



Comparative Analysis of South Korean and Philippine Foreign Policy in Light of Regime Changes



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Research Question

The current literature largely focuses on how current situations within a regime shape the foreign policy of a nation. This project addresses the question of how regime changes over time affect a country's foreign policy decisions. Specifically, it will do this by examining regime changes in South Korea and the Philippines in which the government went from an autocratic regime to a democracy. Foreign policy changes following each transition are then studied to determine the impact the regime changes had on policy realignments.

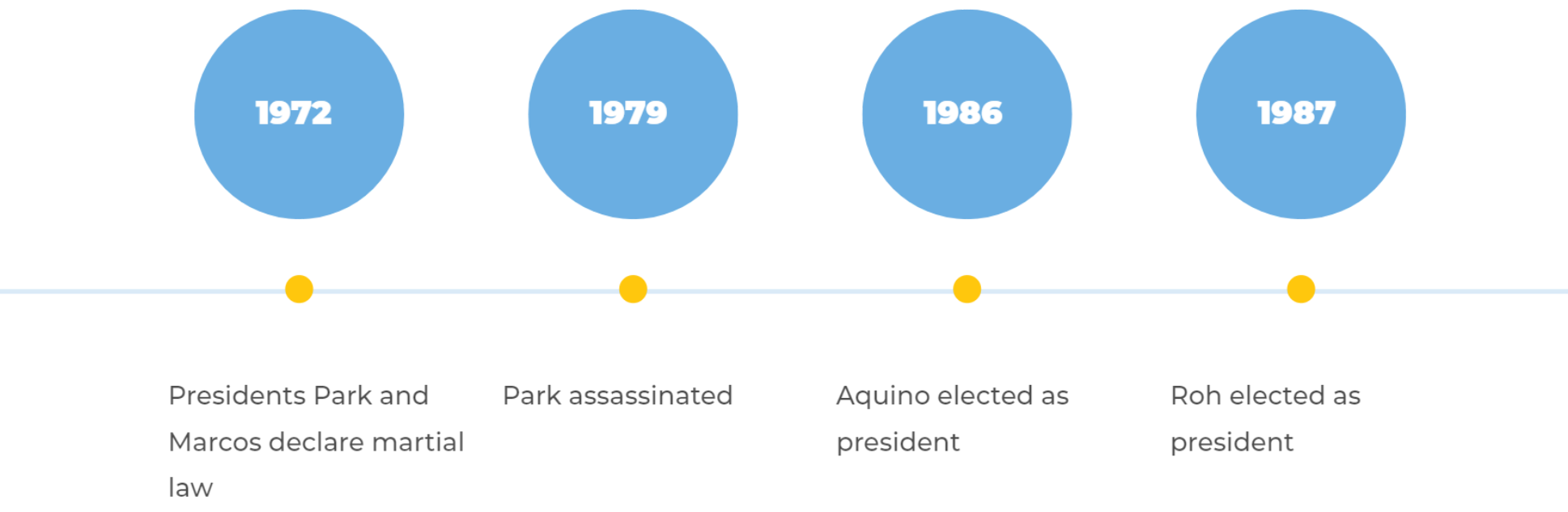
Background Information

South Korea

In 1972, South Korean President Park Chung-hee declared martial law, establishing an autocratic regime. However, Park was assassinated in 1979, leading to a succession dispute that resulted in Park's ally, Chun Doo-hwan taking control of South Korea. In 1987, Chun decided not to ignore the term limit placed upon him as president, and Roh Tae-woo was democratically elected, marking a regime change from autocracy to democracy.

The Philippines

In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law, bringing an end to democracy and creating an autocracy in the Philippines. Then, in 1986, Marcos was ousted from power, and Corazón Aquino was inaugurated as president, resulting in a democratic regime change.



Methodology

To address the research question, a comparative case study analysis is conducted. The cases studied are the democratic regime changes witnessed in South Korea and the Philippines during the 1980s. The foreign policies before and after the regime changes are examined to determine if there are major foreign policy changes resulting from the transition to democracy. "Major foreign policy changes" are defined using the definition of Hermann (1990).

Foreign Policy in South Korea



Overall, Roh's foreign policy goals remained in line with those of Park and Chun: fostering economic development and ensuring national security. However, while their goals were aligned, the specific policies pursued by Roh differed slightly from Park.

Relationship with U.S.

While both Park and Roh valued the alliance with the U.S., Roh had a more stable relationship with America, as Park was hostile toward the Carter administration stemming from accusations of Park's human rights abuses.

Relationship with Regional Powers

Roh appears to have continued the policies seen during Park and Chun in which South Korea pursued peaceful dialogues with North Korea while also expanding relations with other nations, such as Japan. However, Roh did differ from Park by pursuing diplomacy with communist nations under the doctrine of *Nordpolitik*.

Participation in International Organizations

Roh continued to have South Korea join international organizations, as had the Park regime. In addition, Roh followed through with hosting the 1988 Olympic Games, which Park and Chun had worked to have based in South Korea.

Willingness to Enter into International Conflict

Both Park and Roh appear to have preferred to avoid military conflicts, as evident by Park removing South Korea from the Vietnam War, and Roh only sending soldiers to provide logistic support in the Gulf War.

Foreign Policy in the Philippines

The foreign policy goals of Marcos and Aquino differed greatly. While Marcos worked to bolster the economy, appease his supporters, and prevent opponents from gaining support, Aquino prioritized the advancement of the Philippines and the development of international peace.

Relationship with U.S.

While both Marcos and Aquino sought financial aid from the U.S. while also reducing the country's dependency on the U.S., Aquino went through with closing U.S. military bases in her country. Marcos threatened this but did not follow through.

Relationship with Regional Powers

During both the Marcos regime and the Aquino presidency, the Philippines sought to cultivate diplomatic ties with regional powers, including communist nations, like the USSR and China. Both leaders also pursued ties with Japan, though Aquino ultimately had greater success because of her diplomatic reputation.

Participation in International Organizations

While Marcos increased the number of international organizations that the Philippines joined, Aquino restricted the growth of new memberships. Instead, she sought to revive the Philippines' role in groups Marcos had joined.

Willingness to Enter into International Conflict

Both Marcos and Aquino largely avoided international military conflicts. However, Marcos did send noncombat units to serve during part of the Vietnam War, and Aquino sent medical workers to aid in the Gulf War.



Conclusions

After examining the cases of South Korea and the Philippines, it appears that there are significant foreign policy changes resulting from the democratic regime change in the Philippines which are not seen in the case of South Korea. Instead, the policies and goals of Roh are aligned with those of Park and Chun.

The proposed rationale for this difference is in cases where a democratic transition occurs out of a regime in which foreign policies are aimed solely at the preservation and economic advancement of the ruler, the resulting democracy will experience a foreign policy realignment in opposition to the preceding policies. Conversely, in cases where the prior nondemocratic regime's foreign policies were supported by the public and perceived as being aimed at economically supporting the public and addressing a security threat that continues through the regime change, there will not be a significant realignment of foreign policy following democratization.

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Image Citations

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