

The April 19th Generation and the Start of Postcolonial History in South Korea

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Despite implanting buoyant hopes for South Korea's modern and democratic transformation, the April Revolution of 1960 gave way to the military coup of 1961 and the restoration of authoritarian rule. For this reason, April 19th came to be known in subsequent years as an "incomplete revolution" by nationalist intellectuals. This article examines the discourse of national regeneration in the aftermath of April 19th and May 16th to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the two events. The study contends that this pair of seminal developments generated, and was generated by, widespread perceptions of historical transition from an undesirable colonial past to a more desirable postcolonial future. Emergent nationalist beliefs in the start of a new phase in national history played a crucial role in consolidating the framework for political struggles and historical change in the era of developmental authoritarianism.

Keywords: nationalist discourse, April 19th, May 16th, culture, generations

Introduction

The "April 19th generation" (*Saigu sedae*) is a category that defies precise definition. Most commonly, the appellation refers to the influential group of writers and literary critics that emerged in the wake of the April Revolution. The April 19th generation is also closely tied to the idea of the "June 25th generation" (6.25 *cheheom sedae*)—that is, people who experienced the Korean War during their formative years. For analysts of political activism, the April 19th cohort overlaps with the "June 3rd" (Yuksam) cohort to form the first generation of the democratization movement. Part and parcel of this definitional imprecision is a lack of clarity concerning the politics of the April 19th generation. Though generally known for their progressive stances on the issues of democratic

reform, relations with Japan and the U.S., and national unification, numerous veterans of April 19th later espoused conservative positions, thereby clouding our portrait of the generation. In recent years, moreover, the “older generation” of the present era has emerged as a key symbol for political conservatism in relation to the “386 generation,” whose members cut their teeth as student radicals in the 1980s.

In this paper, I turn to the immediate aftermath of April 19th to explore contemporary understandings of the April 19th generation, or the “new generation” (*sin sedae*). By extension, my examination will also encompass discussions of the “old generation” (*gu sedae*). Not surprisingly, definitions of the “old” and “new” generations from that time were protean, as they are today. My aim is not to bring greater clarity to our conception of the cohort, but to investigate the impact that April 1960 had on the emergent field of postcolonial nationalist discourse in 1960-1961. In particular, I wish to show how the seminal event of April 19th solidified the perception that Koreans, after one and a half decades of postliberation adversity, were standing on the cusp of a new era in national history. The “new generation,” which had spearheaded Syngman Rhee’s overthrow in April 1960, was to guide the nation through this collective turning point. The implanting of renewed aspirations for a dramatic postcolonial transition was of no minor consequence. Rather, as I hope to show, it enabled the consolidation of the basic framework for South Korean nationalist discourse for the postcolonial era.

In this study, I use “April 19th” and “April 1960” as shorthand for the series of student demonstrations that transpired between February 28, 1960, and Syngman Rhee’s resignation on April 26, 1960.¹ While “April 19th” corresponds to the appellation “4.19” (*Sailgu*), which receives wide usage in South Korea, “April 1960” has the advantage of drawing attention away from the singular date of April 19th so that we may take into consideration the broader set of events of that time, much in the same way that we are accustomed to speaking of “May 1968.” The appellation “April Revolution” (*Sawol hyeongmyeong*) is also

1. February 28 was the day on which high school students in Daegu staged a demonstration in protest of political abuses by the ruling Liberal Party (LP) in advance of the general elections of March 15. This astonishing protest sparked a six-week series of high school student protests that culminated in high school and university student protests in Seoul and other major cities on April 19. In response to this overwhelming outcry against LP-backed election fraud and police violence, Syngman Rhee resigned from the office of president on April 26.

commonly used in South Korea. Contemporary observers were well aware that April 19th was not a revolution in the classical sense of a major transformation in class relations, mode of production, or political system. Yet many still referred to it as the “April Revolution” because of its symbolic magnitude. On occasion, I will repeat this usage when the contemporary import of the event is relevant to my discussion. Similarly, I will use the official name of the military coup of 1961—the May 16th Military Revolution (*Oiryuk gunsa hyeongmyeong*)—when I wish to provide a sense of how military ideologues used this title to legitimate their seizure of power. Otherwise, I will refer to the coup as “May 16th,” which corresponds to the commonly used appellation of “5.16” (*Oiryuk*).

Section 1: Discursive Sources of the April 19th Generation

The concept of generations is infamously problematical (Jaeger 1985; Roseman 1995; Wohl 1979). Because babies are born into a given national (or sub-national) community year after year, grouping people into precise, age-based cohorts would seem to be rather arbitrary, not to mention unnaturally rigid. In light of this, a skeptic might begin by asking: On what basis do we designate the existence of distinct generations? At the same time, people respond to, and are shaped by, collective events, upheavals, and processes in very different ways, which begs the question: How do we determine the defining characteristics of a generation? And what of the process through which one group’s views come to represent the perspective of an entire cohort? Entering a no-contest plea, generational historian Mark Roseman explains: “To ask ‘What is a generation?’ would be to miss the point. There is no single phenomenon” (Roseman 1995:5). Despite the slipperiness of the concept, however, generations do matter. As most of us observe in our daily lives, temporal context does shape people. And speaking broadly, eras do have distinctive qualities, the relevance of which surfaces time and again.

The April 19th generation serves as a good example. As reflected in its name, April 19th was the defining moment for this cohort. In a broader sense, however, coming of age in the late 1940s and the 1950s—after the epochal event of Liberation in 1945 and amid the turmoil of the Korean War—was the crucial shared experience that set this generation apart from preceding and subsequent generations. Most April 19th protestors were high school and university students born in the final years of colonial rule. As such, they were among the very first to study in the primary and secondary levels of the new South Korean education

system. During the final years of the colonial era, Japanese education ideologues had prohibited Korean language use in schools throughout the peninsula. The reversal of this widely despised wartime policy constituted the most readily apparent difference between the pre-and post-1945 school systems. Immediately after Liberation, nationalist educators introduced formal study of the Korean language into the southern school curriculum under the auspices of the United States Army Military Government in Korea. They also instituted Korean as the formal language of classroom instruction. The “*Hangeul generation*” (*Hangeul sedae*), an alternate appellation of the April 19th generation, reflects the importance of this dramatic shift.²

Study of the Korean language was not the only relevant difference between pre- and post-1945 cohorts. While members of earlier generations received their educations in highly selective fashion in Japanese institutions (in metropole or colony), missionary schools, private Korean colleges, or traditional Korean schools (*seodang*), members of the *Hangeul* generation studied in a rapidly expanding nationalist education system. For the first time, schoolchildren across the country learned about Korean resistance to Japanese colonial rule, as well as nation-centered hopes and aspirations for the postliberation future. Bearing the imprint of its American-trained architects, systematic instruction in the ideals and institutions of modern democracy were another key feature of the new school system. Exposure to nationalist discourse and democratic ideology instilled a more pronounced sense of postcolonial optimism among many members of the post-1945 cohort. Not satisfied with the mere cessation of colonial rule—and buoyed by sanguine representations of Euro-American modernity—idealistic members of the new generation tended to harbor grander visions for the future in the areas of national politics, culture, economy, and society at the collective level. Correspondingly, the disappearance of the harsh realities of colonial-era ethnic discrimination and the postliberation emphasis on national citizens’ equality were sources of loftier career aspirations among young educated South Koreans (Sintaeyang, October 1957).

National division and the Korean War demolished postcolonial nationalist hopes for the development of a self-reliant, prosperous, and unified Korean nation-state. Apart from these nationalist frustrations, the vast majority of the

2. April 19th symbolized the “principal axis of the *Hangeul* generation” for Yun Sik, an SNU student leader in 1960 (Yun 2001:163-164).

population suffered through wrenching realities of violence, want, uncertainty, and separation during the ideological struggles of 1945-1948—and especially during the three years of Korean War combat. Then, after the completion of the armistice agreement in 1953, deep-seated corruption, chronic misgovernment, and endemic instability prolonged the livelihood difficulties of the war years, while severely inhibiting the processes of postwar rebuilding. In spite and because of sustained U.S. efforts to aid the recovery of its Cold War ally, countless South Koreans coped with job shortages, housing crunches, rampant inflation, and heightened crime rates. While the stark gap between postcolonial aspirations and wartime/postwar disorder affected people of every age group, it left a *formative* imprint on the post-1945 cohort. April 19th, in this sense, may be seen as students' critical response to the arduous 1950s.

The emergence of the *Hangeul* generation was also part of the global trend known by contemporary historians as the “Long Sixties” (Marwick 2006; Connery 2006). In Asia, Europe, and the Americas, post-1945 generations took form in conjunction with the reshaping of the geopolitical terrain that followed the conclusion of World War II. Seeking to gain an edge vis-à-vis Cold War rivals, ideologues in both global blocs sought to utilize the educational system as a means to produce skilled and loyal young citizens. In utterly unanticipated ways, however, the ideologization of school curricula contributed to the formation of idealistic movements among the growing population of high school and university students in, among other places, China, France, and Japan (Wang 2003; Bourdieu 1990; Tsurumi 1970). Likewise, in South Korea, the rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary institutions, the concomitant growth of the student population, and the overproduction of university graduates were important conditions of possibility for the eruption of April 19th and, by extension, the coalescence of generational awareness (Sasangye, February 1961).

Culture was intimately linked to the growth of activist movements. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, youths constantly carved out new generational identities by participating in an array of youth cultures and counter-cultures (Siegfried 2006). Americanization—understood here as the selective adaptation of American cultural practices—was an important part of this complex process of cultural definition and redefinition in West Germany, Italy, and other U.S.-allied nation-states (Fehrenbach and Poiger 2000). In South Korea, dating, dancing, and other pursuits of the “*enjoi*” (enjoy) lifestyle were perceived by many contemporary observers to be representative of the younger generation's wholesale adoption of American/western culture (Sintaeyang, October 1957).

Americanization also contributed to the post-1945 dissemination of generational discourse by introducing the figure of the youth rebel to South Korea and other countries in the American cultural sphere. During the 1950s, the broad influence of Erik Erikson's view that adolescent rebellion was necessary for "successful identity formation" helped launch Americans' pop-cultural fascination with rock'n'rollers, bad boys, and other youth rebels who appeared in such films as *The Wild One* (1953), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *King Creole* (1958) (Medovoi 2005). In South Korea, the popularity of American rebel films gave rise to the production of domestic movies about bad boys and teenage delinquents (*bullyang cheongnyeon*)—most notably, *Siptae ui banhang* (Teen Rebellion) (Yeonghwa 1982).

The appearance of the juvenile delinquent as a fixture in the South Korean popular imagination reflects the influence of American psychoanalysis during the Cold War (Zaretsky 2004). Yet, captured by a nationalist lens, the growing incidence of petty crime, gang activity, and other forms of "deviant behavior" (*talseon haengwi*) was considered by many contemporary observers to reflect the failure of older South Koreans to ensure the welfare of youths whose lives had been marred by the Korean War (Sintaeyang, September 1958). Postwar youths seized upon this widespread interpretation and linked it to the theme of rebellion. For instance, Sin Gwanggyun, writing for his high school's literary magazine, lamented the dire state of affairs in postwar South Korea:

At least in schools, our ideals and dreams are cultivated, and we learn the paths that we should take. We receive and read countless admonitions about practicing good and spurning evil, promoting virtue and reproofing vice, and struggling for the sake of rightness. But when we walk outside school gates, we are, in frightening ways, inundated by phenomena that are the exact opposite of what we have learned. Hooligans run amuck on the streets. For heaven's sake! Who is responsible for this crooked state of affairs in which power and money surpass the rule of law, while evil prevails over good? How are we to overcome these contradictions? (Dongdo, February 1959)

The indignant Sin maintained that the failures of parents and elders provoked a rebellious response among alienated youths, who lacked a "place of refuge" in a "society that grows increasingly wicked." Other student essayists turned to French existentialist writings to give expression to the theme of youth rebellion

in the alienating and anxiety-ridden postwar present (Gyeonggi, October 1958). And striking a similar chord, university student Choe Seojeong spoke of “young people’s desire to rebel somehow against establishment society” without regard to consequences—thereby prefiguring the explosive student protests of April 1960 (Sintaeyang, December 1956). For his part, newspaper editorialist Hong Seungman, writing in the wake of the first Masan protest on March 15th, discussed the rise of South Korea’s “enraged youths” in relation to the Beatniks in America, the *après-guerre* condition in France, and the angry young men ethos of contemporary English fiction (Segye, May 1960).

The rise of the April 19th cohort was shaped by additional discursive sources as well. Reflecting the broad influence of the “generation of 1914,” Continental generational discourse made its way to Korea during the colonial era. Pairing neatly with this source was the much older, more venerable tradition of moral protest by scholar-literati on behalf of king and polity. This fundamental component of Neo-Confucian culture in Korea and East Asia constituted a deep historical precursor for modern student protest in the region (Haboush 1994; Kim 2002). Translating this latter antecedent to fit the political and cultural exigencies of the twentieth century were the March First Independence Movement in Korea and the May Fourth Movement in China—two crucial regional events of the global “Wilsonian moment” (Manela 2007). In Korea, the Wilsonian moment solidified the position of students in particular, and the younger generation in general, as the primary protagonist of modern nationalist movements. After Liberation, moderate and rightist South Korean nationalists positioned elite, youth-driven anti-colonial resistance at the very center of the twentieth-century Korean historical narrative (Son 1955; Yi 1948). For their part, ideologues of the new education system emphasized the special linkage between upstanding youths and March First, as well as the Gwangju Students’ Incident (1929), in order to promote nation-centered morals among the *Hangeul* generation (Mungyobu 1959:140). Throughout the April Revolution, youth protestors drew upon the widely shared self-understanding that students should act as the moral vanguard of the nation in times of crisis.

Section 2: Who is the April 19th Generation?

Who comprises the April 19th generation? The most immediate answer is the protestors of April 19th who went on to play influential roles in the fields of politics, economics, and, in particular, literature. Yet, it would be entirely

acceptable to broaden the definition to include every person who protested in the demonstrations of April 18-19—or, for that matter, every person who protested between February 28 and April 26. The historian Hong Iseop, writing in 1962, defined the “new generation” as South Koreans born between the years 1938-1945 (Sinsajo, November 1962). In 1960, such individuals fell between the typical age range of high school and university students. To expand even further, we may define the generation as those individuals who constituted the first age cohort to study in the new South Korean education system, regardless of whether or not they protested in 1960. Furthermore, it would not be unreasonable to adjust the range of birth years to 1938-1948, or even 1935-1950. People born slightly before or after Hong Iseop’s range of 1938-1945 were still, nonetheless, among the first attendees of the new school system—and were still formatively shaped by the turmoil and upheavals that surrounded the key events of Liberation and the Korean War. From the perspective of the present, this looser definition of the April 19th generation, as the first cohort to come of age after Liberation, is quite justifiable.

In this paper, I construe the April 19th generation to consist of all youths who engaged in nationalist activism between February 28, 1960, and May 16, 1961. This categorization encompasses students and school-aged non-students who participated in the “April Revolution” and the “April Revolution Period.”³ Given the participation of middle school students and elementary school-aged children, we might add five or so extra years to the upper limit of Hong Iseop’s range of birth years. The *Hangeul* generation, on the other hand, consists of people born approximately during this expanded birth-year range of 1938-1950, regardless of activist participation in 1960-1961. I distinguish between these two overlapping groups in order to make clear that April 19th participants—and their nationalist protest message in 1960—represented a narrow segment of the broader *Hangeul* generation. I view the latter cohort not as an objective social entity “in itself,” but a fluid grouping of individuals who came of age amid the transformations and disorder of the first decade and a half of the postliberation era. Bearing the formative imprint of that epochal period in the collective past, the discursive idea of the *Hangeul* generation is useful for understanding the era

3. The April Revolution Period (*Sawol hyeongmyeonggi*) refers to the thirteen months of youth activism between Syngman Rhee’s resignation on April 26, 1960, and the military coup on May 16, 1961 (Jeong 1997).

of developmental authoritarianism (1961-1987) and even the broader trajectory of South Korean history from the perspective of the post-June 1987, post-IMF crisis present. Conversely, the April 19th generation is crucial for understanding the specific way in which students, intellectuals, cultural producers, and other nationalist interpreters—in and through the momentous event of April 1960—inscribed the formative collective experiences of the mid-twentieth century into the emerging field of South Korean nationalist discourse. In this sense, I conceive of the April 19th generation at once as an objective group of student protestors *and* as a discursive lens for this collective process of inscription. It is important to note that during this process, contemporary observers of various age groups drew freely upon this discursive lens to discuss key issues faced by the nation-state.

The high school and university students who comprised the majority of student protestors in 1960-1961 were considered to be among the best educated of the *Hangeul* generation, due in large part to the high rates of attrition at every level of the education system. The prominence of elite student participation led most contemporary observers to frame April 19th in the familiar (and simplistic) nationalist mold of an upstanding student movement. This widespread perception was certainly not inaccurate, but it elided a number of significant subplots that were at play during the two-month movement. My aim for the remainder of this section is to provide a more textured understanding of the April 19th generation by outlining important sources of difference within the cohort. For starters, academic hierarchies of school level (tertiary versus secondary) and ranking (top-tier versus second- or third-tier) were key determinants in the outcome and interpretation of the protests of February, March, and April 1960. Building upon a series of nationwide high school student marches, the university protests in the capital on April 18-19—particularly among students from such leading institutions as Seoul National University (SNU), Korea University, and Yonsei University—proved to be the decisive lever in the overthrow of Syngman Rhee. After this denouement, however, most contemporary observers subordinated the invaluable contributions of high school protestors in the first six weeks of the movement to the university protests in Seoul on the signature date of April 19th.

Second, nation-centered interpretations of the event fail to account adequately for the role of sub-national identities in the protest movement. For example, high school and university student leaders relied heavily upon a welter of school-based attachments and relationships to marshal their peers into action

throughout the two months of the April Revolution. In addition, cross-school competitiveness, especially at the local level, was absolutely indispensable for student leaders as they sought to mobilize their classmates, many of whom were reluctant to protest because of legitimate concerns over the potential consequences. The great importance of school-based identities in the April Revolution is relatively well documented in the key protests in Daegu on February 28, Masan on April 11-13, and Seoul on April 18-19 (O 2000; 3.15 1997; Gim 2001). Furthermore, the high incidence of protests in the Yeongnam and Jungbu regions suggests that regional identity was another important factor in April 1960. Despite the country's limited transportation and communication infrastructure in 1960, student leaders were connected through regional networks that took shape through friendships in organic fashion, as well as in leadership retreats for such organizations as the National Defense Student Corps (*Hakdo hogukdan*) and the Junior Red Cross. According to fragmentary evidence, student leaders utilized such ties to communicate with their counterparts in other cities (Gim 1964:245). Regional networks and solidarity, I should note, were particularly relevant in the eruption of protests in Yeongnam. At the same time, in the Seoul protests of April 18-19, high participation rates among students with provincial backgrounds also point toward the relevance of local and regional identities.

It is also worth noting that local resentments against the central government are a frequently overlooked dimension of the protests in Masan—and, quite likely, other provincial protests as well (Yi 2004:42-44). Though sparked by flagrant electoral violations ordered by the ruling Liberal Party (LP), the violent uprising in that city on the night of the March 15 elections was also the product of deep-seated animosity for an unjust structure of local authority that was dependent upon the central regime. Moreover, in the wake of this first Masan protest, Home Minister Choe Ingyu inflamed local sentiments against the LP regime by alleging that “third-column” communist elements had instigated the riots. To deepen the insult, Choe insinuated that Masan, as a hub of black-market activity, was more susceptible than other major cities to communist infiltration. The high-handed response of LP officials to the March 15 protests, and the violence associated with that night, sullied the reputation of a declining port city that had been suffering ongoing economic difficulties after Liberation (Yi 2004). In light of these local dynamics, the non-violent qualities of the carefully orchestrated high school protests on April 11-13 should be seen, in part, as an effort to highlight the pacifism and nationalist probity of the city's students

(Hanguk ilbo, April 16, 1960).⁴

However, the peaceful and orderly daytime demonstrations of April 11-13 gave way to unruly nighttime riots involving non-students and unorganized pockets of students. Like the nighttime uprising of March 15, these volatile protests directly reflected Masan's unjust class relations, which were inextricably intertwined with the LP-centered structure of local authority. This leads us to the third subplot elided in mainstream interpretations of April 19th—class conflict (Yi 2004). In the rigidly anticommunist context of postwar South Korea, contemporary interpreters avoided any serious discussion of class-based tensions. Subsuming non-student participation under the nationalist frame of upstanding student protest was more prudent—and more compelling—within the framework of the dominant discourse.⁵ However, the participation of young unemployed and underemployed non-students was an essential dimension of April 19th that constituted a focused response to the widespread economic and political dispossession engendered through the intense ideological struggles of the early postliberation period (1945-1948) and the Korean War (1950-1953). Reflecting this elision, mainstream newspapers frequently euphemized the involvement of impoverished non-students by spotlighting pitiable, innocuous figures, such as shoeshine boys and paperboys. Similarly, the national media relied on ambiguous categories, such as “citizens” (*simin*) and “thongs” (*gunjung*), to account for the participation of non-students.

Finally, in many cases, contemporary interpretations of April 19th handled the participation of women in perfunctory fashion. Mediated through the dominant nationalist idiom, coverage of women's involvement typically rested upon the widespread assumption that politics was a male pursuit. Newspaper stories about female student participation were often geared toward emphasizing the earnestness and urgency of a protest: the implicit explanation was that student indignation was so great that even schoolgirls took to the streets (Daegu ilbo, February 29, 1960). In similar fashion, the national media tended to handle the participation of female non-students as a way of affixing a figurative exclamation

4. To compare, a *Seoul Newspaper* article published on April 16, 1960, describes the composition of rioters as “young hoodlums, prostitutes, the unemployed, day laborers,” and so on (Seoul sinmun, April 16, 1960).

5. For example, although students constituted a fraction of the protestors in Masan on March 15, numerous contemporary sources describe the incident as a student-led demonstration (Masan 1960:93-94; Donga ilbo, March 29, 1960).

mark to their accounts of the protests. In place of the vague categories of “citizens” and “throngs,” the equally vague label of “(married) woman” (*bunyeoja*) was typically used to conceal the social position of the protestor (Hanguk ilbo, March 22, 1960).⁶ The subsuming of women into the male-centered protest idiom was also apparent in post-April 19th student activism. Weeks after Syngman Rhee’s resignation, female students in the Women Students Association (*Yeohaksaenghoe*) of SNU announced plans to commence an on-campus “new lifestyle movement” (*sinsaenghwal undong*) that would focus on carving out a more assertive role for female students in the male-dominated university (Daehak sinmun, June 13, 1960). Grasping the timeliness of the idea, male students immediately took control of the project, which came to be known as the National Citizens Enlightenment Corps (*Gungmin gyemongdae*). The leadership of the Enlightenment Corps subsequently discarded the original aims of the project (Yeoweon, September 1960).

The foregoing discussion provides a sense of the ways in which the nationalist idiom of student protest flattened out key differences in academic rank, geographical background, class, and gender that directly influenced the contingent escalation of the movement. Generational discourse from the 1950s prefigured the unselfconscious selection of this elementary idiom. The idiom served an important strategic purpose as well. The privileged position of students in nationalist discourse afforded youth protestors a degree of protection that helped enable the escalation of April 19th. In the authoritarian, anticommunist context of the 1950s, the ruling LP would have, in all likelihood, summarily snuffed out the protest movement had it been spearheaded by workers or members of an opposition political party. In contrast, the use of force against youths by LP-backed authorities only weakened the LP’s position, while abetting the protestors’ cause by highlighting youth victimhood at the hands of unjust authority. Bespeaking the efficacy of the nationalist idiom, leftist student leaders involved in the organization of the April 19th protests in Seoul made it a point to censor their own socialist and social-democratic views from university protest claims in favor of democratic and nation-centered ideals that fit within the limits of South Korea’s official anticommunist nationalism (Yun 2001:160).

6. Historian Yi Hyeonhui relates that prostitutes, beauticians, and day laborers were among the women who participated in the March 15th uprising in Masan (3.15 1996).

Section 3: What Was the Voice of April 19th?

The funneling of distinct political stances into the nationalist idiom of youth protest was essential for the success of the movement. On the one hand, the idiom unified students of disparate backgrounds and stances under the common cause of moral resistance against unjust authority, as I have just discussed. On the other hand, the deceptive simplicity of the student protest narrative—which drew upon widely circulating narratives of anti-colonial youth resistance—underlay the discursive resonance of April 19th in the national media and among ordinary South Koreans. To put it simply, enacting the venerable nationalist practice of peaceful mass protest provided the symbolic authority necessary for the toppling of the Rhee regime. At the same time, the great moment of April 19th quickly simplified what had been a loose congeries of youth-based associations into a compact generational identity that was defined by upstanding protest on behalf of the nation-state. In the wake of Rhee’s overthrow, the notion of a “new generation” became synonymous with the “April 19th generation.” In fact, the imprint of April 19th so shaped contemporary perceptions of the youth generation that some intellectuals, in the early 1960s, identified the pronounced interest in generations as a strictly post-April 1960 phenomenon—thereby overlooking the circulation of generational discourse in the latter half of the 1950s (Sinsajo, November 1962).

In the wake of April 19th, generational observers wrote increasingly about the “old” and “new” generations with respect to national past, present, and future. Post-April 19th generational discourse was, in this regard, a genre of nationalist discourse. Or, to return to my discussion in the last section, the idea of the April 19th generation served as a discursive lens that bundled together complex collective issues into simple dichotomies of “new” (*sin*) versus “old” (*gu*), or “young” (*jeolmeun*) versus “outdated” (*nalgeun*). At the very heart of generational discourse lay the basic question of how to effect salutary historical movement from the undesirable present into a more desirable future. In this sense, the voice of April 19th extended well beyond indignant demands for new elections and the redress of police violence to encompass a youth-inspired “fresh contact,” in Mannheim’s sense—that is, a cogent and influential intervention at a critical juncture in national history (Mannheim 1952:302-312). My aim in this section is to sketch the contours of the April 19th intervention, defined as the efflorescence in nationalist discourse that followed Syngman Rhee’s overthrow.

Sparked by the galvanizing moment of April 1960—and fueled by the excess

of concerns about the nation's course—this mainstream nationalist discussion crossed generational lines, in spite of the recurring theme of conflict between the generations. Youthful and aging nationalists alike recoded fundamental problems of the national community into readily intelligible narratives of youth-driven struggle and change as they sought to intervene in Korea's fitful postcolonial path. Thus, to give a common example, nationalist interveners often associated the nation's putative feudality with the "old generation" and its incipient democracy with the "new generation" (Hwabaek, Fall 1960). According to this commonly held view, members of the post-1945 cohort were poised to complete Korea's democratic transformation by supplanting the "absolutism" of their elders. This sort of simplistic story line reveals little about postwar political realities and considerably more about contemporary perceptions of the nation's "backward" politics (Segye, June 1960). To speak more broadly about generational discourse after April 19th, perceived attributes of the "new generation" were actually shared understandings of what the postliberation nation was supposed to become—democratic, modern, prosperous, and so on.

Rather than provide definitive answers, the April 19th intervention consisted of open-ended discussions about national democracy and politics, as well as economy, culture, social relations, and history. Not surprisingly, then, the students and intellectuals who participated in this discourse offered only a hazy vision of their desired future. More concretely, they articulated the need to recover from the key collective setbacks of recent decades—colonization, national division, and civil war (Sinsajo, November 1962). The urgent need to depart for a better future is apparent in critiques of the "old generation." Generational critics were quite circumspect. They gestured loosely toward the "established generation" (*giseong sedae*), which consisted of power-hungry LP assemblymen, corrupt bureaucrats, opportunistic *chaebol*, and ineffectual Democratic Party (DP) politicians (Sasanggye, June 1960). Certainly, these stock figures corresponded to actual figures in politics, government, and business. But rather than point out real personages, generational observers used these stock figures to create a general profile of the country's elite establishment. The profile constituted a critique of South Korea's political settlement (1945-1948) and its subsequent path during the Syngman Rhee and Jang Myeon administrations. Throughout the first decade and a half of the postliberation period, the primary objectives of the nation's leaders were to maintain their positions of power and to amass wealth. Due to these preoccupations, political

leaders not only lacked coherent programs, but were often divided among themselves during these crucial years. Meanwhile, the nation's bureaucrats were more concerned with taking advantage of their posts for personal gain than administering to the needs of the citizenry in efficient and unbiased fashion. Finally, the entrepreneurial elite supplied the latter two groups with kickbacks and bribes in order to secure political favors, state contracts, and other personal advantages (Segye, June 1960). Consistently self-interested, opportunistic, and unprincipled, the “establishment generation”—a stylized composite of the postliberation political, bureaucratic, and economic elite—was deemed by most generational observers to be responsible for South Korea's predicament in the early 1960s.

Significantly, April 19th interveners were quick to emphasize that the established generation—once again, as a generalized profile—had questionable colonial-era pasts. As bureaucrats, compradors, and landlords, post-1945 elites had perpetuated Japan's domination of Koreans before Liberation (Hwabaek, Fall 1960). During the early postliberation years, of course, a great many collaborators and accommodationists did, in fact, rise to important positions in key fields, especially the bureaucracy and the police, as part of Syngman Rhee's highly controversial consolidation of power. Generational observers, however, discussed this deplorable aspect of the recent past in terms of repugnant dispositions characteristic of the older generation. Building upon their stylized composite, they assailed established elites for “selling out the fatherland” and abetting the imperial cause for the sake of personal profit (Hwabaek, Fall 1960). After 1945, the self-interested collaborators and accommodationists of the colonial era, in similar fashion, submitted readily to the power of the Rhee regime and, by extension, the U.S.—thereby subjecting Koreans to new and unforeseen crises.

This critique of the pre-1945 generation went hand in hand with a critique of national character. Expressing a widespread nationalist understanding of the period, one generational observer submitted that the nation's long-standing subordination to China had implanted a “disposition toward serving the great” (*sadae gipung*) among Koreans (Hwabaek, Fall 1960). In the first half of the twentieth century, this engrained *sadae* disposition undermined Korea's independence and became the source for the sycophancy (*abuseong*), servility (*bigul*), opportunism (*gihoejuui*), and collusion (*gyeoltak*) that were so widespread among Korean elites under Japanese rule and after Liberation (Hwabaek, Fall 1960; Sasanggye, June 1960; Segye, June 1960). *Sadae* was itself rooted in the deleterious tendency, which had taken root during the Joseon

dynasty, to place personal interests ahead of the national good, thereby engendering divisiveness. In the contemporary period, personal greed and factional infighting among the country's outmoded political leadership severely impaired Korea's postwar recovery. Generational observers also assailed the older generation for perpetuating those national defects and outdated isms that militated against Korea's salutary modernization—feudality, absolutism, patriarchy, Confucianism, rigidity, formalism, pro-Japanese thought (*chinil sago*), and bureaucratic temperament (*gwallyojeok gijil*) (Hwabaek 1960; Sasanggye 1960). In reality, the notion of the older generation was an essentialized adversary of the new generation and, by extension, the not-yet-modern Korean nation. It was not uncommon for generational observers themselves to point out the imprecision of the “established generation” as a grouping. For example, the historian Hong Iseop divided the monolithic, pre-1945 “older generation” into three distinct age cohorts—(1) people born around 1890, (2) people born around 1900, and (3) people born around 1925.⁷ Graduate student Yu Geunho favored ideology over birth year to determine the older generation's plurality. He distinguished “Japan-friendly” (*geuniljeok*) and “pro-Japanese” (*chiniljeok*) members of the pre-1945 cohort from contemporaneous exile nationalists and socialists who had fought for Korea's independence (Hwabaek, Fall 1960).

Despite such awareness of heterogeneity, the singular caricature of the “old generation” that I sketched above, and its accompanying critique of national history, held considerable currency after the Korean War and, in particular, after April 19th. In contrast, most mainstream nationalists perceived the new generation to be the vanguard of Korea's historical movement into a modern, prosperous, and unified future. Yu Geunho, an aspiring political scientist, reflected on the role of his generation in this key historical transition after the crucial moment of April 19th:

Since our country is late in the reception of advanced civilization (*seonjin munmyeong*), our national society stands in a position of backwardness in terms of historical development. Thus, a generational revolution is inevitable for the achievement of the swift and accelerated development of our entire society. The April 19th Revolution did not complete the

7. Koreans born around 1890, 1900, and 1925 respectively came of age at the time of colonization (1910), the March First Movement (1919) and Liberation (1945) (Sinsajo, November 1962).

generational revolution; it merely opened the door. To complete the generational revolution, the new generation must have a fighting spirit several times greater than that shown in the idealism and courageousness of April 19th. (Hwabaek, Fall 1960)

Here, the *idea* of the new generation, characterized by its democratic awareness, self-reliance, unity, and probity, functioned as the essentialized counterpart of the old generation. As a discursive composite, this idea functioned as a compelling device for expressing fundamental postcolonial aspirations to depart definitively from the colonial past and to correct Korea's perceived condition of historical underdevelopment.

Section 4: May 16th and the Appropriation of Interventionist Discourse

April 19th launched a yearlong period of intensive political activity. A *Donga ilbo* (Dong-A Ilbo) retrospective published in 1974 estimated that some 1,840 demonstrations erupted in the eleven months that followed Syngman Rhee's overthrow (Donga 1975). Buddhist monks, police officers, and masseuses were among the numerous aggrieved groups that were swept up by the participatory fervor of the period, as protestors championed just about every cause under the South Korean sun. The politics of April 19th interveners were certainly diverse. Student activists—the most visible of interveners—mobilized for a number of political causes that ranged from moderate to progressive in orientation. Most prominently, in early May 1961, progressive student activists proposed a summit with North Korean student leaders as the first step in achieving national unification by peaceful means. Among South Korean conservatives, growing alarm over this progressive effort to achieve peaceful unification with North Korea was the immediate impetus for the military coup of May 16, 1961. In the months prior to the planned summit, progressive student demonstrators also demanded the negotiation of a Status of Forces Agreement with the U.S. and denounced Premier Jang Myeon's attempt to pass the "Two Evil Laws" (*2 dae akbeop*).⁸ The establishment of a teachers' union was another important cause on the progressive agenda. Moderate students, for their part, organized the

8. The first "evil law" would have required organizers to provide police officials with advance notice of the time, location, purpose, and composition of public demonstrations. It would also

National Citizens Enlightenment Corps (*Gungmin gyemongdae*) to reform the everyday practices of national citizens in the summer and fall of 1960 (Jeong 1997).

May 16th was also part of the April 19th intervention. Political observers and scholarly analysts have typically treated the former event as the antithesis of April 19th. This is understandable. As an undemocratic seizure of state power, the former event led to the resumption of authoritarian rule, thereby negating South Korea's first democratic triumph. In this sense, May 16th cemented the status of April 19th as an "incomplete revolution" (*miwanseong ui hyeongmyeong*). In line with recent scholarly interpretations, however, I view April 19th and May 16th as two directly related historical events (Yang 2005:121-123). For ideologues of the Supreme Council of National Reconstruction (SCNR), the military coup was not merely a power grab but the start of a "military revolution" (*gunsu hyeongmyeong*) that would complete the task of April 19th. For this reason, ideological statements issued by the SCNR, which took control of government operations after the military coup, fit squarely within the basic framework of the April 19th intervention, as I will show below. I wish to make clear that I do not position May 16th within the April 19th intervention on the basis of a face-value acceptance of SNCR rhetoric. Rather, it is my view that April 19th and the subsequent intervention gave rise to the military coup, as well as its bold revolutionary claims. In the early months of 1960, Park Chung Hee and other marginalized military officers had plotted to carry out a military coup on May 8, 1960, but shelved this plan and opted for a "Clean Up the Military" campaign after the eruption of April 19th (Kim 2004:58-59). In orchestrating their coup one year later, they capitalized on the prevalent understanding that the nation, following the April Revolution, was on the cusp of a major historical transition. Appropriating interventionist discourse, the military junta presented a nationalized program for austere postcolonial development—in short, a centralized "military revolution." Furthermore, the students' overthrow of Syngman Rhee, and the overarching instability that this engendered, opened the possibility of a second political upheaval. In the remainder of this section, I will demonstrate the linkages between interventionist discourse and an essay written

have given law enforcement officials the authority to suspend demonstrations and use firearms at their discretion. The second "evil law," an anticommunist bill, would have amended the existing National Security Law to enable authorities to prosecute individuals for expressing any form of support for the North Korean regime (Han 1974:185).

by the chief ideologue of the SCNR—Park Chung Hee. Titled “*Hyeongmyeong gwaeop wansu reul wihan gungmin ui gil* (The Path of National Citizens for the Realization of the Revolution’s Great Task), the essay I will examine here ran in September 1961, as a six-part series in the *Joseon ilbo*.

We often remember Park Chung Hee’s ruling vision through the trademark slogan “modernization of the fatherland” (*joguk geundaehwa*), as well as his focus on state economic planning and export-driven industrialization. What we sometimes forget is the way in which Park rooted his ideology in the widespread belief that the historical course of the ethnos urgently required rectification. Seeking to bring an end to Korea’s “long nightmare” (*oraet dongan ui angmong*), Park emphasized: “Solidarity among national citizens is the motive force that will enable us to overcome the political, economic, and social crisis that confronts us now so that we may enjoy national peace and prosperity and ensure the happiness of our children and grandchildren” (*Joseon ilbo*, September 17, 1961). Economic reconstruction was the key means by which Korea would avoid degenerating into an “inferior ethnos” (*yeoldeung minjok*) or being “eaten up” by the communist bloc. Park offered a compelling and pertinent program for historical change that centered on the achievement of “democracy.” However, his vision for democracy in Korea emphasized social welfare and social justice, and not the fundamentals of political democracy. Park promised an escape from the ongoing poverty and instability that had plagued Koreans since Liberation and, in particular, the Korean War. Unity among national citizens was the key for accumulating national capital (*minjok jabon*), establishing a self-sufficient economy (*jarip gyeongje*), and ensuring citizens’ welfare.

At the same time, Park stressed that the restoration of social justice through the reinvigoration of national citizens’ ethics would help enable Korea’s modernization. The general lamented the injustice of a society in which entrepreneurs and politicians colluded to exploit the nation’s masses, even as the country’s sizable population of unemployed citizens struggled to feed itself (*Joseon ilbo*, September 18, 1961). To rectify this egregious state of affairs, he pleaded for the “sweeping away of outmoded evils” (*guak eul ilsohada*). On the one hand, South Koreans’ undue emphasis on social pedigree, lineage, region, and academic clique had bred disunity among the members of this enduring “singular ethnos” (*dani minjok*). On the other hand, the spirit of dependence (*uitasim*), slothfulness (*aniljuui*), opportunism (*gihoejuui*), and other long-standing defects prevented South Koreans from reversing the sharp decline in the nation’s fortunes, which originated in the crippling *sadaejuui* and

factionalism of previous centuries (Joseon ilbo, September 17, 1961). For Park, the “path to rebirth” (*gaengsaeng ui gil*) resided in the unified reestablishment of public morality, social ethics, and social justice. He also aimed to revolutionize people’s lifestyles so as to cultivate their ability to support and govern themselves within the greater task of national reconstruction, thereby overturning the dependency and servility that had plagued Korea in the past (Joseon ilbo, September 17, 1961). In this regard, the ideologue sought to create a dutiful “national citizenry” (*gungmin*) that consisted of productive and willing “stalwarts” (*ilggun*) for the nation.

Park forthrightly declared throughout his essay that “realization of the nation’s great task” would require a “political system equipped with coerciveness” (*gangjeseong eul tin jeongchi cheje*). For Park, the “voluntary” (*jabaljeok*) participation of the people was the starting point for the spiritual revolution (*jeongsin hyeongmyeong*) at hand. Strong leadership, however, was an essential element of the revolutionary formula. He justified military rule in several ways. First, he implied that the majority of Koreans did not possess a sufficiently modern and democratic awareness. Thus, the role of the SCNR was to lead and enlighten in “top-down” fashion until the national citizenry was ready for a “bottom-up” political system based on the liberal-democratic model (Joseon ilbo, September 21, 1961). Second, Park designated military rule as a temporary period of tutelage that would culminate in democratic general elections in the summer of 1963. Finally, the ideologue pledged to bring a timely end to economic misery and establish a self-reliant national economy in exchange for interim authoritarianism. Proposing the postponement of democratic politics in favor of economic development—a trade-off crucial for Park’s rise to power—was codified in the SCNR’s “Revolutionary Pact” (*Hyeongmyeong gongyak*).⁹ To be sure, the military’s undemocratic abuses of power certainly had its critics. Nevertheless, after nearly a decade of postwar instability and misgovernment, a considerable number of nationalists saw the need for strong national leadership—and may even have been willing to accept a modicum of political heavy-handedness. An astute political entrepreneur, Park cultivated sanguine visions of rapid national reconstruction along the lines of West Germany’s “miracle on the Rhine,” while testing the limits of public tolerance to the SCNR’s “top-down” tactics (Joseon ilbo, September 16, 1961).

9. Park also subordinated the task of national unification to economic development.

It is worth recalling here that the notion of a “miracle on the Han”—though nowadays a cliché—was an intriguing ideological assurance from the standpoint of 1961.

Immediately following May 16th, the SCNR began to implement a multi-pronged revolutionary program in the fields of government, diplomacy, economy, and education. For the remainder of this section, I will take a brief look at the Settlement of Unlawful Amassments (*Bujeong chukjae ui cheori*) and the National Citizens Reconstruction Movement (*Jaegeon gungmin undong*)—two SCNR projects that directly tackled the military revolution’s focal area of morality and ethics. Within two weeks of the military coup, the SCNR announced the formation of the Settlement Commission (*Bujeong chukjae cheori wiwonhoe*) for the punishment of industrialists and public officials suspected of having accumulated wealth through illegal means—among others, the acquisition of government-vested property and illicit political donations (Hanguk 1962:983). The official inquiry began on June 2, and initial penalties were announced on August 13. Subsequent lobbying efforts by affected *chaebol* resulted in the passage of two amendments to the Settlement Law in late October. Two months later, on December 20, the Commission announced revised penalties for thirty industrialists and thirty-two government employees. Offenders were fined a total of nearly fifty-seven billion won for their roles in “throwing the morality and economic ethics of national citizens into disorder, causing failure of the national economy... driving citizens’ livelihoods into destitution, and bringing about a plunge in national dignity” (Hanguk 1962:980).

Initially, the Settlement of Unlawful Amassments represented the earnest and aggressive continuation of ineffectual efforts by Heo Jeong and Jang Myeon to punish those corrupt entrepreneurs and government officials who had epitomized the moral bankruptcy of the First and Second Republics. In contrast to these lackluster early attempts, the SCNR Settlement began as a systematic undertaking that sought to deal with the problem of state-*chaebol* corruption as part of a comprehensive program for national reconstruction.¹⁰ By promising to mete out punitive justice, the Settlement paired with the SCNR’s Revolutionary

10. The SCNR broadened the scope of the Settlement by adding military officers and university administrators to its list of offenders. It also expanded its inquiry to include unlawful amassments from the restoration of Seoul as the nation’s capital (July 1, 1953) to the penultimate day of the Second Republic (May 15, 1961). Under Jang Myeon, investigations were limited to the time period of 1955-1960 (Sindonga, December 1964).

Court (*Hyeongmyeong jaepanso*) to signal a definitive break from a divisive and self-serving politico-economic establishment that had emerged after Liberation and survived the transition from LP to DP rule.¹¹ While the SCNR attempted to legitimate its seizure of power through these retributive enterprises, it also sought to justify its interim rule by organizing the Reconstruction Movement, which was to prepare South Koreans for this new phase in national history. Launched within a month of the coup, the latter served as the primary intermediate organ linking the SCNR to ordinary citizens in both city and country. Through a number of infrastructural projects and educational programs, the Reconstruction Movement aimed to reform lifestyle practices and disseminate upstanding nation-centered ethics in order to abet the cause of national modernization.

The Reconstruction Movement had numerous antecedents—most notably, the Joseon Products Promotion campaign of the 1920s, the Rural Revitalization Movement of the 1930s, and wartime mobilization efforts of the 1940s. After Liberation, the Rhee regime also mobilized citizens in sporadic New Lifestyle campaigns organized in the 1950s. During the latter half of the 1950s, moreover, high school students participated in rural enlightenment campaigns that were very comparable in thrust (if not in scale) to Reconstruction Movement efforts in the countryside. However, to locate its most immediate precursors, we must turn to the post-April 19th intervention, which gave rise to two lifestyle reform movements—the National Citizens Enlightenment Corps and the Uprightness Campaign (*Cheongjo undong*). Organized in July 1960 by SNU students, the Enlightenment Corps consisted of the National Citizens Enlightenment Campaign (*Gungmin gyemong undong*) in rural areas and the New Lifestyle Campaign (*Sin saenghwal undong*) in urban areas. The rural campaign was geared toward instructing citizens in a variety of topics, including voting, practicing good hygiene, and simplifying ritual ceremonies (Jaegon 1963). For its part, the urban-based New Lifestyle Campaign targeted the consumption of coffee, foreign cigarettes and liquors, and other “luxury goods” (*sachipum*), as well as frivolous spending in teahouses (*dabang*), high-priced drinking

11. Formed immediately after May 16th, the Revolutionary Court prosecuted LP personnel and LP collaborators who had been a party to the political abuses surrounding the March 15, 1960 elections or the suppression of the resulting student demonstrations. In addition, the Court tried political and social activists deemed to be “impure elements” (*bulsun bunja*) sympathetic to communism.

establishments (*yojeong*), and dance halls. Several months after this bold student movement had lost momentum, the decidedly toned-down Uprightness Campaign surfaced in early 1961 to continue the task of national citizens' education (Joseon ilbo, January 26, 1961). Led by a group of eighteen junior National Assemblymen, this minor campaign reintroduced lifestyle reform into the sphere of government, thereby paving the way for the launch of the Reconstruction Movement later that year.

Like the Settlement of Unlawful Accumulations, the Reconstruction Movement should be seen as part of a broader effort by the SCNR to appropriate the reformist energies of April 19th and the intervention into its own authoritarian program of national renewal. In a commemorative declaration issued two years after April 19th, Park Chung Hee succinctly captured this occupation with yoking the military coup to the student revolution: "The May 16th Revolution was the continuation of the April 19th Righteous Undertaking and a pressing emergency measure aimed at rescuing the fatherland (*joguk*) from crisis and reviving the nation-state (*gukka*) through the eradication of communism and the safeguarding of democracy" (Daetongnyeong 1965). Invoking and enacting narratives about overturning the crisis of the present and commencing a new era of history—in effect, "rescuing the fatherland"—carried a great deal of rhetorical weight within the framework of contemporary nationalist discourse. In the immediate, it tapped into impatient desires to escape from the suffering and instability of the postwar present. In a deeper sense, the notion of revival harkened back not only to the triumphant moment of Liberation, but also to the elusive postcolonial exigency of overcoming putative colonial-era legacies of servitude, dependency, and fractiousness. By acting swiftly and resolutely in an array of interrelated projects, the SCNR offered South Koreans a national program more compelling and, in the immediate, more efficacious than that of the LP, the DP, or the April Revolutionaries.

Conclusion

In the long run, however, the SNCR did not deliver on many of its promises. In the case of the Settlement of Unlawful Amassments, a key amendment to the Settlement Law in October 1961 not only reduced the punishment of ten offending entrepreneurs, but also served as an important building block for the state's *chaebol*-centered industrialization strategy of the 1960s and 1970s.

According to the October revision, *chaebol* offenders had the option of using company stocks to pay their fines, provided they erect a factory by the end of 1964. Not surprisingly, numerous culprits capitalized on this generous opportunity. The resulting boom in new factories meshed with the start of the First Five-Year Economic Plan in the following year, while facilitating the reestablishment of the intimate relationship between *chaebol* and the state (Gong 1999:254-255). More immediately troublesome was the pronounced tendency of granting leniency to *chaebol* with ties to the Yeongnam region. The surfacing of regional favoritism in a commission that was supposed to bring an end to the unlawful amassment of wealth signaled the unpropitious start of uneven industrial development in South Korea (Gong 1999:247). This unsatisfactory denouement provoked the journalist Gim Jinhyeon to describe the Settlement as a “flop” (*silpaejak*) (Sindonga, December 1964).

Not to be undone, the National Citizens Reconstruction Movement amounted to “undoubtedly one of the most conspicuous flops of the revolutionary government,” in the opinion of a second journalist, Hong Ingeun (Sindonga, February 1965). Formally, the Reconstruction Movement was to be a civilian-led organ within the SCNR. As such, during its three years of operation, the organ was headed by three successive directors from the field of academics—Yu Jino, Yu Daryeong, and Yi Gwangu. Nonetheless, despite each director’s efforts to shift the emphasis of Reconstruction Movement programs toward active citizens’ participation in the task of economic development, the apparatus retained a top-down orientation geared toward the achievement of statist objectives, especially in the area of regime legitimation (Chae 2004:130). As Hong explained shortly after the dissolution of the Reconstruction Movement in 1964, the organ lacked a “lucid vision” from its inception, relying instead on an ill-defined notion of people’s “participation” in the revolutionary task (Sindonga, February 1965). For his part, cultural critic Jeong Taeyong concluded that the Reconstruction Movement succeeded only in making trivial improvements, primarily in the countryside, while failing to effect fundamental changes in citizens’ lifestyles (Sinsajo, October 1963).

For all its blustery rhetoric about commencing a new era in national history, the SCNR did not show satisfactory progress in the fulfillment of other key promises, such as the establishment of a new political climate and resolution of the poverty crisis. Yet, the military government’s largely superficial accomplishments did not produce a youth backlash in the vein of April 19th. Accompanying the restoration of authoritarian rule was a return to the political

caution and the resigned acceptance that characterized the majority of university students before Syngman Rhee's overthrow. Students who did harbor complaints about the post-May 16th state of affairs often chose innocuous or ambiguous bones to pick—such as dirty streets (apparently caused by a flaw of the old generation) and the lack of “national citizen-ness” (*gunghminseong*)—in espousing a temperate course of generational change (Sinsajo, April 1962, Yeoweon, July 1963). Direct criticisms of the SCNR required greater circumspection. In a short piece titled, “Tangnyu sok e saneun sedae” (The Generation That Lives in Turbid Waters), J, a student of “S University,” denounced the military regime as an illegitimate “anti-national coterie” (*banminjokjeok jipdan*) that had seized power by taking advantage of the political opportunity pried open by April 19th. Linking the leadership of May 16th to the *yangban* of the Joseon dynasty, the landlords of the colonial era, and the collaborators of the Rhee regime, J lamented the ongoing economic and political dispossession of farmers and the ordinary masses, before concluding that only the April 19th generation was capable of accomplishing the desired generational overturn (Sedae, June 1963).

As the anonymous student observed, neither April 19th nor May 16th had brought forth immediate transformations in politics, economy, citizens' ethics, or national culture. Nonetheless, I would argue that this pair of upheavals set loose a political dialectic that had been obstructed in the two-conservative-party politics of the First Republic. Appropriating the trope of generational change, SCNR ideologues sought to legitimate military rule by extending the promise of achieving fundamental nationalist objectives on the basis of direct action rooted in nation-centered ethics. In doing so, they also reified the yardstick for critique of their own regime, thereby creating a narrow yet crucial space for political dissent within the limits of the dominant anticommunist discourse. Derived from the framework of the April 19th intervention, the state's conservative program—which emphasized rapid industrialization—worked in concert with alternative oppositional programs—which stressed democratic reform, economic equality, and unification—to motor South Korea's dialectical postcolonial transformation in subsequent years and decades.

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