come in the form of open elections, greater freedom of the press, and genuine opposition parties. I couldn’t be effective as the US ambassador if alienated from my Korean counterparts.”⁴⁶

Among Lilley’s most controversial decisions in this period was to attend the electoral convention of Chun and Roh’s ruling Democratic Justice Party (DJP) in early June 1987. The US embassy’s own political counselor told Lilley that his attendance amounted to complicity in a democratic charade. Sixty other ambassadors boycotted the convention. Yet Roh Tae Woo personally expressed his gratitude to Lilley for his attendance, observing that there had been considerable pressure for Lilley to join the boycott.⁴⁷

The outcome of the DJP convention was the nomination of Roh Tae Woo as the party’s candidate for president. When announced in public on June 10, 1987, Roh’s nomination sparked the wave of protests and riots that ultimately brought about a democratic transition. On the evening of June 10, student protesters occupied the Myungdong Cathedral in downtown Seoul. The government considered evicting the students by force.⁴⁸ Lilley, however, counseled against such a reckless move. Meeting with the ROK foreign minister on June 13, Lilley said flat out, “Don’t go into the cathedral with troops. It will reverberate all over the world.” The government stood down and resolved the situation peacefully by relying on priests to serve as intermediaries with the students.⁴⁹

The explosion in South Korea caught Washington off-guard. Neither the president nor the secretary of state nor any other high-ranking official made a public statement about the events in South Korea. Although some within the administration suggested sending a presidential emissary to Seoul, others felt that confronting Chun in a public manner might provoke a backlash. Eventually, a consensus emerged around a proposal to send a private letter from Reagan to Chun counseling restraint.⁵⁰ The precise origins of this approach are difficult to identify. During Reagan’s second term, the White House, State Department and Pentagon coordinated their policies toward East Asia by means of a weekly meeting on Monday afternoons known as the “EA [East Asia] informal”. The principal participants in these meetings were Gaston Sigur from the State Department, Richard Armitage from the Pentagon and James Kelly from the NSC staff at the White House. A critical influence on this group’s thinking with regard to Korea was its

⁴⁶ Lilley 2004:270-271.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Se Ung Hahm, a prominent Catholic priest who led the pro-democracy movement in the 1980s and currently President of Korea Democracy Foundation, recalls that he was told that Catholic countries in Europe and Latin America would consider boycotting the Olympic Games if the Korean government use force to evict the student protestors from the Myungdong Cathedral. Authors’ interview with Hahm.

⁴⁹ WP, 17 Jun 1987:A1; Lilley, 2004: 274

⁵⁰ Oberdorfer 1997:168.

successful and bloodless effort to facilitate a democratic transition in the Philippines in 1986.⁵¹ The group had several reasons to believe that a letter from Reagan to Chun, rather than a more confrontational approach, might be sufficient to prevent bloodshed and promote reform in Seoul. First of all, “The South Korean military...had a big hangover from Kwangju.” Although Chun was hardly repentant, many officers were ashamed of the military for killing hundreds of the civilians they were supposed to protect. Chun himself was constrained by the upcoming Olympics and the potential for the games to be cancelled in the event of major violence. The members of the EA informal also believed that Roh Tae Woo was “far more flexible” than Chun Doo Hwan. In several discussions with Roh, members of the group had suggested that Roh would be able to prevail in free and fair elections as a consequence of the opposition’s inability to unite behind a single candidate, either Kim Dae Jung or Kim Young Sam.⁵² The EA informal’s perception of Roh as more flexible than Chun was shared by others. Lilley recalls that “Roh was a different kind of man.”⁵³ In addition, Roh cultivated a close relationship with Don Oberdorfer, the correspondent for the *Washington Post*, in spite of the paper’s constant condemnations of the dictatorship. Oberdorfer recalls that Roh’s “eagerness” to talk was “extraordinary.” Oberdorfer adds that “I always had hopes for [Roh]...He was an open-minded guy who wanted to talk.”⁵⁴

Reagan’s letter to Chun was moderate in tone but delivered in a forceful manner. Composed by the president’s advisers, “the missive was couched in sympathetic, gentle, and inoffensive language, which Reagan preferred when dealing with allies.”⁵⁵ Moreover, the contents of the letter were vague and referred to the crisis at hand indirectly at best. For example, the letter observed that “Dialogue, compromise, and negotiation are effective ways to solve problems and maintain national unity.”⁵⁶ Delivering the letter in a time of crisis presented a challenge. The South Korean ambassador to Washington, Kim Kyung Won, advised Amb. Lilley to present the letter to Chun in person, rather than dispatching it through the corridors of the Foreign Ministry. The letter from Washington arrived in Seoul on the night of Wednesday, June 17. On Thursday, the Foreign Ministry informed the US Embassy via phone that Chun would not receive Lilley. The US political counselor, the third-ranking official at the Embassy, then demanded a meeting with a Ministry representative, only to be given the same reply as before. Only after the political counselor lost his temper and began to yell at one of his South Korean counterparts did the Foreign Minister himself place a phone call to Lilley. Chun would agree to meet with the American ambassador on Friday, June 19.⁵⁷

Lilley was invited to meet Chun at the Presidential Palace at 2pm on Friday. At 10am, Chun had met with his defense minister, intelligence chief and uniformed chiefs of

⁵¹ Authors’ interview with Armitage. Meanwhile, the successful transition in the Philippines also served as a great inspiration to democracy activists and opposition leaders in South Korea. Authors’ interviews with Se Ung Hahm and Dong Choon Kim.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Authors’ interview with Lilley.

⁵⁴ Authors’ interview with Oberdorfer.

⁵⁵ Oberdorfer 1997:168.

⁵⁶ Letter – Reagan to Chun, 17 Jun 1987, NSA/Korea.

⁵⁷ Lilley 2004:276.

staff. Chun ordered the deployment of battle-ready troops across the country by 4am the next morning. Plans were made to arrest opposition leaders. Before visiting Chun at the Palace, Lilley conferred with the commander of US forces in Korea, Gen. William J. Livesey. The ambassador informed the general of his intention to advise Chun against the use of force. Livesey said nothing. In an unusual departure from his conservative style, Lilley chose to interpret the general's silence as consent for a forceful demarche to President Chun. Lilley was determined to reinforce "Reagan's amicable letter with firm and unambiguous statements about the US position regarding the declaration of martial law." Lilley ventured to Chun that the imposition of martial law would risk undermining the US-ROK alliance and result in another massacre as disastrous as the one at Kwangju.⁵⁸ Lilley told Chun, "This is the American position. The [U.S. military] command is with me. I speak for all of the United States."⁵⁹

In addition to the administration, Congress sought to send its own message to Chun and his supporters. Resolutions calling for free and fair elections in South Korea passed both houses without a single dissenting vote. Remarkably, both Republicans and Democrats embraced the Wilsonian proposition that promoting democracy enhanced US national security rather than sowing chaos. Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI), observed that "If the South Korean people are able to freely choose their own government, they will not hesitate to defend it."⁶⁰ Some Democrats went further and sought to deploy economic sanctions against the Chun regime. On June 18, the day before Lilley presented Reagan's letter to Chun, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) introduced the "Democracy in South Korea Act," which would have imposed sanctions on the ROK because "there is no justification for American trade assistance that subsidizes dictatorship in South Korea." Sen. Kerry, a co-sponsor of the act, added that "Quiet diplomacy and the familiar refrain of 'non-intervention in Korea's internal affairs' are simply not adequate responses to the present crisis...I am cosponsoring and avidly support the proposed sanctions against South Korea."⁶¹ The call for sanctions never gathered much support, however. Then, after Roh announced on June 29 that there would be direct presidential elections, the question of sanctions became irrelevant.

Just two or three hours after Lilley met with Chun, Foreign Minister Choi Kwang Soo informed the ambassador by phone that Chun had decided not to declare martial law.⁶² To what degree might one say that American diplomacy promoted the democratic cause in South Korea? More specifically, to what degree might American diplomacy have influenced Chun's decision not to use the military to crush the pro-democracy movement in 1987 as he had in 1980? Was it a coincidence that Chun made his decision just hours after Lilley delivered Reagan's letter, or can a direct, causal relationship be established? Lilley himself cautions against believing that American diplomacy was dispositive. He writes that "it was likely the South Koreans themselves," both generals and diplomats, who "may have influenced President Chun the most." As Armitage

⁵⁸ Lilley 2004:277-278.

⁵⁹ Oberdorfer 1997:170.

⁶⁰ Congressional Record (CR), 27 Jun 1987:17916.

⁶¹ CR, 18 Jun 1987:16652, 16662.

⁶² Authors' interview with Lilley.

observed, the military itself would not countenance another Kwangju.⁶³ Oberdorfer suggests that the younger colonels and generals in the ROK military made known to Chun and Roh their adamant opposition to the use of lethal force against the protesters. Among authors who have scrutinized the South Korean transition, the most widely cited explanation for Chun's restraint is that if the violence escalated, the International Olympic Committee might have called off the 1988 Summer Games or awarded them to another host.⁶⁴ For Chun, the games symbolized the success of his effort to transform South Korea into a truly modern republic. Although Chun had taken power in the midst of deep recession, he presided over a return to double-digit growth. Chun also took power at an unprecedented low point in US-ROK relations and proceeded to restore an alliance that many South Koreans considered essential to their security. Resorting to the brutal methods of 1980 would have jeopardized that achievement. Finally, given that Roh had strong prospects of winning a free and fair election, Chun could be confident that neither the economic nor the diplomatic pillar of his agenda would crumble as a result of a democratic transition. Ultimately, there is no way to separate and quantify the significance of these critical influences on Chun's thinking. One can only speculate whether Chun might still have kept the army in its barracks if there were no Summer Games scheduled for 1988, if the United States signaled that violence was acceptable, or if Roh were not a viable candidate in a free and fair election.

Section 4: Modes of Interaction Between Domestic and External Variables

Without losing sight of the unique history, culture and conditions that distinguished South Korea's transition to democracy, is it possible to characterize the relationship between external and domestic factors in that transition as a reflection of a broader theory of democratic transitions? One prominent candidate for such a theory is an actor-centered rationalist model that emphasizes a process of bargaining. Another prominent candidate is a learning-centered constructivist model that emphasizes a process of socialization. Undoubtedly, elements of both models enhance our understanding of how the South Korean transition unfolded. However, there was little explicit bargaining involved between South Korean and external actors. In contrast, it is hard to study the South Korean transition without seeing it as an instance of one country's struggle to define itself as part of the "modern" and "developed" world.

On occasion, both the Carter and Reagan administrations relied on incentives, both negative and positive, to prod the ROK authoritarian governments along the path of transition. After the brutal suppression of the uprising in Kwangju, the Carter administration suspended the annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) that brought together the ROK's Minister of Defense and his American counterpart. In order to secure a pardon for Kim Dae Jung, the Reagan administration invited Chun Doo Hwan to be one of Reagan's first guests at the White House. Yet far more often, the governments of the US and the ROK spoke to each other in the language of long-term commitment, rather than the language of transactional negotiation. In diplomatic discussions, the two sides

⁶³ Lilley 2004:278; Authors' interview with Armitage.

⁶⁴ Oberdorfer 1997:164, Cumings 1997:332-3.

spoke of their good will, their frustration, their concerns and their sympathy. More than any specific demand or concession, the US and the ROK valued the persistence of a relationship that had lasted for more than thirty years. Even at the pivotal moment in 1987 when Chun Doo Hwan had to decide whether or not to mobilize the armed forces against the opposition, the US government clothed its message to Chun in vague platitudes about negotiation, compromise and unity. Yet the message was heard.

In the late 1980s, common parlance divided the international landscape into three worlds. As an ambitious anti-Communist, Chun Doo Hwan sought to drive his nation forward from the poverty and chaos of its Third World past to the stability and prosperity of a First World future. Yet uncomfortably, Chun had to contend with the First World expectation that stability and prosperity would rest on a foundation of freedom. During the seven-year tenure he allotted himself, Chun sought to achieve an impossible balance that entailed enough freedom for admission to the First World but not enough freedom to temper his monopoly of power in South Korea. One shortcoming that made such a balance impossible was the absence of an identity, ideology or value system that could justify to the people of South Korea such a significant abrogation of their rights and liberties. In theory, Chun might have borrowed from the example of Singapore and invoked “Asian values” to justify the co-existence of an open market economy and a closed political system. Yet in South Korea, one could not persuasively argue that being authentically Asian entailed the surrender of one’s political rights and liberties. Ironically, it may have been the uncomfortable intimacy of the ROK and the United States of America that made it comfortable for men such as Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam to be both authentic Asians and liberal democrats. Although the United States may not have impressed many South Korean democracy activists as a model ally or friend, they came to see freedom as something that was good in its own right, not just something American.

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Ki Pyo Chang, Secretary General and Director of Policy Planning, People's Movement Coalition for Democracy and Reunification (*Mint'ongnyon*) (1985-1986) (Interview Date: April 21, 2008).

Hee Yeon Cho, Professor of Sociology, Sung Kong Hoe University (1990-present); Member of the Executive Committee, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (2000-2001) (Interview Date: April 22, 2008).

Sei Ung Ham, President, Korea Democracy Foundation (2004-present); Member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Peace, Korean Catholic Church (1984-1989) (Interview Date: April 22, 2008).

Byung O Kim, Korean National Assemblyman(1981-1985, 1992-1995); Co-Chairman, Council for the Promotion of Democratization (*Minch'uhyp*) (1985-1987); General Secretary, Korean National Assembly (2000-2002); Co-Chairman, Committee for the Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the June Democracy Movement of 1987 (2004-present) (Interview Date: April 23, 2008).

Dong Choon Kim, Professor of Sociology, Sung Kong Hoe University (1997-present); Member of the Standing Committee, Korea Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2005-present); Member of the Policy Planning Committee, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (2000-2001) (Interview Date: April 23, 2008).

Kyung Won Kim, Special Adviser to President Park (on International Politics) (1975-1980); Member of the Special Committee for National Security Measures (*Kukpowi*) (1980); Secretary to President Chun (1980-1982); Ambassador to UN (1981-1985); Ambassador to US (1985-1988) (Interview Date: April 23, 2008).

Chung Il Oh, Chairman, Standing Executive Committee and Secretary General, NMHDC (National Movement Headquarters for Democratic Constitution) (1987) (*Kungmin undong ponbu*); President, Korea National Council of Churches (1994-1996); Chairman, (Interview Date: April 22, 2008).

Richard Armitage, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1981-1984); Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1984-1988); Deputy Secretary of State (2001-2004) (Interview Date: April 29, 2008).

James Lilley, Director, American Institute of Taiwan (1982-1984); US Ambassador to Seoul (1986-1989); US Ambassador to Beijing (1989-1991) (Interview Date: April 28, 2008) (Interview Date: April 28, 2008).

Robert McFarlane, Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) – United States Marines, Deputy National Security Adviser (1982-1983); National Security Adviser (1983-1985) (Interview Date: April 28, 2008).

Don Oberdorfer, Washington Post correspondent for Northeast Asia (YYYY-YYYY); Chairman of the US-Korea Institute, JHU-SAIS (YYYY-Present) (Interview Date: April 28, 2008).

James Przystup. Member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff (1987-YYYY); Senior Research Fellow, Institute for National Strategic Studies (YYYY-Present) (Interview Date: April 29, 2008).