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Abstract - South Korea's President Park Chung-hee was still a controversial figure in Korean history. He was a man who achieved the economic miracle of South Korea while adopting repressive measures to suspend the democracy and human rights. The legacy of Park Chung-hee still prevails in South Korea. The nostalgia of Park's era also remains. Park receives fairly good evaluations from the world. American newspapers at the death of Park Chung-hee provided the objective views on Park Chung-hee. Throughout the newspapers editorials Park was the man who brought the economic miracle of South Korea and a good ally for the U.S. at the time of Cold War. On the other hand, he was another dictator who enjoyed autocratic rule under the U.S. protection. The American views provide the foundation to evaluate Park Chung-hee of today.

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I. INTRODUCTION

President Park Chung-hee of Republic of Korea was assassinated on October 26, 1979. The new government imposed Martial law over the entire country. It was the major crisis near panic that South Korea faced for the first time since Park Chung-hee took over the power by the military coup 18 years ago.

The news reached the U.S. and American newspapers had a chance to evaluate President Park Chung-hee and South Korea. The editorials of many American newspapers dealt with the incident as the chance to reveal the South Korea and its significances to the U.S. foreign policy. It was a turning point to see the economic development of South Korea under Park Chung-hee's dictatorship. Eventually, they evaluated the image of Park Chung-hee.

The newspapers revealed the U.S. early military reaction for the security of South Korea and the role of Washington for the future of South Korea. For the involvement of Washington in the internal political transition in the South Korea mostly determined by the evaluation of Park's era. Some of them urged Washington not to involve in South Korea because South Korea did fairly well and they were capable of taking care of themselves. On the other hand, some that considered Park as an authoritarian dictator

strongly insisted the active involvement for the democratization of South Korea. That is, American image of Park Chung-hee was important to justify the U.S. policy toward South Korea.

The nostalgia of Park Chung-hee era prevails in South Korea even today. After the economic crisis of 1997, Park Chung-hee syndrome was created. He was a man who provided the hope and better future for Koreans. Many foreign leaders considered him as one of the best leaders in Asia.

The American views on Park Chung-hee at the time of his death can provide the foundation for the evaluation of Park and the nostalgia as well as the syndrome existing today in Korea. The image created by American public opinions through the newspapers at the time of his death could provide more objective views. Also, there was enough information on him since the U.S. was the closest ally of the Republic of Korea at that time.

II. BACKGROUND OF PARK CHUNG-HEE

Park Chung-hee was born in a small town in Gyeongsangbukdo, on November 14, 1917. He was educated under the Japanese colonial education system and graduated from Daegu Normal School and became a teacher. After serving 3 years as a teacher he decided to go to Manchu Military School to become a military official. He transferred to Japanese Army Cadet School. He became a Japanese officer in 8th Infantry Division in Manchuria after graduation. After the liberation in 1945, he joined the Korean Independence Army since it suffered from the lack of experienced military officers.

Park became a high ranking military officer as he returned to Korea but he was dismissed from the Army because of his ideological background. He once joined the Labor Party of South that was the Communist Party in South Korea after the division of peninsula. He returned to military service when the Korean War broke out in 1950.

Park Chung-hee carried out the military coup on May 16, 1961. He controlled the country through the Supreme National Reconstruction Committee as the chairman. In December 1963, he was elected as the 5th President of Republic of Korea and he dominated the power for 18 years.

For the 18 years, Park emphasized the economic development and successfully achieved the goals. The 'Miracle of Han River' was the result of his policy carried out under the 5-Year Economic Development Projects. He also pursued the policy for the development of agricultural rural areas under the slogan of Saemaeul Movement (New Village Movement). It was considered as another major achievement of Park with industrialization.

Meanwhile, President Park believed that the democratization needed to be postponed until South Korea become a country with economic independence. He wanted to see rich Korea before free Korea. He also believed that it was the best way to win the competition against North Korea. As a result, Park Chung-hee was considered as a great leader who brought South Korea from one of the poorest countries in the world to an industrialized and a model for the developing country in the shortest time ever.

At the same time, he was considered as a dictator who suppressed the democracy and human rights. During his regime, he changed the Constitution 3 times to enhance his power and reelection. Finally, with Yusin Constitution, he suspended most of basic rights of the people and created the foundation for the life-long presidency for himself. He faced the resists of political oppositions and students.

III. VARIOUS IMAGES OF PARK CHUNG-HEE

For a while, it was a kind of taboo mentioning about Park Chung-hee in South Korea although shapely divided views on him prevailed. His role for the history of Korea received the public attention again after the collapse of South Korean economy in 1997. Global economic crisis reached to South Korea and foreign currency crisis was resulted South Korea to request the assistance from International Monetary Fund (IMF).

South Korea had to accept the requirements of IMF and the government had to carry out the painful reconstructing processes of its economic system. It was the time that Koreans developed nostalgia of the good old time economically under the President Park Chung-hee. This popular nostalgia became the Park Chung-hee syndrome. Park Chung-hee became a national hero.

For the 30 years after the assassination, many public polls carried out. A poll directed by the 'Realmeter' in August 2009 showed the change of the image of Park. On the question that which presidents contributed to the national development most, people selected Park Chung-hee as the top with 53.4%. (Nocut News, Aug. 26, 2009) Another poll by the 'Research and Research' Park received 75.6%. About the degree of trustworthy for Presidents of the Republic of Korea, in 2007 Park still was the top by receiving 52.7% and 41.8% in 2009. (View & News. June 17, 2009)

Park Chung-hee also received great reputation outside Korea. For instance, in 1999 Park was selected by Time magazine as the '20 Most Influential People of Asia in the 20th Century' (Time, Aug, 1999). It said that Park controlled Korea for long time to change economically weak country into a strong industrialized one although he had a tendency of autocratic dictator.

Former Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew considered that there are three leaders in Asia who save the nations from crisis. He believed that Park Chung-hee was one with Yoshida Sigeryu of Japan and Deng Xiaping of China. Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen of Cambodia considered that the Park Chung-hee's development model is the best for the Cambodia. (MK News, Oct. 2009)

Professor Ezra Vogel of Harvard University believed that there was no Korea of today without Park Chung hee in a interview with a Korean newspaper. He used to be the one who openly criticized Park as a dictator who made Korean people suffer. (Chosun Daily News, Nov. 11, 2006)

Park Chung-hee is one of the most important persons in the history of Republic of Korea and 5,000 years of Korean history for some. Many Korea people believe that he was the one who make the foundation of Korea today. Although there are some reservation for his role in the political development of South Korea, majority of people believed that he was the one to make South Korea one of the economically strong nations in the world. Also many Korean people had Park Chung-hee nostalgia because he was the one who gave hope.

IV. AMERICAN VIEWS ON PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG-HEE AND SOUTH KOREA

It is important to examine what was the public image of American people on Park Chung-hee at the time of his death. It is significant because it may provide more objective views on him. At the same time, the U.S. was the closest ally and the leader of the free world at the time of Cold War. Since initial success of South Korean economic development was possible by the U.S. aid, they had great interests on South Korea and Park Chung-hee.

Most of American newspapers agreed on that South Korea achieved great economic development while they share the similar views that President Park was an undemocratic dictator. The Milwaukee Journal considered that South Korea became one of the economic giants of East Asia. According to this editorial, South Korea was on the verge of becoming a modern industrialized nation. It added that South Korea was one of the major success stories of American economic and technical assistance. Its economic ties to the U.S. and the West were considerable. (The Milwaukee Journal, Oct. 29)

The Providence Journal of Rhode Island pointed out that the 18 years of Park's regime recorded as a time of unprecedented growth, in which South Korea surged from a struggling, backward nation into the ranks of important industrial powers. (The Providence Journal, Oct. 30) The Cincinnati Post also mentioned that Park Chung-hee had performed great services for his country. According to this editorial, since seizing power in 1961 coup, Park directed South Korea's transformation from a poor, peasant society to a prospering industrial power. It continued, "Its average economic growth rate of more than 10 percent a year under Park has been the height in the developing world." (The Cincinnati Post, Oct. 30) For this reason, it considered that President Park did not deserve end his life by the assassination.

The Daily Oklahoman of Oklahoma City highly praised the Park's role in the South Korea's development. According to this editorial, Park's policy was to assure true independence for Korea. Park wanted to achieve economic independence that would make political independence possible. (The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 31) Since Korea was under Japanese colonization, this newspaper made Park Chung-hee a national hero. It continued that visitors had a hard time to comprehend the transformation of South Korea. South Korea had as little as \$100 per capita income and it rocketed up to \$1,500 during Park's regime. It concluded that South Korea surpassed the capacity of North Korea that made South Korea as one of the best model to compete against Communist countries at the time of Cold War. It continued that Park's trouble with the U.S. administration began with the President Carter's human rights campaign. It continued to emphasize that those who criticized Park's stern measures did not live with Communist armies a few miles away.

On the other hand, many newspaper editorials criticized the role of Park Chung-hee. Philadelphia's The Evening Bulletin pointed out that Park's economic success had been increasingly repressive on democratic freedom. (The Evening Bulletin, Oct. 29) Detroit Free Press also mentioned that sustained economic development under the Park's regime was foreshadowed by the growing student revolts and increasingly and open and widespread protests against the regime. (Detroit Free Press, Oct. 30) Boston's The Christian Science Monitor of October 29 believed that Park Chung-hee was a single-minded leader who took the route of personal dictatorship. It introduced the undemocratic measures that Park carried on. According to this editorial, his government became more autocratic and repressive recently. Park revised the constitution to permit the head of state to appoint one third of the National Assembly and to rule virtually single-handedly. He jailed opponents and stifled dissent.

On November 1, Post-Tribune of Gary, Indiana also pointed out that South Korea accomplished economic development within 10 year while other countries took generations to do. Still, the 'revolutionary' changes did not reach the political area. According to this, Park held an iron grip and blocked many dissenters from expressing their views. It concluded that Park's authoritarian rule was one of the reasons for the assassination. The Morning News of Wilmington, Delaware expressed that it was difficult not to welcome the assassination as the opportunity for a restoration of democratic government of Korea. The U.S. also needed to take advantage of this situation. According to the editorial, South Korea frustrated the U.S. because it was hard to pressure Park's regime to adopt more democratic measures since South Korea was achieving unprecedented economic development. (The Morning News, Oct. 31) The Detroit News on October 31 shared similar view that Park had been a "nagging problem" for the U.S. Park even ignored President Carter's appeals for human rights reforms. Park reacted with heavier repression.

The Washington Post defined Park Chung-hee's regime as "18 difficult years." It insisted that Park was not a popular man in the U.S. According to The Washington Post Park Chung-hee's granite features, a kind of stereotypical military manner and his authoritarian political style encouraged the suspicion that he exploited fears of Communist North Korea's hostility to win American tolerance for his own repressive rule. Still, it expressed that the assassination ended the repression, but the immediate successor would lack the popular mandate. (The Washington Post, Oct. 29)

From these editorials, American views on Park Chung-hee were clear that he was an authoritarian dictator with repressive measures politically, but he was also a man who brought the economic success of South Korea. Ironically, as The Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tennessee on October 29 pointed out, Park's economic development brought the growing demands for democracy in South Korea. In one hand, Charleston Evening Post and some other editorials simplify the assassination as the continuous process of the collapse of pro-American dictators such as in Iran and Afghanistan, Nicaragua and El Salvador. (Charleston Evening Post, Oct 30) On the other hand, more objective views existed. St. Louis Globe-Democrat pointed out that Park could not be a good democratic political leader by Western European and American standards. (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Oct. 30) Still, Park's government was less oppressive than most in the region. Also, compared with the Communist regime in North Korea, the South Korean government had looked almost benign according to Tulsa World of October. 29.

V. CONCLUSION

The assassination of South Korea's President Park Chung-hee was one of the most shocking incidents in the history of the Republic of Korea. Death of Park himself was the shocking news and it was more shocking that he was killed by the head of KCIA. Lately, South Korea and the United States developed diplomatic difficulties as President Carter demanded the guarantee of human rights and democracy to autocratic government of Park Chung-hee. Also, Jimmy Carter since the Presidential candidate of Democratic Party adopted a policy to withdraw American troops in South Korea. American newspapers reacted to the incident in South Korea and they became good sources to understand the American public opinion about Park Chung-hee. For Americans, Park Chung-hee was a controversial figure in the East Asia. He was a dictator who ruled the country with iron fist. At the same time he was the man who achieved economic miracle of South Korea. Park was the problem for America that supported democracy, but he was the one who created model of development by receiving American aid. Also, he was the strong anti-Communist leader who achieved economic development as the best model against Communists at the time of Cold War. Because of that the newspapers editorials reflected the mixed feeling of America to President Park well.

This study clearly demonstrates that Park Chung-hee was a significant person for Koreans and Americans, too. Although he failed to achieve American standard of democracy in South Korea, he was the one who at least provided the foundation of South Korea's affluence today. While Korean people reveal his significances emotionally, American image of him provided more objective views.

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