

~~SECRET~~

Matthews

**SPECIAL
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
NUMBER 42-3-61**

(This estimate should be read in conjunction with SNIE 42-2-61)

**THE CURRENT REGIME
IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

On 13 July 1961, concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained. The subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

NO CHANGE IN CLASS
 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 10-13-81 REVIEWER: 009256

~~SECRET~~

Nº 365

THE CURRENT REGIME IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

THE PROBLEM

To assess the character and intentions of the Korean military junta.¹

THE ESTIMATE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The members of the military junta now ruling the Republic of Korea (ROK) are tough, nationalistic, and ambitious. They have all spent their adult lives in military service and most of them have had extensive combat experience. Their approach is not that of the intellectual or the professional politician. They are activists who have demonstrated an understanding of the instruments and techniques for political control. They have long been disgusted with corruption and inefficiency in the government and the military establishment and disillusioned with the lack of progress under civilian rule. Their approach to government is authoritarian and they are convinced that the solution of the ROK's many economic, political, and social ills requires rigid public discipline and firm, centralized government control.

2. The members of the military junta still feel that their position is insecure. Consequently, they are suspicious and quick to suppress any potential source of opposition. There are almost certainly elements of vindictiveness and bitterness in their attitude toward Korean politicians and military officers who have served as tools of the politicians.

¹This estimate should be read in conjunction with SNIE 42-2-61, "Short-Term Prospects for South Korea," dated 31 May 1961. A more detailed estimate on both North and South Korea is scheduled to be completed in August 1961.

3. The ROK's new ruling group intends to bring a new order and discipline into Korean life and to initiate a major economic development effort. While the ruling group desires close relations with the US, it intends to run Korean affairs in its own way and to assert Korean independence. At least for the near future, the group has no intention of turning the government back to civilian control or of reinstating institutions of representative government despite assurances to the contrary. They are only beginning to realize the complexities of the tasks which face them and the limitations of their own training and experience. Frustration of their efforts is likely to cause them to resort to ill-considered or repressive acts.

II. LOCUS OF POWER

4. Major General Pak Chong-hui is the dominant figure in the military junta, but his control of the group is neither absolute now nor certain to continue. The recent removal of Lt. Gen. Chang To-yong eliminated the most likely member of the coup group around whom anti-junta military elements might have gathered. Chang's departure, however, did little to resolve the basic problem of control within the coup group. We believe that conflicts are continuing within the junta concerning policies and tactics, and perhaps, objectives.

5. Although there are various possible factional alignments within the junta based on re-

gional origin or service, the potential division which is most apparent at present lies in the differences between the general officers and the field grade officers. There is a group of some 10 or 12 members of the junta—most of them Colonels—who provided much of the coup's initial impetus and planning and who probably differ with Pak on junta policies. In general, these officers tend to favor drastic measures to achieve their objectives and to suppress opposition.

6. The leader of the Colonel faction is probably Lt. Col. Kim Chong-pil, head of the ROK central intelligence organization and the second strongest member of the junta. He is related to Pak and has collaborated closely with him so far. Nevertheless, he could become a rival, particularly in the matter of the future status of the Colonels in the junta. Pak has indicated that he intends to curb the influence of the Colonels, possibly by ousting them altogether or by assigning them to army commands with promotions. Pak may be sufficiently adroit to accomplish this without causing the Colonels to turn against him. There is, however, a possibility that there may be an open break between Pak and the Colonels group. If such a break occurred, the outcome would depend on whether Kim chose to support Pak or the field grade officers in the junta and in the army with whom he has close ties.

7. There will probably be a continuing struggle for power within the junta as various factions vie for influence and as Pak strives to consolidate his position. Beside the Colonels faction, there is a Marine Corps group, headed by Major General Kim Tong-ha, and other opposition groups may emerge. There will probably be efforts to compromise and settle differences, but if open conflict breaks out, we cannot exclude the possibility that the various faction leaders would call upon their supporters in the armed forces. This in turn would be likely to create an opening for action by ROK military commanders who disapprove of the junta. This could result in armed clashes and even civil war.

III. THE COMMUNISM ISSUE

8. Despite the accusations that have been leveled against Pak and some of the other members of the junta, we still have no hard evidence from credible, disinterested sources that they are in fact Communists or are consciously acting as North Korean agents. In its statements and actions to date, the regime has taken a strong anti-Communist stand. Moreover, Bloc press reports and broadcasts have bitterly attacked the junta, its actions, and Pak personally. We recognize that the junta position and Bloc reaction could be an attempt to conceal the true character of the regime. We cannot rule out the possibility that the coup was Communist inspired and directed, but presently available evidence leads us to the view that the junta as a whole was, and continues to be, motivated primarily by personal ambition, intense nationalism, and a strong desire to impose discipline and force development on the ROK.

IV. NATIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE JUNTA

9. The junta has passed a new basic law, virtually suspending the Constitution of the Second Republic and setting itself up as both the maker and executor of the nation's laws. Under this law, the junta's Supreme Council for National Reconstruction is to approve the appointment of all judicial officials and all formerly elected local governing officers, such as province governors and town mayors. The civil rights of the people are guaranteed only as long as they do not conflict with the accomplishment of the Supreme Council's program. At the same time, the Supreme Council has restored much of their previous authority and power to the National Police and other control organs.

10. When it first seized control, the coup group enjoyed some measure of acceptance from the Korean public which had grown weary of the Chang Myon government's inability to subordinate politicking to economic and political reform. Over the past two months, however, public disenchantment with the new regime has appeared in the cities. Some of the junta's early administrative acts

~~SECRET~~

avored the farmers and in the rural areas a favorable attitude toward the junta can still be found. The economic dislocation resulting from the coup has not yet had a measurable political effect on the public, but it will almost certainly add to other causes of public dissatisfaction with the junta if not soon rectified. The increasing authoritarianism and resort to police rule is adversely affecting the junta's standing among intellectuals and students. Many of the latter now regard the military junta as little or no better than the Rhee regime they overthrew.

11. The junta has made full use of its powers under martial law to close newspapers, jail politicians, educators, and businessmen, and impose curfews and censorship. The atmosphere of fear and intimidation thus created has so far prevented demonstrations of public opposition to the junta. The junta's campaign against potential opposition leaders has greatly reduced the chances for organized resistance. Another student-led uprising is possible. If it were to take place, the junta would probably attempt to put it down quickly and violently, and follow up with increased repressive measures.

V. RELATIONS WITH THE US

12. With the assumption of power by the military junta, US-ROK relations have entered a new phase. The cooperativeness of the Chang Myon government has been replaced by suspicion and distrust. Being personally convinced of the imperative need to rid the country of rule by ineffectual and corrupt politicians, the members of the junta probably were dismayed by and resentful of the initial US opposition to the takeover. Much of this sentiment still remains and the

coup group probably feels that its cool, reserved, and suspicious attitude toward the US is but a reflection of the official US attitude toward them. One evidence of the junta's suspicion is the effort being made by Kim Chong-pil's intelligence organization to penetrate the UN Command, and to restrict intelligence collection activities by US agencies.

13. The members of the military junta are fully aware of Korean dependence upon the US and will seek a relationship with the US which will not endanger the country's major source of economic, military, and diplomatic support. At the same time, the military junta probably intends to develop a new and different US-ROK relationship in which South Korea's leaders will feel that they are in full control of Korean affairs. The junta will be less responsive to US advice in political matters, and almost certainly intends to go about the tasks of reform and political control in its own way. US appeals for leniency for individuals or groups considered by the junta to be corrupt or to be opponents of its regime might be interpreted as interference in Korean affairs.

14. The junta has accepted the principle of the subordination of the ROK Army to the UN Command. However, their willingness to implement fully agreements on the command structure cannot be taken for granted. US forces in the ROK probably will be faced with increasing restrictions and problems of maintaining good relations with the Korean authorities. While recognizing the military necessities of the situation, the junta probably intends to maintain a large degree of independence in its command of the ROK Army, at least in peace time.