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# South Korea: Chun's Growing Political Confidence



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An Intelligence Assessment

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EA 83-10091  
June 1983

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# South Korea: Chun's Growing Political Confidence

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Office of  
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Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
directed to the Chief, Northeast Asia Division, OEA,  
[Redacted]

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**South Korea:  
Chun's Growing  
Political Confidence**

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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 16 May 1983  
was used in this report.*

After Gen. Chun Doo Hwan and his military backers seized power in the unsettled period following the assassination of President Park Chung Hee in late 1979, they established an ambitious set of goals for South Korea. Foremost among these were to restore general political stability and to send a clear signal to North Korea that any intervention in the South would be resisted forcefully. Chun and his group also sought to revitalize the South Korean economy, enhance the country's international prestige, and restructure South Korea's social and political institutions—ostensibly to end the corrupt practices of the Park era.

In the three years since Chun took power, he has made substantial progress:

- With the weight of the Army and the security services behind him he has been able to impose a return of general stability.
- The economy has rebounded, with annual GNP growth rates in the 5- to 6-percent range.
- Chun has recorded an impressive series of accomplishments in the international arena, including strengthening ties with the United States and Japan and having Seoul named as the site of the 1988 Summer Olympics.

Chun is not a charismatic or even a popular leader. Nonetheless, he has earned at least the grudging respect of most Koreans, particularly for his economic and international achievements. These successes in turn have given him the confidence in recent months to undertake a series of liberalization gestures, which have undercut his opponents but in no way diminished his basic control.

Popular doubts remain about his ultimate political intentions and Chun probably recognizes this. In our view, most Koreans still rank improvement in their living standards over the development of a more open political system, but the desire for an orderly leadership succession has probably grown since the transition from Park to Chun. Somewhat defensively, Chun continues to insist periodically—both in public and private—that he will step down as promised at the end of his term in 1988.

The succession question will define to a large extent Korean politics in the mid-to-late 1980s. Chun continues to cultivate his primary base of support in the military, but at the same time he has put some distance between himself and the Army and has begun to develop an alternative civilian

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political power base. Chun seems to be moving toward a greater reliance on his Democratic Justice Party as a vehicle for mobilizing support. In our judgment, Chun's need to strengthen links with labor and the emerging middle class and to cope with the 1985 National Assembly elections requires that he develop an effective party organization. He will certainly need such an organization if he is to train a successor and mobilize the grassroots strength needed to effect the country's first peaceful transfer of power.

Should Chun fail to manage the succession issue to the satisfaction of both the Army and the public, there is a high risk the Army would again intervene in the political process—following the precedents set by both Chun and Park Chung Hee before him.



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**South Korea:  
Chun's Growing  
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**The Presidency: A Sense of Assurance**

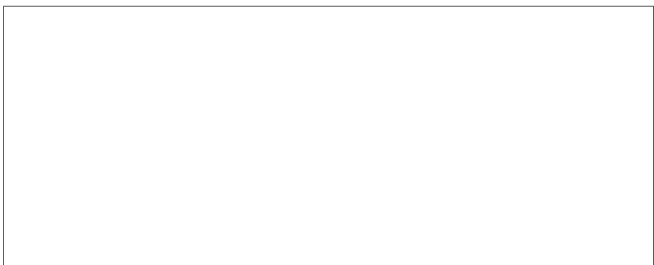
President Chun Doo Hwan is showing greater confidence after nearly three years in the Blue House.<sup>1</sup> This newfound assurance contrasts with his performance of even a year ago, when he seemed to stumble from one political difficulty to another. At that time Chun's slowness to grasp the political implications of his problems led to questions about his leadership ability. Multiple Cabinet shuffles that took place during mid-1982 to defuse political controversy only added to the appearance of a government in disarray.



Throughout this period of vulnerability, Chun retained the support of the Army and the general public, in our view only because they saw his ouster and the prolonged chaos that would ensue as an unacceptable alternative. By contrast, the second half of 1982 was relatively free of political misfortune or self-inflicted wounds.<sup>2</sup>

In our view, South Korea's greatest success story, the continuing series of economic achievements, has helped boost Chun's confidence. By any reasonable standard, 1982 was a good year for the average Korean. The Korean consumer last year had to cope with only a modest 5-percent inflation rate; wages showed about 8-percent real growth after declining in both 1980 and 1981. Economic growth was respectable at about 5.5 percent. The outlook for 1983 is good—and better if there is an upturn in the developed countries.

Chun's growing sense of ease is reflected in his management of foreign affairs. His compromise last December in lengthy aid negotiations with Tokyo ended a troubled period in the bilateral relationship



Chun Doo Hwan

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stemming largely from Chun's inexperience during his early days in the Blue House. Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone's trip to Seoul in January marked the beginning of a more open dialogue with this important neighbor. Chun's willingness to explore the possibility of nonofficial ties with Communist countries and to probe creative cross-recognition formulas to lessen tension on the Korean Peninsula are steps beyond his early style of "visit" diplomacy.

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**Modest Political Initiatives . . .** Perhaps the best barometer of Chun's growing confidence in office, however, is to be found in his recent domestic political initiatives:

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- In December 1982 he released Kim Dae Jung and others closely associated with opposition to Chun when he consolidated power in 1980.
- In January 1983 he promised to review the cases of over 500 people banned from political activity in late 1980.
- Last February he lifted the ban on 250 of these people

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These modest steps have brought Chun immediate political benefits. By allowing Kim to leave prison and go to the United States, for example, Chun was able to write him off as an important figure in the domestic dissident movement while reaping the benefits of this human rights gesture in bilateral relations with the United States, Japan, and Western Europe. [redacted]

Chun's willingness to ease the ban on political activity is also a measure of his confidence, but, as in leniency toward Kim, he has risked little so far. The 250 people chosen were precisely the least likely to challenge the government. Meanwhile, he has kept most of the regime's harshest critics under the ban, unable to act politically. His public pledge last January to review their cases does not constitute a promise to act soon, [redacted]

[redacted] A good indication of his continued confidence will be whether he lifts the ban in time to allow these opponents to position themselves for the Assembly campaign. [redacted]

... **But Basic Controls Remain.** Despite his growing sense of assurance, Chun has made no attempt to modify fundamental restraints on political activity. These include:

- A stiff law against assembly and demonstrations for "political purposes."
- Press censorship, whereby the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) direct editors to avoid sensitive political subjects.
- Three security and intelligence services—the civilian NSP, the Korean National Police (KNP), and the military Defense Security Command (DSC)—that report on threats to government control.

In our view, Chun regards these as keys to national stability and is unlikely to modify them substantially. [redacted]

Chun's opponents among students, Christian activists, and intellectuals are the strongest sources of pressure to modify these controls, although we believe there is latent desire for a more open political system, particularly among the growing, educated middle class. Chun may calculate that his acts of clemency are enough to address such aspirations, at least for the moment.

Certainly most Koreans seem preoccupied more with improving their economic lot than with making efforts to bring about a more open political system. Perceptions of the North Korean threat also act as a deterrent to political experimentation and reinforce a preference for stability. We believe, however, that since the chaos of 1979-80 the public has begun to recognize the need for an orderly process for the transition of political power. Chun's repeated promises to step aside after his term ends in 1988 suggest he too recognizes this desire. [redacted]

**Blue House Dynamics.** Chun appears in stronger command of the decisionmaking process than he was a year ago. He himself moved into the vacuum created last December when he dismissed two former Army aides, Her Hwa Pyung and Hur Sam Soo, who had accompanied him to the Blue House and who had wielded considerable authority. As senior secretary for political affairs, Her Hwa Pyung in particular had had wide latitude in managing Blue House relations with the Army, the intelligence services, the Cabinet, and the ruling party. Many in those circles were convinced that Her was building his own power base by maneuvering fellow graduates of Korean Military Academy (KMA) class 17 into positions of influence. His ability to control the flow of people and paper through Chun's office helped isolate the President and was particularly evident in poor Blue House management of political problems last summer. [redacted]

[redacted] he had alienated too many influential individuals, including members of Chun's core group—senior Army officers who had helped Chun gain power during 1979-80. These individuals made common cause to convince the President that his aide was a liability. [redacted]

[redacted] Chun was unhappy with Her's management of Blue House relations with the ruling Democratic Justice Party (DJP) and the National Assembly. Her's departure with his colleague Hur Sam Soo coincided with Chun's decision to free Kim Dae Jung. [redacted]

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Chun has acted to prevent another powerful senior political secretary from emerging by breaking up Her's old fiefdom and picking less of a "take charge" replacement. The current incumbent's role is limited to that of working on a Blue House weak spot—liaison with the Assembly and the ruling DJP. In filling the job, Chun reached back again into his military past and appointed Chong Soon Duk, a fellow KMA graduate (class 16) and retired brigadier general who had served under the President in the Special Forces in the mid-1970s. Despite this special link to the President, [redacted]

[redacted] We believe he is unlikely to emerge as a powerful influence in his own right. [redacted]

We believe Chun runs risks in concentrating decision-making even more in his own hands. His greater accessibility to people since Her's departure may diminish this problem, but in our view he needs to delegate more authority. Her's presence—if nothing else—served as a lightning rod for Chun, and with his departure the President is more vulnerable to criticism of policy decisions. [redacted]

At least in the short term, Her's departure may have strengthened government management of unexpected crises. The authorities moved swiftly this spring to arrest a policeman who was accused of torturing to death a businessman suspected in a land swindle case. The government's prompt response served to contain public outrage and disarm critics who, as recently as last summer, had assailed a hesitant and uncertain administration. [redacted]

**Role of the Cabinet and the Intelligence Agencies.** Her's departure has not significantly enhanced the supporting roles played by the Cabinet or the intelligence agencies. Prime Minister Kim Sang Hyup, a widely respected academic administrator, is not a political infighter. He and his Cabinet of professionals drawn from the bureaucracy, academia, and the military have not carved out a strong collective role. The two ministers who do have an important role in domestic affairs are the strongly ideological Minister of Education Rhee Kyu Ho and Minister of Home Affairs Roh Tae Woo. [redacted]

Rhee is a controversial figure whose educational reforms, particularly stiffer academic standards, have forced all but the most hardcore dissident students to eschew politics for academics. A former university professor, Rhee has an impact that extends beyond college campuses, but he lacks a political base. He is a staunch nationalist who believes the building of the nation is the goal to which all else must be subordinated. His well-argued, though harsh, verbal sallies against political activism have led US officials to characterize him as the government's leading ideologue. [redacted]

Minister Roh—a member of Chun's core group who is widely viewed in Korea as a possible successor to the President—is the strongest political figure in the Cabinet. He assumed the home affairs portfolio at a moment of government vulnerability, shortly after a shooting rampage by a police officer shocked the nation in April 1982. [redacted]

[redacted] Roh, who has responsibility for the police, stood to lose the most from the police torture affair this spring and may be responsible for the government's effective response. So far, he has been able to resist the usual pressure that political controversy generates on "responsible" officials to resign. Nonetheless, the episode is a mark against him, and in our view he is exceedingly vulnerable to developments over which he has formal responsibility but little control. Moreover, the reported involvement of Roh's son in questionable financial transactions is another problem that could haunt him in the future. [redacted]

Chun continues to manipulate the three intelligence and security organizations—the DSC, NSP, and KNP—so that no single one is consistently dominant. [redacted]

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The DSC may have a slight edge. Chun's experience as DSC commander in the late 1970s and his own close association with the current commander, Lt. Gen. Park Joon Byung, mean that the DSC is well positioned to influence him. It is also the only service that reports on military dissent, and we believe Chun is especially inclined to factor in DSC judgments on the military in his decisionmaking. [redacted]

NSP fortunes have never fully recovered from the events of October 1979 when then KCIA Director Kim Jae Kyu killed President Park. Chun himself directed the agency briefly during 1980, but the directors since then have had little political clout. The current incumbent, Lho Shinyong, is a career Foreign Service officer who is not particularly close to Chun.

[redacted]

Chun has appointed a retired Army general to the NSP's number-two position, but this does not appear to have greatly enhanced the agency's role. The general, Park Se Chik, has a complex relationship with the President. Chun retired him from active duty on corruption charges in 1980, but the move was widely viewed more as an effort to eliminate a potential rival than to clean up the Army. Park behaved meekly during retirement and pressure from Park's Army supporters may have prompted Chun to rehabilitate him last November. Given this background, we believe Chun is especially sensitive to any sign that Park might be using the NSP to advance himself politically. [redacted]

Police fortunes seem at a low ebb with this spring's torture case. The KNP's top leadership has been reshuffled, but Minister of Home Affairs Roh, in our view, will continue to see that police judgments go into Chun's decisionmaking. [redacted]

**Keeping the Army on Board**

Chun rose to power through the Army, and military backing, above all, keeps him in power. Since he has been in office, however, Chun's relationship with the Army has undergone a subtle shift. Chun has moved beyond a first-among-equals relationship with Army leaders and now relates to them more as a senior to

his juniors. The passage of time is partly responsible for this change, but Chun has helped the process along by bringing younger, loyal officers to the fore.

[redacted]

In our view, the threat from North Korea, the engine that drives the South Korean military establishment, is at the heart of the Army's backing of Chun. We believe there is widely shared agreement that Chun pursues the right mix of defense policies, from setting priorities in the military budget to managing the critical security relationship with the United States.

[redacted]

The web of personal ties between Chun and the officer corps is also important. It was especially so in December 1979 when Chun seized control of the Army in a headquarters coup. At the time the core group—largely classmates of Chun's from the elite KMA—threw their support to him when he moved against the Army Chief of Staff. Their backing was especially critical when Chun consolidated power during 1980-81. Initially, he nurtured their support by giving them prestigious, powerful commands and promotions. [redacted]

In the past two years, he has co-opted several of them into his government. Only three generals from the core group remain on active duty today: Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Hwang Yung Si; Commander of the 3rd Army, Lt. Gen. Chung Ho Yong; and Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Choi Song Taek (see table). The retired members for the most part hold prominent government positions, and the President relies on their advice; last December he dismissed his two unpopular aides at the urging of some members of the group. [redacted]

The Army leadership emerging to replace the core group owes its position almost entirely to Chun. And since gaining control of the Army, Chun has made loyalty to him a key criterion to advancement. [redacted]

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**South Korea: The Core Group Today****Retired**

Roh Tae Woo (KMA 11) <sup>a</sup>	Minister of Home Affairs
Kim Bok Dong (KMA 11)	President, Korean Mining Promotion Board
Cha Kyu Hon (KMA 8)	Member, National Security Council
Yoo Hak Seong (non-KMA)	Resigned from NSP

**Active**

Hwang Yung Si (KMA 10)	Army Chief of Staff
Chung Ho Yong (KMA 11)	Commanding General, 3rd Army
Choi Song Taek (KMA 11)	Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

<sup>a</sup> Korean Military Academy class; President Chun is a class 11 graduate.

supporters command the key military units that control the security of Seoul. Most were only a few classes behind Chun in the KMA; many are natives of his home province of North Kyongsang. In some cases their Army careers have intersected with his. [redacted]

Chain-of-command and patron-client relationships in the Army ensure that loyalty to Chun seeps into the junior ranks of the officer corps as well. This is particularly important as a younger generation of officers moves up in the service. A recently commissioned KMA graduate, unlike his elders, may have no personal bonds of loyalty to Chun, but he would to his immediate commanding officer, and so on up the line. [redacted]

Chun has also dangled the prospect of lucrative or prestigious retirement positions in business or government as another means of ensuring officer support. Recent business conditions and reduced government payrolls, however, have limited the number of positions available. [redacted]

[redacted] Nonetheless, former Army officers are prominent in the Cabinet, diplomatic service, government departments, provincial offices, ruling party, and private business. [redacted]

**Monitoring Dissent.** Chun monitors developments within the Army through the Defense Security Command, the military intelligence and security organization that he led when he emerged on the national scene in 1979. As under his predecessor, Park Chung Hee, DSC personnel are assigned throughout the Army to report on current attitudes, morale, and potential threats to the President's control. DSC surveillance itself generates a certain amount of muted resentment within the officer corps. [redacted]

Chun's efforts to create a stronger, leaner Army—what he calls sharpening the blade rather than polishing the handle—has also caused problems. Ministry of National Defense plans to reduce officer slots have hurt morale. [redacted]

There have been fewer reported criticisms of Chun within the Army in recent months than in 1981-82. We believe Army alarm at his leadership may have [redacted]

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crested last summer when his mismanagement of a financial scandal affecting his in-laws provoked particularly strong dissatisfaction. In contrast, Chun's self-styled national reconciliation initiative last December—allowing Kim Dae Jung to leave prison for the United States and releasing other opponents imprisoned during the height of Army confrontations with dissidents in 1980—has not provoked a significant outcry. [redacted]

By and large, the “discipline of the service” probably keeps most Army complaints in check. In our view, the military regards fewer promotion opportunities, the dominance of KMA officers, and the growing success of KMA class 16 and 17 graduates as facts of life for the services, not burning issues that of themselves could prompt an officer or group of officers to mount a challenge to the President. [redacted]



**A Base in Civilian Politics**

Civilian politics in the National Assembly have grown feisty under Chun, but they have little actual influence on national policy. Setting the agenda for debate is Chun's Democratic Justice Party, which—more because of inherent advantages accruing to a ruling party than to its own expertise—is able to manage the proceedings fairly well. The two major opposition parties, the Democratic Korea Party (DKP) and the Korea National Party, together with a few other opposition groupings of little influence, control just over two-fifths of assembly seats. The incidental business they manage to inject into Assembly deliberations occasionally allows them to embarrass the

government but little else. Lacking the numbers to set the legislative agenda, the opposition can only continue to harass. [redacted]

The government sees benefits in allowing the opposition to criticize its policies, but the Blue House has been careful to set the boundaries. [redacted]



Where it counts, however, the government will continue to work through the DJP to thwart the opposition's modest political agenda—unshackling controls on the press and political activity, allowing greater local autonomy, and other limited demands—through promises of study but with little action. [redacted]

**The DJP: Learning the Ropes.** The DJP is Chun's base in civilian politics. It exists in part because he needed his own organization to run the legislature. Within a matter of months in 1980 he assembled several trusted Army associates who set up a party that won the Assembly elections in March 1981. Chun remains party president, and these same associates are still the party's leading lights: Secretary General Kwon Ik Hyun, Floor Leader Lee Jong Chan, and former Secretary General Kwon Jong Dal (see figure 1). In addition to Army alumni, the DJP fielded a willing pool of acceptable politicians from the Park era. In the 1981 elections it garnered 36 percent of the popular vote, which—via a weighted proportional representation system<sup>3</sup>—gave it 151 seats in the 276-seat Assembly. [redacted]

The DJP has set a membership goal of 1 million—or 5 percent of all qualified voters—by next year. As it expands its membership, it will be working to strengthen links with labor and the emerging middle class and to establish a strong grassroots organization that will enable it to monitor public opinion and keep the government informed about public attitudes toward contentious issues. Its training programs are formidable; each week the party churns out hundreds of members newly versed in the slogans of Chun's

<sup>3</sup> The system allocates 61 additional seats to the party that leads in the popular vote, with 24 and seven seats, respectively, given to the second- and third-ranking parties. [redacted]

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**South Korea: Leaders of the Democratic Justice Party**



**Chun Doo Hwan**

*President of the 5th Republic and concurrently party president . . . KMA 11 graduate . . . retired from the Army to assume presidency in 1980.*



**Kwon Ik Hyun**

*Secretary General . . . shares Chun's credentials as KMA 11 graduate from Kyongsang provinces . . . forced to retire from Army in 1973 over scandal involving Chun's patron Yoon Pil Yong . . . Chun narrowly avoided same fate . . . held prominent business and government positions before helping to found DJP and securing a National Assembly seat.*



**Kwon Jong Dal**

*Former Secretary General, now Chairman of the National Assembly Home Affairs Committee . . . KMA 16 graduate, also from Kyongsang . . . served with Chun in Defense Security Command in the late 1970s . . . retired from the Army in 1980 to help found DJP. . . forced to resign post in mid-1982 because of involvement on fringes of a financial scandal . . . active in international parliamentary affairs.*

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**Lee Jong Chan**

*Chairman of the National Assembly Steering Committee and DJP floor leader . . . from respected family with strong nationalist connections . . . KMA 16 graduate . . . retired from the Army in 1980 to help found DJP . . . is widely respected on both sides of National Assembly aisle for his fairness . . . bright and ambitious.*

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“New Era.” And, as befits a ruling party in South Korea, the DJP draws financial support from big business in addition to the government subsidies all parties receive. By all accounts it is swimming in funds [redacted]

The DJP is still trying to establish its role and responsibilities as a “democratic” party that is being constructed from the top down. During its early days, the party’s leaders belabored the theme that it was the source of power, the “leading force in state affairs.” This claim became increasingly hollow as it became clear that the opposition parties had more policy ideas than the ruling party. The original proposal to end the nighttime curfew was an opposition party idea, but once it caught Chun’s eye the DJP made frantic efforts to call it its own.<sup>4</sup> The resignation of the party’s first Secretary General, Kwon Jong Dal, because of his association on the fringes of the financial scandal last summer, led the party to soft-pedal its claim of being the “leading force” in favor of a “partnership” with the government. [redacted]

**Unexpected Exercises in Democracy?** The DJP so far has been a good errand boy for the executive in the National Assembly, although sometimes the government makes it difficult for the party to perform even that function. Last fall the government introduced a reform requiring all bank deposits to bear their owner’s “real name,” as opposed to the still-common practice of registering accounts under pseudonyms as a tax dodge. In this instance, wealthy business contributors to the DJP balked at the prospect of having all of their assets identified and taxed. After intense lobbying and daily reversals of position, the DJP led a painful, public evisceration of the original bill. The government tried to make the best of this obvious setback by portraying it as an exercise in democracy. The truth lay in poor Blue House groundwork for the bill before it was introduced onto the floor of the National Assembly. [redacted]

The same was true for the euphemistically named “Resources Management Bill,” whereby the government sought authority to draw on manpower and resources under less than clearly defined “emergency” conditions. The ensuing opposition and press furor

<sup>4</sup> Chun ended the curfew for all but a few areas in 1982. [redacted]

led the DJP to withdraw the bill for redrafting and consideration at a future sitting. [redacted] the unanimous passage of the national budget in early December—complete with a \$135 million cut from what was proposed originally—was a “show of democracy” that was carefully orchestrated by the Blue House. [redacted]

DJP handling of the real name and emergency mobilization bills seem unintentional exercises, if not in democratic politics then at least in the politics of accommodation, something that is often missing in Korea’s confrontational political culture. While the government will probably try to avoid such loss of control in the future, it may still have learned that responsible give and take is possible and does not necessarily lead to unacceptable outcomes. The episodes did prompt some rethinking on the part of the administration, including a proposal to smoke out potential problems by holding public hearings on selected legislation. It also led the government to acknowledge recently that it needed to improve its coordination with the DJP. [redacted]

**1985 and Beyond.** The Blue House and the party are beginning to look ahead to the 1985 Assembly elections. To a certain extent staffing changes in the wake of Secretary Her’s departure from the Blue House reflect a concern about better coordination with the DJP. Just as Blue House Secretary Chong’s previous experience as a DJP assemblyman should enhance presidential dealings with the DJP, so should the recent appointment of former Blue House Secretary Lee Ha Woo to act as secretary to Assembly Speaker Chae Mun-shick. [redacted]

[redacted]

Of course the DJP and Chun will exercise all the inherent advantages of incumbency to retain control of the Assembly in the 1985 contest. Building on its 1981 experience, the party will try to field candidates in all the country’s electoral districts and work to take

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at least one seat per district. Still, the battle for the popular vote could be a greater challenge than it was in 1981 should the past tendency of large, growing urban areas to vote for the opposition parties hold true. As in 1978, when the Assembly and not the presidency was at stake, voters could be tempted to cast "protest" ballots. If Chun proceeds with his reported intention to lift the ban on the remaining politicians in time for the election, the campaign could be a lively one, but we believe Chun's basic control of the political process will allow him and his party to control the campaign to their advantage. [redacted]

*The Stake.* In a sense the 1985 contest will be a dress rehearsal for the presidential election in late 1987 or early 1988. According to the current Constitution, Chun is barred from succeeding himself, and he has repeatedly pledged to step down when his term ends in March 1988. Even if Chun proceeds with his intention to step aside, however, we expect he will seek to exert a strong influence in the selections of a new presidential electoral college and—in turn—the election of a chosen successor. The party's ability to secure votes in 1985 will have a strong impact on the way Chun approaches the succession. [redacted]

In our view, the DJP over the 1985-87 period is a likely training ground for a successor should Chun proceed with his intention to step aside. Although we lack evidence of Chun's thinking on this score, we believe one plausible scenario would be for him to select a former Army officer and put him through civilian political paces as part of the DJP team during the next National Assembly term. Minister of Home Affairs Roh is a possible choice, although in our view less likely as time goes on and pressure grows from younger Army officers to select from their ranks. A successor might be drawn from among the party's leaders. In any event, we believe Chun's annointed successor would have to develop some popular appeal to mobilize votes for the electoral college—in addition to securing strong support from the Army. [redacted]

This scenario would be a happy compromise between Chun's—and the Army's—need to ensure an acceptable presidential choice on the one hand and the public's desire for an orderly succession ratified through defined electoral procedures on the other. Unfortunately, modern Korea's confrontational history has witnessed no peaceful leadership transition.

The only South Korean precedent for grooming a successor—when Park Chung Hee appeared to be giving the nod to his associate Kim Chong Pil in the late 1960s—ended with Park concluding Kim was developing too much power, moving him aside, and consolidating his own power even more. [redacted]

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Chun's critics, and even politically attuned Koreans who have accepted Chun during his current term, see more pessimistic scenarios. Memories of Park Chung Hee's constitutional revisions in the early 1970s are still too fresh for many Koreans to ignore. In fact, rumors of constitutional revision to extend Chun's tenure are already heard in Seoul, despite persistent government denials—or perhaps because of them.

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Skeptics point to Chun's tight grasp on power and his obvious enjoyment of the perquisites of office. And they adduce other factors peculiar to Korea in the mid-to-late 1980s that could work against a peaceful transfer:

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- The uncertainties of an ongoing, or soon to develop, leadership transition in North Korea might afford Chun justification to stay on for national security reasons.
- The 1988 Summer Olympics—a real coup for South Korea, scheduled just months after Chun is currently required to step aside—could also prompt him to prolong his tenure. [redacted]

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In our view, it is too early to call the succession issue. Chun's actions to date suggest he recognizes the problem and wants to strengthen his political base in an effort to address it. At the same time, these steps limit him to no particular course of action. His moves over the next two years will help answer the succession question, an issue that will define Korean politics to a large extent in the mid-to-late 1980s. [redacted]

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