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INTRODUCTION

On 10 March 2017, the Constitutional Court in Seoul upheld the decision to remove President Park Geun-hye from office following a corruption scandal. It was a victory for the 17 million (cumulative) citizens who took to the streets and squares with candles, and a moment of “popular sovereignty” as enshrined in the constitution (OhmyNews, 2019). In the subsequent 19th presidential election, the Democratic Party (Korean: 더불어민주당; DP) gained an advantage as its conservative supporters split and a progressive coalition emerged, and in the 21st general election in 2020, the DP won an unprecedented 180 seats of the 300 seats available. Including the Justice Party (Korean: 정의당; JP) and the Openminjoo Party (Korean: 열린민주당) and other parties, the pan-ruling coalition has 190 seats. This is the first time since the democratization of 1987 that a single party has won more than three-fifths of the seats, thereby obtaining a strong legislative mandate (Kyunghyang Shinmun, 2020). However, this period of political dominance was not to last and the DP had to hand over power to the People Power Party (Korean: 국민의 힘; PPP) in the 20th presidential election less than two years later, on March 9, 2022. The PPP, the party of the president who was impeached after popular resistance, has returned to power after five years (Jeong, Han-ul, 2022, p. 2).

As much as expectations were high, disappointment with the Democratic Party of Korea and the Moon Jae-in administration, which claimed to be a “candlelight government,” was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a desire for regime change (Pressian, 2022). Opposition parties looking to take a chance and ruling parties looking to stay in power failed to recognize each other as partners during the election. Both parties and their supporters resorted to demonizing each other (Hankyoreh, 2022). In the context of the 20th presidential election in 2022, various suspicions were raised about the candidates of the two major political parties, and it was held amid rampant personal criticism rather than rational policy-centered discussion. The vote was held amid widespread personal criticism, and the vote rate between the two candidates was less than 1%, recording the smallest gap in any election in Korean history. The 2022 presidential election, which was filled with *distrust of mainstream political parties and hatred of politics*, was dubbed by domestic and foreign media as an “Unlikeable Election” or a “Lesser Evil Election” (Gil, Jung-Ah, 2022, p. 2).

As evidenced by previous examples, the primary issue with contemporary Korean politics is the prevalence of two dominant parties that reinforce the logic of their respective camps and

polarize the political landscape to an extreme degree. These two major parties tend to prioritize the politics of hatred and dislike, with an eye on their existing support base. Consequently, policies and campaign promises related to people's lives have become less prominent.

The 22nd general election, held in April 2024, was not markedly distinct from previous elections, as it merely reiterated the pervasive issues that have plagued Korean politics for some time. In the period leading up to the 22nd general election, the major political parties have finalized their key slogans with the intention of appealing to voters. Among these, the DP was reminiscent of the Democratic Party (different from the current DP which existed in 1956. This party created a sensation by opposing the Syngman Rhee regime and raising the slogan, '*We cannot survive, let's change*') of the past by raising similar slogans such as '*We can't survive, let's judge.*' However, the essence of '*judgment*' and '*replacement*' put forward in the 1956 presidential election seems to have a very different political and social context from the '*judgment*' put forward by today's major political parties.

Today's change is nothing more than a regime change between the two conservative parties, without any new people or novel issues, and unconditionally demonizes or caricatures the other party, clearly showing the limits of Korean politics where fundamental change and reform have disappeared.

Another notable limitation of the 2024 general election is that South Korea's progressive political party JP failed to enter the 22nd National Assembly. The JP, which has consistently positioned itself as a progressive party over the past decade, and which was allocated 6 seats with an approval rating of up to 10 percent in the 21st general election, was unable to secure a single seat in the 22nd general election (Dandelion News, 2024). Although public opinion against the two major parties was higher than in any general election and there were many independents, the performance of third parties (especially progressive parties) was at an all-time low, which can be evaluated as the disappearance of the pluralistic values of modern Korean politics. (Kyunghyang Shinmun, 2024).

This study aims to identify the origins and reasons for the disappearance of pluralism in Korean politics. It will also examine why Korea has failed to build a pluralistic political environment like the multi-party systems of Ireland, France, and Germany. It will then proceed to point to the First Republic as the root of the aforementioned cartel structure of the two major parties. The modernization of Korean politics began with the emergence of the First Republic, which can be said to be the starting point of the 'path-dependent conservative cartel' that continues to this day.

On the surface, the First Republic of Korea built a nation that meets Malešević's definition of a nation-state. Malešević's (2019) study found the following:

Nation state, conceptualised as secularised social organisations with fixed and stable territory and a centralised political authority underpinned by intensive ideological particularism and the promotion of moral egalitarianism, social solidarity and cultural homogeneity among its populace" (p. 74).

It is certain that starting with the Constitutional National Assembly in 1948, a constitution was created, the form of a modern state was created (territory/sovereignty/people), a legal system was established, and awareness of popular sovereignty was strengthened. However, Malešević later stated that:

For one thing, very few contemporary nation states are culturally homogeneous or built around strict moral egalitarian principles. While this might feature as a strong ideological aspiration, often inscribed in the constitutions of modern states, the actual realities rarely match these ambitions" (p. 74-75).

As Malešević posits, the First Republic of Korea crafted a constitution that was balanced and peaceful, introduced representative democracy with direct elections, and recognized the South as a legitimate government in the international community. However, after about 12 years of authoritarian politics, unreasonable amendments to prolong the regime, economic imbalances and corruption, and above all, the 3·15 unfair election that violated the constitutional spirit, the First Republic finally collapsed on April 19, 1960, when its internal contradictions exploded into massive nationwide protests on April 19 (Bloody Tuesday) and April 26 (Victory Tuesday) (Oh, Je-yeon, 2018, p. 47). Eventually, at 10:30 a.m. on April 26, Syngman Rhee issued the step-down statement over the radio, and the First Republic came to an end.

The establishment of the First Republic is also regarded as having consolidated the conservative cartel. In 1945, Korea was liberated from Japan, but the establishment of a sole government and the war resulted in the right-wing becoming conservative and the left-wing disappearing and being outlawed. Consequently, conservative political ideology dominated Korean politics (Jung, Seung-hyun, 2013, p. 16). While conservative political forces united and cooperated for a common goal, left-right collaboration and centrist forces failed to have a significant impact on South Korea's nation-building and political history and were relegated to a minority. This is a political legacy with a continuum that applies equally to the context of modern South Korean politics, as previously mentioned. Therefore, the First Republic is

evaluated as an important origin of South Korea's nation-building, and its influence on South Korea's modernization process was significant.

This article aims to establish a connection between contemporary South Korean politics and the First Republic to determine whether the First Republic has structural and ideological influences on contemporary South Korean politics. The two-party system itself - the dominance of conservative parties - is not inherently problematic, but the formation of organized vested interest connections - the interplay of cartelization and power - and a conservative cartel bent on "maintaining" rather than "changing" stifles dissent and limits the expression of diverse voices and perspectives. Furthermore, a balanced democracy necessitates the implementation of checks and balances to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a single party or group. Only by questioning whether the current conservative cartel in South Korea effective checks and balances has can reforms be considered to strengthen the democratic principles that make pluralistic politics possible.

Relevance of Research

The nation-building period of the First Republic was marked by significant chaos, as it coincided with a period of profound change and political dynamic domestically and internationally. In the context of nation-building from 1948 to the 1960s, the Korean peninsula was confronted with the dual challenge of addressing the "*nationalistic aspirations for a sovereign nation*" that had emerged in the colonial era and of "*integration into the international order to build a stable modern nation*" in the context of the Cold War era. To comprehend the nation-building of the First Republic, it is essential to analyze the historical factors and geopolitical context of the era, including the Cold War, the legacy of the colonial era, and Korean nationalism.

Goals of Research

Systematic analysis of the nation-building legacy of the First Republic can provide insight into the complex and path-dependent nature of national identity formation and national integration on the Korean Peninsula. This can contribute to understanding the relationship between historical legacies and contemporary nation-building dynamics.

1. Examine the nexus between the First Republic of Korea and the emergence of the conservative cartel in Korean politics.
2. Compare nationalism in North Korea and South Korea by assessing the dynamics of ethnic and state identity within the framework of nationalism during the First Republic era.

3. Assess the First Republic's nation-building policies, encompassing economic reconstruction, national integration, and security issues, to identify the factors that allowed the conservative cartel to gain ground in the political landscape.

Research Question and Proposition

The central questions of my research are: *“How did the First Republic ideologically and structurally influence contemporary Korean politics, and what political, social, and economic factors caused this influence?”* and *“What were the key factors and processes that led to the formation of the conservative cartel in the First Republic of Korea?”*

Based on the *National Foundation Day* and *liberal democracy debates* put forward by the modern extreme-conservative regime, this research proposes that the origins of the conservative cartel in Korean politics are linked to the characteristics of the First Republic and the nation-building policies. Further research is necessary to gain a more profound comprehension of how nationalist ideology was employed in conjunction with the nation-building policies established by the First Republic, the domestic and international circumstances that existed, and the extent to which the conservative cartel exerted a dominant influence.

Background and significance of the study

South Korea is a country that has experienced generational change, regime change, democratization, economic growth, and war in a short period more than any other country. Accordingly, issues of generation, ideology, and polarization have reached their peak in modern society.

Although more than half a century has already passed, the problems that occurred during the nation-building process in South Korean society still have an impact on modern society. Based on the common truth that “there can be no break in history,” this article seeks to conceptualize and systematically approach nation-building from 1948 to 1960 until the collapse of the First Republic in the April 19 Revolution.

In addition, by taking a universal frame of nation-building and an approach to Korean nationalism that combines a macro-level frame with specific Korean characteristics, this study fills a gap in the literature and will help future researchers arrive at a reliable source. This study also suggests that nation-building is a highly three-dimensional phenomenon and that evaluating it through the macro frame of nation-building is highly valid and essential to understanding South Korea’s contemporary political dynamics and foreign policy, especially in a country with a unique historical context such as South Korea, which was on the frontline of the Cold War/experienced colonization/still has a strong division system. Moreover, South

Korea's political stability is important to the regional security of the Northeast Asian region, and understanding Korea's nation-building, a key player in this area, helps evaluate Korea's political dynamics, internal tasks, and foreign policies. It helps neighboring countries and international stakeholders effectively cooperate with Korea, promote peace diplomacy, and manage potential conflicts or tensions. For the numerous failed, unstable, and currently nation-building states around the world, South Korea's multi-pronged approach to nation-building can be a valuable lesson. In terms of academic contributions, it can also demonstrate to policymakers how to promote pluralism and democratic accountability.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variables in this research encompass the formation and consolidation of the conservative cartel. The dependent variables are political climate, ideological landscape, institutional framework, and political systems.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW

When researching Korean political history, the three ideas that have had the greatest influence on modern Korean political history are nationalism, developmentalism, and democracy. While developmentalism achieved capitalist development and industrialization, democracy was constantly in conflict with developmentalism (Hankyoreh, 2013). Nationalism has had a profound impact on South Korea's nation-building, encompassing both developmentalism and democracy but also manifesting itself as an independent ideological project. Therefore, this paper draws on the literature developed from the perspective of nationalism, developmentalism, and democracy, which are the most central concepts in nation-building.

Firstly, this article pays attention to Bang Minho's argument that Korean nationalism has many branches (Bang, Minho, 2019, p. 159) and considers that only modernist interpretations of ethnicity do not provide clues to understanding Korean nation-building. Accordingly, it is important to understand nationalism based on Anthony D. Smith's theory of Ethno-symbolism. Ethno-symbolism emphasizes the role of myths, symbols, memories, values, and traditions in the formation and persistence of ethnicity and nationalism. The leading proponent of ethno-symbolism was Anthony D. Smith, who argued that an ethno-symbolic approach stresses the importance of continuity over centuries, the role of pre-existing ethnic communities in forming nations, and the importance of national symbols and memories. Unlike the opinions of modernists such as Anderson and Hobsbawm, who emphasize the modernity, grand discourse, structure, and elite of nation and nationalism, Smith also pays attention to the historicity, daily life, and cultural elements of nation and nationalism. Smith argues that the category of nation is not 'invented' or 'imagined' but exists. This provided a theoretical framework for why those involved in nation-building in Korea were so wary of 'national division' and how nationalism changed after the Korean War.

Direct studies on South Korea's nation-building have been conducted by foreign scholars, including Gregg Brazinsky's *Nation Building in South Korea-Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (2007), *Korea Between Empires 1895-1919* (2002) by Andre Schmid and *Origins of the Korean War* (2023) by Bruce Cumings. All three books have something in common they were written by Americans, but the biggest difference is the era and perspective of the study. Andre Schmid is researching the period from 1895 to 1919, Bruce Cumings is researching the period till 1950, and Gregg Brazinsky is researching the period till the 1980s. There are many differences not only in era but also in perspective. Bruce Cumings explains in detail how the United States sided with Korean conservatives and mentions in the book that

Korea was divided after liberation in 1945 due to the rash and thoughtless policies of high-ranking American leaders (Bruce Cumings, 2023, p. 175). In addition, the origin of the Korean War is believed to have occurred not only with the external Cold War system but also internally, that is, with the internal explosion of contradictions latent within Korean society. These fundamental problems include the relationship between landowners and peasantry and ethnic divisions due to the rise of extreme right-wing forces, which reached their peak during the First Republic. While Bruce Cumings fully understands America's responsibility and explains in detail the US policy toward Korea up to the outbreak of the Korean War, Gregg and Schmid researched Korea from a Western-centric perspective from a hegemonic country perspective. Especially, Gregg examined South Korea's nation-building from the perspective of the 'American Transformation of Korea' and it discusses how deeply the United States was involved in the nation-building process of the Republic of Korea after liberation. He argued that the reason South Korea was able to adapt well to the influence of the United States is that they are historically accustomed to accepting hegemonic systems and are good at negotiating with powerful countries. Also, having experienced Japanese colonialism, South Korea was merely a colony of an Asian power, and South Korea's postcolonial nationalism was not inherently anti-Western, unlike other regions of the world. Taking this nationalistic approach, the impact of the relationship between the United States and Korea on nation-building was described in detail (Brazinsky, G. A., 2009). The author explains the relationship between the United States and First Republic leader Syngman Rhee as follows: He supports the U.S. position, saying,

The United States had no choice but to provide continuous military aid, a measure to ensure security even if part of the liberal democracy in Korea was damaged (Brazinsky, G. A., 2023, p.175).

The author explains that the dictatorship and authoritarian behavior of the First Republic were the effects of the Korean War and the armistice system, regardless of the intention or will of the United States. In addition, the April 19 Revolution broke out due to citizens' opposition to the First Republic, and the government collapsed, and the military took advantage of this to seize power. *"After learning that the revolutionary leaders had a firm determination and desire for economic growth, the U.S. government "Instead of restoring the democratic government, they supported the military regime"* (p. 176). It can be said that since Korea's independence, there has been no place where the United States has not been politically, socially, economically, and culturally involved.

As Cumings pointed out, leaving aside the Korean people's desire to create their own independent government, their primary goal was to prevent Soviet domination, that is, the establishment of a government and nation-building that suited the interests of the United States was their agenda (Bruce Cumings, 2023, p.175). Therefore, what values the United States preferred and how the United States managed the Korean people's opposition were synthesized in a complementary way through Bruce Cumings's *Origins of the Korean War*.

Regarding nationalism, Schmid (2002) argued how intellectuals at the time created the concept of 'nation' and spread 'nationalism' and the social background that made it inevitable. The first thing Schmid focuses on in the process of forming Korean nationalism is Korea's historical and geographical situation. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Korea interposed between the great empires of China and Japan, suffered great turmoil both internally and externally. While China, which was believed to be the 'Center of the world,' collapsed, Japan, which was dismissed as a pirate on the periphery, continued to thrive and grow day by day. If China was the 'Empire of the past,' then Japan was the 'Empire of the future.' The fact that China's decline and escape from China's confines, although unexpected, was a 'signal of self-awareness' is a characteristic of the beginning of Korean nationalism (Schmid, A., 2002).

To summarize the modernist view of nationalism, the point of modernism is that nation and nationalism are not old, but a new phenomenon and appear in societies moving toward a state of modernization. However, a big misunderstanding can be made when it comes to Korea's early nation-building from this perspective. For example, the nation-building process that the United States considers a liberal democratic system naturally secured representation and legitimacy for the new nation through universal suffrage based on the Constitution (Oh Hyang-mi, 2005). However, unlike the US's modern national model, after liberation, the Korean people prioritized breaking away from Japanese colonial rule and becoming a 'Single-Ethnic Nation' under the independent 'Nationhood.' In other words, the establishment of a fully independent country, free from colonization and not under the control of any other country, was a priority. To sum up, this research agrees with the argument that international political currents, including China and Japan, should be considered as a basis for explaining Korean resistance to nationalism, it maintains that Korean nationalism cannot be understood solely in terms of modernism from a Western perspective. Due to the geopolitical characteristics of East Asia and the characteristics of resistant nationalism, interpretation from a different perspective was necessary.

Regarding Korea's retreat from socialism, Kim Yoon-jong (2017) presented an incisive analysis of not only the international situation such as the Cold War, but also the leadership and ideology of Korean political forces such as communism, socialism, the left, and the right wings. By presenting examples of political parties in Western Europe and South America, it explains why ideological change did not occur in Korea and why the US military government contacted the Centre-left, Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence — CPKI, including moderate socialist Yu Un-hyung. In the process, it explains how radical nationalistic socialists gained the upper hand in the atmosphere of the Cold War. Kim also explains how Korea's nationalist movement was transformed due to the negative effects of continued American hegemony and division.

In addition, Azerbaijan's nation-building, which has similar elements to South Korea, was also referred to. The nation-building of Azerbaijan, which shares the same historical context as South Korea and the experience of division/colonialism, Valiyev, O., & Alptekin, M. Y. (2023) explain why the first Azerbaijani was not entirely a sovereign nation-state and an incomplete state by evaluating based on the elements of modern state construction. By these standards, the First Republic of Korea was institutionally complete in these respects, but its implementation was imperfect. Furthermore, the study provided a theoretical framework to shed light on the causes of the collapse of nation-building in the First Republic following the April 19 Revolution. In addition, Orkhan Valiyev (2020) used the Small Nation model/theory of Miroslav Hroch to study the nation-building process in the context of a small nation, focusing on specific intellectuals for the first time. This provides insight into the development process and debates on nationalism, where to set the starting point of modernity in a country that has experienced domination or colonialism by another country, and how to evaluate a country with various identities and national development stages of small countries different from those in the West (Valiyev, O, 2020).

Park Mi-kyung (2015) captured the situation in which the exceptionality and specificity of Korean nationalism were not established as a positive characteristic of its own based on rational reason but were transformed into an exclusive, closed, negative tendency based on irrational emotions. Park points out the harmful effects of the 'Ilminjuui (One People. Principle)' policy promoted by the Syngman Rhee regime and argues that it has revealed fascistic elements that emphasize the single thought of ethnic members and an organic nation rather than the values of cultural and political pluralism and diversity. At that time, it explains

the initial state of Korea moving toward the task of nation-building in a somewhat different form from the nationalism, social contract theory, and democracy that support the modern nation.

This article also referred to previous data on 'Land reform', which is essential in South Korea's political modernization and nation-building process. The reason why land reform is important in South Korea's nation-building is because it provided a turning point where the feudal system changed into a capital-oriented one. According to Shin Byung-sik (2017), land reform means a reformative solution to the land problem. He argues that the fact that land reform was specified in the constitution and the government took an active stance under the First Republic of Korea was related to the crisis of legitimacy that occurred in the process of establishing a divided government. As time went by, not only did internal political support decline but in terms of finances, the finances of the First Republic government were said to have deteriorated compared to the US military administration period (Shin, Byung-si, 1997, p. 5). Shin evaluated land reform under the First Republic focusing on the political process. The study focused on the process of coordinating opinions on land reform within the National Assembly, and the pressure from the United States, which maintained a consistent position on land reform. The other reason why land reform is important is that it serves as a major nation-building task for the country within the direction of the Korean economy's development, called 'industrial capitalization of land capital.' However, it was pointed out that peasantry participation was excluded in the process of land reform and that political forces that could represent their interests of, such as the implementation of anti-peasantry agricultural policies during the Korean War, were not developed.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of nation-building in South Korea, it is essential to examine the factors that led to the Americanization of South Korean politics. The ideological landscape of the post-independence regime can be described as having been significantly influenced by the left-wing-led independence movement against imperialism, which was shaped by the Japanese imperialist colonization. In a survey of 10,000 people conducted by the U.S. military government in July 1946, a majority of 4,537 out of 8,467 respondents classified themselves as neutral, with 2,498 claiming to be a rightist and a total of 1,462 claiming to be leftists. However, when asked, "Which system do you like, capitalism, socialism, or communism?" the fact that only 13 percent answered capitalism, 70 percent answered socialism, and 10 percent answered communism, illustrates the ideological tendencies of the time. (Park, Jung I, 2013, p. 175). Although the left wing was a more

prevalent ideology in liberated Korea, it is unclear why the left wing of South Korea declined and socialism did not gain traction in the same manner as in other European countries (e.g., Austria and Germany). As an answer to this, the source was explored according to the research of Lipset, S. M., & Marks, G. (2000) of *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*. The main reasons are 1) America was a new country and society, and the most different thing from the European political landscape was the absence of a feudal system, 2) According to Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, the United States was anti-statist from the beginning, that is, it refused to be controlled by the central government, 3) Also, around the Roosevelt administration, socialist policies such as the New Deal were already developed by the Democratic Party, neutralizing leftist forces, 4) The conservatism of the middle class, 5) Already given voting rights 6) Political repression of radical movements, were pointed out. Among these, the context that can be applied to South Korea can be explained, along with numbers 4-6, as the characteristics of Korean politics resulting from the peculiarities of American ideals and the Cold War. However, the biggest difference from the United States is the constitution and election system that does not allow for the emergence of an alternative third party. In Korea, when a socialist or left-wing political group appears, it is suppressed due to a 'Red complex' or excluded by linking it to North Korea.

To assess the nation-building process in South Korea, it is essential to examine the country's internal foundation strategy and to consider the various external factors influencing international politics. These include the influence of the United States and the confrontation with North Korea. In doing so, it can be demonstrated that the consolidation of the conservative cartel in South Korea is due to several institutional and ideological devices derived from the First Republic that are still present in contemporary politics through path dependence.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

In examining the processes of nation-building, the concept of a nation has two core ideologies: nationalism and modernity. Nationalism is the determinant of modern politics; therefore, it can be argued that nationalism is a problem of modern and the political outcome of modernization is a national “political body” (Valiyev, O, 2023, p. 20). One distinguishing feature of Korean nationalism is that, unlike Western and most third-world countries, the Korean people have a history of ethnic homogeneity and unity (Park, Jong-chul, 2015, p. 52). Furthermore, the authoritarian division system of Korea that emerged during this period was justified by ethnic nationalism, which also justified the division of the country into North and South and authoritarian rule. Along with the myth of a single ethnicity, a closed ethnic identity was created that extended beyond North and South, left and right (Kang, Jin-woong, 2019, p. 14).

Second, as the primary theoretical framework of this thesis is the study of the factors linking nation-building in the First Republic and contemporary Korean politics, this thesis develops from the perspective of path dependency. The ideologically and practically polarized institutions that emerged during this period can be explained in terms of the basic concept of path dependency. The path dependence perspective posits that once a country’s policies are set and implemented in a particular direction, they tend to become increasingly difficult to alter. This makes it very difficult or impossible to change direction again in the future, even in the long term. It is characterized by continuous self-reinforcement and development along the initially chosen path (Liu, Ying Chun, 2019, p. 14). In other words, the National Security Act, which was designed in the first republic of Korea to confront North Korea, suppressed freedom of thought and prevented progressive parties from entering the parliament. Furthermore, the incorporation of the U.S.-centered security system established by the First Republic can be interpreted from this path-dependent perspective as it established the security system that continues to this day. The nation-building process of the First Republic is therefore an excellent lens through which to examine the dynamics of Korean politics.

1.2. Hypothesis based on literature review

According to The First Republic of Azerbaijan (Valiyev, O, 2023):

The difference between modern nation-states and antique city-states is the simultaneous development of the system covering both the society/nation and the market. In other words, a

modern state covers a nation-state, a parliamentary system, and a state-of-law at the same time (Valiyev, 2023, p. 18).

The hypothesis of this study is that the founding of the Republic of Korea had the constitution, education system, and parliamentary system, which are the building blocks of modern nation-building but experienced many internal trials and errors. Consequently, this paper hypothesizes that **“The First Republic is likely the origin of South Korea’s conservative two-party cartel.”** and explores the policies utilized during the nation-building process during the First Republic. These include undemocratic constitutional amendments, nationalist behavior, the imposition of a state ideology that undermines pluralistic values, and the distribution of parties in the First Republic. Alternative parties disappeared, and the national security laws, nationalist ideology, corruption, and conservative two-party system consolidated.

As will be demonstrated, the Progressive Party demonstrated potential for moving beyond conservative politics in 1956, but this was thwarted when its leader, Cho Bong-am, was executed by the Syngman Rhee regime. Thus, Korea’s strong conservative cartel, a conservative two-party political landscape, has its origins in the nation-building process of the First Republic. To substantiate this hypothesis, the principal ideologies and challenges of nation-building in the First Republic will be analyzed. This can be verified by reviewing the historical and political developments during the First Republic and analyzing the changes in the Korean political landscape, including the emergence and consolidation of the two-party system and the dominant role of conservative forces.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Overall, this research conducted a qualitative study that reviewed the literature of domestic and international scholars on the First Republic and conducted a content analysis using the archives of the Korean government (period documents) and official administrative documents of countries closely related to the founding of the Republic of Korea. It also involves observing and describing path-dependent phenomena, problems, or behaviors captured in the nation-building process in the First Republic through an explanatory research design.

In addition, this research focuses on ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Nation-building’ in South Korean society after liberation. After liberation, the framework for perceiving the insight of South Korean society was formed in close connection with the political orientation of the left and right political forces at the time. The information about the international political circumstances delivered to South Korean society at the time was processed facts thoroughly refined by the elite. By way of explanation, the left and right political elite forces of the time were the entities that mediated and translated the postwar world into South Korean society. Therefore, after liberation, the political direction of the left and right and South Korean society’s view of the world was closely connected (2012, Kim, Kwon-jung). For this reason, this paper examines the formation process of South Korea’s nation-building in 1948-1960 in the relationship between the national identity of the left and right political forces and the nation-building agenda set by the foreign policy makers, especially the elite.

In particular, the study of nation-building in developing countries such as Korea during the First Republic is limited in its interpretation of the Western experience. Therefore, the aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and problems faced by governments in Third World countries, including their colonial legacies. To achieve this, a balanced approach was taken, with an analysis of both nationalism and nation-building in Korea, which involved referring to both conservative and liberal literature. This was done to ensure that the study was as neutral and unbiased as possible in its view of nation-building.

To this end, Chapter 3 will organize the concept of nation-building, which runs through the core of the article. Thus, this article will examine what a nation is and the modern state prerequisites for being described as a nation. Correspondingly, this article also studies the reaction against South Korea’s special colonial identity, the formation of Korean national consciousness, and the ideology of identity, and examines the specificity and concept of Korean nationalism based on Modernism, Primordialism, and Perennialism.

Chapter 4 will divide South Korea's nation-building tasks into three conceptual frameworks and focus on the formation process and problems of each. This paper will deal in detail with the ideology used in the national establishment discourse and the issues of sovereignty establishment/economic reconstruction/national integration and security issues subdivided and influenced by it. In addition, it is important to look at Syngman Rhee's policy stance who was in power from July 24, 1948, to April 27, 1960, as the first president of South Korea.

One method that can be used for a more direct examination of how leaders' cognition influences foreign policy is to study the stereotypes that they hold regarding foreign countries. Afterward, through the statements and speeches used by Syngman Rhee, heuristic shortcuts that South Korea's vested interests and radical right-wing nationalists had were discovered and how they were implemented in policies, borrowing concepts related to policy makers' decision-making theory. The human mind is limited and cannot analyze all the information that it perceives. So, leaders try to integrate all this information into theories or within the mental images of the world they have constructed. Leaders analyze information through their cognitive filters, which make it possible to identify and give meaning to the elements that seem important to them (Morin, J. F., & Paquin, J.2018, p. 80). Therefore, this paper will also analyze newspapers, one of the major mass media. To balance the impact of the Cold War discourse on both the left and right, it is important to analyze writings written by intellectuals of the time. Accordingly, examining the ideology, political purpose, and agenda used to establish the nation, various related materials such as official government data, including National Assembly minutes, US military government documents, memoirs, and statements are used as well.

2.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study is the relationship between nation-building in the First Republic and contemporary South Korean politics. To better assess this relationship, it will be determined through a comprehensive policy analysis and official archival data.

CHAPTER III. UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING NATION-BUILDING IN SOUTH KOREA

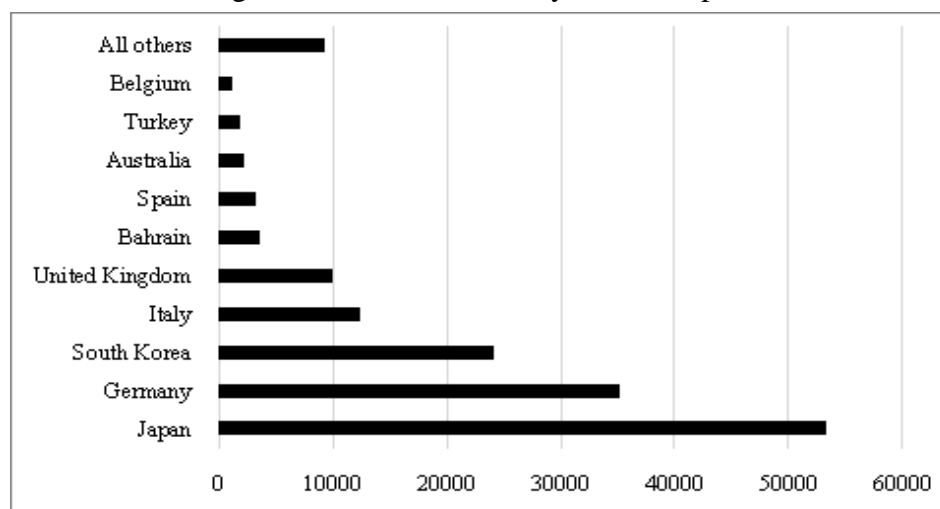
3.1. The political landscape in South Korea is characterized by a conservative monopoly

As previously stated, comparisons can be drawn between the United States and South Korea, both of which have a robust two-party system. The “anti-communism” frame, which is still employed by the staunchly far-right in South Korea, may have been presumed to have disappeared in the United States with the conclusion of the Cold War. However, it appears to have retained its utility in Western societies, including those of Trump’s administration.

Trump’s effort to brand his political opponents and those who now would hold him to account for his alleged criminal conduct as communists has been a through line of his rhetoric since he became a major political figure in 2015 (politico, 2023). It can be argued that anti-communist ideas have a particularly long history and remain particularly powerful in South Korea. As it will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 4, it is evident that almost every nation-building task in the First Republic was based on anti-communism. If the ideology of “anti-communism” is still a useful offensive rhetoric for attacking political opponents in the United States and South Korea, it would make sense to study the common origins of why there is such an aversion to communism in South Korea.

The first reason is that the United States and South Korea have had a strong relationship since liberation and through the U.S. military administration, as shown in Table 1, South Korea is currently the third-largest U.S. military presence in the world, after Germany and Japan. South Korea is also the fifth-largest recipient of U.S. aid since World War II.

Table 1. Ten countries host over 87% of all active-duty US troops overseas.
[Countries hosting US overseas active-duty forces, September 2023]



Source: Defense Manpower Data Center (<https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/main/>)

As a result of this significant funding and de facto rule by the U.S. military since the country's earliest days, South Korea has been heavily influenced by the United States in all aspects of politics, economics, society, and culture. In a survey conducted by the Seoul National University Institute for Peace and Unification in 2022, more than 80 percent of South Koreans chose the United States as the country with which they felt closest, indicating that South Korea favors the American model and values American values (the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University, 2022). For this reason, anti-communist values espoused by the United States during the height of the Cold War, and as a frontline country in the Cold War, ideas other than anti-communism were more strictly regulated, and the path dependency of these conservative ideologies are still valid in South Korean society.

In explaining the absence of socialism in the United States, Lipset's book paraphrases the following sentences:

At the Socialist International's Amsterdam congress in 1904, Daniel de Leon, leader of the Socialist Labour Party of America, who considered Lenin to be a true Marxist, said,

He proclaimed to the 1906 convention of the industrial workers of the world in Chicago "If my reading of history is correct, the prophecy of marks will be fulfilled and America will bring the downfall of capitalism the world over (Lipset, S. M., & Marks, G. ,2000, p. 18).

South Korea was also the most socialist and leftist of any country immediately after liberation. This was due to the legacy of Japan, which persisted throughout 1910-1945, during which many South Koreans identified with and sympathized with the left Cumings, B, 2023, p. 63). Despite the favorable environment for socialism and other left-wing parties, the political landscape in Europe, including Germany, has long been dominated by progressive parties, why the United States and South Korea have become more entrenched in a two-party system? Lipset presents five main conclusions as to why socialism in the United States cannot be consolidated. He identifies five main reasons for the lack of socialist influence in the U.S.:

- 1) the fundamental right to vote (The right to vote is already granted to all citizens),
- 2) the constitutional and electoral system that makes the two-party system rigid,
- 3) the flexibility of the opposition system,
- 4) the political repression of radical movements, and
- 5) the concretization of the middle class.

A comparison of the origins of conservative two-party systems in Korea and the United States reveals commonalities and evidence of American influence. One common origin can be

identified as the ruthless repression of the left. The American Socialist Party, for example, protested the entry of the United States into World War I in 1917, and the Wilson administration responded by jailing the party's leadership on espionage charges, further weakening the party. The Socialist Party was further weakened when President Roosevelt, who had some socialist leanings, succeeded in bringing various classes into the Democratic fold with his New Deal policies, including unemployment relief. Similarly, in Korea, there have been representative movements advocating socialism and alternative ideologies from the First Republic to modern politics. However, each time these movements have emerged, they have been effectively suppressed.

In South Korea, the Progressive Party, founded in 1956, attempted to break the entrenched conservative two-party system, but this alternative party lost ground in 1958 when its leader, Cho Bong-am, was executed under the National Security Act (the Supreme Court eventually acquitted him in January 2011 after a retrial). Table 2 below shows that, from the beginning of the National Assembly, Syngman Rhee's National Society for the Rapid Realization of the Korean Independence (NSRRKI) won 55 seats, the Korea Democratic Party (KDP) won 29 seats, the Daedong Youth won 12 seats, the Korean National Youth won 6 seats, and other parties won 13 seats. On the surface, the large number of independents seems to indicate that pluralistic values are alive and well, but many of the independents were affiliated with the NSRRKI or the KMT. As a result, the composition of the Constituent Assembly was largely divided into three factions: those affiliated with the ROK, those who supported Syngman Rhee, and independents who were aligned with Kim Gu and Kim Kyu-sik. During the First Republic, the number of independents steadily decreased, and the number of parties in the National Assembly decreased sharply. This, coupled with the continued suppression of alternative, progressive, and leftist forces, and, as will be discussed later, the anti-communist ideology that has been entrenched since the Korean War. These factors have provided a solid framework for the rise of South Korea's conservative parties.

Table 2. Distribution of parliamentary seats over the 1st Republic of Korea

	Number of political parties in the National Assembly	1st party	2nd party	Independent	Total number of seats
Constituent Assembly (1948-1950)	17	National Society for the Rapid Realization of the Korean Independence 53	Korean Democratic Party 29	102	198
1st National Assembly (1950-1954)	11	Korean Democratic Party 24	Democratic National Party 23	127	196
2nd National Assembly (1954-1958)	5	Liberal party 113	Democratic National Party 15	69	179
3rd National Assembly (1958-1960)	3	Liberal Party 126	Democratic Party 79	27	233

Source: Republic of Korea National Election Commission website election statistics (<https://www.nec.go.kr/site/nec/main.do>)

3.2. Strengthening Nationalism and State-Identity

Changes in the status of the First Republic's National Day following the liberal-democratic and National Foundation Day debate. Annually on South Korea's Liberation Day (15 August 1945, commemorating the country's independence from Japan), two contrasting arguments are presented in the country: the assertion that the country was founded on the principles of 'liberal democracy', and the assertion that 15 August 1948 should be celebrated as the 'national foundation day.' Celebrating National Foundation Day itself is not a problem at all in a liberal democratic society in South Korea. However, the reason why National Foundation Day is politically and socially 'controversial' in South Korea is because the arguments of those who want to establish National Foundation Day are based on the confrontational and ultra-conservative ideology put forward by the First Republic. According to Jhe, Seong-Ho, the author of *"Propriety of Establishing National Foundation Day and Some Measures to Promote It"*, 1) to establish Korea's unalloyed national status and right history, 2) To properly recognize and socially spread the meaning and legitimacy of the founding of the nation on August 15, 1948, 3) To provide a basis and opportunity for 'love of country(affection of

country)', which is becoming increasingly vulnerable, 4) To eradicate damage to national identity by pro-North Korea, pro-leftists, and anti-constitutional forces, 5) To solidify the founding ideals and national identity of liberal democracy and market economy and to solidify the liberal democratic unification policy, Jhe Seong Ho (2015) argues that the establishment of National Foundation Day is necessary (Jhe Seong-ho, 2015, p. 206).

In fact, Article 119, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea stipulates that *"The economic order of the Republic of Korea shall be based on a respect for the freedom and creative initiative of enterprises and individuals in economic affairs."*, *"The State may regulate and coordinate economic affairs in order to maintain the balanced growth and stability of the national economy, to ensure proper distribution of income, to prevent the domination of the market and the abuse of economic power, and to democratize the economy through harmony among the economic agents."* (Korea Legislation Research Institute, 2019) indicating that the free market economic order is the basis of the economic order of the Republic of Korea. However, the extremist interpretation of 'liberal democracy' is problematic; they make the mistake of interpreting liberal democracy as a conflicting concept of communism, socialism, and North Korea. In reality, liberalism is an ideology that is both progressive and conservative, and liberalism is an ideology that takes individual freedom, the rule of law, and pluralism as its basic principles (Hankyoreh, 2022).

To comprehend the origins of why extreme interpretations of liberal democracy are promoted by the far right, it is necessary to understand how the word liberal democracy has developed in South Korea. First of all, liberal democracy can be understood as a combination of liberalism and democracy (Cho, Han-sang, 2015, p. 71). Therefore, following the history and concept of democracy, it is meaningful to analyze the concept and history of liberalism. Liberalism is an ideology that aims to ensure individual freedom above all else. The idea is that people should not be interfered with or coerced by any group or organization to enjoy their freedom, and as a result, liberalism has an inherent individualistic tendency that emphasizes the individual rather than the group or organization. On the other hand, democracy, which means majority rule, was an ideology that socialists also supported. Therefore, the West emphasized liberal democracy to distinguish it from democracy in socialist countries, and it was also used in an anti-communist sense. This suggests that before the Cold War began in earnest, liberal democracy was not used in an anti-communist sense, but simply as a democracy that advocated the value of freedom. After the Korean War, South

Koreans, whose hatred of North Korea became extremely intense, began to perceive liberal democracy as anti-communism. Liberal democracy as anti-communism was further emphasized by the first president, Syngman Rhee, and since then, authoritarian/dictatorial governments and other ruling powers have used a mixture of anti-communism and liberal democratic values to suppress dissent, opposition, and democracy. In the name of defending liberal democracy, discussing peaceful reunification, reading Marx, engaging in labor activism, and opposing dictatorship were all banned.

Liberal democracy is also known as participatory democracy, socialist democracy, deliberative democracy, grassroots democracy, and so on, and these labels are intended to clarify the nature of the democracy being pursued. However, South Korea's liberal democracy exhibits a peculiar quality. Its foundation is predicated on the assumption that North Korea is a totalitarian state and anti-communist and anti-North Korea, which results in the overlooking of the democratic process. Rather, there have been instances where the pursuit of democracy has been thwarted in the name of freedom and anti-communism.

And this argument surprisingly resembles the national ideology that supported the First Republic. The basis of national identity claimed by this force is not the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, but the anti-communism emphasized during the First Republic and its differences from North Korea and shows a serious misuse of liberal democracy. This national ideology excluded pluralistic values in the process of establishing the First Republic. Ultimately, the reason for the failure of the First Republic, which ended in revolution, can be interpreted as the fact that this extreme ideology did not help in nation-building at all and rather hindered the development of South Korea. Accordingly, it can be analyzed that the proponents of the First Republic and National Foundation Day supporters used extremist ideology to protect the legitimacy of South Korea compared to North Korea and, more accurately, to prolong the authoritarian regime of the First Republic. By looking at the results of the fall of moderate forces/exclusion of political pluralism ideology/imposition of extremist nationalism that occurred at the time of the founding of the First Republic, it is possible to analyze the factors that influenced South Korea's nation-building by the rise of extreme ideology.

3.3. Nation-building as a process of division

To build up South Korea's legitimacy. The declaration of statehood does not imply the completion of building a nation. The building of a nation or national identity makes the presence of a state compulsory (Valiyev 2023, p. 17). In particular, the establishment of South Korea's independent government in 1948 was an incomplete nation-building for the Korean people, who had lived a history of territorial, ethnic, and national unity throughout their entire history (Oh Hyang-mi, 2005).

Therefore, there is still a movement to define March 1, 1919, which announced the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the democratic republic, as the identity of the Republic of Provisional Government Korea. They argue that recognizing and commemorating the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (1919) established through the March 1st Movement implies and commemorates the fact that Korea was established through the contribution and sacrifice of independence activists who resisted the Japanese colonial rule.

On the other hand, politicians wanted to praise the achievements of Syngman Rhee, who served as the first president under the support of the United States in 1948. In this context, they emphasized that 1948 was the National Foundation Day of the Republic of Korea while disparaging other politicians who discussed nation-building across a diverse spectrum. The reason this debate has important implications in analyzing Korea's nation-building is that it suggests that there were many changes and debates in the ideology and approach to nation-building during the period 1945-1960. The most important thing in South Korea's nation-building is the formation of ideology and the political functions contained within it.

South Korea, which was faced with the task of building an independent nation upon its liberation in 1945, was in a situation where the nation itself and even sovereignty, which were prerequisites for building national sovereignty, were *totally absent*. The Korean nation did not exist for 36 years under Japanese colonial rule, but it did not completely disappear. Although the country was officially disbanded by Japanese imperialism, it was a dynastic state that the people did not deny, it was also a republic with a government in exile active in China, and it also existed in the form of a colony under Japanese colonial rule. Of course, officially it was only a part of Japan and did not exist. Therefore, the construction of a nation-state after liberation in 1945 meant introducing a new political system that had never been experienced before.

'Nation' refers to individuals who have the awareness and authority of being sovereign as the source of all political power. In other words, nation-state construction is based on the national consciousness that safety and order can be maintained and justice and free will realized by the

nation's supreme governing authority, and the public consciousness that the source of that supreme ruling authority is the sovereign individual (Choi, 1998). According to modern state pre-conditions, the composition of the political unit should be 'People (Nation)', not 'Ethnic.' However, for the Korean people, August 15, 1945, meant little more than simply becoming an independent 'ethnic.' At that time, the justification for nation-building in South Korea was also ethnicity. The goal of independence was national liberation, and national liberation was the establishment of a nation, which could be interpreted as a lack of sovereignty and a national perspective. Therefore, it can be evaluated that they failed to respond flexibly to the division of the political system that later divided South and North Korea due to excessive national consciousness and the physical division of South and North due to the Korean War.

To sum up, for Koreans, who have historically formed a political community in which territory and residents are consistent, building a nation on a part of the territory in which only half of the ethnic participates and belongs naturally makes questions of legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, during the colonial era, colonies established governments in exile abroad because they were unable to establish legitimate independent governments at home, and not recognizing these governments could be seen as a failure to recognize the efforts of the independence fighters who sacrificed so much for their independence. Various efforts were made to build an independent nation and it is no exaggeration to say that the only justification for nation-building was the fact that it was historically one people.

At the same time, the primary objective of nation-building following liberation was to punish pro-Japanese forces. However, during the reign of the U.S. military government from 1945 to 1948, the U.S. military government did not impose any sanctions on pro-Japanese forces, but instead used moderation in their governing bodies (Lee, Jung-bock, 1996, p. 24).

In addition, on 4 October 1946, during the US military regime before the establishment of the First Republic, the Left-Right Coalition Committee issued the Seven Principles, a compromise between the Five Principles of the Left and the Eight Principles of the Right. The composition of the Joint Committee that drew up this agreement shows that the participation of the left-wing affiliates was completely excluded, and the United States wanted to form a coalition with forces that could at least cooperate with the United States. The nature of the First Republic, which followed the U.S. military regime, thus set the stage for successive right-wing conservative governments. The left-wing forces had strong organizations and popular support, but they were arbitrarily excluded and repressed or refused to participate in

the US-led government formation process. It was to be expected that only the right and the center would be able to enter the US-led government coalition. While the right had a base of wealth and a bureaucratic apparatus maintained by the US military, the center had no base of its own, and thus the Joint Committee on the Right and the Left tended to represent the views of the right (Cumings, B. 2023, p. 361).

3.4. Clash of ideologies and extreme confrontation: Clash of ideologies

Table 3. Four functions of ideology

Four functions of ideology	
The explanatory one	Ideology offers explanations for the causes of social, political, and economic conditions
The evaluative one	It provides standards for evaluating social conditions
The orientative one	It provides orientation and understanding of the identity of its followers
The prescriptive one	It tells followers what to do and how to proceed

Source : (Terec-Vlad, L. 2021 pp. 39)

As specified in Table 3, according to Ball and Dagger, ideology performs four functions (Terec-Vlad, L. 2021, p. 39) Any ideology tries to offer a “vision of the future” in terms of social and political evolution. Ideology from a religious perspective operates with the meaning of pursuing something beyond life centered on the idea of divinity, but there is a difference between political ideology and religion in that ideology presents a perspective on life on earth.

This can be applied to the political situation in South Korea after liberation in 1945. Although more than 200 new political parties crossing the left and right were created, a represented example can be given by the extreme left (radical nationalist-communism) and right (radical nationalist-right), which were the main political spectrum at the time. After the division in 1948, southern communists pursued revolution, while orthodox right-wing forces pursued forced unification. In the process of establishing a nation-building ideology, communists used the norms of the Soviet Union’s expansionist policy, and the orientation of armed struggle, inspired by the success of the Chinese communists, they sought to achieve nation-building based on these references. In this way, the conflict between the left and the right escalated not

only in the external international situation but also in the establishment of internal ideologies, and regional upheaval occurred, leading to a nationwide civil war called the Korean War.

Table 4. Four functions of an ideology of South Korean communists

Four functions of the ideology of South Korean Communists	
The explanatory one	An explanation of the miserable living conditions of the working class and peasant class under the US military government.
The evaluative one	A standard point for transplanting Chinese-style revolution, inspired by the success of Chinese communists.
The orientative one	Direction of armed struggle and violence
The prescriptive one	The norms of the Soviet Union's expansionist policy

Source : (Han, Sang-do 2018 : 34pp)

As will be explained in Chapter 4, even before the US's influence in South Korea became complete, in the North the Soviet Union was already solving the tasks that needed to be resolved after independence one by one, and through international solidarity of communism, it was determined to have an advantage over South Korea in many aspects. As mentioned earlier, most Koreans were more favorable to left-wing ideologies such as socialism and communism than to capitalism, which inevitably laid the foundation for the creation of an authoritarian and extremist ideology to create an independent government for South Korea. This becomes the origin of the extreme ideological clash between North and South Korea that cannot and is difficult to compromise on.

A nation formed by the Cold War and an authoritarian regime. To understand how nations were formed, it is necessary to understand the “social and historical context” of the Modernity period (Loredana, 2021). The nation is “a reality of the modern world”, an imagined, subjective structure. Nations were formed as a result of a “process” of societal evolution, with a common ideology, territory and ethnicity, cultural values, myths, and traditions. At the same time, the concept of a nation involves several approaches: historical, philosophical, social, etc. A multi-level analysis of nation-building is possible only by considering various variables, contexts, and ideological interests.

The political development of Western developed countries has continued to develop through the coexistence of the left and the right and has developed through trial and error through

constant discussion and reflection on these conflicting ideologies. However, looking at South Korea's recent ideological confrontations and controversies, it is clear that they did not develop through the coexistence of left-right political ideologies, but were triggered by foreign invasions in the late 19th century, and even after liberation, the competition between heterogeneous ideologies in the Cold War order led to development rather than the coexistence of political diversity. It can be said that the political system developed with the motto of competition between the left and the right.

The diametrical ideologies that settled in the Korean Peninsula after its liberation from Japanese imperialism were bent on instilling their respective institutions and systems, and hegemonic powers never recognized autonomous efforts within the Korean people in their acceptance and process.

As the end of World War II approached with the defeat of Japan, the Japanese Colonial Government of Korea (the direct branch that the Japanese Empire operated to rule the Korean Peninsula from the date of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty on August 29, 1910, until September 2, 1945), to ensure their own safety of Japanese, the government entrusted the transitional security maintenance to center-leftist Yu Un-hyung. When Yu took action to establish an independent government, such as forming the Kunkukjunbiwiwonwhoi (Committee for Preparation of Korean Independence — CPKI) the Japanese Colonial Government of Korea provided the U.S. military with false information ostracizing Yu. Instead, they created and delivered materials supporting people with pro-Japanese as the right people who can help U.S. military. Accordingly, the US military government rejected the CPKI, led by moderate Yu as an official government agency, and placed pro-Japanese figures who collaborated with Japan during the Japanese colonial period in key positions. This suggests that the hegemonic powers did not support Korea's autonomous independence and nation-building. The forces that led the independence movement and supported the liberation of the nation were politically excluded, creating a situation of confusion among the founding forces and an atmosphere of the Cold War. Because the moderate socialist trend failed to exert popular influence, communists joined the CPKI and radicalized it (Kim Yoon-jong 2017). Afterward, the radicalized CPKI became a direct target of the US military government and was suppressed.

Nation-building and political development were carried out under the thorough separate support of each side as a way for the United States and the Soviet Union to expand their

respective influence over North and South Korea. This has become an inherent and fundamental part of Korean society and has intensified into an ideological debate that is causing the chronic root of evil in South Korean society.

3.5. Characteristics of Korean nationalism: Excessive and misused nationalism

Nationalism where modernism, perennialism, primordialism, and ethno-symbolism coexist.

The most fundamental issue in nationalism today is the question of when and how nations and nationalism came into existence. If nationalism is viewed as a modern phenomenon, its relationship with ethnicity loses much meaning and ethnic identity is not a major consideration. This is because what constitutes a modern state is politicized ‘people/nation.’

However, Koreans who lived through the colonial era did not have the opportunity to experience a ‘nation’ that could exercise political rights and come together as a political association. The loss of national sovereignty due to colonization deprived Koreans of their right to be ‘citizens/nations’, and the establishment of an incomplete nation due to the division of North and South Korea made it impossible for Koreans to be satisfied as a ‘nation’ of a divided nation. Therefore, Koreans had no choice but to prefer the word ‘ethnic’ over the word ‘nation’ (Park, Chan-seung, 2016, p. 21). Thus, when explaining Korea’s nationalism after liberation, it should be considered that the ‘nation’ of political individuals based on modernism is weak, and the ‘ethnic’ aspect is stronger. This can be said to be a major characteristic of Korean nationalism that cannot be explained in the context of modernism.

Nationalism is an ideology and movement that seeks to establish ‘our’ identity. Nationalism as a political ideology and social movement always seeks to determine the boundary of ‘we’ and secure the loyalty of internal members (Chung, Il Joon, 2016). At this time, it was important to imagine ‘they’ that are distinct from us. South Korean nationalism is unique within the spectrum of various nationalism theories. To understand South Korea’s Nation building, it is necessary to know Korean nationalism, which will be possible with a modernist approach, a Primordialism, and a Perennialism approach.

Modernism conceptualizes a nation as a community of citizens with sovereignty in a territorial state. This concept shows that modernism regards nation and nationalism as modern phenomena. The nation assumed by modernists is both a citizen and a territorial existence. According to the view of modernism, which identifies the nation as a historical being, the beginning of nationalism is modern, and modernity such as capitalism, industrialization, and the modern state form its origin. However, in the case of South Korea, which suffered from colonization, there is a limit to explaining nationalism with modernism because it should have

experienced modernization involuntarily (Lee, 2021).

In addition, according to T.Naim, who explains the origin of nationalism and nation from an economic perspective, capitalism leads to uneven economic development, and countries that fall behind in development try to imitate by using advanced countries as models. However, advanced countries that are advanced in development do not simply present development models but exploit lagging countries, which is the imperialism and colonialism we see in the 19th century. At this juncture, Naim argues that nationalism arises against imperialism in colonized or exploited countries. This is also an important theory that can explain Korean nationalism, which is an important theoretical basis for explaining the early development process of nation-building based on nationalism and ideology issued against Japanese imperialism. During the colonial period of Japanese imperialism in the early 20th century, '*Primordialism*' that emphasized blood ties was strong. Through the division of the mid-20th century and the ethnic conflicts of the Korean War, both South and North Korea asserted their respective national legitimacy, and '*Perennialism*', which emphasizes their cultural continuity, was dominant.

Moreover, according to Anthony Smith's *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*(2009), "For ethno-symbolists, the first step is to search for the 'ethnic core' of the nation and trace its social and political origins, in the belief that nations are characterized by a degree of cultural unity and distinctiveness, which in turn draws much of its potency and durability from a conviction of ethnic solidarity (Smith, A. D.,2009, p. 45)." Smith posits that the process by which nations are created is the defining characteristic that differentiates ethnicity from other forms of cultural communities. This process is based on a shared belief in "ancestral relatedness" (Smith, A. D.,2009, p. 46). An analysis of nationalism in the South from Smith's ethno-symbolic perspective reveals that the division of the "nation" in 1948, represented by the sole government of the South and the sole government of the North, is a heterogeneous state formation that challenges popular beliefs and hinders national unity. The divided nation established by the First Republic perceived a threat to its legitimacy due to its contradiction with the popularly supported nationalism of shared ancestry and common symbolism. Consequently, by establishing North Korea as a common enemy, it competed with the regime for the initiative of reunification and national leadership. This was also intended to increase the authority of the First Republic. In South Korea, modernism called '*State nationalism*' or '*Official nationalism*' gained popularity as a result of the confrontation and backlash against North Korean-style '*Juche nationalism*'. The Korean Peninsula can be said to be a place where the history of the division system of the Korean people and the

globality of the Cold War system intersect. Therefore, it has a complex character that is connected not only to the dynamics between North and South Korea but also to changes in international political dynamics. This is what makes it difficult to understand Korean nationalism through Western nationalism. The origins of extreme nationalism to establish legitimacy that appeared in South and North Korea during the First Republic can be said to be due to the characteristics of the 'authoritarian' government.

According to Sinisa Malešević (2019), the strength of nationalism is better gauged not by its aggressive posturing but by its invisibility.

In other words, unlike hostile expressions of nationalism which often indicate insecurity and instability, habitual nationalism is more potent precisely because it is firmly grounded in everyday habitus where it becomes a second-nature, unreflected daily practice. When measured this way, *bland nationalisms* of liberal nation states (such as Denmark or Finland) are much more powerful than nominally *aggressive nationalisms* of authoritarian states (such as North Korea or Eritrea). In this context, one's sense of individuality is generally firmly linked with the organizational, ideological and micro-interactive structures of one's nation state. Politics with highly developed organisational capacities are much more capable of channeling nation-centric ideas and practices as they possess the means to do so. Furthermore, although authoritarian states such as Eritrea or North Korea often engage in permanent and very aggressive nationalist mobilization, this nationalism lacks the degree of ideological penetration associated with politics characterized by vibrant civil societies. *In other words, strong and well-grounded nationalism entails a degree of liberty where individuals can articulate their own visions of a nation* (Sinisa Malešević 2021, p. 255).

South Korea, which only understood the nation as a justification for nation-building, understood nation-building itself as an incomplete and transitional phase. Therefore, in the process of solidifying division, there was still more interest in building a unified nation-state than in building a country without defects as a sovereign nation. The political factions that accepted the construction of a partial state and participated in South Korea's independent elections were also unable to escape from the aggressive national consciousness. South Korean elites who participated in independent elections and the establishment of an independent government also viewed the construction of a democratic nation as a preliminary step toward national unification.

As Malešević argues, nationalism that is well-organized and developed by citizens enables

political maturation into a vibrant civil society. Still, Koreans had rarely recognized associated democracy with liberalism or representative democracy, or republicanism, being unfamiliar with conditions such as socioeconomic stability and the need for consolidation among divergent political groups to allow democracy to function properly (Kim, Yoon-jong 2017, p. 40). Accordingly, before looking into the First Republic's process of using nationalism for nation-building in the next chapter, it is important to evaluate what basis their nationalism and was formed and how it was misused.

Meanwhile, as the Cold War began in earnest, the U.S. military occupation made the establishment of capitalism and economic stabilization the top priority for nation-building in South Korea. The U.S. believed that if economic stability was not achieved, serious public disunity would occur. This can be said to be because they believed that if a second Chineseization occurred, that is, if the people started a revolution, U.S. support would be useless and they would be incorporated into the communist bloc. In contrast, the government of the First Republic of Korea set securing national defense capabilities as the top priority for nation-building (Shin, 1997, p. 30). As such, for the U.S. and the government of the First Republic, political integration, establishment of a democratic system, and cultivation of the people's sense of sovereignty could not be the top priorities for nation-building at that time. Since democracy is the source of operation that presupposes the existence of a sovereign state, it was necessary to receive proper education and experience in implementing democracy in a fair situation. However, in the international politics of balance of power based on realism, South Korea had to accept conditions that did not allow it to mature politically and socially. The government of the First Republic, which needed absolute support from the U.S., eventually became relatively compliant with the U.S. economic stabilization policy by the early 1950s. From the perspective of Syngman Rhee's regime, whose legitimacy is threatened, to overcome the unstable internal situation, it has to cleverly reinterpret nationalism and create an ideology of 'Excessive Nation' and 'Indiscoverable Individual.'

3.6. What is Ilminjuui (One People Principle)?

After facing liberation with the loss of sovereignty by Japanese imperialism, Korea was immediately subject to divisional rule by the US military. Under these circumstances, the legitimacy of Korea's state construction was inevitably threatened. The lack of deep thinking beyond the historical experience resulted in the construction of two hostile countries on the Korean Peninsula after liberation in 1945, leading to a war that completely denied each other. The excess of national consciousness led to the understanding of the established state as

incomplete in the sense of national unification, and not complete in the sense of sovereignty. Even though South Korea is a constitutional state that puts the legitimacy of the state on the realization of popular sovereignty through ordinary elections, South Korea wanted to find the maintenance and fulfillment of the new state in the slogan of national unification, not the solidification of the constitutional state. Therefore, it was important whether or not the new state was a unified national state, and the division was naturally defined as an uneasy situation that was difficult to endure. In this situation, it could be presented as an urgent task to overcome the unstable situation as soon as possible rather than building the internal legitimacy of the new country. So, each regime in North and South Korea created a nationalist ideology that emphasized its legitimacy which is North Korea included the ‘Juche’ ideology, and South Korea had the ideology of the ‘One People Principle’ so-called ‘Ilminjuui’.

As one nation, we can never be divided into two.

There should be no class

And there should be no difference.

What is oneness, what is a region, and what are men and women?

Our people are one. One land, one mind, one life, and one treatment.

There is one thing, and it is one thing in terms of culture (Kim Han-jong 2006, p. 315).

Ilminjuui was a political concept that was formed in the process of attempting social and political integration of the Republic of Korea by Syngman Rhee, who became the head of the first government of the Republic of Korea with the support of the United States in a situation of left-right conflict immediately after liberation. This is not an elaborately conceptualized ideology that encompasses ethnicity or race but is presented as an efficient means of educating the people in the process of attempting domestic political integration for the political stability of the Syngman Rhee government. It is not an ideology, but rather a political deadlock. It can be said to be a political strategy to reach an agreement and breakthrough (Park, Eui-kyung 2015, p. 3).

Specifically, on December 31, 1949, the first curriculum was established according to the principle of one people and democracy, student military training was implemented, and ‘The Korean National Defense Student Defense Corps (in Korean - Hakdohokukdan)’ was organized. As mentioned earlier, systems based on Ilminjuui, including Hakdohokudan, are reminiscent of fascism. The Hakdohokukdan operated as a student surveillance and mobilization organization throughout 1950 (Yeoun, Jung-eun: 2004 p. 200). What the First

Republic government had in mind most when forming Hakdohokukdan was how to eliminate left-wing students existing in schools. In addition, to eradicate any leftist ideology that might arise within the school, the plan was to prevent students in advance by subjecting them to anti-communist ideology and military-style group training. Along with this, each school principal established a surveillance system for teachers and students by comprehensively reviewing teachers' negligence, teaching content, and private lives and submitting a report on teachers' trends to the Provincial Office of Academic Affairs. In this surveillance system, all school members were systematically organized into a hierarchy. Not only did it remain a national celebration day such as March 1st, Constitution Day, and Liberation Day, but also students' collective participation was mobilized by establishing memorial days such as President Syngman Rhee's Birthday, Hakdohokukdan's Day, and Anti-Communist Student Day. This mobilization system was used to internalize and ideologize anti-communism. The nationalism of the First Republic of Korea, based on the principle of Ilminjuui ideology, was nothing more than militaristic and disciplined group training rather than proper nationalism advocated by Sinisa Malešević.

Syngman Rhee sought to make Ilminjuui not for one political party, but a creed that all citizens should follow, believe in, and achieve. The point where Ilminjuui, which aims at national unity, arrived was the scene of one-party politics led by one leader. It may be a natural phenomenon that integration results in unity rather than diversity or pluralism, but as national integration soon presupposes unified thoughts and actions of all ethnic members, immigration reveals fascistic elements. The biggest problem with this can be analyzed in three ways.

- 1) As the premise of Ilminjuui, it emphasizes the Koreans as one ethnic group and differs from the Western modern concept of nationalism that focuses on thinking about the individual. It can force individuals to make moral sacrifices that make sacrifices for the group.
- 2) The core of Ilminjuui is anti-communism. Although the South and the North each established independent governments, they still had a sense of unity as the same people. However, with the spread of Ilminjuui, anti-communism included ideological elements that undermined national identity, that is, instilled hostility toward North Korea. This served as the biggest factor blocking the growth of the opposition party, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
- 3) Due to the experience of colonialism, the ideology of Ilminjuui, aimed at realizing the ultimate value of perfecting the nation, was established at the highest level of all

ideologies and thoughts without proper education on the meaning of nationalism, democracy, or modern sovereignty. By educating nationalistic ideologies before the modern constitution, sovereignty, and civic education, nationalism developed into an idea close to statism.

- 4) As ethnic identity is replaced by national identity, it can be said to be a transitional period of identity change from ideology based on the Korean race to discovering oneself as a member of the people of South Korea.

Although Ilminjuui advocates *national unity*, accidents such as the successive assassinations of leaders of the liberation period (mainly the victims were left-wing and center-left forces), the intensification of the Cold War, and the outbreak of the Korean War suggest that the deep background of this idea is not unity or national values. It proves that it is something other than. They aimed to solidify political power rather than establish a modern democracy and modern state, and this can be confirmed because of the authoritarian government in the early Cold War.

In this way, using the plausible title of Ilminjuui as a steppingstone, Rhee Syngman, a key right-wing figure, came to firmly take power in South Korea, and Ilminjuui became established as the core strategy and ideology of nation-building advocated by his party. Accordingly, Syngman Rhee proposed five principles for establishing a new Republic of Korea. It was the integration of political forces, national self-determination, freedom of elections, national unification, and the construction of a national welfare state. In this way, the biggest slogan of the first republic, 'Ilminjuui', can be analyzed as being too fascist in its obligations as a citizen instead of stimulating national emotions.

Right-wing figures, including Syngman Rhee, accepted US democracy and presented the unification goal of unifying the Korean Peninsula into an anti-communist and liberal democracy. Preoccupied with primordial national unity and political ideology, it was unable to create an opportunity to develop a mature civil democracy based on the Constitution. Incidents such as the Jeju 4.3 Incident and the Yeosu Incident, in which the state massacred innocent citizens on suspicion of collaborating with the Communist Party, occurred one after another, and this can be evaluated as damaging the foundation of nation-building. During the US military government from 1945 to 1948, in a situation of left-right conflict, issues of cultivating people's sovereignty and capabilities, such as sovereignty and constitution, were not priorities for nation-building (Oh Hyang-mi, 2005, p. 16).

As will be discussed in Chapter 4 of the strategic assessment of nation-building in the South, the constitutions of the Republic of Korea from the First Constitution onwards were highly

drafted constitutions that reflected the line of centrists who supported liberal democracy for politics and mixed or socialism for economics. They were based on the realization of social justice and the development of a balanced national economy. However, during the US military government and the First Republic of Korea, economic and social justice was not prioritized, workers were not recognized as having a share in profit sharing, and the state did not protect those who were unable to earn a living (Lee, Jung-bock, 1996, p. 13). The imposition of extreme national identities such as *Ilminjuui* did not recognize these pluralistic values, and alternative policies were ruthlessly suppressed on the grounds of anti-communism. This monolithic idea based on the logic of security, such as *Ilminjuui*, is still a useful aggressive rhetoric in Korean society today and is the theoretical foundation and legacy of the 'liberal democratic' values left behind by the First Republic.

Ilminjuui and Juche(self-reliance) ideology. Then, one significant question may arise: On the Korean Peninsula, where nationalism is so strong, South Korea and North Korea, which were completely divided by the Korean War, have not had any movement for unification or national integration at the government level. Accordingly, this part will compare nationalism, which is the biggest basis for nation-building in South Korea and North Korea, represented by One People's Principles and *Juche* ideology which made national unification fundamentally impossible.

An important characteristic of Korean nationalism is that it started as a 'Resistance nationalism' and progressed to an ideology of mobilization of ruling power. In other words, it started with resistance nationalism as an opposition to imperialism during the Japanese colonial period, but after liberation, it was mobilized as an ideology to justify the ruling power's system in the South and North, respectively. If North Korea formed a single ideology called *Juche* (*Juche means self-reliance in Korean*), it can be said that South Korea had the *Ilminjuui* under the Syngman Rhee regime and economic nationalism that advocated *national revival and modernization of the country* under the Park Chung-hee regime (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, 2024)

As mentioned earlier, *Ilminjuui* (One People's principle) is, on the surface, an ideology put forward by Syngman Rhee in 1949 to lay the foundation for democracy, eliminate internal divisions, and establish an anti-communist system (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, 2024). The meaning is to break down the division caused by 'class' and to spread an ideology that fits the characteristics of our people as a single race. The ideology of *Ilminjuui* was activated

and worked by organizing various organizations as an anti-communist ideology, but it was only used as an element to justify the existing Syngman Rhee regime and was a guiding ideology that did not encompass democracy/pluralism and liberalism specified in the Constitution, so it collapsed completely through 4.19 revolution.

In addition, it's also important to look at the context and background in which North Korea's "Juche ideology" emerged. Externally, after Stalin's death in 1953, criticism of the Stalinist socialist system increased along with a movement to downgrade Stalin in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist bloc, leading to a strong wave of revisionism. It was a time when political opponents' challenges to Kim Il-sung were boiling over internally, including responsibility for the failure of the Korean War, cult of personality, and economic development strategy. (Suh, Jae-jean, 2015, p. 18).

Socialism, which emphasizes class instead of nation, took a critical stance by officially defining nationalism as a bourgeois ideology. However, socialism also actively utilizes nationalism, and North Korea's Juche ideology is a representative example. Moreover, North Korea's Juche ideology could not be free from the influence of fascism in the first half of the 20th century in that it emphasized an orderly mobilization system that did not tolerate individuality, lineage, and organic groups. Likewise, while South Korea had 'Ilminjuui', an extreme nationalism based on anti-communism, North Korea had 'Juche ideology'.

Juche ideology functions as a guiding ideology in all areas, including Juche in ideology, independence in politics, self-reliance in the economy, and self-defense in national defense as its ideological goals (Suh, Jae-jean, 1993, p. 72). As mentioned, one of the domestic backgrounds in which the Juche ideology was formed was Kim Il-sung's search for a justification for eliminating his political opponents. Criticism of Kim Il-sung intensified, especially over responsibility for the failure of the Korean War. In addition, following the trend of criticizing the personality cult in the Soviet Union, anti-Kim Il-Sung forces in North Korea also began criticizing Kim Il-Sung's personality cult. Kim Il-sung emphasized the establishment of Juche in the process of eliminating his opponents, and through this, he tried to rationalize his actions of eliminating political opponents. He first used the word 'Juche' on December 28, 1955, in a speech criticizing many of his political opponents and forcing them into exile and expulsion. Then the Soviet Union and China criticized this and began to intervene in North Korea's internal affairs. With this as an opportunity, Kim Il-sung decided to achieve 'independence' from the Soviet Union and China, and argued that the establishment of Juche was necessary, saying that his political opponents were steeped in dogmatism, formalism, sectarianism, and bureaucracy, making the revolutionary task difficult (Suh, Jae-

jean, 1993, p. 82). Kim Il-sung used Juche intending to sever relations with the Soviet Union and take an independent path to avoid being swept away by the wave of change taking place in the socialist world in the late 1950s. Juche ideology, which was formed to protect the regime by blocking the influence of the reforms of the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern European socialism, gradually developed into a ruling ideology for social integration, idolatry of Kim Il-sung, and effort mobilization as it overcame the regime crisis, and further developed into a 'whole society' and developed into the 'Juche ideology'.

From this perspective, Juche ideology and Ilminjuui can be seen as typical examples of regime ideology rather than an ideological system faithful to the universal interests of the nation and ethnicity (Suh, Jae-jean, 1993, p. 86).

The characteristic commonalities of the two ideologies can be summarized as follows:

1) It has ideological characteristics of 'Disconnection and Blocking'.

Nationalism was utilized to provide 'legitimacy', which was the biggest task of each regime. To solve the challenges faced externally, 'Us' and 'The people' were emphasized. While South Korea demonized North Korea, North Korea declared a break with other communist countries, completely blocking and cutting off pluralistic political forces or political forces opposing the regime.

2) It can be said to be an extreme form of nationalism.

Things for national integration and development can take various forms. It can be expressed as a liberal stance, a socialist stance, or a centrist stance, but the two regimes failed to achieve pluralistic political development while accepting the nationalism set by authoritarian leaders. This can be evaluated as the prototype of nationalism, an extreme form of nationalism, and fascism.

Also, the biggest difference between South Korea and North Korea can be described as follows:

1) North Korea attempted to cut itself off from the outside world.

Since North Korea was wary of Chinese and Soviet reformists from the early days of developing Juche ideology, it later opened the way for the development of North Korean-style socialism through Juche ideology. 'Our style of socialism' can be interpreted as a new form of extreme nationalism that further clarifies the essence of Juche ideology and the meaning of North Korea's independent path to maintain power by cutting off from the outside world amidst the crisis of the entire socialist world such as the 1950s.

Through the process of comparing the extreme nationalism of North Korea and South Korea, it can be concluded that the problem of division has penetrated deeper ideologically than expected and that it is an inherent factor that makes pluralistic politics impossible beyond the simple ideological confrontation between the two regimes. It can also be evaluated as a form of extreme nationalism that blocked the development of both North and South Korea's politics. This had a huge impact on the nation-building process of the two regimes, and in particular, South Korea's First Republic actively adopted the ideology and attempted to build a nation. Therefore, from the time of the First Republic, that is, from the point of adoption of this ideology, instead of a 'national' identity, South and North Korea were no longer the same 'ethnic', but each had a 'national' identity.

Chapter 3 demonstrated the collapse of the centrist and leftist forces that sought an independent state through the number of seats in the ruling party in South Korea. To elaborate, this paper described how the conservative forces, which had been steadily engaged in nation-building in South Korea since the American military regime, strengthened their national identity and ideology of anti-communist unified nationalism before and after the Korean War. I also compared the United States, which has a strong two-party system like South Korea, with South Korea to show why it does not have socialism and drew a common thread of ruthless suppression of the left. I also showed that the origins of this conservative cartel still have a strong influence on contemporary Korean politics through the "Liberal Democracy/National Foundation Day Debate," which served as a state ideology that reinforced the incomplete legitimacy of the First Republic's relationship with North Korea and its half-hearted nation-state construction. In this process, it explained how alternative parties and opponents of the First Republic regime were arbitrarily or unilaterally excluded from the political space, and how right-wing and conservative parties naturally came to play a leading role in the First Republic.

This was possible because the conservative forces of the First Republic, having secured their legitimacy, created a strong nationalist ideology of *ilminjuui* as a form of strengthening national identity. This ideology was used to differentiate the country from North Korea, but it turned out that it was not a nationalism that could contribute to the development of democracy, but rather an extreme nationalism that legitimized the regime.

CHAPTER IV. 1948-1960 NATION BUILDING STRATEGY

4.1. Analysis of the nation-building strategy of the First Republic government

Korean War from the perspective of realism. Since the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948, “World peace” has been regarded as a fundamental principle of South Korea’s foreign policy and one of its national identities. As stated in a press conference on February 4th, 1949, before the Korean War, President Rhee emphasized that peaceful unification should be pursued rather than through war. However, when North and South Korea were divided and the Cold War began, he declares that to achieve permanent peace, it was necessary to conclude a mutual security treaty with the United States and the ‘Pacific Alliance’ in the Asia-Pacific region (Choi, Youngho, 1999). After the Korean War, he changed his attitude saying that not only should South Korea form a collective security system with anti-communist Asian countries, but also switch to a policy of unification by force against North Korea. As 53 states of UN members decided to support South Korea in the wake of the Korean War, the Rhee administration’s peace plan through collective security became even more solidified. President Rhee’s realistic peace perspective was widely shared among the major politicians and elites of the time. In South Korean society in the 1950s after the end of the Korean War, as advocated by President Rhee’s regime, there was a realist peace discourse, that is, the strengthening of military power in response to the threat of communism, the signing of the US alliance externally, and the establishment of a collective security system in the Asian region. It can be said that the realistic peace discourse, which calls for forming a group to respond to North Korea was dominant.

The Korean War was an all-out conflict on the Korean Peninsula between the United States’ will to build an anti-communist bastion after World War II and the Soviet Union's will to build a communist bloc. Therefore, the Korean Peninsula became the center of the post-war Cold War and continues to exist as the world’s only division country. The conflict on the Korean Peninsula went hand in hand with the establishment of the Cold War at the global level. In 1947, the Truman Doctrine came out and the Marshall Plan began. As the Cold War began in earnest, this harmed the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and the Soviet Union's nuclear tests increased the need for the United States to pursue a ‘firm policy’ in Asia (Cumings, B. 2023, p. 82). This is why the U.S. government set the goal of ‘containing communist forces and shrinking them in all feasible areas’ in Asia, including Korea. This decision was a preview of the choices the United States would make in the Korean War.

South Korea's liberal democracy and North Korea's democracy prioritize people's welfare each set individuals and groups as the goals that democracy should pursue. After the Korean War, South Korea sought economic stability based on aid from the United States, while North Korea sought to achieve independent growth by distancing itself from the Soviet Union. As a result, pro-American culture spread in South Korea, and pro-American intellectuals in South Korea and the working class in North Korea formed an elite group.

Perceiving Korea as a vital Cold War battleground, U.S. officials prioritized military and financial assistance to the country. During the fifteen years after the Korean War, South Korea frequently topped the list of U.S. aid recipients. Kennedy-era policy documents referred to South Korea as one of the "big five" countries with Pakistan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Turkey-that received both military and economic support. In 1960 alone the United States dispensed to South Korea \$380 million more than it provided any of the other big five and 7.6 percent of the total U.S. foreign aid budget. Private philanthropic groups, such as the Asia Foundation and the American Korean Foundation, that were active in the country supplemented official largesse with millions of dollars to support social and cultural programs (Brazinsky, G. A. 2009, p. 20).

Throughout this period, U.S. officials provided crucial political support for the conservative nationalist regime despite their indifference to development and democracy. They did so primarily because they regarded dictatorship as the only figure capable of blocking the influence of the Korean left. The United States inadvertently helped deepen Rhee's authoritarianism by providing his regime with massive military and economic aid that he could manipulate to reward allies and punish adversaries.

In this way, South Korea selected the United States as a strategic ally and carried out various projects with support for right-wing values, conservative values, and anti-communism, and the subjects producing history textbooks also centered on these historical schools. Therefore, it has become impossible for Korea to lay the foundation for normal growth by weakening nationalism such as anti-communism and statism, which are priorities over democratic values. In particular, when examined from an international political perspective, it can be concluded that the main policy focus of foreign powers regarding the division and war of the Korean Peninsula was to expand and maintain their interests in the Korean Peninsula while blocking other countries' domination of the Korean Peninsula. Because the Korean Peninsula is geopolitically located at a strategic point for powerful countries, neighboring powers pursued a policy of passive intervention to prevent the Korean Peninsula from being incorporated into the opposing camp's sphere of influence, under the recognition that active intervention with

the concept of sole control of the Korean Peninsula would be impossible. In international relations, a choice must be made at the crossroads of whether to create conditions for integration and value pursuit. Looking at the policies and strategies of foreign powers that led to the division of the Korean Peninsula and the war, they generally considered meeting their own “national interests” as a priority consideration.

Furthermore, it was established that this realist perspective has been the fundamental policy stance of the Republic of Korea from 1948 to the present. For South Korea, which sought peace through shared security views with the United States, this path-dependence-based peace policy has created a challenging political environment in which it has been difficult to promote inter-Korean relations through discourse and conclude a peace agreement without interference from other powers. The legitimate politicians who could devise South Korea’s national strategy within the system of Congress were, by necessity, conservative forces who were approved by the United States and who did not oppose the First Republic government. When a small number of alternative forces attempted to challenge the government's stance, they were immediately excluded from the process, and the First Republic was strategically controlled so that only conservative forces, or conservative cartels, could survive within the system.

4.2. Nation-building process and evaluation of the First Republic

Before examining the nation-building process and evaluation of the First Republic, this section comprehensively explains how the First Republic, which was established by receiving ample support from the United States and eliminating political opponents, established itself as a nation, and the citizens’ backlash through revolution. This part will discuss what elements were lacking in the founding process and why they failed, how the First Republic violated the largest democratic electoral system, what factors strengthened support for the regime, and, crucially, the regime's support for the April 19 Revolution and how it collapsed.

Implementation of a modern electoral system and constitution drafting. On August 15, 1945, the Republic of Korea was liberated from Japanese imperialism, and on August 15, 1948, the government of the Republic of Korea was officially proclaimed internationally. The Republic of Korea was the first democratic republic in history to be established on its own territory by its own people. From this time until 2024, the constitution has been amended nine times, and it can be said that South Korea is currently living in the “1987 system” or the ninth constitutional system (SBS, 2016). While there are no agreed-upon criteria for categorizing

republics, many agree that the point at which the governance structure changes is the point at which the constitution is amended to change from a presidential system to a parliamentary cabinet system or to change the way the president is elected.

A series of political events, such as the aforementioned liberation and the enactment of the 1948 Constitution, provided the opportunity to establish nation-building. The South Korean constitution was not the work of a small elite, nor was it the work of a small group of lawyers, and as a result, the Constitutional Law stipulated equality, freedom, justice, human rights, peace, solidarity, security, and happiness as important constitutional values (Kim, Su-Yong, 2018, p. 36). The Constitution of Korea was a liberal democracy in politics and a mixed economy, but it also reflected the line of centrists who supported socialism. As evidence of this, Article 85 of the Constitution provides for the nationalization of important underground resources and fisheries resources, Article 86 provides for the distribution of farmland to farmers, and Article 87 provides for state ownership or public ownership of public enterprises such as transportation, communication, and finance, and state control of foreign trade. In other words, the Constitution was an economically progressive constitution that prioritized the realization of economic and social justice, state control of the economy, the right of workers to share in the profits, and state protection of the extremely poor (Lee, Jung Bock, 1996, p. 12).

Crisis of democracy. Syngman Rhee, who represents the leadership of the ‘transcendent reigning type’, was a strong defender of anti-communism and played a certain role in the introduction of the parliamentary system, but it is pointed out that his practical efforts related to the institutionalization of parliamentary politics cannot be evaluated favorably (Lee, Takesun, 2018, p. 161).

In 1948, under the supervision of the United Nations, for the first time in history, elections were introduced as the basic system for forming public power. South Korea’s early election system was manipulated, challenged, and even stopped by political forces. In this way, elections are accepted by the public as the ultimate mechanism that secures the legitimacy of public power. In a duration of 12 years from 1948 to 1960, the so-called First Republic corresponds to the initial stage of the process of institutionalizing elections (Hwang, Su-Ik, 1996, p. 81).

This period contains the history of the failure of the electoral system in that elections were introduced as a basic system for organizing public power, were manipulated by those in

power and the regime collapsed due to public resistance to election fraud. The election system and election process under the First Republic were completely violated to ensure President Syngman Rhee's long-term rule. The electoral system of the First Republic changed through two constitutional amendments, two amendments to the National Assembly Election Act, and four amendments to the Local Autonomy Election Act. Syngman Rhee and the Liberal Party continued their power by revising constitutional laws to their advantage whenever the opposition party's support grew and showed signs of posing a serious challenge, thereby achieving the goal of extending political power. In the first presidential election held under the Constitution, Syngman Rhee was elected as the first president with overwhelming support, receiving 180 votes by secret ballot from 196 members of the National Assembly. However, since it was a method in which members of the Constitutional Assembly arbitrarily wrote down the names of candidates without receiving separate candidate registration, there were aspects of the election that were carried out regardless of the wishes of the individuals, such as Kim Gu, who declared that he would not participate in the election. Among them, the third presidential election in 1956 was an event that marked a major milestone in the nation-building of the Republic of Korea. After the ruling party suffered a crushing defeat in the second National Assembly election in 1950, President Syngman Rhee's control of the National Assembly became greatly unstable, so he illegally amended the Constitution and introduced direct voting. In the 3rd presidential election in 1956, Rhee Syngman registered as the Liberal Party's nominee, Shin Ik-hee as the Democratic Party's nominee, and Cho Bong-am as the Progressive Party's nominee, and the 3rd presidential election was held in May. *The third presidential election in 1956 can be said to be an event that marked a major milestone in the nation-building of the Republic of Korea.* Syngman Rhee received 5,046,437 votes and Cho Bong-am received 2,163,808 votes. Syngman Rhee was elected again, but the vote gap with Cho Bong-am was not large, and in the vice-presidential election, Syngman Rhee's running mate was not elected, receiving 3,805,502 votes, and the Democratic Party's Jang Myeon received 4,012,654 votes. After the Korean War, he could not escape poverty and stagnation, and the corrupt and authoritarian regime led to a decline in public support for Syngman Rhee, in addition, he was already an old politician, over 80 years old (Yung Mung Kim 1991: 104). After the third presidential election, Syngman Rhee felt huge political pressure and had no choice but to maintain power through continuous coercive measures, such as the Progressive Party incident and the New Security Act scandal. The electoral system, which was introduced in the absence of proper democracy and political public consciousness in terms of political culture and socio-economic conditions, left behind a history of miserable

failure under the First Republic (1948-1960). Since then, the electoral system has been reformed, people's awareness of political participation through elections has been raised, and political consciousness as citizens mature enough to protest election fraud has been heightened. In the presidential/vice-presidential election held on March 15, 1960, the Syngman Rhee regime engaged in massive election fraud to extend its rule. Fraudulent practices such as stuffing ballot boxes with as much as 40 percent of the ruling party's votes, using three-man or 5-man open voting, switching ballot boxes, and expelling opposition observers were used to prolong the Liberal Party's rule. As a result, the results were completely falsified, and in one precinct in Daegu, a traditionally strong opposition area, the interim tally showed a shocking result of “5,000 votes for the Liberal Party and 32 votes for the Democratic Party” (Lee, Jun-sik, 2016, p. 246). In response, public dissatisfaction with the blatantly illegal and fraudulent election exploded everywhere, and the student resistance movement that ignited in Daegu quickly spread to other regions. The violation of the Constitution committed to ensuring Syngman Rhee’s long-term rule reached its peak in the 3rd presidential election, and Syngman Rhee intended to continue his power until the 4th president. On April 19, 1960, the revolution that broke out against the rigged elections that occurred nationwide finally brought the end of the First Republic to an end. The First Republic of the Syngman Rhee regime, which was able to remain in power for a long time through a formal election system, reinterpreted and trampled the constitution according to the regime to the extent that it could not be considered a democratic country. Since then, the electoral system has been reformed, people's awareness of political participation through elections has been raised, and political consciousness as citizens mature enough to protest election fraud has been heightened. Table 5 is an archive of slogans from the April 19 Revolution, which was the most decisive event in the collapse of the First Republic.

Table 5. Slogan of April Revolution

Let's go north, come south	Give us the freedom of the academy
Let's oust the democratic rebels	The 3.15 election fraud is illegal and invalid
Let’s hold another presidential election	Overthrow dictatorship, guarantee freedom of academies
Let’s defend democracy	The freedom I found with blood, are you going to take it away with a gun or a sword?

Source : Open archives, Korea Democracy Foundation (<https://archives.kdemo.or.kr/contents/view/224>)

The constitution was enacted but not legal and fair, education was universal but biased, and nationalism was misused. If the level of political consciousness of citizens had not increased, if there had been no criticism of dictatorship and a correct understanding of the democratic system, the ostensibly legal government of the First Republic would not have collapsed.

Heuristic Shortcut Theory and Syngman Rhee regime. In the context of Korea's anti-communist and authoritarian regimes, as well as from a perspective based on path dependence, heuristic shortcut theory can be understood by examining the psychological mechanisms and cognitive biases that facilitate the formation and maintenance of these regimes. The ideological and institutional practices that the First Republic entrenched can also be explained in terms of heuristic shortcuts.

Heuristic shortcuts, or cognitive heuristics, are mental processes that allow individuals to make quick judgments and decisions based on limited information and cognitive effort. These shortcuts often rely on previous experiences, social cues, or simplified mental models to guide decision-making. They help reduce cognitive load and make decisions efficiently, but they can also lead to biases and errors. Decision-makers could simply mention analogies ex-post to justify their actions and convince the public that their policies are well founded. From this perspective, analogies may tell us more about the decision-makers' rhetorical strategies than about their cognitive processes. Decision-makers may draw analogies from history that correspond to their preferences, rather than identifying their preferences as a function of analogies (Morin, J. F., & Paquin, J. 2018, p. 81).

This heuristic refers to the tendency to judge the likelihood of an event based on the ease with which examples or instances can be suggested. In Korea, the memories of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the ongoing tensions with North Korea have created an "availability" of the communist threat in people's minds. This can make people more susceptible to anti-communist rhetoric and policies, as they appear more relevant and imminent. The anti-communism that emerged during the First Republic is sometimes referred to as the "Red Complex" in modern society. This is a political ideology that has divided the Republic of Korea into left and right from August 15, 1945, when the Japanese forced colonialism ended, to the present. The Red Complex began with the US military government and the First Republic and has since infiltrated every aspect of Korean society, dividing the people into left and right. The Red Complex has been employed primarily by conservative political parties and politicians as a strategy to secure electoral support. To suppress opposition to the regime, the anti-communist law and the National Security Act were used, and the people's resistance

against the dictatorship, including the democratization movement and the labor movement, were manipulated into communist activities, resulting in countless sacrifices. (JoongdoIlbo, 2023).

The representativeness heuristic involves making judgments based on how closely something resembles a prototype or a stereotypical representation. Authoritarian regimes often rely on this heuristic by presenting themselves as strong leaders, protectors of national security, and proponents of stability. By appealing to the representativeness heuristic, they tap into people's desire for safety and certainty, leading them to support authoritarian measures as the means to achieve these goals. Additionally, confirmation bias relates to the tendency to search for, interpret, or recall information in a way that confirms preexisting beliefs or expectations. In Korea, anti-communist propaganda and extensive censorship employed by authoritarian regimes can shape the information people are exposed to. This reinforces their existing bias against communism and consolidates support for the regime.

These heuristic shortcuts and biases can contribute to the consolidation of anti-communist sentiments and the support for authoritarian regimes in Korea. By appealing to people's cognitively efficient decision-making mechanisms and manipulating information, these regimes can bolster their legitimacy and maintain control.

In this way, to understand why the Korean War broke out, why Korea was caught up in the whirlpool of the international situation, and what nation-building process was necessary for Korea to become a democratic country, education for not only a small number of elites but also citizens was desperately needed. However, Syngman Rhee's regime was understood as only a tool to maintain the system by cleverly using national education to stimulate fear in the immediate vicinity.

Recognizing, critiquing, and evaluating these cognitive biases is important to promote a more nuanced understanding of the potential impact of political ideologies on society, but simply because North Korea and communism are the cause of the Korean War, and the only way to counter this threat is through division and eradication of communism. The elite put a lot of effort into simplifying things by using heuristic shortcuts.

As can be seen from President Syngman Rhee's 1948 presidential speech entitled 'Establishment of the Government of the Republic of Korea and Our Resolution', he was a 'communist'/'the United States, an ally of freedom'/'loyalty to the government', etc., and democracy and freedom that cannot be experienced under communism.

“Today, as the U.S. military government ends and the Korean government begins, it is necessary to renew even greater friendship between all *Americans and all Koreans...*”.

“The people have the guarantee of protecting the freedom of civil rights, but the right to disobey or overturn this government has never been granted, so if there are any insufficient people, whether they are communists or not, it must be proven that they are trying to overthrow the government as individuals or as a party. *When that happens, there will never be forgiveness, so you must be extremely careful.*”

(Source: Ministry of the Interior and Safety Presidential Archives)

The First Republic sought to further ensure friendly relations with the United States due to the Korean War and the confrontation with North Korea, and Syngman Rhee regime used the above three keywords (*America, communism, and freedom*) and rhetoric throughout his administration. The policies of the First Republic regime were put into practice. These three keywords are still unconditionally demonized or praised by ultra-conservatives in Korean society, and if opposing or progressive political parties and politicians show differing opinions on them, they bring up their past experiences attack them, and exclude them politically.

4.3. National priorities of nation-building in terms of Economy / Security and Integration tasks

Three major political spectrums contributed to South Korea's founding process. Communists, moderate left/right-wing forces, and right-wing forces fought for power in the early days of the nation's founding. The moderate forces were assassinated or failed to take power, and radicalized forces took power in the North and South. Additionally, economically, both North and South Korea implemented land reform, and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 forced them to face various political, economic, and cultural changes. They had no choice but to be influenced by the two hegemonic countries, the Soviet Union and the United States, and shared the same ethnicity, language, and culture, and resolved the three nation-building priorities and tasks for national unity/integration, whether peaceful unification or unilateral unification. It can be said that this has become a major task for North and South Korea.

Immediately after independence in 1945, there was a sharp conflict over the issue of how to establish a legitimate government on the Korean Peninsula. This suggests that the beginning of the Cold War system and Korea's nation-building are closely related. By establishing the concepts of nation-building and sovereignty, we can analyze South Korea's early nation-building. In this chapter, South Korea's nation-building is finally analyzed to see what made South Korea and North Korea so different and what led to the failure of building a single nation-state.

The problem of economic reconstruction. As mentioned in the literature review, land reform can be said to be one of the most important tasks in the early stages of national construction. It was a major pledge of all political parties prior to forming the Constitutional Assembly on May 10, 1948. There was only a difference in whether land reform was more radical or more moderate, and because most of the people were farmers, land reform was inevitable. The government of the First Republic and the ruling party supported land reform within the larger framework of capitalist development dependent on the United States and anti-communist unification, reduced the state-owned sector, and advocated industrialization centered on large private capital in which the private sector led the economy dependent on the United States. On the other hand, the moderates and the opposition party showed subtle differences in that they aimed to expand the nationalized area by nationalizing important industries, implementing strict land reform, and relying on the self-sustaining development of small and medium-sized industries while preventing the tyranny of large corporations (Shin 1997, p. 32). North Korea, which implemented land reform one step ahead of South Korea, implemented

land reform on March 5, 1946, under the principle of ‘free confiscation and free distribution.’ The first republic of government, feeling a sense of crisis, completed the land reform bill just before the Korean War. As the land reform bill was passed, education was quantitatively strengthened, this is because academic research and educational institutions were excluded from the land subject to land reform. The below table is the number of students at each school level recorded by the Korean National Statistical Office. As can be seen from these statistics, the quantitative development of education has increased significantly.

Table 6. Number of students at each level of school (1935~1960, unit: 1,000 students)

	Elementary School	Middle School	University
1935	717	34	3
1945	1,366	89	8
1952	2,369	445	33
1955	2,877	749	79
1960	3,621	820	98

(Source: Korean Statical Information Service, <https://kosis.kr/index/index.do>)

An important figure in implementing land reform in South Korea is Cho Bong-am of the Progressive Party (who was considered Syngman Rhee's biggest rival during the 3rd presidential election). He chose the method of confiscation for a fee and distribution for a fee rather than the method of gratuitous confiscation and free distribution like North Korea. Due to land reform, South Korea laid the foundation for its transformation into an industrial capitalist, and by preventing the communist revolution, economic growth as a capitalist country based on capitalism was possible.

However, in reality, it can be said that it still has limitations that cannot escape the shadow of corruption. The management and supervision of monopolies and corruption that should have accompanied land reform were neglected. The Korean War had a significant impact on the East Asian economic order, as countries on the front lines of the Cold War, such as Korea and Taiwan, were completely incorporated into American hegemony. After the war, these countries had no choice but to grow their economies under the influence of the United States, and in a situation of system competition, the United States had to strengthen their security and lead to economic growth for their own benefit. It is no exaggeration to say that new capital investments made in Korea depended solely on aid. (Kim, Woen-Sik 2021, p. 232). Although institutional changes such as land reform were made, the management of other issues such as

the distribution of U.S. aid resources, exchange rates, and trade with Japan were not left to bureaucrats but were handled directly by the president and surrounding elites, who regarded them as political issues. In this way, the Syngman Rhee regime monopolized national resources, including U.S. aid resources, and in the process of distributing them to the private sector, corruption was rampant. Through this, the regime profited and maintained power, and corporations provided an opportunity for important capital accumulation. This is why many people explain and understand the early development of Korean companies as collusion between politics and business rather than the manifestation of capitalist entrepreneurship. Through collusion between politics and business, companies gained monopolistic profits in the so-called flour milling, sugar manufacturing, and cotton textile industries. Rather than building a solid foundation for the post-war destroyed economy, which was South Korea's main nation-building system, it neglected the contradictions of capital accumulation by neglecting companies similar to today's conglomerates (Kim, Woen-Sik 2021, p. 244).

Farm households could only cover 80% of the average living expenses of urban worker households, and by 1960, the number of potential unemployed people in rural areas reached 2 million. This deepening of uneven development eventually narrowed the domestic market and prevented productivity improvements.

When a crisis occurs, what is important is how states and companies manage the crisis and present alternatives. However, the Syngman Rhee regime was unable to overcome structural contradictions, let alone carry out large-scale reforms. As the contradictions of capital accumulation erupted in the form of a crisis and the state failed to manage the crisis, people's dissatisfaction with the regime grew. This became a condition for the April 19 Revolution, leading to the collapse of the Syngman Rhee regime. The recession that continued after the 1957 crisis became an important condition for the social movement that led to the end of the regime. In this way, the economic aspect of the nation-building task of the First Republic can be said to have failed due to 1) contradictions in capital accumulation, 2) the absence of national discipline, and 3) rampant corruption, which hindered the development of the overall domestic economy.

The problem of National unity and security issues. After World War II, East Asian countries were divided into capitalist and socialist camps and engaged in a fierce ideological confrontation, which was clearly expressed in the Korean War and the Vietnam War (Kim, Sangi, 2014, p. 63). Responses to external threats required the establishment of an effective resource mobilization system for the central government, and countries forced resource

mobilization and blocked internal opposition by concentrating and strengthening government organizations, including the military, security, and intelligence agencies, and tried to minimize it (Kim, 2014). The formation of a nation-state means the creation of an independent state with sovereignty externally, but internally it also means the process of integrating residents within a certain territory under a single sovereignty. War appears as a violent and physical conflict, but it is not just a battle of physical force.

Especially at the point when the war ceased, the important thing was a battle of ideologies, and it was important to determine who had the legitimacy. In the 1960s, South Korea settled on the concept of nation-building by combining the tasks of security and national integration with ideology.

The process of understanding nation-building is important as it connects the gap between national identity and state identity, as well as the issues of nation-building and security in South Korea.

The rise of realist perception. In the early days of the founding of the First Republic, radical right-wing forces took power and North Korea also established a communist regime, which inevitably resulted in a terrible war called the Korean War. In this situation, peaceful unification through dialogue between each government was considered virtually impossible, and as the Cold War deepened, the realistic perception of security through force was accepted as a reasonable policy. The Public Order Maintenance Act, which was enacted to suppress independence activists during the Japanese colonial period, was newly enacted as the 'National Security Act' with the creation of the Constitution in 1948. The bill, which was established with the justification of hunting down socialist followers, was actually intended to suppress opposition forces. The second reason for enacting the National Security Act was the Truman Doctrine, which signaled the start of the Cold War. In March 1947, U.S. President Truman announced the doctrine to 'block the expansion of communism.' Accordingly, since there was a large influx of socialists after liberation, the country could not become an ally of the United States unless it enacted the National Security Act and punished left-wing forces. Therefore, it can be assessed that there were external factors that forced the socialist movement, including the center-left, to decline in South Korea during the liberation period. In response, conservatives argue that the only nation-building strategy for the Third World, which has no basic infrastructure at all, is to achieve security and stability, which is the first of the three nation-building challenges facing the Third World, based on the examples of Israel, Singapore, and Taiwan, non-Western countries with similar conditions to Korea (Kim,

Chung-nam, 2009). There are several commonalities in the state-building of these three countries: state capacity was strengthened prior to democratization.

- Strong centralized government led by a charismatic leader
- Security was the overriding concern, which inevitably compromised democracy
- Economic development was seen as a post-security and post-democratization condition.

The author argues that, from a liberal perspective, Korea's nation-building is considered negative because it is a deviance from democracy, however, by consolidating its central power it was able to establish the foundation necessary for successful nation-building (Kim, Chung-nam, p. 123).

The realist perception of security through force has been implemented as is in the history of inter-Korean relations, and the limitations of such security discourse are also believed to be reflected in the current situation on the Korean Peninsula. After liberation, the division of South and North Korea and the Korean War was already a confrontation of international power between the two camps, and the arms race between North and South Korea for post-war unification of the North and communist unification was also a continuation of a confrontation of realist power in the name of ideology (Kim, Woen Sick, 2020: 31).

South Korea's security is very closely related to its relationship with the United States, so *the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty* should be considered carefully. This treaty was signed between Korea and the United States on October 1, 1953, came into effect on November 18, 1954, and was concluded for the purpose of mutual defense. One interesting expression is repeated in the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1953: the term 'Pacific region' is used four times in relation to the location and safety of the two countries. Instead, the term 'Asian region' was never mentioned. This was extremely unusual for Korea, which had been an Asian country in name and reality until then. After this treaty, the United States was positioning Korea as a clear 'Pacific country' rather than an 'Asian country'. Since liberation, the United States has always been stationed in Korea, and immediately after the armistice of the Korean War, it reached its peak number of 325,000 and then gradually withdrew. During the First Republic, the number was 325,000 in 1953, 223,000 in 1954, 70,000 in 1957, and 50,000 in 1959. Due to this treaty, if the United States requested a military base in Korea, Korea had no choice but to grant it, and as a result, the U.S. military base in Pyeongtaek, Korea, was established as the largest U.S. military base overseas. On the other hand, the Philippines is set to take the lead by allowing US military bases to be built within Philippine military bases. Japan also does not stipulate that the deployment of U.S. forces is a right of the

United States. In other words, Korea relied on and sought to cooperate with the United States for more security than other countries.

Paradoxically, it can be said that the focus on security by using the United States to keep North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union in check relatively neglected the nation-building tasks of eliminating pro-Japanese factions and national unity that the people of that era wanted. The Special Investigation Committee of Antinational Activists is an organization aimed at eradicating pro-Japanese groups promoted at the National Assembly level immediately after the establishment of the government of the Republic of Korea. One of the biggest reasons why South Korea's nation-building did not proceed effectively and democratically after liberation and was ruled by dictatorial and corrupt forces for a long time was the pro-Japanese movement by President Syngman Rhee and the pro-Japanese faction surrounding him on June 6, 1949, and disbanding the Special Investigation Committee of Antinational Activists. On September 22, 1948, the Constitutional Assembly promulgated the Anti-National Activities Punishment Act to punish pro-Japanese figures who collaborated with Japan and committed treasonous acts against the nation during the period of national sovereignty invasion. Accordingly, a special committee against the people was formed, and the National Assembly elected a former independence activist as chairman and established several organizations. However, the negligence of the US military government in ignoring the fact that there were many existing pro-Japanese officials in the government organization that had to be quickly formed to fight the communist camp was clearly revealed. As the Anti-National Special Act functioned properly and pro-Japanese forces were arrested one by one, President Syngman Rhee was driven into a political crisis as his supporters, especially police officers of the pro-Japanese police, were arrested. So, the pro-Japanese forces formed an organization and flocked to the headquarters of the investigation Committee of Antinational Activists and staged a protest to disband the Anti-People Special Committee, claiming that it was a group instigated by the Communist Party. In this way, the activities virtually collapsed within six months of its inauguration, and those who were pro-Japanese remained in high-ranking officials and were not punished or their property wasn't confiscated. Clearing up the past was accomplished in all countries liberated after World War II, but only the Republic of Korea was frustrated. This can be interpreted as abandoning the desire from below to liquidate the past, that is, the priority task of national integration (Lee, Gang-soo, 2004, p. 182).

Although the First Republic's nation-building tasks of economy, security, and integration were clear, they can be evaluated as incomplete policies that ultimately triggered the April 19

Revolution. As mentioned above, the economy benefited only a few, security weakened the concept of sovereignty, and integration left the nation's long-standing task unfinished. This distrust and dissatisfaction with the First Republic led to the April 19 Revolution.

4.4. The First Republic collapsed due to the 4.19 Revolution.

In the early days of the First Republic, various reforms were set as nation-building, and many things were implemented, but although their positive effects were clear, after the Korean War, almost everything was reset and faced a tragedy. Even in waging the Korean War, the United States and the Soviet Union were not interested in the liberation of divided ethnics. The post-war occupation policies of these two imperialist powers were focused on redistributing spheres of influence between themselves. Even before the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union began negotiations to adjust spheres of influence to divide Europe and Asia, and quickly sent their own troops to places where agreement was difficult to plant flags. Both the United States and the Soviet Union tried to transplant their systems to occupied territories and establish regimes that were friendly to their countries. Both the United States and the Soviet Union thoroughly suppressed the 'revolutionary movement from below' in the occupied territories. South Korea also implemented land reform in response to the Soviet Union, but the hyperinflation it faced after the Korean War caused the value of the rent securities it had issued to plummet, and the division of the nation made the path to national integration more difficult. With North Korea defining each other as enemies, the 38th parallel became more solidified, and a security logic based on realism was implemented as the front line of the Cold War. Accordingly, the friendly relations with the United States, anti-communism, and nation-first principles that the First Republic had tried to solidify were overturned by the revolution on April 19, 1960, without gaining the sympathy of citizens. The First Republic, which was overthrown with the participation of all walks of life, came to an end with Syngman Rhee's resignation, and through this incident, people were able to learn about democracy and internalize what it means to be a mature citizen. After this, awareness of protecting civil rights and understanding of sovereignty increased and new power was created. It can be said that the elements of democratic citizen participation, people's sense of sovereignty, and active political participation, which were overlooked in the nation-building of the First Republic, made a difference.

4.5. Limitations and evaluation of South Korea's nation-building

Leaders of the First Republic argue that maintaining a military alliance with the United States, a superpower, is an inevitable choice because South Korea cannot defend itself against security threats from North Korea and China (Kim Yoon-jong, 2017). The decision to form a military alliance with the United States during the First Republic, when the country lacked independent security capabilities, was a logical one. However, the case of Austria, a country that did the exact opposite of these claims, provides a more rounded assessment of the First Republic. Instead of military alliances, Austria employed another strategy: neutralization.

The Soviet Union dealt with Austria in terms of geopolitical military strategy, and because of its recognition of Austria as a buffer zone against NATO. Stalin's main interest in Austria was in an economic scrapping plan within the Soviet-occupied territories (Günter Bischof 1999, p. 150). The Soviet Union, which determined that it could economically defeat it through the Eastern bloc, was able to use a relatively relaxed strategy towards Austria. But the crucial factor was that the Communist Party in Austria was so weak that the Soviet Union could not easily make Austria into a manageable satellite country like Bulgaria or Romania. This limited the strategic choice of external forces that occurred when the Soviet Union in Austria could not set up a more aggressive strategy, that is when the link between internal and external forces was weak. Look at Austria in this regard: The election of 25 November 1945 was a blow to the Communist Party and received more than 5% of the vote. The coalition of Christian Democrats (ÖVP) and Social Democrats (SPÖ), who support 90% of the vote, took over the Cabinet and granted Christian Democrat Julius Raab.

Additionally, when the Second Austrian Republic was born after World War II, the country was desperate to prevent a recurrence of the deep political divisions caused by the bloodshed of 1934. Austria, having learned the historical lesson that confrontation between the left and right extremes only leads to bloodshed, chose a coalition government among centralized parties after World War II, and in this process, the extreme left and right lost influence.

During the Cold War, relatively small countries in internationally disputed areas were pressured to choose between military alliance and neutralization. Korea and Vietnam chose an alliance strategy and immediately experienced the tragedy of war. Austria, on the other hand, took the path of neutralization, avoided national division, and prospered in peace.

In contrast, the Korean peninsula was only able to experience democracy and people's sovereignty after the pain of division and unjust massacres passed, after the collapse of the First Republic in 1960. At that time, there were many extremist political forces in South Korea, and their selective strategy following the intervention of foreign powers, including the

United States and the Soviet Union, led to the exclusion of moderate political forces. In conclusion, a comprehensive assessment of the First Republic can be defined by the three main task factors.

- 1) Economy – Considering that most of the people at the time were farmers, land reform was a suitable economic policy for the majority. However, when it came to ‘restoration’ the economy after the Korean War, the First Republic committed a distributional error.

This caused social problems such as recession of the domestic market, inequality, and unbalanced development. For this reason, while Taiwan has a solid economic structure of small and medium-sized enterprises, Korea has reached a pyramid economic structure dominated by conglomerates. When hyperinflation occurred like this, the country should have actively acted and implemented policies to rebuild the economy.

- 2) Integration – Among the more than 200 political parties immediately after liberation, the extreme right-wing, which was firmly established as the dominant force in South Korea, was a factor that hindered national and political integration. As can be seen from the Austrian case, the importance of centrist politics should not be overlooked in order to prevent radicalized political forces. South Korea should avoid extreme right-wing politics and achieve mature integration in the form of coalition politics.

- 3) Security – In the international politics of the Cold War, choosing a neutral country process like Austria was never an easy choice. However, as mentioned earlier, it can be cautiously assessed that if citizens' political consciousness had been heightened and their identity as a sovereign nation had been sufficiently educated, the tragedy of national division lasting more than 70 years would not have occurred. North-South relations, which were so intense in the First Republic, have not only remained unresolved and deepened into a matter of national integration, but have also been elevated to a matter of global integration, threatening security around the world.

CONCLUSION

Upon liberation period in 1945, the First Republic of Korea, faced with the great challenge of building a modern nation, quickly established various institutions. This period can be characterized as the beginning of modern Korean politics and the origin that has most influenced the current political specificity of South Korea.

This study analyzed the impact of the nature of Korean nationalism on state formation from a political perspective and explained the reasons for the low exercise of political rights by the people and the lack of acceptance of pluralistic values. On the other hand, by comparing and analyzing the phenomenon of “extreme nationalism” that emerged during the same period in North Korea, we explained the process and provided evidence of why nationalism, which was utilized as an ideology of separation and blocking, fundamentally prevented the integration of the Korean Peninsula. In addition, we comprehensively explained what nation-building focused on in terms of economy, security, and integration, and the limitations and evaluation of the founding of the Republic of Korea. A specific evaluation of nation-building was also presented, along with a short alternative. For South Korea, which experienced Japanese imperialism, building a unified nation based on nationalism has been a long-standing nation-building challenge; therefore, the country's leaders, who made it a top priority, were bound to become victims of the harsh international situation known as “Cold War politics.” Thus, before South Korea could fully understand the “nation” as a political entity and acquire the necessary capabilities for an institutionally democratic modern state, the country was faced with the worst consequences of the Cold War: the outbreak of the Korean War. The US military government seems to have lacked a sufficient understanding of the Korean peninsula, failing to understand that Korea had a unique ethnic problem that the great powers did not have. Therefore, rather than nation-building according to the interests of the South, it was forced to proceed with nation-building according to the interests of the US as a frontline country in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. As a result, a US-sponsored dictator came to power in the name of national security, which led to the spread of ‘extreme nationalism’ to unite the people.

During the First Republic, Syngman Rhee's regime consolidated its political power by establishing a national ideology of “unitary nationalism” while trampling on the legitimacy of the constitution and electoral system without any understanding of democracy. Coercive politics stifled other political parties and the diversity of liberal democracy and prevented a proper understanding of the modern civil state as a political union. The history of the First

Republic's electoral system shows that it was internally unconstitutional and lacked an understanding of sovereignty - that all sovereignty comes from the people - at all levels. Anti-communism was used to slyly distort empirical facts and frame the population in terms of North Korea and espionage, as seen in Syngman Rhee's economic, security, and reconstruction-related propaganda slogans and responses to opposition candidates, especially during the third presidential election. These methods were used to create fear and eliminate opposition leaders. Citizens with little information about political issues or candidates used empirical methods from the Korean War to fabricate political scandals. It wasn't until 2011 that the Supreme Court reexamined the case and acquitted the government.

At the time, the United States was the only entity that could stop the “judicial killings” in the South. The U.S. Embassy in Seoul stated that “the Syngman Rhee government's characterization of peaceful reunification as a charge of overthrowing the government shows its weakness,” and when Cho Bong-am was sentenced to death, the U.S. ambassador personally visited Rhee, worried that “it would deal a significant blow to the political progress that the United States has made in Korea.”

However, while the United States was concerned about the regression of democracy in South Korea, they did not actively prevent it - they did not want the Cold War system to falter, because they needed the shield of the Cold War. They prioritized U.S. strategic interests over South Korea's democratization and political maturity. Syngman Rhee consistently adhered to his plan for the military reunification of North Korea. Syngman Rhee, who called for an “immediate showdown with China” and openly expressed his hostility to the communists, was a good partner for the United States.

The ideology of the Progressive Party at the time was “social democracy,” and it called for a welfare state, a social security system, improved living conditions for all people, equality of distribution, rapid economic growth, peaceful reunification, and the implementation of true democracy (Jung, Seung-hyun, 2013, p. 121). In his opening speech, Cho Bong-am made it clear that what the Progressive Party was aiming for was “a progressive line of social reform that rejects both communism and capitalism.” Although he was not a communist or had close ties to the Soviet Union, he was eventually repressed by Syngman Rhee's regime because he adopted the taboo theory of peaceful reunification as a policy and insisted on holding general elections in North and South Korea under the supervision of the United Nations.

Nation-building based on security/economy/reconstruction often has a similar agenda. While the ruling and opposition parties are ostensibly pushing for economic recovery and democracy after the Korean War, their detailed strategies vary depending on their stance on the nation,

unification, and hegemonic state. It is understandable that South Korea has experienced many setbacks in its efforts to establish an ideal modern state that is sovereign and state-like, but where the people are the masters.

The nation-building established by the leaders was not a politics for the people, who had been exploited by imperialism since before the liberation in 1945, but an imperfect republic that focused on imitating and following a system of strategic alliances that used nationalism bordering on nationalism to create many loopholes in nation-building. This thesis hypothesizes that the First Republic is the origin of Korea's conservative two-party cartel, and examines the undemocratic constitutional amendments, nationalistic behavior, the imposition of a national ideology that undermines pluralistic values, and the distribution of political parties in the First Republic to prove that the First Republic excluded leaders of diverse ideologies from participating in the First Republic. It proves that the anti-communist values established at this time, and the ideological elements of transforming ethnic identity into national identity, are still present in contemporary Korean politics through the liberal democracy debate and the National Foundation Day debate.

Despite its international reputation as a 22nd-ranked democracy and 13th-ranked GDP in 2024, South Korea's domestic policy remains tense with North Korea and on the opposite side of the conflict between China and the United States in what can be described as the New Cold War.

As a victim of the Cold War system during its nation-building process, ethnic conflicts and complex relationships with great powers are essential to understanding South Korea's political dynamics and foreign policy. This study will help neighboring countries and international stakeholders understand South Korea's unique characteristics and provide a basis for consultations and discussions to promote peaceful diplomacy and manage potential conflicts and tensions.

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Nation-building in the First Republic of Korea (1948-1960) : The origins of the conservative cartel in Korean politics

Abstract

This paper investigates the historical origins of the conservative two-party cartel in South Korea. The current period of transition in Korean society is characterized by the emergence of new political and contemporary issues, including those pertaining to labor, welfare, and inequality. However, there is a lack of a solid political base for discussing new political parties and social issues. This paper begins by examining the reasons why, despite the self-evident need to respect pluralistic values and diverse identities in a democracy, a political party representing these values has yet to emerge. The main hypothesis is that the nation-building of the First Republic, which spanned from 1948 to 1960, created an ideological and political environment that facilitated the establishment of the conservative two-party system.

Accordingly, this paper conducts a content analysis focusing on ‘nationalism’ and ‘nation-building’ in the First Republic, with the aim of identifying the conservative path-dependence cartel that has structurally influenced the ideology of the current South Korea.

Despite the fact that leftist forces were more popular in the South Korean political landscape after the liberation in 1945, only conservative forces were able to maintain their prominence within the legal institutional system. The consolidation of the conservative cartel formed during this period has led to the development of the current South Korean political landscape and institutional framework as an ideological factor that undermines pluralism. The nation-building policies were led by conservative parties that sought to protect their vested interests, and this entrenched cartel still has a strong influence on South Korean politics today.

Currently, severe inequality is emerging as a social problem in South Korea. However, it is still challenging for progressive parties that discuss pluralistic values, such as policies to reduce inequality and polarization, labor policies, and welfare policies, to enter the political arena and come to power. This structure of the First Republic emphasized strategic alliances over pluralistic values and focused on systematic confrontation with North Korea.

Keywords: the first republic of Korea, nation-building, nationalism, South Korea, sovereignty
