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South Korean Political Development in the 1980s

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The establishment of the Fifth Republic under the direction of President Chun Doo Hwan in June 1981 marked the opening of a new era of political and economic development in South Korea. The two previous years relative political openness and then political repression, of more than occasional turmoil and violence, and of economic pause after nearly two decades of explosive growth were replaced by a period of comparative political stability, renewed economic expansion, and initiation of some social reforms. While there was no possibility of short-term acceptance of the legitimacy of the new regime, most Koreans seemed to welcome the end of uncertainty following the death of President Pak Chung Hee in late 1979 and looked forward to resumption of rapid economic development and concomitant social betterment.

Two years later was still too early to tell whether the balance between long-term hope and short run suspicion would decisively tilt one way or the other. In fact, there appeared to be much continuity of political style with the Pak regime. But if the government were to keep its promise on succession, if the economy were to grow as rapidly as government officials hope, if no singular events would intervene to derail obvious trends, and if the international military and economic situation did not deal a fatal blow

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to the domestic order, the prognosis for emergence of an economically prosperous and politically progressive South Korea was reasonably good. Unfortunately, forecasts were mixed: succession and growth looked positive, but the international picture was turning bleak, while singular events -- the Rangoon killings or the heightened prospect for student-worker-dissident disorders -- could at any time derail what could have been a hopeful trend. Just to list these major conditions, moreover, was to indicate how difficult it would be to convert the rather shaky situation of 1983 into the kind of solidity that would be able to withstand the inevitable shocks that would come before the 1988 succession.

It did seem reasonably clear that Korea was confronted with several opportunities that, while not different in kind from the four political eras of the post-1945 past, at least could not be longer postponed. These were: institutionalization and liberalization of the political process; solving many current socio-economic problems merely through further rapid growth; and creation of a well-ordered society of relatively satisfied citizens and consumers through enhanced social welfare and income redistribution measures. By 1983, however, there were only initial indications of progress in the political arena and there was not much movement toward social welfarism other than as spin-offs from the anticipated economic growth. The emphasis was entirely on political stability as the most important condition of economic growth and on economic growth as the sources of popular satisfaction and eventual purchase of genuine political loyalty to President Chun and his program.

The dangers associated with this political-economic strategy were also clear. They were: missing the opportunities

to move South Korea far down the road to becoming a modern liberal-democratic polity and economy; and attempting to over-direct developments, thus corrupting the regime's goals, however well-intended, through faulty means. In a word, the danger was to err by muddling through instead of exercising genuine leadership and to lead through coercion, by top-down over-centralized authoritarianism characteristic of the political culture of the past but dysfunctional and unnecessary in the years ahead. The government in 1983 was guilty of both of these sins and thus stood on the brink of losing what little popular support it had garnered so far.

The political issues were simply stated. First, would President Chun keep his word and not attempt to succeed himself in 1988, thus importing much-needed regularization into the political process? Second, would the government strive toward institutional democratization of the political process through centering political life in the National Assembly and looking to the three political parties as the principal means of bringing forth a new crop of political leaders? (Another way to phrase this question was: would --or could-- the military, which since 1962 had stood at the base of the Korean political system, voluntarily step aside from its role as kingmaker and concentrate more or less exclusively on national defense?) Third, could a fundamental shift be made in the governmental direction of the economy and the polity, from overly-close central bureaucratic control to less direct regulation relatively free from the necessity of personal connections? Fourth, would the citizenry be patient enough to avoid extreme political disturbances and the government restrained enough to avoid extreme repressive measures, tacitly cooperating in building political (and thus socio-economic) stability? Finally, would the government so modulate economic development as to promote increasing quality of economic life (i.e., lessen the rich-poor gap) and

overcame the tendency (or the necessity) by many to engage in corrupt economic behavior? The five watchwords of Korean politics in the 1980s thus became: succession, democratization, decentralization, stability, and distribution.

Each of these themes needs to be amplified. For analytic and expository purposes, succession will be artificially separated from democratization, the next three topics lumped together, and distribution discussed, briefly, as if it were an autonomous subject. In reality, of course, ~~was~~ related to the others in a complex and shifting manner.

As to the succession issue, the question in 1983 was still open despite a Constitutional provision preventing President Chun from succeeding himself after his seven year term of office would expire in early 1988. The question was on everyone's mind and there was an unfortunate tendency to reduce all political problems to that one issue. The President had taken every possible occasion to assert that he would not try to alter the Constitution in any way and would thus carry out his word, and he put out statements of denial whenever rumours of impending manipulation gained currency. Such was the suspicion of Chun, however (born of the near-universal perception of the illegitimacy of his coming to power in 1980 and 1981 and his vicious repression of the Kwangju protest in May 1980), that many, perhaps most, Korean citizens believed that some attempt at altering or circumventing the Constitution would be found. If so, there was little doubt that there would be a major public outcry against it, that in many areas of the country protests would take the form of mass popular demonstrations cutting across class, gender, and generational lines, and that the entire foundation of Chun's rule could be shaken as a result. This, in fact, would be a latter-day expression of the negative definition of the Confucian Mandate of Heaven doctrine. If Chun attempted to doctor the succession process to his favor, he would lose what little legitimacy, i.e., right to rule, he had succeeded in gaining

through the mere act of seizing power. The situation would then be similar to the last days of Pak Chung Hee in 1979, wherein the government was forced constantly to increase its level of repressive violence until someone high in the bureaucracy (in that case, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency) took matters into his own hands and assassinated Pak. Chun Doo Hwan lived in fear of a similar spiral of events, which was the major reason why he probably could not alter the Constitution in his favor.

There were, of course, scenarios as to how Chun could manipulate the succession. The President could actually step down as scheduled, but in reality manipulate things from behind the scenes. One way would be through his younger brother, Chun Kyung Hwan, the energetic head of the Saemaul Undong, who was already building a personality cult around himself (to which subject we return to below), and who could run for and hopefully win the Presidency on the basis of his organizational strength. Another would be to step down but first assume the headship of the government party (the Democratic Justice Party), having first assured himself that that party could control the National Assembly and --a further assumption-- thus the country. Second, Chun could wait until after the National Assembly elections in 1985 and then, presuming he and the DJP had firm control of the Assembly, could merely declare a national emergency under a pretext or for some justifiable reason (i.e., North Korean military interference, especially as the 1986 Asian Games or the 1988 Olympics, both scheduled to take place in Seoul, approached). Third, Chun could, in accord with the Constitution, "take the necessary emergency measures" (Article 51) or reimpose martial law (Article 52), both of which could be legitimated by the Assembly (although only with difficulty, given the express prohibitions of Articles 45 and 129). Finally, there was the possibility that, just as in 1979-80, the military would step in to abrogate the scheduled succession, impose military administration, and put one of its own men in power, say Roh Tae Wu.

Several conclusions were immediately apparant. First, all but the first scenario presumed some degree of increase in power of the National Assembly, or at least an increasing tendency to make it the locus of power as relates to the succession issue. There were some advantages to a written constitution that, at least on paper, made the Assembly a politically powerful body. To violate it with impunity was to run the risk at least of massive popular demonstrations and at worst of North Korean intervention. Second, the first two scenarios were not mutually incompatible. Chun Kyung Hwan's drive to prominence was just beginning in 1983 and would stand or fall not only on his success in generalizing the Saemaul appeal but on Chun Doo Hwan's own record. Both would take time, probably beyond the date of the 1985 elections. If both Chuns were to be in difficulty at that point, the President would still have the option, if he dared brave the political storm that would follow, of trying to modify the political system in his favor. Third, the military by 1988 might be moving off the political stage if no North-South conflict has taken place (as is likely for reasons specified later) and if there were no large-scale disorders to tempt Pyongyang's intervention. Because of the Asian Games and the Olympics, both of which would temper the propensity of both government and populace to resort to extreme measures, and assuming general restraint, the product of an unwillingness to see a return of the disorders attendant upon the end of the Pak regime, the military might not find the need (some might say excuse) to re-enter the political arena.

The upshot of the succession issue early in the Chun era was thus a marginally hopeful prospect for institutional democratization. The President found it difficult to move decisively to convert his grip on the Blue House into a second term. Popular opposition and probable opposition from his own military supporters stood in the way, to which should be added some probability that he generally intended not to succeed himself --that

he meant what he said. In any case, succession scenarios led straight to the wider question of whether the country, despite its lack of success in the past and its tendency toward an authoritarian political culture, would in fact be able to move toward democracy.

There were many components to the equation, and any consideration of the issue easily expanded into an inquiry into South Korea's future as a whole. For analytic purposes, however, the following related directly to democratization and the attendant themes of decentralization and stability: the role of the parties, in and outside the National Assembly; prospects for local self-rule; Saemaul penetration of and attempted domination over major elements of Korean society; press liberalization; and the role of the Blue House in politics. Three related issues --decentralizing economic decision-making, fostering economic democracy, and treatment of various opposition groups-- are important to that analysis and are folded into discussion of these four topics.

South Korean political parties as a whole were not the locus of political life, because neither they nor the institution wherein they were supposed principally to operate --the National Assembly-- possessed any real power. The Democratic Justice Party, numerically the strongest and the most well-financed of the three, was in fact a creature of the Blue House, and derived its support from that source, from the propensity of many Koreans to gravitate to the authoritarian center of power, and from the widespread desire not to see a repetition of the instability of the recent past. The Party's purpose was to mobilize popular support for government programs and to assure domination of the National Assembly, in both of which regards it was reasonably successful. A portion of its candidates did have to stand for election --the next occasion being in early 1985-- and thus there was some tendency toward accountability, especially since its majority in the Assembly --54%-- was not

overwhelming. The trouble was that, so long as the DJP took as its task the two purposes just noted, so long as real power continued to be centered in the Blue House and the military behind it, and so long as it did not fear for its life at the hand of the voters' ballots, it would not become a genuine political party but remain essentially a high class support group and propaganda arm of the Presidency. Moreover, it suffered from too close an association with Chun, which meant both that it could justify but not criticize and that it could not grow up its own healthy crop of charismatic leaders, long a sine qua non of real political success in Korea. Finally, merely because it was the ruling party, it had enormous difficulty in shaking off the dysfunctional effects of the average citizen's cynicism toward politics in general and antipathy toward Chun's illegitimacy in particular.

The major opposition group, the Democratic Korea Party, was a mirror image of the DJP. It suffered from the knowledge that it was out of power and, in all probability, that it would always be out of power. It could only act as a vehicle for ballot-box and intra-Assembly protest and inter-locution. Its membership therefore consisted mostly of educated liberal democrats, the politically or socially disinherited, and those who did not fully benefit from the existing distribution (e.g., centralization) of power or from rapid economic growth. It did appear to have a genuine grass-roots organization throughout the country, but it was constantly thwarted by the better-financed DJP and by the government itself, which used all the tools at their disposal to assure the party's continued weakness. Because it did not have to worry about direct governmental leadership, however, it tended (just as its predecessor, the New Democratic Party) to develop strong leadership from below and also to suffer from factional and charismatic effects of such leadership. Even with Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam banned from participation in politics, they cast long shadows across the political

landscape, as shown by the response to Kim Young Sam's hunger strike of early 1983. The regime made sure he would not martyr himself by forcing hospitalization, and treated him gingerly by allowing access after he returned home. But it did not allow publication of the news of those events until the health danger was over and suppressed entirely news of sympathy hunger strikes by dozens of his supporters around the country. The DKP won a substantial number of National Assembly votes in the 1981 elections, taking % of the ballots cast and seats, was the focus of support for the politically legal opposition to the government (others --dissident students, the religious opposition, and underground forces-- operated essentially outside of the political framework provided by the 1980 Constitution), and carried on as vigorous an organizational effort at the local level as the situation allowed. It claimed to suffer much from government interference, however: telephone tapping, mail surveillance and other forms of internal intelligence gathering, and political pressure. It did the best it could under the circumstances --holding rallies, publishing newspapers, taking positions in the National Assembly, etc.-- but because of its relative lack of power, was not taken seriously by the electorate and thus tended to operate in a partial vacuum.

Nonetheless, were the National Assembly to be provided with increased power (e.g., budgetary, interlocutory, and succession-related), as could well happen in the mid- to late 1980s, the DKP could become the center of opposition political life in the country. That is what happened twice before in post-War South Korean politics, bespeaking the Korean tendency to bifurcate political loyalties --either to the absolute center of state power or to the opposition when the center begins to lose control over events. But although the elections of 1985 could thus increase in importance, in 1983 they were on no one's minds except those of the Assembly members themselves. There was, moreover, unfortunately no indication from the Blue House that it would move to pay more attention to the Assembly. Quite

the contrary, the government's handling of the "convening of panels" issue in early 1983 demonstrated its extreme reluctance to broaden the scope of National Assembly authority. What counted most in the Assembly was a member's access to Blue House power. If that could be demonstrated, as in the case of many members of the DJP and perhaps some independents, then the individual himself was of interest. But that did not yet enhance the authority of the Assembly as an institution.

A second political issue was that of local autonomy. In a state that had always been highly centralized and which in the 1980s was still governable from one center, despite the very large increase in population since World War II (the 40 million mark was passed in mid-1983), there was neither tradition nor incentive to decentralize governance, institutionally or geographically. And yet both efficiency and justice militated in favor of such a departure; efficiency because the country was becoming too complex to be governed well from Seoul alone, justice because local issues were best decided at that level. An additional reason was that no genuine and permanent democracy in Korea would develop unless a pluralism of power were allowed. Localities and institutions (particularly universities but also business) cried out for autonomy. Everywhere in 1983 there was resentment against needless centralization of power. From the point of view of continuity of political culture, it was understandable that all provincial governors, mayors, ward head, police and fire chiefs, etc. should be appointed by Seoul and in the case of the more important administrators, be sent from outside the local area, and that there was little local fiscal autonomy. That, after all, was how it was always done, from Yi Dynasty times forward, in accord with Confucian norms. But as the populace gained in sophistication, education, and political awareness, the pressure for localization (and hence for democratization) of administration grew and, with it, opposition to the center.

A vicious circle had come into existence. Over-control from above generated local resentment which, occasionally, eventuated in direct opposition (as in Kwangju in 1980) or otherwise in less overt but still measureable feelings. These in turn led the regime to tighten its grip on the localities or to shuffle investment resources, according to Seoul's view of which provinces and cities were least trustworthy, away from the trouble-makers. There was thus not much movement on this front, and it was easy to conclude that nothing substantial would change.

The same thing was true of the universities. Professors had been stripped of tenure by Pak Chung Hee on a whim in 1978 and made servants under temporary contracts of varying length. Deans and college presidents were removeable by the government (and many were, especially after the Chun Doo Hwan coup in 1981-82). If these moves were made in accordance with the center's suspicion of the political loyalties of the intellectual community (which was accurate), the academy retaliated in kind by infecting the students even more with their anti-authoritarian virus. The students in turn responded (when other factors were admixed) by taking to the streets or by carrying out periodic on-campus demonstrations. The upshot was a series of student arrests, school closures, faculty purges, and police beatings that tended to unite the campuses against the government and exacerbate the already severe alienation between the two sectors of society.

To this was added the unfortunate side effects of the Ministry of Education's decision in 1981 to admit thirty percent more students as freshmen as would be allowed to graduate four years later and carry them along until after the end of their third year before dismissing them arbitrarily, even if they had passing grades. The purpose was to get students to study harder and to play at politics less, but the upshot was, at least for that portion, accelerated and enforced politicization, heightened

insecurity, threat of career failure before it had a chance to begin, and --if they were thrown out of school for demonstrating, as many were-- permanent consignment to the proletariat and sure candidates for underground movements dedicated to violent overthrow of the government. Fortunately, the Ministry partially relaxed that foolish policy in the late summer of 1983 before the first cuts were due to be made. Much damage had already been done, however, It would take more time to undo its effects, and the backtracking in late 1983 was generally regarded as not fast or far enough.

The spread of democratization throughout construction of secondary loyalties, decentralized decision-making, and the (perhaps inadvertant) fostering schools of democracy in educational, local governmental, and industrial institutions was coming under increasing challenge by the Saemaul Undong. What was originally a government-sponsored rural self-help movement that achieved much deserved success under Pak Chung Hee was considerably broadened in late 1981 to penetrate urban areas, significantly politicized, and essentially made a creature of the Blue House to organize under government control all walks of Korean life. It also took on strong ideological overtones that, together with the cultural nationalism emanating from the Academy of Korean Studies and the personal (but officially approved) philosophy of the former Minister of Education, Rhee Kyo Ho (e.g., anti-Western cum anti-communist socialism), formed the mainstream of Chun's drive to motivate all Koreans to march in a single direction to a single tune. While we return to the ideological theme below, the Saemaul movement drew increasing attention as a body laying the groundwork for organized political penetration of most social institutions. What in the 1970s was largely limited to underpinning village economic development had by 1983 become a far-flung empire of tightly-controlled organs blanketing the entire country. There was a Central Saemaul Leader's Association several hundred thousand strong, a Saemaul Women's Clubs Central Federation with

several million members, a Central Council of Business and Office Saemaul in charge of its activities in close to 7000 offices, a Factory Saemaul Headquarters active in close to 20,000 factories, a Central Federation of Saemaul Youth Societies that was moving from its rural base into the cities and by 1983 had established 760,000 youth clubs, a Village Library Headquarters for placing mini-libraries in 35, 000 villages, a Sports Club that had already held national meets and was trying to centrally organize practically all amateur sports groups, and a research organization.

Were these organizations to have limited themselves to "nation building" and recreational activities, they would merit laudatory mention in studies of Korea's economic and societal development but lack attention in works devoted to political life. They were, however, political organizations, they were directed by the government, they were armed with an ideology (watery though it was), and they did aim to control many, if not all, aspects of daily life. If they succeeded in that aim, South Korea would move several steps along the path from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. They were, in fact, organizationally little different from similar bodies found in all Leninist societies. Was it possible in Korea to form an amateur sports league, a network of baby-sitting groups, a hiking organization, and the like? Clearly it still was in 1983. There were also the universities, the churches, the Boy Scouts, etc, that stood outside the Saemaul Undong and to some extent competed with it. But if all business, labor, and industry leaders were expected to take at least a week's Saemaul training, establish Saemaul branches at all work levels, and foster new Saemaul activities and its ideological approach, the bridge to totalitarianism was being built. There were as yet also no Saemaul neighborhood associations to check up on the citizen's daily life and moral conduct (although there had long been a rudimentary organization of that sort under the local government authorities). Two keys to the future would thus be whether neighborhood

groups would be transferred to the Saemaul and thus "revitalized" and whether competing organizations would either be banned or brought under the Saemaul flag.

If there was danger of de-democratization emanating from the politicization and generalization of the Saemaul, there were also countervailing forces. Perhaps most importantly, it was not clear that Saemaul penetration was any more than superficial. There may have been much organizational activity at every level, but it also consisted of choirs that wanted merely to sing, boys who only desired to ride in a bike race, and women who sought out baby-sitting groups as a good idea in its own right. There also seemed to be much natural resistance to the political-ideological content of Saemaul and a lot of mere lip service to its quasi-governmental organizers. To be sure, no one could miss the deliberate personality cult being built around Chun Kyung Hwan; the long-term success of the movement would come more and more to depend on his ability to survive politically. He (and his brother, the President) obviously intended to build up the organization as a grass-roots political base for the post-1988 era, but in the end that could prove to be his Achilles Heel and the urban Saemaul's undoing. A government-controlled movement to create multiple support organizations might work in communist countries, but in South Korea, where there had to come to be a natural suspicion of most every government policy, it could well result in inadvertant but effective organization of the opposition or at least the creation, as in industry, of secondary (or even primary) loyalty groups. If so, the future could turn out to be more democratically oriented than totalitarian, and less authoritarian than in the past.

Press liberalization was a fourth area of democratization. Since Pak Chung Hee's seizure of power in 1962, the media in Korea was subject to

government censorship. The degree of control varied, depending on the subject, regime, and era. When Chun Doo Hwan took power, many journalists were banned from their profession and censorship was tightened up again after the relatively liberal interregnum following Pak's death. The mechanism of control was multi-faceted: government ownership of majority control of some newspapers and broadcasting networks, daily directives and analyses on whether, how, and to what extent publicity could be given to certain issues, campaigns against newspapers (such as Dong-A Ilbo) that got out of line, and outright purging of those editors and reporters who the government regarded as incorrigible opponents. On that basis, it would seem that there was no press freedom in South Korea and that the picture was bleak, since there was little likelihood of major change.

Fortunately, the situation was actually much better. First, international news was not censored to the degree domestic developments were, so long as reporting on Korea was reasonably favorable. Second, the American Armed Forces broadcast network remained largely outside the system and, although it took care not to tread too heavily into reportage of domestic events, it represented an alternative and widely available news source to a nation whose people took English as their most important foreign language. Third, even with censorship, the degree of detail and the quality of reporting was very high. The South Korean citizen, even by reading the standard newspapers, could obtain a reasonably clear picture of what was transpiring in the country. Fourth, there was the phenomenon of the liberal censor. What was not expressly prohibited was implicitly permitted, censorship of a given story was often temporary, editors were not always told in detail how to play a story, and censors themselves took as their task the imposition of minimal, not maximum, degrees of censorship. Fifth, the press itself constantly pushed at the limits of censorship, sometimes going beyond the permissible

but not suffering (most of the time) other than a gentle slap on the hand from the government. And last, even with 40 million people, Korea remained a "small" country in the sense that information, once generated, could not be suppressed for long. Like other highly developed cultures, Koreans loved to talk and the informal word-of-mouth network was well developed, even, more so in a culture where personal "connections" were the stuff of social life.

In 1983, there were some signs of official liberalization. First, martial law had been lifted, and with it the more stringent forms of censorship relaxed. Second, the ban on most journalists imposed at the outset of the Chun regime had been reversed. And although the individuals in question could not thereby reclaim their old jobs, they could, for the most part, re-enter their field. Third, there was an unannounced relaxing of the limits of reportage and the information content of the news media broadened. The media held genuine reader and viewer interest. That was not the same as broad guarantees of freedom of the press, but neither was it anything near the grim, grey lack of any information characteristic of the Leninist states, particularly North Korea. The South Korean government could hold few secrets for long. Finally, as the economy became more sophisticated, as the country became even more important in international trade and politics, and as the level of education rose, the ability of mindless censorship to convince the citizenry of obviously erroneous arguments declined precipitously. The government could not have a complex economy and international respect without also having a generally informed populace. Since its legitimacy and continuity in office depended mostly on the former, it had, albeit slowly, to give ground

on the latter. Press liberalization would therefore probably continue, although unplanned, down to 1988.

Politics in South Korea, as in other countries, possessed two attributes: style and policy. Policy was the outcome of marginal (i.e., usually short-term) changes of a controversial nature produced by the interaction between the government and its environment. Policy was also the product of the particular style of the governing authorities, both administrative-bureaucratic and executive-legislative. More than two years after the Chun regime came to power, it clearly possessed its own Blue House style that constituted an important element in the political equation and helped direct longer-term political change, i.e., political development. That style in turn stemmed from two sources: overall Korean political culture, the product of many centuries of Korean history, on the one hand, and the idiosyncrasies of the President, his immediate advisors, and his military support base, on the other. It was not easy for the outsider, much less the foreigner, to describe Chun's style, especially as it was still in evolution. It was more difficult still to explain it in terms of that culture and his personality.

Nonetheless, certain facts and trends seemed apparent. Most importantly, both Koreans and foreigners noted that the President had not merely become more assertive and confident as he learned the details of the job more thoroughly but had become more demanding and promulgative and less willing to listen and consensual. When he came into office, he clearly felt his lack of authority and accordingly sought out advice from many quarters and (after the first rush of reforms and purges) deliberately moved slowly. By 1983, that initial period was clearly over. Indeed, the danger was commandism: treating the whole nation as a military unit to be mobilized and directed in unison toward a single end. From this seemed to stem a second arresting quality of the

Blue House, at least according to domestic observers: isolation from the public at large and from important advisory groups in particular. It remained an important strand of Korean political culture that the head of state, just as the King in dynastic times, deliberately put himself above the citizenry, act in public in a sometimes imperious manner, and play the part of a giver-of-laws and symbol of authority. That in itself led Chun Doo Hwan to become overly formal in public appearances and increasingly to eschew his original role as a self-appointed populist. He was becoming stiff and ceremonial, like his predecessor. He emitted short slogans for posting on office walls next to his picture and for easy memorization. More and more, he ruled from the Blue House and through lesser officials rather than touring the country and obtaining back-door confirmatory evidence and opinions from informal advisors in various sectors of society. He did not even allow the development of personal loyalties, a feature useful to authoritarian rulers. If this was in accord with the political culture, it was, unfortunately, two-way isolation, a mutually insulating device, ruler from society. The natural inclination toward isolationism necessitated by the need to appear magistral was accentuated by the suspicion of him by many otherwise natural supporters --low level bureaucrats and official workers, big businessmen, and farmers-- stemming from the manner in which he came to power. It was questionable whether, in any short term, he could make up by good works the harm inflicted by military and the Kwangju repression.

Not that Chun did not try. Any listing of the positive side of the regime's balance sheet would already be long, and perhaps the tentative liberalization that began to take place from 1982 (with the abolition of martial law and the curfew) and in 1983 (with the freeing of most political prisoners and the return to their normal pursuits by many others) and longer-term economic growth would turn the corner of public opinion. But not in

the early years. Chun lacked time, and external developments constantly bore down on him. Enforced public isolation born of deliberate elevation of style was in fact accentuated by a further problem. Many outside the Blue House remarked on the generally low quality of the President's immediate advisors. With few exceptions (Kim Jae Ik, the well-known economics assistant and Hahm Pyong Choon, the highly respected Presidential secretary, were always mentioned as quality stand-outs --their deaths in Rangoon were thus a grave national loss as well as personal tragedies), those who were listed as personal assistants and secretaries were no more than that: note takers, listeners, and carrier-outers of orders, and not true advisors. Even Pak Chung Hee was seen in a comparatively favorable light because at least he maintained an inner sanctum of high quality advisors and an informal outer sanctum of intellectuals and specialists. The upshot was that the President was short of concrete proposals, whether good or bad.

The issue was not that the President would probably never qualify for Mensa --he was no less well-endowed with natural intellect than most other rulers of Korea or of other states. The problem, in addition to the above, was was felt personal insecurity and a knowledge of his own political inexperience. The second of these qualities was remendable over time, but the first might turn out to be a permanent defect. Insecurity --despite an obviously solid set of opinions about what was good for the country produced by many years of cogitation and discussion with his military colleagues insecurity could lead to a spiral of mistakes, since the President, exposed constantly to new situations, could not attain the efficiency that comes from experience in dealing wver time with basically similar circumstances. Sensing this, the President sought to minimize change and the prospect for change, emphasizing stability über alles. He thus ran the danger of first appearing and then becoming reactionary in an effort to hold back the tide of political changes that modernization required and that, ultimately, could not be avoided.

Decentralization, the third political issue in South Korea, was beginning to emerge in 1983 as a major issue between the central government and business. The Pak Chung Hee regime had overseen very rapid economic development; indeed, its most positive legacy was the transformation of the country as a whole from an underdeveloped Asian backwater to one of the industrial powerhouses of the region and an example for all the world to behold. The hallmark was government leadership in all sectors of the economy from countryside to railhead to dockside to smokestack.

Pak's industrialization drive began in 1962 as a prerogative of the government, which wrote and promulgated the economic plan and fostered the development of, and concentrated the nation's resources on, the "ten large companies". It ended in 1979 with a highly modern economy that had been created, practically out of nothing by the concerted effort of the Korean people, who had probably never worked so hard and surely had never before had so much to be proud of. Even with the "pause" at the turn of the decade--the product of a mixture of international economic shocks and domestic political setbacks--by the early 1980s growth had been renewed, national income had expanded 35 fold as compared with the 1950s, prosperity was everywhere evident, and the stage was set for a "second economic miracle". The question was whether the previous, and still extant, formula of top-down political direction would suffice this time as well. Had not industry grown too large and complex for any single agency to run successfully, much less one that, for all its past economic success and proven intellectual foundation, was at base making every economic decision with a view first to its political relevance?

By mid-1983, more than two years into the Chun era, there was little sign that much was being done about the problem. It was, nonetheless, the issue about which the captains of Korean industry complained the most. And, given their new-found power and the dependency of the government's ultimate legitimacy on industry's ability to perform another economic miracle,

the Blue House was probably more inclined to listen. Not that industry overly-minded governmental leadership of the economy; it knew that planning, rough-tuning, and regulation were all necessary and probably unavoidable.

What it did not appreciate was interference into, and control by the bureaucracy of, the details of production and financing. What industry probably desired was not a Korean version of Japan, Incorporated, but a workable balance of power between polity and economy. Above all, Korean business did not want authoritarian political control. The charge of over-management (directed, it should be noted, not so much at the Blue House itself as against the swollen bureaucracy and its attempt to micro-manage from the outside) was probably solidly based. The government would thus no doubt have to listen and act more circumspectly if it wished to assure its political future. Business by 1983 had become an autonomous, if not an independent, entity in the domestic political firmament.

Economic decentralization was important for three further reasons, each of which was founded on democratization. First, if industry could carve out an increasingly large area of reserved decision-making, factory, bank, and service enterprise could become training grounds for local self-government. Habits of making choices without necessary appeal to the central political level or waiting for bureaucratic permission, once ingrained on the shop floor, in the inter-office memo, and at the boardroom discussion, could spread to other spheres of life and end up helping to transform the political culture. Second, as autonomy of decision-making spread, loyalty to the enterprise first and to the polity second would increase and politics would tend more and more to revolve around the interest group and not constantly be swept upward to the Blue House level. Third, the attempt by the government to prevent such a process first from gaining momentum and then getting out

of political control --the obvious aim of the Saemaul movement's attempted penetration in business and industry-- would be thwarted. With it, the acute danger of transforming an authoritarian mass culture into one more closely resembling totalitarianism would lessen. In 1983, it was too early to say whether these countercurrents would eventually propel the country in a decisively different political direction. But it was clear that the beginning of a transformation was already underway, not merely in Korea's political economy but more importantly in its political culture.

The fourth political issue concerned the contradiction between popular desires for democratic liberalization that presumably ought to accompany economic modernization, on the one hand, and the regime's emphasis on political stability as the most important condition of economic growth, on the other. The Blue House predicated its own future, and the prospects for promised eventual relaxation of political control, on a sustained period of high growth and technological transformation such that per capita income would by the end of the 1980s rise to the level of advanced industrial countries. Only then would it be possible to loosen the economic pressure and allow the luxury of more advanced democracy. The screws had to be kept tight, the Blue House felt, for international reasons as well: the North Koreans would remain dangerously ahead in military preparedness until well past mid-decade; the stringent competition presented by lesser developed but rapidly growing Third World states (China, India, etc.) would require keeping wage rates as low as possible; and the series of prestige meetings, beginning with the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in late 1983 and ending with the Olympics in 1988 all necessitated, in Blue House eyes, keeping the populace politically in place. Further economic growth, in other words, would lead to economic democracy by providing a larger economic pie to slice up and by providing

relatively higher income to the most disadvantaged sectors of society. Once that had been done, the populace would be assumed capable of handling political liberalization, since it would be comparatively more sophisticated and (importantly) have a direct and relatively higher stake in preservation of the system that brought them prosperity.

Most politically involved groups in South Korean society did not see things that way. The students, perhaps the most politicized outpost other than the dissidents and the disenfranchised, denied the whole Blue House syllogism. To them, not only were the Korean people long since ready for the full range of democratic modes of expression (contested presidential elections, after all, were a more or less continuous feature of political life from 1948 to 1971) but to accept the government's program was to consign Korea to a further period of unnecessary dependence on international market forces and hence on American economic overlordship. The Blue House arguments were also seen merely as so many excuses for continued denial of political progress, repression of democratic rights, and avoidance of its own political illegitimacy. Since students felt that no other sector of society was as nearly free to express the views of the vast majority, since students had a duty of lead the fight against needless authoritarianism, and since they had the time and the comparative intelligence to seek and proclaim the truth, they considered it their right to put themselves at the front of the resistance campaign, come what may. Hence, there was a need to demonstrate, to outwit the police and the intelligence agents and hoodlums in their midst, to bring their cause to the attention to all other Koreans and to the outer world, to risk suffering and even death in the ongoing and escalating struggle, and in general to do whatever was necessary to assure eventual victory.

It was not unusual that many students, thus self-convinced, turned to radical tactics, for the thought pattern reported here was quite similar to

that of radicals everywhere who eventually find that perfected catechism, Leninism. It was no wonder also that socialism had become so popular among many students. It would have gone much farther were it not for the exceedingly negative example of North Korea and the Korean War. Of course, student radicalism leading to Leninist tactics was exactly what the government feared and was looking to confirm as the reason for reacting instantly and severely to every demonstration (there was a tit-for-tat escalation throughout 1982 and 1983 on many Seoul campuses) and to seeing North Koreans behind such other expressions of political opposition as the fire-bombing of the American Cultural Center in Pusan in the spring of 1982 and the bombing at the Center in Taegu in the fall of 1983.

Thus continued the vicious circle of denial of democratic rights, radicalization, demonstration, repression and further denial, further radicalization, etc. Three measures temporarily contained this process: (1) effective police and intelligence actions; (2) disinclination of the general populace to support student demands for overthrow of the Chun regime so soon after it had come to power (i.e., most people were willing to give the Blue House a modicum of time to prove itself and to see if its announced policies would really work out: they valued political stability more than political progress), and (3) the threat of expulsion and thus ruining the careers of those caught demonstrating. It should also be mentioned that the students were not solidly united behind the radicals, who in fact constituted but a small (although growing) minority of the whole, and that most students stuck increasingly to their studies (the latter one product of the Ministry of Education's graduation quota policy previously mentioned). Moreover, the allure of the so-called dependency theory --that South Korea, like Latin American and Third World countries, was an unwilling economic, and therefore political, dependent of the United States and would not emerge

from that status until independence from Washington was achieved-- had probably peaked by 1983 as more discerning students noted that South Korea actually did not fit the theory and that interest in the original Wallerstein idea had waned in international academic circles. Nonetheless, it was still true that student radicals, on and off campus, retained a great deal of prestige, that they accessed students from freshman year forward, and that theirs was the only force that could, when the right combination of circumstances presented itself, lead a popular movement against the government.

Those circumstances--bloody repression of demonstrations that got out of hand plus worker grievances the product of poor working conditions plus average citizen opinion that the Chun regime had lost what stability-producing legitimacy it possessed-- were likely to come together only at exceptional moments. Thus the probability of radical student success was still small. It could rise, but only due to developments beyond student control. The "best" that radical students could hope for was that the Blue House would react with excessive violence to off-campus demonstrations and the citizenry would join their call to bring down the government. While not impossible, 1983 was perhaps too early for them to expect such a popular response, even to police brutalities. If asked to choose, most people still seemed to prefer stability even important opportunities for liberalization to be lost at the same time.

If radical students were a small and stable percent of all college attendees, if their radicalism was relatively unappealing to the vast majority on campuses throughout the country, if they ceased by and large to take part in clandestine activities upon graduation, and if their belief structure were eroded upon entering the work force by the realities of their new life, their role in Korean political affairs would not have been so critical. But their numbers increased as the Chun government continued in office, their

appeal broadened to such an extent that most students did count themselves as their supporters, and they kept their radical contacts, organizational activities, and beliefs once off they left campus (indeed, many went underground). The ideology of the future South Korean leadership was thus slowly moving leftward, and could not help but vitally affect the direction of political life and foreign policy in the medium to long term. Radical student beliefs and activities constituted not merely a "problem" for the regime that suppression, penetration, and regimentation could only exacerbate but was itself a response to conditions of political and social life in Seoul and elsewhere in the Republic of Korea. In other countries, the history of the interaction between radicalism and government indicates that, after a point, a vicious circle is entered, wherein positions are frozen on both sides, melioration of the conditions that produced radicalism in the first place do not cut away its support, and repression --the only choice left to the government-- only causes radicalism to increase its determination and its level of popular support in geometric proportion. The Chun regime in late 1983 appeared to be dangerously close to that point. Probably some time remained, thanks in part to the Rangoon slaughter by North Korea of some best minds in the Southern leadership. That did give some pause to the radicals. But unless the causes of student discontent were dealt with forthwith, the probability was high that the point of no return would have been passed.

If students were thus controllable but greatly troublesome in the short term, they threatened to lead a genuine revolution in the longer run. The same was not true of industrial workers. This large (about 5 million and 13 percent of the population) and increasingly important element of South Korean society was generally regarded as politically powerless (although hardly inert) in all but extreme situations. Hours were too long, wages

too low, the need to struggle for survival too great, and the ability to organize effectively and speak with a united voice too weak for them to become influential political force in any short to medium term future. Union activity was severely constricted, government legislation required greivances and negotiations to be conducted within the enterprise and not across the industry, the rise of class feeling was still nascent in those workers who had jsut left rural life, and the combined effect of joint business-bureaucracy policy cooperation, international competition, and surplus urban labor undermined the success of normal demands for better working conditions and higher wages. Added to that was a general suspicion under Chun Doo Hwan that unions were Marxist-like institutions and capable of being subverted by North Korea. Finally, worker-management relations appeared to exhibit a high degree of Confucian paternalism: workers were supposed to look up to the owner as a father figure and to his management team as an internal bureaucracy-of-merit, while management was supposed to look out for the interest of wage-earners.

Events in the early 1980s cut both ways, working simultaneously to increase and decrease worker alienation. On the negative side were: (1) a slowly growing but highly inflationary economy, which negated relative large wage increases, which saw urban housing prices shoot out of sight despite much new construction, and which drove many small businesses out of business or to the brink, thus increasing unemployment and employer resistance to wage increases commensurate with productivity gains; (2) a set government policy in 1983 and beyond to deny the workers most of the wage increases due from productivity gains --only one-third of the anticipated 6 percent gain would be reflected in paychecks, the other two-thirds going to help retire the foreign debt and balance the government budget; (3) continual government-employer suppression of strikes and work stoppages, some of a serious degree,

with selective imprisonment or dismissal the normal concomitant; and (4) passage under the Chun Doo Hwan regime of a series of laws that effectively pulverized the union movement, resulting in a decline in union membership, abrogation of collective bargaining rights, and substitution in their stead of employer-dominated Labor Management councils. On the positive side were: (1) a relatively high degree of worker satisfaction, despite all; (2) worker tolerance, in the short term, of low wages and long hours in consonance with their understanding of South Korea's need to move carefully in the world economic depression and to remain competitive with other low-wage developing states until higher levels of technology and skills were reached; (3) rapid cycling into and out of the labor force of low paid young women, who would otherwise have become more radicalized by their work experience; (4) a willingness to work within the Labor Management Council system, at least for a while; and (5) a spreading social welfare system led by health insurance (despite the appearance of abuses long known in other countries).

On balance, it appeared that there were yet a few relatively trouble-free years within which the government could convince the workers that its program of solution through growth to all economic problems would succeed. But there were influences at work that would bring an end to such a period, even if economic growth were able to purchase overall political stability. For one, Korean political culture was changing. Urbanization, the decline of the extended family, the growing loss of respect for authority, and a leftward drift in an already highly politicized population all pointed toward resurrection of a strong union movement, heightened demands for income redistribution, and satisfaction of the many and serious worker grievances. For another, the changing structure of Korean industry and the impending end of rapid urbanization meant that government and management would have much less leeway to impose draconian measures on unskilled, temporary, and female workers. The number of such workers would decline and those in

higher skill and wage level industries would increase as Korea moved up to higher technology and left such areas as textiles and shoe production to lower wage nations, and as farm population stabilized. Third, it was improbable that all the felicitous conditions that the government was counting on to pull the country away from economic threats, domestic and international, would actually transpire in the simultaneous and benign manner assumed. It was doubtful, for instance, that successive years of c. 10 percent rates of growth could be coupled with zero inflation and 6 percent productivity increases, while holding wage gains to a mere 2 percent. Korea's economic future, like all futures, was a low probability event and to depend so completely on the perfect concatenation of the most optimum conditions was only to ask for trouble. Finally, the Korean worker, long politicized by the political culture, made further so by the Chun regime and its mode of rule, and even more by the urban activities of the Saemaul, could not be expected to remain politically passive for too long. Low-level but representative disputes normally settleable at the shop or the enterprise level could quickly spread and become catalysts for smoldering resentments first on an industry-wide and then a nation-wide basis. So while industrial peace was the rule in the early 1980s and with luck probably would last a few more years, its continuation for the longer term was highly doubtful.

Student radicals sought to supply the leadership for a future anti-Chun rebellion and industrial workers could provide the mass support. A third element, the dissident religious opposition, was also present, but its role was less certain. The Christian church in Korea had a long history of nationalism and resistance to injustice, foreign or domestic. But during the first half of the Post-War period, Christians were not politically involved as such; instead, they concentrated on individual belief, developing organizationally, and growing numerically. When Pak Chung Hee came to power, they had become

quite numerous --nearly 2 million. They had not, however, stood at the head of the anti-Rhee overthrow in 1960, and most of them in the 1970s and 1980s continued to take an evangelistic and other-wordly approach to religion, avoiding involvement in social and political issues. But beginning with the Pak regime, other Christians --whose numbers grew precipitously from that point-- took an active part in promoting the social gospel, advocating human rights, and pushing for democratic reforms. Several Korean Christian organizations, including the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission and the Catholic Farmers Association, served as the locus for opposition and dissident activities, and prominent Christian leaders --including the Catholic Cardinals of Seoul and Pusan, leaders of the Korean National Council of Churches, the Student Christian Federation, students and professors at Hankuk Theological Seminary, and literary figures (e.g. Kim Chi Ha) --led resistance to the Pak government. Since the imposition of the Yushin Constitution in 1971, Christians were prominent among those who were outspoken in their opposition and they supplied a high proportion of those arrested, tried, incarcerated, and tortured by that regime.

The activist branch of the Christian Church took individualized opposition to Pak and later to Chun (who continued, in its eyes, Pak's policies) to be a duty in carrying out its interpretation of the Christian belief. It did not, however, choose to serve as the organization center of non-government political opposition. That role was forced on it by the post-1971 circumstances, as all other relevant institutions --universities, unions, and student associations-- were brought under tight government control and as individual political spokesmen --the "three Kims" and others-- were progressively unable to turn their personal and political followings into sufficient political power to influence or make policy. These opposition figures, public and private, operated from churches because they had become the only refuge

from persecution. The latter became centers of resistance because they were the only institution that the government dare not attack openly. The opposition between both the Pak and the Chun regimes, on the one side, and Christian churches, on the other, was thus not only the "normal" issue of church-state relations in a relatively open society or the individual activism of some church leaders, but a reflection of the tenure of Korean society. Workers, students, farmers, and others felt they had no other place to go and found in the church and at least part of its doctrine a champion of their interests. It was no wonder, then, that churches provided much of the leadership of the Pusan and Masan uprisings and of the Kwangju Incident, served as communications centers and hiding places for dissidents and were more and more regarded as a locus of discussion and analysis at a time when neither the National Assembly nor the press could fill that function. Thusly did they draw the ire of the Blue House. It was no wonder also that there was much talk about converting the rapidly growing Christian numerical strength (about one quarter of the population, or about 10 million) into political power --even of founding a Christian political party.

During the early years of the Chun regime, the church-state situation continued to deteriorate. Part of the student opposition, further radicalized and driven underground, tended to congregate within the church (although, significantly, church students sometimes found themselves criticized as not radical enough because of the American connections of many churches). A split developed along generational lines, as older, non-violent church leaders found their authority slipping away in favor of younger radicals. And the torch of radicalism began to enflame even such previously non-politically involved branches as the Jesus Presbyterians, although they had hitherto remained socially conservative and pietistic. Finally, the process of radicalization spread to the church schools, as the Chun

government sought to control them through domination of their boards, content of instruction, and sending into their campuses squads of intelligence teams, plain-clothes police, and hired hoodlums.

The church by 1983 had thus become an important force for political change in South Korea, even violent political change. It was true that many of its leaders did not seek to involve themselves in politics and tended to return to a more traditional religious concerns once crisis periods had passed (that is what happened in Kwangju and Pusan: leadership was thrust upon them and they exercised it as such, but when "normalcy" had returned, they exited the political stage). It was also true that the church served as a natural locus for those in socially precarious positions, especially urban dwellers just wrenched from their more comforting rural backgrounds. Indeed, its rapid growth and its politicization stemmed in part from that cause, and its influence could stabilize or even decline once that process neared completion. But it found itself in the same vicious circle, in its relations with the state, as did the students and the workers: social and political involvement led to government suspicion and opposition, creating a degree of radicalism among some, in turn bringing out overt government actions against a broader reach of its membership, begetting in response further radicalization and wider participation in active oppositionist activities.

Two illustrations. One was the growth of a corps of radicalized rural Catholic priests committed to democratic rights and Catholic worker organization. That in a branch of the church which in Korea, had not been central to the human rights movement. The other was the rise of Minjing theology, a syncretic belief system amalgamating Christian Messianism, traditional shamanism, and folk practices with a this-worldly philosophy of resentful anger against oppression, rooting out of evil, especially greed, and cutting one's self off from pleasureable diversions to concentrate on the

task of restoring the common people to their rightful place at the center, not the bottom, of society. While Minjing beliefs were obviously in consonance with primitive Christian theology, they were also looked to by many in Korea as justifications for anti-government actions. As such, they provided an intellectual underpinning to the Christian resistance and bridged the gap between nationalist and religious opposition to Blue House rule. There would have been no Minjing theology, in all probability, had socio-economic-political conditions not been propitious. Its very existence and popularity attests to the gravity of those conditions.

Students, workers, and believers constituted the three groups in serious, sustained, and reasonably solid opposition to the government. Their path leftward over the years was of a piece and if continued would no doubt eventuate in a series of outbreaks leading to open rebellion. . . . Such was the strength of their opinion, and that of other citizens that their still comparatively small numbers could swell rapidly in a crisis, precipitate large-scale demonstrations and riots, and confront the government with the choice of going under or engaging in bloody repressions that would turn the country into a occupied camp and the Blue House into a palace under siege. North Korean intervention would then be just around the corner.

Between these groups and those who supported the Blue House were a large number of citizens, some politicized but deliberately keeping out of controversy, others also politicized but kept out of political activity by government decree or pressure. . . . Among the former . . . were farmers, housewives, low-level office workers and bureaucrats, and small-scale merchants. For each, the pursuit of private interests was always uppermost in their minds. Farmers looked to conditions for a good harvest and were content so long as the government kept rice procurement prices up, consumer prices down, and spread the fruits of economic progress,

especially road construction and modern farming methods and information, to their areas. Housewives were concerned about their children's education, social stability, availability of enough consumer goods at affordable prices, and non-erratic behavior by their husbands. Office workers and bureaucrats desired much the same, with the addition of added job security and welfare benefits. Small-scale merchants wanted price stability, access to loans at affordable rates, and protection from the economic power of the ten large corporations. The Chun government banked its long term future with these groups (the vast majority of Korean society) on promulgation of measures would satisfy these desires. For the most part, that meant price stability, resumption of high rates of economic growth, and such organizational and "educational" efforts as were being carried on by the revamped Saemaul movement. It was too early, in 1983, to gauge the degree of success of those programs in keeping the four groups mostly out of the political arena.

It did seem likely, however, that if political stability and economic growth could be maintained, the Blue House would have its way and that grudging political acceptance, if not positive loyalty, would be the rule in those reaches of society. In 1983, however, it was manifest that political acceptance by these masses was a thing of the future. They were silent, to be sure, but not without personal opinions. If an outbreak came, they would not necessarily join it, at least not in large numbers. Still, they would probably be just as glad as their more radical and activist fellow citizens to see the Chun government topple. The two conditions put on their support of such a change were: low probability of invasion from the North and no perceived worsening of their social positions and economic status. Since no one could offer such guarantees in the fluid situation surrounding rebellion, they would join the fray only late in the game and remain on the sidelines until it was clear which side was most likely to win.

Those who were more politicized but kept out of politics, voluntarily or not, constituted South Korea's fourth estate -the intellectuals, professional commentators, writers, professors-- the dissident but disenfranchised politicians, and the media. They had a startlingly small voice in the country's public affairs. They were publically silent although privately active. But the very fact of their near-universal unwillingness to say even neutral things, much less remark kindly about the Chun regime in public fora bespoke two major problems: their lack of support for the Blue House and their lack of contact with it. The intellectual elite in most nations is usually split between supporters and detractors of the government. Those in support say so in public, agree to provide advice and assistance to it, and take posts of leadership within it. In historical Korea, that was even more so, given the combination of Confucian ethics and the single center of authority in the country that created the so-called vortex of power sucking up and propelling toward the top all those who were interested --as everyone was-- in national affairs. In the early Chun era, that pattern appeared to have been broken, at both ends. The Blue House failed to call in, even on an informal basis, professors and others who might have been helpful in providing a flow of ideas and a reasonably accurate reflection of public opinion. This contrasted directly with Pak Chung Hee, who to his credit had done just that. Chun, however, seemed to remain content to get his ideas from some of his military colleagues and the upper strata of the bureaucracy. Thereby he ran the risk of perpetuating the stark alienation from the informed public that arose from the manner in which he took power.

On their part, the intellectuals and the media mostly kept away from Chun. Partly, to be sure, their reluctance was the product of a wait-and-see attitude. But by 1983 that had continued for three years, much too long. Another part was their opposition to what they considered unnecessary and

harmful policies, such as student repression and over-interference in educational administration, freezing of political development in favor of enlarging the economy, fear that repression would be physically visited upon their persons, and turning away from a foreign policy that (in their eyes) was too pro-American, much too dependent on hosting prestige meetings at home and prestige trips abroad, and too much concerned (despite the obvious facts and Chun's own positive policy initiatives) with the threat from the North. A final part was their caution that, if they sided openly with the regime or even allowed themselves to be drawn into informal consultative roles, they would lose their student and reader audiences. Thus they kept quiet.

Known dissidents exhibited the same symptoms, but in more extreme form. Many had experienced torture and imprisonment or had witnessed the Kwangju repression, others were in hiding or in exile, and still others were under house arrest. Even though Chun had in 1983 released most political prisoners incarcerated during the previous three years, had restored political rights to most of those who he had initially banned from political participation, had gotten rid of martial law and the curfew, and had thrown out the Yushin Constitution, that was hardly enough for them. The Agency for National Security Planning (the new name for the revamped and mostly tamed KCIA) was, after all, still quite active and continued to utilize all its well-known methods. If dissidents participated actively in politics at all, therefore, it was possible to do so only in the most negative manner -- hunger strikes, plots, etc. Other than that, they also chose to keep quiet.

If there were three groups mostly opposed to the government and several in between, there were three others that generally supported the Blue House. They constituted a triumvirate of power in South Korea: the business community, the bureaucracy, and the military. Of these, the

military was, of course, the most important, since it occupied many positions of power, from Chun Doo Hwan down, and stood in the shadows of the Blue House in case of need. But more visible and more concerned with day-to-day administration and policy-making were the bureaucracy and business.

Business --which is to say, representatives of the ten large companies, the major banks, and the four national business organizations-- was for the most part supportive of the government and its policies, but more out of necessity than conviction and with a strong admixture of surprisingly liberal, even critical, opinion. The major corporations and banks also supplied many of the cabinet ministers and occasionally provided informal advice to the Blue House. There appeared among some businessmen a reluctance to serve in these positions, however, since their attitudes toward Chun was one of tolerance at best and because some of them felt that ministers ought to come mostly from the National Assembly. Government service was thus thought of as an act of duty and patriotism and not a reward or, for the most part, a chance to reap private gain at the expense of the public treasury. Businessmen also occupied many of the leadership posts of the ruling Democratic Justice Party and thus shared the reigns of power in a less direct manner. They also sensed that the Blue House, in its comparatively weakened state, was more amenable to their advice. Their power thereby increased.

Businessmen were, obviously, well versed on South Korea's international economic and political situation. They realized, therefore, that price stability, high growth, continuation of relatively low wages, and stabilization of foreign debt were necessary conditions to economic health and progress. But most rejected the notion that further economic development would by itself lead to political liberalization. Indeed, many indicated that democratization was a key element in further social stability, hence was a sine qua non of renewed economic growth, and that the political situation could rapidly deteriorate were the base of political participation and support not

broadened out. Perceiving that the political situation was frozen, many went on to express private but strong criticism of the situation.

That criticism contained several elements. The most widely held was that the government, in this case the bureaucracy, was exercising unnecessary interference in and control over the private sector. Bureaucratic dominance had been justified at an earlier stage of economic development, according to the argument, but the economy had grown so large and complex that no set of top-down controls could continue without severe damage to the economy. Needed, therefore, was relaxation of control, i.e., decentralization of economic decision-making into the hands of the business community itself. Although that might appear to have been self-serving, many believed that further economic growth was highly dependent on such a reform and that business had become too used for its own good to government direction, favors, and bail-outs. The Korean economy was in fact at a crucial juncture: if the authoritarian decision-making style (a product among other things of the Confucian bureaucratic legacy, now outmoded) were not done away with, there would be little chance of fulfilling national economic goals during the 1980s. The result would be that the lag between economic leadership and political backwardness would catch up with the Blue House, and citizen despair over mal-distribution of the social product would link up with lack of confidence in the political leadership to produce revolutionary change.

Criticism of the bureaucracy also was voiced as concerned its alleged corruption, its arrogance, and its lack of adherence to a strong work ethic. Corruption was said to be worse than during the previous two regimes, a serious charge indeed. Many top bureaucrats supposedly worked short hours and filled the golf courses during midweek, and others did not know -- could not know -- their jobs because of too-rapid rotation and the increasing complexity and technical requirements of correct management decisions.

Moreover, the Blue House was unaware of the magnitude of the problem, for it was too new on the job and was dependent on the same bureaucrats for its information about the economy. The recommended solution to this problem was the same: devolution of economic decision-making to the private sector. The issue of corruption in the private economy --symbolized by the three major scandals so far visited upon the Chun regime (the curb market revelations, the Myongsong tax evasion and embezzlement, and the Cho Heung bank thefts)-- were viewed not as honest efforts by the Blue House to attack corruption with new vigor but as symbols of how rampant the problem was in society as a whole and of the government's inability (or unwillingness) to cope with the problem successfully. Needed was: a genuine dialogue between government and business; a better balance between the two by giving more power to business; a new attitude by the Blue House of listening not so much to individual businessmen as to business groups; withdrawal of the military from ill-advised attempts to understand and make complex economic decisions; splitting bureaucrats off from too close a tie with business so that corruption would be less likely; a stop to the system of very rapid rotation of bureaucrats through the top jobs (where they felt they must quickly grab some bribes before they retired); and a breakup of at least the four top companies whose power was so large they could easily influence bureaucrats and politicians.

Obviously, these were serious charges, if true. It should not be overlooked, however, that the Korean bureaucracy was, for the most part, a meritocracy, drawn from the best of society, rising not so much on political and social connections (although those were hardly irrelevant in Korean society) as through good work and experience. It was for the most part, competent, efficient, reflective of the society as a whole, prestigious, and zealous in carrying out its duties in a spirit of national mindedness. In normal times, it should not have been an element in politics and it was not, so

long as its administrative measures were non-controversial. But South Korea since 1945 had almost never been blessed with normal times and, because of the enormous changes inflicted upon society through war, modernization, and rebellion, the bureaucracy was often thrust into the center of power, and thus of controversy. In the Pak and Chun regimes, moreover, bureaucrats came even more to the fore merely because of the difficulties of ruling, from a single center, a large and increasingly diverse population and a rapidly changing and growing economy. Added to that, from 1979 forward, was the necessity to tighten up economically in the new era of high cost energy, international economic decline, and competition from other low-wage countries. This put even more power in the hands of the bureaucracy, since the natural --and indeed only-- response of the new regime was to seek legitimacy over the long term through the only means it could: renewed growth through a restructured economy and a society purged of corruption. That meant listening even more closely to the advice of economic planners. It also meant revamping the bureaucracy by replacing thousands of older senior civil service officials with younger, more highly trained and rationalist men eager to rise in the system and thus desirous of expressing their loyalty to the new regime.

While in many regards this was a repetition of the changes at the beginning of the Pak era two decades before (which had not, after all, produced a bureaucracy largely free from corruption), the inherent political weakness and administrative inexperience of the Chun regime gave the bureaucracy relatively more power than it had possessed in the previous political era. Coupled with the lack of external checks on its power, with the still very strong Confucian tendency to do things through personal contacts rather than via administrative channels, and with the normal insecurity attendant upon the transition between regimes (in which many competent bureaucrats having been pre-emptorily removed), it is no wonder that charges of

corruption and inefficiency were laid at its doorstep. Finally, the bureaucracy was caught, within the leadership triumvirate, between the military and business. The others had real power, albeit of different sorts, that no bureaucracy could ever possess. Bureaucratic power could only be derivative, mediating, and rationalistic. In that sense, business complaints against the bureaucracy were misplaced.

What was really occurring was a campaign for greater business autonomy, which in turn was the product of the needs of a changing economy and of a still unsure Blue House. It was the bureaucracy's business to help plan and change that economy and to help modernize the polity and society. It could only accomplish that task with the instruments at its hands, which were obviously inadequate. It therefore had to make alliances and compromises, as best it could. Within two generations, South Korea had managed to transform a partly traditional and partly colonial administration into a modern executive organ. That it was still politicized should have been no surprise, given the political demands placed on it by its environment. That it was still corrupt and inefficient bespoke not so much lack of moral character as a protective response to conditions that a modern administrative organization was not designed to face. The South Korean bureaucracy was thus thrust into positions and situations it would have preferred to have avoided while striving nonetheless to fulfill its duty as best it could. If the economy could resume high rates of growth, if the Chun regime were granted the time and the necessary public support to carry forth reforms, and if international events did not throw the entire domestic system into disarray, the bureaucracy would have its chance to continue to climb toward objective and efficient administration and to take itself out of its over-exposed and over-politicized position. But those were big "ifs", perhaps impossible of simultaneous fulfillment, and certainly not likely short-term outcomes in any case.

It must be said that the military did not directly run the country. The Blue House did, with the assistance of bureaucracy and business. Chun Doo Hwan had civilianized himself and at least some of his military colleagues, to the extent that wearing a business suit and living in civilian quarters constitutes civilianization. The military as a whole stood back of the Blue House and was no doubt ready to intervene once again if the situation called for that. But, as in the early Pak Chung Hee era, its tendency was not to call the shots on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, there was a natural tendency to return to the business of national defense first and political involvement second. Not that the military had evacuated the Blue House or that Chun Doo Hwan did not listen to his former colleagues. There were still military committees in some ministries and the President had appointed some Army leaders (Choo Young Bock and Home Affairs Minister, Yoon Sung Min as Defense Minister, and Roh Shin Yong as head of the Agency for National Security Planning are examples) to top cabinet posts. And the Korean Military Academy Class 11, led by Chun and the so-called Taegu "Seven Stars", formed the most important factional group in the new government. But more and more the President was coming to depend on non-military personnel for his advice and administration, drawn from business and bureaucracy. His personal advisor group had thus broadened considerably from the initial group drawn from the KCIA, the Defense Security Agency, and the Colonel-level members of Class 11. In this, he was following a pattern established by Pak Chung Hee and responding to the needs of running a complex economy and society.

There were factions and fault lines within the military, of course. Basically, that meant the various Military Academy classes but included as well personality, province of origin, common experience (especially if it involved combat), and administrative track record. The traditional levels and commands were also important --corps, division, special forces, the

Capital Corps, the Capital Security Command, the 34th Division, etc. But for the most part there appeared to be a low level of intra-military conflict. Chun had succeeded in exiling his principal political challenger Kim Dae Jung, his two intra-military rivals, the "two Hos", were also abroad, and Roh Tae Wu, who some say could be made into the heir-apparent, was put on the shelf as Vice Minister of Sports. Most military leaders were reasonably satisfied with Chun and had concluded the two most important tasks were first to restore stability as the condition for strong national defense and second to restore solid economic growth. That view was shared by the two other ruling groups of the triumvirate, business and the bureaucracy, and probably the majority of citizens. None in the military and most outside it wanted a return to the chaos of the early 1960s and most top officers saw their intervention of the late 1970s as having forestalled just such a possibility.

To be sure, the military was ready to put down with the necessary force demonstrations, strikes, and other evidence of instability. Indeed, they were perhaps more anxious than the previous regime to stop such outbursts at the very outset. They were conscious, as was everyone else, of how fast things could move once student protests or news of worker martyrdom moved off the campus and out of the factory to enlist the support of the average citizen. They were also conscious that incidents on the order of the Kwangju events of 1980 must not be allowed to occur again. No one, from the corps commander down, wanted to turn their guns on the citizenry as a whole, and most, even if so commanded, would probably not. Better to remove grievances in the first place, they figured, than face such an impossible choice. Thus the military was much in favor of restoration of rapid economic growth as the presumed means to popular satisfaction. Whether they also supported removal of the causes of political opposition was more doubtful. Many had apparently concluded, along with others, that Korea's problems were as much political as economic but, unlike the others, they had not taken the second step to

conclude that political problems were best addressed directly and not through the assumed palliative of bigger paychecks and distribution of a larger social product on a reasonably equitable basis. They concluded the best bet was to stick with Chun, despite his obvious shortcomings, until mounting economic problems might necessitate some change. Barring major outbreaks, therefore, the military would probably continue to back Chun down to the end of his term in early 1988.

The final question was whether the government's economic policies and the priority given to economic growth over political change would create an economic democracy in Korea. Even if presuming rough success in the strategy of assuaging political tempers through higher income, would the population concur with the decision to forego building a political democracy until much later? There were three issues by which that question could be analyzed: (1) was the Blue House economic strategy workable; (2) would growth solve what some perceived to be an emerging problem of income distribution; and (3) was the assumption of growth first, liberalization later a viable one or would, as in the past, politics (international as well as domestic) intervene so constantly as to force reconsideration of the strategy as a whole?

The weight of opinion among economists and others appeared to be that, pari passu, the government program would have a reasonably good chance of success, that the economy would therefore grow by a great deal during the rest of the 1980s, and that many problems of inequality would be solved merely through that means. Opportunities would increase, jobs would be created, demand for a more highly skilled and educated work force would be satisfied, incomes all around would be augmented, the supply of relatively inexpensive consumer goods increased, and the government's capability to provide a welfare system improved. Even were resources initially to be insufficient, the very fact that promises had been made would tend to cause

the government (if past practice were any guide) to redouble its efforts and see the matter through. The real question would then be whether growth by itself would induce the positive beneficial effects intended or whether the pains and dislocations of growth would combine with the lack of specific political improvements to place impossible burdens on the growth first strategy.

One approach was to ask whether inequality of distribution of the social product was increasing, or significantly so, and whether, in the eyes of the population, it mattered much or little. It was true that South Korea began the growth process with the enormous advantage of relative socio-economic equality, through the post-World War II land distribution and the destruction of the Korean War. And it was also true that relative equality was not greatly disturbed by the years of large growth down to the mid-1970s. From the period after 1975, however, there was some evidence that inequality had increased and that the process continued after Chun came to power (despite deliberate efforts to mitigate the backwardness of the Chollas and to work hard at providing new sources of income to farmers). Moreover, there emerged, along with the growth of a significant middle class (itself one of the best indicators of success in distribution) a high critical attitude by many in that class. The issue thus became equity of distribution as well as relative equality of distribution, e.g., perception as well as reality. Both were important. It mattered to many, for instance, that the number of chauffeured cars in Seoul and other major cities seemed to increase abnormally while many who though they deserved at least their own automobile had to continue to ride the buses. Because the middle class was vocal, its perceptions counted as much as favorable government statistics reflecting real improvements in the less visible rural areas or as much as the Blue House's promise to institute health insurance.

Another approach was to return to the question of corruption. In Korea, as in many other societies, "corruption" took at least four forms: (1) payment for services that would otherwise have been free; (2) transfer of assets, from the public to the private sector and vice versa, in the guise of exchange of "presents" and in expectation of compensation; (3) transfer of assets from the government treasury to particular political parties and from there into the hands of certain individuals; (4) the ability to use public regulations for private gain. All four types continued to exist in Korea. The first, exemplified by the need to pay for local police protection, etc., generated increasing middle class resentments. The second may have decreased under the anti-corruption campaign, although the curb market scandal indicated that it was still assumed that one could purchase public influence through private ties. The third was at least no more a problem than it had been under the Pak regime. Surely, however, it was no less. The last, symbolized by the 1983 bank scandals, appeared to be growing. Whatever the reality of corruption in Korea, the public's perception was that the problem was indeed worsening and that the Blue House was either unwilling (e.g., its instructions to the Democratic Justice Party to stand pat in the "no-name" scandal debates in the National Assembly) or unable ("Chun is weak", "Chun doesn't know what is going on") to do anything about it. Public concern with the issue could be looked on positively, on the other hand, as the bringing into the popular conscience as "bad" a set of practices that historically were looked on as culturally "normal" and therefore "good". Whether that was an indication of "progress" or not depended on one's definition of that term, one's evaluation of tradition Korean culture, and the costs and benefits of corruption to modernization.

The third approach was to ask whether, in the end, the population would buckle down once again and grudgingly if not willingly forego political progress

in favor of the promise (and perhaps the reality) of higher incomes and a more plentiful supply of consumer goods. All the evidence seemed to indicate that it would not, that the Blue House's assumption that it would was far off the mark, and that further economic progress was highly conditional on evidence of firm intention and strong movement to broaden the basis of power and deliver political rights to the people. While the Blue House thought the issue could be reduced to political legitimacy, which could be purchased by good works in the economy and by promises of a Constitutionally-mandated succession, clearly the issue was much broader and concerned the entire panoply of issues considered earlier. It was true that the Soviet massacre of 269 people aboard Korean Airlines Flight 7 and the North Korean massacre of top Southern officials in Rangoon, both during the fall of 1983, had provided additional time and maneuvering room for the government. But those would provide only temporary breathing space. The major political issues remained to be addressed on their merits.

A fourth approach was to consider Korea's social welfare system. Would the promise and increasing the delivery of welfare measures (medical insurance, unemployment benefits, retirement insurance, etc.) act as a buffer against the expected tide of political protests? In 1983 it was too early to give a definitive answer, not only because of the wide variety of political issues involved but also because Korean society was still traditionally-oriented enough not to depend on welfare to the same extent that did more highly urbanized societies organized around the nuclear family or the single person household. The family and the farm still provided a haven for the very poor and the temporarily unemployed and there was still the expectation that the young would take care of their parents during retirement. As urbanization and abandonment of the extended family proceeded (and the government's growth strategy made it inevitable that that process would continue unabated),

however, implementation of the standard range of social welfare measures would become increasingly necessary. The Blue House stood ready with such programs and it seemed likely to carry them out without undue difficulty. Welfare issues were therefore not yet a national problem (despite glaring welfare gaps in the industrial area) and probably could be addressed with confidence as the 1980s proceeded. Indeed, if the experience of other countries was any guide, it was probable that the government could purchase at least some political loyalty through promising and implementing successive welfare measures, beginning with a medical insurance program.

But the bottom line was still that welfarism, in the general sense of depending on added per capita income, continuation of reasonable distribution of wealth, and spread of welfare benefits, was still only one element in a general picture. By itself it could not pacify a disquieted population, supply social stability, or purchase political legitimacy. It was a necessary but hardly sufficient ingredient in a highly dynamic mix, of which popular aspiration and governmental power were more weighty elements.

While South Korean political developments during the 1980s were principally a function of changes in the internal order, the country and its politics were hardly immune from the effects of international events. Indeed, the relationship was even more direct for South Korea than for most other nations: the military threat from the North was pervasive and Seoul's openness to foreign economic and cultural penetration was great. Two sets of influences bore down on South Korea, those emanating from the four states most important to Seoul --North Korea, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China-- and those linked to changes in the structure of Asian and global international relations. Together, they not only placed South Korean foreign policy in a position of very little freedom of action but constrained the character and the direction of domestic life.

It was the continued, and heightened, threat from the North that most concerned the Blue House and its military supporters. Pyongyang, a garrison state more heavily armed per capita than any other nation in the world, was poised to strike the South within any twelve hour period and wreak havoc in Seoul and many other parts of the country. The ominous military facts were known to most knowledgeable Southerners, of course, and need not detain us. Several implications followed for Southern politics, and those were as important as the possibility of instant war. First and foremost, the magnitude and immediacy of the threat was uppermost in the minds of the Southern military-political leadership in deciding on any political change. Given the Blue House's still tentative grip on leadership and legitimacy, it had to be even more sensitive to Northern actions in the wake of possible political liberalization or, more likely, of tightening up politically and economically. Any outbreak of violence in South Korea could be interpreted in Pyongyang as fulfilling one of the conditions for its long-awaited military intervention, and thus had to be avoided if at all possible. The Blue House thus justified the strictness of its political control principally by reference to the Northern threat.

Moreover, central aspects of other Blue House policies were tied to the desire to overcome the military threat in the long run. Aside from most every foreign policy departure, the strategy of concentrating on economic growth at the expense of all else and of subordinating to it all political issues was a direct outcome of competition with the North. If only the South could reproduce the high growth rates of the past, Pyongyang would be decisively outdistanced economically and Seoul could afford to field the army that would provide the country with an impenetrable shield. Victory, in that sense, was already within sight, since many analysts concluded that the job could be done by the close of the 1980s --presuming of course that South Korea would in fact progress that fast. Every effort in the mean time had to be made to assure a favorable outcome, including keeping the population hard

at work and, above all, not in a state of political flux. Hence the reluctance to take a chance on political liberalization. Better a measure of repression in the name of stability and order than opening up political life, inviting disorders and Northern intervention, just when the danger was greatest and just when the recipe for ultimate security had been found. Better also to be prepared for the anticipated perturbations in Pyongyang surround the upcoming Kim Il Sung succession. And if proof were needed of the seriousness --indeed irrationality-- of Northern intents, one had only to point to the Rangoon slaughter on October 1983 and the constant infiltration of armed agents across the country's land and sea borders.

Two consequences, one immediate and one long term, flowed from this syllogism when put in the context of popular attitudes toward Chun and his political-economic program. One was that an increasing percentage of the citizenry had already departed from the Blue House's evaluation of the severity of the threat. In part, that change was a natural function of the increasing youth of the population and its distance from the horrors of the Korean War. In part, however, it was a function of an increasingly general belief that Chun was merely using the putative threat from Pyongyang to rationalize his seizure of power and his suppression of popular opposition to his rule. If the Blue House said the military threat was extreme and that extraordinary measures had to be taken as a consequence, then the threat was really not so great and the sacrifices requested were unjustified. They should thus be resisted.

The other consequences stemmed from the vicious circle that the Blue House and the populace found themselves in. Repression and required sacrifice would themselves lead in the long run to the very outcome --anti-regime disturbances and probable overthrow-- that Chun sought to avoid. In that sense, Chun Doo Hwan was an accomplice, unwillingly and perhaps unknowingly

so, to Kim Il Sung's plan to soften up the South for eventual attack. The very policies Chun kept in effect (e.g., these of the Pak regime as they pertained to how to respond internally to the North's threat) would eventually lead to precisely the unwanted outcome. The Blue House's response to that dilemma was to freeze in their places most proposals for liberalization so that, in the short run, little was done to lessen tensions and garner popular enthusiasm for programs that on their merits should have been supportable. But after three years of rule, the short run was nearly over.

If the North could cause both immediate and long term trouble for the South and for the Blue House's political-economic program, it was the United States that possessed even more actual and potential influence, for good or for evil. For one, it was Washington that guaranteed Seoul's security, by treaty pledge, by forces in place or earmarked for combat, and by national interest. If American commitment were to weaken, in the eyes of the South Korean population or the North Korean leadership, the result could be military disaster -- repetition of the events of the early 1950s with similar results, in all probability, but with much higher levels of destruction. And although the thirtieth anniversary of the Mutual Security Treaty was celebrated in 1983, it was doubtful that the American commitment would stand up under the onslaught of two forces. One was the probable reaction of American public opinion to impending events in the South: if anti-Chun popular demonstrations broke out and, as would be likely, be repressed with force, popular attention would be drawn to the assumed character of the regime and would, whatever the innate interests of the nation, side with the demonstrators. The solidity of the American military commitment would invariably decline and the inclination of the North to take the direct action would correspondingly increase.

That would be even more the case were, as was likely, the cries of student-led demonstrators to include a high volume of anti-American slogans.

Nothing could more quickly erode American popular support for continuing a strong commitment to the military defense of the South. And even though an American administration might still decide to maintain that commitment the North could well mis-perceive American determination and invade. Since the post-World War II period evidenced liberal-conservative swings in American popular opinion (to be sure, regarding issues and on a timetable that had little to do with Korea), and since the mid-to late 1980s appeared to be a period of renewed "liberalism", the issue of ties to Korea was likely to surface in the White House as well as the public mind. And were the manner by which the question were raised to resemble, in the Korean mind, the careless, shortsighted, and offhanded means by which the Carter Administration had announced its own troop withdrawal and human rights policy, the South Korean reaction --official as well as popular-- might be to show the Americans the door, come what may.

For another, the United States influenced Korea directly through its domestic and international economic policies. By keeping its own interest rates high through tax cuts and budget deficits, Washington kept back its own economic recovery and thus retarded that of Korea. High interest rates also kept the conversion rate of the dollar higher than "normal" and thus slowed the sale of American products in Korea, making more difficult in turn Korean sales to the United States, restrict domestic Korean growth rates even further, and call into question Seoul's ability to repay its international debts. Not only did the American Congress therefore unwittingly legislate on the future of Korean-American economic relations, it also directly influenced the outcome of the Blue House economic program, on which the latter staked its whole future. Moreover, the radicals' argument, that Korea should not remain so dependent on the United States, gained more general currency, thus buttressing their general line that Chun had capitulated to the Americans.

The final American influence on Korea was more diffuse. General American foreign policy was constrained to deal first and foremost with the Soviet threat. During the 1980s and 1990s, that threat would peak in terms of its impact on the security of the American homeland and reach its greatest geographic extent. The competition would be global, while the threat of war would be high. Given resource constraints and the over-riding importance of this issue, Washington's propensity was to subordinate all other concerns to dealing with the Russians. Already in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Asia and thus Korea were down the list of American policy concerns. Asia was forcing its way back up toward the top, as we argue below, but still had to take a back seat to more important Soviet-related actions in the strategic missile competition, the Central European front, the continuing Middle East crisis, and the emerging problems in Central America. Down the policy list meant that Korean developments would not merely claim less decision-maker attention than the situation demanded but would be less capable of imposing the necessary sacrifices and trade-offs that would be conducive to effective policy. The tendency would be to let matters ride until they flared up to demand immediate attention, by which time it could be too late. Coupled with this was an American tendency to tire of Korean demands for special attention and immediate satisfaction of demands. Perhaps, in the end, Washington would lose interest in the South and tend to listen more closely to those who argued for withdrawal or for compromise of the North-South split on terms too close to those proffered by Pyongyang.

China and the Soviet Union were also important international actors whose policies impinged on domestic South Korean political developments. If more indirectly. Each supported Pyongyang, verbally and separately, and each, privately, told Kim Il Sung that it would neither bankroll nor stand behind him if he were to go South. But because of Sino-Soviet competition, Kim

continually played one against the other, so that neither could break decisively with Pyongyang's militarist-imperialist tendencies. Moreover, both Moscow and Beijing found Pyongyang a willing gendarme in their separate attempts to spread their respective influences into the Third World (the North Koreans, for instance, helped the Soviets fasten Marxist-Leninist rule over several African and Middle Eastern states while China found Pyongyang's martial proclivities and war material supplies useful to recapture a role for itself in the Middle East). Finally, as the Soviet-American conflict heated up and as Sino-American distancing proceeded, it was increasingly likely that the two communist giants, for separate reasons, would listen more closely to what Kim said; Chinese and Soviet propensities to play a bit faster and riskier game with the Americans tempted each to involve the North in their anti-American plans. It was true that each also hoped to improve relations with Seoul, and each had opened the door a crack in the early 1980s. But Pyongyang's objections and its threat to lean on the other side continually short-circuited those initiatives.

Soviet and Chinese influence in Seoul was therefore negative: they helped keep the North away but they also competed to support Kim's buildup and his anti-Southern mania. There was a third, longer term, negative influence. Moscow and Beijing would grow vastly in the amount of power, military and otherwise, each could devote to the Northeast Asian arena. Already the Soviet military threat had become very high, just as the Chinese threat to Korea had continued since late 1950. Although Seoul stood possibly to benefit from Chinese industrial needs, enhanced Chinese and Russian military potential could cause Moscow and Beijing to involve themselves more deeply in Korean problems. While many contingent elements would surely enter the picture, there could be a tendency for both parties to become more anti-Seoul if only because South Korea stood with the United States. Thus,

Seoul might find it increasingly necessary to worry about Soviet and Chinese military threats to its security. As in similar cases in the past, the Blue House's first reaction would probably be to tighten up politically at home.

Changes in the structure of overall Asian and global international relations also bid fair to influence the political situation in South Korea. In Asia, aside from the regional effects of Soviet-American rivalry and the growth of Russian and Chinese power, two changes were sure to come. First, the locus of violence in Asia was likely (presuming, of course, no new Korean War) to move southward to the Taiwan Straits and Southeast Asia. By the mid-1980s, China was likely once again to bring up the issue of Taipei's future, perhaps in a more direct and threatening manner. That could not merely sour Sino-American relations further but induce a crisis in their relations. The Philippines in 1983 was already in a state of incipient revolution, which meant that American attention would focus increasingly on Manila and that the important American bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay might become less useable in the event of a Korean military contingency (to which they had always been critical). Vietnam, with the second largest and most experienced army in Asia, might decide to use it to expand even further eastward from Pnom Penh. That would bring a crisis in the United States as well as ASEAN, with the consequence that Washington would have to devote increasing resources and attention to the defense of Thailand. This southward drift in American Asian policy could only leave Seoul exposed. Such a development would surely influence political trends in South Korea. In all probability, the reaction of the Blue House would be to tighten up politically even further. If concomitant international events of the sort mentioned previously were to take place within the same general time frame, the consequences could be severe as a siege mentality developed.

The second Asia-centered change was the prospective further loosening of Japanese-American ties, in the security realm as well as concerned trade and economic issues. Such a change was not merely a trend often noted by commentators but one that the Japanese government had already decided on as a matter of policy. In particular, Japan would continue its armament program without principal regard to American demands, the policy of basing Tokyo's security on continuation of the Security Treaty with Washington would be seen as a free and voluntary choice and not something done out of necessity, Japan would seek occasions to make known its policy differences with the United States and increasingly and deliberately depart from American policy leadership. Tokyo would thereby have to deal more directly with the increasing military activism of the Soviet Union in Northeast Asia and elsewhere, as well as with China's new foreign policy assertiveness, both of which would tend to drive the country back into American arms. But the objective was that, when possible, Tokyo would seek to extract concessions, to enhance its own general freedom of action, from Washington in exchange for agreement in policy and action to act together with the United States. In a word, Japan would take a much more active and independent stance on Asian and more general international issues. Coming at just the time when Seoul would feel the need for Japanese political backing and even security when the United States for its own reasons would be encouraging melioration of Seoul-Tokyo ties, the Japanese could be tempted to drive a harder bargain with the Blue House on such issues as trade liberalization and security cooperation in and around the Sea of Japan. A newly assertive Japan would also tend to touch raw nerves in Korea, for all the well-known historical reasons, and thus make even more difficult the reconciliation in policy and attitude that would be in both their interests. The upshot, although complicated as usual by intervening events and the contrasting policies of the

the other relevant states, would be further accentuation in Seoul of the feeling of isolation and threat. Once again, the domestic political resultant could well be a policy of even further restraint on opposition groups and of slowing down even more the process of political flowering that ought to accompany the more advanced stage of economic development that the country was entering.

Global international relations also would vitally affect the Korean domestic political situation. As noted above, in the political sphere, increasingly bad relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were likely even more to dominate world politics. The American-Soviet struggle for primacy skewed every local issue and infused every region with the venom produced by their arms competition, their ideological rivalry, and their comparative ability to project power around the globe. (A fearsome example of how directly and immediately such tensions could penetrate Seoul was the Flight 7 incident of early September, 1983. Such a thing might not have taken place had militarism not been so predominate in Soviet policy.) The major effect was to dilute the American capability to involve itself as closely in the defense of the South as the situation warranted and to divert Washington's policy attention to more immediate crises in the Middle East and Latin America and to the budgetary and force build-up requisites of strategic arms competition with Moscow. During the years since its Vietnam debacle in 1975, the United States had largely succeeded in getting away with pretending that the increasingly widening gap between its Asian interests and its regional commitments, on the one hand, and its specific policies and investment in Asia-specific policy means, on the other, did not exist. That gamble had worked for several reasons. The Soviet Union had roughly the same order of priorities in its own foreign policy goals. Moscow found its Asian policy strongly opposed by a cotigurie of powerful and growing Asian states led by China and Japan. Washington, in several instances had successfully pursued

a policy of bluff and verbal commitment when the resources back of them were mostly lacking. Finally, the White House in both the late Carter years and the early Reagan administration had turned around and begun the long process of refurbishing the American military machine.

But non-Asian claims on American attention and resources increased steadily in the 1980s and would continue to do so during the rest of the decade, as the standoff with the Russians mounted in intensity. The likely effects on South Korean domestic developments were two. First, and most importantly, America might lack the necessary power to assist the South against Northern invasion, were the United States to be simultaneously locked in a struggle, directly or indirectly, with the Russians outside the region, or were American interests and commitments to necessitate intervention in the Persian Gulf. Perceiving that possibility might well induce the Blue House to feel the need to augment national defenses (among other things) through repression of opposition demands even more than a result of the trends described earlier. Second, the White House would, on margin, be less inclined to predicate the development of better relations with President Chun or his successor on forward movement in liberalization and human rights in the South. The American President's advisors were well aware of the tentativeness of the political situation in Seoul and were anxious to find occasion to encourage the Blue House to break out of its isolation and move more bravely to break the vicious political circles noted above. But those occasions might not come if the Russians were constantly on the American mind and if the judgement were made that, for the time being, no chance should be taken by rocking the political boat in South Korea. Coupled with increasing popular resentment against the United States for previously discussed reasons, the outcome would be a tragedy: the United States would have missed the opportunity to help modernize South Korea politically (which was in America's own interest),

the long-term security of the South would be increasingly jeopardized by internal disunion, and popular suspicion that Washington was interested only in propping up Chun would have been confirmed.

Global economic relations also could not help but affect the South Korean political situation. Merely to list the pitfalls that could lay ahead was to draw attention to the fragility of the Blue House's assumption that high economic growth would solve pressing political problems. Those included the above noted difficulties stemming from American economic policies, domestic and international; the constantly high probability of another oil crisis attendant upon a new Middle East war, leading to higher energy costs; peaking and probable decline of Korea's vital earnings from overseas construction, especially in the Middle East; ever-increasing competition from the other developing nations with even lower wage scales than South Korea's (That included China for the first time, which for foreign trade purposes could effectively set its wage bill at zero); protectionist impulses from Europe, not merely North America, against Korean imports; generally slow growth rates across the globe; and the still lively prospects of a severe threat to the international finance system through default. Given these impediments it was not clear in 1983 that international economic conditions were going to be so highly favorable as the Blue House assumed. What if they were not? The government did not appear to have an alternate plan except belt-tightening and it could not do that with political safety. Thus, along with many of the other trends and forces noted throughout this analysis, the effect of the international economy on domestic politics was not only to force revision of the government's plans but also to make it face the necessity of political liberalization. Otherwise, it risked losing all.

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