

**TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA:
PROCESS AND PATTERN SINCE 1987**

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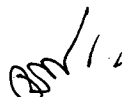
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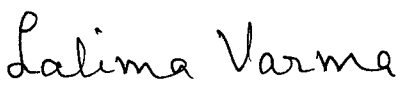
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CERTIFICATE

This Dissertation entitled "**TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN REPUBLIC OF KOREA: PROCESS AND PATTERN SINCE 1987**" by **Mr. Amit Kumar** for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy** is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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I am responsible for any oversimplification and inaccuracies, which may remain.

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AMIT KUMAR

TO MY FAMILY

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CHAPTER - ONE

CHAPTER-I

AUTHORITARIANISM AND STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Historical Background: The Establishment of Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea was proclaimed on 15 August 1948. It was the time for the people of newly founded Republic of Korea, which came to be known as South Korea (hereafter Korea), to start the struggle for building a nation, which would bring economic prosperity and social freedom. The new state faced many social and political problems in the aftermath of liberation from Japanese colonialism that had ended in August 1945. During the traumatic period of Japanese colonial rule from 1910-1945 the maneuver in favour of freedom and democracy were suppressed. The Japanese colonial rule was preceded by about five hundred years of Confucius monarchial order. In such a historical background it seemed difficult to establish a prospering and viable democratic state, as political and social situation were chaotic and complicating in the aftermath of liberation¹. But the process of establishing a Republic on the democratic principles was started with the first general election in the history of Korea which was held on May 10, 1948.² As a result of this election 198 representatives for the

¹ For details of political and social condition during this period, see, Gregory Henderson, "Korea: The Politics of Vortex", (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1968), Han Woo-Keun, Trans. Lee Kyung-Shik, "The History of Korea", (The E.U.L.-Yoo publishing company; Seoul; 1970), pp. 493-509.

² Ki-Baek Lee, Trans. Edward W. Wagner, "A new history of Korea" (Harvard University Press, Cambridge; 1984) p. 378.

National Assembly were chosen, who immediately started the formulation of a constitution, which was promulgated on 17th July, 1948. Subsequently according to the provision of newly promulgated constitution, which proscribed indirect election of president by the National Assembly, in which Syngman Rhee emerged winner.³

The first important factor, which gave rise to the people's expectation for establishment of a democratic government, was the promulgation of constitution on July 17, 1948. The constitution established the framework for democratic rule.⁴ Under the influence of USA, presidential form of government was adopted and the president received broad power under the constitution.⁵ Though there were other checks and balances enshrined in the constitution, restricting president gaining absolute control of the politics and society.

Hopes and aspiration of the people of republic was high as newly formulated and adopted constitution guaranteed various democratic rights, including equality before law, freedom of speech, press and association, equality of the sexes etc. In principle all the important institutions of democratic state had been proclaimed. The relative autonomy of the legislative, executive and judiciary were guaranteed with a view to prevent concentration of power in any one institution. Now

³ ibid, p. 379

⁴ For constitutional provision and its further development, see Sung Chul Yang, "Formal Governmental Structures and Political Process" in "The North and South Korean Political System- A Comparative Analysis. pp. 463-503

⁵ ibid, p.467

what remained to be seen was that how the policy of implementation was going to take shape? In the constitutional and political history of Korea there have been nine constitutional amendments ever since the first proclamation of constitution in 1948. These constitutional amendments were concerned with the power of president.⁶ In most of the cases, except in two (i.e. Ninth and Second of 1987 and 1960 respectively), it intended to increase the power and influence of the president in autocratic manner.⁷ Starting from the first President Syngman Rhee till the fifth President Chun Doo Hwan, all tried to appropriate greater or more power to the office of the presidents and also to perpetuate themselves longer in presidential office. In this process aspiration of political democracy of society was stifled. What is remarkable to note is that with the heightening of authoritarianism in Korea, the struggle for democracy also grew simultaneously. Political conscious people provided adequate responses and reactions, though not always same in their influence and scope, to the all hues of authoritarian mechanism of state, which evolved in the ensuing period.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to trace the history of authoritarianism which ensued from the five republics and also the responses and reactions of polity and society which struggled for the restoration of democracy and its consolidation in the country.

⁶ T.S. Chandrasheker, "Political Transformation in South Korea since 1992" Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation (Centre for East Asian Studies, SIS, JNU 1996) p. 2

⁷ *ibid*, pp. 2-4

The First Republic 1948-1960: The Growth of Autocratic Rule

From the beginning of establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, there was not much political cohesion among different political factions. It was also reflected in the internal strife in the cabinet of President Rhee. The rift between president and his cabinet obstructed the smooth functioning of government and National Assembly.⁸ The widening rift in legislative body provided an opportunity to Rhee as he was unable to receive support for his activities from National Assembly. On the other hand social unrest in some areas in the country provided him another opportunity to use power in the authoritative way. In the wake of the Yosu-Sunchan rebellion, which had started from an army regiment in Yosu in South Cholla province, a Press Council Law and the National Security Law of December 1948 was promulgated. Henderson provides the data that "Between October 1948 and April 1949, some 89,710 persons were arrested, politics of repression gained momentum. Between September 1948 and May 1949 the government closed seven newspapers and one news agency."⁹

All these measures were being taken in the name of fighting communist threat and social instability. These attempts of president Rhee of imposition of the strong-arm tactics on society were criticized by opposition as autocratic and repressive. Political parties expressed their

⁸ Andrew C Nahm, "History of Korean People: Korea Tradition Transformation", (Seoul, Hollym, 1988) pp. 423-424.

⁹ Gregory Henderson, n.1, pp. 162-163.

discontentment for such behavior as the opposition parties could feel the increasing authoritative character of president Rhee. On the eve of National Assembly election in 1950, the opposition parties felt the urge of some changes in constitutional framework so that presidential power be curtailed and cabinet be made responsible to the National Assembly.¹⁰ Opposition Democratic National Party (DNP) brought a proposal for making president only a ceremonial head of the state. It was a direct challenge to the president Rhee's aspiration of governing the nation with the iron hand. This proposal made him more determined to increase his control and subsequently with his expert maneuvering, it was defeated in National Assembly.

The war in Korea and the Armistice of July 1953 provided president Rhee another opportunity for gaining autocratic power. More dictatorial power was bestowed on him during the war years; it remained even after the war though.¹¹ President Rhee in an attempt to gain more power and to increase the chance of his re-election amended the constitution first on July 5, 1952 as the second presidential election was approaching.¹² The defeat in 1950s National Assembly election had further weakened his strength in the National Assembly. Due to this situation, chances of his re-election was not at all in his favour, as

¹⁰ Young-Ho Lee, "The Politics of Democratic Experiment" in W.R. Wright ed. "Korean Politics in Transition", (University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1975) pp. 13-43.

¹¹ Eun Sung Chun, "Transition to Democracy in South Korea", Asian Profile Vol. 17 No. 1, 1989 pp.25-28.

¹² Young Ho-Lee, n. 1 p. 21-22.

president had to be elected by two-thirds of majority of National Assembly. Realising that it would be difficult, if not impossible to be re-elected by National Assembly, Liberal Party, which he had floated in December 1951, proposed a constitutional amendment to institutionalize the system of electing the president and vice-president by direct popular vote. This proposal was defeated initially but while arresting all his opponents Rhee got it passed on 5 July 1952.¹³ The way in which the Liberal Party carried out the process of amendment, writes Eun Sung Chun, "the constitutional amendment alienated the people and aroused their feeling against the government". At the same time, government financial reform also put the people in difficult situation, as with the rapidly increasing inflation, prices were going up.¹⁴ With the increasing severity in economic life, people had become militant for their demand. Finding no other way in controlling social instability as it developed in the form of militant protest and demonstration Rhee started the politics of intimidation.

On the other hand the supporters of President Rhee having ensured his re-election for second time through dubious means, it was not surprising that they began another exercise before long to extend the consecutive term of the president from two to three. The exercise, thus begun during the third national assembly election in 1954.

¹³ Eun Sung Chun, n. 1 pp. 25-28.

¹⁴ Andrew C. Nahm, n. 1 p. 429.

As Bong Gi Kim puts it, "The Liberal Party advocated the Constitutional Amendment under the plea that the constitution be purified in the direction of presidential system by means of wiping out some confusing element contained in the excerpt Constitutional Amendment in which Presidential system was mixed with the cabinet responsibility system".¹⁵

The Liberal Party was quick in starting the campaign for the constitutional amendment. On September 6, 1954 Liberal Party announced the proposal of 2nd constitutional amendment demanding the removal of two-term restriction on presidential tenure and abolition of the post of the Premier. As there was not much support for the president, the proposal was defeated by margin of just one vote in the National Assembly.¹⁶ The very next day, Liberal Party surprised the country while announcing the proposal passed, as according to the Sasooip (rounding of the fractional vote), it was announced that proposal had got the required number of votes. In this way, Rhee cleared the way for contesting for the third time for presidency in a highhanded manner.¹⁷ This move of the ruling party further alienated the people, discontentment and contempt for the government increased. In spite of the people's anger and alienation for the president, Rhee continued to rule the country authoritatively.

¹⁵ Bong Gi Kim, "Political Development in Modern Korea (After Liberation)" (Seoul; The Korean Information Service, Inc.1980) pp. 21-22.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.23.

For third presidential election in 1956 there were three political parties in the race. The leader of one of the two opposition parties Shin Ik-Hui (Democratic Nationalist Party) whose chances of victory was much stronger, died during the campaign period making it easy for the re-election of Syngman Rhee. Rhee was able to grab power once again but the 1956 election clearly showed the antagonism of the people toward Rhee and his party. Whereas Rhee received 72 per cent of the votes in 1952, he got only 56 per cent of the votes in 1956¹⁸.

Though Rhee was able to maneuver majority of votes in his favor, winning the election for the third time consequently, political groups and people in general had become more alienated. That's why during the third National Assembly election in 1958, Liberal Party received five less seats than it had in previous assembly. On the other hand opposition Democratic Party had increased its number of seats from 47 to 49. The number of independent candidates was 28 and the opposition party together with independents was in a formidable position to block the bill proposed by Liberal Party.¹⁹ The condition was favorable for the opposition parties, as unitedly they were in position to obstruct the autocratic functioning of president.

However, Rhee regime became increasingly repressive, and civil liberties were more frequently violated. Looking forward to 1960 election,

¹⁷ Andrew C. Nahm. n. 2, p. 433.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 433

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 434.

the Liberal Party set out to crush the opponents, and it introduced on November 18, a new National Security Law with the sole motive of fighting communist propaganda.²⁰ Opposition lawmakers occupied the National Assembly hall to prevent the passage of revision to the National Security Law, which was alleged to be designed to suppress the press and to silence all criticism against the administration and Liberal party. These oppositions were met with coercive use of power by Rhee government and this bill was passed while locking the opposition leaders in the basement of the Assembly Hall on the voting day.²¹

During the fourth presidential election in March 1960, a wave of protest and demonstration started. In the view of increasing repressive tactics of government, political class and democracy aspiring intellectuals and students were against the adoption of illegal and wrongful methods adopted by the ruling party. Election was held on 15 March 1960 and with the spread of news of wrongful methods adopted by Liberal Party, protests started throughout the country.²² In almost a month long agitation, Rhee succumbed to the forces of change and on April 19, 1960, he had to announce his retirement. A caretaker government was formed on April 28, with Ho Chang as acting president.²³ This brought an end to the first republic.

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 434.

²¹ *ibid*, p. 434.

²² Eun Sung Chung, n. 2, p. 27.

²³ Young Ho-Lee, n. 3, p. 24.

In the interim government period, a major amendment of the constitution was brought about and it appeared that the search for democracy was gaining ground in Korea once again. It was third attempt at amending the constitution since its adoption by National Assembly in 1948. Whereas last two amendments were done for the purpose of increasing authority and duration of president, this amendment tried to make the state more responsible and democratic. It has advocated the idea of democracy under the strong parliament system. The National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment establishing a cabinet system to prevent dictatorship and to regain its own prerogatives.²⁴ The form of National Assembly was made bi-cameral with the creation of 58-member upper house called House of Councilors. This amendment had reduced the power of president and he was just made figurehead of the state. Restriction was also imposed on the term of presidency for one term. Now president had to be elected by National Assembly. In this amendment, post of prime minister was assigned an important responsibility, as the head of executive branch and responsible to the National Assembly.

Amidst such major changes, in next election, Chang Myon and Yun Po-Son won the premiership and presidency respectively with heavy majority. With the inauguration of the new government it appeared that

²⁴ Robert E. Bedeski, "The Transformation of South Korea", Routledge, London, 1994, p. 22.

Korea was moving towards democracy. Though in reality what came out was a short-lived experiment, which could not be sustained for longer.

The Second Republic (1960-61): Failure of the Democratic Experiment

Even as the Chang government was trying to stabilize the political situation and ensure an era of constitutional and democratic government with clear mandate of people, social and political situation remained very volatile.²⁵ Freedom and rights, which were provided by the new constitution, were being abused by groups of power seekers and social instability and economic condition deteriorated.

It was a time when it needed a strong and decisive leadership, both the President Yun and Prime Minister Chang proved weak in controlling the situation. With the increase in rivalry among different political factions for capturing power, government kept moving awkwardly, unable to control in the deterioration of the political situation. Moreover, Henderson writes, "police overthrown, social condition bore resemblance of the chaos of 1945-46. Social insecurity increased in the wake of the flourishing of various kinds of unsocial gangs, extortionists, black marketers, gangsters and hoodlums."²⁶ In this situation what infuriated people more was the worsening economic condition. The exchange rate between the Korean currency [the Hwan] to US dollar changed from 650

²⁵ T.S. Chandrasheker, n. 3, p. 8.

²⁶ Gregory Henderson, n. 2, p. 179.

to 1 to 1300 to 1 in 1960. The employment rate grew from 24 per cent in the September of 1960 to 26 per cent in the early 1961.²⁷ With each passing day, social and political situation were worsening and becoming more and more volatile. The protest and demonstration were getting intensified. Between March and April 1961, writes Andrew C. Nahm, "around 74,000 teachers, students and workers of leftist organization demonstrated in many important cities alleging the government for inactivity and senselessness". Political situation worsened due to the split of ruling Democratic Party into three separate parties. It lost the majority position in National Assembly, which increased the incapacity of the government. People's apathy and indifference towards government was becoming harsh by each passing day. By now military had also become restless and in May 1961, a group of military officers carried out a coup and overthrew the democratically elected government and that way came the end of 2nd republic.²⁸

The Third Republic (1963-72): The Establishment of Military Regime

On May 16, 1961, a coup led by Major General Park Chung-Hee deposed the Democratic Party government and established the military junta.²⁹ The establishment of the military junta was welcomed by most South Korean people initially as the citizens were already disappointed

²⁷ Andrew C. Nahm, n. 3, p. 442.

²⁸ Korea Annual, (Seoul, Yonhap 1998) p. 23.

with the former government, and the young officers promised to save the country from social chaos and restore civilian government by mid-1963. But it was just an early euphoria, what turned out was the establishment of military regime which put control on the many political rights of citizens. Major General Park Chung-Hee amended the constitution to serve his personal goals. The new amended constitution was promulgated in December 26, 1962.³⁰ The constitution increased the power of the president, cabinet's position was lowered and it became only a consultative body for the president. This constitution took back the power of prime minister again as it remained only a ceremonial post. An additional post of deputy prime minister was also created. Once again National Assembly was made unicameral. In addition to such institutional changes, President was given authority to mobilize military in name of maintaining public peace and safety.

Having control over the state institutions and banning political activity, Park Chung-Hee made the plan of lingering the military rule for four more years. On March 1963, he announced that he would seek people's approval through a plebiscite. But under the growing external as well as internal pressure, he could not be successful in his attempt and had to lift the ban on political activity and freedom of press.

²⁹ Hak Kyu Shon, "Authoritarianism and Opposition in South Korea", (Routledge, London, 1989) p.19

³⁰ Korea Annual (Seoul, Yunhap, 1998) p. 23.

Park's desire to remain active in politics became evident when he announced on July 27, 1963 that there would be a general election within a year and in the forthcoming election he would also be a candidate.³¹ For the ensuing election, he contested for the post of President as a Democratic Justice party's candidate. The division in the opposition party, enabled Park to win the election although with a narrow margin.³²

With the inauguration of Park's presidency on December 17, 1963, the Third Republic was born and in the following years, an era of military authoritarianism evolved. During this period, authoritarian nature of the state became more pronounced and a system of controlling political and social activity developed.³³ For having full control of the society, authoritarian and repressive institutions such as Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) and other intelligence network were developed. In the face of increasing student demonstrations against Kim-Ohria memorandum, accusing the government of taking a "low posture and humiliating stand" vis-à-vis Japan in August 1964, the National Assembly enacted the Law concerning Press Ethics and Law Concerning the Security of Educational Institutions. The government was able to

³¹ Andrew C. Nahm, n. 4, p. 449.

³² *ibid*, n. 6, p. 449.

³³ Robert E. Bedeski, n. 1, pp. 23-26.

establish a tight control over the campus activities of the students as well as the press.³⁴

On the other hand looking forward to the 1967 presidential election, four opposition parties joined together and formed the New Democratic Party (NDP) in February 1967 with Yu chin-O as its chairman. Both former presidents Yun and O severely criticized the policies of the government. Yun, charging the government was riddled with "corruption, irregularities and dictatorial authoritarianism".³⁵ But they could not defeat Park in the election as President Park won the election with a huge margin. The opposition party demanded the nullification of the election results and called for a new election. Failing in this, members of the National Assembly belonging to the opposition party boycotted the Assembly session. A compromise was finally reached in early 1968 and opposition party returned to the National Assembly.

In face of growing opposition from the political foes, Park had a different plan to diffuse such opposition. The amended constitution did not allow for third term presidency. To change this unfavorable situation that prevented the possibility of his prolonged rule, Park started the process of amending the constitution once again. With the announcement of proposed constitutional amendment, Korean political arena became highly disturbed. Political opposition in the form of mass

³⁴ Andrew C. Nahm, n. 5, p. 450.

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 451.

agitation, started against the move of Park.³⁶ In spite of widespread and violent protest by political parties, Park got the approval from the National Referendum held on October 17, 1969. However only 67.5 per cent of 15 million eligible voters had turned out in the referendum.³⁷ The low turn out of voters was indicative of the fact that growing authoritative tactics of Park Chung-Hee government had alienated the people.

It shows that by this time anti-government sentiment among student, political parties and general public had grown immensely and they were becoming cynical and disillusioned towards the government. This was reflected in the result of the 7th presidential election, which was held on April 27, 1971 when 56 percent of urban voters cast their ballots in favor of the opposition party leader Kim Dae Jung, who was narrowly defeated by Park Chung Hee. In the 8th national Assembly election which was held on May 25, 1971 the ruling party suffered a setback as it won only 113 seats while the major opposition New Democratic Party 89 seats, well over one-third of the 204 seats and became large enough to block the process of any constitutional amendments proposed by the ruling party.³⁸

The Fourth Republic: The Heightening of Authoritarianism

After getting elected for third consecutive term in 1969, Park Chung-Hee's ambition to remain in authoritative position in continuation

³⁶ T.S. Chandrasheker n. 2, pp. 10-11.

³⁷ Andrew C. Nahm, n. 6, p. 453.

³⁸ *ibid*, pp. 456-457.

for unlimited period grew more. Now his efforts were to make presidential power more autocratic. He not only wanted to enhance the power of president but also tried to change the pattern of electing president from direct to indirect way. This happened in rapidly deteriorating international as well as internal situation. The improving relationship between USA and China was considered not good from security point of view. Coupled with this, growing anti-government activities of the opposition parties and students on the domestic level, led president to take an extra ordinary step in strengthening his power. Claiming that North Korea's threat to Republic of Korea was vastly increased, on December 6, 1971 he proclaimed a National Emergency Decree in order to strengthen the national defense.³⁹ His action further curtailed human rights and freedom of press. A storm of opposition against NDP to nullify the action taken by the ruling party and to restore parliamentary rule failed.

In a "Coup-De-Grace", the government proclaimed nation wide Martial Law on October 17, 1972, dissolved the National Assembly and suspended the constitution in order to pave the way for President Park's continued rule. A new constitution proposed by the Extraordinary State Council on October 17 was put to public referendum and in November it received the approval of 14.4 million voters.⁴⁰ The new constitution, commonly known as Yushin (Revitalising Reform) constitution, gave the

³⁹ ibid, p. 457.

president greatly expanded power. According to Yushin constitution, National Council for Unification, an extra-legislative body other than the National Assembly, would elect the president. The new institution consisted 2000 to 6000 delegates chosen by the Park himself. Article 39(I) stated that the “election of the President by the National Council for Unification was also to be held without political debate”.⁴¹ The president was empowered to dissolve the National Assembly under Article-58. President was constitutionally the National Leader above the three branches, Executive, Legislature and Judiciary.⁴² There were no restrictions on the number of times he could run for the office. Thus this constitution made President Park a virtual dictator.

The separately made Electoral College, National Council for Unification, elected Park with thumping majority in December, 1972 to serve a new six year term. With his inauguration in December the fourth republic emerged.

The increase in the autocratic power of the state, the misuse of power by the ruling Democratic Republican Party and the worsening of the economic conditions caused social turbulence. The voice of students and opposition leaders though heavily suppressed, grew louder which demanded the reversal of the constitution. Amidst heightening of the

⁴⁰ ibid, p. 457.

⁴¹ ibid, p. 457.

⁴² Rebert E Bedeski, n. 3, p. 27.

crisis there was an attempt to assassinate President, though he couldn't be killed, his wife was not that lucky.

With growing pressure and tension in order to legitimize his rule and Yushin constitution Park brought the plan of referendum to decide its fate. He tried to end the debate over his perpetual rule and highly authoritative Yushin constitution through the referendum. With the government machinery in control, it was not very difficult task to get the approval from public through the façade of referendum. In the referendum held in February 1975, Yushin constitution got the approval for its further existence, though opposition still remained in fighting mood.⁴³ They expedited their activities. But once after getting the approval for his autocratic rule, government became more prone to use repressive tactics against the opposition. To fulfill this goal Korean CIA and police were put into action. Any opposition to government was not tolerated. He also tried to stop the talk on constitutional revision and in this regard he brought an emergency degree forbidding any agitation for constitutional revision as anti-government activity.

Amidst such political control of state, National Council for Unification again chose Park to serve for another six years in 1978. It triggered off political protest as it made the president Park rule almost non-ending.⁴⁴ But government adopted repressive tactics again, and opposition was silenced. Students who were becoming more and more

⁴³ Eun Sung Chung, n. 3, p. 27.

involved in opposition of Park rule were arrested and prosecuted. For this purpose, Korean CIA agents were planted at colleges and universities.

In the midst of this tense situation, President Park was shot and killed by Kim Chae-Gyu, director of Korean CIA, on October 26, 1979. The fourth Republic was nearing towards its end as intense struggle for power capture ensued hereafter.

After the assassination of the President, there was a process of political realignment not only in the ruling party but also in the opposition party. Often the process caused political disorder. The disunity among politicians and the lack of unified democratic force provided the military a chance to participate in the politics of transition.

On October 12, 1979, Major General Chun Doo Hwan, the head of the Army Security Command, lead a coup against his superiors and arrested a number of officers.⁴⁵ Even though the new military leaders promised that the primary duty of the military was not to intervene in politics but defending the country, it was evident that these men are going to be important in future course of political event in the country. Of course, the December coup doesn't necessarily mean the birth of another military authoritarian regime. There was still a chance of civilian rule, although it was slimmer.

⁴⁴ ibid, p. 27.

⁴⁵ For the Political Development in Korea during and after the emergence of fifth republic, see Harold C. Hinton, "Korea under New Leadership", (Praeger, New York 1983) pp. 56-65.

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Unfortunately, however, the political situation was not getting better. Choi Kyu-Ha, premier under President Park was elected by the Electoral College, the National Council for Unification, restored opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung's civil-rights in February 1980. Kim Dae-Jung had a number of followers in the opposition groups including the New Democratic Party, the strongest opposition party. Since the NDP was expected to win the forthcoming election, intra-party conflict between the incumbent leaders of NDP and the forces represented by Kim Dae-Jung became more and more intense. Such disruptions of the NDP provided time for Park's followers including General Chun Doo Hwan to regroup and an excuse for the military leaders to intervene in politics.

During the period of political vacuum, students began to demand Martial Law be lifted and the remnants of the Yushin system of the Park's regime be removed. Of course, General Chun's fate under a new civilian regime would have been precarious, so he did not accede to the student's demand. President Choi of the interim government resigned on August 16 and the National Conference of Unification elected Chun Doo Hwan president. The existing National Assembly was dissolved and its functions transferred to the Legislative Council for National Security. In the end a new constitution was approved by 92 percent of the votes in referendum in October and thus Fifth Republic emerged.

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Fifth Republic (1980-87): Transition to Democracy

After three years of hard line approach to any opposition to his regime since it came to power on December 1983, the Chun regime started opening up the political space for the opposition. Through the University Autonomy Measure, the police force stationed in the universities were removed from the campuses and the students and professors, who were expelled for their anti-government activities, were restored at their original position.⁴⁶ Prohibitions of political activities for the opposition politician were removed. These changes were brought while keeping two things in mind. First was the low popularity of the government among masses, which compelled the government to take measures, which could improve the government's image. Secondly government was feeling confident in running the country in both the economic and political terms after three years of experience in administration. Through the enforcement of economic stabilization policy the Chun regime managed to regain economic growth from minus 5.2 percent in 1980 to 11.9 percent in 1983 and also brought down the inflation rate from 28.7 in 1980 to 3.4 percent in 1985.⁴⁷ In political sphere, it was felt that various legal measures introduced to control dissident were operating in satisfactory manner. In other words, after three years of administration, the Chun regime was confident enough

⁴⁶ Sejin Pak, "Two Forces of Democratisation", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 28, n.1, 1998, pp. 48-50

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 51.

about the stability of its rule and was willing to relax its control in order to improve its legitimacy score. Again the image not limited to the national level, for it was known that time that Korea will be hosting the 1988 Olympics in Seoul and Chun understood that he will be inaugurating the opening ceremony and the eyes of the world will be on Korea.

It turned out that the 1983 liberalization measure was a great miscalculation on the part of Chun regime. Activists, who were released from legal restrictions, began to organise within their respective spheres; in the universities, in their political parties or in their work place. Anti-government activities that went underground during the earlier years surfaced and joined hands. The expanding organizational momentum gained by the victory of the opposition party NDP in the parliamentary election in 1985. The opposition agenda supported by the voters was the revision of the existing constitution. This revision was about the change in the system of indirect nomination of president. Naturally the Chun regime was not willing to accept this notion. During this complex situation, Chun issued a declaration on 13th April 1987 postponing the revision of the constitution until after the 1988 Seoul Olympics.⁴⁸ Once again large-scale protest erupted across the country. The calls for constitutional revision grew stronger, led by students and opposition parties. No revision of the constitution meant that his successor would

⁴⁸ Han Sang Joo, "South Korea in 1987", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, n. 1, 1992, pp. 1-13.

be selected under the existing Electoral College system before the end of the year. Chun's move was a surprise attack on opposition. The government had clearly decided to take the offensive and quickly started to prepare for a presidential election using its might to suppress the protest of opposition. On June 10, 1987, the Democratic Justice Party (DJP) nominated Roh Tae Woo, its chairman, as its candidate to succeed Chun as its president. On the same day opposition held a joint rally in Seoul for realizing a new constitution. The rally marked a major turning point. After 10 June, demonstrations were held almost daily continuously day and night.

After few days of civil disorder and political crisis, newly elected chairman of ruling Democratic Justice Party, on June 29 announced dramatic and unexpected concessions to the opposition demands including that the nation's next president be elected through direct elections.⁴⁹ The Declaration specified that there would be in addition to the other liberalising measures such as freedom of press and autonomy for the academic institutions, a peaceful succession of government through direct presidential elections based on the revision of constitution. This ended the political turmoil in South Korea and was a major breakthrough in the history of political transformation of Korea.

Later in the year, the main political parties agreed in basic outline of the new constitution, a settlement that cleared a way for the nation's

first direct election in 16 years. The constitution was endorsed overwhelmingly by South Korean people. In December, Roh won the presidential election over two opposition leaders, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, who were against each other. This was the first peaceful transfer of power in South Korea, a significant step towards Democracy.

The June 29 Declaration had come up in diverse and complex political and social development in Korea of last 40 years. It ended the era of authoritarianism, which had been reigning the country ever since its inception in 1948. Moreover for the last 16 years country was under the control of military and every transfer of power so far was never relatively that peaceful as it was the case now. What is more remarkable about this democratisation process in Korea is that it changed the country in terms of political freedom.

As it is evident from the discussion in the sections above, with the ongoing hard-line politics of the government and later its politics of liberalization there was also activity going on in the oppositional front. The transformation of politics in Korea was the outcome of interplay of ruling block as well as opposition groups. The former group consists of military bureaucracy and business elites. The latter groups are students, opposition party and churches.

⁴⁹ To see the 8- point proposal of Roh Tae Woo see appendix Robert E Bedeski, "The Transformation of South Korea"

By the time, ruling block was loosing its legitimacy and on the other hand opposition group was increasing their movement. The opposition groups frustrated with the Chun's government disregard of the people's aspirations for democratic development as he had declined for the constitutional changes on April 13, mobilized their forces against the Chun government and that so called "June Protest" started. Facing with their problems, the ruling block had to yield and what surfaced was June Declaration. Thus the driving force of South Korea's democratisation can be roughly concluded as the outcome of political dynamics between the ruling elites and opposition groups. The opposition groups demanded democracy and struggled for it. Confronting the challenge, the ruling elites reluctantly or voluntarily conceded.

CHAPTER - TWO

CHAPTER-II

JUNE 1987 DECLARATION AND DISMANTLING OF AUTHORITARIANISM: 1987-97

The inauguration of Roh Tae Woo Government in February 1988 after the 9th constitutional amendment and direct election in December 1987, marked the beginning of Korea's transition to democracy.¹ The December presidential election (13th presidential election) was the first such election in last 40 years of political history of Korea, where ruling-elite while shedding its authoritative control over political system was contesting election with other political parties on the basis of equality. It was the result of struggle for democracy waged by various groups of political society, aspiring democratization of political system. The election signified the challenge posed to erstwhile ruling elite as James Cottan puts it that ruling military had to yield political space for popular participation of citizens "within recognized and agreed parameters" and further he mention that it was an indication of the movement from an authoritarian to a more democratic if not fully democratized form of government.² The other important aspect of this change was that the ruling military elite in position of power and authority were sent back to barracks and their decades of hegemony over politics was seriously undermined.

¹ For the Political Development during 1987 transition period see Sang Joon Kim, "Characteristics Features of Korean Democratization", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall-Winter 1994, pp. 181-196. Han Sung Jin, "South Korea in 1987: The Politics of Democratization", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, January 1988, pp. 52-61.

In the checkered history of Korean democratic movement it was a remarkable achievement in the sense that it opened new avenues for democratization of polity and society. Now it appeared that authoritarian control of state by military had become past as Korea's military rulers accepted the demand of popular election of the president after the prolonged and massive agitation by the opposition political parties and democracy aspiring people. In aroused political sentiment of people, military backlash did not seem possible.

This achievement of democratic forces in Korea becomes noteworthy for the reason that Korean economy under the military regimes recorded unprecedented two-digits growth rate.³ The authoritarian ruler had not any crisis of legitimacy at least as far as economic development was concerned. In this sense democratization process in Korea differs to those Eastern European and Latin American countries which had also gone through the process of democratization. While analyzing the democratization process in these countries many scholars advance the view of economic debacle for such change.⁴ It is true that in some Latin American and Southern European countries deepening of economic crisis facilitated or

² James Cotton, "From Authoritarianism to Democracy in South Korea", *Political Studies* (1989), Vol. XXXVII, p. 244.

³ For economic aspect of Korean Democratization process, see Chung In Moon and Sung-Min Kim, "Democracy and Economic Performance", in Larry Diamond and Byung-Kook Kim (ed.) "Consolidating Democracy in South Korea", (Boulder, London, 2000) pp. 139-172. Chalmers Jhonson, "South Korean Democratization: The Role of Economic Development", *Pacific Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1-10.

⁴ For comparative analysis of Korea's democratization see Samuel Huntington, "The Third Wave: Democratization in Late 20th century", (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Adam Prezowarski, "Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America", (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1991), Scott Mainwaring Guillermo O'Donnell, and J. Samuel Vanezuella, (ed.), "Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The new South

hastened democratic reforms, though in Korea authoritarian system made the way for democratically elected government in the period of economic growth. In 1987, Korea witnessed an intensified phase of widespread agitation, yet it recorded 12 per cent growth for a second year in a row, and the per capita income rose to \$ 2,800, and due to the increase in export, such a high degree of economic growth rate was recorded and it also helped increasing the current account surplus, which was estimated to be \$10 billion for that year.⁵ These data proves that Korea was quite successful economically, though on political front such development was not seen and it remained underdeveloped in terms of institutions that could sustain and strengthen democratic polity. However, the ideal, the hope, the commitment for democratic polity, respect for rule of law, marginalization of military and stiff opposition to all hues of authoritarianism were never abandoned specially by the broader section of intellectuals, liberals and democratic minded political forces.

As shown by the incessant student demonstration starting from late 1960s till the "June Resistance Movement in 1987, seething discontentment of politically deprived class, paved the way for democratic transition. Because economic development induced by industrialization made Korean society more pluralistic and contentious thereby making the continuation of authoritarian rule

Democracies in Comparative Perspective", (South Bend University of Notre Dome Press, 1992).

more difficult.⁶ As Sejin Pak in his article argues that the process of democratization in Korea is expedited through the “forces of democratization from below”. The forces ‘from below mainly included opposition parties, Students, working-class groups, churches etc. Due to the changes in class-structure in post-liberation period through rapid industrialization and economic growth, there were many who felt deprived economically and politically, were now coming together and jointly fighting for their rights. Finally thus the process culminated in “Democratic Declaration” and Roh Tae Woo government was inaugurated on 25 February, 1988.⁷

In the beginning of democratic transition period with Roh’s succession to power, chosen successor of erstwhile president Chun Doo Hwan, there existed some skepticism about the newly made president’s assurance to the electorate that he would usher in ‘a great era of ordinary people’ in view of his military background and also close link with the past.⁸ Moreover at the end of his tenure there was second free, fair and direct presidential election in 1992, which brought the first civilian president in 30 years of military rule. It was another major breakthrough in the process of democratization as Sang Joon Kim says that “it signified the end of the first phase i.e. transition from authoritarianism and the beginning of the 2nd phase

⁵ Hang San Joo, “South Korea in 1987: The Politics of Democratisation,” *Asian Survey*, Vol.21, No.4, Winter 1992.

⁶ Sang Joon Kim, n.1, p. 184.

⁷ Sejin Park, “Two Forces of Democratisation of Korea”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.28, No.1 (1998), pp. 45-71.

⁸ R.R. Krishnan, “Significant Achievement of Roh Presidency”, *Korean News*, Vol.21, No.4, Winter 1992.

i.e. of democratic consolidation". With the advent of the Kim Young Sam's government as a result of December 1992 presidential election, consolidation aspect of democratization got a boost and in the following years there emerged the sign of dismantling of authoritarianism.

Since June 1987, in various sector of Korean society democratic transition and consolidation has been carried out to a degree unimaginable just a few years ago. President Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam conducted legal and institutional reforms to meet the popular wish for democratization and elimination of authoritarianism. This chapter seeks to examine the various features of the two governments, which helped the process of democratic transition and its consolidation in following years.

The Evolution of Democracy

The protest for liberalization and democratization of polity and society, which had began in the mid of Chun Doo Hwan presidency as a result of liberalizing policy initiated by president Chun in the mid of his term, were getting intensified during the last months of his presidency.⁹ The announcement of Roh Tae Woo's candidature in upcoming presidential election on 10th June, 1987 in ruling Democratic Justice Party's national convention, a wave of protest triggered off.¹⁰ These protests were getting more and more intensified

⁹ Sejin Pak, n.2 pp. 50-52.

¹⁰ Bret L. Billet, "An Evolving Democracy or Authoritarian Revisited", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXX, No.3, March 1990., p.309

with every passing day. The choice of Roh Tae Woo, coupled with Chun's announcement on 13th April, 1987 to stop the debate on constitutional reform was viewed by political pundits as an attempt for continuation of authoritarian military rule.¹¹ It was not acceptable to the opposition parties, and with each passing day scale of protest-demonstration increased in its intensity. In wake of mounting surge of political opposition for democratic change, military government had left with the option of repression or surrender.¹² Looking for a way out Chun proposed to the main opposition party (Reunification Democratic Party) leader Kim Young Sam, for dialogue for the negotiation on constitutional reform. Sensing that government position has weakened, as Han Sung Joo have commented that "Kim refused to compromise and demanded the government should agree to an immediate national referendum to choose between a parliamentary system and a presidential system with direct popular vote, as well as the release of all political prisoners and restoration of the civil and political rights of Kim Dae Jung, an another veteran opposition leader".¹³

As the crisis deepened more, pressure by the democratic forces mounted on the ruling elite and finally it yielded to the basic demand of opposition in the form of "Democracy Declaration" by Roh Tae Woo on 29th June, 1987. This was 8-point proposal, which incorporated major demands of opposition parties, "such as freedom of press,

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 309

¹² Hang Sung Joo, n.2, p. 54.

¹³ *ibid.* p. 54.

autonomy for academic institutions, including a peaceful succession of government through a direct presidential election based on the revision of the constitution".¹⁴ The opposition in rare show of approval welcomed Roh's proposal and thus a new era of democratic transition finally began.

Democratic Transition Under Roh Tae Woo Government

The sign of victory of the forces of democratization was evident from the fact that National Assembly had approved a new constitution and the ordinary citizens had ratified its approval in just three months of time after the democracy declaration in June 1987. What was remarkable to note here is that this 9th constitutional amendment had not been done in arbitrary fashion like in the previous military regime it used to be carried out. It was for the first time in 40 years of political history that the new constitution was written on the basis of consensus between ruling and opposition parties.¹⁵ That's why newly amended constitution received the approval of 94% of voting public in the referendum held in October 1987.¹⁶ The constitution upheld the democratic aspiration of people and many liberalizing mechanism were adopted regarding electoral system, freedom of press, executive power vis-à-vis legislative, investigation in administration offices and labor policy. Most remarkable achievement of the constitution was the institutionalization of election of president by direct popular vote. The

¹⁴ Sejin Pak, n.2, p. 51.

¹⁵ Myungsoon Shin, "Democratic Transition and consolidation in Korean Politics", *Korea Observer*, Vol.XXVII, No.2, Summer 1996, p. 167.

new constitution had helped making the National Assembly more effective for the purpose of democratic negotiations.

The parliamentary inspection power by which to inspect and probe the administration was restored after 16 years. Meanwhile, the president's emergency powers were curbed to cover only economy and financial matters. The term of the presidency was reduced from a single seven-year term to a single five-year term. As a guarantee the court's independence from the government, appointment of Chief Justice of the judiciary by the President required the assembly's endorsement.¹⁷ The constitutional amendment was indeed an auspicious reform, which marked the beginning of the democratic transition in Korean politics.

Another example of evolving democracy after the June declaration was the first direct election for president held in December 1987. In this election, candidate of erstwhile ruling party managed to win the election utilizing the opportunity provided through the lack of a single consensual candidate by opposition parties. Both the opposition leader Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung cherished the personal ambition of being president and therefore both decided to contest election. The division of two opposition leader(these opposition leaders had been struggling together for years for cause of

¹⁶ Bret, J. Billet, *ibid*, p.302.

¹⁷ For constitutional and political changes brought after 1987 Declaration see Robert E. Bedeski, "The Transformation of South Korea, Reform and Reconstruction in the Sixth Republic Under Roh Tee Woo 1987-1992", (Routledge, London and New York, 1994), pp. 42-52. Myungsoon Shin, "Political Reform under the Sixth Republic", Myungsoon Shin, Brian L. Evans and Dae Ryun Chang (ed.). "Partners in Changing World: Korea and Canada in the Pacific Rim" (Seoul, The Institute of East and West Studies, Yonsei University Press, 1990). pp. 57-58.

democracy) cleared the way for Roh Tae Woo's easy victory. Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung got 28 per cent and 27 per cent of votes, whereas Roh received 36 per cent of votes.¹⁸ The percentage of votes, together these two leaders received, shows that if the opposition parties had agreed to fight the election jointly and put up a single candidate he would have won. Likewise, the results of 13th president election is also indicative of the fact that majority of voters were with the democratic opposition parties. In this election as opposition parties jointly got 165 seats and Ruling Democratic Justice party got only 125 seats.¹⁹ It was for the first time in the republic's 40 years history that a ruling party has been denied controlling power in National Assembly.²⁰ The big opposition-small ruling party (Yaso-Yadae) configuration of National Assembly set the tone for coming few years, as government received stiff opposition from the National Assembly. The National Assembly had acquired the power and now it could play the important role in the process of democratic transition shedding its reputation of being 'rubber stamp' of executive branch.²¹

This view becomes more conspicuous in the light of campaign initiated in National Assembly by opposition parties for the liquidation of legacies of the Fifth Republic. They made it the first order of business to investigate and expose the wrong doings and scandals of previous regime. The president Roh Tae Woo had personal and political connection with fifth Republic's president Chun Doo Hwan.

¹⁸ Bret, J. Billet, n.2, p. 312.

¹⁹ B.J. Billet, n. 2, p. 302

²⁰ Myungsoon Shin, n. 1, p. 168

This may be the reason why he hesitated taking direct action against Chun. The situation created stalemate between opposition and ruling party in the National Assembly.²² With the increasing demand from National Assembly for rectifying the misdeeds of Chun's regime, Roh and Chun had to find a way out. With the increasing tension in National Assembly, ultimately, Chun had to apologies for his doings and he also returned all his wealth to the state, leaving Seoul to spend time in seclusion in mountainous area.²³

Freedom of Press

During the authoritarian military regime, the media, both print and electronic was controlled by the state. Press had not enough freedom. With the opening of democratization process, policies of controlling media were reformed. Both the 8-point democratization proposal of Roh and new constitution called for the elimination of prior constraints on freedom of the press.²⁴ The Basic Press Act of 1980, which was the effective weapon for controlling press and media, was repealed and replaced by the Act of Registration of periodicals and the Broadcast Act in November 1987.²⁵ Now, opening up of periodicals and magazines became less stringent. Because of the liberal attitude of the government there was wave of opening of new

²¹ ibid, p. 168

²² Robert E. Bedski, "The Transformation of South Korea – Reform and Reconstruction in the Sixth Republic under Roh Tae Woo 1987-1992". (Routledge, London and New York, 1994), p. 37-40.

²³ Young Whan Kihl, "Slow Progress Towards Democracy: South Korea in 1989", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, January 1990, p. 68

²⁴ Bret. J. Billet, n. 3, pp. 303-304.

²⁵ Kyn Ho Youm and Michael B. Salwen, "A Free Press in South Korea: Temporary Phenomenon or Permanent Fixture", (*Asian Survey*, Vol. XXX, No.3, March 1990), pp. 314-315.

newspapers and magazines. Since the enactment of Basic Press Law in mid 1989 there was almost 100 per cent increase in the publication of Newspapers. The number of periodicals registered under the Ministry of Culture and Information (MOCI) had also increased from 1,492 to 3,728, just within a year after the reforms.²⁶

To boost the confidence among press personals and journalists, Roh adopted a liberal view towards media and abolished repressive laws restricting freedom of press. In this regard, Article 104-2, i.e. crime of slander against state was abolished in late 1988.²⁷ In earlier regime this article had been abused for crushing the dissidents voice against the authoritarian state and now its abolition reflected the liberal attitude of government.

The liberalization policy regarding press freedom helped the advancement of democracy in Korea as now voice of previously suppressed section of society could be heard and grievances redressed. Really it was a remarkable action in the process of democratic transition of politics and society.

Labor Reforms

The development model adopted and followed by the military regime for economic growth was not very much favorable for the working class in Korea. Their demands and protests were generally crushed and they were always remained under the stiff control of

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 318.

corporate management and state. As B.K. Kim Hyun have described in his article that there were only “labor administration” not labor policies under Park Chung Hee’s regime. In the name of subverting communist threat, independent labor unions were not allowed to form their own organisation and there existed only pro-government labor unions. With the beginning of democratization process, reforms in labor policy were enacted. These reforms, though they were limited in scope, could start the process of liberalisation on the control of labor politics.

Labor had played active role in the struggle for democracy and it was due to grand alliance of political parties, students and working class, which had pressurized authoritarian ruler for the democratic opening of society.²⁸ After getting success in 1987, labor had got new confidence, and now, number of labor disputes were increasing. With the increase in the number of labor unions from 2,725 to 4,086, the rapidity of labor dispute had also increased.²⁹ During the first six month, since the Democracy Declaration, more than 3000 labor disputes took place.³⁰ These were the sign of tolerance shown by the democratic state where voices of all section of society were, now, heard. Moreover Roh government tried to negotiate the labor problem and brought reforms for ameliorating the working condition and wage earning. For this purpose minimum wage salary were fixed from 3700

²⁷ Byung Kook Kim and Hyun Chinlim, “Labor Against itself: Structural Dilemmas of State Monism”, In Larry Diamond and Byung K. Kim (ed.) “Consolidating Democracy in South Korea” (Lyune Reinner publisher, Boulder, London, 2000), p.333.

²⁸ Myungson Soon n. 3, pp. 109.

²⁹ Bret J. Billet n. 4, p. 305.

to 3900 won depending upon the type of manufacturing industry.³¹ It was an important gain for the working class.

The beginning of democratic era also brought the formation of independent and quasi-independent labor unions, free from the government control. It was only Federation of Korean Trade Union [FKTU a pro-government labor organization] which functioned during the authoritarian regimes. But in the changed political situation, the Federation of Democratic Labor Union[FDLU] was established as an alternative to FKTU. It was alleged that FKTU had always compromised on the labor interest and always stood with government. With the formation of FDLU, worker had new avenues to be organized and stood for their rights. That's why membership to this organization shot up very fast and by December 31, 1988 22 per cent of the South Korean work had joined the labor union, a considerable increase in the unionized worker.³² This situation provided labor groups to bargain in a more organized way and also put pressure on government to deal with such organizations in more democratic way, instead of resorting to the old tactics of repression. With the increasing awareness for their rights and organization capability, suppression of labor activism was not going to be an easy task for the government.

³⁰ ibid, p.306.

³¹ ibid, p. 306.

³² Jung Young Tae, "Labor Movement and Democracy in the Age of Global Neoliberalism: The Case of Korea", *Korea Journal*, (Summer, 2000), pp. 256-257.

Democratic Transformation under Kim Young Sam Government

Since, the first term of presidency after the June Declaration, Korean political system and society in general have shown the tendency of progress towards democratic transformation. Many institutional reforms had taken place to stabilize the achievement gained by the Democratic Declaration. In this scenario, reversal of old style of military control of state seemed a distant probability. The presidency of Roh marked the transition from authoritarian military rule to a democratically elected government, through a mandate given by the election held in free, fair and direct way. Due to the development of democratic consciousness and surge of democratic aspiration, ruling party could not manage to win the majority seats in National Assembly and Yaso-Yadae (big opposition-small government) configuration of National Assembly tied the hands of Roh to function in a autocratic manner. Ruling party under the heavy pressure from opposition parties in National Assembly, were often in stalemate like condition on many legislative agenda.

In early 1990, the government party and two opposition parties merged into the Democratic Liberal Party (DLP)³³. The government claimed that this merger ended the government ineffectiveness due to legislative logjam as a minority party having to deal with these legislative opposition groups which had a combined majority in the National Assembly. In this way ruling party managed to have control

³³ Victor D. Cha, "Politics and Democracy under the Kim Young Sam Government", (*Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXIII, No. 9, September, 1993), p. 850.

over National Assembly and it seemed as Victor D. Cha puts it that democratization went reversal and stagnation while having full control over National Assembly. Nevertheless, Kim Young Sam, the veteran opposition leader who had also joined in the government coalition tried to get the presidential nomination in up-coming presidential election in 1992. Moreover, under the increasing pressure for a non-military ruler, DLP had to nominate Kim Young Sam for December 1992 election.³⁴ The year 1992 proved remarkable turning point in the Korean political history as it had seen the return of a civilian government after 30 years of direct or indirect military rule. It produced a great sense of optimism that South Korea would continue to progress towards political democratization.³⁵ The Kim Young Sam government had more legitimacy than the preceding ones in that he was the first civilian president since 1961 and had also been a long time opposition leader engaged in democratic struggle against successive military regimes. But the way he had come to power while being an ally of the ruling party, put the people in suspicion. In this situation, few people expected that he would be able to mount successful assault on the old regimes power base by transforming the procedures of the government that military authoritarian regimes had established over the past three decades. As soon as he assumed the presidency, however, President Kim Young Sam launched a series of

³⁴ Hong Yung Lee, "A turning point in Democratization: South Korea in 1992", (*Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIII No. 1, Jan, 1999). p. 32.

³⁵ Myungsoon Shrin, n.4, p. 170.

reforms, which have had profound impact on various sections of the Korean society.

Democratic Transformation under Kim Young Sam Government

Realizing his role and responsibility of being first civilian President Kim Young Sam started the process which could first boost confidence in political and social class. First major initiative taken in this regard was the establishment of the primacy of civilian rule.

For this purpose the important task was the elimination of military legacy from politics. As soon as Kim took power, he started removing old military leaders from the high position they had captured for a long time.³⁶ In view of the powerful position and influence these military leader held, it was not going to be an easy task. Since it was among the high priorities set by President as it is put by M. Shin, certain important measures were initiated. President Kim was helped in this move because of an incident which had started haunting the news-media in the early days of his presidency. In April 1993, the wife of a former navy chief Captain grabbed headlines by charging that the wife of a former navy chief refused to refund the requisite bribe of 100 million won after the former's husband had been denied a promotion³⁶. In view of government's desire to end the corruption in armed forces and for cleansing the military from malpractices, investigations and probes were started involving former and incumbent army generals and admirals who had either taken or

³⁶ Chong-Sik Lue and Hyuk-Sang Soh, "The Year of Great Reform", (*Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIV, no.3, Jan.94), pp. 3-4.

³⁶ Myungsoon Shin, n.5, p.171

offered bribes. The sense of insecurity among corrupt army personnel also grew in view of government announcement of the extension of probe in purchase of military equipments. This development has come with the belief that this area of military had many scandalous revelation in past also. Investigations were started and many corrupt generals were booked and arrested on the charge of involvement in corruption. These initiatives became helpful in establishing primacy of civilian rule over military which had ruled the country authoritatively for long and now it approved that these powerful men of previous era were not beyond the reach of rule of law.³⁷

These investigations alone, however could not assume Kim Young Sam's control of the army domination by cronies of General Chun and Roh. It was well known that General Chun had masterminded the coup d'état of December 12, 1979. President Kim declared in May that the coup had been illegal and he removed four generals including the chairman of the Joint chief of Staff for taking part in it. The government also uncovered an illegal private clique, the Hanahoe (One Society) within the army and forced the retirement of those, who had belonged to it.³⁸ This group had been organized in the 1970s with the tacit approval of President Park Chung Hee and both generals Chum and Roh belonged to it. The group had a firm grip on the army, as it members occupied many key positions. Undoubtedly, the disbanding of the secret group was the most important of the

³⁷ Chong Sik Lee & Hyuk Sang Shon, n.1, pp. 3-4
³⁸ *ibid.* p.4

reforms President Kim implemented.³⁹ The removal of the influence of military in politics made a new civilian government less vulnerable to authoritarian backlash.

Campaign Against Corruption

The second important measure taken by President Kim Young Sam in the light of democratic consolidation was his anti-corruption campaign. Since the democratic opening of political space, aspiration of people for transparency in political and economic affairs had been increased. So in this regard some initiatives were important. President Kim began a campaign, aimed at keeping “the upstream clean”.⁴⁰ At it has been reported in the Mungsoon’s article that Public Officials’ Ethic Law was revised in June 1993 which made it obligatory to periodically register and disclose their assets in order to institutionalize the disclosure of public official’s assets.

Moreover, in the effort of eradicating corruption from every section of official and non-official public departments, importance and influence of high office’s departments were not taken into consideration. As it has been reported in Korea Annual, 1994 that regardless of the high position in the government offices one holds, President Kim pursued with his anti corruption campaign. And for this purpose full autonomy was provided to the agency [Board of

³⁹ “The Civilian Government’s Reform Policy and Anti-Corruption Campaign”, *Korea Annual*, 1994, p.56.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.56.

Audit and Inspection] responsible for investigation and prosecution in the corruption cases.⁴¹

To set the precedent in right direction President Kim first revealed his personal assets that was followed by other leading figures from the ruling LDP, Cabinet ministers and other top government officials.⁴² As a result of all these revelations about bribery among senior government officials, assemblymen, military generals, university administrators, bank presidents and corporate executives became the daily fare of the country during the first half of 1993. As a result of all this 1,363 public officials including members of the police and office of the public prosecutors were dismissed for malfeasance and 242 were forced to resign because they improperly acquired wealth. In the private sector, several hundreds of people were arrested or indicted for the proper behavior, 31 persons for having illegally built luxurious homes, 602 persons for having illegally speculated in the real estate.⁴³

Another measure introduced in August 1993 by President Kim Young Sam to eradicate corruption was the Real Name Financial Transaction system (RNFTS). The new system was designed to terminate the longstanding practice of conducting financial transactions under false names, which has been providing a breeding ground for all sorts of money abuses in Korea.⁴⁴ Until RNFTS became effective, people used names other than their own as a means of

⁴¹ ibid, p.56

⁴² ibid, p.56

⁴³ ibid, pp. 55-57

evading taxes. By increasing transparency in banking business and money market, this reform was particularly aimed at rooting out collusion between politics and business. With the introduction of the RNFTS, the government expected that financial dealings would become transparent, that underground economic dealings would cease and that the funds that were channeled into political circles in the past would be terminated. As a result, it is expected that there will be a drastic change in Korean political and economic practice. Thus implementation of the RFTNS became central for establishing a clear and fair political climate in Korea.

The Liquidation of Authoritarian Legacies

The legacies of the past authoritarian regime was main agenda even during the Roh government and still there were unsettled issues which needed to be given attention. The task was doubly important for president Kim as throughout his political career so far he had stood against symbols. His efforts were trying to ease the division, which separate society and government. He took many measures so that government could look approachable and reachable. For this purpose it was necessary that remnants of past should be first liquidated.

The very first step in this regard which he undertook was the opening of the gate of Congwa Dae (Presidential residence) and office for ordinary people, which were "off limit" earlier⁴⁵. This was symbolic of the fact that President now wanted interaction with the people.

⁴⁴ Victor D. Cha, n.1, p.852.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 854

President Kim also ordered the removal of restriction imposed on some places in the past regime. These places which were symbolic of the authoritarian past were now made available to common use of public and he pledged to turn these grounds into public parks. Built during the Park Chung Hee regime these 'safe houses' (called anga) were despised by the people because these were symbol of the special privilege given to the ruler. He also tried to improve the image of his cabinet members while making them look more approachable.⁴⁶

In addition to these symbolic posture of liberalization of government, President Kim tried it to extend to the political level also. In his political amnesty programme he released many political dissidents; many of them were having radical political views. The government absolved reverend Mun Ik Hwa of violations of the national security law stemming from his highly publicized trip to North Korea in 1989. Li In Mo, a self professed communist, a political prisoner since Korean War, was repatriated to the North on the humanitarian grounds.

Political Reforms

With the inauguration of Kim Young Sam government Korea had advanced politically in the direction of democracy so for the purpose of strengthening democratization process President Kim initiated many political reforms as well. For this purpose Kim Young Sam government brought many reform policies, which were intended to make the system politically more democratic. After completing the

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 853

symbolic gesture of political reform in first year, in the next year i.e. 1994 government brought package of political reform bills relating to election, political funds and local autonomy.⁴⁷

The new electoral law tried to end the permanent malpractice in the transaction of money during election by political parties was increased to curtail wrong methods for obtaining money. It also increase the advances for political candidate at all levels, and slashed the legal limit for campaign fund with severe penalties for violation.⁴⁸

The link between political class and business has been a matter of concern in Korean society. This was reason for decay of morality in public life. It was because the electoral process in Korean political atmosphere was quite a costly affair. One needed to spend huge sum of money to win a election. The political parties had to spend money to keep the rank and file intact. In order to have the votes of 'supporters' massive use of money was common. It becomes important to know that what was the source of money? In order to weaken collusive link between political class and business, Kim Dae Jung brought important policy changes in political fund law. To make the transaction of money more transparent in political affair, political fund law was revised. A new Political Fund Law was introduced in 1993. According to the provision, amount of subsidies from state to political party was raised to 800 won from 600 won per eligible voter.⁴⁹ Subsidies were also given during parliamentary or local election. This

⁴⁷ Chong Sik Lee and Hyuk Sang Sohn, n.2, pp.5-6

⁴⁸ Myungsoon Shin, n.5, p.175

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p.174.

way now parties could raise their political fund through legal and honest way, not only this now political parties were allowed to set up a “support group”, which could receive donations. The amount was reached to \$150 million won per year.⁵⁰ In this way now they need not to depend on business for collecting fund.

Another important measure taken to promote democratic consolidation was the revision of the Local Autonomy Law to have a full-fledged local autonomy. These reforms initiated by President Kim were important for consideration of democracy in Korea, as it tried to increase transparency and accountability in political and social affairs. It also helped in boosting confidence and faith in government which had pledged to remain democratic. More importantly with the initiation of such reforms, public consciousness was also maturing and now process of democratization could not be limited to the political liberalization, but society in general had started showing sign of belief in democratic process. It was very important gain in view of the transition of Korean political system from authoritarianism to democracy. Such efforts really helped in the consolidation of democracy in Korea.

Though in the last years of Kim Young Sam presidency, the process of democratization could not be carried out in the same manner as it had been done in the last two-three years. There were many corruption scandals which haunted Korean media in 1996.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p.175

⁵¹ B.C. Koh, “Internal Strains and External Challenges: South Korea in 1996”. *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No.1, 1997, pp.1-9

Not only this, there were huge labour unrest against the National Assembly's passage of a law which labour unions felt as anti labour. There was government crackdown on radical student activism also who were supporting the North Korea formula for unification. In the last years of Kim Young Sam i.e. 1997, Korean economy plunged into deep crisis and it was alleged that government's inefficiency in formulating new economic policies were mainly responsible for such debacle. Though people's faith in democracy had not waned as it was evident from the Dec.'97 presidential election. This third consecutive free, fair, and direct presidential election signified the importance of democratic transition with which country was through.

CHAPTER - THREE

CHAPTER- III

CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRATIC POLITY SINCE 1998

The new phase in the democratization process may be set to have begun with the June 1987 declaration. Since then South Korea has made a notable progress in terms of democratic consolidation especially in the last ten years. As the result of December, 97 presidential elections, victory of 'legendary' opposition leader Kim Dae Jung in the keenly contested presidential election signified the first 'lateral transfer of power' in South Korea's 50-year constitutional history.¹ The last ten years have been described as 'democratic decade' in Korea's contemporary history. The year 1997 has its own importance. Kim Young Sam and Roh Tae Woo were chosen after the electoral reforms in 1987; in both cases there were several linkages with the earlier authoritarian structure, especially as continuation of personnel from authoritarian ruling elite. The election of Kim Dae Jung marked the first peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party.² The election of Kim Dae-Jung, 'who could not succeed in his earlier three bids in 1971, 1987 and 1992', was in itself an important sign of credibility and liability of democratic institutions and confidence in the electoral process. The inauguration of Kim Dae Jung, one

¹ Tong Whan Park, "Clearing the Last Hurdle to Political Economic Maturation: South Korea in 1997", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.1, January, 1998, p.1

term, for five-year tenure, was seen by some as beginning of the “era of the government of the people”.³ In fact, Kim Dae-Jung personified in himself hitherto suppressed and marginalized forces not only in terms of region from which he belongs [cholla province], but also the progressive and democratic ideas, for which he had been fighting throughout his political career. It was the time for celebration for those who had been neglected in ‘turbulent course of modernisation’ and development, as now their own representative was at the helm of affairs, leading them into new phase of democratic transition. The hegemony of Kyongsang province augmented with Park Chung Hee’s seizure of power in 1961 was broken and there emerged the hope of development, which would have pan-national in character, encompassing all section of society.

The shift in power to opposition leader was not only important politically which showed the sign of maturity but it had other social and economic importance as well. Economically the year 1997 was a disaster as country faced a crisis, which is often compared with the Korean War in terms of magnitude and its effect on society. An acute financial crisis had gripped the country and people’s expectation was high from newly elected president. Important policy change, in terms of politics and economy, were urgently needed. Though the Korean democracy

² Kang Jung In, “Some Reflections on Recent Democratisation in South Korea”, *Korea Journal*, Summer 2000. p.219

has been gradually progressing during democratic decade, it could not have been able to change many economic policies, resulting in severe economic crisis. The pre-crisis policy gridlock under democracy prolonged many attempts to reform the very economic institutions and practices that made the economy vulnerable to crisis.⁴ The failure in controlling the over-extended *chaebol*, insolvent bank and inflexible labor market produced a situation, where collapse of economy became imminent. Started with the disintegration of Hanbo steel in January 1997 and Kia Motors in the mid of the year, uncontrolled expansion of *chaebol* began to burst. Foreign investors, whose money were the major strength of Korean economy, started fleeing en-mass, pressing the panic button which affected the all walk of Korean society. The exchange rate fell to 44 per cent during November and December 1997 and stock price index also dropped 33 per cent.⁵ By the time when Kim Dae-Jung held the responsibility of leading the country situation had reached alarming proportion. The nation's foreign currency reserves totaled a mere \$3.8 billion. A \$10,000-plus per capita gross national product plummeted to less than \$6,500, unemployment reached close to 10%, the bankruptcy rate rose

³ Doo Boem Shin, "Korean Politics and Society: The Quest for an Underlying Philosophy", *Korea Observer*, Vol.32, No.2. Summer 2001, p.203

⁴ Mo Jongryn, "Democracy and Economic Crisis", *Korea Journal*, Summer, 2000, pp.306-313

⁵ Byung-Kook Kim, "Electoral Politics and Economic Crisis, 1997-98" in Larray Diamond and Byung-Kook Kim, ed., "Consolidating Democracy in south Korea". P.173.

far above normal, and factories were running at barely over 60% of capacity at the time when Kim Dae-Jung came in the presidential office⁶. Really it appeared that it was most difficult time the Koreans suffered in their post-liberation period as not a single household escaped misery.⁷ Reforms and restructuring were needed but before that salvaging the country from collapse was urgent. And for the purpose of taking out the ship from turbulent water of Korean economy and polity, Koreans had chosen Kim Dae-Jung for his democratic leadership and excellent qualification to lead their country out of the difficulties. When he was inaugurated on February 25, 1998, president Kim confronted the dual goals of promoting democracy and a market economy. Without hurting the interest of any class of society, he had to enthuse confidence not only in terms of economic growth but in terms of democratic consolidation of polity. For this he resolutely pushed reform in four major areas - the financial, manufacturing, labor and public sector. As a result, in less than two years, the country managed to recover from the economic crisis with its foreign currency reserves rising to over us\$90 billion.⁸

It is the purpose of this chapter to evaluate the reforms measure taken by kim Dae- Jung, which not only stabilized the

⁶ Tong Whan Park, "Swallowing the Bitter Pills of Restructuring: South Korea in 1998", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XXXIX, No.1, January/February 1999. p. 133.

⁷ *ibid*, p.133

⁸ http://www.korea.net/government/president/president_6.html

Korean economy but also gave boost to the on going process of democratic consolidation of polity and society.

The evaluation of year 1997 becomes important for the purpose of analyzing the democratic progress, which had taken place in the previous decade. It is important in the sense, as there were definite sign of consolidation of democracy, though lack of proper policy changes not only hindered advancement of democracy, it created fresh problems.

First it saw the debacle of economy as a result of delay in reforming economic policies, which were long over-due. It was widely believed that the vulnerability of economy deepened due to the collusive link between politics and business. The last president Kim Young Sam who had started the process of cleansing business-environment on market and democratic principle could not succeed completely in his attempt. Owing to this, his popularity level, which was 90% at the beginning of his term in 1993, plummeted to a single digit support in 1997.⁹

The year 1997 was going to have 15th presidential election. The result of this election was going to be very decisive as many important issues were at stake. All-important political parties started the struggle for securing the presidency. As ruling party candidate had never lost in the past, naturally fierce competition began among possible contenders in the ruling New Korea party (hereafter NKP). Lee Hoi-chang was

nominated as presidential candidate in the party convention, though as another aspiring and ambitious candidate Rhee In Jae also claimed his stake. They couldn't agree on single consensual candidate, and they fought election separately¹⁰. It became favorable condition for the opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung who utilized this opportunity while making alliance with United Liberal Democrats (ULD) led by kim Jong-Pil. The alliance between National Congress for New Politics (NCNP, Party of kim Dae- Jung) was beneficial for Kim Dae-Jung on two points, first it gave him support from Choongchung area (Kim Jong-pil's stronghold) which had limited support for Kim Dae-Jung. Secondly it also supported him in ameliorating his progressive image of being soft toward North Korea.¹¹ Meanwhile Lee Hoi-Chang who formed an alliance with Cho Soon's Democratic Party, creating Han-nara Dang (Grand national Party). Rhee In-Jae floated his own party National Party for the People (NPP). With the heighting of three way presidential race, chances of victory for Kim Dae-Jung increased in view of split of voters of Kyoungsang (28.3 of voters) between Lee Hoi-Chang and Rhee In Jae.¹²

The result of the election presented the sign of maturing political consciousness among Korean voters. It

⁹ Tong Whan Park, "Clearing the last hurdle.....", n.1 p.4

¹⁰ For detail happening of 1997 election see Byung Kook Kim "Electoral Politics and Economic Crisis, 1997-98", in Larry Diamond and Byung Kook Kim, ed., "Consolidating Democracy in South Korea", pp. 173-202

¹¹ Tong Whan Park, "Clearing the Last Hurdle...", n.2, p.5

produced first lateral transfer of power in South Korea. It also gave 'resounding no' to Lee Hoi -Chang's speculation that risk-averse tendency of middle-class, comprising 85per cent of Korean population, would support him in economic crisis condition.¹³ Instead they chose otherwise and set those forces aside that were responsible for economic-political chaos, which the country was passing through. The rational choice of voters could also be judged from the poll-results, which were conducted before the election. These polls reflected voter preference almost exactly the same throughout the campaign-period. Even during the period, when such polls by media and news- agency were banned -from November 28 to December 18- survey were conducted and pattern did not change. It was notable difference, which showed that now Korean voters had become free from the fear of persecution, while showing their political preferences.¹⁴ Really 1997 election was remarkable achievement in arousing democratic conscience among Korean people.

It was really going to be tough time ahead for the newly appointed president Kim Dae-Jung who had taken the responsibility to lead the country in very disappointing and difficult scenario. Indeed his election as a new leader was filled with hope and expectation from diverse section of society.

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ibid, p. 6

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ibid, p. 7

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Tong Whan Park, "Clearing the Last Hurdle..." n. 3, p. 7

Moreover, passing through the ordeals and challenges were not new for Kim Dae-Jung, whose political career spanning more than 40 years was in itself studded with numerous ordeals. He did not only suffer political oppression and persecution from the military dictatorship, his life itself was threatened. He escaped five attempts on his life and spent six years and 10 years under house-arrest or exile.¹⁵ Though he never submitted to any persuasion or threat and followed only the path toward democracy for the nation and the people. And now he himself became the center of activity for leading the country out of difficulties and now he had opportunity to pursue the ideas and policies, which he had been advocating since long.

Kim Dae Jung's Reform initiatives

The foremost important task lying ahead for president Kim Dae-Jung was the economic recovery. He began to work to help the nation overcome the economic crisis. He gave the slogan of 'second-nation-building' and demanded support from general masses and political class.¹⁶ He could see that the present economic crisis was the end-result of the lack of accountability in political and business affairs.¹⁷ The corruptive link between government and business was judged the main culprit of economic hardships.

¹⁵ R.R. Krishnan, "Kim Dae Jung: Towards a New Era." Korea News, 1998

¹⁶ Tong Whan Park, "Swallowing the bitter Pills of Reforms..." n.2 p.136

From the beginning of modernisation and industrialization process in Korea, big *Chaebols*(big conglomerates) were favored in business. Starting from the Pak Chung Hee era, *Chaebols* got the state support for the purpose of mobilizing resources effectively and achieved higher economic growth.¹⁸ That time this policy worked well as he got the justification for suppressing labor and democratic movement on the pretext of fighting communist threat. With the tacit support of government, size of chaebols became behemoth and sometime, as many scholars argued, autonomy of state was also taken for granted. This link could not be severed completely even after the dawn of democratic government in 1987 and 1992. Though soon after getting elected on the support of popular vote, these governments took measures to delink the collusive economy-polity relationship, they could not be successful in severing the link completely. More importantly the first two democratic governments of Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam in the beginning of their term, waged high-profile campaign against mal-practices. Roh took measures against land concentration while Kim acted against corruption amongst party and government functionaries.¹⁹ But ultimately they had to leave office with their reputation highly tarnished by

¹⁷ Dae-Jung Kim, "Djomics: A new foundation for the Korean economy" 1999. WWW.Democracy-market.org.

¹⁸ Young-Kwan Yoon, "Overcoming Cold-War Legacies: South Korea in 1999". Asian Survey, Vol. XL, No. 1, JAN/FEB 2000 p.166.

corruption scandals. It was the indicator of *Chaebol* influence on government-body and their policies. These politicians were dependent more on business-group for staying in power, because electoral-campaign and its process needed huge amount of money. It was argued that winning election in Korea was a costly affair and it could not be possible without the support of big business. Having grown in size beyond the control of state, function of economically dominant group was not primarily based on economic principle but rather 'humain network' played much more important role.²⁰ This model of development, therefore, many critics argued, created the 'moral-hazard' and market inefficiency, ultimately leading to the economic crisis.²¹ According to the Kim Dae Jung own analysis of the situation, main blame for Korea's economic woes was the absence of political and business accountability. Moreover this analysis of Kim Dae Jung was coincided with the diagnosis of IMF, which had provided \$57 billion bailout package for salvaging Korea's economy from collapse.²²

The reform measures initiated by Kim Dae-Jung, while following the conditionality imposed by IMF, it was argued that capitalist mode of development is possible on the democratic

¹⁹ Tat Yan Kong, "Power Alternation in South Korea," Government and opposition.V01.13 No.4.2001.p.375

²⁰ Sang Hwa Chung, "Political Economy of the Korean Economy Crisis in the Late 1990" Korea Observer, Vol. 32, No. 4, winter 2001 p. 503

²¹ For political implication of Korean economic crisis, see Song Hwa Chung, "Political Economy of the Korean Economic Crisis in the Late 1990s" Korea Observer , Vol. 32. No. 4 , pp. 501- 531

²² Tong Whan Park, "Clearing the Last Hurdle..."n.3 , p.1

principle without the collusive link between business and politics. For transparent financial transactions, financial watchdog Financial Supervisory Committee was established in April 1998 under the office of the Prime Minister to function as a neutral independent supervisory policy making body.²³This Committee had to ensure the enhanced transparency in corporate governance. Moreover to combat the problem of official corruption, the government planned to introduce an agency modeled on Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption.²⁴

To restructure the over-expanded *Chaebols* Kim Dae-Jung brought the idea of "big-deals". Under this arrangement, LG Semi-conductor and Hyundai Electronics merged their semi-conductor operation.²⁵ This measure became controversial afterwards, though it put leash on chaebol's unending desire of expansion. On the other hand few people criticized too much involvement of government in business affair.

These measures initiated by government were remarkable in the sense as the influence of state was regained over the most powerful social-group, the *Chaebol*. Even though some policy measures were termed as coercive, *Chaebols* were obliged to restructure their over expanded business. Due to government effort heavily indebted Daewoo Group- the second largest

²³ Doo Boem Shin, *ibid*, p.203
²⁴ WWW. Democracy-market.org.
²⁵ Mo Jongryn, n. 1. p.319.

Chaebol—agreed to reduce its operations to six-auto-related business while remaining 19 units were to be spun off or sold.²⁶ This was the sign of reduction of support of government to big conglomerates, which had impression that they were too big to fail and in any case. They had impression that government would be coming to their rescue as a last resort.

Moreover, for reforming the financial rector, which had support (with government connivance) of inappropriate lending, resulting in staggering debt-equity ratio for most of the major corporation, government announced restrictions on *Chaebol* control of non-bank financial institution and re-imposition of ceiling on cross-share holding among units of the top 36 *Chaebols*.²⁷ In this way government could get the power of regulating financial sector in transparent and democratic manner and it also brought confidence in economy, which could now trust on free and a fair dealings in business sector and that also on market principle.

All these reforms and restructuring in corporate and financial sector were carried in less than a year of time since Kim Dae-Jung held office of president in February, 1998 and by the end of year 1999 there were fruitful sign of economic growth and stability. For example, the GDP growth rate rose from -5.4% in 1998 to about 9.3% in 1999, unemployment fell from 8.6% in

²⁶ Young-Kwan Yoon, *ibid*, p.167

Feb 99 to 4.8% in September'99. Foreign exchange reserves increased from about \$8.87 billion at the end of 1997 to \$65 billion in the third quarter of 1999.²⁸

These achievement were not important only for the economic reasons as it saved people from economic hardships, Kim's reform drive also showed that reform and democracy are compatible with each other. The situation was not completely in favor of president as opposition Grand National Party dominated the configuration of national Assembly, and for passage of any legislation government needed the support of GNP. On the other hand, GNP for its own interest didn't cooperate with the president. But this couldn't be the big hindrance for legislation agenda brought by Kim Dae Jung as many GNP legislative members defected to Kim Dae Jung Party giving adequate support in formulating policy for democratic development. Due to his unwavering commitment to democracy, his reforms policy got legitimacy and credibility from the people. He was also able to gain support from abroad, as foreign investors and allies, especially the U.S. Government provided him help, as they wanted to see him succeed.²⁹ Thus while gaining support form his reform measures internally as well as externally Kim Dae

²⁷ David I. Stienberg, "Continuing Democratic Reform – The Unfinished Symphony", in Larry Diamond & Byung Kook Kim, ed., "Consolidating Democracy in South Korea", pp.203-238

²⁸ Young Kwan Yoon, n. 2 p.167, *ibid.*

²⁹ Mo Jongryn, n. 2 p, 317

Jung tried to expand the area of reform from economy to other social and political sphere.

ECONOMIC REFORMS

In the beginning of Kim Dae Jung Government economic recovery was the foremost task and this target was soon to be overcome, as the government was able to produce a level of stability in less than a year. For his purpose restructuring in economic area such as corporate, finance and public sector were followed on the dual principle of market-economy and democratic aspiration.

For flourishing market-economy as discussed, reforms were carried out in corporate, finance and public sector. As for example to initiate the process of public sector reform, the Government Reform Office, in the Planning and Budgeting Commission, was launched in 1998.³⁰ For the purpose of minimizing the size of over-staffed bureaucracy 10% seats of civil servants were reduced. Not only this five-ministries were eliminated out of the total number of 22.³¹ The reforms, which were initiated by Kim Dae Jung government, would not have been complete, if working-class would have been ignored from the development process. A variety of studies have shown that it is the working class i.e. labor, which plays the important role in promoting democracy. Because it is working class which gets

³⁰ Doo Boem Shin, n.3,, p.203.

³¹ A Handbook of Korea.(Seoyl: Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service, 1998), p.237.

the maximum benefit out of pro-democratic reform, so they are expected to play the role of promoting and defending democracy.³² The suppression of this section, which constitutes the major part of society, democracy can never be consolidated in its truest form. Realising this aspect of democratic consolidation, President Kim has tried to incorporate in his reform policies the interest of labor group also. At the outset of his reform policies such as announcement of Tripartite Committee in February 1998, inclusion of labor representation was highlighted. This committee, which was formed to suggest policy-decision on reform, had representative from management and government. It was called Tripartite Agreement for Fair Burden Sharing.³³ It was believed that it would not be fair enough that cost of restructuring should be borne by labor alone, so whatever policy-changes is going to take place in coming periods, opinion of labor sector must be solicited. This was very important policy-change, which was a clear departure from the erstwhile regimes's attitude towards labor, because Roh Tae Woo's democratic government had returned to old politics of repression of labor in 1990. But with the increasing level of democratic consciousness, arm-twisting tactics of the state seemed not possible now, and thus this social-pact between the three important sections, Corporate, Labor and

³² Jung Young-Tae, "Labour Movement and 'Democracy in the Age of Global Neoliberalism: The Case of Korea, *Korea Journal*, Summer 2000, p.253.

Government had come up in the form of Tripartite Agreement. The agreement which has been taken place in this social pact, put some burden on the shoulder of labor unions also but in exchange of this burden, such as agreement on lay off of workers, employment flexibility etc., other gains such as enhanced political rights, state-social counter measures and structural reforms of big business including its internal governance, were bargained.³⁴ Due to such relaxation of the restriction on the organised labor, formation of political party, representing the interest of working class, was possible. That's why a left-of-center political party, the Democratic Liberal Party, came up. It was major achievement in the sense of democratic transformation of society where now most suppressed section, had got the opportunity of political participation. Later, though, in coming 2000 National Assembly election it could not fare well.³⁵ Its legitimacy as legal political formation had been approved. Moreover social pact delivered many other concession demanded by organized labor over the past decade. These included legalization of teacher's unions in December 1998, legalization of the more radical Korean confederation of

³³ Tat Yan Kang.1, p.385.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 385

³⁵ For detail information about the 2000 National Assembly election, see, Hong Nack Kim, "The 2000 Parliamentary Election in South Korea", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XL, No.6, Nov./Dec.2000, pp. 894-913

Trade Unions, multiple unionization at the work place, and the provision of third parties to enter disputes.³⁶

The political opening broadened the activities of many civic-organizations. As for example there was formation of Citizen's Alliance For General Election (CAGE) during the 2000 National Assembly Election.³⁷ CAGE, which represented 457 civic groups and other reformist alliances listed those politician whom they had judged as being unfit to run for Parliament, citing them for either alleged corruption, laziness and incompetence, having a criminal record or some combination of all these factors.³⁸ CAGE demanded that these blacklisted candidate shouldn't be allowed to contest and even if they run in the election, CAGE requested voters to defeat them. This was further development in the rising democratic aspirations among the Korean social and political class.

POLITICAL REFORM

The political-system in Korea was becoming more and more democratic, as it has been discussed earlier also, was indicative from many transforming aspects of Korean society. The victory of Kim Dae Jung was in itself the most powerful example of maturing of the political process. The very fact that he was elected and could serve the nation widened the avenues

³⁶ Tat Yan Kang, n. 2, p.387.

³⁷ *ibid*, p.387.

³⁸ Hong Nack Kim, n.1, p. 901.

of political change. If Kim Young Sam's election represented an important transitional and positive stage in South Korea's political growth, the election to the presidency five years later of Kim Dae Jung -a democratic dissident who had once been sentenced to death by the military and subjected to an assassination attempt - was even more remarkable.³⁹ So after his election it becomes imperative for him to take initiative, which could further give advancement to the forces of democratization in which he had been involved throughout his political career.

At this stage of political development in Korea what was most remarkable to note that regionalism still remained the most significant factor for political alignment. Election were won or lost mainly on the basis of regional support base. Even the Kim Dae-Jung victory was the result of tacit maneuvering of regional factor. Due to the split of Kyoungsang-region voters, which had not its own presidential candidate in 1997 election, and almost total support from Cholla province, Kim Dae Jung could manage to win election. The political parties were not formed on the basis of issues and ideologies, that's why major political parties had different point of views on many important issues. These parties had mainly regional-support and primarily based on charismatic leader from the particular area. Such regional based election made it difficult for the ruling party,

³⁹ David I. Steinberg, n.1, p.205.

government and leader to identify social bases for reform policies.⁴⁰

To combat the menace of regionalism, Kim Dae-Jung government started the process of revision of electoral system in the fall of 1999. In May, 1999, the leaders of the ruling coalition, the National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) and United Liberal Democrats (ULD), agreed to replace the current single electoral system with multiple seat, one in which two to four law makers would be elected in enlarged constituencies.⁴¹ The leader also agreed to let voters cast one ballot for party and one for a candidate. In addition, a proportional representation system was also envisaged, making some of the seats based on the share of the total votes each party gets. In this way, President Kim and the ruling coalition hoped to ease deep-rooted regional antagonism and foster nationally based political parties.⁴² Though this electoral reform could not be implemented due to the stiff opposition from Grand National party and certain civic-organization. Some changes were brought in the existing electoral system. It had begun the process of reform in the electoral system, which would try to end regional prejudices prevalent in the Korean Political system.

Another political problem in Korean political system was the strong presidential system. Even under the democratic

⁴⁰ Yong-Chool Ha, "A summit and the Search for New Institutional identity – South Korea in 2000", *Asian Survey*, Vol.XLI, No.1, Jan/Feb 2001, p.33.

⁴¹ Young Kwan Yoon, n.3, pp. 170-171

transition, Presidents of Korea tend to function sometime in autocratic manner.⁴³ Due to its powerful position in the political-system, important decision sometime appears to be authoritative and coercive. Present President Kim's alliance with Kim Jong-Pil's ULD party was on the assurance of amending the constitution to curtail the power of President and bringing the parliamentary political system with strong prime minister. It became the key political reform issue during the first two years of Kim's Government. Though this policy-change has not been achieved so far because of political constraint of *yaso-yadae* (small ruling party - big opposition) configuration of National Assembly and other factors, efforts, are being taken to soften the political prowess of President and make the system more democratic.

The assessments of Kim Dae Jung government's performance shows that many reforms and policy changes in economic and political field have been brought and implemented and they have been producing results, too, though there still remains some limitations in over all reform. These limitations have affected the speed of consolidation process of democratisation and there are still many areas, which are yet to be reformed and made democratic. As for as economic reforms are concerned their scope was limited because of external as

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ibid, p.171
David I. Steinberg, n.2, pp. 214-215

well as internal causes. In the era of Globalization and moreover, also because of conditionality imposed by IMF and other foreign investors, Kim Dae Jung have limited choice, internally also constraints of coalition politics and limited strength in national Assembly tied the hands of ruling government. In the beginning of Kim Dae Jung government, when opposition GNP had majority in National Assembly, [later many GNP member defected and joined ruling party] there was stalemate like condition on various legislative proposals. In 2000 National Assembly election also ruling Millennium Democratic Party[NCNP has been enlarged and renamed as MDP] could not muster majority seats again and so same condition continued even at present.⁴⁴ Because of Kim Dae-Jung historic initiative to improve relationship with North Korea and meeting with North Korean National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il in June 2000, have helped increasing the popularity level for the President, it could not help in strengthening his hand politically. Though President Kim have utilized the resources whatever he commands for promoting ideals of democracy and helped speeding up the process of democratization in the country.

⁴⁴ Hong Nack Kim, n.1, pp. 894-913

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Taehan Minguk or Republic of Korea was proclaimed on 12 July 1948. It emerged against the backdrop of a series of developments in the preceding about four decades. These include the traumatic experience of Japanese colonial rule; the various forms of anti-colonial movements; the rejuvenation and redefinition of Korea's distinct ethnic, cultural and national identity; the strong and pervasive desire to establish a democratic political, socio and economic order on the debris of pre colonial and colonial systems; the emergence of new forms of intervention by the United States and the Soviet Union through their military presence and Joint Commission; the intensification of internationalization of the "Korean problem", and the 10 May 1948 general election in part of Korea amidst controversy. 12 July 1948 also witnessed the historic adoption of "honpop" constitution with an explicit commitment to uphold democratic values and rights. The representatives of the Constituent Assembly convened at the end of May 1948 appointed a constitution Drafting Committee that prepared the constitution in about six weeks. The constitution was promulgated on 17 July 1948. This date is officially celebrated as Constitution Day every year, although the constitution has undergone several changes. In the preceding three chapters an attempt has been made to (a) evaluate the trajectory of political developments revolving around the Constitution's democratic

vision, values, rights (b) the patterns and forms of distortion and deviations, and the efforts at not only defending the objects but also expanding the scope and enriching the substance of democratic values. The study has sought to focus on the period since June 1987 declaration, which is generally considered as the decisive turning point in contemporary constitutional and political history of Korea.

In June 1987 under mounting pressure from political class and civil-society, the ruling military government yielded to the democratic forces and gave way for the transformation of political-system. It was historic achievement for the forces of democracy, which had been heavily suppressed, in earlier regimes. It is also true that the aspiration for a democratic society among the political class could never be crushed completely and only because of their continuous effort at easing the restriction imposed on political-liberty, such a change could have been possible. The year 1987 saw the dramatic turn of event; establishing first democratically elected government in last 30 years of history. Since then there have been two more free, fair and direct presidential election, which has helped immensely in transforming the Korean political system into a democratic one.

Chapter-I deals with the political development starting from the time of proclamation of constitution in 1948 when constitution adopted "liberal democracy with capitalist economy" as the form of government, though it remained an empty rhetoric, degenerating into personal

dictatorship or military authoritarianism. The sign of evolving autocratic government started from the very first presidency of Syngmman Rhee, who had amended the 1948 constitution two times in 12 years of his rule. He tried to delay his rule from two to three and then tried to make it unending. These authoritarian style of functioning of Syngmman Rhee created big tension politically, and from here only, the struggle for a democratic government began. The political uprising by opposition parties and students forced the Rhee government to end his autocratic rule and give way for the establishment of a true democratic state.

The experiment of a democratic government, which was established by the third constitutional amendment, proved weak and due to its internal as well external factors, it was overthrown in a military-coup by Park-Chung Hee. Again country had relapsed into authoritarianism without giving much time to the forces of democracy to be developed in its mature form. Park Chung Hee proved himself more hostile towards the concept of political-freedom as he ruled over two decades in much more autocratic way than his predecessor. In order to strengthen the presidential power and linger his rule perpetually he amended the constitution thrice, which provided him greatly expanded power to thwart any opposition to his rule.

The proclamations of Yushin (Revitalising Reform) constitution in October 1972, was a further step in aggravating authoritarianism in Korea. Though there were protests and opposition to this new move of

Park Chung Hee, it could not be fought tooth and nail in strict atmosphere of political control. The political situation remained highly autocratic, where voices of other political actors could not get opportunity to get stronger. This situation could not be ended even with the assassination of Park Chung Hee on October 26, 1979 by Korean CIA director Kim Jae Kyu. It only heightened the scramble of power-capture among the political groups. Not only in the ruling-elite but in opposition camp also there was in-fighting. This lack of unity among politicians of opposition parties, gave another chance to military to take the lead and soon Chun Doo Hwan another military leader was at the helm of affair.

The inauguration of Chung Doo Hwan government in 1980 started another phase of military dictatorship. In the mid of his rule under the increasing pressure form the society and also in order to legitimize his performance, Chun initiated some liberalization on the control of political rights and allowed political participation of opposition parties. This change in attitude had come both by the his conviction of consolidation of his rule through high economic growth and also by the continuous pressure built-up by the democratic forces. The opening of the political space, though limited, started the unprecedented level of political protest and demonstrations by the democratic minded politicians, students and intellectuals. It was supported by the working class as well, which has been highly suppressed, and always remained under pressure of state. This situation was aggravated by the 13th April.1987 announcement of

Chun Doo Hwan to forgo all talks of constitutional reform, which was long-standing demand of opposition parties. The wave of protests had taken new height and when on 10th June 1987, Chun announced the nomination Roh Tae Woo as a next presidential candidate of the ruling party, it was clear to the opposition group that the military rule was not going to end unless and until they force government to do so. From 10th of June, protest and demonstrations became the daily affair and it brought the government under heavy pressure. There was international pressure as well. Seoul was going to host Olympic games next year so all eyes of the world were set at Korea. Chun did not want to show the world that such a political-disturbance had gripped the country. So in a dramatic turn of event, chosen successor of Chun Do Hwan, Roh Tae Woo on 29th June, announced 8-point proposal of democratic liberalization, giving way to the establishment of first democratically elected government in February 1988. It was really a remarkable achievement in the political transformation of country, which for centuries have seen a very strong state controlling all part of social-life of people. According to the plan of 8-point proposal, direct election to the president was accepted and many other liberal policies were also adopted.

In chapter II it has been discussed that the adoption of new constitution was in itself a great departure from the earlier regime's politics. In this constitution many demands of opposition groups who

have been advocating the democratic transformation, have been incorporated. Many political rights such as freedom of speech, press, formation of organization by labor-groups etc. were provided. Only according to its provision, first election was held on the principle of equality where no extra advantage was given to the ruling-block. Such election in itself is very important contributing factor for strengthening of the institutions of democracy, though this election was also the reminder of weakness of Korean political-development. In the earlier regime there have been continuous struggle against authoritarian political-system by opposition parties and leaders but they could not be united to give a consolidated opposition to the ruling elite. Same thing was repeated once again in December 1987 election, when two veteran opposition leaders Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam could not compromise on their personal goal, giving chance for victory to the ruling party candidate. Total votes these two leader received jointly was much more than the Roh's votes, but due to division of their vote, power remained in the earlier regime's representative. Though in next National Assembly election in April 1988, ruling block received a setback as it failed to receive a majority of seats of its own. Three opposition parties jointly received 165 seats whereas ruling Democratic Justice Party got only 125. The Yaso-Yadae (Big-opposition-Small Government) configuration of National-Assembly forced Roh to start many important reforming policies in the direction of democratic consolidation. The opposition parties in

the early years of Roh's regime started the discussion in the National Assembly over wrongdoing of Chun government. Under the heavy pressure from three opposition parties, Chun had to surrender his wealth and apologies to the nation for his misdeeds while leaving Seoul to spend rest of his life in secluded mountainous area. It was time for rectifying the wrongdoing of previous regime and this process had been started successfully. Not only this some important changes had been brought in other areas to facilitate the process of democratic development. The level of freedom enjoyed by media was unprecedented and unheard in Korean political history. Surge of new Newspapers, magazines and periodicals etc. was new development. Easing of the restriction imposed on media, allowed citizens to come forward and speak up against their grievances as well as their support. Some important policy changes were brought in the labour policy, which allowed the labour groups to form their own union to represent them in more honest and independent way. As an alternative of the pro-government Labour Union, the Federation of Korean Trade Union, another trade union Federation of Democratic Labour Union was established in 1987. It was major achievement for the labor, as for as there past history is concerned.

Then in this chapter it has been discussed further that alliance with the ruling party paved the way for opposition leader Kim Young Sam to win the election in 1992. It was true first civilian government ever

since the 1961 coup of Park Chung Hee. It was milestone in Korea's transition to democratic process. In 1992 election, Korean voters had elected a civilian president who throughout his political career has been struggling for the restoration of democracy in Korea. Though, he had come in power with the support of Roh Tae Woo's party, so some people doubted the credential of Kim Young Sam in launching reform movement, which he had been pursuing since long. Though such skepticism was to be changed into pleasant surprises as he initiated many reforms for the purpose of consideration democracy in the country. First thing he did in this regard was ousting the old guards of military from high position so that political and social system be purified from the hegemony of military which ruled long in the country quite authoritatively. With the end of hegemony of military from politics was important sign for the consolidation of democratic value as in this condition when military had been sent back to barracks and their position in the politics eliminated, return of authoritarian military government was minimized. Removing the legacies of the authorization past he sent positive message that government was interested in consolidating aspect of democracy. And democratic consciousness was taking root in the heart and mind of people. The implementation of reform in electoral system, political fund law and in many other areas gave hope to the establishment of truly democratic government.

In chapter III, It has been discussed that there was remarkable achievement in the decade after the 1987 Declaration, which saw two democratically elected presidents, and there were many gains as for as democratic consolidation is concerned. Though lack of some policy change and continuity of old form of economic and foreign policy had created big troubles for the Korean economy and society. That's why the level of popularity, which Kim Young Sam government used to enjoy in the early years of its formation, plummeted to very low level in the face of economic crisis looming large on Korea's fate. In such a disturbing economic and social condition Kim Dae Jung, a long time political leader who had become a legend in himself in the struggle for democracy, came to power in 1997. His life was full off ordeals and challenges posed by authoritarian state. Though he never compromised on his principles and waged untiring war against authoritarian state and advocated the development and growth through the process of democracy. He won the 1997 election and now his ideas and beliefs were put to test. He had to score on two points. One to salvage economy, which was almost at the tip of collapse and second, advancing the ideas of democratic consolidation. He initiated with the reforms in economy, which started giving result just within a year and by the end of 1999, Korean economy had been stabilized. The measures taken for the recovery from the economic crisis were very much compatible with the principle of democracy. He tried to severe the collusive link between economy and

polity, which was main corruptive link for creating the problems of moral hazard. To bring accountability in political and economic affairs certain measure was adopted which were successful to a great extent. He rightly judged the situation and brought changes in the existing corporate finance, labor and public policies. There was need to put leash on over extended *Chaebols* which kept expanding their size with the connivance of ruling political elite without considering its drawbacks. Financial reforms and banking reforms were also very urgent, seeing the importance they play in economy. They came under the control of state supervision and lending money to big corporate was made strict. For the first time in Korean political history it was considered that labour should also be included in the discussion over economic issues with the corporate employer and government officials. It was major breakthrough in democratization process as it put Korea ahead of many Asian countries, where such moves have been never dreamt off. There was also reform in public sector to boost the sagging confidence of citizens and keep their morale high.

The journey of democratic transformation, which started form June 1987 declaration, have achieved significant progress in terms of the growth of democratic institutions and practices. The simple example of this is the election of presidents through a direct vote, which had never been the case in previous authoritarian regimes. Not only this, those sections are also coming-up and putting their stake in the discussion

and negotiation over political social and economic issue who hitherto neglected or ignored. Though reforms taken place in the democratic period are not complete, and there are need to take all these unresolved issues seriously and solved properly, so that democratization of society could speed up and it could include other democratic factors, too.

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