

Transforming From Praetorianism to Civilian Governance: A Comparative Study of Myanmar and South Korea

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A coup d'état broke out in Myanmar in 2021 when its military arrested newly-elected members of the ruling party and cracked down following civilian protests with violence. Since the country gained independence in 1948, Myanmar is not able to establish a stable governing system but instead keeps suffering from political decay for decades, indicating the unhealthy involvement of the military in the realm of politics. This paper seeks to conduct a comparative study of Myanmar and South Korea, the latter of which similarly experienced decades of military dictatorship but underwent a successful transition to democracy in the late 1980s. The paper adopts the Praetorianism theory of Samuel P. Huntington to theorize the dynamics of the military rule in Myanmar and South Korea and also analyzes the differences between the cases of the two countries. In the end, the paper evaluates to what extent the lessons from South Korea can be learned by Myanmar.

Key words: Myanmar, South Korea, political transformation, Praetorianism

Introduction

On February 1, 2021, a coup d'état broke out in Myanmar when Tatmadaw, the country's military, deposed democratically elected members of Myanmar's ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), including State Councilor Ang San Suu Kyi, who was the de facto leader of Myanmar before the coup. Before long, Tatmadaw vested power in a stratocracy named State Administration Council and declared that state power had been transferred to General Min Aung Hlaing, the Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services. The reason for the coup was to overthrow the results of the November 2020 general election, which was alleged to be invalid by the coup forces (NPR, 2021).

In response to the coup, civil resistance efforts have emerged within Myanmar against the military in numerous forms, ranging from public protests, civil disobedience, labor strikes, military boycott campaign and so on. Facing the growing resistant movements, the coup leaders enacted several countermeasures, including the pursuit of arrests and criminal sentences against protesters, internet blackout, media blackout, imposition of martial law, engaging competing political parties to join the State Administration Council. The military infamously used violent force to suppress protesters over the following months and caused dozens of deaths and injuries (ABC News, 2021).

Many observers of the country's political history have offered explanations for why the coup occurred at this moment. Some highlighted the Tatmadaw's insecurity over its future status since the popularly-elected

civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi has attempted to reduce the military's political authority (Ryan & Self, 2021). Others emphasize the Tatmadaw's demand for respect, which the ruling party—the NLD—has outright denied by refusing to investigate the military's claim of voter fraud in the November 2020 general election (Thant, 2021).

Whichever factors flipped the switch, a revival of military dictatorship is materializing fast for the people of Myanmar. With surgical steps straight out of a coup textbook, the Tatmadaw has done the following in just one week: conducted night arrests of major opposition political figures across the country, assembled a State Administrative Council with Min Aung Hlaing at its helm, filled the majority of ministerial posts, filed charges against the *de facto* civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and *de jure* President Win Myint, curtailed freedom of expression on social media, repeatedly cut off phone and internet connections, and imposed martial law across major cities.

The recent coup is among many other similar ones in the history of Myanmar since it gained independence in 1948, indicating the unhealthy involvement of the military in the politics of Myanmar. As a result, the country is not able to establish a stable governing system but keeps suffering from political decay for decades. The resilient struggle against repressive dictators has been a hallmark of Burmese society. During the nearly 50 years of military rule between 1962 and 2010, popular anti-regime protest movements and uprisings sprang up every decade in urban areas throughout the country. Despite violent crackdowns, thousands of grassroots activists and their supporters, staged historic student protests, labor protests, and monk-led boycotts that cohered under a nationwide pro-democracy movement. Older activist generations would continue to inspire and pass down lessons on nonviolent strategies to new movement leaders, who then carried the movement forward throughout the repressive years. The country is now at a crossroads, calling for solutions to end the current crisis, as well as promote stability and development in the future (Tran, 2021).

This paper seeks to examine the dynamics behind the decades-long political instability in Myanmar, with a focus on Tatmadaw's participation in domestic politics. The paper will then compare the situation of Myanmar with that of South Korea which underwent a successful transition from military rule to civilian governance in the late 1980s and has since remained a democratic and prosperous nation. A modern adaption of Praetorianism by Samuel P. Huntington is adopted as a major tool in the paper to analyze the role of the military in state governance. Then, the paper will demonstrate the similarities and differences of military's roles within the two countries. In the end, the paper will conclude with lessons that Myanmar can learn from the experience of South Korea and apply it in the construction of the country's transformation from military rule to civilian governance.

The Political Involvement of the Tatmadaw in History

To understand the evolution of Myanmar's armed forces, some important aspects of the country's history must be kept in mind. From the moment it was born, Myanmar has been devastated by rebellions across the country—some of which originated from ideology and some from ethnic origin. In the face of a rebellion with very limited national resources, dangerous terrain, and strong state support, fighting the rebellion has become the main task of the national armed forces. Therefore, if the history of the armed forces is described in terms of the actions or threats it has faced, it is obvious that it only begins to deal with external threats at a later stage in a focused manner.

Since Myanmar regained its independence in 1948, the Tatmadaw has played a vital role in restoring and maintaining law and order. It is one of the most important institutions in Myanmar politics. During the civil war in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Burmese army suppressed communist and separatist rebellions, restored law and order, and maintained peace and stability. While engaging in counterinsurgency operations, the armed forces had to drive foreign invaders out of the country. However, in October 1958, as the political situation began to deteriorate to the point where the national security crisis was imminent, the then civilian government agreed to transfer state power to the Burmese army under the intervention of some senior military commanders (Maheshwari, 2014). In October 1958, the Burmese army established a caretaker government to restore political stability and hold general elections; it finally held general elections in February 1960, and then returned state power to the democratically elected government (Steinberg, 2021).

As the political crisis was looming again, on March 2, 1962, the Burmese army launched a military coup in the name of the Revolutionary Committee. At that time, General U Ne Win led a military coup and took power. The next twenty-six years. By the end of April, Revolutionary Council (RC) announced the Burmese Road to Socialism as its national construction plan. The leadership of the Burmese army subsequently established the Burmese Socialist Program Party in July 1962 to lead the socialist revolution in Burma (Maheshwari, 2014). In October 1958, the Burmese army established a caretaker government to restore political stability and hold general elections; it finally held general elections in February 1960, and then returned state power to the democratically elected government (Steinberg, 2021).

It was not until 1974 that a new constitution was promulgated and general elections were held to restore a constitutional government based on isolationist policies and a socialist economic plan to nationalize Myanmar's major enterprises. The economic situation was rapidly deteriorating and the black-market economy had the upper hand. By 1988, widespread corruption, rapid changes in economic policies related to Myanmar's currency and food shortages has led to large-scale student-led protests. In August 1988, the army suppressed the protesters, resulting in at least 3,000 deaths and displacement of thousands of people, and took over the state again in the name of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and changed its name to the National Peace and Development Council. In November 1997, after the crackdown in 1988, Ne Win resigned as party chairman, although he remained active behind the scenes as another military government came to power (Maheshwari, 2014).

In 2007, the so-called Saffron Revolution sparked widespread anti-government protests. These protests were triggered by rising fuel prices and named after the saffron-colored robes worn by participating Buddhist monks. International pressure prompted changes in Myanmar. In addition, the military government hoped to attract investment, reduce dependence on China, and establish relations with more countries. The military government introduced a new constitution in 2008, which is still in use today, giving the military extensive powers even under the civil rule. The military government was unexpectedly formally dissolved in 2011, and a transitional civil council was established, during which the former army bureaucrat and prime minister Thein Sein was appointed president (Myoe, 2009).

The 2011 Political Reform: An Attempt Towards Democracy

Starting in 2011, President Thein Sein took the lead in implementing a series of reforms, including pardoning political prisoners, relaxing media censorship, and implementing economic policies that encourage foreign investment. In 2015, Myanmar held its first national multi-party elections—considered to be the freest

and fairest elections in decades—since the country’s transition away from military rule. The daughter of the independence hero General Aung San and one of Myanmar’s most famous democratic leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi led her opposition party, the NLD, and won a landslide victory in the elections, winning the majority of seats in the upper and lower houses of the parliament. The new legislator elected Aung San Suu Kyi’s longtime confidant Htin Kyawas Myanmar’s first civilian leader in decades. Aung San Suu Kyi was appointed to the newly created position of State Counsellor and became the de facto head of the civil government.

But experts said that the armed forces continue to have a lot of control. The 2008 Constitution included several provisions to protect the rule of the army. For example, 25% of parliament seats were reserved for the military, and any amendments to the constitution required more than 75% of parliamentary approval, effectively giving the military the right to veto any amendments. In addition, the military’s acting party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), maintained a seat in the powerful defense, home affairs, and border affairs ministries (Myoe, 2009).

In 2020, Myanmar held its second national elections under the civil rule, and the NLD Party won by an overwhelming advantage. Although Human Rights Watch and other groups stated that the elections were flawed due to the deprivation of rights of the Rohingya and other problems, there was little controversy about the huge victory of the NLD.

The military suffered a major blow in the elections: the USDP won only 33 of the 476 available seats, while the NLD won 396. The military leaders accused voters of fraud. The military detained and charged Suu Kyi, placed lawmakers from the NLD and other parties under house arrest, and announced that Senior General Min Aung Hlaing would take charge of Myanmar during a yearlong state of emergency. It said elections will be held once the state of emergency ends, but experts said the military could retain power indefinitely.

In the aftermath of the coup, Myanmar had the largest protest since the Saffron Revolution. With tens of thousands of people calling for democracy and the release of Suu Kyi and others. The armed forces used the constitution to justify their actions. The document allows the military to exercise control under any circumstances that may lead to “the dissolution of the federation, the collapse of national unity, and the loss of sovereignty.” The military argued that the allegations of election fraud fit this description (Maheshwari, 2014).

In any case, the 2021 coup has brought a major setback to Myanmar’s transition towards a democratic and stable political system, and put the country again at a crossroads to make decision of its path in the future.

The Case of South Korea: From Dictatorship to Democracy

Since gaining independence in 1948, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been ruled under dictatorship for nearly four decades and had a successful transition into a civilian-governed democracy in the late 1980s. Similar to the situation of Myanmar, the Korean military has played a significant role in the political, economic and social process of Korea throughout history. Nevertheless, the democratic transition of Korea distinguishes from that of Myanmar as Korea remains largely a stable and prosperous democracy since the completion of political reforms. This section will briefly go through the history of Korea, with focuses on the roles of military and the process of democratic transition, to lay a foundation for the analysis that follows.

The three-year-long Korean War reduced the entire Korean Peninsula to rubble years after the establishment of South Korea. Millions of soldiers and civilians were killed. Most of the country’s industrial facilities were destroyed. South Korea has become one of the poorest countries in the world. However, the war taught South Koreans the value of freedom. This experience laid the foundation for inspiring patriotism in the

hearts of young students and uniformed soldiers and became the main engine of the country's modernization. President Rhee Seung-man strengthened his autocratic rule. In 1960, the ruling Liberal Party rigged the presidential election. Young students took to the streets to protest. The situation worsened when many demonstrators were shot by the police, which led to a massive protest called the April 19th Revolution. President Rhee Seung-man announced that he would step down and seek refuge in Hawaii. Soon thereafter, the constitution was amended and the cabinet system and the bicameral National Assembly were passed. According to the new constitution, the regime led by Prime Minister Jang Myeon was established, but the political situation became extremely fragile due to political struggles and continuous street demonstrations by students (South Korea.net, n.d.).

In May 1961, a group of young officers led by General Park Chung-hee launched a coup to seize power. In the presidential election held on October 15, 1963, after two years of military rule, Park Chung-hee, having retired from the military, was elected as President and inaugurated in December that same year. The government led by President Park set up a 5-year economic development plan under the slogan of "modernization of the fatherland" and achieved rapid economic growth by implementing an export-oriented policy.

Observers called it the "the Miracle on the Han River". The state vigorously pushed land development, including the construction of the Gyeongbu Expressway and metro lines. The country has also launched a Saemaeul Undong (New Community Movement) to transform a poor agricultural society into a country dominated by manufacturing.

When the government announced the Yusin (Revitalizing Reform) in October 1972, which aimed to extend the current government's term after 18 years of dictatorship, students and ordinary people continued to engage in democratization. After President Park was assassinated in October, 1979, a group of new officers led by General Chun Doo-hwan (Singunbu) seized power through a coup. The New Army used force to suppress voices calling for democratization, including the democratization movement on May 18. Chun Doo-hwan was sworn in as president and exercised an autocratic rule. The Chun Doo-hwan government concentrated on stabilizing the economy and successfully controlled price increases. Under his leadership, the country has achieved continued economic growth.

Although democratic demonstrations have been suppressed, with the extension of the military dictatorship, the requirements for the direct election system and freedom of speech have also increased. In 1987, one year before the end of the full presidential term, a large-scale democratic demonstration broke out across the country—the June Uprising. The June Uprising finally achieved its goal. After amending the constitution to guarantee the direct election system and restrict the president's re-election, Chun retired as president and established the democratic government currently known as the Sixth Republic (Choi, 2021; South Korea.net, n.d.).

In June 1987, the ruling party's presidential candidate and long-term political ally of Chun Doo-hwan, Roh Tae-woo issued a special statement stating that he would accept the people's demands for democratization and direct elections. In December 1987, he was elected to a five-year term as President and sworn in as President in February 1988. This election was no doubt a historic moment for South Korea as it marked the country has formally become a democracy and remains since then. Roh Tae-woo is also the last South Korean president to hold a senior military position before entering politics (Choi, 2021).

Praetorianism: Theoretical Analysis of the Military Rule in Myanmar and South Korea

Having gone through the history of political transformation in Myanmar and South Korea respectively, analyzing the similarities and differences between the cases of Myanmar and South Korea to clarify the factors leading to their opposite results, and finally draw lessons from history, it is of great significance and possibility.

A major feature in common between the two countries is that they have been under military rule for a long time. This section will establish a theoretical framework based mainly on Samuel P. Huntington's Praetorianism model, which focuses on the role of the military in national governance and its influence on political transformation.

Huntington's work represents an important starting point for developing a theoretical framework to explain the issue of military intervention in politics. Changing the political order in a society is one of the most ambitious attempts. The purpose is to establish a theoretical framework to analyze the problems of institutional instability and military intervention in developing societies. Therefore, a brief discussion of Huntington's arguments may help clarify the political role played by the armed forces and the shift in military intervention patterns in Myanmar and South Korea.

Huntington considers that the Praetorianism doctrine is the result of the lagging development of political institutionalization related to socio-economic development and social mobilization. The result is political mobilization without political integration. New social and political actors are being mobilized without simultaneously establishing political institutions that can express and integrate their needs. In the absence of a mediation mechanism, society and political forces confront each other "naked", that is, their politicization is not guided by institutional mechanisms, but is composed of unmediated wars against everyone. As we have seen in the history of Myanmar and South Korea, the large-scale participation of the armed forces of the two countries in politics is motivated by the desire for institutional political systems and social development. Especially in Myanmar, the central government lacks absolute military superiority over the local minority armed forces, and the social unrest under the incompetent transitional government (Peruzzotti, 2004; Lee, 2003).

The increase in citizen participation has exacerbated the ungovernability of politics because it allows new social groups to enter politics without simultaneously establishing appropriate interest aggregation and intermediary mechanisms. The development of social differentiation and diversification has not been accompanied by the development of more complex institutional arrangements, which can manage and stabilize the newly reached social complexity. Violence and de facto social power filled the vacuum left by lack of political institutions. Perhaps the most notorious aspect of the former is the central role played by the military as an arbiter of political conflicts. However, the latter is only the most obvious manifestation of a broader phenomenon: the unmediated politicization of all social forces.

Huntington believes that the issue of unmanageability is the most typical feature of Praetorianism. In the praetorian society, different forms of regimes usually follow each other in "seemingly unpredictable and confusing ways". The difference between Praetorianism and authoritarian and democratic regimes lies in the lack of any type of stable institutional arrangements. In the praetorian scenario, feeble political institutions find themselves at the mercy of unruly and powerful social forces, which "colonize" the former to advance their private interests. The "colonized" political system lacks the autonomy of any social group: Specific interests and individuals use public office to promote their private and/or corporate interests. This proposition is also very important because it shows a major difference between Myanmar and South Korea—in the history of the

former, we have seen frequent civil and military alternations, which caused severe social unrest and policy inconsistency, while in the latter's history, Regimes tend to be more stable, and there is less direct military rule except based on each government (Peruzzotti, 2004).

Huntington considers that there are two main political paths for system construction: The first is to use the army as the central agent of the institutionalization process. The second one depends on the organizational ability of the political party. Let us briefly study some of the problems brought about by the military road because it is the problem we are focusing on in this article. In his analysis of possible institutionalized alternatives, Huntington foresaw military authoritarianism as a possible solution to the problem of Praetorianism. He distinguished occasional military intervention (an integral aspect of Praetorianism) from attempts to establish a permanent authoritarian regime:

“Intermittent military intervention to stop politics or to suspend politics is the essence of Praetorianism. Sustained military participation in politics may lead a society away from Praetorianism (Huntington, 1968).”

Huntington's confidence in the military as a potential system builder is based on the special organizational characteristics of military organizations and their monopoly on violent methods. Huntington believes that the institution's emphasis on professionalism, discipline, and hierarchy keeps it safe from politicization. In a praetorian context, the military seems to be the only actor capable of acting as a neutral and depoliticized force. He believes that only the military can unite the people behind a common national goal because their contempt for politics makes them a just force above politics:

“The military... may possess a greater capacity for generating power in a radical praetorian society... The military can be cohesive, bureaucratized, and disciplined... The effectiveness of military intervention stems at least as much from the organizational characteristics of the military as from its control of or use of violence... It is thus their superior organizational capacities that make intervention by the military... more productive than intervention by other social forces... Military intervention, which many people consider to be the source of the evil in a praetorian society, may also be the source of the cure (Huntington, 1968).”

The bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes would illustrate the many dilemmas of the military road leading to political institutionalization. Compared with past military coups (as Huntington correctly observes as an integral part of the praetorian game), the military regime sees itself as a fundamental attempt to establish the institutional basis for a new order to prevent the prolonged problem of Praetorianism. The new military regimes were committed to the restoration of order through the deactivation of civil society and the normalization of the economy. Their policies were oriented by a common effort at establishing a new polity that would leave Praetorianism behind.

To sum up, the military plays a progressive role during the early stage of modernization in both Myanmar and Korea, serving a role of “mediator” or even “reformers”. Yet the conflicts between military and civic groups rapidly intensified in the later mass Praetorianism stage, where the expansion of political participation makes the society more complex and the urge of modernization more salient. The role of the military thus changes from a participant to a conservative guardian of existing orders, political decay follows and the country faces the choice of future's path.

Differences Between Myanmar and South Korea

The cases of Myanmar and Korea were not exactly the same despite the Praetorianism-styled military rule

shared by both of them. The differences directly led to the varying results of political transitions in the two countries, where Korea rectified its authoritarian legacy more effectively in 1995 and 1996, while Myanmar never adequately came to terms with it.

Comparing the different experiences of confrontation and crime in the two countries in the past, we focus on three main roles: the government in power, civil society, and the military. The different ways in which they interact will be identified as a key variable to explain the different results of historical rectification and political handling of the remaining issues. In addition, it traces how the settlement or failure of past crimes has affected democratic governance in Myanmar and South Korea. Some people believe that the different performances of the two countries in correcting the authoritarian heritage have profoundly affected the quality of democratic governance in terms of culture and system.

The remaining problems have also led to the dilemma of the relevant state institutions. Many human rights violations, institutionalized crimes committed by the military, police, or security agencies, and covered up by public prosecutors, investigations, and prosecutions, are bound to frustrate and undermine the stability of the state machinery on which the new regime relies on law enforcement. Maintain order. In some cases, the active moral crusade against past wrongdoing may even trigger military threats. If it is not an armed rebellion, it will make it more difficult to punish those responsible for institutionalized crimes. In addition, there is no easy way to collect reliable information about past wrongdoings, because many perpetrators are low- and middle-level public officials that are strategically placed to hide information from the public. Even if the evidence is collected, unless their commanders are also brought to justice, it is problematic to punish them. By blaming their superiors, they improperly portray themselves as victims of the times and are forced to do things they do not want to do. Therefore, in an attempt to correct the past, there are two opposing and mutually opposing political reasons: “ethical symbolism” and “political nationalism” (Garreton, 1996). The moral symbol of rational beer proposed by victims and human rights-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emphasizes the need to find the truth and punish offenders as a way to establish the rule of law to strengthen accountability and deepen democratization. According to its advocates, seeking the truth and punishing offenders are not only to prevent future violations of human rights and future military coups; it is also the moral obligation of society to victims and their families. In addition, punishing offenders will symbolically break with the past and restore the honor of victims accused of subversion by the state.

In contrast, the basic principles of political nationalism emphasize the need to recognize the restrictions imposed on truth investigations by larger political structures and lower expectations of what can be done. Its advocates usually call for “remembering” but not punishing offenders, and reconciling with the past but not succumbing to the pressure of the past, lest emerging democracies shake under the threat of military backlash or political polarization. They argue that because their new democracy is fragile and vulnerable to the threat of democratic reversal, reconciliation is essential to the task of putting the new democracy on a more stable foundation. For them, the consolidation of democracy should take precedence over the moral need to punish past crimes. In the eyes of political nationalists, the proponents of moral symbolism believe that moral movement is an indispensable part of democratic consolidation and is considered to bring about the opposite democratic reversal.

For South Korea, despite the country’s transition to democracy through transactions and reforms, its democratic regime began investigating and punishing the crimes of authoritarian officials in 1996 after many

twists and turns.

South Korea's rectification of its authoritarian past has gone through three stages. One of three different democratically elected governments presides over each term to deal with the problems of the past. The different remedies they offered reflect the changing balance of power between democratic and authoritarian forces, as well as the respective political calculations of the political leaders in power. The Roh Tae-woo government (1988-1992) only reluctantly dealt with the issue of its past autocracy, because any investigation of the Chun Administration's past human rights violations will tarnish its public image, sow the seeds of its internal division, and even implicate the president in criminal activities. It started investigating the Gwangju massacre in 1980 only because of increasing pressure from opposition parties and the chaeya (civil society) movement of dissidents. The opposition did this because the Gwangju massacre provided an opportunity to demand its continued loyalty to the cause of human rights, rebuild its tense alliance with chaeya's dissidents, and regain the political initiative lost due to the defeat of the 1987 presidential election by exposing Roh Tae-woo's relationship with the Chun Administration. However, the president agreed to hold a hearing in the National Assembly because the opposition promised to seek the truth only, rather than prosecute human rights violations. Roh Tae-woo also saw an opportunity to shirk all responsibility for past wrongdoing to Chun Doo Hwan. Then came seven years of difficult political tug-of-war. Roh Tae-woo and later Kim Young-sam tried to tame chaeya's dissidents on human rights violations through rhetorical concessions and even political suppression. At the end of the tug-of-war, Kim Young-sam suddenly turned around and prosecuted the leaders of the 1979 military coup and the 1980 Gwangju massacre for military mutiny, treason, and corruption. In contrast, the Kim Dae-jung government (1998-2003) shifted the focus of reform from prosecuting the perpetrators to establishing institutions to protect human rights (Lee, 2003).

After their respective democratic transitions, South Korea and Myanmar both made serious efforts to compromise with the past and correct the crimes committed by the previous authoritarian regime. Both found that dealing with past authoritarian crimes was fraught with irreconcilable dilemmas, at least in the short term. In addition to the democratic transition model, the political dynamics after the transition significantly affected the outcome of the struggle to correct the remaining problems. Myanmar's transformation is mainly through concessions from the military, but South Korea has gone further in rebuilding history and correcting human rights violations with a transaction/reform model. The reason why South Korea is successful is that compared with Myanmar, its democratic consolidation process has dispersed political power more, weakened the military more, and tilted the balance of power more toward opposition parties.

This divergence in the post-transition political trajectory manifests itself in three different ways. First, South Korea is prosecuting the top politicians of former Presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo for the worst mutiny and treason other than corruption and bribery, while Myanmar focuses more narrowly on murder, kidnapping, and torture by security forces. By doing so, the South Korean civilian government has positively denied the legitimacy and legitimacy of the authoritarian regime, while Myanmar has avoided the problems of national terror and institutional crimes after the 2011 reforms.

Secondly, the South Korean government has not only been more active in investigating past wrongdoings; they have also prosecuted the perpetrators, despite many futile efforts. In 1996, the court sentenced Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo to life imprisonment for more than 20 years for military mutiny and treason. In Myanmar, despite strong pressure from civil organizations, the Burmese government could not prosecute let

alone investigate past human rights abuses (Peruzzotti, 2004).

Third, South Korea began to establish an institution to protect human rights during the presidency of Kim Dae-jung, and finally passed legal prosecutions against the two former presidents and their deputy tenants, leaving the past behind. Myanmar is also lagging in the construction of future-oriented institutions, because counter-insurgency operations have dragged its democratically elected government into a retaliatory war with the rebels, and human rights violations on both sides have risen at the same time. Human rights violations are not the past but the present. The democratically elected presidents, with their hands dirtied in counterinsurgency operations, had neither the moral clout nor the political interest to build institutional protections for human rights, which would make the military accountable for human rights violations (Lee, 2003).

Judging from the experience of the two countries, the following factors seem to be the key factors that determine the political outcome of historical rectification. First, the ability of the elected president to reform military-civilian relations is the primary variable that determines the scope, speed, and depth of historical rectification. The Kim Young-sam government could sue Chun Doo Hwan and Noh Tae Woo in 1995, only because Singunbu was removed from the army three years ago for political reasons other than correcting human rights violations. Then, Kim Young-sam forcibly retired, not because he foresaw the confrontation with Chun Doo-hwan and Noh Tae-woo, but because he wanted to put the army firmly under his leadership. However, when Lu Tae-woo's embezzled funds were revealed to trigger a political crisis, the purge of Singunbu officials helped Kim Young-sam expand his political options and chose the option of historical rectification to overcome this crisis.

Unlike South Korea's military administration, Myanmar's military regime has not made it easier for reformed Myanmar to break with the past. On the contrary, the break between Myanmar and South Korea is equally difficult because the military is invited to share power with the ruling military government and continue to suppress the opposition as a small partner of the regime. The military is deeply involved in human rights violations and opposes any obvious break with the past after the democratic transition. In addition, the Myanmar military not only avoided conflicts with their leaders during the ruling of the military government but also portrayed themselves as advocates of democratic values and gained the power to defend their interests. If being a junior partner made the Myanmar military interested in preventing investigations into past institutional crimes, then standing on the side of the victors in the two revolutions provided the power to defend such interests. After the democratic transition, the military's political influence has grown abnormally, hindering the correction of past human rights violations.

Second, the existence of internal security threats has severely hindered the military's withdrawal from politics, thereby preventing the correction of past and ongoing human rights violations. The Myanmar military continues to violate human rights while carrying out counter-insurgency operations. The democratically elected government believes that they must ignore these human rights violations, lest leftists and separatists threaten political stability and undermine the nascent democracy. South Korea is also facing security threats from North Korea, one of the consequences of which is to maintain the national security laws that were used to suppress dissidents before 1987. North Korea's economic and military power, and the collapse of North Korea's economy. In addition, the progress made in the inter-South Korean dialogue has significantly reduced the perceived (if not actual) military threat from the north, making it increasingly difficult for security forces to suppress human rights in the name of national interest.

Third, civil society is an organized field of social life, which is voluntary, self-generated, and not controlled by the state (Diamond, 1994). It also independently affected the results of historical rectification of politics. In South Korea, extensive mobilization of civil society is the key source of pressure for democratic change. Roh Tae-woo and later Kim Young Sam refused to go beyond investigation and compensation, only seeing victims, chaeya dissidents, and later chaeya groups transformed into non-governmental organizations, working harder to fight back and plan large-scale political protests. The activities demanded that the leaders of the 1979 military coup and the 1980 Gwangju massacre be punished in accordance with the law. They build their political power by establishing contacts with opposition parties and bringing university professors, students, teachers, and lawyers into the national umbrella organization.

In Myanmar, civil society is also actively calling for the correction of human rights violations, but it is more dispersed internally than South Korean NGOs and has fewer close ties with the opposition party externally. In addition, Myanmar's middle class and intellectuals reacted even more vaguely to the call to action. Political parties are not willing to risk dissatisfaction from the military because they are extremely divided.

Importantly, both experiences show that the correction of past authoritarianism has had a lasting and positive impact on the democratic system. It can not only prevent the country from being bound by the weight of the past, it also allows it to advance the establishment of institutional protection of human rights. But this will endanger the personal political interests of the rectifier and threaten the direct stability of his/her nascent democratic regime. Due to this trade-off between system benefits and personal risks, as well as the dilemma between long-term justice and short-term regime stability, the political elites of these emerging democratic regimes, including South Korea's Kim Young Sam, are still unwilling to face the past and deal with it positively. Only when further evading this issue could seriously undermine his presidency, did Kim Young Sam begin to correct history. It was only at that moment that the transformative forces of post-transitional politics significantly empowered South Korean society, instilled new human rights concepts in it, and established new channels of communication between its weakly organized but politically controversial opposition parties.

The Possibility of the "South Korean Way" for Myanmar

South Korea's democracy is the result of 27 years of democratic protests and activism. It is an example of how public demands for fair elections can transform an authoritarian regime into a free democracy. The democratization process in the country has some similarities with the recent protests in Myanmar. The cases of South Korea in the past and Myanmar and Thailand today show that the public is increasingly concerned about the right to choose leaders through fair elections and enjoy the freedom of speech. The government used tear gas, water cannons and even live ammunition to suppress the demonstrations. The international community is under increasing pressure to respect human rights and democratic freedoms; the United States has warned Myanmar to stop the violent suppression of civilians. In the long run, these demonstrations in Myanmar may achieve the same results as South Korea in 1987.

However, compared with the situation in South Korea, two main differences may cause more difficulties for the recent democratic movement. First, in the cases of South Korea and Myanmar, there are differences in the way they treat "democracy" itself. Due to the influence of the United States and the anti-communist during the Cold War, democracy was deeply ingrained among the South Korean people. South Korean leaders needed to emphasize "democratic ideals" to contain the perceived threats of North Korea and communism in public

opinion and to justify their governance. Therefore, even if the government was authoritarian, the ideals of democracy were included in the education curriculum. Direct elections were held regularly before Park's Yushin Regime. Since democracy was used to justify their rule, even leaders like Park and Chun, who obtained power through force and indirect elections, had to persistently face the public's challenges over their legitimacy and demanded for the popular right to select the state leader.

On the other hand, the military regime in Myanmar defends itself in ways other than democracy. From 1962 to 2011, Myanmar has been under a military dictatorship. Even if the military began its transition to a civilian government in the first decade of the 2000s, it retained the right to participate in domestic politics. According to the 2008 constitution drafted by the military, the military is allowed to appoint 25% of the seats in the federal parliament. This prevents the civilian government from passing constitutional amendments that allow fair and direct elections to exclude the influence of the military. The space for real democracy to take root in Myanmar's domestic politics is limited (Choi, 2021).

Second, Northeast Asia in the 1980s is in sharp contrast with Myanmar in the 2020s. The June Uprising occurred before the end of the Cold War. It was not until the early 1990s that South Korea established any diplomatic relations with China or the Soviet Union, and it relied on the United States to ensure security when fighting against the communist bloc. Therefore, the authoritarian regime needs the support of the United States to maintain its power. One of the reasons Chen had to give up power was because he lost Washington's support. During the June Uprising, the Reagan administration pressured Junjun to ban the use of force against civilians and promote democratic reforms in South Korea. Therefore, the South Korean government has no choice but to accept the call for democracy, because losing the support of the United States will weaken its security against its northern rivals.

In contrast, Myanmar today has become an arena for competition between the United States and China. Since the end of the Cold War, China's rise as a regional hegemon has increased Beijing's influence on its neighbors and challenged the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

As far as Myanmar is concerned, some analysts have pointed out that China may prefer Aung San Suu Kyi's government to the military government. Chen Hai, the Chinese ambassador to Myanmar, also stated that the political disputes in Myanmar are "definitely not what China wants to see (Wong, 2021)". However, this does not necessarily mean that China wants democracy in Myanmar. Instead, it seeks stability. Both military coups and civil disobedience movements are seen as the source of China's instability. They may undermine their regional interests and push the United States to intervene as the self-styled protector of freedom and democracy (especially when the Biden administration has called on the League of Democracies to confront China). China has also blocked the UN Security Council's statement condemning the coup and has not shown any active attempts to limit the military government's violent repression. If the instability in Myanmar increases, China may choose to support an authoritarian government to quell any sources of instability. Therefore, authoritarian regimes have less motivation to accept democracy, because even if they lose the trust of the United States, they can still seek support from China.

Conclusions

This paper has explored the different results of political transitions in Myanmar and South Korea, respectively through reviewing the history of the two countries and using Huntington's theory of Praetorianism, with a focus on the military's participation in domestic politics. Based on the analysis on the Praetorianism

characteristics shared by both countries and differences within their transition processes over the handling of dictatorship legacy and the building of new political institutions. In the end, the possibility of applying the experience of South Korea in Myanmar has been evaluated.

South Korea's democracy was possible not only because of the public's demand but also because of the government's search for legitimacy and dependence on external power. Although Myanmar is currently going through a similar process, its differences from South Korea may cause more challenges to democracy in the region. South Korea can be a role model for the democratization of Myanmar, but it should not be the only one. The successful democratization processes in other Southeast Asian states can be good examples, such as Indonesia after Suharto or Philippines' "People Power" movement that took down the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. A new paradigm of democratic movements using online platforms might also provide a breakthrough.

Even then, however, it is still unclear if Myanmar is willing to accept democracy any soon. The current situation suggests that there will be more agony, struggle, and hardship in the years to come.

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