

**KOREAN DEMOCRACY IN THE VORTEX:
THE CHALLENGE OF 1992**

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The year 1992 will be remembered, like the critical and turbulent year 1987, as another landmark in the advancement of South Korea's growing democracy. Most of all, the direct presidential election scheduled for December 1992 will be a crucial juncture in choosing a new political course for the country after five years of the *minjuhwa* democratization policy of the Roh Tae-woo [No T'ae-u] government. The voting results will reflect not only the popular verdict on the trials and errors of the Roh government, which will depart in February 1993, but also the people's rising expectation of a liberal civilian democracy to match both the prestige and burden of the country's fast advancing economy.

The Roh government promised new hope when in February 1988 it declared "a decisive departure from the authoritarian past" and it has since enjoyed both achievements and limitations in terms of pushing the

country towards a liberal civilian democracy. While pursuance of the democracy policy has generated positive results, to the extent that the basic issue of democracy versus dictatorship has now practically lost its political appeal, the Roh presidency has been constrained by increasing tension between conservative pressure and reformist demands in a visibly pluralizing society. Despite Roh's known penchant for patience and flexibility, criticism of his political indecision and supposed economic mismanagement has grown and undermined the authority of the national leadership in a traditionally Confucian country. As a result, the governing Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) suffered a setback in the March 1992 general elections when it failed to maintain its majority position within parliament.

The Emerging Power Struggle

The intensifying power struggle in South Korea for the post-Roh leadership is the result of the three-party merger between government and opposition in January 1990 which launched the DLP. The main beneficiary of the conservative alliance is apparently the moderate parliamentarian, Kim Young-sam [Yöngsam], in early 1992 executive chairman of the DLP. Previously an opposition leader, Kim took a risk in joining the government side through a political somersault that eventually won him the presidential nomination ticket in May 1992. This created an opportunity for the third and perhaps final contest for the presidency between the two arch-rival Kims. The other Kim is Kim Dae-jung [Taejung], a more populist leader who now heads the largest opposition group, the Democratic Party (DP). Kim Dae-jung outmanoeuvred Kim Young-sam in the opposition party's presidential nomination in 1971, but was narrowly defeated by the incumbent president Park Chung Hee [Pak

Chönghüi] in the popular voting. Dae-jung challenged the government candidate once again in the heated 1987 presidential election, initially alongside Young-sam. But suicidal rivalry between the two Kims for the country's top job gave the crucial edge to Roh.

The two Kims, known as the leading civilian "fighters for democracy," shared strong antipathy towards the authoritarian rule of the military-supported government during the last three decades. The former Chun Doo Hwan [Chön Tuhwan] government excluded the two from politics in the early 1980s, which merely helped bring them closer in a common crusade. But now, because of democratization, they face each other as the main adversaries in Korean politics. The electoral race extends far beyond such personal rivalries, for it has strong regional implications. Kim Young-sam maintains his political foothold in the southeastern Kyöngsang provinces (the Yöngnam region), particularly in his home town of Pusan. Kim Dae-jung, in contrast, has been closely identified with the anti-establishment political sentiment of the southwestern Chölla provinces (the Honam region), the site of the tragic 1980 Kwangju incident. The clash of regional interests between the two Kims is now more pronounced than in the past because North Kyöngsang, with the city of Taegu at its political centre, has produced three successive generals-turned-presidents since 1961.

The emerging balance of power in South Korean politics is more complex than this recurrent bipolar contest might suggest. Within the DLP there is a muted challenge to the leadership of Kim Young-sam from a moderate reformist, Lee Jong-chan [Yi Chöngch'an]. Lee virtually ran against Kim in the party presidential nomination convention. He rejects the "patronage politics" of the two rival Kims and calls for a rejuvenation of the country's political leadership. Secondly, the launching of the new opposition Unification

National Party (UNP) in January 1992 by Chung Ju-yung [Chông Chuyöng], former chairman of the giant Hyundai conglomerate, and this party's remarkable showing in the March general elections, significantly changed the rigid political landscape of South Korea. The UNP, as a third force, not only undermined the influence of the two Kims—especially that of the more conservative Kim Young-sam—but also introduced a new specific linkage between politics and business interests. Chung, who has been described as South Korea's Ross Perot, is also running for president.

Finally there is an independent challenge made by a liberal reformist Park Chan-jong [Pak Ch'anjong], the leader of the small opposition New Political Reform Party (NPRP). Although the NPRP failed to secure any parliamentary seats other than that of its own populist leader in March, Park's liberal centrist tendency and some regional support in Pusan, his home town, as well as in Seoul might have an effect, given the divided popularity of the two Kims.

The present picture of quadripolar power competition could be redrawn through surprise deals and strategic coalitions as the election day approaches. Compared to the 1987 elections, when the key issue was a simple choice between "reform within stability" and the ending of military rule, the nature of the power struggle has been transformed into a more diversified establishment of civilian industrial democracy. Apart from the underlying demand for a change of generation and an end to regional antagonism in politics, there is a serious challenge coming from influential *chaeböi*, the big commercial conglomerates, in favour of more business autonomy and the development of an "economic presidency" commensurate with the country's increasing economic affluence.

The Parliamentary Elections: A Surprising Prelude

The unmistakable prelude to the presidential election race was provided by parliamentary elections on 24 March 1992, the results of which came as a nasty surprise to the government. The leaders of the ruling DLP, including Roh and his chief party manager Kim Young-sam, showed confidence and even complacency in dealing with electoral pressure. The giant DLP, which had enjoyed a dominant position with 216 seats, or more than a two-thirds majority in the 299-seat National Assembly since the 1990 tripartite merger, expected a comfortable victory. However, it was denied even a simple majority. It gained only 149 seats overall—116 regional seats out of the total of 237 single constituencies and 33 proportionally distributed national seats. 149 was one seat short of a simple majority. It later managed to absorb nine out of 21 independent winners, thus avoiding a hung parliament.

Considering the combined voting for the now-merged three DLP parties in the previous general elections, when they gained 73.5% of the vote, the new approval figure of 38.5% was a crushing blow.¹ After the electoral results were announced, Roh reportedly said that "the government and the ruling party should acknowledge the people's will."²

In contrast, the main opposition DP led jointly by Kim Dae-jung and Lee Ki-taek—Lee was previously Kim Young-sam's top deputy, but he denounced the merger and in 1991 joined the other Kim—strengthened its position by winning 75 regional constituencies and adding 22 national seats, 97 seats overall. In terms of voting popularity, the new DP figure of 29.1% was much higher than the meagre 19.3% garnered by Kim Dae-jung's Party for Peace and Democracy (PPD) in the 1988 general elections.

The most notable electoral result, however, was the significant advance made by the hastily organized UNP.

Chung, who pledged to break the mould of bipolarized politics, won a total of 31 seats including 24 regional seats. Encouraged by this 17.4% of the popular vote, the UNP nominated Chung for the presidency and tried to expand its influence by recruiting politicians from amongst sitting independents.

The main reasons for apparent voter disenchantment were economic mismanagement and political uncertainty, the relative slowing down—by South Korean standards—of national economic growth to 7%-8%, and an inflation rate approaching 10% pushed up by rising wage levels, growing trade deficits, and enlarged foreign debts. All of this turned away conservative middle-class voters. Despite Roh's repeated commitment to tackling the country's immediate economic problems through the slogan of "more work and less spending," the government, with no clear consensus on economic management, was placed at an electoral disadvantage. This disadvantage was exploited by the DP and the new UNP, who both sharply criticized the government. As a result, the electorate was both depressed and uncertain; as late as one week before the election day, 36% were still deeply concerned about economic issues and an even larger 59.1% were undecided about which party to vote for.³

Voter dissatisfaction was directed at the three-party merger of 1990. The main rationale for the merger had been to restore stability in politics and to re-invigorate economic growth.⁴ The continued sluggish economy and the ceaseless jockeying for power among DLP leaders, however, disappointed a large number of pro-government supporters, who by 1992 perceived the "grand conservative coalition" as a convenient means for exclusive power-sharing. Dissatisfaction was strongest among young voters. According to an opinion survey carried out in February 1992, 81.7% of those responding in their 20s and 30s (who now comprise 56% of the total electorate),

expressed negative views about the state of politics, citing chaos, corruption, and inordinate struggles for power.⁵ In another opinion poll carried out in March, the majority of younger voters questioned welcomed the emergence of new political parties such as the UNP and the NPRP.⁶

Sensing the growing danger of political antipathy and distrust of the establishment, most DLP candidates chose to refrain from publicizing their special ties, if any, with the "one-Roh, two-Kim" leadership (the other Kim, so far not mentioned, was Kim Jong-pil [Kim Chongp'il], who had been an influential politician under the Park regime). The opposition DP candidates also downplayed their relationship with Kim Dae-jung in order not to provoke young voter distaste for old-fashioned politics. Instead, candidates tried to promote the freshness of their own political ideas. With hindsight, however, the DLP leadership undermined such efforts through a policy of endorsing individual candidates, since its selection procedure relied not so much upon the merits or popularity of individuals as a consideration of the balance of power within the coalition. As a result, many unselected DLP would-be candidates joined the UNP or ran as independents. The DLP also failed to attract floating voters, voters who were typically angered by the claims of last-minute election irregularities attempted in favour of the government party candidates.⁷

On the whole, the March election was relatively clean and smooth. But the voter turnout rate was only 71.9%, nearly 4% lower than the elections in 1988. This reflects a dissatisfaction with politics. In terms of regional voting, the DLP showed a relatively even national distribution compared to other parties. In Seoul and the nearby city of Inch'ön, where voting tended to be evenly polarized between the government and opposition, the DLP managed to take around 35% of the total votes cast. In the central city of Taejön, the DLP garnered 27.6% of the votes, about 2%

more than the DP. However, in Kwangju, where anti-government sentiment was strong, the DLP received only 9.1% of the popular vote compared to an overwhelming 76.4% taken by the DP. Consequently, Kwangju remains a vacuum for the ruling camp, with no parliamentary members to represent the party's interests. This was also the case in surrounding South Chölla where, despite the substantial support of 25.2% of the popular vote, the DLP failed to win any seats. Conversely, they dominated in the traditional strongholds of Pusan, Taegu, and regional Kyöngsang, all of which rejected the DP candidates.

Democratization under the Roh Government

The election results were a verdict on the achievements and limitations of five years of *minjuhwa* policy initiated by a surprise televised address in June 1987. The initial address acted as a significant catalyst. Faced with surging people power for freedom against Chun, Roh, the then-presidential nominee of the ruling Democratic Justice Party (DJP), accepted a direct presidential election system as demanded by the opposition after 16 years of rule through an electoral college.

The address was a great political gamble to Roh. The opposition, in order not to lose its so-called "historic chance" to obtain power, pressed hard for a single unified candidacy between the two Kims through political compromise. There was to be a division of roles: one Kim would run for the presidency, and the other Kim would control the party. But apparently irreconcilable rivalry between the two precluded such a strategic unity and led to Roh's election, with 36.6% of popular support, against the combined 55% of the two Kims.⁸

The Sixth Republic, because of its difficult genesis, chartered its initial course by consciously distancing itself from the authoritarian legacy of Chun. Despite its economic successes, the Chun government had been disgraced by its failure to escape from the heavy political burden of the Kwangju incident, which not only sharpened regional tensions between Kyöngsang and Chölla, but also strained the civil-military relationship in the country.

President Roh, himself a former general and a close colleague of Chun, displayed his commitment to more democratic rule by trying to avoid the impression of a commanding presidency, such as had been the hallmark of Chun. Thus, unlike previous leaders, he started carrying his own briefcase in public. He replaced long conference tables with round ones at the Blue House, and refused to be addressed as "*Kakha*" or "Your Excellency" by officials. Although these were surface changes, the political implications of such liberal behaviour within an authoritarian Confucian culture were not negligible. The reduction of political monotheism and authority, to create what we might call a "consulting presidency," was also reflected in Roh's decision-making style. Discussions and consultations ostensibly replaced unilateral orders and decrees. Presidential meetings with opposition leaders became more cordial and even collegial.

More substantially, efforts were also made by the Roh government, based upon its pledge to "civilianize" military-influenced politics, to institute limited democratic reforms. For example, freedom of the press was expanded to allow the media to more openly criticize. Political caricatures of the president were allowed for the first time. Labour unions became more active with the introduction of a new minimum wage law.⁹ Student demonstrations were less harshly repressed—at least until May 1989 when six policemen died in a clash in Pusan. The political neutrality of the military was repeatedly emphasised. Local government autonomy

was re-introduced after 30 years, in city, province, county, and municipal district councils. In diplomacy, the Roh government's achievements were even more evident. Helped by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, South Korea vigorously widened its diplomatic horizons through summit diplomacy. Inter-Korean relations have also moved towards a cautious *détente* through prime ministerial talks, eventually facilitating the two Koreas' entry to the UN in 1991.

The Roh government may not, however, deserve all the credit for political reform, and it has not always been consistent in its implementation of democratization. At the initial stage, besides the practical necessity to promote a national image for the Seoul Olympics, a strong campaign for democratization led by the emboldened opposition encouraged liberal reform. The hung National Assembly was a serious constraint on the Roh government despite the underlying conflict of interests among the Kims. This situation seemed to improve after former president Chun went into internal exile following a public apology in November 1988. Moreover the dragging on of negotiations for "liquidation" of the authoritarian irregularities of Chun's Fifth Republic, including the ex-president's testimony in parliament and the award of compensation for Kwangju victims, undermined the reformist image.

Roh was in fact walking a tightrope between conservative hardliners and liberal reformers. Gradually, the centre of political gravity within the government began to move towards the right, which led to denunciations by the opposition and the media of "regression" back to the Fifth Republic. The first sign of this was Roh's indefinite postponement in March 1989 of the "interim appraisal"—a concept implying a national referendum—of his reform policy. This had been promised during the presidential

election campaign. A change of attitude was more clearly perceived when the public prosecution office summoned Kim Dae-jung in August in connection with the investigation of a parliamentary spy case, thus ending the apparent honeymoon between government and opposition.

The conservative drift was also confirmed by Roh's sacking of Lee Jong-chan [Yi Chongch'an], regarded as the leading opposition voice within the ruling party, from his commanding post of secretary general. Lee had earlier clashed with Park Jun-kyu [Pak Chŏn'gyul], the party chairman. At the centre of the conflict was Lee's demand for more democracy within the party hierarchy and for a reduction in the influence of the so-called "TK group" for whom Park was a representative figure. In a narrow sense, "TK" meant politicians from the Taegu and Kyŏngsang area, particularly graduates of the prestigious Kyŏngbuk High School in Taegu. In broader terms, however, it implied an informal but cohesive stratum of a power elite within the ruling party, government bureaucracy, business, and the military who shared the same regional background as, and included, Roh and his predecessors Chun and Park Chung Hee. In an attempt at political damage limitation, Roh appointed two new party officials who did not belong to the group and denounced "factionalism" as undesirable. The initial incident nevertheless indicated the potential for further friction. Meantime, Chun finally testified to the National Assembly about his "misrule," which virtually ended the prolonged negotiations concerning the Fifth Republic controversies, though his testimony was not regarded as wholly satisfactory.

It was against this background that the tripartite coalition of the DLP was launched in early 1990 by the president, Kim Young-sam and Kim Jong-pil, to "save the nation" from instability and dislocation. For the embattled Roh, the merger signified the onset of a second stage of

democratization; for the two former opposition leaders, the merger was a convenient way of entry into the power structure. This was particularly so for Kim Young-sam, who did not relish his position in an opposition led by Kim Dae-jung. His appointment as executive chairman of the new ruling party meant the possibility of succeeding Roh from within.

The merger of the DLP also enabled the three conservative leaders to isolate Kim Dae-jung from the mainstream of politics. For this reason, Kim Dae-jung quickly accused the new alliance of a right-wing *coup d'état* against parliamentary democracy. Despite the formal union, however, there seemed little real cohesion in the merged DLP. Signs of serious friction quickly began to surface. In particular, the largest faction of the *minjung* group, managed by Park Tae-joon as acting deputy to Roh, and a "new TK group" represented by the outspoken Park Chol-un [Pak Chōrōn], repeatedly clashed with the *minju* group led by Kim Young-sam, and this overshadowed any semblance of unity. Then, the disclosure in November 1990 of a confidential memo signed in May by the three leaders for power-sharing through a constitutional amendment that would allow a cabinet system of government not only discredited the merger but strained the partnership between Roh and Kim Young-sam.¹⁰

The nature of this uneasy political cohabitation was the perceived reciprocity of strategic, if limited benefits. If Roh's support could be counted on for Kim Young-sam to secure the next presidency, Kim's presence on the government side could be counted as invaluable for Roh to control political development and delay the impact of his increasing lame-duck status. Despite serious internal conflict, therefore, cohabitation continued. There were risks on both sides. For Roh, having Kim on his side meant he had to be prepared to sacrifice some of the solidarity of his

own camp, especially the loyalist TK group, for to many Kim remained a potential adversary. On the other hand, for Kim, the alliance was perhaps the greatest gamble of his life because of the uncertainty of his eventual succession and the likely ruin of his career if the partnership with Roh collapsed.

What made the thing work was a common interest in containing the influence of Kim Dae-jung and the intentionally ambiguous position taken by Roh towards Kim Young-sam's succession. While pronouncing a minimum democratic guideline in March 1991 that excluded former soldiers, presidential relatives, and in-laws from the party presidential candidacy, Roh agreed that the final candidate would have to be chosen by "intra-party free competition." This discounted TK influentials such as Chung Ho-yong, a former general and colleague, Kim Bok-dong, another former general and Roh's brother-in-law, but was exactly the position consistently taken by Lee Jong-chan, who was already a declared presidential candidate. Kim's discomfort over this idea was alleviated with the increasing weight of support given to him by other TK influentials such as Kim Yoon-whan, the party floor leader, and Keum Jin-ho, a former minister of commerce and a further brother-in-law to Roh.

The delicate equilibrium was fundamentally disturbed when the media began to speculate in early 1992 that Roh had finally decided to implement the transfer of power to Kim. Rather than promoting him, this immediately stimulated the formation of a broad united front against Kim with the support of the two co-chairmen, Park Tae-joon and Kim Jong-pil, and substantial majority of the DLP's parliamentary members. Lee Jong-chan argued that any non-competitive and prearranged method of power transfer would directly contradict the spirit of party democracy. Lee had firmly established his constituency in the centre of Seoul and, since he was a graduate of the top-ranking

Kyōnggi High School in the capital, a school which had produced a large network of technocrats, academics and businessmen, the media quickly depicted the conflict as a growing regional power game between "TK" with "SK" (Seoul and the surrounding Kyōnggi area) and "PK" (Pusan and the surrounding Kyōngnam area). "PK" was, of course, led by Kim Young-sam, a graduate of a further prestigious school, Kyōngnam High School.¹¹

In an effort to defuse the unfolding crisis, Roh clarified his neutral position, a position in which he would support a competitive presidential nomination process. Nonetheless, the serious cacophony developing within the governing structure, including the negative reaction of some TK loyalists to the idea of a power transfer to Kim, clearly impaired the authority of the presidency. On balance, Roh's declared role as neutral manager, in which he would supervise the procedure for the next leadership contest, has had both political benefits and costs. While the uncertainty regarding the official endorsement of Kim's candidacy helped continue Roh's ability to influence the course of politics, it was met by a criticism of his indecisiveness, lack of clear sense of direction, and, ironically, insufficient authority. The disrespectful renaming of the president as "*Mul Tae-woo*"—*mul* means water, without a distinct colour or taste of its own—, for example, reflected a cynical view of the "democratizing" leadership.

Roh's less authoritarian, wait-and-see approach to politics, in contrast to the "tackle and fix" approach of his predecessor Chun, generated costs in the management of the national economy. On the whole, despite a continuous expansion of gross national production and the repeated political initiative to democratize an economic structure biased in favour of sprawling *chaebōl* conglomerates, the government's economic policy has oscillated between conflicting goals of regulation versus liberalization, and price

stabilization versus growth stimulation. Compared to Chun's tight rein on consumer-price inflation maintained by authoritarian credit controls, Roh's more ad-hoc and laissez-faire approach has had inevitable trade-offs in the form of enlarged autonomy and reduced efficiency in the industrial sector.

Furthermore, the economic vibrancy of South Korea peaked in the 1988 Olympic year with a remarkable 12.4% growth rate. It has been constrained since 1989 by continuously rising unit labour costs, foreign exchange rate pressure, a widening trade deficit with Japan, and by increasing American demands for market opening. Democratization has also brought a rapid expansion of domestic consumption, coupled to a move away from savings and investment. As a result, despite a respectable 8.6% nominal GNP growth in 1991, inflation touched double-digits and the current-account deficit reached a record \$8.8 bn.¹² Unable to forge a coherent policy of stable economic growth partly because of the burden of party political disputes, Roh responded to the increase in private consumption and the decline in savings by resorting to authoritarian measures which ranged from moral preaching against conspicuous consumption to outright punitive taxation. These measures led to a considerable backlash from the overheated private sector.

In the area of business relations, Roh's policy of economic democratization aimed to curb the power and influence of the *chaebōl*. Despite partial success, this created conflict more than compliance. The government's regulatory anti-*chaebōl* measures, taken in May 1990 to penalize real estate speculation, had the impact of weakening the extra-legal financial base of the giant business groups. But the attempt to re-introduce a real-name transaction system for open business practices was confronted by concerted strong resistance from both business and political circles. All of this implies a less than

democratic symbiosis between government and business leaders. In fact, defiant *chaebŏl* leaders went a step further by beginning to express serious concern about the government's "drifting" economic policy. Most striking was the open censure made by heads of the five major economic organizations in May 1991 of the government's "extempore effects."¹³ Chung Ju-yung, in particular, became increasingly critical of the government's "misconceived" economic intervention and control. Clearly the conventional partnership between authoritarian government and supportive business was being challenged on one hand by a new political assertiveness and on the other by a demand for more independence in the fast expanding industrial sector.

In sum, Roh's democratic reform initiative broadened the basis of political pluralism by moving towards a less centralized and less authoritarian system. More open criticism of the government and its policies and the less subservient attitude of the business community are both indications of such pluralism. But at the same time, the *minjuhwa* policy brought to the surface latent social tensions, both economic and inter-regional, and serious structural problems which required a determined and cautious approach which would not exacerbate the conflict between conservative hardliners and liberal reformists. In terms of political orientation, Roh moved in the right direction. In terms of political capacity and strategy, however, he exposed his limitations. The three-party merger apparently strengthened Roh, but in fact served to undermine the government's moral authority. Spectacular foreign policy achievements were thus overshadowed by the built-in predicaments of domestic politics.

The *minjuhwa* policy highlighted the acute need for cultural adaptation away from the authoritarian, dependent tradition. This is a transitional dilemma of a country where

the resilience of Confucian social values and the compulsion or radical modernization co-exist. In the case of Roh, the initial policy to create a non-charismatic image of leadership through the decentralization of power was positively received. But gradually this policy began to produce a sense of discomfort and even cynicism towards liberal gestures. The approach of Roh failed to draw lasting support because of a continuing demand for strong leadership. The reason for this lies deep in the public desire for political moralism rather than outward political liberalism.

The Changing Political Scene: Searching for Leadership

Within the ruling DLP, the electoral blow in March 1992 transformed the simmering contest for the presidential nomination into overt competition. Theoretically, Kim, as executive chairman of the party, was responsible for the perceived defeat. In practice, however, the disappointing electoral performance and the ensuing sense of crisis worked in his favour. He quickly seized the opportunity to press for the support of the politically weakened Roh by arguing that no better alternative was left than to endorse Kim's candidacy. The TK influentials continued to throw their weight behind Kim. Backed by some 53 parliamentary members, more than one third of the DLP's total number of sitting parliamentarians, Kim declared in late March his intention of running for president. However, once again, this catalyzed the formation of an anti-Kim front of about 27 parliamentarians who eventually decided to support Lee Jong Chan at the party's May convention.

Supported by party leaders such as Park Tae-joon, Yoon Kil-jung, Choi Mun-shik and Park Chul-un, who were known figures in the anti-Kim front, Lee put himself forward as a determined and serious contender for the

post-Roh leadership. Kim relied on his long record of opposition to authoritarian rule, like his main rival Kim Dae-jung, and kept his strong regional support. In contrast, Lee counted on his freshness, his appeal to regional neutrality, his relative youth, and his substantial government experience. Between these two was a non-committed "observer" group of about 70 parliamentarians led by the new chief executive, Yi Ch'un'gu, a loyal follower of Roh. This middle group was the critical force coveted by the two contenders.

As the convention approached, it became increasingly evident that Roh's support inclined towards Kim. Kim thus intensified his appeal to the middle group, which in turn began to shift from its neutral ground. Kim also managed to weaken the anti-Kim front by approaching such influentials as Pak Chunbyŏng and Yi Handong, and by securing an alliance with Kim Jong-pil. Lee Jong-chan, perceiving the adverse turn of the party's political tide, lodged a strong protest against Roh's acquiescence in this "unfair competition." But, when the situation became irreversible, he announced his refusal to run for the nomination. This almost amounted to a direct challenge to Roh's authority. At the dispirited convention on 19 May, Kim won the nomination by securing the support of 66.3% of the 6,904 delegates. Nonetheless, the fact that 33.2% supported Lee in his absence imposed a substantial burden on Kim and Roh.

Kim's risky gamble has paid off. To use a popular Korean expression, he "jumped into the tiger's cave" and caught the tiger. But it is Roh who tamed the tiger. Without the veiled support of the incumbent president and cheerleading from Kim Yoon-whan, the senior manager of the old TK faction, Kim would have fought a difficult uphill battle for power. Perhaps the key reason why Roh supported him was his recognition that no other figure in

the ruling structure could be expected to win against Kim Dae-jung. Also, in relation to civilianization and democratization, which are the proclaimed hallmarks of the Roh presidency, the Kim Young-sam card was the most pragmatic, if not entirely comfortable, choice. It may also prove to be the safest choice for an outgoing administration, given the heavy debt owed by Roh to Kim.

One can argue that the eventual rise of Kim within the ruling party structure was the result of the position maintained by his main rival, Kim Dae-jung. By the same token, Kim Dae-jung, who will be 67 in 1992, has been able to justify his prolonged political survival partly because of the continued political life of Kim Young-sam. The two have therefore been locked in a relationship of competitive interdependence *vis-à-vis* military-backed authoritarian rule and, more recently, the growing demand for a new and younger generation in political life. However, in their orientation, their basis of support, leadership styles and personalities, the two are very different. Kim Young-sam is a more conservative and flexible negotiator enjoying greater middle class support. Kim Dae-jung is more progressive and a defiant orator who has more working class appeal. If Kim Young-sam is an instinctive integrator who delegates power to followers and depends on others for advice and expertise, Kim Dae-jung, by contrast, is a charismatic perfectionist who maintains an authoritarian party hierarchy and who has an intellectual grasp on policy. Now surprisingly, Kim Dae-jung has been enthusiastic about holding open policy debates among candidates but Kim Young-sam has shown no interest.

So far the two Kims, with the exception of the critical case of the lost 1987 race, have played a positive-sum game in surviving the turbulent waters of South Korean politics. The progress of democratization under Roh, however, has gradually changed their rivalry into a kind of zero-sum

game. Kim Dae-jung's alliance in 1991 with Lee Ki-taek signified an intensified fight. And, given the endorsement of Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-jung sharpened his political offensive towards the ruling party structure. The main focus of his criticism has been the decision to postpone direct local government elections, which could have had a crucial impact on the presidential election. (Until now, local governors and mayors have been appointed by central government.) Meanwhile, Kim Dae-jung is trying to create a gentler and kinder image to enhance his appeal to conservative sectors of society, including the military, the "veto group" vigilant against any signs of left-wing activities, the middle class, and women. Kim's morale has been boosted by the DP's "victory" in Seoul in March 1992, where his party gained 27 out of the total 44 districts with 37.2% of the popular vote. The DLP held only 14 seats.

Nonetheless, the high concentration of Kim Dae-jung's support in one particular region, the southwest, remains his Achilles heel, just as it is his source of strength, in what may well be his last bid for power. In addition, the so-called "character" issue, that is his alleged early and brief involvement in left-wing politics, continues to arouse concern amongst sceptical conservative hardliners. In terms of parliamentary politics, the fact that he leads the largest opposition party is another potential source of concern for stability-conscious floating voters. For this reason, Kim proposed the creation of a pan-national cabinet in the event of his winning the crown.

The challenge of Chung Ju-yung from outside the ruling camp, like that of Lee Jong-chan from within the party, provided Kim with a relative advantage, since this was considered to deprive him of less support than Kim Young-sam. For the ruling camp, then, Chung is seen basically as a spoiler. The UNP of Chung, in order to maximize its political benefit as the second opposition party, adopted a flexible

position between the two other camps. It sided with the DP in pressing for direct local government elections, but made clear that it would deal with the ruling party from within parliament rather than fight it from outside. Because of the hasty UNP creation, though, the party lacks manpower, and this hampers its ability to compete. Because of the background of its leader, and despite its public pledge to dissolve the business conglomerates, accelerate the growth of the national economy, and achieve economic justice, the party remained identified with the interests of big business. Partly for this reason, and partly to avoid confusion with the Unification Church, the UNP changed its English name to United People's Party (UPP) in June (the Korean name remained the same). Initial popular support for the UPP, which was visibly being challenged by the ruling camp's hostile taxation policy towards Chung's business group, Hyundai, now seems to be on the decline. In addition, while Chung's outspoken and straightforward political style has given him some popular appeal, it has also been a source of concern. A good example of this was his recent remarks on the possible "legitimization" of the Communist Party of South Korea which, overnight, reduced his party's popularity.

The Perceptions of Voters

The presidential race is not focused on ideological divisions, contrary to what might be expected. The reason for this is that there are not many significant distinctive ideological differences among the contenders. (The radical opposition party, *Minjungdang*, failed to win a single seat in the March 1992 elections.) This reflects the broadly conservative inclination of South Korean voters, voters more sensitive to the personalities and leadership of the candidates than to the parties or policies they represent.¹⁴ Perhaps Kim Dae-jung and Park Chan-jong of the NPRP

could be described as relatively progressive by virtue of their policies for income redistribution, social welfare, defence, and inter-Korean relations. But neither regards himself as a socialist. Compared to these, Kim Young-sam and Chung Ju-yung are mainstream conservative. But Kim has not yet produced his own clear-cut policy platform, and Chung is trying to appeal to lower income voters through his radical proposal to halve the price of apartments and to dissolve the *chaebŏl* structure. Lee Jong-chan, the DLP "protester," stands somewhere between the two.

In early 1992, the practical issue of economic management, rather than an ideological commitment to democracy, received the highest priority in nationwide opinion polls. Nearly 70% of respondents in one recent survey expressed strong concern about the negative impact of rising inflation and the recession, whereas less than 10% gave "democratization" as their main concern.¹⁵ Together with this dominant concern about the economy, support for a change of generation in political leadership has also visibly grown. In the same survey, about 80% of respondents said they wanted to see younger political faces. As for the renewed presidential competition, nearly half the people asked were concerned that it would intensify regional antagonism.

Despite popular apprehension about the polarization of politics, the current trend is towards an ultimate electoral confrontation between the two Kims. Kim Young-sam remains more popular with voters in their 30s and above, while Kim Dae-jung finds more support with younger voters. In terms of overall potential popularity, however, several surveys carried out in June 1992 revealed Kim Young-sam leading his rival by a margin of 10% - 15% with, on average, support from 30% to 35%. Lee Jong-chan has roughly 15% and Chung and Park Chan-jong about 8% to 10% each.¹⁶

These preliminary voting predictions suggest that Kim Young-sam has established a position as leading contender. Apart from the premium of central and local bureaucratic support for the governing party candidate, Kim's moderate image and his previous track record will provide him with substantial advantages. In fact, 63.1% of those questioned have predicted that Kim will be elected as the next president, regardless of their own approval or disapproval. In the case of Kim Dae-jung, a favourable prediction was given by only 13.4% of respondents.¹⁷

Kim Young-sam's position is not altogether secure. He has to deal with the so-called "quality" issue in contrast to the "character" issue of his main rival. Does he have sufficient intellectual and administrative ability to manage complex national and international affairs? In particular, economic management and foreign policy are areas in which he has relatively unproven credentials. The other vulnerability is voter resistance to his political switch from opposition to ruling party. Again, according to polls conducted in June, less than half those who supported him in 1987 said they would vote for him again. (In the case of Kim Dae-jung, the figure for continuous support was much higher, at 63%.) Potential voter resistance to Kim Young-sam from pro-government voters is also substantial. Among those who supported Roh in 1987, only 35.2% said they would vote for Kim while 34.5% were uncommitted.¹⁸

In order to attract conservative floating voters, whose support is critical, Kim has been trying to expand his working partnership with the governing and former governing elites. In late June, he made a surprise visit to the office of Lee Jong-chan in a gesture aimed at persuading him to stay within the DLP rather than form his planned People's Alliance. Kim also agreed to give top party posts to politicians from other groups. Earlier, he even paid a courtesy visit to former president Chun, his old political

adversary, in an apparent effort to mend fences. Chun did not offer any guarantee of co-operation. This strategy may alienate Kim's former supporters to the benefit of either Chung or Park, perhaps even Kim Dae-jung. Also, if the other Kim decides to enter into an anti-establishment alliance with Park or—though less likely—with Chung, Kim Young-sam's leading position will be undermined. Even if he is elected, he might find his presidency seriously constrained by the combined opposition majority, as did Roh in 1988.

To avoid this eventuality, Kim may find it necessary to redefine his position between opposition and government in order to embrace the moderate pro-reformers on both sides. The most radical option would be to create a new political party with a fresh image and broader support. Failing this, acceptance of the opposition demand for direct mayoral and gubernatorial elections, reversing the presidential decision to postpone these until 1995, could be an option, though with high risk implications. Finally, the formation of an alliance with Chung, which is not totally inconceivable, remains a wild card. In any event, South Korean politics are moving towards a more competitive and power-sharing form of democracy.

NOTES

- 1 In the 1988 general elections, the three parties which later merged to create the DLP obtained, respectively: Democratic Justice Party (DJP) led by Roh, 34%; Reunification Democratic Party led by Kim Young-sam, 23.9%; New

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- Democratic Republican Party (NDRP) led by Kim Jong -pil, 15.%.
 2 *The Economist*, 28 March 1992, p. 72.
 3 *Chosŏn Ilbo*, 17 March 1992.
 4 For the background to the 1990 three party merger, see Jin Park, "Political Change in South Korea: The Challenge of Conservative Alliance", *Asian Survey*, December 1992, pp. 1154-59.
 5 *Sisa Journal*, 19 March 1992, pp. 20-21.
 6 *Han'guk ilbo*, 21 March 1992.
 7 The most controversial irregularities include proxy votings in the military for absentee voters and the involvement of intelligence agents in negative campaigns against an opposition candidate.
 8 In the election, Kim Young-sam collected 28% of the total votes cast while Kim Dae-jung took 27%. The other contender, Kim Jong-pil, received 8.1%.
 9 For analysis on the freedom of the press and labour activism under the Roh government, see Bret Billet, "South Korea at the Crossroads: An Evolving Democracy or Authoritarianism Revisited?", *Asian Survey*, March 1990, pp. 303-07.
 10 The memorandum signed by the three leaders on 6 May 1990 specifies that they will: 1) work towards the realization of parliamentary democracy in which both parliament and cabinet are responsible to the people, 2) introduce a constitutional amendment within one year in favour of the cabinet system, 3) begin to prepare for the amendment within one year.
 11 *Tonga ilbo*, 7 January 1992.
 12 See "Economic Monitor: South Korea", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 April 1992, p. 74.
 13 In the critical statement, the leaders of the business community attributed economic difficulties to "faulty leadership by the administration." *Korea Times*, 11 May 1991.

- 14 According to recent opinion polls, only 14.3% and 26.1% of voters identified the presidential candidates with, respectively, their own parties and policy platforms. 57.7% said they would vote for a candidate based on that candidate's ability and personality. *Kyōnghyang shinmun*, 16 June 1992.
- 15 Issue of consumer price and economic recession, 55.8%; democratization, 8.8%; overcoming regional antagonism, 16.3%. *Kyōnghyang shinmun*, 16 June 1992.
- 16 *Han'guk ilbo* on 28 May 1992 put the figures as follows: Kim Young-sam 30.7%, Kim Dae-jung 21.6%, Lee 15.4%, Chung 9.4%, Park 7.7%. More recently, the *Chungang ilbo* on 19 June gave a similar pattern: Kim Young-sam 30.5%, Kim Dae-jung 18.7%, Lee 14.7%, Chung 7.5%, Park 10.1%.
- 17 *Han'guk ilbo*, 28 May 1992.
- 18 *Kyōnghyang shinmun*, 16 June 1992.

THE ILHAE FOUNDATION: BEYOND A SCANDAL

JACQUELINE YOOMINH PAK

Introduction

Before hosting the World Olympiad in Seoul in September 1988 as a symbol of international recognition of South Korea's "economic miracle," there was to be yet another miracle, a "political miracle" unprecedented in modern South Korean history. After decades of authoritarian rule since independence from Japan in 1945, demonstrations and riots embroiled the entire people of the South in the summer of 1987 with a forceful show of political will for democracy in every sector of society, never before experienced in such magnitude. With people angered and frustrated by the prolonged political stalemate between the ruling party and the opposition as to whether to adopt a parliamentary or direct vote system for the Presidential election in November 1987, demonstrations culminated in a massive popular uprising calling for a direct election and a complete ouster of President Chun Doo Hwan [Chōn Tuhwan]. Chun, a former general who came to power by a