

Two Nation States in the Korean Peninsula

Natural space and geographical conditions

The Korean Peninsula is located in the East Asia region, surrounded by China, Russia and Japan. Korea is the smallest country in the region. The total area of the Peninsula is about 220,880 km², putting it at less than half the size of Japan, and slightly smaller than the United Kingdom (UK). The Peninsula is about 1,070 km long and about 300 km wide (Kwon et al., 2016). Across the middle of the Peninsula lies the 250 km long and 4 km wide Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea at the 38th parallel of latitude. The area of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, hereinafter, North Korea) is 12,054 km², while the Republic of Korea (ROK, hereinafter, South Korea) covers 10,034 km² (Statistics Korea, 2019a). The area of South Korea in the 1960s was 98,430 km², but due to land reclamation efforts it has grown to the size it is today (Kwon et al., 2016). The DMZ is about 145 km south of Pyongyang, the capital city of North Korea, and about 50 km north of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. The distance between Pyongyang and Seoul is about 195 km. The DMZ itself is 250 km long and about 4 km wide.

The eastern part of the Peninsula has long, high mountain ranges, hills and streams, while the south-west region has a wide range of farmland with coastal plains. The highest point of the Korean Peninsula is Baekdu Mountain in North Korea (2,744 m), while the second highest point can be found at Hala Mountain on Jeju-do ('do' here means 'island' in Korean) in South Korea (1,950 m). Both mountains are volcanic. Both Korea's also have several important rivers, including the Daedong River, which runs through Pyongyang, and the Han River, which runs through the centre of Seoul.

North Korea shares its northern border with Russia and Chinese Manchuria, while South Korea is surrounded by the sea and various islands. At the very northern edge of North Korea, where Baekdu Mountain is located, it has a 1,029 km long border with China and a 16 km border with Russia. South Korea's territory includes 3,348 islands, which have a total area of 3,853 km² (Hong et al., 2018). The most famous big islands are Ulleung-do, Dok-do and Jeju-do. While Ulleung-do and Dok-do (two major islands in Ulleung County) are in the East Sea, Jeju-do is in the Korea Strait. Jeju-do is the biggest island in Korea. There are also many small islands, mostly located off the West and South coasts.

North Korea has nine provinces with three main cities, while there are six metropolitan cities in South Korea, excluding its capital city of Seoul, and eight provinces, not including Jeju-do. Seoul is categorised as a special self-governing city while Jeju-do is defined as a special self-governing province. Most natural resources can be found in North Korea, especially in the mountains, whereas South Korea lacks natural resources.

The shape of the Peninsula has changed over time. The present geographical shape of the Peninsula is similar to how it was in the Chosun period. The territory of ancient Korea was much larger than it is now. For example, Goguryeo had the largest territory in the late 5th century with a border as far North of Harbin in Chinese Manchuria (Ebrey and Walthall, 2014). More detail about Goguryeo and Chosun follows in the next section.

Historical development from pre-colonial times to independence

The modern concept of Korea can be seen only from the post-colonial period in its history. However, it is equally important to understand pre-colonial Korea as a nation since the homogeneous ethnic and linguistic legacy of ancient Korea is still prominent in modern Korea. To begin with, pre-colonial Korean history can be divided into five periods: the origins period; the Three Kingdoms period; the United Silla or Late Silla period; the Goryeo period; and the Chosun dynasty period. Until the end of Japanese occupation, there was only one Korea in the Peninsula; the division of Korea into North and South is quite recent. In this section, pre-colonial Korea means both Koreas before the division.

Controversially, the origin of Korea can be found in ‘Go-chosun’ (Old Chosun), which is also a founding name for the ‘Chosun’ dynasty, which will be introduced later in this section. The reason to take Go-chosun as the beginning of Korea’s history is that it is believed that Tangun, as the founder of Go-chosun, marks the beginning of Korean history, even though the story is found only in forms of myth or legend, not in the official historical record. In the myth, it is said that Tangun established Go-chosun as the first Korean state in 2333 BCE. Therefore, most scholars of Koreana history tend to focus more on the Three Kingdoms period when they discuss early Korea. There is no official written record about the early history of Korea until the beginning of CE, and the record during the era of BCE was written by the Chinese. Along with Buyeo, another early political state of Korea, Go-chosun made itself known to its neighbouring country, Han China. In the 4th century BCE, Go-chosun collapsed and Buyeo took power in the Korean Peninsula. With the decline of Go-chosun, there were a few more rising political states other than Buyeo, such as Goguryeo, Okjeo, Dongye, Mahan, Jinhan, and Byeonghan.

While Buyeo and Goguryeo were struggling between themselves and against China in the north of the Peninsula, the remaining states in the central and southern parts of the Peninsula formed the new state groups of Baekje, Silla, and Gaya. However, Buyeo was merged into Goguryeo in 494 CE after attacks by nomadic tribes from Manchuria, while Gaya collapsed due to the alliance of Goguryeo and Silla in 562 CE. As a result, the five-state system in the Peninsula ended, and the era of the ‘Three Kingdoms’ (Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla) began in the 4th century and continued to 676 CE.

In the meantime, in China, the Han dynasty collapsed, and the Sui dynasty took power in 589. When the Sui dynasty reunified China, they continued the Han dynasty’s ambition of enlarging its land by attacking Goguryeo. However, the Sui could not accomplish their aim as they were defeated by Goguryeo after various attempts. When the next dynasty, the Tang, took over power from the Sui in 660, they were continually frustrated by Goguryeo, and decided to change their strategy by invading Baekje from the south by the sea. When the Tang attacked Baekje, they allied with Silla, and succeeded in taking Baekje. After occupying Baekje, the Tang began pushing their forces towards Goguryeo in alliance with Silla. As a result, the war ended in victory for the Tang dynasty. However, Silla did not accept the Tang’s offer to become its vassal and survived the ensuing battles between the Tang and Silla. In 676, Silla unified most of the Peninsula, and the so-called Unified Silla or Late Silla period continued until 935.

During this period, however, the Unified Silla was not the only state in the Korean Peninsula; Balhae was established in 698 by survivors from Goguryeo and people from Manchurian tribes in the old Goguryeo region. Balhae, located north of Silla and whose territory extended towards Manchuria, was the only rival state for Silla in the Peninsula. At the same time, the existence of Balhae made it relatively easy for Silla to maintain its sovereignty against the Tang as Balhae remained a direct enemy on the border of the Tang dynasty.

The Unified Silla period played an important role in Korea’s history as it drove stable government and political institutions and fuelled the advancement of culture, religion and society in various ways. Examples can be found in the remarkable development of Buddhist culture, significant maritime power with extended trade, a centralised taxation system, and astronomical observatory technology during this period. However, it has been controversial to interpret this as the development of a nation system in Silla. Some historians, such as Hwang (2017), have concluded that while Goguryeo contributed to the civilisation of ancient Korea, Silla actually reversed its development by introducing the Chinese system into the country after relations with the Tang dynasty were normalised in the 8th century.

However, the decline of the Tang in the mid-8th century also affected Silla and led to its end. Likewise, Balhae was weakened by external forces from neighbouring countries, including Japan and nomadic tribes from Mongolia. In the late 9th century, Tang China, Balhae, and Silla struggled with internal and external turmoil. In Silla, the central government authority was taken over by the local provinces in the mid-9th century, and Balhae collapsed due to the invasion of Mongolian nomadic tribes in 926.

After the Unified Silla era, the Korean Peninsula experienced the ‘Later Three Kingdoms’ period. In the late 9th century, Baekje and Goguryeo were restored, and named New Baekje and New Goguryeo. While both New Baekje and New Goguryeo fought with each other based on their conflicting ambitions to unify the Peninsula, Silla was no longer included in this power game as it was the weakest state out of the three. In 918, New Goguryeo changed its name to Goryeo and began to accept refugees from Balhae because Goryeo considered Balhae a successor of Goguryeo, along with New Goguryeo and Goryeo. With increasing influence and power in the region, Goryeo absorbed Silla in 935 and New Baekje surrendered in 936. This is seen as the beginning of the Wang dynasty of Goryeo. While Unified Silla cannot be considered to have unified the Peninsula due to the continued existence of Balhae in the region; reunification by the Wang dynasty in Goryeo has been considered a complete process because it unified not only the Later Three Kingdoms but also incorporated survivors from Balhae.

Goryeo began to use the name ‘Corea’ (which is how Goryeo often sounded in other languages) when communicating with other countries as part of its active trade with wider partners in the world. Thus, the modern name ‘Korea’ originated from Goryeo. While Goguryeo’s territory included part of Manchuria, the land claimed by the Goryeo dynasty was similar to today’s Korean Peninsula. In terms of religious culture, Silla emphasised Buddhism in its culture and society, but Goryeo fostered Confucianism and Taoism as well. As a result, the people of Goryeo practiced Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism together. The Wang dynasty of Goryeo lasted for about 1,000 years in the Korean Peninsula, from 935 to 1392; however, it suffered from constant invasions by the Mongol Empire throughout, and by the Ming dynasty in China towards the end of its period of dominance. Nevertheless, Goryeo managed to develop and advance its culture, such as art and woodblock printing techniques, thanks to its continued international activities.

While Goryeo experienced external threats, it struggled with internal political challenges to reform. The Wang dynasty of Goryeo ended in 1392 as the last king was assassinated by reformists, and the succeeding Yi dynasty gave the state a new name: Chosun. As the name shows, the Yi dynasty emphasised its legacy from the period of Go-chosun. Also, it brought a

huge change in the cultural and political systems, from Buddhism to Confucianism. This so-called neo-Confucianism revolution was twinned with the creation of Chosun, and thus neo-Confucian values became predominant in society. Another notable event in the Chosun period was the invention of the Korean alphabet, ‘Hangul’, by King Sejong, which contributed to a higher literacy rate among the people. Before Hangul, Koreans used to use Chinese character. As well as language, literature and philosophy, technology was also widely developed. During the Chosun period from 1392 to 1910, the Yi dynasty expanded its northern border, and the modern border of the Korean Peninsula remains as it was in the Chosun period.

Chosun also suffered from external threats from Japan and Manchuria. In 1592, the year of ‘Imjin’ in the Chosun calendar, a sudden invasion by Japan took place. A massive number of Japanese troops landed at Busan fortress, located in the south-eastern part of the Korean Peninsula. This was the opening event of the ‘Imjin Waeran’ – the war with the Japanese in the Imjin year. The record shows that there were no survivors from this attack on Busan, and the total population of Chosun also decreased dramatically. When Chosun defeated Japan in the naval battle of Myeongnyang in 1597, this was a turning point which led to the end of the war in 1598. However, not long after the Imjin Waeran, the new power in China known as the Qing dynasty invaded Chosun from Manchuria in 1627 and in 1636. Chosun could not defeat them outright, and as a result, Chosun suffered from continuous interference by the Qing dynasty.

After the initial resistance against the Qing, there was a movement in society to adopt more Qing culture in 18th century Chosun. At the beginning, there was a level of resistance to the Qing, who were originally from Manchuria and thus considered ‘barbarians’ compared to the preceding Ming dynasty of China. People’s perspectives gradually widened as they moved away from the dominant neo-Confucian ideology. With the new views and perspectives in society that were being imported from the Qing came an increasing demand for revolution and reform. As a result, for example, ‘Donghak’ was established as a new religion in Chosun in 1860. Donghak literally means Eastern Study as a religion, which was created against the ‘West’; however, it embraces much more than this. It included religious philosophy of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and folk belief. Catholicism was also introduced. However, both religions were suppressed by the government.

The fear of opening doors to new cultures and systems continued. Chosun did not welcome the American vessel ‘General Sherman’ and defeated a French armada which attempted to land in Chosun in 1866. Another invasion by the United States (US) followed in 1871. This negative sentiment against foreigners was largely caused by the previous experience of endless invasions throughout the history of the Korean Peninsula by nomadic tribes,

Mongols, Chinese, Manchus, and Japanese, and now the situation worsened due to the Western invaders, who called Korea the ‘Hermit Kingdom’ in the 19th century (Seth, 2011). However, Chosun eventually had to sign the unfair Ganghwa Treaty with Japan in 1876 which opened trade relations after it failed to defeat the Japanese invasions of 1875 and 1876.

With the 1876 Ganghwa Treaty, the imperialism of the late 19th century made its way to the Korean Peninsula. A diplomatic relations agreement was signed with the US in 1882. However, a series of resistance to imperial western powers led to the ‘Donghak Uprising’ in 1894. The Donghak Uprising was a grassroots revolutionary movement for reform against social discrimination and foreign dominance in Chosun. The origin of both independence movement during Japanese colonial period and the civil society movement, including labour movement, during democratisation in modern South Korea can be found in Donghak movement. Following Donghak Uprising, Chinese troops intervened to stop the rebellion and the Japanese forcefully occupied the royal palace in Seoul with the stated intention of halting further Chinese military expansion in the Peninsula and towards Japan. Soon after, Japan declared war against China in the Peninsula, and when the China-Japan War ended with Japanese victory in 1895, Japan began to impose its power across the East Asian region. Against increasing control by Japan, there was a group of people in the government who intentionally sought an alliance with Russia, which was the only threat to Japan at the time. However, after Japanese soldiers assassinated Queen Min in 1895 (also known as Empress Myeongseong), who was the last Queen of the Chosun dynasty in the Korean Peninsula and who maintained Chosun’s alliance with Russia, Japanese power over the Korean Peninsula grew.

In the meantime, Chosun had an independence movement against Chinese influence in the Peninsula, after resolving existing internal politics between King Gojong (husband of Queen Min, and also known as Emperor Gwangmu) and his father, Heungseon Daewongun. As a part of its independence movement, in 1896, the Independence Club and the Independent Newspaper were established. The following year, King Gojong announced a new country, ‘Daehan Jaeguk’ (the Great Empire of Han) and proclaimed himself its Emperor, in order to maintain his sovereignty at the same level with the other surrounding imperial empires of Russia, Japan, and China. The modern name of Korea in Korean, ‘Han Guk’ originated from Daehan Jaeguk (‘Han’ from Daehan, and ‘Guk’ from Jaeguk). The efforts to transition to a more modern society bore fruit, and infrastructure such as telegraph lines, street cars, railroads, and electricity lines were implemented in Daehan Jaeguk in the years following 1896. For instance, the railway was funded by the American and Japanese imperial powers. However,

when the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904, the momentum for Korea to become an independent modern sovereign nation-state was eclipsed.

As a result of the Russo-Japanese War, the influence of Japan over the Peninsula grew stronger. For example, in 1904, Daehan Jaeguk and Japan signed an agreement which allowed the Japanese to intervene in the government of Daehan Jaeguk. When the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed, allowing Japanese supremacy in the Korean Peninsula. Against this, a team of secret Korean emissaries visited the Hague, in the Netherlands, for the World Peace Conference in 1907, but their mission was unsuccessful and King Gojong was forced to abdicate, signing a treaty which handed over government power to Japan. The Japanese protectorate period, which began in 1905, resulted in the formal colonisation of Korea, which officially began on 29 August 1910 and lasted until 15 August 1945.

The Japanese colonial period in Korea can be divided into three stages: military rule (1910 – 1919); cultural government (1919 – 1931); and economic exploitation (1931 – 1945). During the first period, Japanese established a police state in the Korean Peninsula, prohibited Koreans from forming any political, social, and business activities and promoted rice cultivation for export to Japan. Its second colonial phase began when the March First Movement for the Declaration of Independence occurred in 1919, which was led by students and later spread to the wider public. Japan initially repressed the movement with mass arrests and executions; however, it later changed this policy to so-called ‘cultural government’ which allowed limited freedom of speech and business activities. The final stage of Japanese colonialism began with the Manchuria Incident in 1931. During this period, Japan introduced a modern social and economic system into Korean society; however, this was received negatively due to the military conscription, forced labour, forced comfort women (sex slavery), and forced assimilation to Japan that came with it. On top of this, heavy industrialisation and economic exploitation was carried out by the Japanese in their efforts against the US during the Second World War. Korea became fully independent from the 15-year Japanese colonisation only when Japan lost the War in 1945.

Population structure

Koreans are known to be ethnically homogeneous. Even today, the Korean Peninsula does not have any significant ethnic or linguistic minorities (Seth, 2011). The population in South Korea is about 51.2 million, while around 25.6 million people live in North Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2019b). However, since Korea was divided, the pattern of population composition

tends to show different trends between North and South Korea. South Korea has seen a growing section of the population who have married people of other nationalities due to its open market system, while North Korea remains a Hermit Kingdom. Out of the 51 million people in South Korea, about 49.9 million people are native Koreans whereas about 1.6 million are from overseas. Among the 50 million native South Koreans, females slightly outnumber males (Statistics Korea, 2019).

In South Korea, especially in rural areas, the young female population left for the cities and the remaining male members of the community have had difficulties finding eligible partners. Due to this, Korean men increasingly marry immigrants from other countries such as China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan. According to the national statistics in South Korea, about 16 thousand male South Koreans are married to foreign women, while about four thousand female South Koreans are married to foreign men, as of 2018, which is the most recently available data (Statistics Korea, 2019b).

For those from overseas, the majority are from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, the US, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Among the 1.6 million foreigners living in South Korea, 90 thousand people (six percent) were from other countries not stated above. The highest population of foreigners are from China (45 percent), and slightly less than two thirds can trace their ethnic origins to Korea. They are called Korea-originated Chinese in Korea. People from Vietnam (ten percent) and Thailand (nine percent) are the next largest foreigner groups in South Korea. The rest of the population from other countries is about one to four percent each (Statistics Korea, 2019b).

As well as its population of foreign origin, a certain percentage of the population of South Korea has defected from North Korea. The government of South Korea has published an official record of North Korean defectors in South Korea since 1998. In 1998, a total of 947 defectors came to South Korea, while 1,137 North Koreans defected to South Korea in 2018. The trend in North Korean defections began to steadily increase from 2005, and in 2009 the highest number of defectors to South Korea was recorded at 2,914. Before 1989, female North Korean defectors were only seven percent of the total, but since 2002, more female North Koreans have defected than males. More recent statistics show that more than 70 percent of North Korean defectors to South Korea are female. As of 2019, it is known that more than 30 thousand North Korean defectors live in South Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2019a & 2019c).

In terms of demographics, South Korea is fast approaching an ageing society. According to the United Nations (UN), South Korea shows the largest increase in the share of older people

aged 65 and over (UN, 2019a: 7). The ratio of population aged 65 or over in South Korea in 2019 is 15 percent whereas it is nine percent in North Korea. In comparison, the forecast fertility rate between 2015 and 2020 stands at 1.1 percent in South Korea, and is slightly higher in North Korea at 1.9 percent. Under five infant mortality is at three percent in South Korea while it has reached 18 percent in North Korea (UN, 2019b: 17).

Economic structure

Korea in the 1950s was suffering from the aftermath of the Korean War. Since that time, while North Korea has remained one of the world's poorest countries, South Korea has achieved enormous economic development. In the 1960s, the GDP in South Korea was USD 2.0, compared to USD 1.2 in North Korea. In the 2010s, the difference grew starker, with GDP at USD 1,014.3 in South Korea and USD 12.3 in North Korea (Eichengreen et al., 2015: 261). GDP per capita stood at USD 39,400 in South Korea (47th out of 229 countries) in 2017 and USD 1,700 in North Korea (215th) in 2015 (CIA, 2018).

At first, it was North Korea that seemed to achieve rapid economic growth during the 1950s and early 1960s, thanks to development aid from Russia and its existing industrial infrastructure left over from the period of Japanese rule. However, when the Sino-Soviet split took place in the 1960s, North Korea lost the support of Russia and Chinese support was not enough to fuel significant economic growth. For example, in the 1950s, Russian aid to North Korea made up 33 percent of its national revenues (Ku, 2018a: 131). The resulting economic stagnation has never reversed, especially with the floods and famine in the 1990s, and the current economic situation in North Korea continues to be poor. Various existing sources, including the UN, clearly show a pattern of low GDP in North Korea.

However, the structure of the economy in North Korea has undergone significant changes beginning from the late 1990s. Due to the floods and famine of the 1990s, the government of North Korea was no longer able to provide rations, and thus a survival system was created at the grassroots level as a form of grey market (referred to as 'Jangmadang' in Korean in North Korea) and with rich private entrepreneurs (called 'Donju' in Korean in North Korea). The number of private entrepreneurs has rapidly increased, which led to marketisation by the people. Currently, the economic system in North Korea is based on a coexistence system between a centrally planned economy and marketisation. Even though marketisation has not massively contributed to the *de facto* economic growth, it has become a significant social phenomenon (Ku, 2018a; Smith, 2015).

The case of South Korea is widely known as an economic miracle – the Miracle of the Han River. South Korea is one of the four Asian tigers, along with Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, which achieved rapid industrialisation as a developmental state. South Korea is one of the very few countries which transformed from fragile states to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor members. According to the OECD, South Korea is now the 11th largest economy and 6th largest exporter in the world (Gurría, 2016). Finally, South Korea has been a good example of one of the rare cases to overcome the middle-income trap.

In the 1950s, South Korea's per capita income was about USD 67 (Ku, 2018b: 71). In the 1960s, GDP in South Korea was USD 158, and it increased to USD 31,363 in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). During its early period of industrialisation in the 1950s, the government of South Korea pursued an import substitution policy because it did not have enough capital, skills, and natural resources. During this period, South Korea was heavily dependent on the US and the UN's grant aid schemes. In the 1960s, the government of South Korea introduced the export-oriented light industrialisation policy based on its first five-year economic development plan. The shift from agriculture to manufacturing was achieved. South Korea was able to gain both financial support (loan aid) and technical assistance (grant aid) from the World Bank. The role of government in economic development was enhanced during this period.

The export-led industrialisation continued in the 1970s but changed from light to heavy and chemical industry. The Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement) in rural areas was also introduced in order to reduce the urban-rural income gap. The Saemaul Undong had three main pillars: diligence; self-help; and cooperation in the community. Each village received government support, such as cement, so that they could develop their community based on their own development plan. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, research and development (R&D) was emphasised based on a high level of human resources development driven by the education fever in South Korea. The government-business link which began in the 1940s continued during this rapid economic development process. The conglomerate business groups in Korea, known as 'Chaebols', contributed to the earlier stage of Korean economic development based on strong government support.

South Korea continued its economic growth in the 1980s with some minor fluctuations, but with much focus on information technology (IT) development and on industrial rationalisation (less government-led industrialisation). Also, when the decision was made by the Olympic Committee to hold the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, it also positively contributed to the economic development pathway. South Korea successfully held the Asian

Games in 1986 and the Olympic Games in 1988, and it saw this as a turning point to go global. For example, the travel ban was lifted, and since 1988, the number of South Koreans travelling overseas has continually increased (Seth, 2011).

Based on its economic achievement, South Korea joined the OECD in December 1996. However, South Korea's economy was badly influenced by the Asian Financial Crisis shortly after this in 1997. Even though it overcame the middle-income trap in the late 1990s, its rapid economic growth began to slow down, and the industry now turned towards high-tech. During the 1990s, some of the public sectors were privatised, along with the institution of a 'real name' financial policy. The Chaebol Specialisation Reform was also conducted in order to limit unnecessary expansion. However, this did not work out substantially, and when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) landed in South Korea over the Asia Financial Crisis, it requested the country rein in the overexpansion of business, the number of subsidiaries of the major Chaebols, and the duplication of investment.

The reform after the Asian Financial Crisis was not an easy option for South Korea's economy at all. The unemployment rate dramatically increased from two to eight percent (Seth, 2011: 469), and many family breadwinners lost their jobs. Increasing numbers of homeless people were observed on the streets. However, the restructuring achieved another round of rapid recovery by overcoming the middle-income trap and South Korea became a member of the OECD DAC in 2010 by paying off its emergency IMF loans.

The main factors accounting for successful economic development in South Korea constitute five pillars. With limited resources, a war-torn country conducted export-oriented industrialisation, starting with light industry such as textiles and later shifting to heavy and chemical industry. It had a strong leadership as a developmental state. Chaebols played an important role as success-motivated business owners although the strong and imbalanced nexus between government and chaebols has become problematic in contemporary Korean society. The country also utilised official development assistance (ODA) as a driving force during the take-off stage of its economic modernisation. Lastly, the emphasis on education and human resource development worked efficiently during the earlier stages of industrialisation (Lim, 2016).

Current political development

Before World War II ended in 1945, Russia entered the Korean Peninsula as part of its offensive against Japan. When Japan surrendered, the US arrived in the Peninsula to balance out the Russian troops in the region. As a result, both sides agreed to divide the Peninsula into

two countries at the 38th parallel. In North Korea, Kim Il Sung, leader of the Manchurian guerrilla during the Japanese colonialisation period, became leader, while in the South the interim leader was Rhee Syngman, who studied and lived in the US. In 1948, Rhee Syngman held national presidential elections with US support and became the very first president of the ‘Republic of Korea’, while in the North, Kim Il Sung proclaimed the ‘Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’ and made himself chairman of the National People’s Assembly. Ironically, North Korea’s ideology was not established based on ‘democracy’, but communism, while South Korea eventually became a democratic state after some experience of dictatorship.

In 1949, both US and Soviet troops left the Peninsula, but the legacy of the Cold War remained, with a clear dichotomy of ideological and geographical division. On 25 June 1950, the Korean War broke out when the North invaded the South. At the beginning of the War, the Soviet Union begrudgingly backed North Korea, while the US and its allies supported South Korea throughout the War. More Chinese forces joined the Korean War supporting North Korea, and eventually, the US, the UN Command (UNC), North Korea, and China agreed on the Armistice Agreement in 1953, while President Rhee Syngman of South Korea did not sign the agreement, refusing to accept any division of Korea. Technically, both Koreas are still at war as of 2019. Accordingly, both Koreas have taken different routes in their political development, and this section will focus on the democratisation progress in South Korea.

Since the establishment of the ‘Republic of Korea’ in 1948, South Korea has had 12 presidents in its 70 years of modern political history. During the period from the end of the Korean War until 1987, the country suffered under authoritarian governments, with massive public protests, and we have witnessed the development of democracy in South Korea since 1987 to present. Even though South Korea was established with a US-like constitutional system, its modern political system began from dictatorship as it did not have a concrete tradition of democracy.

Rhee Syngman oppressed the people of South Korea under his authoritarian regime (the First Republic). By instituting the National Security Law in 1949, it became easier for him to manipulate the system. For instance, he abused his power against his political opponents by accusing leading opponents of violating the National Security Law. He managed to win three terms in total; however, when he attempted another election to continue his power in 1960, students took to the streets in pro-democracy demonstrations against the corrupt government, known as the ‘4-19 Revolution’, which resulted in Rhee’s retirement. Arguably, the student-led protests in the 1960s was resulted from increased levels of education in the country after the Korean War (Seth, 2011). The success in expelling the corrupt authoritarian president was

based on the sacrifice of more than 100 students who were killed and hundreds of citizens who were wounded by the armed force.

When Rhee retired and fled to Hawaii, Yun Po Sun was elected as the liberal president in 1960 (the Second Republic). However, this was not by a popular election but through a newly adopted system wherein the National Assembly chose the president. In this way, more power was given to the prime minister rather than the president. However, neither Prime Minister Chang Myon nor President Yun Po Sun could maintain their control for long. With the increasing concerns about leftist movements among workers, students, and teachers, as well as the potential weakness of the country in the case of another invasion by North Korea, a military coup seized power in 1961 and dissolved the National Assembly. Martial law was introduced, and a curfew was imposed. The Supreme Council for National Reconstruction (SCNR) was created by the military rule, and President Yun and Prime Minister Chang resigned in 1962. Led by General Park Chung Hee, the SCNR restricted all kinds of political activities in the country and began to arrest anyone who was suspected of being a communist. The 30-year period of military rule began. Ironically, South Korea experienced its greatest achievement of economic development under Park's regime, while democracy was under threat.

However, due to US pressure, Park announced the restoration of civilian rule by 1963 and retired from the military in order to stand in the presidential election. The ban on political activity was also lifted. Using the strong institutional tool of Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) led by Kim Jong Pil, Park Chung Hee won his first presidential election in 1963 (the Third Republic). After he was elected for the third time in 1971, Park announced a state of emergency and declared martial law, suspending the constitution and the National Assembly, and banning political activities again in 1972. He named his new dictatorship government 'Yushin', which means 'revitalising' in Korean. The Fourth Republic was known as the Yushin Era. Based on several reform measures, the power of the president became its strongest ever, and he was not elected by the people but by the National Council for Unification (NCU), of which he was the head. Free speech and criticism of the president were prohibited. Any suspects were arrested by the KCIA, tortured and forced to confess. Koreans living abroad were abducted or murdered. His strongest political opponent, Kim Dae Jung, who later became the 8th president of South Korea, was kidnapped from his hotel room in Japan and was almost thrown into the sea. Kim was saved by a warning from the US at the last minute.

However, his administration weakened as more labour movements and protests took place in the late 1970s. Eventually in 1979, when Park announced martial law would be re-imposed in the area of Masan and Busan in response to another uprising by students and

workers, including military action against the protestors, he was assassinated by the new head of the KCIA, Kim Chae Kyu. After his death, Prime Minister Choi Kyu Hah was elected as president by the NCU under the Yushin constitution. The period after the Yushin era was called the ‘Seoul Spring’. For example, Choi released hundreds of political prisoners, including Kim Dae Jung under the Seoul Spring period. However, Choi’s political openness did not last long.

On 12 December 1979 (known as the ‘12-12 Incident’), General Chun Doo Hwan took control of the military and illegally occupied the government, including KCIA, through violence in 1980. In comparison, Park Chung Hee’s military coup in 1961 was bloodless. Students protested, and Chun proclaimed martial law, closing universities and prohibiting political and labour union activities. Kim Dae Jung was also arrested, and thus civilians in Gwangju, where Kim Dae Jung’s hometown is located, held massive protests. The military intervened and thousands of people were killed on the streets (known as the ‘Gwangju Incident’ or the ‘5-18 Democracy Movement’). When Choi Kyu Hah resigned, Chun was elected by the NCU (Fifth Republic) in 1980. At the beginning of the Fifth Republic, Chun lifted the curfew in selected areas and eased travel bans. School children no longer needed to wear military style uniforms. People were not obliged to stand to attention when the national anthem was played at 5 PM. Yet, these measures did not mean that the country became truly democratic. The military authoritarian regime (or dictatorship) was still in place, and thus accusations of dissidents continued and press censorship remained.

In the 1980s, although South Korea was still under an authoritarian regime, the power of political opponents gradually increased, and pro-democracy protests by students and political activists continued. In 1987, when Chun announced that the NCU system would be upheld for the new presidential election, another mass public demonstration took place. Chun wanted to have a smooth power transition from himself to his successor, Roh Tae Woo, who played a critical role during his military coup in the 12-12 Incident. However, there was a threat by the international body that the 1988 Olympics venue, for which Seoul had been chosen, could be changed if the mass protests continued. Over ten thousand civilians joined the march in the form of a peaceful protest in Seoul. Eventually, Chun and Roh agreed to introduce a new constitution for the direct presidential elections with a presidency period of only five years (the June Declaration). The year of 1987 has been seen as the turning point for the political transition to democracy in South Korea’s history.

Despite Chun’s lack of popularity, his ally Roh Tae Woo won the presidential election and began his presidential term in 1988. This was not only because many voters desired stability, and thus voted for Roh (the conservative party), but also because other votes were

scattered into smaller fractions by voting for Roh's opponents – the so-called 'three Kims'. Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung were the biggest political opponents for Chun and Roh, and the former military leader Kim Jong Pil also ran in the election. Even though Roh won the election, the three Kims strengthened their position in the National Assembly. Many government branches became independent, including the judiciary, whose independence was abolished by Park Jung Hee. However, the National Security Law was still abused. Students and workers' uprisings continued to take place, and the National Assembly conducted investigations into the corrupt Chun Doo Hwan's regime. In the meantime, Kim Young Sam merged his party with Kim Jong Pil's and won the presidential election in 1992 against Kim Dae Jung. Roh became a lame duck.

Kim Young Sam is the first president in South Korea who was elected by a *de facto* democratic system. At the beginning of his five-year term in 1993, he untied the military-political nexus in the country. Both Chun and Roh were jailed for treason, mutiny, and corruption. Kim disclosed his financial information to the public and conducted financial reform by introducing the 'Real Name' system which prohibited account holders from using false names. In 1995, as a part of his reform process, Kim introduced the local autonomy law, which allowed local elections at provincial, city, county, and local levels for the first time in South Korean history. However, the corruption in the government still existed, and demonstrations by students and organised labour remained. At the same time, the National Security Law was still in effect. Kim Young Sam even deployed the police force against protesters.

In 1997, Kim Dae Jung was elected to the position of president, and there was a shift from a conservative government to liberal/progressive one. The most urgent issue in the country for Kim Dae Jung was the aftermath of the 1997 Financial Crisis. However, Kim's financial and economic policies failed. Not only losing popularity, Kim Dae Jung's control over the National Assembly was weakened because he was from Jeolla Province, whose economic and political influence was lower than other provinces. Kim's Sunshine Policy, which provided economic support to North Korea with a higher level of interaction, and the Summit between the two Koreas, became a disappointment even though he was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000. At the same time, his three sons were accused of financial misconduct. On top of that, the National Security Law was used at a similar level as by his predecessors.

When South Korea held a presidential election in December 2002, the winner was Roh Moo Hyun, an unconventional politician and former human rights lawyer who did not have a

university level degree. This was quite a surprising result for Korea's political history, as Roh did not have a strong political legacy and brought less experience than his opponents. Accordingly, his cabinet consisted of so-called outsiders from the conventional political system, including activists, lawyers, and professors who did not have sufficient political experience. He continued Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy but did not gain much interest from the public. His inexperienced administration faced impeachment by other political parties for the first time in South Korea's democratic history, but Roh managed to create alliances with other parties and retained his majority. However, Roh became a weak president and his popularity waned. Unfortunately, after the end of his term, he committed suicide in 2009 when his family members, including his wife and elder brother, were involved in a corruption scandal.

The unpopularity of Roh had a negative influence on his party successor in the following presidential election. As a result, in December 2007, the opposing party candidate, Lee Myung Bak, won the election. Lee Myung Bak was the first president whose former career was in the business sector. After leaving Hyundai as a member of the executive team, he turned to politics and became Mayor of Seoul. Due to his background, there was a hope that he could bring a high level of economic growth back to South Korea. He established the Green Growth Policy and tried to create new jobs through more construction opportunities with the Four Major Rivers Project. However, he was not successful in boosting the economy. Both the Green Growth Policy and the Four Major Rivers Project ended in disappointment.

The election which Park Geun Hye, daughter of Park Jung Hee, won in December 2012 was influenced by the poor economic performance of South Korea. In other words, there was still hope for economic prosperity with Park Geun Hye based on the legacy of the rapid economic miracle that occurred during her father's presidency. She imposed revised Saemaul Undong in the country, but ended up with little achievement. Due to a massive corruption scandal, she was impeached and jailed in 2017 by the Candlelight Movement.

The Candlelight Movement originated from the candlelight protests for the case of Mirae Life University project and the illicit entrance of Jung Yoo Ra to Ewha Womans University (the names was created with 'Womans', not 'Women's', in order to respect each individual student). The Mirae Life University project turned out to be part of Park's massive scandal with her friend Choi Soon Sil. Jung Yoo Ra's illicit entrance at Ewha Womans University was led by her mother, Choi Soon Sil. The mass protest in July 2016 at Ewha Womans University was the beginning of a series of peaceful protests with candlelight. Although students were attacked by the police authority, they decided to take a peaceful approach. This catalysed the Candlelight Movement and resulted in Park's impeachment. At the same time, it is evaluated

that the 2016 Candlelight Movement embraced the legacy of the 1960s protests in South Korea because it was initiated by students and expanded to the public (for example, Kang, 2017).

The Candlelight Movement gained momentum in late October 2016 and ended in March 2017 with about four million participants in total. It was not organised by certain groups, but by the people themselves. There was a festive atmosphere with different age groups, including infants and primary and secondary level students. It also produced a new protest phenomenon in South Korea. While there was a mass group of people demonstrating their anger against Park Geun Hye's corruption, a smaller group of elderly people came to the streets with Korean flags supporting Park and her father's legacy as part of conservative people's action.

Upon the impeachment of Park in May 2017, Moon Jae In was elected as the new president. While it is too early to judge whether his policies were successful or not, it is a fact that he has put the peace agenda of the Korean Peninsula as the priority of his administration. Starting from the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in 2018, which was conducted by both Koreas in South Korea for the first time since the Korean War, he tried to accelerate the peace process in the Peninsula. As a president whose political background lies in the liberal/progressive party, his policy seemed to follow Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun's Sunshine Policy. However, the progress has not yet been significant. Accordingly, it would be interesting to assess how much progress he has achieved in terms of relations with North Korea. At the same time, it would be another point to examine how differently he contributed to the political democratisation movement in South Korea as a liberal/progressive government leader who once served as a member for the Roh Moo Hyun's cabinet, compared to his predecessors, after his term ends.

South Korea has exhibited a ten-year cycle of presidency between conservative and liberal/progressive parties since the end of the military coup-led presidential period. Conservative presidents Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam ruled between 1988 and 1998, liberal/progressive Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun served as presidents between 1998 and 2008, other conservative politicians, Lee Myung Bak and Park Geun Hye, became presidents during 2008 and 2017, and now a liberal/progressive president, Moon Jae In, has been leading the cabinet since 2017. In this regard, it will be interesting to trace the trend and discover whether the tendency of Korea's ten-year cycle of presidency will continue, how and why.

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