SETTING THE PARAMETERS FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:
STUDENTS, WORKERS, AND THE SOUTH KOREAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL

by

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B.A., The University of Alberta, 1989

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 1991

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to explain social movements—why they occur and why they assume their specific characters—in terms of the way a society is structured. Using premises drawn from theoretical literature on late capitalism and contemporary social movements, one is directed to look for contradictions in sociopolitical structures for the source of conflict and social movements. When social groups experience these they may engage in collective action or protest movements. It is possible, however, that they may not be fully aware of these contradictions or strongly motivated by them. "Dominant" social groups may take steps to ensure that conflict does not emerge by masking disparities or by suppressing defiant groups.

Where the state intervenes heavily in society and economy, as in late capitalist societies, unique contradictions are created which may inspire social conflict. However, the state is also in a unique position to "legitimate" its intervention and the existing sociopolitical configuration. The state will be most concerned with preventing movements that pose the greatest threat to the prevailing social structure. Social contradictions and the efforts of dominant groups and state to temper their impact produce a series of inducements and constraints to collective action.

Although South Korea is not in the stage of late capitalism, parallels exist and it is possible to use this theoretical framework to explain the difference between the student and labour movements in that country. The features of the Korean model of development—an interventionist developmental state, an emphasis on economic development and neglect of social and political, nurturing of monopoly capital, popular exclusion from the policy-making process and fast-paced industrialization—produce a particular set of motivations and barriers to collective action. Because workers and students do not experience these in the same way, their respective social movements differ in shape and level of activity.

Workers are essential to the development process and thus are subject to more constraints to protest
activity in the form of developmental rhetoric and even outright repression. State and business expend
greater efforts to ensure that they are 'incorporated' into the model. University students are particularly well-
placed to see the contradictions of the model and are less inclined to accept state attempts to legitimize its
caracter. Because students are not as essential to the development process, they are not faced with the
same repressive measures. Nevertheless, their ability to influence the middle and working classes forces
the state to respond to their protest. Students are not as regimented in their time and environment as
industrial workers which affords them more space for protest activity. Middle class sympathy for their cause
has also helped to shield them from the state's negative sanctions.

As the Korean development model has undergone restructuring since the mid-1980s, the student and
labour movements have adapted accordingly. Workers have grown in power, while political reform has
undercut the students' protest platform. Yet many of the former structures remain intact; they were
remodelled just enough to accommodate growing pluralism in society. The future of these two movements
remains in question as they await further reform or government retrenchment.
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INTRODUCTION

South Korea¹ has received considerable attention as a country that has moved from the ranks of the lesser developed to the newly industrialized. While the bulk of academic attention has focused on Korea's economic development, the attention of the news media has been captured by its volatile political situation. At the centre of this political drama, one finds social movements taking their opposition to the ruling regime and the economic establishment into the streets. This is the 'flip side' of the Korean miracle, a side that deserves at least as much attention as GNP growth statistics. Korea's economic success and its popular protest are not distinct phenomena like two separate dramas playing on the same stage. They are two parts of the same play and thus cannot be viewed in isolation.

Social movements are an important part of every sociopolitical system. Like a mirror, they provide a reverse image of society, reflecting back all of its contradictions and incongruities. They demand a reassessment of existing institutions, but they also suggest alternative ways of "constituting" society.² Established structures and social movements are intimately bound together. Alain Touraine provides a succinct summation of this relationship: "[A social movement] is born and dies with the society of which it is part."³ Sociopolitical structures provide the context for social movements or set the parameters in which they act. Every society contains certain contradictions which give rise to social conflict and social movements.⁴

It makes sense then to look to the intersection of social movements and social structures for

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¹South Korea or the Republic of Korea will simply be referred to as Korea throughout much of this paper.


⁴Giddens, p. 198.
explanations of why movements occur and why they take the shape that they do. This thesis attempts to explain the difference between the student and labour movements in South Korea with reference to the structures and conditions created in the process of three decades of intense economic development (1961-1991). The 'Korean development model' comprises certain features which generate inducements and constraints for protest movements. Because workers and students do not experience these in the same way, their respective movements differ in level of mobilization.

Korean students have figured prominently in sociopolitical protest for decades. They inherit a tradition of dissent from students during the Japanese occupation and even as early as the Yi (Choson) Dynasty (1392-1910). One would expect workers to be equally active as they have carried the burden of Korea's intense economic development. Traditional Marxist analysis and the development experience of other capitalist countries, such as Britain and the United States, reinforce this assumption. Nevertheless, there has been a marked difference in the level of labour and student mobilization, at least until the mid-1980s. Up until that time, worker protest tended to be more sporadic and less militant. In spite of the concerted efforts of student activists and a small core of militant workers, these two movements seldom achieved solidarity of social action.

Exploring the reasons for the dissimilarity in the level of activity of the labour and student movements raises a fundamental question—not "how" movements succeed, but "why" they develop in the first place. The first chapter of this thesis looks at a number of possible explanations for the unique qualities of these

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two movements. In the literature on South Korea, one often encounters references to cultural-historical legacies as determinants of contemporary patterns of protest. Chapter two discusses explanations drawn from general theories of social movements such as the relative deprivation and resource mobilization theories. The literature on late capitalism and new social movements theory seems to have the strongest explanatory power for South Korea's social movements. Although this literature is generally applied to developed capitalist societies, it is useful because it points to the particular pattern of Korean development as a source of social movements. By placing the student and labour movements in this context, one is able to understand why certain cultural legacies prevail, why social groups have uneven access to resources and why relative deprivation does not always translate into collective action.

Chapter three outlines the central characteristics of the Korean development model. Social movements in South Korea are a product of a modernization process that has emphasized the economic dimension while leaving the political and social lagging behind. The features of the model which have relevance for the two movements in question include: a strong "developmental" state which is insulated from popular demands; a close connection between politics and economics, with economic development serving to legitimize successive authoritarian regimes; nurturing of monopoly capital as the vehicle by which economic development might be achieved; and intense, rapid industrialization with growth rather than equity as the measure of successful development.7

In chapter four, the labour and student movements are analyzed in turn to show how they have

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7For further information on these points see: Chalmers Johnson, "Political Institutions and Economic Performance: The Government-Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan," in The Political Economy of New Asian Industrialism, ed. Fredric C. Deyo (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 136-164. For information on the insulation of the Korean state see: Lym Hyun-Chin and Paek Woon-Seon, "State Autonomy in Modern Korea: Instrumental Possibilities and Structural Limits," Korea Journal 27 (November 1987). Hooshang Amirahmadi discusses the emphasis on growth in "Development Paradigms at the Crossroad in the South Korean Experience," Journal of Contemporary Asia 19 (No. 2, 1989):169-70, 173. The literature on the Korean political economy is vast and these articles represent only a few of those that describe the characteristics listed above. A more extensive treatment of this subject along with references to other material in this area can be found in chapter three.
developed in the face of the constraints and inducements which emanate from the Korean pattern of development. The fifth and final chapter of this thesis discusses the transformation of the Korean model in recent years and the attendant changes in the shape of the two movements in question.
I. KOREAN CULTURE, HISTORY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In searching for answers as to why students have been more active than workers in sociopolitical protest in South Korea, one frequently encounters references to the influence of cultural-historical factors. Many commentators on the student movement draw attention to the parallels between contemporary student protest and remonstrance of the throne by Confucian scholars in Yi Dynasty Korea. By so doing they suggest, at least implicitly, that student activism is a cultural inheritance. Through protest activity students are either consciously or unconsciously fulfilling a traditional role which Michael Kalton refers to as "the conscience of society".

Certainly similarities exist, but can one ascribe student activism to the resilience of a traditional role? Incredible transformations have taken place in the past few centuries. What do contemporary students have in common with Yi dynasty Confucian students? In modern Korea just as in traditional, higher education represents a ticket to a position within established institutions. However, traditional students remonstrated when the dominant order was threatened whereas contemporary student protest, for the most part, challenges the legitimacy of existing institutions—particularly the political.

The Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) introduced this dimension of student protest—the rejection

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8The following excerpt is an example of this:

"Students, as the nascent literati, were often the watchdogs of political morality. Student demonstrations, against what they regarded as undue Buddhist influence or unorthodox Confucian behaviour, may be traced to the fifteenth century and were sporadic thereafter. Students today regard themselves as the political conscience of the country, although on occasion that role is disputed by elements of society at large." David I. Steinberg, The Republic of Korea: Economic Transformation and Social Change (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), p.79.


of the existing political and social configuration. A significant number of Korean students pursued higher education as a means of finding a place within the colonial order. Some succeeded but, for the most part, opportunities were few and social mobility was blocked by Japanese who filled the upper levels of government, bureaucracy and business.\textsuperscript{11} Out of frustration at this lack of opportunity, fervent nationalism or perhaps a change of consciousness in the process of receiving an education, students became a significant force in the nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{12}

One can detect a legacy from traditional Korea and the Japanese colonial period in contemporary student protest, but legacies are not equivalent to motivating factors. As Peter A. Gourevitch notes, since every culture contains a number of "diverse" and even contradictory elements, it is more useful to look for current circumstances which enhance specific cultural-historical characteristics.\textsuperscript{13} Using culture as a blanket explanation for rapid economic development or the extent of student militancy fails to capture the complex relationship between modernity and tradition. Korean students are not simply acting out a cultural-historical


\textsuperscript{12}Many Korean students went to Japan to receive higher education where the academic environment was not as restricted as it was in at home. They were introduced to schools of political thought which inspired rebellion against Japanese rule such as democratic liberalism, the rights of self determination and socialism. Henderson, p. 91. See also Chong-Sik Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 98-99; Kenneth M. Wells, "Background to the March First Movement: Koreans in Japan, 1905-1919," Korean Studies 13 (1989):3-21; and Michael E. Robinson, Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920-1925 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 109-111. In February 1919, Korean students in Japan issued the Tokyo Korean Students Declaration of Independence. For details of student involvement in the March First Movement see Robinson, p. 66; Chong-Sik Lee, Korean Nationalism, chap. 7 and Ki-baik Lee, p. 342.

legacy; they are denouncing contemporary social and political realities. These reinforce the traditional role of students as activists. It is important to look at the ways in which the structures created by Korea’s model of development provide cause and space for student militancy.

Cultural-historical explanations of the level of labour activism are not as common in view of the fact that parallels between modern industrial workers and some traditional counterpart are not as easily drawn. However, like the peasants, workers do act as the economic backbone of the prevailing socioeconomic structure. While their labour is indispensable to the survival of that system, their social status does not reflect their importance. Unlike the socially privileged students, whose protest and moral indignation is accepted as a right of position, those at the lower end of the Confucian hierarchy are more subject to the dictates of obedience and submission.

Does the peasant condition have relevance for labour activism or the lack thereof? One does encounter references to the consequences of Confucian hierarchy and authoritarianism in the literature on the labour movement. The majority of industrial workers are of peasant stock, and thus peasant attitudes have been carried into the industrial workplace. Nevertheless, Gourevitch’s warning can also be applied to South Korea’s labour movement. Cultural traditions have complex ramifications which are mitigated by intermediate factors like development models. Traditional peasant conservatism was also complemented by a willingness to rebel when reality did not correspond with the idealized Confucian order. Furthermore, the degree of lower class incorporation into the Confucian order itself is open to question. It is difficult to attribute 'harmonious' labour relations to a cultural propensity to submit to the rigors of life at the bottom of the social hierarchy.


15See Robinson, p. 17; and Cumings, Korean War, p. 10.
The industrial working class is not a product of Yi Dynasty Korea, but has its origins in the period of Japanese colonial rule. Initially, Korea served as a supplier of foodstuffs and raw materials. After Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, Korean industry experienced a substantial expansion in order to meet the demands of the Japanese war effort. The percentage of Korea's gross commodity product devoted to manufacturing went from 17.7 in 1925 to 39 in 1939. Manufacturing experienced an average annual growth rate of 10 percent from 1910 to 1945. Japanese zaibatsu controlled the lion's share of the larger manufacturing firms, but Korean entrepreneurs headed a significant number of smaller firms, mostly in the manufacture of textiles. Of greatest interest for the purposes of this paper is the expansion of the working class. The number of industrial workers went from 212,459 in 1938 to 421,229 in 1944.

Just as do the students, Korea's working class carries forth a legacy of anti-establishment protest from the colonial period. Under the Japanese, one did not find workers labouring dutifully out of a cultural propensity to submit to authority. Industrial relations were marked by conflict; disputes were militant and widespread, at least until repression drove the labour movement underground. Could it be otherwise when those relations were a microcosm of the whole colonial experience with Japanese at the top and Koreans on the bottom? Labour struggle became another component of the broader national struggle. It was

16 Ki-baik Lee, pp. 349-50.
17 Ibid., p. 351.
radicalized by a strong influence from the left, which in the process of trying to discredit, the Japanese made seem more attractive and heroic.\textsuperscript{23} The number of work stoppages and labour disputes and the consequent repression of workers under Japanese rule introduced a pattern of worker protest that is an important part of Korea's labour history.\textsuperscript{24}

Another important shaping experience for the labour and student movements occurred during the decade immediately following liberation in 1945. These years witnessed the Soviet and U.S. occupation of separate halves of the peninsula and the subsequent creation of two autonomous states, the election of the First Republic in the South in 1948 with Syngman Rhee as president and the Korean war from 1950-1953. American forces did not arrive to occupy the southern half of the peninsula until three weeks after the Japanese had surrendered on August 15, 1945. During the interim, "people's committees" were established by moderate leftist forces. Shortly before the Americans arrived, members of the people's committees declared the establishment of the "Korean People's Republic". Instead of working with these organizations, the Americans nurtured conservative groups and paved the way for Syngman Rhee to rise to power.\textsuperscript{25} Rhee's rise and the early rejection by the Americans of those whom Ogle refers to as "moderates" contributed to a fall-out between radical and conservative groups. This even led to guerilla activity on the part of leftist forces in a number of regions of South Korea.\textsuperscript{26} The outbreak of the Korean war gave further justification to Rhee to eliminate the 'communist threat' which essentially meant anyone left of his ultra-conservative


\textsuperscript{24}In \textit{Dissent}, Ogle notes that cooptation was another feature of labour relations under Japan (p. 6).

\textsuperscript{25}For details see Henderson, chap. 5; Cumings, \textit{Korean War}, chap. 5; and Ogle "Labour," pp. 38-45.

\textsuperscript{26}One of the most serious incidents occurred in 1948 when an army regiment sent to crush guerilla activity on Cheju Island mutinied and began the Yeosu-Sunchon Rebellion. See Sungjoo Han, \textit{The Failure of Democracy in South Korea} (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974), p. 15-16; and Henderson, pp. 162-63.
Liberal party.\textsuperscript{27}

All of this had major consequences for the student and labour movements which had been influenced strongly by the left. At the time of liberation, groups of workers took control of factories in order to keep them running and to guard against looting.\textsuperscript{28} The unions they formed were affiliated with the people's committees and eventually a quasi-national union, the \textit{Chun Pyong} (General Council of Korean Trade Unions), was created. In 1946, it claimed 553,408 members.\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Chun Pyong} constantly found itself at loggerheads with the American Military Government in Korea (AMGIK) which it refused to accept as having legitimate authority.\textsuperscript{30} In 1946, it was behind a general strike which was eventually quashed by the AMGIK.\textsuperscript{31} It continued to operate but at much reduced capacity due to legal restrictions and was finally outlawed by the Rhee government in 1949. In its stead, the Rhee regime fostered a right-wing labour group known as the \textit{No Chong} (Federation of Korean Trade Unions).\textsuperscript{32}

Youth organizations experienced a similar fate. Students had been very active in the creation of the people's committees throughout the Korean countryside. 'Radical' student organizations also were met with suspicion by the AMGIK and repression by the Rhee government. During the Korean war, the most militant

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{This included Cho Pong-am and his Progressive Party. Cho was eventually executed for "espionage activities" in 1959. Han, pp. 78-87. See also Henderson, p. 215.}


\footnote{For more information see Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld, \textit{Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economies in Crisis} (San Francisco: The Institute of Food and Development Policy, 1990), p.30; and Ogle, "Labour," pp. 46-47.}

\footnote{Ogle, \textit{Dissent}, p. 9; and Amy Rauenhorst, "Industrial Relations in Korea: The Backdrop to the Current Drama," \textit{Comparative Law Journal} 11 (Spring 1990):321-22.}

\footnote{For details see Ogle, "Labour," pp. 48-50, 55.}

\footnote{Ogle, \textit{Dissent}, p. 12.}
\end{footnotes}
either fled to the North or were executed by the Rhee government. More moderate activists were forced to make a choice between supporting the Rhee regime or being "branded" as communists like their more militant counterparts. After the war there was little room for student mobilization outside of the government created student and youth organizations: the National Youth Corps and the Korean Student Corps for National Defence. Some small leftist cells remained but their latitude for activity was extremely small.

In spite of concerted efforts to mobilize students in support of the government, student demonstrations against state corruption and election fraud became the catalyst for the fall of the Rhee regime in April 1960. Yet, as Martin Hart-Landsberg notes, this was a different breed of student activism than that which had existed prior to the Korean war. Leftist elements had lost much of their influence; those cells that remained did not take an active part until Rhee was out of office. The new guard of student activists were fed on the principles of liberal democracy and the free market. They demonstrated against the Rhee regime because it did not reflect the principles which it supposedly espoused.

From 1960 on, the students began to tread an increasingly more radical path which took them back again to the left. The workers did not experience the same progression. Although one cannot deny earlier efforts, their radicalization was delayed until the 1980s. Labour did not participate in the initial demonstrations

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33See Henderson pp. 167-69 for details of trials.
34Sungjoo Han, Failure, p. 195.
37Hart-Landsberg, "Looking at the Left," p. 60.
38Sungjoo Han, Failure, p. 200.
against the Rhee government but after student demonstrators were shot they too joined the call for a clean-up of the government.\textsuperscript{40} Under the Chang Myon administration, labour disputes multiplied exponentially as did student activism.\textsuperscript{41} Nevertheless, the two movements did not continue on the same path.

It is difficult to make a definite connection between traditional Confucian culture, labour and student militancy during the Japanese colonial period or the suppression of the left following liberation and the shape of contemporary labour and student movements without considering the ways in which the Korean development model has reinforced and rejected various legacies. Chapter three will discuss aspects of the Korean model of development that might have caused the two movements to diverge. The next chapter looks at the general literature on social movements to create a theoretical framework for the differing levels of student and worker mobilization during Korea's rapid development.

\textsuperscript{40}Ogle, \textit{Dissent}, p. 13 and \textit{"Labour,"} p. 73.

II. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THEORY AND SOUTH KOREA

An alternative to looking for explanations of student and labour mobilization within specific historical-cultural legacies is to turn to the general theoretical literature on social movements. There are a number of broad approaches to the study of social movements. This chapter will focus on a few that seem to have some relevance for South Korea.

One approach which is often referred to as the social "breakdown" theory focuses on conflict that occurs within a society as the result of change. One of the most well known works in this area is that of Neil Smelser, *A Theory of Collective Behaviour*; Chalmers Johnson adopts a comparable argument in his book *Revolutionary Change*. In brief, this approach sees society as an integrated whole which, when faced with endogenous or exogenous change, may have difficulty maintaining social integration and experience "structural strain" or "disequilibrium". Those groups of individuals that are not integrated may develop an "alternative ideology" or "generalized belief" which suggests an extra-system means of solving their lack of integration. Failure of existing institutions to meet this critical juncture through reform or "conservative change" may result in "revolutionary change". Applied to South Korea, this theory would suggest that social movements are a result of 'disequilibrating' change that has occurred in the process of development. While this seems to be in keeping with the central arguments of this paper, there are a number of reasons why it is rejected in favour of other theories.

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42Smelser outlines a step-by-step process by which social movements develop which he refers to it as the "value added" scheme. According to this paradigm, the "determinants of collective behaviour" are: (1) "structural conduciveness", (2) "structural strain", (3) "spread of a generalized belief", (4) "precipitating factors", (5) "mobilization of participants for action", and (6) "operation of social control." Neil Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behaviour* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1963), pp. 15-17.


45Johnson, *Change*, pp. 60, 93-94. See also Smelser, p.17.
This approach has received some criticism for its depiction of social movements as a "pathological", "non-rational" phenomenon, rather than an integral part of any social system, as is change itself.\(^46\) It is not simply change or development that produces social movements, but the manner in which development occurs. In fact, they are often the result of dissatisfaction with the way society is put together rather than the way it breaks down. Breakdown theories also fail to provide an adequate explanation as to why structural strain or social disequilibrium would operate on students and workers differently. Why would students be more likely to mobilize in response to change than workers? Arguing that workers are better integrated into the social structure means little if one does not consider how that 'integration' is achieved. Do the workers not experience the upheaval of development to the extent that they would look for some alternative means of finding social "equilibrium"? Breakdown theories are inadequate because they fail to consider the possibility that social movements are not simply an outgrowth of change, but a response to existing social structures. They do not explain the ways in which the consequences of change would differ for certain groups.

A related theory for explaining the development of social movements is that which is referred to as relative deprivation (RDT).\(^47\) It attributes the cause of social mobilization to the disparity that a mobilized group sees between itself and other groups. While this approach makes intuitive sense, it suffers from over simplification. In the Korean case, it does not seem to hold much explanatory power. Although Korean workers are aware of their unfavourable position in comparison to the business class, their sense of

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\(^{47}\)See Ted Robert Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) for one of the most well known versions of this theory.
deprivation has not been translated into a high level of worker collective action. According to Gurney and Tierney this is one of the major weaknesses of the relative deprivation theory. Experiencing relative deprivation and mobilizing for collective action are two different things. So it is with Korean workers; their feelings of deprivation are not automatically turned into protest activity. The RDT does not explain how the effects of relative deprivation might be modified. It does not indicate the source of deprivation, or explain the failure to engage in collective action even in the presence of relative deprivation.

One might also question what the relative deprivation theory has to say about student activism. Many student activists are from middle class families and hence economic deprivation is not a primary motivation for their dissent. It is possible, however, to suggest that students are experiencing deprivation of opportunity. This may occur on two fronts: the failure of society to provide university students with the kind of employment opportunities that their education has prepared them for and/or the failure of political institutions to reflect the principles which students have been taught or offer them adequate opportunity for participation. This kind of deprivation involves more than simply looking at students vis-a-vis other groups and brings us back to the cause of these feelings of deprivation.

A third approach to the study of social movements, one which arose as a critique of breakdown and deprivation theories, is that referred to as the resource mobilization theory (RMT). Inspired by Mancur Olson's, *The Logic of Collective Action*, this approach sees social movements as purposive, rational

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mobilization on the part of social actors. According to RMT, change and grievances are an integral part of any social system. What determines mobilization is not the existence of these conditions but the ability to acquire and mobilize resources for the purpose of social movement activity. According to Mayer N. Zald and John D McCarthy:

The resource mobilization approach emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements on third parties for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control and incorporate movements.

Thus sociopolitical mobilization can be explained by the ability to mobilize resources, not only physical/economic, but also support from other groups including institutionalized political actors and the general population.

Can one use this paradigm to explain the varying levels of student and worker activism? Has the student movement been more active because students are in a better socioeconomic position, because they are able to rally more political and popular support? University students are generally from better socioeconomic backgrounds than the workers but this does not necessarily afford them fungible resources that can be used for protest activity. Other opposition groups—the Christian churches, journalists, academics and the opposition parties—have expressed sympathy for the students' cause, as has the general public, but often that support has been more passive than active. They give moral support rather than providing tangible

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53Tilly, chaps. 3 and 4.
resources. Other groups have not always been as willing or perhaps as able to make the sacrifice that the students have. The middle class, for example, has been reluctant to back the students except when really pressed and outraged as in 1987.54

Is it simply the case that workers are less active because they do not have the same access to resources? All of the above mentioned opposition groups including the students have expressed their sympathy and solidarity with the workers. Furthermore, the workers have resources that are not available to the students. The withdrawal of their labour through disputes and strikes is far more disruptive to the system than student demonstrations. Students rely on the support of others and their ability to disrupt others to make their action effective. If one considers the "tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements", it may well be that students are more active than workers simply because they are not subject to as much control and repression.

While the RMT does raise some valid points, its explanation begins in the middle of the development of a social movement. It is almost a truism that Korean students are able to mobilize because they have easier access to resources, receive more support and face less constraint. The real issue is why this is the case. Furthermore, the RMT does not tell us why workers and students would want to mobilize resources in the cause of a social movement in the first place.

The foregoing discussion of historical-cultural legacies and social movements theory make some pertinent points regarding the development of social movements in South Korea. Yet, they are only able to complete part of the puzzle of why social movements occur and why different social groups may be more prone to movement activity. The literature on new social movements and advanced capitalism direct our

attention to structural conditions which reinforce certain cultural legacies, contribute to relative deprivation and make resources more available to some groups than others. These theories force us to look not at development itself but the structures created in the process of development. In so doing they provide a more complete picture of why social movements occur in general and why the Korean development model would have a different impact on students versus workers.

According to Anthony Giddens, conflicts emerge at the site of "primary contradictions" in a society: "Conflicts and contradictions tend to coincide because contradiction expresses the main ‘fault lines’ in the structural constitution of societal systems." In their work on advanced capitalism and contemporary social movements, Claus Offe and Jurgen Habermas present some hypotheses which help to make sense of the Korean model of development and the social conflicts that emerge or fail to emerge from it. It is possible to apply some of the ideas from this literature to South Korea even though it is not yet at the stage of advanced capitalism. According to Offe and Habermas, the late capitalist state finds it increasingly necessary to intervene in economy and society in order to correct the "dysfunctions" of the market. They outline the reasons why and ways in which state intervention occurs.

The capitalist state has a self interest in perpetuating a mode of production upon whose revenues it has come to depend for survival. State intervention is undertaken to compensate for market deficiencies

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56 Giddens, p.198. For Giddens, "[the primary contradiction of the capitalist (nation-) state is to be found in the mode in which a 'private' sphere of 'civil society' is created by but separate from and in tension with the 'public' sphere of the state (p.197)."


which may precipitate system crisis. These measures are not meant to usurp the market, but to shore it up. These measures include welfare and full employment policies aimed at securing mass loyalty and minimizing social conflict. According to Offe, the primary reason for the provision of welfare services is not to meet the concomitant need, but to fortify capitalism. Habermas emphasizes the importance of these policies in serving to legitimate, not only state intervention, but the social division of labour. This form of legitimation replaces the liberal capitalist ideology of unfettered opportunity for all. As a result of state intervention, areas of life and conflict formerly considered socioeconomic become politicized. The state is credited with more responsibility for the health of the economy and for the creation or alleviation of social injustice.

With some modification, these premises can be applied to South Korea. The features of the South Korean developmental state will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters; the following serves as an outline certain characteristics that effect social movements. Although the South Korean state does not intervene for the same reasons or in the same manner as the advanced capitalist states, a number of

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58Claus Offe, "Political Authority and Class Structure," in Critical Sociology, ed. Paul Connerton (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 413; and Jurgen Habermas, "Problems of Legitimation in Late Capitalism," in Critical Sociology, pp. 365, 367. Habermas outlines some of the ways in which the state intervenes "to correct the market mechanism with regard to its dysfunctional side effects,: (1) creating supra-national economic blocks, (2) increasing state consumption, (3) political channelling of capital, and (4) meeting the material and social costs (p. 367)."

59Offe and Ronge, pp. 252-54.


61Offe, Welfare State, p. 144.


63Habermas, Rational Society, p. 102.

parallels can be drawn. The Korean state attempts to remedy the shortcomings of the market by taking charge of the direction of development. In late capitalist societies, the state intervenes to bolster that which already exists while the South Korean state has intervened to realize its vision of the economic system. In both cases, links are forged between polity and economy; in Korea, these links were consciously established from the outset. Although the colonial inheritance of a strong bureaucracy and police force, and a relatively weak indigenous bourgeoisie placed the Korean state in an autonomous position it has also grown dependent on market revenue.\(^6^5\) The capital demands of the heavy and chemical industry drive in the 1970s bound the success of regime even more closely with that of big business. President Chun Doo Hwan discovered this when his regime attempted to rationalize the activities of Korea's conglomerates (chaebol) in the early 1980s. The state could not afford, politically or economically, to allow many of these giants to sink.\(^6^6\) The Park and Chun regimes also depended on 'successful' economic development to bolster their fragile legitimacy. Intervention creates responsibilities that decrease state autonomy. Because an interventionist state's fortunes become so entwined with those of the economy that it seeks to bolster, the health of that economy assumes importance for the legitimacy of the regime itself. As a consequence, conflict that threatens the economic system becomes politically significant.

According to Offe, attention will be directed to those conflicts which are most system threatening.\(^6^7\) Welfare policies are instituted because a quiescent labour force is essential to the well-being of a capitalist state.\(^6^8\) In Korea, welfare policies did not receive much attention until the Roh Tae Woo government

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\(^6^5\)See Cumings, Korean War, pp. 151-69.


\(^6^7\)Offe, "Political Authority," p. 415-16.

\(^6^8\)Habermas, Rational Society, pp. 102, 108.
assumed power in 1987. In their stead, the state has avoided conflict and legitimized its interventionist role through the rhetoric of the communist threat, drawing upon the patriotic sentiments of its population to propel economic development. When this has failed, Korea’s developmental regimes have resorted to repression. John Lie provides a succinct analysis of these methods:

> Park's strategy [and Chun's as well] to maintain power was to develop and consolidate the repressive state apparatus on the one hand and to pursue economic growth on the other, using the rhetoric of anti-communism with the stick of repression and the rhetoric of economic nationalism with the carrot of economic growth.

Because the workers are such key players in the development process, it is towards them that much of the rhetoric and repression is directed. While the regime would ideally like all the members of society to support its agenda, the withdrawal of student support is not as threatening to the well-being of the political and economic system. Nevertheless, student discontent must be contained so it does not claim the sentiments of the majority of students or spill-over into other sectors of society.

The Korean state takes more preemptive action against and has greater capacity to control the labour movement. This is consistent with the pattern of social conflict that Offe sees developing in late capitalist societies:

> The needs with the greatest conflict potential are those on the periphery of the area of state intervention. They are far from the central conflicts being kept in a state of latency and therefore they are not seen as having priority among dangers to be warded off.

Because labour protest is a central conflict, the state takes care to ensure that it will not erupt. The Korean

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69In 1973 for example, only 0.97 percent of GNP was spent on social services. Bruce Cumings, "The Origins and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences," in The Political Economy of New Asian Industrialism, p. 74.


77This is Habermas's interpretation of Offe in Rational Society, p. 108.
state does this through cooptation of labour organizations and heavy handed controls. The student
movement is not a central conflict and thus faces a different set of inducements and constraints. According
to Habermas, "[t]he legitimation propositions of the system of dominance do not seem to be convincing to
this group..."72 Offe notes that "...the most likely actors [in social movements] are those who have the
easiest cognitive access to the particular nature of systemic irrationalities or those who are the most likely
victims of cumulative deprivation."73 This is in accord with the observations of others writing on advanced
capitalist societies and contemporary social movements. Alberto Melucci suggests that those who experience
the contradictory pulls of a society's opportunities and constraints most intensely will be the most inclined to
participate in social movements.74 He gives the example of students in Western 'post-industrial' countries.
Their education prepares them for prominent positions within established institutions, but political, social and
economic realities may mean that a place does not really exist for them.75 Yet as Giddens notes, the
existence of societal contradictions is not in itself a sufficient cause of social movements:

If contradiction does not inevitably breed conflict, it is because the conditions under which
actors not only are aware of their interests but are both able and motivated to act on them
are widely variable.76

Social groups may be prevented from engaging in collective action by a lack of awareness of their situation
or constraints placed on them by "dominant groups in society" and "state agencies".77

72 Habermas, "Conditions," p. 43. In *Rational Society*, he notes that "Active students, who relatively frequently are in the social
sciences and humanities, tend to be immune to technocratic consciousness because, although for varying motives, their primary
experience in their own intellectual work in neither case accord with basic technocratic assumptions (p. 121)."


74 Melucci, *Nomads*, p.47.


76Giddens, p. 198.

In South Korea contradictions emerge from a development process which features intense, rapid industrialization coupled with heavy state intervention. Economic development proceeds apace while political and social modernization lag. The state has built a strong partnership with business in order to achieve its developmental goals. Popular groups have been virtually excluded from the policy-making process. Concerns for social equity have been sacrificed to the demands of growth.

How does the impact of this model differ for the student and labour movements? In light of the theoretical material discussed above, one should look at the contradictions experienced by students and workers for motivations to engage in collective action. While students may benefit from development in some ways, they also experience the negative effects of an over-emphasis on technical education, acute competition for employment and the lack of political openness and social equity. Students face the contradiction of expanded opportunity through education but lack of fulfilment of that opportunity upon graduation due to economic and social realities. Workers also experience the contradictions of rapid and intense development--they see the fruits of progress, but are conscious of the fact that they are not the primary recipients of those fruits. Still they do not match the students in protest activity.

The following chapters examine the circumstances that cause the student and labour movements to differ in spite of the fact that both groups seem to have cause for dissent. Because workers are central to the development model, one would expect them to face greater constraints to collective action. If Korean state and business are in a position to help prevent contradictions from turning into labour conflict, workers may not be fully aware of their interests. Students occupy a different place in the development process. They contribute less to its success and have less power to cause it to fail. As a result, they should not face as much repression as workers. It is also important to consider the conditions that may make students more aware of the contradictions inherent in the development model and less inclined to accept state attempts to
legitimize its character. With changes in the model, one would expect to see changes in these two social movements. The emergence of a more pluralist society and political reforms in 1987 should have been accompanied an evolution of these two movements. The next few chapters attempt to confirm these hypotheses by analysing the Korean development model and its impact on students and workers.

Presenting a structural argument such as this, one should not forget that social conflict does not arise in a deterministic sort of way. Social configurations have attendant contradictions to which groups and individuals in society respond. The nature and volume of the response is determined as much by the actors as the field or parameters in which they act. Although the present argument may concentrate on the field, this is not intended to undervalue the 'people dynamics' that lead to collective action. As Giddens notes, structures are created by social action stretched over time and space. As such they can be modified by social action, but they "limit that range of options open" to social actors. Ultimately, it is the Korean students and workers who choose to organize or not given the structural conditions that they are faced with. It is with this set of conditions and how students and workers respond to them that the remainder of this thesis is concerned.

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79 Giddens, p. 177.
III. THE KOREAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL

South Korea is one of those countries to which Gerschenkron's famous thesis of "economic backwardness" or late development can be applied. The task of 'catching up' often requires greater concentrations of capital and resources than can be provided by the fledgling private sectors of lesser developed countries. In this situation, it is not uncommon for the state to step in where the market fails. This is true of South Korea; the state has taken it upon itself to create conditions in which rapid industrialization can occur. The Korean model of development, however, did not simply originate from the circumstances of "economic backwardness". It is also a response to some specifically Korean conditions.

Under Rhee, economic policy was interventionist but not in the same manner as that of the post-1961 developmental regimes. The Rhee government tried to build up industry through import substitution, but state economic policy was characterized by ad hoc measures that were inflationary, haphazard in application, heavily dependent on foreign aid and riven with corruption. Under the tutelage of U.S. advisers, the bureaucracy developed the Five Year Economic Reconstruction Plan (1953/4-1957-59), but the Korean state did not acquire its developmental character until after 1961. Because the Rhee regime was driven more by political than economic rationale this plan was implemented in a less than efficient, rational manner.

American aid formed the bulk of industrial capital and this was channelled into industries that

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81 According to Mason et al., between 1953 and 1960, "... over 70 percent of imports were financed by foreign grants..." From 1953 to 1962, aid was the equivalent of 8 percent of GNP (pp. 93, 185). Amsden puts the figure at 15 percent of average annual GNP from 1953 through 1958 (p. 39). See also Clive Hamilton, Capitalist Industrialization in South Korea (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 32-35.


83 Huer, p.161; and Jones and Sakong, pp. 41-3.
produced consumer goods such as food processing and textiles. The developmental effect of these policies was mitigated by the corruption and rent-seeking behaviour of politicians, businessmen and state officials.\textsuperscript{84} It was this conduct that brought the students out onto the streets in April 1960. Following the resignation of Syngman Rhee, students continued to demand that the corrupt be disciplined. The Chang Myon government's attempts to meet these demands yet maintain the confidence of business and bureaucracy was one of the factors that contributed to its instability and ineffectiveness.\textsuperscript{85}

Park's junta justified its 1961 coup by citing the deficiencies, real or imagined, of the civilian government in providing the political stability necessary for national security. For military personnel, who had been taught to view anything that veered to the left as a communist threat, the increasing influence of progressive groups in Korean polity and society was cause for concern.\textsuperscript{86} Activist students intended to meet with North Korean students the same month as the coup.\textsuperscript{87} Of additional concern was the fact that North Korean development had outpaced that of the South following the Korean war.\textsuperscript{88}

While the junta's early rhetoric focused on safeguarding South Korea from the communist threat, it was not long before security was wedded with economics and industrial development rose to centre stage.

\textsuperscript{84}Hamilton, pp. 32-3.
\textsuperscript{85}Mason et al., p. 45. See also Sungjoo Han, \textit{Failure}, chap. 7; and Henderson, pp. 177-82.
\textsuperscript{86}Sohn, \textit{Authoritarianism}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{87}Martin Hart-Landsberg, "South Korea: The Miracle Rejected," \textit{Critical Sociology} 15 (Fall 1988):35. See also Henderson, pp. 179-80; and Sungjoo Han, \textit{Failure}, pp. 200-205.
In 1963, Park made the following statement:

> Economic resurgence is an integral part of a nationalistic vision of a more independent Korea to come—more independent of the United States aid and control and, as an economically stronger and independent entity, more able to deal with North Korea.\(^{89}\)

Within a few short years of the 1961 coup, the Park regime established or reinforced the structures that were to become the foundation of the Korean model for almost three decades. Changes have occurred, with the *Yushin* constitution and under the rule of Chun Doo Hwan, but the fundamentals that were established then have remained.\(^{90}\) These structures establish the parameters in which the labour and student movements act. They will be outlined briefly in the following paragraphs.

One of the main features of the Korean model of development is a 'strong' or authoritarian state that makes economic development one of its primary goals. Chalmers Johnson refers to the South Korean state as a "hard" developmental state.\(^{91}\) Bruce Cumings calls it a "bureaucratic authoritarian industrializing regime" (BAIR).\(^{92}\) Whatever the appellation, the essentials are the same. Because development is defined as a national rather than a regime goal, it can be used to legitimize state intervention and the authoritarian character of the regime. The Korean state uses economic planning to project the desired shape of the economy. These plans would be useless without certain perquisites to ensure private sector compliance, for despite intervention, initiative remains in the private sector.\(^{93}\) The most important tool that the Korean state has at its disposal is the control of access to credit. In 1961, all commercial banks were nationalized under

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\(^{90}\)Initially the Chun junta gave lip service to creating a welfare state, but it soon became clear that such policies would be difficult to establish given the power of the chaebol. See Haggard and Moon, p. 219.


\(^{92}\)These states are ubiquitous in the economy and society: penetrating, comprehensive, highly articulated, and relatively autonomous of particular groups and classes." Cumings, "Origins and Development," p. 71.

\(^{93}\)For more information on Korea's economic plans, see McManus, "The Three 'E's of Economic Development, (I & II)."
under the "Illicit Accumulation of Wealth Law". In order to gain access to credit, firms must align themselves with state economic policies that have been geared to export-led growth since the mid-1960s. For those who have acquiesced, the benefits have not been insignificant. Not only do they obtain credit at fire-sale interest rates, they are also eligible for tax exemptions, tariff protection and import privileges. According to the Korean Productivity Centre, without these types of subsidies, many of Korea's leading exports "would have been produced at a loss" in the 1960s. It should be made clear that these were not merely handouts, but were conditional upon proof of a firm's ability to export. Therein lies the developmental nature of the post-1961 Korean state. The Rhee regime gave similar concessions to business, but these favours were often based on political rather than economic criteria. Under Park and Chun economics gained more importance although it by no means eclipsed politics. It was necessary to display the capacity to perform in addition to supporting government policy.

State concessions to business amounted to the nurturing of monopoly/oligopoly capital. Under the Illicit Accumulation Law, a number of major businessmen were arrested but released on the condition that they relinquish their shares in commercial banks and cooperate in government economic plans. This has led to a rather incestuous relationship between government and big business, compounded by the fact that

94 Amsden, p. 68.

95 For more information on the state's tools of intervention see Mardon; Bello and Rosenfeld, pp. 51-4; and Amsden, chap. 3.


98 Hamilton, Industrialization, pp. 32-33.

99 Mardon notes that those arrested included the heads of Lucky-Gold Star, Samsung and Ssangyong, companies which continue to place in the ranks of Korea's largest conglomerates (p. 474-5). See also Minho Kuk, "The Government Role in the Making of the Chaebol in the Industrial Development of South Korea," Asian Perspective 12 (Spring-Summer 1988):113.
actual family, marriage, school and regional ties do exist between the two.\textsuperscript{100} One result of this relationship has been the growth of huge conglomerates that are marked by their "degree of diversification and concentration".\textsuperscript{101} In 1975, the ten largest chaebol accounted for 7 percent of GNP; by 1985, this had risen to 11.5 percent.\textsuperscript{102} Their share of total exports went from 12.4 percent in 1975 to over 50 percent in 1985; in 1987, they represented 72 percent of total sales.\textsuperscript{103} Firms that are unwilling or unable to keep up with state initiatives have been left behind. The politically unwilling have been dropped completely.\textsuperscript{104}

Because the state initially had the upper hand, Jones and Sakong refer to its relationship with business as "Korea Inc." with government as the senior and the chaebol as the junior partner.\textsuperscript{105} The extent to which the government has come to rely on the chaebol in more recent years was revealed when the Chun government tried to rationalize the operations of these corporations in its economic stabilization policy.\textsuperscript{106} Although the high debt-equity ratio of the chaebol make them vulnerable to the discontinuation of government support, the Korean state is also vulnerable by association.\textsuperscript{107} This is due to the large share of these conglomerates in the Korean economy and the fact that the Bank of Korea is ultimately responsible


\textsuperscript{101}Amsden, p. 116.


\textsuperscript{103}Ibid, p. 516 and Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 63. See also Minho Kuk p. 122 for sales and employment figures of the chaebol and Amsden, chap. 5, for a detailed account of the chaebol.

\textsuperscript{104}Mardon relates the cases of bankruptcy of the Yulsan Corp. in 1979 and Kukje I.C.C. in 1985. These companies both began to show sympathy for opposition parties and found the credit rug pulled out from under them (p. 476-77).

\textsuperscript{105}Jones and Sakong, pp. 67, 69.

\textsuperscript{106}Haggard and Moon, p. 221, 228; and Amsden, pp. 132-36.

\textsuperscript{107}The debt ratio of the top 50 chaebol was 506.1 percent in 1985. Minho Kuk, p. 125.
for their debt. By 1983, 48 percent of outstanding bank credits were held by the top chaebol.108 Although the state may have started out in the dominant position, by the 1980s many Koreans felt that "[i]t had become a captive of the chaebol."109 Unquestionably the chaebol had increased in power since 1961. This process was facilitated by the capital and resource demands of the heavy and chemical industry drive in the 1970s.110 What has developed is a partnership from which neither party can easily extricate itself and where the lines of the senior-junior relationship have become blurred.

Another important feature of the Korean development model is the speed with which industrialization has taken place. The Korean economy has experienced impressive growth as measured by GNP, GNP per capita, and the share of exports and manufacturing.111 Equally impressive is the rate of sectoral adjustment—the move from light to heavy industry, and from heavy to high tech.112 As Russell Mardon notes, private initiative alone cannot account for the speed and direction of these shifts.113 All of this redounded to the benefit of the chaebol who were the most well-placed to take advantage of new sectoral initiatives. There have been new entries and some shift in the ranks of the leading conglomerates, but it is

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109 Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 47.

110 Ibid., p. 60, and Amsden, p. 131.


112 In 1960, heavy and chemical industry accounted for 30.0 percent of total manufacturing output, 40.5 percent in 1971, 50.7 percent in 1977 and 61.9 percent in 1984. The share of light industry decreased from 70.0 percent in 1960 to 59.5 percent in 1971, 49.3 percent in 1977 and 38.1 percent in 1984. Amsden, p. 58, Table 3.3; and Tibor Scitovsky, "Economic Development in Taiwan and South Korea, 1965-1981," in Models of Development p. 173, Table 4.5.

113 Mardon, p. 473.
surprising to see the resilience of several major groups like Samsung, Lucky-Gold Star and Ssangyong.114

A final aspect of the Korean model of development that has special relevance for social movements is the exclusion of popular groups from the policy-making process. This reflected President Park's aversion to politics and that legacy has been carried on by successive regimes. The year following the resignation of the Rhee government was marked by an unprecedented amount of activity on the part of political parties, student groups and labour unions. The volatility of the situation was one of the major justifications for the 1961 military coup. Once in control of the reigns of power, Park dismissed the National Assembly and banned all existing political parties and labour unions. In a bid to make itself legitimate by taking on the form of a civilian government, the junta relaxed its control somewhat and elections were held in 1963. For most of the 1960s, intermediate associations like political parties and labour unions were able to act with some degree of freedom, but the political noose was eventually tightened again. In 1972, the Yushin (Revitalizing) constitution was promulgated and Park's power became nearly absolute. The national assembly was emasculated and the activities of intermediate associations, and "extra-institutional" opposition groups safely curtailed.115 After 1981, the Chun government tried to distance itself from this blatantly authoritarian period, but the controls remained intact. The Chun regime merely gave them a different shape.

The insulation of the Korean state was achieved by a variety of institutional means, and then outright repression when these failed. The national assembly was structured in such a way that ruling party dominance was assured and it acted as a rubber stamp for cabinet decisions.116 The bureaucracy became

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114See Minho Kuk, pp. 112, 114, 116-17.


116Choi, p. 219.
the vehicle by which government policy was formulated and achieved, not the ruling party.\textsuperscript{117} While the bureaucracy was unfettered by the whims of ruling and opposition politicians, the President and those close to him exercised a good deal of direct authority over the various departments. Key ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Economic Planning Board were headed by politicians who were close to the president.\textsuperscript{118} All of this served to create an economic policy apparatus that responded expeditiously and efficiently to direction from the top, but which was shielded from popular influence. Given the presence of ex-military personnel in government and bureaucracy, this structure is not surprising.\textsuperscript{119} Chung-in Moon provides a useful, if somewhat innocuous characterization of the Korean state:

While executive dominance minimized bureaucratic infighting and ensured consistent and coherent policies, political capacity to insulate economic decision making from contending social pressures produced efficient policy outcomes and effective implementation.\textsuperscript{120}

Where institutional mechanisms failed to achieve the desired degree of exclusion, both the Park and Chun regimes resorted to other measures. Recalcitrant oppositionists were arrested and harassed; those who were more pliable were bought-off.\textsuperscript{121} Behind all of this was the back-up of the military itself, a massive police force and a formidable security organization—the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (Agency for National Security Planning under Chun). The KCIA/ANSP received a dubious reputation for its ability to infiltrate opposition parties, labour unions, and student organizations, reveal their activities to the police and

\textsuperscript{117}Bae-Ho Han, "The Role of the State in Development: The Korean Case," \textit{China Report} 22 (July-September 1986):298. Under President Chun, the ruling party had somewhat more power.

\textsuperscript{118}Johnson, "Political Institutions," p. 154.

\textsuperscript{119}See Huer, pp. 66-71, 82-84.


\textsuperscript{121}Bae-Ho Han, p. 301.
intimidate their members.

Although the authoritarian nature of the Korean developmental state seems obvious, its chief 
engineers would deny that it was detrimental to the Korean people. Undoubtedly, the shape of the Korean 
state can be attributed, at least in part, to the concern for self-preservation of those in power. Their 
commitment to the goal of national development was not, however, without substance. In their eyes, 
development began with economics from which all good things would follow in time--national security, material 
well-being and even democracy. Until some indeterminate level of economic development was achieved, 
political control was justified. The problem of this 'temporary' disassociation of politics and economics was 
that success came to be gauged in terms of growth not equity.122

The lack of political and social development led significant portions of the Korean public to doubt the 
sincerity of the regimes' commitment to true development. With few institutional channels through which to 
articulate these concerns many turned to extra-institutional methods. The state's obstinate refusal to respond 
to popular initiatives eventually created such a wellspring of discontent that it could no longer be controlled. 
This is the subject of the final chapter--the breakdown of the Korean model in the mid-1980s. The next 
chapter will discuss some reasons why the model described above has had a different impact upon student 
and workers.

IV. WORKERS AND STUDENTS IN SOUTH KOREAN DEVELOPMENT

The Labour Movement

It would be a mistake to create the impression that economic development was simply a facade to legitimate a series of authoritarian regimes in South Korea. These regimes are deserving of titles like capitalist developmental state and BAIR because economic development became an important goal in itself, not simply a means of achieving legitimacy or even national security. This goal influenced state labour policy but so did the fact that these regimes were authoritarian and hence lacking in a strong popular mandate. As Stephen Haggard notes, "labour controls in Korea had political roots..."; they were not simply a means of maintaining national comparative advantage.  

The South Korean military saw the corrupt politics of the Rhee regime and the turmoil following its fall as anathema to security and development. The 1961 coup was executed with these problems in mind. As one of the most efficient and modern sectors of society, the military often attempts to rationalize other sectors of society in its own image. Given the record of other developed countries, the Park regime did not see organized labour as an obstacle to its developmental goals but as a possible ally. Ogle cites a 1966 Office of Labour Affairs report that notes the positive correlation between the level of development and the extent of labour organization in Japan and Germany. The Park regime was concerned with the character of organized labour and saw a need to advance 'cooperative' labour-management relations.

Immediately following the May 1961 coup, all existing unions were "deregistered" and strikes were

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124 According to Choi, this was the case in Korea (p. 210).

banned. In time, the Park regime showed that its purpose was to purge labour organizations of their undesirable traits rather than eliminate them completely. These traits included their corruption and politicization under the Rhee regime and their radical drift under Chang Myon. Unlike Rhee, Park did not want unions to serve merely as a "political tool"; he was also concerned with their economic possibilities. That the regime saw a need for labour organization is reflected in the protection of the rights of workers—to organize, bargain collectively, and participate in collective action—in the labour laws. Yet the qualification of these rights indicates the government's desire to focus the efforts of workers on the goal of national development, limit their grievances to those of an economic nature and keep them out of politics. South Korean labour laws also reflect a conviction that the protection of worker rights was one of the necessary trappings of modernity.

In 1946, the AMGIK set out the basic rights of workers which were incorporated into law in 1953 by the Rhee government. This law consisted of the Trade Union Act, the Labour Disputes Adjustment Act, the Labour Relations Commission Act and the Labour Standards Act. Although these various acts have been revised over the course of time, they still remain as the basic tenets of Korea's labour law. However, the existence of labour laws and their actual observance are two quite different things. Rauenhorst notes that "...these statutes have generally been ignored, suspended or abused by government and management

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127 Choi, pp. 84, 147, 201. One of the amendments to the labour law following the coup was the stipulation that unions could not give monetary support to political parties (p. 84).

128 Rauenhorst, pp. 329-30.

129 Choi, p. 84; Ogle, Dissent, p. 63 and "Labour," p. 290-1.

Labour legislation had little meaning under Rhee once the influence of the left was eliminated and the No Chong was incorporated as an arm of the Liberal Party.

Under Park, workers faced the obstacle of mandatory cool-down periods before strike action could be taken and the probability of the dispute being submitted to government intermediaries for binding arbitration. Nevertheless, the 1960s are generally acknowledged as a relatively open period in the history of the Korean labour movement. This should not be interpreted as a willingness on the part of the Park regime to tolerate labour dissent. Much of the labour peace in the 1960s was due to the lack of testing of the boundaries of labour laws on the part of workers. When that test came, the laws were amended and repression escalated.

In 1969, the Provisional Exceptional Law Concerning Labour Unions and the Settlement of Labour Disputes in Foreign Invested Firms was promulgated when strikes in foreign firms threatened to sour Korea's investment "climate". These restrictions were extended to all unions under the provisions of the 1971 Special Measures Law which gave the President extraordinary 'emergency' powers to delimit acceptable popular activity. When the Yushin constitution was established in 1972, the suppression of worker collective action became permanent. Workers continued under these restrictive conditions until Park's death in 1979. In 1980, before Chun Doo Hwan's military coup and the return of oppression, labour disputes erupted across the country and the number unions increased dramatically.

The labour laws established by the Chun administration were even more confining than those under

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131 Rauenhorst, p. 324.
134 Choi, p. 88.
135 See Appendix A, Table 1.
Park. There were a number of reason for this. The blight of the Kwangju massacre left the regime with a very fragile base of legitimacy. Dissident groups—workers, students, Christian churches—had grown in power and consciousness since 1961. The chaebol had also increased in size and economic might. Korea's recessed economy demanded immediate attention. In an effort to give the regime more room for manoeuvre, unions were "purged" and the labour laws amended. Under the revised labour legislation, third parties were prohibited from participating in dispute mediation. This was aimed at excluding church labour groups such as the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) and the Catholic Youth Workers (JOC), but it also effectively emasculated the Federation of Korean Trade Union (FKTU), and its affiliated industrial unions. According to Jeong Taik Lee, "the new labour control system in 1980 was strong enough to contain resistance by the workers from 1981 to 1983." After 1983, worker grievances and their capacity to do something about them intensified to the point where even the authoritarian Chun regime struggled to contain labour discontent.

The manner in which labour laws were administrated says much about the ambition of Park and Chun to push rapid industrialization in spite of its sociopolitical costs. It became apparent, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, that these regime were inclined to apply labour law when it worked to the benefit of management and the state, not when it could be used for the realization of worker goals. Choi cites figures which show

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136 In May 1980, citizens of the city of Kwangju came out on the streets to protest Chun's manoeuvres against the civilian government. Troops were sent in to put down this uprising and estimates of the numbers of civilians killed range from 200 to 2000. For details see Donald N. Clark, ed., The Kwangju Uprising: Shadows Over the Regime in South Korea (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988).


138 Launius, p. 7 and Rauenhorst, p. 334.

that 96 percent of firms inspected in 1971 failed to meet the requirements of the Labour Standards Law. In 1980, the number was 92.6 percent. When a dispute occurred it was submitted for binding arbitration by labour committees that generally favoured management over workers. If a dispute escalated to a strike, the police would often stand by and allow management hired thugs to beat workers and then arrest labour activists.

Government and business attitudes toward labour unions illustrate their skewed interpretation of labour rights. Although the right to organize has been secured by law since 1953, this has often meant little in the face of state-management measures to control unions. In the eyes of Korea's developmental regimes labour should organize for the purpose of contributing to economic development. The mediation of grievances should be limited to those of an economic nature, and workers would be willing to accept less than the optimum in wages and working conditions as a sacrifice for national development. This had led to what Jang Jip Choi refers to as "state-sponsored corporatism" whereby unions are organized from the top down under the tutelage of state bodies. The election of the leadership of the FKTU and its affiliated industrial unions has occurred under the 'watchful eye' of state security agencies. At the enterprise level, management expends similar efforts to ensure that local unions will be headed by malleable persons.

This brings us to another feature of the Korean model of development which has a significant impact.
on the labour movement—the state-conglomerate alliance. As noted earlier this relationship has become particularly close as a result of the Park regime's ability to undercut business power through the Illicit Accumulation of Wealth Law. Once this was accomplished, Park used the 'carrot' of credit to create a partnership with business in the pursuit of goals outlined by a series of five-years economic plans. Business may have had some qualms about the partnership initially, but it soon became clear that the benefits were more than compensatory. Losing entrepreneurial latitude in return for a much reduced risk seemed well worth it to those who were willing to go along with government policy.

This arrangement was much different from that which Park, and later Chun, tried to forge with labour. The business-state relationship was more representative of true corporatism. Business participated in the creation and implementation of economic plans and received all sorts of concessions in return for cooperation. Labour, on the other hand, was excluded from participating through anything other than government dominated channels. This represented 'incorporation' rather than corporatism. Korea's industrializing regimes were concerned with achieving rapid and efficient development for which labour cooperation was a vital ingredient. Because of the need to survive and the competition in a large surplus labour market, at least until the 1970s, it did not take many carrots to get labour to participate. With the left eliminated or discredited labour had little power to strike a more equitable bargain.

Undoubtedly there were those in the Office of Labour Affairs, the ministry of labour under Chun, who had sympathy for and saw it as their duty to advance the interests of workers. This ministry has little capacity to do so however, as labour policy was largely determined by more powerful ministries such as the EPB, MCI, and KCIA where labour was considered as only one small element in the whole economic and political

146Choi, pp. 247, 252.
147Low levels of investment in agriculture and low food prices drove many off the farms into the city creating a ready pool of workers. Koo, pp. 675-6; and Choi, pp. 48-49.
scheme. Workers were promised a higher standard of living and one cannot deny that this was delivered. Increased productivity soon brought material rewards to workers as well as business. Considering the low starting base of the economy in 1961, it is not surprising that the worker expectation threshold rose slowly before the signs of growing prosperity, at least for the business class, became more apparent.

There were two aspects of government-business cooperation that worked to the detriment of labour interests. The first was a laxity in applying the law in favour of the workers, ie. allowing management to act with relative freedom. The second, darker aspect was the state's participation in the repression of the workers. Management was allowed to manipulate unions in order to try to make them into company dominated organizations by bribing, firing and intimidating labour activists. Another option was to preemptively organize a union of management sympathizers (the law decreed that only one union was allowed in an enterprise). When these measures failed, management resorted to violence, pitting privileged workers against the underprivileged or hiring thugs. As noted earlier, the state was well aware of these measures. Police would often stand by and watch the thugs do their work, then go in and arrest protesting workers.

The greatest example of regime–chaebol complicity has been the willingness of the state to use police and military against workers when management failed to keep control. There are a number of examples of this; one of the most famous is the Y.H. Textile Co. Incident. A number of female employees held a sit-in

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148 Choi, p. 223.

149 In 1960, GNP per capita was $94. Steinberg, p 123.

150 Choi, p. 95.

151 Ibid., p. 95.

152 During a dispute at Dongil Textile Co. in the 1970s, female workers called upon police to prevent their male colleagues from attacking them. Their pleas were ignored. *A Call to Support the Dong-Il Textile Workers, 17 May 1978, compiler unknown, cited by Sohn, pp. 136-37.*
demonstration to protest lay-offs and working conditions. When they moved their demonstration to opposition party headquarters, 1000 riot police were sent in to break the strike. Several of the workers were beaten by police and one woman died. Similar dramas were played out throughout the 1970s and 1980s--the strike at Hyundai Shipyard in 1974, Sabuk mines in 1980 and Daewoo Apparel in 1985. Several major disputes occurred in larger firms--owned by the chaebol--where more workers were concentrated in a workplace. These same firms had more power to mount a counter-offensive against workers.

Another factor that is introduced when a state assumes a developmental role is the possibility of using its control of public information in the cause of development. Where the media and the educational system toil under state restrictions as they do in South Korea, the state has more latitude to propagate a developmental ideology. This is precisely what occurred under Park and Chun. The Park junta justified its coup in the interests of safeguarding South Korea from communist expansion. This rhetoric was soon followed by the tie between development and security. With the tragedy of the Korean war only eight years distant, this discourse stuck a responsive chord in the Korean public. The workers were not immune and with other perspectives silenced, they too responded to the call for national sacrifice in the cause of development and security.

Workers were not, however, completely swept up by this kind of propaganda. Korean workers are well educated with many of them having received some secondary education. They were exposed to liberal democratic ideals even in the 1960s, if not more revolutionary ideologies. Many were aware of the

153Launius, p. 7. See also Choi, pp. 287-92.

154Choi, p. 96, 98.

155See Huer, pp. 92-93 for examples.

156Choi, p. 72, 176; and Ogle, "Labour," p. 143. In 1946, 7.4 percent of Korean workers had received secondary education. By 1983, the number had risen to 50 percent. Amsden, p. 222.
incongruities and inequalities in the development model. Yet their ability to criticize it and organize for collective action has been curtailed by the superior position of business and the willingness of ‘Korea Inc.’ to resort to the suppression of labour dissent. Workers have been sincerely concerned about the possibility of military action on the part of North Korea. This has helped deter them from more militant unionism, at least until the mid-1980s. Until then, they focused their demands on wages and working conditions and did not question the wisdom of the capitalist development model.\textsuperscript{157} What they sought was a ‘kinder, gentler’ capitalism that was more responsive to labour interests and more equitable in its distribution. Over time, the ability of workers to press their demands has been enhanced and, in the past four years many workers have drifted toward a more militant ideology.

In the seventies, as workers became more conscious of socioeconomic contradictions and more skilful in pressing their demands, they were faced with more state-sponsored rhetoric and repression. These measures sowed the seeds of a growing politicization of the labour movement. Chun’s heightened suppression of worker dissent did much to promote the maturation of these seeds. As Ogle notes, by the 1980s activist workers realized that responsibility for the mistreatment of labour could not be imputed to business alone.\textsuperscript{158} The change in worker consciousness in the 1970s was due in part to the efforts of Christian-labour groups such as the Urban Industrial Mission and the Catholic Youth Workers.\textsuperscript{159} The Chun Tae II incident in 1970 also helped to turn the attention of students to the plight of the workers.\textsuperscript{160} They began to contribute their energy to the labour movement by drawing attention to worker grievances in student

\textsuperscript{157}Choi, p. 109, 111.

\textsuperscript{158}Ogle, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{159}For more information on these groups see Rauenhorst, pp. 336-9; Ogle, Dissent, pp. 86-89; and Choi, pp. 76-78.

\textsuperscript{160}Chun Tae II was a garment worker in the Peace Market area of Seoul wherein 27,000 workers, mostly young women, laboured in appalling conditions. In 1970, Chun Tae II self immolated in a desperate act of protest against the conditions that these and other Korean workers were forced to endure. See Sohn, pp. 34-35.
protests, teaching workers at night schools or even taking jobs in factories. These efforts contributed to a breakdown in the efficacy of the state's development ideology. Launius illustrates this by citing the comments of one union activist:

as workers 'witnessed the rapid industrial development of the nation during the 1970s, their endurance came to an end. A quiet change of opinion spread among labourers: poverty is not our destiny and society should be held responsible for it.... Over the last decade, industries were one-sidedly encouraged with various administrative favours by the government while labourers were forced to reserve the right for the economic development of the nation.'

The Chun and Park regimes tried to counter this growing consciousness with a mix of rhetoric and repression. An illustrative example of the efforts at manufacturing a supportive worker mentality is the Factory Saemaul Movement. The movement's rallying cry was to: "Treat employees like family: do factory work like...[your] family business." Factory Saemaul tried to draw on the Confucian loyalty to family to inspire workers to forget their grievances and continue to sacrifice for national development in spite of its unequal endowments. This movement had little legitimacy given the fact that the management-labour relationship was more akin to a master-servant than a father-son relationship. Employers have also tried to increase worker loyalty through the provision of


163 Kyuhan Bae, p. 361 and Choi, p. 182.


165 Choi, pp. 182, 195.
"paternalistic perks." While these have helped, many workers feel that business should not feel so magnanimous about giving workers that which is their due—a more equal share of production returns.

Chun's purification camps were a more malignant mutation of the Factory Saemaul Movement. Dropping all of the subtlety of cultural manipulation, worker activists were sent to camps where methods reminiscent of the Gulag were used to purge them of their oppositionist tendencies. Similar methods were used under Park by the KCIA, but not in such a structured fashion. The stories of those who returned from these camps probably did more to advance the cause of the labour movement than to divert it from its path. Chun tried to use the labour-management councils to inspire voluntary cooperation. The 1980 amendments to labour legislation required that all companies employing over 100 workers should establish such a council. It soon became clear that they were just another arena where management could dominate workers.

Income distribution acts as both an inducement and a constraint to labour protest. By citing relatively equitable distribution the state tries to create the image that Korea's pattern of development has benefited the majority of its citizens. The fact that state agencies are often the source of these statistics might not, in itself, lead one to question their veracity. The problem is that most of these statistics fail to report the full earnings of the richest and the poorest of income groups. "Profits from real estate speculation and the curb market" are not fully represented by income distribution figures. Single person and non-farm rural

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166 Amsden, p. 210. She is referring to conditions at POSCO, a public enterprise, but Samsung is an example of a private corporation which does the same thing.

167 Ogle, Dissent, p. 99.


170 Launius, p. 8.
households are excluded from the data. Even if one accepts these distortions, Korean industrial workers attain their reported earning level by working the longest hours of countries surveyed by the ILO in 1980 and 1986. Nominal wages increases of 26.4 percent between 1966 and 1979 are representative of inflationary growth; the other side of this is the rapid increase in the cost of living. Workers' real wages actually fell by 5 percent in the early 1980s. Furthermore, the growth rate of labour productivity consistently outpaced wage increases until the mid 1980s. Tax burdens were not carried equally by all income groups; corporate taxes fell from 5.4 percent in 1971 to 3.6 percent in 1980. According to Amsden, managers make over three times as much as production workers. These statistics give only a very narrow picture of what inequality means for Korean workers. As Paul Streeten points out:

Inequality of income distribution touches only a small portion of the vast multidimensional problem of inequality. There is inequality of assets, of access to earning opportunities, of satisfaction from work, of recognition, of ability to enjoy consumption, of power, of participation in decision-making. The call for greater equality, for a genuine community of equals cannot be answered simply by measures that reduce the Gini coefficient or any other simple measure of inequality.

With this perspective, statistics that seem to indicate a relatively equal distribution of income in South Korea dissolve into so much state and academic rhetoric.

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171See Rhee, p. 195 and Amsden, pp. 16-17, note 11.
172cited by Launius, p. 8 and Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 24.
175See Sohn, Authoritarianism, p. 234, note 81.
176Choi, p. 269 and Mardon, p. 481.
177Amsden, p. 229-30.
Government and business efforts to promote tranquil labour relations have been aided by the rapid pace of industrialization in South Korea. The expansion of industry and inter-industry sectoral shifts have occurred swiftly. In the space of two decades, Korea went from an economy where manufacturing accounted for 13.4 percent of GNP in 1966, to 33.4 percent in 1985.\textsuperscript{179} During that same period, the share of light manufacturing fell from 59.5 percent of total manufacturing output in 1971 to 38.1 percent in 1984.\textsuperscript{180} The share of heavy and chemical industries increased from 40.5 to 61.9 percent between 1971 and 1984.\textsuperscript{181} The number of "wage workers" increased from 2.4 million in 1963 to 8.1 million in 1985.\textsuperscript{182} This meant a number of things for the Korean labour movement. In the 1960s much of the labour force was comprised of first generation industrial workers to whom collective action was a new concept.\textsuperscript{183} Although labour laws were less restrictive in the 1960s, workers did not have the experience to use legal protection to their benefit. As Koo notes, unlike many European countries, Korea lacked a strong artisan heritage that would help give workers a sense of collective identity in the factory setting.\textsuperscript{184} They came as rural migrants who had known only farm life prior to their "proletarianization".

As workers became more aware of their rights and their exploitation in the 1970s, they were faced with other obstacles to collective action. The state measures outlined above were only one part of this. Light manufacturing, the sector first emphasized in Korea's industrialization drive, employed a large number of female workers. These young women had the greatest cause for dispute, but the least power to articulate

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{179} Koo, "Farm to Factory," p. 672.
\bibitem{180} Amsden, p. 58.
\bibitem{181} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{182} Koo, "Farm to Factory," p. 672.
\bibitem{183} Choi, p. 89.
\bibitem{184} Koo, "Farm to Factory," p. 677.
\end{thebibliography}
their grievances. According to Deyo, the impotency of female manufacturing workers was due to their "low skill levels, low wages, employment insecurity, lack of career mobility, high levels of turnover and lack of attachment to work groups or firms." With the heavy and chemical industry drive in the 1970s, skilled positions increased to the point where there was even a shortage of qualified workers. The skill requirements of these jobs meant that wages were higher and turnover rates lower. The majority of heavy manufacturing workers were men who had greater capacity to challenge management and government given their high skill and wage levels, relative job security and support from working class communities. Even though the share of light manufacturing decreased, it still remained as an important part of the economy. Korea's rapid industrialization and simultaneous commitment to different industrial sectors created a "proletarian population [with] greater heterogeneity and internal status differentiation than its European counterparts...." Employers exploited this heterogeneity, turning white collar workers against blue, male against female and so on.

In spite of the odds, female industrial workers became "the torchbearers of the labour movement" in the 1970s. One of the best examples of their courage is their effort to establish an autonomous union at Dongil Trading Co. in 1972. The company-sympathetic union was dominated by male workers in

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185 Female workers generally receive lower wages (44.5% of male wages in 1980), work longer hours (241/mo. versus 231/mo.), and labor in worse conditions than their male counterparts. Amsden, p. 204 and Rauenhorst, p. 332. Choi describes the conditions at Bando Trading Co. in the 1970s (p. 125).


187 Ibid., pp. 196-206.

188 Koo, "Farm to Factory," p. 674.

189 Jeong Taik Lee, p. 142; and Choi, p. 95.

190 Rauenhorst, p. 333.

191 For a detailed account, see Choi, pp. 136-39; Ogle, Dissent, pp. 84-86 and Sohn pp. 136-40.
supervisory positions. Yet the woman workers managed to get one of their number elected as the first female president of a union in Korea. They met with incredible opposition from their male colleagues, management and police. They faced dismissal, harassment, bribery and beatings. For some time these women would not yield, but the forces united against them proved to be too much and the union was once again coopted by the company. Nevertheless, this is just one illustration of the efforts of women to protect their jobs and their rights. They may not have been motivated by radical ideologies, but they were progressive in that they chose to oppose the unfairness inherent in the development model and the traditional culture.

Given the conditions cited by Deyo which rendered female labourers relatively powerless, their protest was not as system-threatening and more easily contained than that of heavy industry workers. Yet these workers also began to discover the fragility of their position in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With high inflation rates in the late 1970s and the stabilization measures undertaken by the Chun regime, workers experienced a drop in real income and many firms were delinquent in the payment of wages. Economic instability and the spread of discontent in the labour force pressed the state to respond. According to Jeong Taik Lee, "limited options for accommodation of interest of the working class predisposed the state to fall back more upon coercive measures for labour repression." This was only a stop-gap measure as discontent boiled beneath the surface and workers began to identify more closely with those in other industries despite state and management efforts to the contrary.

The Korean formula for a quiescent labour force was rhetoric plus repression plus the rapid rate of development. This prescription was derived from a development model which featured state intervention, a close government-business relationship and rapid industrialization driven by growth concerns rather than


193Jeong Taik Lee, p. 151.
equity. South Korea's developmental regimes tried to manipulate traditional culture in order to command the loyalty and sacrifice of workers. They were aided in this goal by a real fear of communist North Korea and the fact that the speed of development kept workers disoriented for a number of years. When the rhetoric failed and workers demanded some substance in terms of wages, conditions and job security, state and management resorted to repression. The ultimate failure of this formula was clearly revealed by the explosion of labour unrest in 1987.

The Student Movement

In light of the theoretical material discussed in chapter two, one would expect students to be more inclined to protest than workers because: (1) They do not play a central role in the development process and therefore are not faced with the same measures of cooptation and coercion; and (2) They are better placed to see the contradictions in the existing social configuration and are not as susceptible to the legitimation ideologies of the political system. The withdrawal of student support will not significantly disrupt the realization of developmental goals unless: (1) They are able to inspire discontent with established structures among the middle and working classes; or (2) Student alienation becomes so extensive that there is difficulty finding recruits to fill white collar, managerial and technical positions. If this occurs, the student movement will demand more attention from the state than one would expect for a 'peripheral' conflict.

Although only a minority of Korean university students consistently participate in protest activity, their influence is far greater than their numbers. The student movement has been able to extend beyond the bounds of the university by linking up with the labour movement and other opposition groups. It has also done much to make the public aware of the disparity between economic and political development. In fact,
the student movement has been able to set the pace for other movements.\textsuperscript{194} The economic establishment and civil service have not yet experienced any real difficulty in finding recruits among university graduates, even the activists may finally compromise in order to find employment. Nevertheless, a significant number of former student activists continue to challenge the regime--actively by becoming opposition politicians or forming dissident organizations, or passively by withholding their political allegiance from the ruling regime and its economic policies. While this latent dissent may not offer a direct challenge to established structures, it exists as a reserve force that may be pressed into action by some compelling issue.

If student protest was isolated to university campuses, by issue and location, then perhaps it would receive less attention from the public and the state. However, as student activists have demonstrated their capacity to extend beyond these bounds, they have presented a real threat to prevailing structures. Korea’s developmental regimes have responded with measures similar to those used to suppress the labour movement. Since the development model has different implications for these two movements, these measures have not had the same effect. Even when the Park and Chun regimes succeeded in containing student demonstrations within the physical boundaries of the campus, the focus of student dissent has continued to be much broader. Therein lies its insurrectionary potential. Unlike workers whose grievances have, for the most part, been confined to labour issues, students have focused on the political failings of Korea’s path of development. An uneven development pattern has created space for student dissent.

Students are placed in a position to see the contradictions of the Korean model more clearly than are many other groups in Korean society. They recognize the fact that the state plays a major role in the creation of those contradictions with its emphasis on industrialization and neglect of political development and social equity. Their education, formal and informal, provides them with the ideological tools to counter state

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{194}Sohn, Authoritarianism, p. 116; and Manwoo Lee, p. 7.
\end{quote}
rhetoric which attempts to justify and legitimate this model.\textsuperscript{195} This is only one of the reasons why the student movement is more active than the labour movement. Students do not have to overcome the formidable state-business alliance in order to engage in collective action. Furthermore the pace of development has not been as disorienting or divisive to the student movement. Although students face repression, it is not as extensive or as effective as that which the workers face.

The measures used by Park and Chun against the students were not unlike those used against workers. They ran the whole gamut from appeals for patriotic support to attack by tear gas squads. Nevertheless, one can detect a greater reluctance to use violence and a tendency toward restraint when dealing with students. Park wavered between restrictive Presidential Emergency Measure's and conciliation.\textsuperscript{196} When students organized demonstrations against the \textit{Yushin} constitution in October 1973, the government responded by arresting and expelling hundreds.\textsuperscript{197} In an effort to appear as the benevolent dictator, Park released and reinstated many of these students a short time later.\textsuperscript{198} The desired effect was not achieved. Students continued to oppose the regime even though the conditions of PEM's 1 and 2 made it difficult to muster massive demonstrations. With the failure of conciliation, Park continued to dispense PEM's as occasion warranted. The disruptive capacity of the students is demonstrated by the fact that PEM 4 was specifically designed to emasculate a student organization--the National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students.\textsuperscript{199}

\textsuperscript{195}Habermas, "Conditions," p. 121.
\textsuperscript{196}Sohn, Authoritarianism, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., p. 67.
\textsuperscript{199}Ibid., p. 70. See also Young Whan Kihl, \textit{Politics and Policies in Divided Korea: Regimes in Contest} (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), p. 63.
The suppression of student activists became particularly pressing given their proclivity to unite with other dissident organizations and their attention to the plight of workers (this was sparked by the Chun Tae II suicide). Students began, more and more, to see democracy in terms of social justice. They also began to turn to literature from the left in their search for how this might be achieved. Liberal democratic institutions seemed powerless in the face of an authoritarian regime like Park's. The influence of this kind of thinking increased steadily throughout the seventies, but it might have remained moderate if not for Chun's political manoeuvres and the brutal suppression of the Kwangju Uprising. Nineteen-eighty has been referred to as "the last year of political romanticism" for students. Activists lost their remaining faith in the power of liberal philosophy and began to cleave to more radical formulas for the realization of social justice.

Given the bloody inauguration of the Chun administration, students distrusted any efforts at conciliation from the outset. It appears that the regime failed to fully appreciate the extent of their alienation. When it became clear that repression was not working, Chun tried to win the students through moderation in the form of the 1984 Campus Autonomy Policy. Under this policy, 350 student activists were released from prison and 1,363 expelled students were allowed to return to their universities. The police and ANSP presence on campus was greatly reduced and student government was allowed to operate freely. Contrary to plan, the voice of moderation did not prevail on campus. Militant students were able to use the new openness to strengthen their position and fan the flames of opposition to the regime. Within a few

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203Ibid., and Manwoo Lee p. 9.
months, the Chun regime returned to the 'rod of repression' by sending security agents and police back onto campuses to break dissident organizations. The number of expulsions and arrests mounted. By 1986, over 85 percent of political prisoners were students and between 1980 and 1987 1,579 students were expelled. Following the Asian games in 1986, 8,000 riot police mounted a four day siege against student activists at Konkuk University. The incident ended with the arrest of 1,525 students.

The government's incomplete authority over the campus environment has hindered efforts to suppress the student movement. Although Korea's national universities have been referred to as "government agencies" because their presidents are appointed by the Ministry of Education and they depend on the state for funding, even these campuses have not been able to erase student autonomy. This is due to the nature of the university experience as much as anything else. University studies do not make the same demands on time, or regiment students in the same way as industrial labour does workers. In spite of the fact that many of Korea's universities are heavily dependent on the state, they are not committed to the model of development in the same manner as the chaebol. They take their mandate to educate seriously. University administrations have not formed a partnership with the state comparable to that between the regime and conglomerates. Moreover, many of Korea's major universities, Yonsei, Korea, Hanyang and Sogang to name just a few, are private universities. Their administrations are not as easily cowed by government decrees.

The state does try to exercise control over university administrations, but many administrators and

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faculty maintain a somewhat guarded support of the students. They have been reluctant to cooperate with state efforts to combat the movement. In 1975, the presidents of Korea and Sogang universities resigned to denounce the state's heavy-handed measures.\textsuperscript{208} Chun also had some difficulty in getting university administrators to implement his policies.\textsuperscript{209} In 1985 the president of Seoul National University was fired when he refused to expel students who had participated in the occupation of the U.S. Information Services Library in 1985.\textsuperscript{210} In spite of the emphasis on economic 'modernization', universities retain a broader vision of their purpose than to simply turn out technocrats and engineers in pursuit of this narrow goal.

University professors are potential allies in anti-government remonstrance. Among them are some of the regime's greatest partisans and most ardent critics. Those who have supported the Park and Chun administrations have often been attached to government funded research institutes which dispense the kind of technocratic expertise that is the foundation of Korea's development model. The critics have been more concerned with democracy, equity and social justice--not at some distant future time but in Korea's present circumstances.

Professors have also suffered for their convictions by losing their jobs and even through imprisonment. Although they have tended to be more patient and less idealistic than their students, their censure of the regime has bolstered the student movement.

\textsuperscript{208}Sohn, \textit{Authoritarianism}, p. 223, note 130 and p. 83.

\textsuperscript{209}Dong, "University Students," p. 243.

In 1986, over two hundred professors signed a declaration which included the following statement:

The harder the political oppression, the more furious the protest movements of students. We do not accept the political, tactical measures which excessively blame radical actions of our students without analysing in depth the reasons for their radicalism. We believe that, in reality, the renewal of our society is the best remedy for the radicalism.  

Over the years, dissident professors, and other intellectuals have served as ideological gurus for the student movement. In the late 1970s and 1980s students turned to more radical alternatives which went beyond the critique offered by these dissenters. Hein Kim relates the story of "a professor highly regarded for his leftist sympathies a decade ago now finds himself branded as a 'neo-conservative' by his graduate students." Even when the support of faculty and administrators has not been forthcoming, the fact that students are not as circumscribed as workers by the demands of development has made it more difficult for them to be repressed.

Student government is another area in which the government has been unable to make lasting inroads. Although radicals may have been effectively barred from holding positions at certain periods of time, they have created their own parallel organizations underground. The strength of this underground activity was demonstrated in 1984 with the Campus Autonomy Policy. Within a very short time of the policy being inaugurated, student government and study circles were controlled by "activists". They established the National Federation of Student Associations (Chonhaknyon) in 1985 with the Sanmintu (Struggle Committee for the Liberation of the Masses, the Attainment of Democracy and the Unification of the Nation) as its radical

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212 Hein Kim, "Campus Radicals Face the Ideological Gap," FEER, September 8, 1988, p. 92.

"political arm". It is a credit to the resilience of student collective action that, when the government tried to eliminate this organization, two more militant underground organizations: the Chamintu (Committee for the Anti-U.S. Struggle for Independence and the Anti-Fascist Struggle for Democracy) and the Minmintu (Struggle Committee Against Imperialism, the Military and Fascism and for the Nation and Democracy) rose up in its stead.

The grassroots of student organization are study circles. Circles are a ubiquitous phenomenon on university campuses and they feature everything from calligraphy to hang gliding. They provide one of the main social outlets for students and also lend their organizational resources to the student movement. A number of underground circles exist for the sole purpose of studying insurgent literature and initiating anti-government protest. They have developed sophisticated tactics to "indoctrinate" new members. Senior members target new students from their home provinces and expose them to alternative ideologies. This is particularly effective as these students are experiencing the disorienting effects of life away from home and they trust someone who is from their area. The small size of circles, their number and the difficulty of distinguishing between the moderate and the militant makes the suppression of anti-government organizations a formidable task.

In contrast to the workers who have been bombarded with developmental rhetoric and have not had as ready access to alternative ideologies, students have benefited from access to ideological tools that can be used against the regime. What was unavailable through Korea's universities became available from

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214 Dong outlines three central objectives of Sanmintu: (1) "promotion of labour student solidarity", (2) "political action against the Chun regime", (3) "measured direct actions and assaults on some visible symbolic targets of American and other foreign investment interest in Korea." "University Students," pp. 243-44.


students going abroad to study. Frustration with government intransigence and the failure of democratic liberalism to stand up in the face of authoritarianism have led many students to seek solutions in more radical sociopolitical thought, including dependency theory, international structuralist theories, the writings of the Frankfurt school and Marxist-Leninism.\(^{218}\) The works of Kim Il Sung have even found their way into South Korea's underground study circles. The influence of this literature cannot be ignored. Ahn cites a survey that reveals the extent to which this "extra-curricular reading" has shaped the political attitudes of university students.\(^{219}\) While moderate ideologies claimed the sentiments of the majority of students to the end of the 1970s, the Kwangju incident did more to advance the spread of leftist thought than uninterrupted broadcasts from North Korea could have accomplished in a decade. Those students who continued to cleave to moderate views could find little to defend such a stand and thus their influence was weakened.

Concern for human rights, democracy, and social equity have been consistent features of the student movement, but as Sohn notes, "the openness of [these] concepts" has led to a "blurring" of liberal and socialist theories.\(^{220}\) The sway of leftist theories is evident in the rhetoric of the Sanmintu, Chamintu, and Minmintu—their names alone are a testimony of this. Words like fascist, neo-colonialist, imperialist, and anti-people (minjung) became common fare in student condemnations of the Park and especially Chun regimes. Despite familiar government attempts to discredit the movement by raising the spectre of the North Korean threat, student access to ideological alternatives remained as a formidable tool to counter regime rhetoric.

As long as only a minority of students, who could be marginalized effectively, adhered to leftist


\(^{219}\)Ahn Chung-Si, "Political Culture and Political Socialization of the Post-War Generation in South Korea," \textit{Korea Journal} (May 1988):18. This survey, which was administered by a Seoul National University campus paper in August 1985, indicated the sources that influence student thinking: "1) extra curricula reading of booklets (43.5%), 2) discussions with peer groups (26.8%), 3) through parents (10.3%), 4) religion (9.3%), 5) professors (2.6%) and 6) mass media (2.2%)."

\(^{220}\)Sohn, \textit{Authoritarianism}, p. 172.
ideologies they would not cause much concern. What Park and Chun did not fully realize was that repression was not the most effective means of ensuring that this would be the case. In fact it helped to reconfirm the need for an extra-institutional opposition. Although only 5-8 percent of students are activists and 1-2 percent extremists, their influence on the thoughts of their fellow students surpasses their numbers. According to a 1982 survey cited by Ahn, 80.8 percent of students see communism as unrealistic but containing positive aspects. This indicates that Korea's university students have the ability to see things in terms other than black and white; it is not simply a matter of choosing between an authoritarian capitalist regime and communism. Given the government propensity to use violence, students, and the public, have been willing to tolerate extreme action and ideologies on the part of radicals. Moderate students have even swelled the ranks of the activists on occasions when the actions of the government have been particularly vexatious.

Another noteworthy feature of the student movement is the high profile of students from elite universities. Parallels with history notwithstanding, this is significant for a number of reasons. It indicates that the nascent middle class objects to Korea's model; dissent is not merely a function of deprivation. Graduates from elite universities generally do not experience difficulty in finding a place within established institutions, if they are willing to forsake their radical ways (unless they have been blacklisted, jailed, or expelled). Nevertheless, their discontent with the model is not completely erased once they receive their first pay cheque. As students, they protest because they see the disparity between political and economic development. In the 1970s, this was made all the more apparent because they were able to contrast it with

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221 Hein Kim cites figures of 1 to 8 percent for radicals and 4 to 5 percent for "active sympathizers". "Still on the Streets," FEER, June 2, 1988, p. 36. John McBeth says that 5 percent of students are activists and 1 to 2 percent are pro-communist. "The Short March from Moderation to Radicalism," FEER, January 15, 1987, p. 31.


223 See Ensor "Echoes of Confucianism," p. 35.
the ideals of liberal democracy that they were being taught by their professors. When they began to doubt the power of this school of thought, they began to measure Korea against more revolutionary ideologies.

These students protest, not only because they witness the abysmal lack of fit between the ideal and the real, but also because they are barred from extensive participation in the political system. Even though the Korean education system gives strong emphasis to humanities and social sciences, these graduates, just like their technical counterparts, are expected to find employment within the economic establishment or a bureaucracy with a strong technocratic mind set. In other words, the pattern of development narrows their range of career choices and does not allow them to achieve the status that they feel they have become qualified for. This is particularly galling when graduates from military academies fill prominent positions.

Students question the rationale of social and political institutions that teach them a democratic-egalitarian ideal and yet impede the actualization of that ideal. Surveys show that Korean university students are willing to accept status differentiation if it has been achieved through hard work and ability, on the basis of equal opportunity. As Korean society is presently constituted, they see the achievement of status and power as a function of connections not merit and they resent the need to conform in order to rise within existing structures. Most graduates comply because they feel they have no choice. A minority refuse, but their lives are spent on the margins, unable to find employment commensurate with their educational achievements.

Korea's developmental regimes have not necessarily been aided by the pace of industrialization in the suppression of the student movement. Although universities have felt the effects of rapid economic development in an increase in the number of students and the expansion of science and commerce faculties,

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it has not had as disruptive an impact on student organization as it has had on labour. The social science faculties are still the largest and these students are the most inclined to protest. The student movement has experienced more continuity and fewer divisions.

The Park and Chun regimes tried to starve the movement by disconnecting it from the general student body and society as a whole. A number of methods were employed to this end: painting protestors as pro-communist ideological extremists, using more overt forms of repression—expulsion from university, arrest, imprisonment and police beatings, and blacklisting them so they could not return to university studies or find anything but menial employment. These measures had an effect, but it was not always that which the government desired. The students gained a good deal of sympathy for their sacrifice. After all, they almost always focused on national rather than student issues. This gave them an advantage over workers who tended to highlight labour specific grievances. The sincerity of the student concern with the lack of political development and social equity struck a respondent chord with the general public even though this did not always translate into open support. Those students who could not return to mainstream society after being blacklisted became part of a growing counter-culture of dissent. As the numbers of these politically ostracized dissidents has increased, so has the sophistication of their tactics and their ideological critique.

Students have proven their ability to form ties with other protest groups in spite of preventative government efforts. They have always been conspicuous members of national opposition organizations—the National Congress for the Restoration of Democracy in the 1970s and the People’s Coalition for Democracy

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225 Steinberg, p. 81, Table 7.1. By 1984, 27 percent of students were enrolled in the social sciences, 21.3 percent in engineering, 12.5 percent in linguistics and literature 11.1 percent in education and 9.4 percent in natural sciences, arts, medical sciences, agriculture and humanities. Social Indicators in Korea, 1985, cited by D.S. MacDonald, The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 87-88. See also p. 91.

226 See Sohn, Authoritarianism, pp. 35, 65 for examples of protest activity of students in the social sciences.

227 Hein Kim, "Campus Radicals," p. 91. See also Lie, p. 43.
and Reunification in the 1980s. In these organizations, they have laboured with dissident religious groups, intellectuals, journalists, opposition politicians and even workers. Student initiatives to unite and rally workers have caused the government particular alarm. Students began by expressing sympathy for workers in their demonstrations; later they went to work in factories. If discovered, they were immediately dismissed and possibly faced more severe action. In 1985, 321 "disguised" workers were fired.\textsuperscript{228} Between January and May 1986, 350 were fired.\textsuperscript{229} An anti-government rally held in Inchon in 1986 featured the combined protest of large numbers of students and workers and demonstrated the success of these efforts in spite of government suppression.\textsuperscript{230} All of this was very disturbing for Korea's developmental regimes; they were unable to contain the student movement within safe bounds.

It is not only the government that has hindered the full blossoming of a student-labour coalition. There are a number of obstacles to overcome including the traditional low regard of labour. This continues to manifest itself in the 'low' language that managers and white collar workers--even newly recruited university graduates--use when speaking to older, blue collar workers.\textsuperscript{231} These attitudes have made workers suspicious of activist students, as have their radical ideologies. Until the mid-1980s, only a small core of militant workers were willing to move as far left as the radical students. Nonetheless, bonds have developed and the regime has not been able to reverse the process. Because workers were more easily controlled than students, much of the initiative for this 'united front' has come from the student movement. Since 1987, workers have become a more active party in anti-establish protest and it increasingly bears the imprint of their

\textsuperscript{228}Dong, "University Students," p. 249.

\textsuperscript{229}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{230}Ibid., p. 250.

\textsuperscript{231}Mark Clifford, "Drudges with Grudges," \textit{FEER}, June 1, 1989, p. 37.
interests.

The student movement is often described as having become ritualized.\textsuperscript{232} This reflects regime efforts to contain it and student recognition that the cost of going beyond the parameters set can be very great (expulsion, arrest, beating, blacklisting and sometimes even death). At times they have been content to protest within the bounds of the university--they are still visible and their rejection of authoritarian developmental regimes remains apparent.\textsuperscript{233} Like water lapping on a rock, they have hoped to wear down regime intransigence and popular apathy through daily demonstrations. There have been many times when militant students have burst beyond these bounds, in 1980 and 1987 for example. This potential makes the student movement a force that must be dealt with.

Summary

The fact that the Korean development model has not had the same effect on the labour and student movements explains much of their variation in level of activity. Students have had more ideological tools available to explain the contradictions of a model that emphasizes economics and neglects political and social development. This has also given them more defence against regime developmental rhetoric. Students are also not as easily repressed because they have more autonomy in the organization of their activity and time. They are not faced with the same formidable coalition of government and business. They even receive guarded support from administrators and professors. Moreover, the pace of development has not had the same disruptive effect on student organization as it has on labour. The first generation of industrial workers were pulled from their farms with little experience in collective action. Rapid development created a heterogenous work force that could be manipulated by business and the state. While the numbers of


\textsuperscript{233} Buruma, "Right This Way," p. 36.
students have increased dramatically, they have experienced more continuity in organization. When Korean youth enter into university, they are incorporated into organizations such as study circles that are student-controlled whereas workers enter factories and labour organizations that are dominated by management with state back-up. In sum, these two groups face a different set of inducements and constraints as a result of their different positions in the development process.

234 Although student protest is sometimes described as a generational challenge, this does not explain why young workers of the same generation do not match the students in activism. Braungart cites "different social and cultural positions" as the source of dissimilar mobilization patterns within the same generation. Richard G. Braungart, "Historical Generations and Youth Movements: A Theoretical Perspective," in Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change, vol. 6, eds., Richard E. Ratcliff and Louis Kriesberg (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1984), p. 118. In Korea, these different social positions are a consequence, at least in part, of the model of development. See Braungart, pp. 115-19.
V. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE MODEL

As the 1980s progressed, the stress on the foundations of the Korean development model became increasing evident. Inducements and constraints to worker and student collective action changed as the model evolved. The consequences of rapid development were manifest in high inflation rates, elusive comparative advantage and rising expectations for more equal distribution of the fruits of development. The government-business relationship began to show signs of strain and the authoritarian state faced the challenge of popular groups demanding democratization. The legacy of Kwangju refused to die; in spite of a good economic record, the Chun regime could not shake its image as a bloody dictatorship. The students assumed the major responsibility for defying the regime and, as indicated in the last chapter, they refused to be swayed by either propitiation or repression.

Another notable feature of the 1980s was the growing force of labour dissent. Male heavy industry workers began to take up the torch from their light industry female colleagues. Heavy industry workers, many of whom were employed by chaebol, were once pacified by their relatively privileged position.\textsuperscript{235} The Chun regime's stabilization measures proved that even the formerly privileged were not immune to the demands of growth-first political economics. As a result of stabilization measures that included chaebol mergers, real wages fell and many lost their jobs.\textsuperscript{236}

These problems were compounded by the fact that South Korea was having difficulty developing a comparative advantage in these industries.\textsuperscript{237} Much of the growth that had occurred was due to government subsidies and protection. When the Chun regime tried to rationalize chaebol activity, some of


\textsuperscript{236}Cumings, "Origins and Development," p. 80. See also Haggard and Moon, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{237}Cumings, "Origins and Development," p. 79.
these subsidies were retracted. The government had to backtrack when it became clear that it did not have the latitude to discipline these conglomerates with impunity. Yet, it could not continue to subsidize them at the same inflationary levels as the Park regime. It was apparent that the government-business relationship had changed. These were not the same firms that had been manipulated into supporting Park's development objectives in 1961. They had grown far beyond that, to the extent that it was questionable whether the state was still firmly leading development.

Stabilization measures may have helped to put the Korean economy back on track, but they also increased the autonomy of business. The privatization of Korea's commercial banks made it easier for businesses to obtain credit without first having to meet all of the regime's specifications. Nevertheless, the Bank of Korea and Ministry of Finance still set the standard for commercial banks. Real financial autonomy came from income obtained by speculating in real estate and the curb market.

It became evident, not only to the state, but to the public as well, that Korea Inc. had entered a new phase. The rhetoric of 'all for development and development for all' fell flat in the face of giant conglomerates that were obviously more concerned with their own financial aggrandizement than that of the nation. As worker consciousness evolved, they chafed at the lopsided nature of national sacrifice. In their eyes, they did all the sacrificing, while business did all the developing. Workers denounced the conspicuous consumption of the business class and its intimate relationship with government. Their anger was also increasingly directed toward that state as they realized its role in facilitating their exploitation.

This change in labour consciousness was aided by the activity of other dissident groups, particularly the students, among industrial workers. Militant workers realized that directing their demands toward

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238 Haggard and Moon, p. 221.

239 Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 69; Haggard and Moon, p. 228; and Hamilton, Industrialization, pp. 47-48.
management was futile when their position was a consequence of the whole political and economic system.

The irony is that when the workers became more politicized and directed their protest toward the state, it no longer had a strong capacity to discipline business. Two and a half decades of support had undercut its autonomy. This is not to say that the state lost its leverage completely but that business developed considerable leverage of its own.

The 1985 National Assembly elections gave the opposition movement a great boost. In spite of manipulation on the part of the ruling regime, opposition parties were able to capture 116 of 276 seats. The ruling Democratic Justice Party won only 35.3 percent of the popular vote. 

Gerrymandering of the Assembly meant that this did not translate into opposition seats; nonetheless, it was a significant 'victory'. The democracy movement began to coalesce around the issue of amending the constitution to allow for direct election of the president. The ruling party favoured a parliamentary system. Chun tried to counter the growing power of the democracy movement by entering into constitutional talks with opposition parties. Political restrictions placed the major opposition leaders, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung on the sidelines, but they managed to exert their influence through the back door. Much to their chagrin the nominal head of the New Korea Democratic Party, Lee Minwoo, did not prove to be as pliable as they had assumed. In December 1986, he proposed a package of compromise with the ruling DJP. This set off a drive to oust him and put Kim Young Sam at the head of the party. In the end, Kim Young Sam established a new party. In spite of these disruptions, the opposition parties managed to participate with the National Coalition

\[240\] Ogle, Dissent, p. 158.


for a Democratic Constitution in a petition drive in support of direct presidential elections.

In April 1987, President Chun announced that constitutional talks would be suspended because of the difficulty of working with a divided opposition party. This threw fuel on the flames of popular resentment. The initiative for the constitutional drive moved from the hands of the opposition parties to extra-institutional groups. Student activists, who realized that their progressive radicalization had isolated them from the mainstream of the movement, moderated their demands in order to create a united front against the regime.\textsuperscript{244} The deaths of two students at the hands of police and Chun’s naming a former general who had been involved in the 1980 coup, Roh Tae Woo, as his successor acted as catalysts to ignite the latent discontent among the middle class. They came out on the streets to cheer on demonstrators.\textsuperscript{245} On June 26, students from 69 of 114 colleges and university participated in a nation-wide peace march which involved over 200,000 citizens.\textsuperscript{246}

When the extent of popular alienation became clear, repression ceased to be a viable option. According to Manwoo Lee, the military refused to participate in action against the Korean public.\textsuperscript{247} Roh decided on a ‘grand compromise’ which came in the form of an eight-point democratization plan announced on June 29, 1987. This included many of the demands of the democracy movement: direct presidential elections, the release of political prisoners, and the lifting of restrictions on freedoms of speech and assembly.\textsuperscript{248} A presidential election was held in December 1987. Roh emerged as the victor after the

\textsuperscript{244} Wonmo Dong, "Student Activism and the Presidential Politics of 1987," in Political Change, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{246} Dong, "Student Activism," p. 178.
\textsuperscript{247} Manwoo Lee, p. 39.
The real victory came in April 1988 when opposition parties claimed a majority of seats in the National Assembly, even though the DJP ruled by a plurality.250

Roh's democratization package represented a serious modification of the development model. Korea's strong developmental state was significantly weakened. By strengthening civil liberties and lifting restrictions on the freedom of the press, new channels were opened to the public to influence policy making. With the revision of election law, political candidates became more responsible to their constituents. They could not simply rely on gerrymandering to ensure their seats. Formerly, there were two seats in each constituency and the ruling party would usually win the second if not the first. In 1987 single member districts made the election more competitive. In order to win and maintain seats, assemblymen of all stripes had to become politicians. As their constituents entreated them to champion local interests, they pressured the bureaucracy to deliver.

With an opposition majority in the assembly, the civil service lost its former autonomy. Powerhouse ministries like the MOF, MCI and EPB could not act with the same freedom, safely shielded from the demands of the public. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Labour, whose concerns had been placed as a low priority, developed more clout in the determination of policy. Signs of this came as early as March 1987, when the MOA helped push through an extensive farm debt relief program in spite of the resistance of the EPB and MOF.251 At the end of the year, a similar scenario was played out with grain prices. The MOF and the EPB favoured a 7-8 percent increase, but a more generous 14

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249Manwoo Lee, pp. 46-65.

250The opposition parties won 169 seats while the DJP had only 125. See Manwoo Lee, p. 103, and Steinberg, p. 67.

251Haggard and Moon, p. 232.
percent increase was implemented. Roh favoured the more popular option. The Korean government could no longer tread the path of growth first, ignoring equity until some undetermined time. The Roh administration felt a need to respond to this; the 1988 minimum wage law is another example. Welfare policies acquired more importance in a more open political environment. The Roh regime has turned to these to legitimize its continued intervention in the economy as the security threat has lost some of its utility.

What has all of this meant for Korea’s social movements? Roh’s democratization plan was a political move which failed to address many of the demands of workers. What it did do was signal a break in repression. Workers took advantage of the new spirit of liberalism to press their demands. Between the summer of 1987 and the end of 1989, over 7,100 labour disputes occurred. By the summer of 1988, there were 2,799 new unions, with 586,167 new members. A two month strike by 20,000 shipyard workers at Hyundai Heavy Industries in the fall of 1987 is one example of the magnitude of labour protest during this period. While workers initially made their traditional demands for higher wages, better conditions and more freedom of organization, it was not long before their protest assumed a political tone. Striking Daewoo workers denounced company contributions to Roh’s 1987 presidential campaign. The foundation for this politicization had been laid in the 1970s. For some years, it was only the most militant

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254 Mark Clifford, "Whose in Charge Here?" *FEER*, November 23, 1988, p. 84.


256 Ogle, *Dissent*, p. 115.

257 Clifford, "Drudges," p. 36.

workers who concentrated on the connection between their immediate conditions and the interplay of political and economic structures. In the early 1980s 'political' unionism began to gain more adherents. When the dam broke loose in 1987, a political critique was soon wedded with traditional grievances.

In keeping with political reform, the government made it clear that it would no longer intervene in disputes on the side of management. The government amended the labour law in October of 1987 as a sign of its commitment to foster more equitable labour-management relations. Although the law is "still very restrictive", it opened the possibility for workers to take control of the union movement. Many worker-controlled unions have become part of what has been referred to as the minjung or democratic union movement. These local unions have united to form the Federation of Democratic Labour Unions, a national organization intended to provide an alternative to the FKTU, which is deeply compromised by its past relationship with the government.

In spite of a more relaxed political atmosphere, workers have struggled to establish autonomous unions. Although responses have varied, business has not welcomed these unions with open arms. Employers have resorted to their familiar tactics of trying to coopt workers or beat them into submission. Samsung tried to set up "paper unions" in order to combat the growing power of workers. Rather than


260 Bret Billet, "South Korea at the Crossroads: An Evolving Democracy or Authoritarianism Revisited?" Asian Survey 30 (March 1990): 306. Although compulsory arbitration was eliminated, unions are still barred from "political involvement". A cool-off period and advance notice of a strike are still required under the new labour law. See Haggard and Moon, p. 234; Clifford, "The Price of Democracy," 1988, p. 61 and "Spring Offensive," p. 66.

261 See John McBeth, "Labour Rocks the Boat," FEER, January 1989, p. 65; and Brandt, p. 89.


263 See Ogle, Dissent, chap. 6 for a description of how various businesses have responded to the upsurge in union activity since 1987.

meet worker demands for autonomous unions, it shut down its shipyard temporarily in 1987. What changed, at least for a short time, was the government's proclivity to stand behind these measures.

Bello and Rosenfeld give an illustrative account of attempts by workers at Hyundai Heavy Industries to establish an independent union. They faced bribery, threats, and beatings by kusadae but persevered. The final defeat came in March 1989 when, in an abrupt about face, the government sent in 14,000 riot police by land, sea and air to break a major strike. As these authors note: "After a few months of trying to project the image of being a neutral arbitrator between capital and labour, the Korean state reverted to its traditional role of being the ultimate defender of the chaebol."

As workers have become more politicized, they have increasingly found common cause with the students. The student movement has also undergone a major metamorphosis as a result of democratization. In contrast to the labour movement, which was given a major boost by the reforms, the student movement experienced a challenge to its unity and legitimacy as an anti-government force. Roh's reforms managed to accomplish what years of repression had failed to do--isolate the militant. Although non-activist students and many members of society had been dismayed by the movement's radical drift, they tolerated it and empathised because of the activists' commitment and willingness to suffer at the hands of the state. When the government demonstrated a capacity to compromise, those of more moderate opinions felt that continued extremism would be counter productive. Students have always focused on the lack of progress toward democracy. They claim that political authoritarianism contributes to the exploitative nature of economic development. When it appeared that the regime was finally making a sincere effort at political modernization, students lost their former constituency among the more moderate citizens. Radical influence with the public

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266Bello and Rosenfeld, pp. 41-42.
and on university campuses waned. Demonstrations decreased in size and the number of arrests mounted. Students were no longer protected by public sympathy.

Moderate students who focused on university issues were able to defeat candidates fielded by the Chondaehyop (National Association of Representatives of University Students) in the November 1989 student government elections. Chondaehyop's sending a student to Pyongyang in June 1989 alarmed citizens who were willing to tolerate a little pro-North Korea rhetoric in the heat of battle, but felt it was going to far in a climate of reform. One should not leave the impression that student radicals have lost all influence. Following the Roh regime's return to traditional methods of repression in 1989, these activists have once again demonstrated their ability to sway the movement and rally support for their stand. Furthermore, the increasing unemployment of university graduates helps replenish the reservoir of discontent. In 1989, approximately 40.1 percent of university graduates were unemployed.

Roh's reforms inspired renewed hope among the Korean population that democracy could be achieved. Yet, as Bruce Cumings points out, it is still the state in "negotiation" with military and business elites that controls the democratization process. This has been clearly demonstrated by government retrenchment in the last two years. The Hyundai incident cited above is just one example of a return to the

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268 According to Brandt, "Chondaehyop candidates were defeated at nearly half the universities, including ... SNU (p. 93)." See also Deming, Leyden and Bank, p. 9; and Dong, "Student Radicals," pp. 180-81.


suppression of the labour movement. Perhaps the changes were only superficial; between 1987 and 1989, 600 leaders of democratic unions were imprisoned.\textsuperscript{271} There was, however, a short hiatus in the overt oppression characteristic of the Chun regime. When it appeared that things were going too far too fast, Roh pulled back the reins and returned to the familiar platform of popular movements threatening national security and economic development. In January 1990, the radical Korean Trade Union Congress (Chonnohyop) was banned because "it [was] leading to a vicious conflict with an ideology of class struggle for the liberation of labour."\textsuperscript{272} Clearly the communist threat has not lost its utility in the eyes of the regime in spite of its international decline. North Korean intransigence in the face of glastnost and perestroika lend this rhetoric some credibility with the South Korean public.

During the first two years of labour unrest, South Korea lost several millions of dollars in export revenue.\textsuperscript{273} The strength of the world economy in 1987 and 1988 allowed it to weather this storm and still achieve relatively high rates of growth.\textsuperscript{274} An economic downturn in 1989 may have been one of the factors that lowered the government's tolerance of labour dissent.\textsuperscript{275} Two years of wage increases in the double digits threatened Korea's comparative advantage in several industries.\textsuperscript{276} Rather than look for ways to

\textsuperscript{271}Ogle, Dissent, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{272}Quoted in David Easter, "South Korea Blames Labour for Economic Woes," Guardian (New York), April 4, 1990, p. 17, cited by Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{273}By mid-August 1987, it was estimated that labour disputes cost $74.7 mn in lost exports. Clifford, "Labour Strikes," p. 14. See also "Labour Disputes Hit South Korean Exports," FEER, April 13, 1989, p.67.


\textsuperscript{275}In 1988, South Korea had a trade surplus of $11.6 bn; this went down to $4.6 bn in 1989. Manwoo Lee, p. 137. 1989 also marked a $1.9 bn balance of payments deficit. Mark Clifford, "Rising Expectations," FEER, March 14, 1991, p. 53.

\textsuperscript{276}Wages increased 18.6 percent in the final quarter of 1987, 19.6 percent in 1988, 23.0 percent in 1989 and 17 percent in 1990. Bon-Ho Koo, p. 60 and Clifford, "Expectations," p. 53.
improve productivity, a number of businesses moved part of their operations to countries where wages were cheaper. According to Bello and Rosenfeld:

This hemorrhage of productive capital is likely to render even more tenuous the link between conglomerate prosperity and domestic welfare, further eroding the legitimacy of the chaebol-dominated model of growth.\(^{277}\)

For the time being, the Roh regime is trying to renew the confidence of capital by offering it subsidies and support reminiscent of past developmental regimes. The difference is that labour is not willing to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden as it did before. The labour movement is still experiencing difficulty in uniting and it is battling a well-entrenched foe, but it will not return to its former quiescent place, nor does the Roh regime have the same power to force it there.\(^{278}\) In spite of the control that it still exercises, the 1987 reforms have placed new constraints on the state and given the public more power. The Korean state must now walk a tight-rope between public demands for redistribution and business demands for investment. The government-business partnership is not the united front that it once was. This is as much a function of reforms as it is of the chaebol's increased capacity to go their own way. The Korean state still has tools to use against the chaebol as demonstrated by the way that it disciplined Hyundai in 1991.\(^{279}\) The question is whether these will be used in favour of the public or simply to bring business back in line with state developmental agendas.

Although the student movement went through a slump following political reform, it has revived as the Roh regime has proven itself deserving of censure. The nadir of the movement came in May 1989 when six

\(^{277}\)Bello and Rosenfeld, p. 171.

\(^{278}\)Lie, p. 48. Since 1987, white collar workers have also participated in labour disputes. Even foreign banks have not escaped labour unrest. Mark Clifford "Labour's Love Lost," FEER, May 4, 1989, p. 68.

policemen died in a fire set by militant students at Dongeui University in Pusan. This coupled with the movement's professed sympathy for North Korea diminished its reputation as a righteous opponent of authoritarianism. Many felt that students had gone too far in their ideology and their tolerance of violent methods. In 1990, student activists regained some of their influence as politicians demonstrated the limits of their commitment to reform. In January 1990, when two of Korea's three major opposition parties announced their intention to merge with the Democratic Justice Party to form the Democratic Liberal Party, students were incensed. They could not understand such a betrayal, especially on the part of Kim Young Sam. With all but one political party discredited, the indispensable role of the extra-institutional opposition, including the student movement, was reconfirmed. Demonstrations increased, as did popular support. On the day of the actual merger, May 9, 1990, 98,000 people participated in anti-DLP rallies. When a student was beaten to death by police in the spring of 1991, the upsurge of protest activity approached 1987 levels. The Roh regime was able to pacify the general public by apologizing and firing the interior minister. These incidents renewed the progressive radicalization of the student movement.

A disturbing element of recent student protest has been the number of self immolations. This inspired the famous dissident poet, Kim Chi Ha, to exhort students to: "Give up your sickening politics of necrophilia." One cannot help but wonder if there is more to this kind of protest than remonstrance of

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the ruling regime. It seems that the line between discontent with the sociopolitical situation and personal anomie has become blurred. Whatever the case, the student movement is far from spent and will prove to be a significant actor as long as the government provides it with cause for protest. It is the perverse behaviour of the regime that makes the movement acceptable in any way to more moderate public opinion. An important feature of recent protest has been the extent of student-labour cooperation. Two years of relative openness allowed the labour movement time to move towards the students ideologically. Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to bridge the gap between student concerns like reunification and labour's focus on economic issues.

The 1987 reforms marked a major milestone in the Korean development process. With election reform and the expansion of civil liberties, political development was given long overdue attention. The policymaking process became more open to the public than it had ever been in the history of the Republic of Korea. The last two years have proven, however, that it is not easy for the state to disengage from a model that it has been dedicated to for two and a half decades. The Korean state still expects to achieve high levels of economic growth. With a newly empowered public demanding more equitable distribution, this is not an easy goal to reach. Popular opinion can no longer be sacrificed on the altar of economic efficiency. On the other hand, the state cannot simply drop its obligations to business as the well being of the two have become so closely entwined.

The Roh regime found itself walking a tight-rope after unleashing popular forces that have proven difficult to control. These are the facts of life in the ranks of the not so newly industrializing. The problem of how to maintain the confidence of business and the support of the public is a familiar one to developed

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286 Lie, p. 50.
countries. Unwilling to sacrifice growth to meet public demands for social justice, the Roh regime has tried to retrace its steps and return to the simple formula of national security and growth oriented economic development. This formula is not able to gain the same mileage in a more pluralist society as it did in the 1960s and 1970s. It is true that government, military and business elites still remain in the driver's seat. The majority of the South Korean public is quite conservative and seldom willing to take the same risks as militant students and workers. Now that ordinary citizens are finally able to articulate their interests in relative freedom they will try to direct the path of development in their favour. For the most part, they will be content to do so from the back seat but, if the government turns around completely, extra-institutional movements like the students and workers will increase their influence.

These alterations in the development model have allowed workers more room for protest. The labour movement can no longer be carefully contained as it was in past decades. Worker consciousness has risen and political reforms have made it more difficult for management and government to resort to repression. Workers have also tried to take advantage of cracks in the government-business alliance. The labour movement is still struggling for independence, but it has developed more power to pursue worker interests. The student movement lost some momentum with the 1987 reforms. As the regime made an attempt at political modernization, the movement's major *raison d'être* was undermined. Students were no longer fortified by public support. As the Roh regime has waffled on its commitment to reform, these two movements have remained in a state of flux. A fully independent labour movement has not been established, nor has the student movement lost its ability to act as an influential opposition movement. While some of the former structures of the Korean model have been changed, many remain intact and Korea's social movements have adapted accordingly.
CONCLUSION

South Korea has experienced amazing growth over the past three decades—so the economic statistics indicate. In contrast to the vibrant economy, political development has lagged. From 1961 to 1987, Korea's 'modernization' drive was headed by what Bruce Cumings refers to as bureaucratic authoritarian industrializing regimes. Economic development was a priority for these states which allied themselves with business and shielded policy-making from the public in order to achieve their goal. These regimes sought legitimacy through a carefully controlled election process, state-sponsored intermediate groups and the connection between industrialization and national security.

Korea's state-led, fast-paced development model has had important consequences for social movements in that country. The model creates issues to which movements respond and also helps define the parameters in which they act. While it is important to remember that people create social movements, it is also necessary to understand the context of their action. This thesis places South Korea's social movements in the context of the structures created by the model of development. Although workers have been at the centre of the model, the labour movement did not approach the same level of mobilization as the students until the mid-1980s. The varying demands of the development process on these two groups help to explain the divergence of their respective movements.

There are a number of theories of social movements that can be applied to South Korea. Some look to cultural-historical explanations, others to relative deprivation, access to resources or structural conditions. This thesis favours a structural argument that focuses on the field in which social movements operate. Literature on late capitalism and contemporary social movements have some utility for Korea. This literature helps to explain why the state might intervene in the economy, its concern with conflicts that are system-threatening and its need to legitimate its intervention and the political economic structure. It also suggests
that societal contradictions will not have the same impact on all social groups. While these factors may not completely account for the difference between labour and student movements in Korea, they do point in the right direction.

Korea’s industrializing regimes have been committed to economic development for a number of reasons—a desire to 'catch up', an obsession with national security, and the need for self-preservation. Economic development has also been used to justify the state’s authoritarian character. Rather than using redistributive policies to legitimate its intervention and the social division of labour, the Korean state has resorted to patriotic appeals and outright repression when these failed. Korea’s strategic conditions and a colonial legacy of an "over-developed state" have made these methods possible. Korea’s developmental regimes have been able to insulate major policy-making bodies from popular pressures. They have also forged a formidable alliance with business. These conditions, coupled with the rapid rate of industrialization have had important consequences for the student and labour movements. They help to explain why some cultural legacies are more enduring than others, why relative deprivation does not translate into collective action and why social groups have unequal access to resources.

The role of the state in development has made a number of things possible. Korea’s industrializing regimes have been able to create a national rhetoric in support of development. When this has failed, they were not averse to using force to fortify business against labour. Unlike developed countries with ‘weaker’ states, which are more subject to the demands of public opinion, South Korean governments have not turned to redistributive techniques as a means of engendering public support for the model until more recently. Because of their importance to the success of the model, workers have faced the full gamut of rhetoric and repression. The disorienting pace of development has also contributed to their difficulty in organizing a

287 Choi, p. 196.
powerful, united movement.

Students have not been as susceptible to the rhetoric, nor have they been as easily repressed. The development model does not make the same demands on them, nor does it compromise their autonomy in the same way. Their education, both formal and informal, provides them with ideological alternatives to regime rationale. It raises their awareness of the lack of political modernization and the consequences of that. For years, Korean universities have been preaching the gospel of liberal democracy, but as far as the students could see, this doctrine had failed to win any converts among state, military and business elites. A significant number of students began to question the power of the message itself and have turned to other schools of thought, which include socialism and even Kim II Sung's juche philosophy.

Students are not as easily contained because they have more autonomy on campus than workers do in the factory. They are not subject to the same regimentation as industrial workers. Furthermore, although university administrations are dependent on the state, they are not as well incorporated into the development model as business. They do not receive such an array of perquisites in return for cooperation. Students are better able to protest as a result of the 'space' that these conditions afford them.

After 1987, these two movements began to resemble one another more in militancy and activity. A change occurred in the inducements and constraints to collective action. The costs of protest were lowered for labour in a more open political climate. Workers have grown in their capacity to challenge employers and the state. They recognize that government and business elites share responsibility for their exploitation. Workers have developed the same doubts as students regarding the regime’s “legitimacy propositions”. The movement has been strengthened as privileged workers have also come to realize that their position is not assured. In contrast the student movement was temporarily weakened as a result of political reforms. Radical activists lost credibility in the face of government compromise. For years, the lack of democracy was
their major platform. Once the Roh regime demonstrated a willingness to open up the political process students lost control of that platform. As the state has returned to coercive methods, the student movement has been revived. Until the government proves that it is firmly committed to democracy, the extra-institutional opposition will still be able to draw on popular discontent. In 1987, the development model was only shaken by reforms, not destroyed. It is still evolving and the direction of that evolution will depend upon the willingness of elites to move forward towards greater democratization and the patience of the public in waiting for this to happen. As the structures of the Korean development model evolve, so will social movements in response to these new parameters.
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### Table 1

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<th>Year</th>
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**Source:** You Jong-II, p. 36, and Yonhap, "Yonhap Wraps up Year's Labour Developments," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *East Asia: Daily Report*, December 13, 1989, p. 29, cited by Bello and Rosenfeld, p.43, Table 1.4. *First ten months only.*