

# 2008

*h-diplo*

## H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews

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Volume IX, No. 17 (2008)

1 August 2008

**Gregg Brazinsky. *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy*.** Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. xiv, 311 pp. \$45.00, ISBN 978-0-8078-3120-5.

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URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/NationBuildingSouthKorea-Roundtable.pdf>

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**Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge**

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The Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars hosted on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007 a discussion on Gregg Brazinsky's book which included commentary by Professor William Stueck from the University of Georgia and by James Delaney, a former CIA station chief in Seoul during the 1980s. The session is available in an online video that runs for about an hour at

[http://wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.event\\_summary&event\\_id=276244](http://wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.event_summary&event_id=276244)

After Brazinsky's brief overview on his book, Stueck comments very favorably on Brazinsky's thesis and attention to U.S. engagement with Koreans from the Army to the Boy Scouts and how the book connects the 1960s with the pre-1960 period as well as the post-1980 period. Stueck does question several of Brazinsky's conclusions on the U.S. role in the success and failure of South Korean regimes and whether or not the U.S. stance reflected the popular will in South Korea. Delaney discusses several incidents in the 1980s that shed light on behind the scenes U.S. involvement with President Chun Doo Hwan and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, the KCIA.

The H-Diplo reviewers appreciate the strengths of Brazinsky's study, his willingness to ask big questions and to go against existing trends in scholarship on Korea and East Asian topics. They agree that he has covered with impressive research in Korean and U.S. sources a neglected period in the relationship of South Korea and the U.S. They also welcome his central thesis which emphasizes the interaction of Americans and Koreans in shaping the transition from autocracy to developmental autocracy to democracy by 1987 as well as his attention to the primacy of Korean agency in this process (although Americans in Korea worked to further this process). Brazinsky's study also makes a significant contribution to the current debate concerning what works best for the United States in promoting representative government, democracy, and modernization.

The reviewers do raise questions and disagreements with a number of Brazinsky's interpretations from several different perspectives and Brazinsky responds to their critiques in a sustained, engaged discussion.

- 1.) On Brazinsky's central thesis James Matray and Brad Simpson question whether the U.S. role was one of design to promote development and democracy or inadvertence as U.S. officials consistently gave priority to Cold War security concerns and economic development over insistence on significant moves to democracy. Brazinsky would not disagree on the priorities of Washington and U.S. diplomats and military leaders in Korea, but he does suggest that a wide range of Americans working in Korea provided more long term support and encouragement for democracy and that Koreans adapted the American ideas and advice to their own traditions and perspectives.

- 2.) Brazinsky is credited with thinking big in placing South Korea in the larger context of Cold War authoritarian regimes and Fareed Zakaria's concept of liberalizing autocracy: "regimes that developed the economy, preserved order, and liberalized the rights of worship and travel before surrendering power. By doing so, they inadvertently created an environment in which democracy could thrive." (4-5) In exploring why this process worked in South Korea as the military led a "developmental autocracy," Brazinsky, according to Brad Simpson challenges "several veins of scholarship on modern Korean politics, East Asian political economy and modernization" (1) Michael Robinson also notes that the movement to democratic practice in South Korea "moves back and forth in bits and starts" rather than adhering to Zakaria's model. (2) Simpson emphasizes U.S. support for a military-technocratic modernization campaign in Korea as central to U.S. policy: "I came away convinced that Brazinsky had presented a damning indictment of how American nation-building efforts helped define what democracy and stability would mean in South Korea in ways that significantly delayed its emergence and narrowed its meaning." (7) Brazinsky responds at length to these critiques.
- 3.) The reviewers welcome Brazinsky's thorough attention to the efforts of U.S. policy and Americans in Korea to encourage and assist Koreans in building institutions that would contribute to modernization of Korea and movement toward democracy. An impressive range of programs focused on the Republic of Korea's educational system, the media, civilian bureaucracy, the military, intellectuals, and youth including the introduction of Boy and Girl Scout organizations and 4-H Clubs. Michael Robinson (5-6) and Sang-Yoon Ma, however, question whether Brazinsky's successfully demonstrates that these efforts had the effects that the author suggests. Did the efforts of Americans on the ground, "who consistently tried to promote liberal and democratic values and institutions" in Korea, Sang-Yoon Ma asks, contribute to the eventual emergence of democracy in Korea when Washington and American officials in Korea supported military-backed authoritarian regimes? This reviewer and others endorse Brazinsky's emphasis on the primary of Korean agency and how Koreans adapted American ideas, advice, and training within their own traditions, culture and interests. However, they would have welcomed more analysis of how the Koreans viewed the American campaign.
- 4.) Brad Simpson also questions the nature and impact of the democracy message that Americans tried to inculcate with the different Korean groups. "The goal of such efforts was to contain and channel the nationalist and democratic impulses of South Korean youth (as well as labor, church activists and intellectuals)," Simpson suggests, "along liberal, procedural, associationalist lines, staunching their tendencies toward racialism, mass politics, anti-Americanism, popular nationalism and a more participatory democracy." Simpson views this as encouraging democratization from the "middle-up" as opposed to from the "bottom up" and that the mass protests that overthrew the Chun Doo Hwan government in 1987 came from both the middle and the bottom. (6) Brazinsky counters that the U.S. approach had the best prospects for success in the South Korean context. (9-10)

- 5.) The reviewers also disagree somewhat with Brazinsky and among themselves on the author's assessment of the different South Korean regimes. Brazinsky is not uncritical of Korean regime leaders from Syngman Rhee to Chun Doo Hwan and he does mention the American efforts to keep leaders from repressing their critics and behind the scenes efforts to encourage elections. However, Washington seemed to give priority to security concerns and economic development when it had the most influence with the Korean regimes. On the one hand, Sung-Yoon Lee questions Brazinsky's use of autocracy to describe the South Korean leadership without including the context of the North Korean leaders and other Asian regimes, writing that "A comparison of authoritarianism under Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan should take into account many factors, in addition to [the] Kwangju [massacre in 1980], such as the abuse of power by the executive branch, equality—or the lack thereof—before the repression of basic civil and political liberties over a defined period." (4) Other reviewers are more critical of the U.S., as Michael Robinson notes, "siding, however reluctantly, with autocracy to the detriment of evolving democratic institutions." (3) Sang-Yoon Ma also questions Brazinsky's treatment of the nine month Chang Myon democratic regime in 1960 which Park Chung Hee overthrew as "too weak to make political and economic progress" (4) when Park's performance during the first years wasn't very impressive.
- 6.) Since Korea is the last of the countries divided by the Cold War to still be in that state, readers might anticipate this division and its consequences having a significant impact on U.S.-ROK relations. Brazinsky does mention North Korea as a major factor influencing U.S. security concerns (26, 28, 102-103), and official concerns about North Korea moving ahead of South Korean in economic development in the late 1950s, (104) and North Korean appeals to student groups on the issue of unification. (109) However, for most of the study North Korea and the reunification issue has an "elephant in the room" presence. Matray questions the attention given to North Korea in several contexts, such as "North Korea's intensified efforts ... to destabilize the ROK" after Chang Myon took over which, Matray infers, contributed to Washington's reluctance to back Chang and other democratic leaders versus a military-backed regime. (2) Matray also suggests that reunification is more of a motivating force for U.S. policy than Brazinsky recognizes. (6-7)

### Participants:

**Gregg Brazinsky** is an Assistant Professor of History and International Affairs in the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. Brazinsky received his Ph.D. from Cornell University is a specialist on U.S.-East Asian relations during the Cold War. His work focuses on the social and cultural impact of the United States on East Asia. His articles have appeared or will appear in the *Diplomatic History* and in several edited volumes. Professor Brazinsky is now pursuing research on several other projects. One is a study of the cultural impact of the Korean War in America, Korea and China. Another is a comparative study of American nation building programs in East and Southeast Asia during

the Cold War. He serves as co-director of the George Washington University Cold War Group.

**James I. Matray** is professor of history at California State University, Chico, where his final term as department chair ended this academic year. He has published more than forty articles and book chapters on U.S.-Korean relations during and after World War II. Author of *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* and *Japan's Emergence as a Global Power*, his most recent books are *Korea Divided: The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and the Demilitarized Zone* and *East Asia and the United States: An Encyclopedia of Relations Since 1784*. During 2003 and 2004, Matray was an international columnist for the *Donga Ilbo* in South Korea. For the past three years he served on the Board of Editors for *Diplomatic History*.

**Professor Michael Robinson** earned his Ph.D. in history at the University of Washington in 1979. He taught at the University of Southern California for sixteen years after which he moved to Indiana University where he is a Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures and an adjunct Professor of History. He has written extensively on the origins and evolution of Korean nationalism. His first book, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea* focused on nationalist ideology formation during the 1920s. More recently he has become interested in popular culture and the origins and development of modernity in Korea. With Gi-Wook Shin his *Colonial Modernity in Korea* examined a number of nodes of modernity appearing during the period of Japanese occupation. He has just finished a new book, *Korea's Twentieth Century Odyssey: a Short History*, that was published by the University of Hawaii Press in Spring 2007. He is currently working on a new, integrated East Asia History for college courses with Jonathan Lipton and Barbara Molony.

**Brad Simpson** (Ph.D. Northwestern, 2003) teaches at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He will be joining the history faculty at Princeton University in the fall of 2008. Stanford University Press published his first book, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S. – Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* in March. Brad is also a research fellow at the National Security Archive, where he directs the Indonesia and East Timor documentation project. His current research explores how the international community's embrace of authoritarianism in Indonesia shaped discourses and practices of development, human rights, business-state relations, civil military relations and political Islam during the reign of Suharto. Recent essays and reviews are in *Cold War History*, *Diplomatic History*, *Critical Asian Studies*, and *Peace and Change*.

**Sung-Yoon Lee** is Adjunct Assistant Professor of International Politics at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Lee received his Ph.D. in International Relations from The Fletcher School in May 1998. Lee was appointed to the Fletcher faculty in September of that year. He has taught at Bowdoin College (2000) and Sogang University (2007). In Fall 2005 Lee launched a new program at Harvard's Korea Institute, the Kim Koo Forum on U.S.-Korea Relations. His publications include "The Folly of Fabled Sentimentality: South Korea's Unorthodox Courtship of North Korea," *The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Special Report*, November, 2006.; "Dependence and Defiance: Historical Dilemmas in U.S.-Korea Relations," *Korea Policy Review*, The John F.

Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Summer 2006; "Swan Song for an Alliance: U.S.-ROK," *Asia Times Online*, September 15, 2006; "Aggressive North, Submissive South: What Bush Can Do for the People of Korea," *The Weekly Standard*, August 14, 2006; "A Korean Day of Infamy: From November 17, 1905 to November 17, 2005," *The Weekly Standard*, January 23, 2006; and "The Mythical Nuclear Kingdom of North Korea," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* (Summer/Fall 2005);

**Sang-Yoon Ma** is Assistant Professor of International Relations and American Studies at the Catholic University of Korea. He earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Seoul National University and D.Phil. in International Relations from the University of Oxford. He published numerous journal articles and book chapters on the diplomatic history of Korea-US relations and US foreign policy in general, which appear in *National Strategy*, *Korea and World Affairs*, *Asian Perspective*, *Journal of American Studies* and *The Korean Journal of International Relations*, etc. He is currently working on two projects: South Korean foreign relations during the détente era and a comparative analysis of the United States' relationship with its major allies.

I.

In South Korea today one finds a particularly successful manifestation of the United States's Cold War project in East Asia. Over the past generation, under U.S. auspices, the once destitute, war-torn South Korean nation has grown into an open democracy and one of the world's largest trading nations. What is the role of the United States in this rare success story?

In grappling with that apparently U.S.-centric question Gregg Brazinsky has written a very well-researched and balanced account of the encounter between two very different nations—an unequal bilateral relationship that initially grew out of the needs of the post-World War settlement but soon came to be sealed by the outbreak of the Korean War and the emerging U.S. policy of containment in East Asia.

The United States obviously occupies a high position in the hierarchy of historical causes behind South Korea's rise as an industrialized democracy. After all, liberation from Japanese colonialism in August 1945, the establishment of the Republic of Korea in August 1948, and the last-minute rescue from near death in the wake of North Korea's invasion in the summer of 1950 all came courtesy of the United States. If not for the U.S. role, especially in the early years of the South Korean republic, South Korea as we know it today would certainly not exist.

But just how instrumental was the United States in South Korea's nation building throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s? Few would claim that the U.S. was the sufficient condition for South Korea's economic and political development. However, many would argue that U.S. security and economic policy toward South Korea was at the very least a necessary condition for South Korea's security and prosperity. Such is the contextual backdrop for, and perhaps the main assumption behind, Gregg Brazinsky's ambitious new book. More than any other monograph in English, Brazinsky's *Nation Building in South Korea* examines in intimate detail the U.S. role in South Korea's transformation as a rapidly modernizing state and society. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the South Korea story—a stunningly successful process of nation building, often in concert with, as well as in opposition to, the broader U.S. containment policy in East Asia.

The focus of the book is not to debunk the myth, still vigorously held onto, among others, by South Korean leftist scholars, that the partition of the Korean peninsula in August 1945 by the United States and the Soviet Union is the root cause of all that is wrong with the Korean peninsula today, including the destitute nuclear tyranny that is North Korea. Rather, the book describes in close detail the rationale for the U.S. policy of propping up successive authoritarian governments in Seoul, and how the South Korean leaders took advantage of such U.S. commitments—for themselves as well as for the sake of the nation. The most significant aspects of the influence of the United States on South Korea's nation-building are addressed in Chapter 4, "Toward Developmental Autocracy" and Chapter 5

“Development over Democracy.” (101-162). Both chapters are highly persuasive and insightful, and deserve close reading.

Toward the end of the book the author notes, “Among the dozens of nations to emerge from formal colonialism following World War II, South Korea was one of the select few to achieve economic prosperity and political democracy.” (251). In this regard alone, the South Korea success story merits study by developing nations as well as by scholars across a wide range of academic fields, including development economics. From an empirical standpoint, Brazinsky’s assessment that “none of the leftist revolutionary governments that gained power in the postcolonial world after 1945 has been nearly as successful as South Korea in achieving rapid industrial development and lasting democratic government,” (253) is unassailable. It is a national experience worthy of study, and perhaps even emulation, and Brazinsky does an admirable job of explaining the various twists and turns in the relationship between the American superpower and its South Korean client state.

Such an optimistic—not to mention eminently sensible—assessment has long fallen out of fashion in mainstream South Korean historiography. To celebrate the South Korean national experience would seem to imply that South Korea is either a child of America’s imperialistic-but-benign designs or the fruits of an able authoritarian leadership, or a combination of both. While anathema to reflexively anti-U.S. South Korean nationalistic scholars, such a sanguine interpretation of the South Korea-U.S. relationship will surely become the orthodox interpretation fifty years hence, and probably in perpetuity. It is an important story that needs to be told, and Brazinsky’s account is full of interesting historical details.

For instance, the author describes in detail the internal debates within the Kennedy administration that led to the decision to support Park Chung Hee’s military junta in 1961: “American officials often emphasized the youth and dynamism of the junta’s leaders in their discussions of U.S. relations with the ROK.... [U.S.] Ambassador Berger sometimes emphasized the vigor of the regime’s leadership as well.... Berger wrote that members of the junta had established themselves a group of capable, energetic, and dedicated men determined to make genuine reforms, to lay the foundations for honest and effective government and devoted to the return of representative government.” (123-124). One sees in the Americans’ images of the junta’s leaders the kind of youth, vigor, and discipline that historians have come to associate with the leaders of Meiji Japan. Such a sanguine appraisal of Park Chung Hee and his men actually comported with the prevalent view of the South Korean public at the time, which willingly accepted—or acquiesced to—the coup d’état as fait accompli in the summer of 1961 despite having overthrown Syngman Rhee in a popular uprising just the year before.

## II.

In assessing the role of the U.S. in South Korea’s national development, Brazinsky takes care—at times too much care—to strike a balance: “American influence was significant but far from determinative in shaping struggles between the state and civil society after 1972. . . . American policymakers were not solely responsible for either the brutality of the ROK’s

military dictators or the eventual triumph of democracy during this era.” (250). Elsewhere, the author notes, “Americans certainly influenced the process of nation building, but they never completely determined it.” (260).

Such excessive caution carries the risk of blurring the historical narrative, or rendering it insipid, or even slurring causality. In several places Brazinsky persuasively argues the role of the United States in affecting South Korea’s domestic politics or foreign policy. Heavy economic pressure by the U.S. in 1963 prompted Park Chung Hee to allow for free elections in October that year, which he won by a narrow margin (132). The Park Chung Hee government accommodated and used to its own economic advantage the American insistence on normalizing relations with Japan and dispatching combat troops to Vietnam, even as its critics were charging that South Korea was, in the case of the former, selling out, and in the latter, bartering “blood for treasure.” (137).

However, within the context of the broader themes of the book—U.S. involvement in South Korea’s nation building—I wonder if Brazinsky’s standard assessment of South Korean autocracy does not run counter to his main points, that South Korea is a stunning success story in terms of both economic and political development, an extraordinary feat achieved by the combined talents and interests of South Korea and the United States. The author unwittingly seems to cast South Korea’s authoritarian leadership and its opponents in primary colors, and the young republic’s political history as a clearly definable contest between the forces of dictatorship and democracy. In liberal American historiography, terms such as “dictator,” “repressive,” “human rights violations” are routinely applied to the Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan “regimes,” while their successors, the Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung “administrations” in the 1990s, along with their supporters, are invariably cast as champions of democracy.

While such views are not unwarranted, such standard classifications do raise the thorny question of appropriate terminologies for describing the North Korean regime under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, a communist dynasty that is, with its systematic and widespread attack on its civilian population ever since its inception, the most “advanced” totalitarian system the world has ever known.

Not only did South Korea, even in its most extreme authoritarian years, not operate political prisoner concentration camps, it never willfully starved a sizeable portion of its population or exterminated political prisoners en masse. Therefore, assessments such as what follow should be considered in the context of dictatorships of the same era, in North Korea, China, Burma, Cambodia etc: “Despite the fact that South Korea had been governed by some of the harshest conservative autocracies in the world throughout much of the Cold War, it somehow became one of the most dynamic democracies in Asia by the 1990s.” (4). “South Korean military dictators were far from benevolent despots. They carried out inexcusable transgressions against the basic human rights of their citizens, which may never be forgiven despite their record on economic issues.” (5). The author also claims that South Korea “possessed a particularly repressive version of developmental autocracy.” (223).

A finer distinction of South Korean autocracy and democracy is not only a matter of apologizing for developmental dictatorship or demonizing the North Korean regime solely for the sake of criticism. It is also an inquiry into the general conditions of humankind and their political systems of that era—the nature of democratic institutions, their evolution, and the degree of protection or abuse of individual liberties within that political system. Such an inquiry should also take into account the appraisal by the very people governed under that system, be it democratic or dictatorial.

Brazinsky asserts, “After Park Chung Hee’s assassination in 1979, a new military dictatorship—far more brutal than Park’s—assumed power, causing the battle between democratic forces and the state to escalate to a new level.” (11). No doubt the author has in mind the Kwangju massacre in May 1980, the darkest hour, save for the Korean War, in South Korea’s political history.

No other historical issue between South Korea and the United States ignites the flames of accusation and suspicion as does the specter of the massacre of hundreds, if not thousands, of South Korean civilians in the southwestern city of Kwangju in May, 1980, and the alleged U.S. complicity in the brutal killings and tortures undertaken by the South Korean military. The killings in Kwangju served for many South Koreans as the defining moment of their political conscious. For many, the Kwangju massacre became the seminal event in shaping their image of the United States.

Judging the degree of dictatorship by the number of deaths inflicted on the civilian population would make sense, except that the brutal killings in Kwangju were not a protracted or routine practice by the Chun regime throughout the 1980s. The moral distinction between firing live rounds into crowds of university students on 19 April 1960 in Seoul by the Syngman Rhee government and over the course of several days in May 1980 in Kwangju by the Chun Doo Hwan junta is not nearly as great as that between a state’s repression of civil liberties like freedom of speech as practiced by Park Chung Hee and a pervasive system of tyranny in the form of state-run gulags under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. In short, a comparison of authoritarianism under Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan should take into account many factors in addition to Kwangju, such as the abuse of power by the executive branch, equality—or the lack thereof—before the law, and the repression of basic civil and political liberties over a defined period.

Such considerations may have refined the author’s view of South Korean autocracy as well as his overly kind assessment of South Korean democracy after 1987. It may also have prevented the error that the author makes with respect to the role of the U.S. in the massacre. Brazinsky makes the assertion that “General John Wickham, who as commander of American forces in South Korea had operational control over joint U.S.-ROK military personnel, released the Twentieth Division of the ROK Army from its duties along the demilitarized zone. It was this division that ended the citizens’ uprising on 27 May and paved the way for Chun’s usurpation of political authority.” (237). Brazinsky uses the same word, “released,” again in the very next sentence. The implication that the U.S. Commander played a complicit—if not direct—role in the ROK troops’ use of brute force on unarmed civilians is hard to miss.

The crux of the matter is the command structure of the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), and the lingering Korean suspicion that General Wickham, or someone in the U.S. Forces, must have approved, or at the very least known of, the deployment of army troops under the CFC into Kwangju. Since the bloodshed, the U.S. government, General Wickham, and U.S. Ambassador William Glysteen have all repeatedly denied any prior knowledge of the movement of troops, including the movement of troops by Chun Doo Hwan on 12 December 1979. In fact, under the terms of the CFC Agreement, the ROK government was not required, except in wartime, to seek approval from the U.S. Commander before withdrawing units from the CFC, but merely to notify the Commander of the troop movement for situational awareness.

Yet, what lingers in the consciousness is not the U.S. disclaimer, or General Wickham's well-known animosity toward Chun Doo Hwan, or that Wickham was in the U.S. between May 14 and 18 while the ROK Defense Minister had withdrawn the Twentieth Infantry Division from the CFC structure, or that the U.S. had strongly protested against the Chun regime throughout the period of trial in Kwangju, but that the United States in the end embraced Chun, even with blood on his hands, as a legitimate leader. Even with blood on his hands, Chun Doo Hwan proved an effective leader, as the economy grew once again at near 10% per year, inflation was controlled, and the financial sector was liberalized during his tenure. The Chun Doo Hwan years were a happy time for the vast majority of the South Korean population, despite the Kwangju massacre and Chun's ignoble demise, during which the relationship between South Korea and the United States remained close and cooperative. A greater focus on the bilateral relationship during the 1980s may have added more to Brazinsky's close reading of South Korea's transformation during the 1960s and 1970s.

### III.

Throughout the book one finds a number of factual errors—some minor, some more serious. For instance, on the very first page of the "Introduction," the author writes, "In previous centuries Korea had been governed by emperors who remained formally subordinate to China as part of a tributary system. The system endured until the country was colonized by Japan in 1910." (1)

The Korean monarchy only adopted the title of "Tae Han Jae Kuk ("The Great Korean Empire") in 1897, when King Kojong declared himself "Emperor." None of his predecessors ever made claim to that exalted title, reserved only for the celestial "Son of Heaven," the Chinese Emperor. The Japanese Emperor reigned but did not rule, which the Koreans recognized. Moreover, the tributary system—the traditional East Asian world order devised by the Chinese—came to an end in the aftermath of Japan's victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, several years before Korea became Japan's colony in 1910.

Typographical errors range from the trivial, like Park Chung Hee being referred to as "Pak" (136) to the more serious, like the sum of capital flow from Japan to South Korea in the aftermath of the controversial normalization of relations between the two countries.

“Under the terms of the normalization treaty, the Japanese government agreed to provide the ROK \$30 million in unconditional grants and an additional \$20 million in low-interest loans.” (140). Considering that South Korea’s exports in 1964 totaled all of \$200 million, the omission of the zero in both “\$30 million” and “20 million” are quite consequential. Moreover, Japan’s commercial credit of \$300 million as part of the deal should also have been mentioned.

A factual error or omission with respect to the South Korean protests against the normalization talks between South Korea and Japan is found on page 134: “In late May Ambassador Berger wrote that the ‘situation in Korea has again reached a peak of uncertainty, unrest and disarray.’ When he met with Park after the first student demonstrations had erupted, the two agreed that the situation ‘had become serious.’” U.S. Ambassador Samuel David Berger (not to be confused with President Bill Clinton’s National Security Adviser, Samuel Richard Berger—and not to suggest that the author does!) was referring to the second wave of protests on 3 June 1964, coming less than two months after the first wave of protests in late-March. By 25 March eleven universities and four high schools in Seoul alone had become arenas for demonstrations numbering some 80,000, which prompted Park Chung Hee to issue to the nation on 26 March a peculiar pledge, swearing with his life, that his government was acting in the negotiations only for the interest of the nation and the people without personal ambitions.

I would have liked to read more on the Peace Corps Volunteers in South Korea since 1966 and their influence in shaping mutual images between Korea and the U.S. Therein lies a story rich in cultural context, but the author dedicates only four pages to that aspect of the U.S.-ROK relations.

Despite such criticisms, in the end I can but commend the author for his in-depth study of this important story of close and sustained cross-cultural relationship. South Korea’s nation building under U.S. auspices is, from the South Korean perspective, an important story. It is also an important story from the American perspective. As Brazinsky points out, South Korea, along with Taiwan, is the only postcolonial state among over 30 in which the U.S. intervened that developed a stable economy and democracy. (6).

The role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War is a story that needs to be told and retold again and again. The emergence of the Asia-Pacific as a political, economic, and even geographical region that commands the world’s attention is a post-World War II phenomenon, one in which the United States has played a seminal role. And in no other state in the region—save for Japan and Taiwan—has the U.S. played a such a constructive role in nation building as that in South Korea. And this remarkable story Gregg Brazinsky tells with force and eloquence.

Gregg Brazinsky's *Nation Building in South Korea* is a welcome addition to the literature on the history of Korea-US relations. Many of the American and Western historical studies on the bilateral relationship have been focused on the Korean War (1950-1953). Given the war's importance in the international history of the Cold War, it is no surprising that a lot of attention has been paid to the war itself. However, the Korean War wasn't the end point of the country's modern history and of Korea-US relations. South Korea rose from the ashes of the war to become a vibrant democratic society with a dynamic modern economy. Outside Korea, few historians have researched these astonishing South Korean experiences. Brazinsky fills this vacuum. His book is a major historical analysis of the South Korean experiences based on solid archival research.

The central question of the book is how the South Korean success in nation-building came about. Specifically, Brazinsky asks how developmental autocracy emerged and evolved in South Korea. Although Brazinsky does not define nation-building explicitly, the concept is rather loosely suggested to contain two main goals: economic development and political democratization. According to the author, there are only a few cases where autocracy evolves into "developmental autocracy." Even rarer is the transition from "developmental autocracy" to democracy. American attempts at nation building in various regions of the world have largely failed, which makes South Korea's success in both terms simply unprecedented.

Regarding this question, many commentators such as Fareed Zakaria argue that economic growth tends to produce preconditions for democratization. Although Brazinsky accepts this tendency, he stresses, "there is no guarantee that [developmental autocracies] will eventually be supplanted by democratic governments" (5). In order to explain why South Korea was different from many other Third World countries, a more complex and nuanced answer is necessary.

Brazinsky's central thesis is that the combination of "the magnitude and duration of U.S. assistance" and "Korean agency" was the key to the success in South Korea (6). Since 1945, the United States provided South Korea with large-scale economic and military assistance. More importantly, according to Brazinsky, the United States helped to create institutions of civil society and the military. Furthermore, it infused the desire for modernity and the ideal of democracy into South Korean society. Based on wide-ranging archival sources in both Korea and the United States, Brazinsky meticulously documented various U.S. efforts in these regards, including support for the growth of public education, mass media and academia. Also, through various U.S. exchange programs, many Korean civilian and military leaders were invited to the United States.

Of course, during the period the book covers, most of the South Korean political regimes were far from liberal and democratic. The author admits that successive US administrations rather consistently supported South Korean autocratic regimes for the sake of anti-Communist strategy. Within the Cold War context, as a rule, the security

interest against Communism took priority over the goal of democracy promotion. Nonetheless, he argues, “[t]he United States has attempted to create and sustain nation-states that advance its interests and embody its ideals” in various places during the Cold War and beyond (1). Likewise, he also documents that America’s liberal and democratic ideals were not absent in its relations with South Korea. But here an apparent contradiction arises: how could the United States try to advance liberal and democratic ideals in South Korea, while it was supporting dictatorial regimes?

Brazinsky’s solution to this contradiction is to distinguish official US policy from unofficial American efforts, and short-term policy from long-term engagement. Instead of high-level U.S. policy-makers in Washington, he highlights “Americans on the ground,” i.e. American officials and civilians working in South Korea, who consistently tried to promote liberal and democratic values and institutions in the country. For example, while official U.S. policy was to support the Syngman Rhee regime, U.S. officials in Seoul attempted to dissuade Rhee from repressive measures “privately” (57). The author also describes the USOM’s (U.S. Operations Mission’s) and the Asia Foundation’s programs to strengthen democratic institutions in Korea, which makes fascinating reading (156-158). Although these efforts were less visible than official U.S. policy, they contributed to the eventual democratization of the country in a few decades. Thus, despite their government’s official policy line of supporting South Korean autocratic regimes, it is argued, Americans could believe that political liberalization and democratization of the country would come in the long term, not entirely abandoning their democratic ideals.

The author’s emphasis on U.S. efforts to build the infrastructure of democracy in Korea constitutes the most original part of the book. This also makes the book go beyond traditional diplomatic history narrowly defined. Government to government relations are not the only focus of the book. Government-to-society and society-to-society relations receive more attention. Also, in addition to political and economic relations, cultural aspects of the Korea-US relations are highlighted.

Nonetheless, there are some ambiguities in Brazinsky’s arguments. First, it is unclear if the distinction between the U.S. government’s policy and the efforts of the American on the ground was real and even meaningful. Private efforts of American officials in Seoul to discourage the Rhee regime’s repressive character and the USOM’s program to strengthen democratic institutions, for example, might well be understood as a part of larger policy of the U.S. government rather than as separate efforts from the official governmental policy. Also, if various American private-sector organizations such as the Ford Foundation, the Asia Foundation and Christian Church-related groups were closely involved in helping nation-building in Korea, one comes to wonder whether or not (and how) their activities were coordinated with those of the U.S. government.

Second, there are ambivalences with regard to the degree of American cultural influence on the Korean society. The author argues that various American efforts were effective in instilling the ideals of democracy and desire for modernity into the Korean minds. In this regard, he demonstrates at length what Americans did. However, little evidence is provided to attest that those efforts were really effective.

For example, he asserts that the two most significant South Korean political changes in the early 1960s—the “April 19 Student Revolution” which ended the Syngman Rhee regime in 1960 and the “May 16 Military Revolution” through which the Park Chung Hee regime was established in 1961—were “led by the two groups that had received the most direct exposure to American influence—students and military officers” (101). This explanation is mono-causal. For a fuller explanation we would need to take other factors such as Korea’s traditional culture into consideration. As Brazinsky puts it, Korean students “saw themselves as the social and political vanguard of the nation” (108). This perception of the students’ political role, which constituted one of the important reasons for the Korean student activism, largely came from Korea’s neo-Confucian literati tradition. Also, regarding American influence on the Korean military, it is a rather simplistic to argue that “South Korean officers came to share Americans’ commitment to building their nation’s strength and prosperity” (72) just because of American influence. The goal of a rich nation and strong army which animated Korean nationalism existed notwithstanding and long before American influence.

In fact, Brazinsky qualifies his own argument by emphasizing “Korean agency.” He repeats that the South Korean success in nation-building was mainly due to the efforts of Korean themselves. American support only supplemented Korean efforts. To some degree, this qualification contradicts his argument about the American cultural influence. More seriously, he specifies little about what South Koreans themselves actually did. He scarcely explains, for instance, the process by which Korean economic plans were made and implemented during the 1960s and the 1970s. It is ironic that the author emphasizes the importance of the Korean agency, while his narrative is mainly about American efforts. Because of this omission, readers are left with no clear answer to the book’s central question, that is, why and how the Korean success came about.

The relative inattention to Korea is related to the third problem of the book. Sometimes, the author’s judgment of South Korean leaders does not reflect the larger context in which they were situated to lead the country. President Syngman Rhee is portrayed as a leader who was both autocratic and ignorant of economy. Although this might be true, it needs to be weighed against the fact that Rhee’s top priority was always national unification.

A more critical case is Chang Myon’s short-lived democratic regime which also receives Brazinsky’s negative assessment. According to the author, Prime Minister Chang was democratic but too weak to make political and economic progress. One piece of the author’s evidence to support this view, however, is mistaken. Quoting from a telegram from the US embassy in Seoul to the State Department, Brazinsky argues:

In December 1960 Ambassador McConaughy explained that “lacking a parliamentary tradition and limited by an opportunistic political opposition,” the new regime was “further affected by traditional concepts of personal family and regional loyalties.” Although the Chang government had made some progress, he remained skeptical that it could achieve economic growth (p.112).

In fact, however, McConaughy's view of the Chang regime was brighter than Brazinsky's as the following fuller quotation of the original text of the same telegram makes it clear:

Handicapped by unfamiliarity with U.S. working arrangements, lacking a parliamentary tradition and limited by an opportunistic political opposition and querulous and narrowly nationalistic press, government is further affected by traditional concepts of personal, family and regional loyalties. Despite these limitations, however, government has taken constructive steps forward. The ROK armed forces have maintained an acceptable degree of efficiency ...; civil service and police ... are at least no longer an oppressive arm of government ...

The national economic output has continued to rise. Notwithstanding a very large net increase in population, it appears that per capita income will also continue to increase, but probably not rapidly enough to fulfill popular expectations.<sup>1</sup>

There is another factual error on the Chang government. The book asserts that the Chang government was established right after the Rhee regime was overthrown in April 1960 and, therefore, lasted thirteen months before the military *coup d'état* in May 1961. But actually a four-month period of an interim government preceded the Chang government, making Chang's time in office only nine months.

The nine-month period of the Chang government is not just a trivial matter, considering the fact that the first three or four years of the Park Chung Hee government also marked political instability and no great economic progress. The author describes Park Chung Hee and his government's achievement of economic growth quite positively. That achievement, however, came only after 1965. Until 1964, inexperience, a power struggle within the military government and the lack of support from the intellectuals and the political opposition compromised the effectiveness of the government's leadership. If Park's performance during its first 3-4 years was not as impressive as US policymakers had expected, it would be unfair to criticize Chang's poor record during his much shorter time in power. It could be argued that Chang was robbed of time to prove that democratic leadership could make political and economic progress.

All in all, notwithstanding some weaknesses, Brazinsky's book is an ambitious and innovative work which deserves a wide readership. Not only does it cover the entire period of Korea's modern history, but its superb documentation of American efforts to build the infrastructure of the South Korean nation illuminates a hitherto largely unappreciated but important aspect of Korea-US relations.

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<sup>1</sup> McConaughy to Herter, 24 December 1960, RG 59, CDF 1960-63, Box 2181, NA (U.S. National Archives II).

Gregg Brazinsky asks important questions and provides insightful and persuasive answers to them in his *Nation-Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of Democracy*. His excellent study partially fills a gaping hole in the literature on recent U.S.-Korean relations and the history of the Republic of Korea (ROK). He also has made a valuable contribution to the discussion about modernization in East Asia and elsewhere in the developing world after World War II. With respect to South Korea, however, his work is a beginning that hopefully will stimulate more research on the subject, resulting in publication of additional studies that will deepen our understanding of how an impoverished ROK achieved economic development and democracy.

Few countries have suffered more than Korea during the past century, having to endure brutal colonial rule, military occupation, destructive war, and finally permanent division. The purpose of this study is to explain “how South Korea was transformed from the indigent, despotic nation that existed at the time of the Korean War to the wealthy democratic one that emerged by the early 1990s and of what role the United States played in its transformation” (4). Brazinsky focuses on examining the years 1945 to 1972 when the United States committed a huge amount of resources and energy to the task of nation building in southern Korea. “Of the numerous places where nation building was attempted” during the Cold War, he claims, “South Korea was one of the few” (1) places where U.S. policies eventually achieved stated goals.

Balanced perspective is the greatest analytical strength of Brazinsky’s account. He emphasizes throughout how “the actions of both Americans and Koreans shaped South Korea’s transition from autocracy to developmental autocracy to democracy over the Cold War era” (8). Ultimately, however, the author concludes that Korean agency was more important than American influence, showing how the Japanese colonial experience and their own ideas guided the South Koreans as much as U.S. direction. His main thesis holds that “it was less American skill at extending their ideals than Korean ability to appropriate them that made South Korea into one of the few places where nation building came close to producing the intended outcome” (259).

What many Korea scholars will find exaggerated and unpersuasive is Brazinsky’s argument that the United States was following a purposeful course of “institution building” in South Korea after World War II to establish a basis for the eventual realization not only of economic development, but also democracy in the ROK. “These efforts to reshape the very thinking of South Koreans were at times based on disturbing assumptions of cultural superiority,” he notes, “but they facilitated the emergence of elite groups that were determined to develop the economy and democratize the country” (6). But whenever these groups challenged dictatorial leaders who were either corrupt or repressive, the United States was silent or defended autocratic rule in the interests of security. This account does not resolve conclusively whether the success of nation building in South Korea was the result of inadvertence or, as Brazinsky insists, design. I shall return to this issue for fuller consideration later in this commentary.

This study rests on thorough research that constitutes its second pillar of strength. Brazinsky has consulted numerous archival collections in the United States, as well as all the relevant secondary sources. But his conclusions draw enhanced credibility from reliance on books, articles, and unpublished works in the Korean language. The author refers periodically to modernization studies, explaining for example in his introduction the concept of “liberalizing autocracy” when dictatorial regimes unintentionally create conditions encouraging the rise of democracy. Brazinsky describes the ROK as a “developmental autocracy” because in South Korea, the military dictators’s “relentless pursuit of industrial development and their determination to integrate South Korea into the global economy helped to satisfy some of the precondition for democratization” (5). Six illustrations provide visual examples of U.S. nation-building efforts in action, especially photographs of American officers training South Koreans.

Wisely, Brazinsky, for the most part, presents his arguments about U.S. nation building in South Korea in chapters providing historical context and then in topical chapters describes specific American actions to build institutions and educate individuals as a basis for economic development and democratization. Opening with a description of the period from 1945 to 1960, he covers familiar ground in showing how the United States mocked democratic ideals in creating and then supporting a highly autocratic state in South Korea under President Syngman Rhee. Similarly, his summaries of the April 1960 Revolution, Park Chung Hee’s coup a year later, and Chun Du Hwan’s seizure of power in 1979, while adding few new details to these stories, provide the background critical for understanding and accepting author’s arguments. Ignoring relevant events, however, undermines his sharp criticism of the United States for not backing pro-democracy leaders in 1980. Failing to mention North Korea’s intensified efforts thereafter to destabilize the ROK, he argues that “there is little reason to believe that they would have been unable to govern the country in a manner that promoted stability and democracy after the [Kwangju] uprising” (239).

Many scholars insist that the United States purposely followed policies in South Korea from 1953 to 1960 that prevented the rise of democracy. While not denying that “American human and material resources helped consolidate” (26) Rhee’s dictatorship in the ROK, Brazinsky explains in his first chapter how “this was a period not only of fierce military struggle but also of aggressive state building” (23). His most powerful evidence is the success of American pressure on Rhee to begin land redistribution before the Korean War and then complete the process with serious postwar land reforms. But Washington also funded creation of a huge military force that Rhee used to suppress opposition because its highest priority was defending South Korea with limited reliance on U.S. troops. His monopoly over political power, however, would allow Rhee to spurn American proposals for expanding agricultural productivity, contributing to an absence of progress toward economic development. “State Department officials believed,” Brazinsky concludes, that U.S. “interests and credibility were so intertwined with the fate of the Rhee regime that taking action to discipline Rhee would jeopardize America’s strategic position in Northeast Asia” (39).

Brazinsky makes a strong case for purposeful American nation building in South Korea during the 1950s in his next two chapters, focusing first on U.S. modernization efforts in civil society. He provides detailed coverage of how U.S. policy-makers implemented measures that rebuilt the ROK's educational system, professionalized its media, and upgraded its civilian bureaucracy. One goal was to train "teachers who embodied the ideal of communal responsibility and would transmit it to their students" (45). Labeling the results "somewhat ambiguous" (46), the author still claims success in creating "one of the most vibrant sources of opposition to the Rhee government" (50). Another source of dissent was print culture as a consequence of U.S. government financing for publishers and exchanges for journalists to the United States. U.S. officials also sponsored formation of press clubs and media leader programs to build support not only for a free press, but also economic development and pro-U.S. sentiment. Similar American efforts and funding for new management schools at South Korean universities resulted in the training of honest and efficient civil servants who eventually replaced Rhee's corrupt administrative appointees. Americans also tutored younger and more dynamic legislators, while advising mayors and local officials on how to establish greater local autonomy.

Americans trained a cadre of increasingly influential people to combat economic stagnation and promote democracy, but they did not assume power because, as Brazinsky explains in chapter three, a "new military elite wanted to do the same thing but in a very different way" (70). Seeking to create a force able to defend South Korea, the United States invested vast resources to train "officers who embodied the discipline and patriotism of the modern military" (90). Using the "counterpart system" initially during the Korean War, Americans "forced South Korean officers to perform combat operations and administrative functions according to U.S. standards" (80). They also helped establish the Korean Military Academy and the National Defense College, where students were taught how "to apply newfound skills to goals of national development and resistance to Communism" (89). Training at U.S. military schools gave South Korean officers skills, but left most uninspired or alienated. Displaying intense nationalism and self-confidence, they developed a sense of superiority over other groups in Korean society, as well as resentment toward American dictation. Because they "were not . . . enthusiastic about American cultural and political values" (91), Brazinsky concludes, U.S. advisors "never managed to fully imbue this group with a faith in democratic politics" (100).

Chapter four resumes the historical narrative with discussion of how the United States became less concerned about security, but increasingly troubled regarding political repression in South Korea. "Potential comparisons between the stagnation that existed in the South and the steady progress occurring in the North," Brazinsky emphasizes, "worried Americans, who saw the peninsula as a showcase for liberal capitalism in Asia" (104). In 1957, the Eisenhower administration began cutting aid to Rhee, contributing to his departure in 1960. After welcoming Korea's first democratically elected government, U.S. leaders came to doubt its ability to promote development amid rising political instability. When Park staged a coup in May 1961, Brazinsky reports, American officials in Seoul initially tried to restore the legitimate government, but the new Kennedy administration embraced military rule and thus set the stage for developmental autocracy in the ROK. Brazinsky reveals how one reason for President John F. Kennedy's support for dictatorship

over democracy was the “enthusiastic if slightly patronizing” (122) support Park received from U.S. military leaders. More important was Park’s commitment to modernize South Korea through eliminating traditional maladies such as corruption and factionalism.

In chapter five, Brazinsky explains how Washington used aid as a carrot and a stick to force Park to implement U.S. proposals in place of his own failed plan for economic development and hold elections that made him president in 1963. Park then followed American advice in normalizing relations with Japan, deploying ROK troops in Vietnam, devaluing the won, and promoting exports. His “willingness to accommodate the Americans on these issues in the face of strident opposition bolstered U.S. support for his government while forging a rift between American officials and Park’s opponents” (133). The author then traces how U.S. influence over the ROK declined as its economy boomed and other global issues diverted American attention. As U.S. officials tolerated his suppression of dissenters, Park implemented a plan for industrialization that “nurtured a select group of favored firms” (146), resulting in the creation of a state-dominated political economy. He also consolidated his authoritarian rule, culminating with approval of the 1972 Yusin Constitution. Americans in Seoul received little support from Washington for their tardy attempts to counter these developments. The Nixon administration then discarded any leverage over the ROK when it further reduced aid, adopting a strategy, Brazinsky concludes, of recognizing “South Korea’s increasing autonomy while avoiding actions that could undermine its security, stability, or economic growth” (159).

Brazinsky suggests that active American promotion of nation building in South Korea ended in 1972. Before offering some criticisms to end this lengthy commentary, let me summarize briefly the last three chapters. First, Brazinsky describes how the U.S. Information Service and private foundations educated South Korea intellectuals about modernization theory in the 1960s to build “a sense of nationalism that would not identify with North Korea” (163). Some converts joined Park’s government, while others opposed it, but all adapted the Western development model to reflect Korean culture and traditions. Next, he documents U.S. efforts to persuade South Korean youth to endorse democratic practices, contribute to development, and embrace Free World internationalism through establishing English Conversation clubs and special intern programs. Most dramatic was the impact of transplanted Boy and Girl Scout organizations and 4-H Clubs in creating a “participatory ethos” (204) as a motive force for young South Koreans. “The waves of student dissent that occurred during the late sixties and seventies,” Brazinsky contends, were “the unintended outcome” of these U.S. nation-building activities (222). The last chapter describes how “highly determined groups of democratic elites” (223) that the United States created, but now could not control, joined with workers to install a “remarkably durable” (249) liberal democracy in place of military dictatorship in 1987.

*Nation Building in South Korea* documents how the United States played a central role in South Korea’s emergence as a wealthy and democratic nation. Less persuasive, however, is Brazinsky’s argument that this was more a result of design rather than inadvertence. Despite the supposedly coordinated efforts to undermine the Rhee regime, for example, the author writes that U.S. officials did not anticipate the 1960 Revolution. To be sure, State Department officials worked hard to promote development and democracy, but the U.S.

military had little interest in supporting this endeavor. A prime example of the absence of a U.S. consensus on nation building that Brazinsky almost entirely ignores is the decision not to implement a plan to sponsor a coup against Rhee—Operation Everready—twice during the Korean War. In each case, U.S. military leaders successfully opposed the advice of U.S. diplomats in Seoul. Brazinsky does record that “U.S. military leaders who had served in Korea played an important role in shoring up American support for [Park’s] junta” (122). Among these officers was General James Van Fleet, who the author might have noted had helped to scuttle Operation Everready. Undermining his case for design, the author admits “that some of the long-term consequences of U.S. actions in South Korea were better than the intentions behind them” (253)

There are weaknesses in this study. For example, Brazinsky does not provide much background information regarding some of prominent players in the nation building process. He covers the contributions of the United States Information Service, but tells readers nothing about its origins, structure, and mission, let alone why its name in the ROK substituted “Service” for “Agency.” More important, he only makes brief mention of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency’s activities on a page not listed in the index with four citations to minor references. Apparently, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) made no contribution to nation building in South Korea, since there is no reference to its activities in this study. Readers may wonder, given the CIA’s penetration of the Michigan State University Group in South Vietnam, whether the two American universities with programs in South Korea in the 1950s were not the targets of parallel operations. Nor does Brazinsky mention domestic political opposition as a prime reason for President Jimmy Carter abandoning previous advocacy of military withdrawal from South Korea in 1978, attributing this decision solely to security concerns. There is no mention of other seemingly relevant issues, such as the axe murders in 1976 and Koreagate that same year.

There also are a few factual errors. Brazinsky erroneously dates the dispatch of ROK troops to suppress the Cheju Uprising that ignited the Yosu Rebellion in December 1948 (24), but later correctly places it two months earlier. While the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) did begin operating in 1951 to rebuild South Korea, its original establishment was late in 1950 to help reconstruct a reunited Korea. General Mark W. Clark was commander of the United Nations Command and not “the U.S. commanding officer” (27). Kim Chong’il is identified first as Park’s brother-in-law (115) and then nephew-in-law (128). While not mistakes, inconsistencies exist on some interpretive points. For example, Brazinsky complains that “Rhee further hampered export growth by petulantly refusing to establish official diplomatic relations with Japan . . .” (36). Yet he admits later that even the “Americans could not easily reduce either Korean resentment of Japan or Japanese racism toward Koreans” (199). Left unsaid is the fact that Park secured loans and grants in the 1965 treaty with Japan as direct compensation for past colonial exploitation to mitigate popular anger toward the Japanese. Finally, the author claims that in 1960, decreasing “fears of a North Korean invasion” allowed U.S. officials to seek “above all political leaders who could develop South Korea’s foundering economy” (110). More important was North Korea’s persistent economic superiority and unmentioned proposals for peaceful reunification.

Failure to devote sufficient attention to North Korea constitutes the first of two major weaknesses in this study. Brazinsky's first reference to the threat South Korea faced from the north is on page 26. More important, he notes that Rhee "frequently threatened to initiate new hostilities against North Korea" (31), but minimizes the impact this had on the U.S. policy of limiting the ROK's military capabilities before the Korean War in comparison to greater concerns about "what South Korea's economy could support . . ." (25). As for events inside the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and their impact on nation building in South Korea, Brazinsky is silent until his conclusion, where he heaps ridicule and scorn on North Korea. U.S. actions, he concludes, saved South Korea from "Stalinism, international socialism, or juch'e, which all were fairly rigid" and instead allowed "the South Koreans to reap the benefits of their own diligence and creativity" (260). He then gratuitously adds that "the DRPK's insistent pursuit of a chimerical ideal of pure Koreanness is, in its own way, profoundly un-Korean" (260). Charles Armstrong has offered powerful evidence to the contrary, showing how Kim Il Sung relied on traditional values and beliefs in building a regimented state under a supreme leader. Moreover, in parallel circumstances during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Korea, after losing its patron, became the "Hermit Kingdom" to defend itself against a grave foreign threat.

Gregg Brazinsky deserves high praise for producing not only a well written, fully researched, and analytically thoughtful book about U.S.-Korean relations, but one that stresses Korean agency in determining the course of events in its country. In my judgment, however, he falls short of providing an entirely accurate description from the Korean perspective. A preponderance of South Koreans never will consider the process of nation building complete until Korea is reunited. But for Brazinsky, as well as the United States, emulation of the American model of economic and political development alone is enough to justify declaring a complete success. In fact, missing from this study is serious discussion of reunification as a motive force in the nation building process. In his last chapter, the author lists reunification as a component in *minjung* (the people) ideology that "sometimes identified the United States as an enemy of the Korean people" (244). This study inadvertently spotlights a major reason for anti-Americanism in South Korea, revealing how self-interest motivated the United States and the ROK military dictators to conceive of nation building as a process that stopped at the demilitarized zone. But when the ROK absorbs the north, as it almost certainly will, the United States will be able to claim some of the credit. This is because, as Brazinsky shows, "even while American policies sometimes inhibited democracy from the top down, American influence worked in other ways to encourage democratization from the bottom up" (255).

**N***ation Building in South Korea* is the latest in a series of studies of the “New Cold War History” under the editorship of John Lewis Gaddis. This is a valuable book that discusses material not yet covered in the rather large literature on America’s adventure on the Korean peninsula since 1945. This study’s best feature is its in-depth discussion of American programs involving the training of the Korean military, U.S. association with and training of senior Korean economists/bureaucrats, and other programs calculated to influence current and future Korean elites. This study refreshingly uses Korean sources and thus is able to describe with great effect Korean reactions, both enthusiastic and critical, of American machinations in the political evolution of the South Korean republic. Fully half of the book devotes itself to institution building (chapters 2 and 3) and programs to engage Korean elites (6 and 7). These are inserted within bridging discussions of the evolution of U.S. – Korean relations with reference to the usual topics: security, diplomatic relations, and development. The chapters on institution building and the molding of elites are fascinating, and there is much new material here presented with insight and verve. But the overall frame and its bridging chapters on U.S.-South Korean relations is less effective. The theoretical framework is thin, and there is nothing new in the discussion of the general course of U.S.- Korean relations.

Brazinsky’s argument places his study in Fareed Zakaria’s frame of political evolution in the developing world; that is, democracy often evolves along a continuum of autocracy – liberal autocracy – democracy. In the case of South Korea, Brazinsky sees significant utility in this frame because of the obvious progression of South Korean political history. Using his South Korean case, he is intent to answer the question that Zakaria apparently ignores as to how this progression is driven, what variables, what mechanisms---generally how does a society move from one stage to another. Thus at the beginning of the book Brazinsky posits that it was a combination of U.S. nation-building and Korean agency that pushed the process along from autocracy to the ultimate emergence of democracy. The problem is that Brazinsky’s narrative only partially fits this frame; while Zakaria’s model moves smoothly from autocracy to democracy, the history of democratic practice in South Korea moves back and forth in bits and starts. It starts autocratically under Syngman Rhee with an opening to democracy in 1960 only to move to very autocratic in the 1970s, and since the late 1980s becoming a democratizing society. I don’t know where the “vibrant” democracy is located in contemporary South Korea, but it is certainly not in its formal party system nor its state civil society relations. If there is such a vibrant democracy today, it is probably more visible in the post-1987 civil society that can be characterized by a free press, increasingly free political expression, and a truly “vibrant” NGO movement that focuses its gaze and criticism on the state and capital over a variety of issues of public concern NOT attended to by the elites who dominate the formal party system and thus the formal mechanisms of power.

This is only to say that Brazinsky has picked an overly gross model of democratic evolution that I do not believe helps his attempts to explain the U.S. role in the evolution of democracy on the peninsula. “Nation Building” is also a charged and mis-leading concept

to apply to this case. Nation Building in my mind must be re-cast as institution building; the Koreans had already constructed their nation, or, at least, the ROK represented one construction in opposition to the North's ideas of what and who represented the nation. I think that the whole conceit of Nation Building prettifies what the U.S. was doing in the world in the early decades of the Cold War. We can call American policies what we might, but the major concern of U.S. policy remained focused on the bottom line of maintaining alliances in the service of its competition with the Soviet Union for World leadership. And in the service of this goal the U.S. found itself often siding with, however reluctantly, autocracy to the detriment of evolving democratic institutions.

The most interesting chapters focus on institution building (civil society and military) and the cultivation of intellectuals and South Korean youth. Chapter Two focuses on civil society. Here Brazinsky deals with U.S. efforts to affect the development of the Educational system, Journalism/Media and the civilian bureaucracy. The time frame is principally the 1950s and into the early 1960s. U.S. support of curriculum development, teacher training, and university professor exchanges had some influence on the shaping of educational elites and, perhaps more importantly, the insertion of an American sense of democratic values in the textbooks for Korean youth. In journalism, the U.S. cultivated elite journalists and brought a number of them to the U.S. to observe American newspapers in action. Americans helped to establish the Kwanhun Club in 1959, an institution still active in journalism today. And Brazinsky's discussion of American programs for bureaucrats and politicians (Leader Program) is particularly interesting; two future ROK presidents, Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam participated in the Leader Program.

As interesting as these detailed discussions are, there is a lack of a discussion that might help the reader assess the overall impact of these programs. In all cases, it is not clear what the long-term effect of such outreach efforts were to shape the outlook and behavior of civilian elites in the ROK. Observers often cite the expansion of education and its role in spreading democratic values as a reason for the rise of opposition movements to authoritarianism in the South. But Brazinsky neither picks up on this argument nor demonstrates how the U.S. educational assistance programs or the shaping of curriculum might have helped shape this phenomenon. Efforts to cultivate journalists also appear to have had little effect if only in so far as American policy to support authoritarian rule at all costs contradicted U.S. interests in a vital and free press. When faced with Rhee's crackdown on free speech in 1959 or Pak's after the 1961 Military coup, there is no evidence of the U.S. protesting in any meaningful way the essential trashing of American efforts in this arena. Finally, while it is perhaps unfair to ask, it would have been good to consider how the opportunities afforded both Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam might have affected their outlook on the U.S.

Brazinsky's chapter on the Military is one of the most important in the book. He details the building of the ROK army from its early days before the Korean war until its maturation in the 1960s. Perhaps most interesting is his exposure of factional problems within the Korean military between older, Japanese trained officers and younger officers moving up during the period of intense American influence within the ROK army. The strong identity of the Japanese trained group within the ROK military complicated American efforts to

mold the curriculum, structures, and ideology of the army. Nevertheless, it is clear that the U.S. efforts to elevate the ROK army to a highly professionalized and disciplined force were successful even if they were only able to shape partially the ideology of the officer corps. The irony of helping to create what was in the 1950s and 1960s perhaps the most efficient, modern, and professionalized institution (thus carrying great prestige within Korean society) is not lost here. However, we must remember that it was the military that intruded for over 25 years in the political process and retarded the evolution of pluralism and democratic institutions in South Korean Society.

Another part of the national building project in Brazinsky's eyes was the Americans' extensive engagement with Korean intellectuals and students over the period of maximum American influence in Korea. This discussion occupies Chapters Six and Seven. Again, it is hard to gauge the efficacy of these programs within the overall drift of ROK politics. But my sense is that it is important to know just how many intellectuals were engaged in exchange programs, received fellowships, traveled to the U.S. on exchanges or founded important research institutes and think-tanks using support from the U.S. government or private foundations. Given the power, prestige, and public influence of intellectuals in Korean society, their experiences with U.S. leaders and in the U.S. itself for the most part created like minded and important allies within the leadership of important Korean institutions. It is distressing to see, however, how little the U.S. did to protect those who deviated from the U.S./Military government party line on development or democracy in general. Aside from the very successful program to foster the 4H Club movement in rural Korea, a program that strengthened rural society and indirectly as a major sector of support for Park Chung Hee, American dealings with student youth was not particularly effective. Indeed, by the mid 1960s the chance to influence students had long since passed as students radicalized and formed what would become an institutionalized resistance to the military dictatorships of Park and Chun. Brazinsky might have done more with his interesting section on the U.S. Peace Corps here. Bringing radicalizing American youth to Korea as the Vietnam War reached its height might not have been the best idea if the intent was to help shape the hearts and minds of Korean youth (most PC volunteers were in teaching programs). As a volunteer myself (1968-71) I vividly remember the ambiguity of our situation as students charged us with being toadies of U.S. power that was merely supporting a dictatorial political system....this in spite of our own self-identification as radicals (radicals perhaps but not Communist draft-dodgers as we also commonly charged) within the context of domestic American politics. Nonetheless, the chapters on institution building and the support of intellectuals and students are in my mind the best parts of this interesting volume. One wonders what will come of the path blazed here in subsequent research.

Overall, this volume presents a mixed-bag of new material that is only loosely integrated with a rather routine discussion of the political history of post-war South Korea and American involvement with its governments through the critical decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. It is hard to assess just how much influence the U.S. had on the institutions and people who were not in power. Indeed, America's general policy to support only informally those institutions that might help Korea evolve in a more democratic direction undermined the very intent of the programs themselves. Only in 1987 did the United States throw its weight against the ROK government in favor of the

grass-roots movement for democratization. For decades before this, American support created friends, influenced South Korean thinking, but left these friends in jeopardy in favor of the realpolitik of the Cold War. I wish Brazinsky had focused more on this critical and central irony in the American posture in Korea. Nevertheless, this is an important book that brings much new material to light. In doing so it does a great service to the field and will stimulate more research on the post-war era.

*Prudent, Prudent, Tragic: Brazinsky's Arc of Korean Development*

Greg Brazinsky's ambitious and wide-ranging book *Nation Building in South Korea* joins a growing body of literature on modernization and nation-building that is integrating policy history with broader social, political and economic processes that transcend explicitly Cold War concerns. Brazinsky highlights the methodological shortcomings of many historians (including this one) writing about development, utilizing a wide range of Korean and U.S. governmental and nongovernmental sources, including often unexplored records of USAID, USIA, religious societies and foundations, even South Korea's 4-H and Boy Scout organizations, to give voice to a diverse cross-section of Korean and American voices, especially young people, who rarely find a place in our narratives. He gives us empirically rich biographical portraits and descriptions of U.S. and Korean officials, technocrats, students and missionaries, among many others, and pursues his story across a long chronological sweep while remaining archivally grounded.

Most importantly, Brazinsky is unafraid to ask a big question. How do we explain the twin successes during the Cold War of South Korean development and its democratization by the early 1990s? The answer, he suggests, is quite simple: American influence and Korean agency, leavened with a paradox. On the one hand the US supported authoritarian or highly centralized rule in Korea for forty years. On the other hand, "Americans working on the ground create[d] new institutions ranging from the military to schools to academic organizations through which they attempt[ed] to strengthen the indigenous demand for development and democracy"(6). While South Korea's colonial experience under Japan structured its developmental options, American ideas and influence proved the X-factor, borrowed and adapted by Koreans to suit their own needs and culture in ways that often confused and disturbed their ostensible benefactors.

This was a contradictory process, Brazinsky maintains. U.S. officials did not intend to midwife such an authoritarian, highly centralized polity and economy or facilitate such a state-led process of industrialization. But, by training a generation of military officers and technocrats and imbuing them with the nationalism, administrative and planning skills to lead such a process they made it possible. Likewise, American officials did not set out to foster conflict between an authoritarian state and society by inculcating students, intellectuals, journalists and others with a desire for both development and democracy through programs of aid, education and exchange. But, Brazinsky argues, they did (222).

To make his case, Brazinsky examines U.S. nation-building efforts directed at South Korea's armed forces, technocrats, intellectuals, students and civil society from the division of the peninsula in 1945 through the late 1980s, highlighting several crucial periods - 1945-1948, 1960-1961 and 1979-1980 - where opting for authoritarianism over democracy in South Korea shaped the country's future trajectory. Brazinsky's argument challenges several veins of scholarship on modern Korean politics, East Asian political economy and modernization: in his account ideology trumped industrial structure; American hegemony

counted for more than Japanese colonialism; military establishments really were modernizing vanguards; and, in the end, U.S. support for developmental autocracy (combined with various “nation building” programs) nurtured rather than retarded the post-Cold War emergence of democratic regimes.

No historian would deny that that South Korea developed in part under the protective umbrella provided by American hegemony. Unfortunately, however, Brazinsky doesn't convincingly link U.S. nation-building efforts to the formation of South Korea's distinctive developmental approach, fails adequately to theoretically interrogate the meaning of either democracy or development, and implicitly accepts the claims of military modernization theorists of the 1960s and 1970s that support for authoritarian regimes provided the essential breathing space for economic development, middle class formation and the post-Cold War emergence of democratic states.

The first half of the book traces the Truman and Eisenhower administrations' “alliance of convenience” with Syngman Rhee and the emergence of Park Chung He's “developmental autocracy.” The outlines of this story are well known. Brazinsky rightfully notes that “US policymakers doubted the capacity of any South Korean leader to fashion a liberal democratic government and in the absence of such leadership preferred to support Rhee” (29), whose ruthless police and intelligence services destroyed Korea's left for a generation. He infers from this, however, that the “US had no choice but to foot the bill for South Korea's security even if doing so actually hindered the cause of democracy” (31), conflating the blinkered vision of U.S. officials with the narrow choices that fell within their gaze. A widening of our own gaze reveals a by now vast literature on the Orientalist discourses of American officials in the early Cold War: their racism, cultural chauvinism, belief that “Asians” (or “Africans,” “Latinos,” “Arabs,” etc.) needed or desired authoritarian leaders, and a conception of democracy premised upon the exclusion of mass movements, labor and the political left from effective participation.<sup>1</sup>

Brazinsky's aim is to demonstrate that American “institution building” efforts nurtured a desire for democracy and development among the armed forces, students, journalists and technocrats while simultaneously helping Rhee erect the scaffolding of a police state whose rough edges they hoped eventually to soften. Yet, despite providing rich and detailed descriptions of U.S. assistance programs and the role of UN agencies in shaping South Korean institutions and practices, the book tells us little about how either Americans or Koreans actually thought about democracy and development. How did the “social democratic” vision of the Sinjinhoe student study group movement (49), to take one example, differ from that of their American official, military, and civilian counterparts? How did each define civil society, its relation to political parties, the state and the process of social change? How did Koreans square the U.S. embrace of authoritarian rule and

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<sup>1</sup> Among representative works see Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950–1957* (Durham, 2004); Doug Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999).

prioritization of stability over democracy with vague encomiums to democracy in textbooks, trainings for journalists and the like?

A similar conceptual fuzziness marks the discussion of the U.S.'s cultivation of "promising bureaucrats and public officials" in the 1950s (59). Brazinsky argues that unlike the "un-purposive" Rhee, to borrow a phrase from Atul Kohli,<sup>2</sup> U.S. trained bureaucrats and officials such as Budget Bureau director Yi Hinban helped to stimulate thinking and discussion of "democratic development" (62), "proved willing to work with U.S. officials to implement more reasonable policies" (67), opposed corruption and expressed a deep "commitment to change" (69). But U.S. efforts to train and expand a technocratic, administrative class in South Korea mirrored similar programs elsewhere. Far from aiming to spur a desire for democracy such programs implicitly sought to insulate central banking, currency, taxation, and economic planning more generally from democratic control as technical rather than political problems (142). The Kennedy administration's successful attempt to rein in Park's First Five Year Economic Plan in 1962 demonstrates that U.S. officials hoped to insulate planning from military interference as well (131). This was a challenge Washington confronted everywhere it promoted military modernization, since encouraging armies to play a greater role in economic development and civilian administration meant accepting a greater degree of statism in economic policy than would previously have been conceivable.

Brazinsky focuses extensively on proclamations expressing a general desire for "change" and "development" and not enough on spelling out the particular plans Americans and Koreans held out for South Korean reconstruction and industrialization, the conflicting ways each defined "reasonable" economic policies and the assumptions behind them, and how these reflected broader conceptions of Korea's preferred developmental trajectory and comparative role in the fabric of American hegemony. In a chapter on U.S. engagement with South Korean intellectuals that draws on a wide range of novel sources, Brazinsky persuasively demonstrates how they rejected American insistence that religious traditions such as Confucianism or Buddhism were incompatible with modernity and development (163-189). But we learn little of their criticism of U.S. economic planning or goals for Korean industrialization.

Song Insang, who helped draft Korea's first economic development plan in 1957, provides a clue. Brazinsky writes that Song "genuinely believed American advisors placed too much emphasis" on promoting cash-crop agriculture, mineral extraction for export, and reintegration with the Japanese industrial structure over production for local use or import substitution (ISI). Why "genuinely believed"? Song was *right* that American economic advisors and officials held out for Korea a peripheral or, at best, semi-peripheral role in the regional and world economy. American officials *did* want South Korea to lead from what they saw as its comparative advantage in export agriculture, textiles, light manufacturing and assembly and other declining Japanese industries. The question wasn't *whether* "the benefits of integrating South Korea into the world economy outweighed the costs" – as

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<sup>2</sup> Atul Kohli, *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge, 2004), 63, 69.

South Korea had little choice if it wished to industrialize – but on what (and whose) terms (140). As Brazinsky details (149-160), the Johnson and Nixon administration expressed concern with the Park regime’s growing authoritarianism and centralization of power in the late 1960s in rough proportion to the early success of the Big Push for rapid industrialization in steel, shipbuilding, autos, chemicals, machine tools and electronics, which challenged the assumptions of economists and planners about how South Korean industrialization ought to unfold in relation to Japan. In part this concern can be summed up in a trade-off: textiles vs. steel, and the degree of state power and labor discipline necessary to extract domestic savings to fund light versus heavy industry. American manufacturers, to name but one interested constituency, were surely less concerned with the threat that the growing centralization of power in South Korea posed to democracy than to the potential threat that Korean steel, machine tools and chemicals posed to their exports.

Luckily for everyone, the Vietnam War provided an expanding economic pie of military contracts that fed South Korean firms, just as the Korean War did for Japan fifteen years earlier. Brazinsky discusses in detail the political controversy surrounding South Korea’s dispatch of combat troops to Vietnam and near concurrent normalization of relations with Japan. But he gives short shrift to the impact of military contracting and Japanese aid and reparations on providing markets for and incubating those industries that were the backbone of the Big Push (140-141). Since this period is so crucial in most accounts of South Korea’s industrialization drive - and the point at which it begins to break decisively with the views of the U.S. and IMF (International Monetary Fund) – I would have welcomed a fuller exploration by Brazinsky of U.S. and Korean thinking on these matters. Did U.S. officials view such policies primarily as a military expedient or a political payoff for the provision of troops, or did they recognize that they were providing protected markets for industrial sectors that U.S. economic advisors considered inappropriate for South Korea’s role in the world economy?

Perhaps more important: how, if at all, did U.S. aid and training nurture an emerging technocratic class that ended up wresting autonomy not just from the world economy but from domestic society and the structural constraints imposed by aid and security dependencies on Washington, when other countries could not? Part of the answer may lie in the simultaneous - and far greater - U.S. commitment to building up a “modern, efficient military establishment” in South Korea. As elsewhere, Brazinsky richly describes the many ways that American training and assistance helped shape the structure and organization of Korean military, but U.S. practice here differed only in scale from elsewhere in the so-called Third World. While initially borne of the exigencies of wartime and the need to continue plugging the containment dike at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the expansion of the Korean army acquired its own internal and external logic by the late 1950s as both Korean and U.S. officials began to view the military as a potential modernizing force.

Brazinsky’s argument that “Americans planned for this force to defend, not govern, the country” (71) is, however, beside the point; as he later notes, by the end of the 1950s the U.S. had come to see the sort of military-technocratic alliance emerging in Korea as the preferred form of government in much of the so-called Third World (97-98). The Draper

report was just one manifestation of a much broader intellectual and policy shift in the direction of linking military aid more tightly to comprehensive programs of economic and technical assistance. Whole shelves of social science literature in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Sam Huntington, Morris Janowitz, Moshe Lissak, Henry Bienen, Edward Shils and others lay the intellectual and policy groundwork for the U.S. embrace of military-led modernization or outright dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> Brazinsky attributes the Korean armed forces' "undemocratic" tendencies to their Japanese roots and argues that American officers over the course of the 1950s "never managed to fully imbue this group with a faith in democratic politics," by which he presumably means a commitment to civilian control over the armed forces (100). But he provides scant evidence that top policymakers ever considered this a priority, much less how such views could be reconciled with their commitment to military-led modernization. Moreover, he treats the growing confidence of military officers that they had both the capacity and right to rule South Korea in the name of economic development as the unintended consequence rather than the desired goal of American training and the broader policy framework underlying it (122-123).

This broader shift in American thinking toward support for military modernization helps in part to explain the shallow and fleeting U.S. support for South Korea's thirteen month "democratic experiment," and its acquiescence to the Park Chung Hee coup of May 1961. In the eyes of many in Washington what made the Chang Administration unacceptable was its insufficient commitment to rapid economic development, technocratic rule and the repression of student radicals calling for reunification with the North and denouncing dependency on the US (110-113). What made a return to civilian rule under Park in 1963 acceptable was recognition that the emergent top-down political system would still "be strong enough to implement unpopular but necessary reforms" (128). None of this is surprising. What surprises is Brazinsky's agreement that Chang displayed "an excessive reluctance to use force to maintain order" or control demonstrations by peaceful students, and his deeply conservative assertion that "good governments must first learn to control the governed and then to control themselves" - rather than to mediate their aspirations (110).

Nearly everywhere Brazinsky discusses the efforts of U.S. officials, foundations and non-state organizations to mobilize students, labor, missionaries and intellectuals from the 1960s through the 1980s we see similarly conservative assumptions on their part about the acceptable limits of democracy, even after Park's inauguration of the Yusin system and the turn toward outright dictatorship. American officials seemed perpetually afraid of South Korean students, "sympathetic toward [their] democratic aspirations" but "concerned about their potential to undermine political stability" (191) - whether by calling for reunification with the North (105-108), opposing normalization of relations with Japan (133-136,199), engaging in mass protest against the Park or Chun Doo Hwan regimes (232-237) or channeling South Korean nationalism along anti-American lines, as happened after the Kwangju massacre in 1980 (243-245). Aid to South Korean labor, channeled

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<sup>3</sup> The best accounts are Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, 2003); Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, 2001).

through the American Agency for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) sought to encourage anti-Communist, bread and butter trade unionism and corporatist representation rather than “the kind of labor radicalism that could, in the American perspective, endanger economic progress” (157).

Brazinsky argues that a “wide array of official, private and religious organizations became involved in efforts to steer South Korean youth toward ideals and values that would facilitate liberal democratic nation building,” in part by “instill[ing] ... a civic mindedness that would prepare them to participate in a democratic society” (189).

But his conception of civil society is self-consciously liberal and Western - a space where “young people could practice democratic forms of debate and dissent” (222) rather than as a space for mass mobilization, protest or resistance that might inculcate more radical democratic sensibilities. It is hard to see how, by seeking to moderate the politics of and discouraging resistance by students, labor, church and other broad social forces, American efforts even unintentionally contributed to rather than retarded the radicalization of Korea’s pro-democracy movement and its willingness to court repression, arrest and periodic massacre. The goal of such efforts was to contain and channel the nationalist and democratic impulses of South Korean youth (as well as labor, church activists and intellectuals) along liberal, procedural, associationalist lines, staunching their tendencies toward radicalism, mass politics, anti-Americanism, popular nationalism and a more participatory democracy. In a revealing anecdote, Brazinsky describes a USIS official in 1967 collaring a student attempting to hand out leaflets to tire factory workers while on a USIS-sponsored field trip, explaining to the youth “this is not the purpose of this tour” (196). Yet it was precisely this sort of cross-class mobilization that twenty years later helped to produce the mass protests that brought down the Chun Doo Hwan government, despite the Reagan administration’s efforts to “moderate” the demands of both sides (as it nearly simultaneously sought to do in the Philippines). American influence “did not work to encourage democratization from the bottom up” as he suggests, but rather, it seems, from the middle up (255), in order to deflect the threat posed by democratic tendencies emanating from below.

Brazinsky also filters his conception of democracy through a thoroughly American lens (as strained through the writings of Fareed Zakaria, Sam Huntington and others). Though “Americans erred in supporting dictatorships in South Korea for too long and, at times, being too tolerant of their excesses,” he writes, “for much of the Rhee and Park eras, insisting on democracy would have been unrealistic,” because South Korea lacked a broad middle class, “the institutions and social groups needed to sustain liberal democracy,” and “a participatory ethos that would enable them to become responsible democratic citizens” (255, 257). Thus, in Brazinsky’s assessment the U.S. was prudent in siding with authoritarianism in the 1940s and early 1960s. The tragedy of the Reagan Administration’s embrace of the Chun dictatorship was that unlike 1945 or 1960 (when an “illiberal democracy” might have emerged) there were now responsible liberal democratic elements that the U.S. could have worked with to preserve stability and “liberal democracy” (238, 255).

Despite the impressive range of Brazinsky's narrative and the diverse array of actors whose engagement with South Korea he explores, there is a curious flatness to his account. In a book covering forty years of U.S.-Korean relations Brazinsky largely assumes American consensus over the meaning and content of democracy, modernization, Korean industrialization, civil society, the role of the U.S. military occupation and more. U.S. policy seems to simply unfold, aid and troop levels rise and fall, yet we almost never see bureaucratic conflict among U.S. civilian, intelligence or military officials or with Congress, the business community, foundations, missionaries, the media or others (for the only exceptions I could find see 155, 228-229). Had an American radio broadcast the remarks of Korea University President Cho Myonggi that modernization should be viewed "as the creation of a welfare society on so vast a scale that it involves the entire world and mankind," a legion of conservatives would have jumped from their chairs sputtering and shaking their fists (177). This was precisely *their* point in condemning U.S. foreign aid schemes in the 1950s and 1960s that encouraged state-led development, public investment, and public-private aid partnerships such as the Alliance for Progress. Likewise, American missionaries engaged with South Korean counterparts in the Urban Industrial Mission (225) surely had their own critique of the Nixon and Ford Administration's tolerance of the Yusin system and refusal to openly support human rights and democracy. The Latin American liberation theology from which the Minjung movement derived some of its key tenets was shaping American missionaries (for example Thomas Melville and Dan Berrigan) abroad far more than they were shaping it, and I imagine that a closer examination of sources might reveal a similar dynamic at work in South Korea.

In the end this ambitious, widely researched and often insightful book failed to persuade me that American ideas and nation building efforts were the indispensable ingredient in South Korea's rapid industrialization, much less its political liberalization. Instead, I came away convinced that Brazinsky had presented a damning indictment of how American nation-building efforts helped define what democracy and stability would mean in South Korea in ways that significantly delayed its emergence and narrowed its meaning. South Korea may indeed be a nation-building model of sorts, but probably not in the way that Brazinsky intends.

Response from Gregg Brazinsky, Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University

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The publication of my book, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans and the Making of a Democracy*, has managed to make a lot of people unhappy in both the United States and in South Korea. In writing the book, I tried to take a balanced approach to a controversial and frequently contested topic – the role of the United States in the Republic of Korea’s remarkable transformation into a prosperous democracy over the course of the five decades after World War II. Through using both American and South Korean source materials I strove to demonstrate how this transformation was a product of both American nation building and Korean agency. I show how the two combined to change South Korea first into what I call a developmental autocracy (a modification of Fareed Zakaria’s concept of “liberalizing autocracy”) and, ultimately, into a democracy. I don’t hesitate to criticize American policy makers or South Koreans who supported unnecessary political repression. But at the same time, I argue that democracy was not a realistic possibility for South Korea during the 1950s and 1960s and that the United States did make some genuine contributions to the country’s eventual democratization.

The problem with attempting to be balanced is that it inevitably leads to criticism from both the right and the left of the ideological spectrum. This has certainly been the case for much of the response that *Nation Building* has thus far elicited. Conservatives have argued that I am overly critical of both American foreign policies and South Korea’s autocratic regimes. They downplay some of the more tragic episodes that occurred in the process of nation building and claim that American policies could not have been more successful at promoting democracy than they actually were. They have also claimed that I understate popular support for the ROK’s autocratic governments.<sup>1</sup> Those on the left are skeptical that American policies did anything at all to promote democracy in South Korea. They argue that even overt U.S. efforts to encourage the spread of democratic ideals in the country were really just veiled attempts to secure American interests and discourage dissent.

The H-Diplo reviews of *Nation Building* include some of the most sophisticated iterations of both the conservative and liberal critiques of the book that I have yet seen. I am deeply flattered that each of these reviewers devoted so much time, energy, and insight to analyzing the merits of my work. Ultimately, however, I remain convinced that the arguments I advance offer the best possible explanation for why democracy eventually emerged in South Korea and that the judgments I render provide the fairest possible assessment of the actions of both Koreans and Americans in the ROK’s nation building process.

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<sup>1</sup> For a sophisticated example of the kind of criticism the book often receives from conservatives that is not included here see William Stueck’s commentary during my book launch at the Woodrow Wilson Center available online, along with a video of the event, at [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.event\\_summary&event\\_id=276244](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=topics.event_summary&event_id=276244).

That is not to say that the book does not have its limitations. I would certainly agree with some of my reviewers that it has some. But I want first to draw a distinction between what I would call a “limitation” and what I would call a “weakness.” A “weakness” generally results from a failure on the part of the author either to analyze available information properly or to organize and present evidence in ways that effectively substantiates the basic arguments. The “limitations” of most books, on the other hand, are generally not the fault of the author. They result from either lack of available evidence or necessary decisions to limit the scope of a particular study in order to maximize intellectual coherence and create a realistic research agenda.

This brings me to James I. Matray’s admirably even-handed critique of *Nation Building*. Matray’s review is perhaps the only one that does not fit comfortably with either the liberal or conservative critiques that I delineated above. Instead it exhibits some elements of both. For instance, he writes that ignoring relevant events surrounding America’s decision to support Chun Doo Hwan in 1980 “undermines” my “sharp criticism of the United States for not backing pro-democracy leaders in 1980,” (2) echoing the contentions of some conservatives that the last chapter of my book is unfair to American decision makers and overly sympathetic to the ROK’s democratic movement. In other places he hews closer to what many on the left have found disagreeable in my book as on page 6 where he takes issue with my admittedly glib dig at the North Korean regime and its relationship with its “fraternal” socialist allies.

But some of the most significant “weaknesses” that Matray points to are, in my view, not weaknesses but rather limitations. In particular, he faults me for not devoting adequate attention to the roles of either the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency or the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) in South Korea’s nation building process (6). Both of these organizations were unquestionably powerful but silent actors in shaping South Korea’s political history from the 1960s onward and deserved more attention. The problem of course is that source materials that could have allowed me to offer even a sketchy description of the roles of these agencies just weren’t available. There is, to the best of my knowledge, virtually nothing that has been declassified at the National Archives that can shed significant light on the actions of the CIA in South Korea during the Cold War. And trying to find materials about the KCIA’s activities in this time period is an even more futile exercise. I probably should have included some brief mention of these organizations, their probable significance to the story, and the difficulty in acquiring reliable source materials about them. But the limited attention that I devoted to them in my view represents a limitation rather than a weakness of the study.

Along similar lines, Matray calls my “failure to devote sufficient attention to North Korea” one of the other “weaknesses” of my study. He writes that I am silent until the conclusion on “events inside the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and their impact on nation building in South Korea.” (6). It is true that I do not devote a great deal of attention to internal developments in North Korea in this work. But I don’t think that a more detailed discussion of such developments would have been germane to a book that seeks first and foremost to explain the economic and political evolution of South Korea. Although the DPRK always loomed in the background, internal developments there did not figure

prominently in American discussions about how to promote either economic development or democracy in the South. I bring up North Korea where it is relevant. For instance, I note that the DPRK's relative success at economic reconstruction after the Korean War contributed to the growing emphasis that U.S. policy makers placed on economic development in the ROK from the late 1950s onward (103-104). Generally, however, I think that restricting my discussion of North Korea was essential to keeping a sharp focus on the specific questions that I wanted to address in my study. Again, I would call this a "limitation" rather than a "weakness" of the book.

Aside from my disagreements with Matray over what he considers weaknesses, I do not agree with the way that he characterizes my arguments in parts of his review. In particular, I think that he overstates the role of "design" in my explanation for the success of American nation building in South Korea. He writes that I was not persuasive in my argument that the ROK's emergence as a wealthy and democratic nation "was more a result of design than inadvertence" (5). This is not exactly what I was arguing, however. In fact, in the introduction I try to make it clear that there was an inadvertent and almost accidental quality to the course of political evolution followed by South Korea during the Cold War. I write that "Americans did not originally set out to create a developmental autocracy and when one emerged they did not have a set plan for converting it into a democracy" (6). I do argue that at the day-to-day level Americans involved in endeavors such as improving South Korea's schools and promoting debates about development among Korean intellectuals sought to encourage democratization. But I also show that Koreans responded to these initiatives in unexpected ways, complicating the question of why democratic ideals ultimately triumphed. Moreover, there is a difference between arguing that specific cultural and economic programs tried to promote democracy and arguing that general political evolution in South Korea followed American designs as Matray claims that I do.

Finally, I would take issue with some of the points that Matray raises about North Korea on page 6 of his review. He disputes what I see as the irony of the current North Korean regime's efforts to use preserving Korea's cultural integrity as a pretext for isolating itself from the rest of the world, maintaining one of the world's cruelest dictatorships, and causing untold suffering among millions of its own people. The irony, as I see it, is that the DPRK is, in many ways, a lot less Korean than it thinks it is. Matray cites Charles Armstrong's fine study of the North Korean Revolution as evidence that Kim Il Sung did in fact use "traditional" Korean values and beliefs in creating the foundational ideology of the North Korean state. But Armstrong's work mainly focuses on one kind of "tradition," namely Confucianism. Although Confucianism has a long history in Korea and has exerted a powerful influence on Korean society, it did not originate in Korea. Koreans absorbed and adapted Confucian influences from China between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries much as they absorbed and adapted Buddhist influences in earlier centuries and much as South Koreans absorbed and adapted American influence during the Cold War. In this context, I don't see why Matray views the odd combination of Confucianism, Stalinism and isolationism that the DRPK leaders so rigidly insist on as more "Korean" than the more dynamic blending of the old and new that has occurred in the South. If one takes a broader view of Korea's history, the capacity of its people for cultural adaptation stands out as

much if not more than the aspects of Confucianism that North Korean political leaders have emphasized. It is in this sense, that I see the DPRK's efforts to shut itself off from the rest of the world as an ironic rejection of one of Korea's most enduring qualities.

Sung-Yoon Lee's interesting review is a highly sophisticated version of the critique *Nation Building* has often received from conservatives. Lee praises the book for not going along with the leftist South Korean historiography that generally casts post-1945 Korean history as an unending tragedy while ignoring the South's remarkable economic development and eventual democratization. He takes a somewhat dimmer view of parts of the book that are more critical of American foreign policy and the ROK's military leaders. He writes that I at times take "too much care" to "strike a balance" and criticizes my use of terms such as "autocracy" and "dictatorship" to characterize the Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan governments. Lee adds that such assessments should have been "considered in the context of dictatorships of the same era, in North Korea, China, Burma, Cambodia, etc," many of which resorted to degrees of political repression that were far in excess of what was practiced in the ROK.

It is not entirely true that I ignore the differences between the North and South Korean political systems. Throughout the book I did take care to characterize South Korea's military governments as "autocratic" and "dictatorial" but never as "totalitarian," the term most frequently used to describe North Korea. In retrospect, I wish I had been more careful about explaining what I meant by some of these terms and why I used them. But the distinctions between the autocratic South and totalitarian North were certainly in my mind as I wrote the book. In the conclusion I make clear that despite my criticisms of the ROK's military dictators I believe that their policies exhibited a degree of rationalism that helped to prevent human tragedies on the scale of those suffered in places like the PRC and DPRK during the years after the Korean War.

At the same time, when discussing abuses of power by respective South Korean autocracies, I did not feel compelled to continuously contrast them with the far more systematic political repression that prevailed north of the thirty-eight parallel. Such comparisons would have set the bar too low for making meaningful judgments about both South Korea's political leadership and American policy. Showing that South Korea's military regimes were not as tyrannical as their adversaries in the North could provide at best a feeble justification for some of their actions. To me, it was also important to address the questions of whether the ROK's military governments were more repressive than they needed to be and whether the United States should bear some responsibility for some of their excesses. By answering these questions in the affirmative, I do not think that I have introduced points that run counter to the main themes of the book as Lee suggests. The fact that I generally see South Korea as a successful example of American nation building does not mean that I cannot acknowledge that political leaders in both Seoul and Washington committed some very grave errors in judgment.

Lee takes issue most specifically with the way that *Nation Building* characterizes American decision making during the notorious Kwangju Massacre. The details of American involvement in this highly tragic episode have been the subject of endless disputes among

policy makers and scholars. In the book, I write that the American Commander John Wickham “released” the Twentieth Division of the ROK Army, which was eventually used to put down the citizens’ uprising in Kwangju, from its duties along the DMZ. According to Lee, this amounts to an admission that the United States “played a complicit – if not direct – role in the ROK troops’ use of brute force on unarmed civilians.” He goes on to dispute this interpretation noting that the U.S. government and General Wickham have repeatedly denied any knowledge of South Korean troop movements and that American officials generally did not look favorably upon Chun Doo Hwan’s power grab.

In the few pages devoted to the Kwangju Massacre and Chun Doo Hwan’s seizure of power in *Nation Building*, I looked carefully at the available evidence. To me the most important question is not whether or not Americans took a favorable view of Chun or the significance of Wickham’s decision to release the twentieth division (which has often been disputed) but what American priorities were. The documentary record clearly shows that while Carter administration officials would have greatly preferred to avoid bloodshed, ultimately their first priority was the restoration of order. They were not directly responsible for the killing of civilians but they certainly did create a permissive context that facilitated Chun’s use of force and eventual seizure of power. Moreover, although the most senior officials responsible for American policy at the time have denied any U.S. responsibility for the tragedy that unfolded in Kwangju, some of their underlings have acknowledged that the United States could have played a more constructive role during the crisis.<sup>2</sup> The point here is not to completely pin responsibility for the Kwangju massacre on the United States, as some have done, but to recognize that the tragedy that unfolded there (much like the larger success story of South Korean nation building) was a result of a complex blend of American decisions and Korean agency.

Although I disagree with Lee’s review on several points, I appreciated his willingness to offer a critique of the book that is quite different from the one I have generally received from my academic colleagues. The reviews by Michael Robinson, Sang-Yoon Ma, and Bradley Simpson provide thoughtful versions of the criticisms that I have more often heard in academia and from the left. They generally feel that my view of American policy was too sympathetic and raise questions about the efficacy of U.S. efforts to promote democracy. Yet each of their critiques focuses on different aspects of the book and raises different theoretical issues so I will respond to them separately.

Michael Robinson questions whether “Nation Building” is even an appropriate description of American policies in Korea and elsewhere. He writes that the term “prettifies what the U.S. was doing in the world in the early decades of the Cold War” and contends that, “the major concern of U.S. policy remained focused on the bottom line of maintaining alliances in the service of its competition with the Soviet Union for world leadership.” But Robinson’s critique here oversimplifies the complexity and diversity of motives that animated American policy makers during the Cold War. Maintaining alliances and containing Communism were certainly important U.S. goals, but Americans did not see

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance James V. Young, *Eye on Korea: An Insider Account of Korean-American Relations* (College Station, 2003).

these as incompatible with other key objectives such as promoting an integrated global economy, fostering development and disseminating democratic ideals and institutions. In *Nation Building* I present substantial evidence that South Korea was a prime example of how these goals intersected. From the first pages of the book I show how Americans looked upon South Korea not only as a strategic ally but also as an exemplar of the comparative virtues of the “Free World.” (see especially pages 2-3). Americans simultaneously believed that the alliance needed to be preserved so that liberal nation building could occur and that transforming South Korea into a prosperous democracy would deepen the alliance. Ultimately, it is much more difficult to divorce the strategic priorities of the Cold War from the idealistic underpinnings of twentieth century American policy than Robinson’s criticism here allows.

Robinson also argues that I should have been more attentive to what he sees as the “central irony” of American policy during these years – namely that American support “created friends, influenced Korean thinking but left these friends in jeopardy in favor of the realpolitik of the Cold War.” To some extent, I agree with Robinson on this point. In the conclusion of the book I say quite specifically that the United States too often proved willing to tolerate the excesses of the Rhee and Park governments, which included the ruthless suppression of dissidents (255-256). But I don’t think that American policy was defined by this irony to the same extent that Robinson seems to and therefore did not make it one of the major themes of the book. It is important to remember that, at times, the United States did wield its influence to protect democratic forces against the state. For instance between 1961 and 1963 the Kennedy administration constantly and successfully pressured Park Chung Hee to abandon military rule and hold elections. And of course, the United States made well-known efforts to save the life of dissident politician Kim Dae Jung when the ROK’s military rulers tried to eliminate him. There certainly were times that the United States might have done more to protect South Korea’s democratic movement but I think that it is important to balance criticism of these failures with recognition of the times that Americans did take risks to support democracy.

In addition to calling for a more critical view of American policies, Robinson’s review raises some questions about the overall effectiveness of my argument. It notes that I have chosen an “overly gross model of political development” because Fareed Zakaria’s notion of “liberalizing autocracy” does not really fit South Korea where the history of democratic practice moved “back and forth in fits and starts.” I am not sure if Robinson intended this point as a criticism or a summation of points that are in the introduction. On pages 2-3, I discuss very specifically the limitations of Zakaria’s model making more or less the same point that Robinson does. The limitations that Robinson points to are exactly why I come up with my own phrase “developmental autocracy,” which bears similarities to Zakaria’s idea but is a better fit for the specifics of South Korea’s history.

Robinson generally finds my chapters on institution building more original and effective than those that dealt with economic development, security, and diplomacy. I would agree that these are the chapters that offer the most new material and cover topics that have been ignored. But I felt that it made little sense to talk about institution building without a broader narrative of U.S. involvement in South Korea. Moreover, even what Robinson

considers the more conventional chapters present some new information and use materials that, to the best of my knowledge, no scholar in either the United States or South Korea had looked at before the publication of *Nation Building*.

The most difficult of Robinson's criticisms to respond to is his contention that I did not do enough to evaluate the overall impact of American institution building programs. He writes that it "is hard to assess how much influence we had on the institutions and people who were not in power." I struggled with how to do this throughout the book and have probably been more successful in some instances than in others. In chapters 6 and 7, which dealt with U.S. efforts to engage South Korean intellectuals and students, available sources allowed me to give some sense of both the nature and breadth of American influence. In chapter 6, I combine some discussion of the popularity of modernization theory (which American scholars assisted by private foundations actively sought to promote among their South Korean peers) with detailed analysis of how individual scholars adapted and modified the theory. Similarly, in chapter 7, I was generally able to interweave statistics about the number of South Korean youth who participated in specific American programs with some analysis of their written reflections about their experiences. I cannot think of any method that would have better allowed me to show the extent of American influence on these groups. It was more difficult to assess the overall impact of earlier programs geared at improving South Korea's schools, promoting a free press and training bureaucrats that I described in chapter 2. Part of the problem is that these new institutions influenced vast numbers of South Korean elites in so many direct and indirect ways that it would have been impossible to cover them in one book. I tried to point out how these new institutions shaped the parts of South Korean history that were most relevant to the country's political and economic evolution. I do for instance discuss the vital significance of students educated in the ROK's rapidly growing education system to both the April 19<sup>th</sup> Revolution and South Korea's democratic movement. At the same time, however, I could not look comprehensively at all of the ways that the expansion of schools and the media influenced Korean society and draw neat conclusions about the extent of their impact. Doing so would have taken me too far from the central questions I sought to address. I think my book provides a starting point for understanding the critical role of the United States in building and expanding new institutions during the 1950s. But the full story of how these institutions affected South Korean society needs to be answered in other books.

There is one other point on which I disagree with Robinson and that is his characterization of South Korean democracy. In the book I wrote that the ROK had achieved a "vibrant" democracy by the end of the twentieth century. Robinson writes that he "does not know where the 'vibrant' democracy is located in contemporary South Korea, but it is certainly not in its party system nor its state civil society relations." He writes that if there is a vibrant democracy it is more "visible in the post-1987 civil society." When I used the term I had in mind both the ROK's formal political structures and its burgeoning civil society. I think it is important to remember that during the last fifteen years South Korea has seen several peaceful transitions of power between opposing political parties in both the executive and legislative branches of government. These parties have offered voters distinct alternatives about the course that the country's foreign and domestic policy should

follow. Elections have been free and fair. This has been the case in only a handful of countries outside of Europe and the United States. Of course, South Korea's party system, like those in other democracies, still has problems but given the difficulties that most post-colonial societies have had at achieving genuine democracy, its achievements deserve more attention than its deficiencies in my view.

Sang Yoon Ma's review focuses much of its criticism on my skeptical assessment of Chang Myŏn and the democratic government that briefly held power in South Korea after the April 19 Revolution. Ma thinks that I was too quick to dismiss the Chang government's chances of stimulating economic growth and building a stable democracy. He writes that Chang was in power for a very short period of time (nine months) compared to Park Chung Hee and that it is unfair to compare the two. He adds that, "the first three or four years of the Park Chung Hee government also marked political instability and no great economic progress." Ma is not entirely accurate here. The ROK achieved a growth rate of 5.9% in 1961, Park's first year in power, compared to 1.9% in 1960. The rate dropped to 2.9% in 1962 partially because of poor harvests and clashes over policy issues with American advisors. But, as I describe in the book, these policy disagreements were worked out by early 1963 and South Korea's growth rate accelerated rapidly afterwards, reaching 9% in 1963 and hovering at that level for most of the 1960s. It is impossible to know whether Chang's economic policy making would have improved if he had remained in power longer. But there is little reason to believe that he could have brought about the same kind of economic miracle that unfolded during Park Chung Hee's nineteen years in power. In fact, Ma's review does not try to dispel my skepticism about Chang by pointing to instances in which his government displayed genuine leadership on economic issues but offers only vague suggestions that things would have slowly improved if Chang remained in power.

Ma also misstates how I used one particular piece of evidence on this issue, a telegram from the American Ambassador in Seoul, Walter McConaughy, to the State Department. According to Ma, I used the telegram to support my view that Chang Myŏn's government was "democratic but too weak to make political and economic progress." By quoting at greater length from the telegram Ma attempts to show that Chang was actually more capable than I admit. There are two important points here, however. First, I was not using the document to evaluate the Chang government itself but to demonstrate the impact of modernization theory on how Americans viewed Chang. The document serves this purpose well because it clearly integrates concepts such as "tradition" and "modernity" that were elaborated by Walt Rostow and others. I generally base my negative evaluation of Chang on his lack of real achievements, not on what American policy makers said about him. Second, even if one takes the document at its word, it hardly provides a ringing endorsement of Chang. Although it does give some credit to Chang it ultimately notes that while economic output would continue to rise it would probably not rise "rapidly enough to fulfill popular expectations." Americans did not see such conditions as a reason to believe that Chang would take South Korea in the direction that it needed to go but as a formula for instability.

Bradley Simpson's probing review is perhaps the most deeply critical of the five. There are many points on which I disagree with him but for the sake of sparing readers a lengthy and

tedious point by point refutation I am going to focus on what I see as his most central criticism. Generally, Simpson argues that the American nation building efforts that I describe in the book did not contribute to South Korea's democratization but instead "helped to define what democracy and stability would mean in South Korea in ways that significantly delayed its emergence and narrowed its meaning." In making this criticism, however, Simpson generally ignores my argument about Korean agency and, perhaps unwittingly, misrepresents the situation that existed on the ground in South Korea during much of the Cold War.

Simpson's concluding paragraph is typical of how his critique tends to elide my argument about the centrality of Korean agency. He writes that in the end, my study "failed to persuade" him "that American ideas and nation building efforts were the indispensable ingredient in South Korea's rapid industrialization much less its political liberalization." The problem is that I never argue that American nation building was *the* indispensable ingredient. I take care to argue that the same kind of nation building programs failed miserably in other parts of the world and that it was really Korean agency that made the difference between success and failure. But my argument about Korean agency is horribly inconvenient for those on the left who prefer to emphasize how the United States sought to impose its values abroad rather than the appeal of American ideals to many in the "Third World."

In making his case that American nation building delayed rather than promoted democratization Simpson continuously skirts over the question of whether democracy would have in fact been sustainable in South Korea before the 1980s. His tendency to do this first becomes clear on the second page of his review where he critiques my handling of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. He writes that my assertion that the United States "had no choice but to foot the bill for South Korean security even if doing so actually hindered the cause of democracy" conflates "the blinkered vision of U.S. officials with the narrow choices that fell within their gaze." He then cites the vast literature on how Orientalist discourse led American officials to believe that Asians needed or desired authoritarianism. I am very much a fan of the work done by scholars such as Seth Jacobs, Doug Little, and Stephen G. Rabe (who Simpson cites) and the often brilliant analysis of the assumptions behind U.S. foreign policy that they offer. But a common limitation of these studies is that they are based almost entirely on American sources. There is a difference between showing how American prejudices predisposed U.S. officials to believe that democracy was impossible and proving that democracy actually was possible in places such as South Korea, Vietnam, or the Middle East. In *Nation Building*, I base my argument that sustainable democracy was not a realistic option on an analysis of the constellation of political forces that existed on the ground in South Korea, which draws heavily on Korean materials. My point is not that American prejudices had no influence on U.S. policy but that even if they did not, democracy would still have been unsustainable in a country with such poor economic conditions and deep political divisions. Most political science literature on this subject lends credence to my views. Even recent scholarship that has criticized Singer

and Huntington has acknowledged that economic development is crucial to determining whether democracy can endure.<sup>3</sup>

In numerous places Simpson tries to show how specific American efforts to promote democracy actually worked to limit the possibilities for broader political participation. He criticizes my handling of American efforts to train South Korean bureaucrats and officials noting that they were similar to U.S. efforts elsewhere that implicitly sought to “insulate central banking, currency, taxation, and economic planning more generally from democratic control as technical rather than political problems.” Simpson’s critique here neglects two important points, however. First, in many successful democracies including the United States, issues such as central banking and currency are insulated from popular control. The complexity of these issues often does require the public to entrust their management to people with the prerequisite technical expertise rather than making poorly informed decisions. All democracies struggle to find a balance between entrusting their leaders to decide critical issues and direct popular control. But the degree of popular control that Simpson seems to be calling for here is unrealistic for advanced industrial nations like the United States let alone young impoverished ones such as post-war South Korea. Second, in the South Korean context, American efforts to nurture an administrative class genuinely *did* serve to undermine the highly corrupt and autocratic political economy that prevailed under Syngman Rhee and thus encourage democratization. By assuring that reform-minded technocrats participated in economic decision-making Americans helped to weaken the extensive system of cronyism that Rhee used to strengthen his grip on political power. Thus, they helped to open the possibility for a more democratic political economy than the one that existed during the Rhee era.

Along similar lines, Simpson disputes my contention in Chapter 3 that Americans intended for the ROK military to “defend, not govern,” South Korea. I argue in the chapter that Americans tried but failed to imbue South Korean military officers with a respect for democratic politics. According to Simpson, this argument is unconvincing because I provide “scant evidence that top policymakers ever considered this a priority, much less how such views could be reconciled with their commitment to military-led modernization.” Simpson’s first point (that top policymakers did not consider this a priority) is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the Korean Military Advisory Group, which bore primary responsibility for training the South Korean armed forces did try to kindle the military’s faith in Western style democracy and I provide much evidence of this in the book. Top policymakers generally wanted to see the South Korean military develop into a force that could help contain communism but were not very involved in shaping the character of the institution either way. Simpson’s second point, that I don’t explain how the American desire to promote military modernization in parts of the developing world could be reconciled with efforts to promote a democratic ethos among military officers, muddles the chronology in which these events and ideas unfolded. The United States began building up the South Korean Army in 1946 and by the end of the Korean War had already turned it into a powerful institution. The rapid development of the Korean Army predates much of

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance, Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, “Modernization: Theories and Facts,” *World Politics* (January, 1997), 155-183.

the social science literature advocating military modernization that Simpson assumes guided American efforts on this front. The literature on military modernization did contribute to the Kennedy administration's eventual embrace of Park Chung Hee but I make this point quite explicitly in Chapter 4.

Simpson picks up on this strand of criticism again in his discussion of my chapters on institution building during the 1960s. He argues that I privilege Western and liberal conceptions of democracy based on "democratic forms of debate and dissent" over "mass mobilization, protest or resistance that might inculcate more radical democratic sensibilities." American efforts to moderate the politics of South Korean dissidents, he contends, likely "retarded" the country's democratic movement rather than contributing to it. It is admittedly one of my default assumptions that democracies based on liberal principles are the most durable and equitable. Yet Simpson's review scarcely makes me want to apologize for this. What Simpson neglects is the fact that "democratic forms of debate and dissent" have proven much more critical to successful democracies than the other modes of political expression that Americans sought to moderate. Mass mobilization, protest, resistance, radicalism, and popular nationalism, all of which Simpson believes that American nation builders did not give sufficient emphasis to, were present in some democracies but also abounded in authoritarian regimes such as North Korea, the People's Republic of China and Vietnam. Democratic forms of debate and dissent did not. Part of the reason for this is that by the middle of the twentieth century many Asian societies already had traditions of mass mobilization and protest. They did not have much experience in the more procedural aspects of democracy that are also vital for stable democratic government. I don't see how Simpson can believe that Americans retarded the development of democracy in South Korea by promoting those facets of it that were most lacking in Korean society.

But let's for the sake of argument look at what might have happened if the United States did encourage greater measures of radicalism and dissent as Simpson believes that it should have. Would this really have allowed South Korea to move toward political democratization more rapidly than it did? There is little reason to believe that it would. For one, not all groups in Korean society could have been easily mobilized against the state. It is important to remember that during the sixties and early seventies, the majority of South Koreans supported the Park Chung Hee government despite its autocratic proclivities. As I explained in the book, Park won what most observers considered to be a fair presidential election in 1963 and trounced his opponent by a huge margin in the presidential election of 1967. Like many people living in developing nations, the majority of Koreans were willing to sacrifice some measure of democracy for rapid economic growth. Most of the protests that occurred during the 1960s were elite protests and did not necessarily reflect "democratic tendencies emanating from below," as Simpson thinks they did. It is on this point that I think Simpson fundamentally misunderstands the political dynamics that existed in South Korea during the 1960s. Of course, Simpson is right that twenty years later cross-class mobilization helped to bring down Chun Doo Hwan's government. But the key phrase here is "twenty years later," by which time the middle and labor classes were more significant parts of South Korea's social order and a much less popular military regime had gained power.

Ultimately, despite the thoroughness and sophistication of these reviews, they mostly seek to supplant the balanced approach that I took in the book with more one-sided arguments that either reflexively criticize or defend American policies toward South Korea. It is time for a new generation of historians to abandon these sorts of ideologically predetermined viewpoints that have marred so much writing about America's relationship with South Korea in the past. We must acknowledge that the United States made some tragic errors in its Korea policy and that these errors caused a great deal of pain and anguish. But we must also recognize that South Korea could not have become the prosperous democratic society that it is today in the absence of a vast American nation building effort that cost billions of dollars and thousands of lives. Only by embracing these complex dualities of the U.S.-Korean relationship can Americans and Koreans fully come to terms with the legacies of the Cold War.

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