The Japanese Journal of American Studies, No. 34 (2023)

What Kind of "America" Mattered in the State Building of South Korea? The "Tudor" Polity and the "Progressive" State*

*Seong-Ho Lim***

The primary arguments of this article are threefold. First, from a theoretical perspective, importation of foreign models plays a critical role in new nations' processes of state building, but the multiplicity of dimensions of foreign exemplars permits politicians in new nations to enjoy broad discretion in how they strategically employ different aspects and versions of a foreign model. Second, the American model, arguably the most influential foreign exemplar in the 20th century, has historically manifested two widely contrasting images: that of a so-called "Tudor" polity, characterized by decentralization of power and the prominence of local authority, and a "Progressive" state, prioritizing effective and rational governance and centralized initiatives. Third, existence of both these versions of the American model enabled South Korea's first President Syngman Rhee to selectively highlight each of them in his public speeches (1948–1950) to strategically support his vision for the daunting task of South Korean state building.

1. Introduction

A crucial question in international and comparative politics is the extent to which leaders of a new nation, or of an established nation undergoing a process of political, social, and economic transition, import and employ models of other nations in the processes of state building. Models of

*An early version of this paper was delivered online at the 2022 Annual Conference of the Japanese Association of American Studies (June 4, 2022).

**President 2022/23, the American Studies Association of Korea and Professor, Department of Political Science, Kyung Hee University

America played an outsized role in this complex and multifaceted process during the second half of the twentieth century and continue to do so today. This is because of the United States' dominant role in defeating the Axis powers in World War II and its leadership in opposing communism thereafter, as well as its leading economic and military presence, its tradition and myth of democracy, and its pervasive popular culture.

Some political leaders of countries across around the world as well as American politicians themselves have openly praised and expressed gratitude for American presence, hailed American examples to be adopted universally, and created oversimplified narratives of the nation's history. At first glance, the American global presence may appear clear and unmistakable, and American examples abound across the globe. But on closer examination, we see that each country's construction of the American model and its relationship to it takes on nuanced meaning in a reframed form. People in other countries—notably political elites—have their own interests, values, and agenda they pursue strategically. Apart from what American leaders intend and hope, foreign players consider their own contexts and accordingly view American presence and examples through diversely refracted perspectives. No matter what image of their country Americans may value and desire to project to the world, people in other countries will perceive America through their own prisms, modifying that image and constructing their own concept of America in ways that are relevant and useful to them in the context of their nation. Indeed, local contexts in which an American model is imported vary greatly, as do interpretations of the meaning of American presence, examples, and models.

South Korea's interpretation and use of American models of governance during the late 1940s when the nation was founded as an independent republic provide an illustrative example. Like politicians elsewhere who often referred to or studied a foreign country as a model from which to learn, South Korean politicians at that time felt the need to look to the U.S. as the modern exemplar of governance. Korea had been liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 by the U.S. victory in WWII and the southern half of the Korean peninsula was under American military rule for nearly three years through 1948. Upon independence and the creation of the Republic of Korea or "South Korea" in 1948, the country was already facing the threat of the communist North which was growing rapidly under the influence of the Soviet Union.

South Korean political leaders, having just launched a republican form

of government with no prior experience with democracy, naturally looked to America as a sacred model to follow in those early years. This was especially the case for the country's first president Syngman Rhee, who had lived in exile in the U.S. for many decades before returning to his homeland. Rhee and his supporters idealized and extolled almost everything related to America as something to yearn for in the fledgling stage of state building.

Yet, the U.S. example, like that of any country, offered a variety of sometimes conflicting aspects and lessons, whose interpretation depended on the interests and intention of the observer. Strategically minded Korean politicians pondered what conceptions of America would best suit them as a model to guide the country's daunting task of state building. Although American military and economic strength in particular made American presence overwhelming and unchallengeable at the time, shrewd Korean politicians, particularly President Rhee with his reputation for political cunning, had their own ideas about the distinctive characteristics of the U.S. and how best to utilize them for their own purposes. They, as policymakers attentive to their normative obligations and practical calculations, had strong motivations to characterize America in selective ways.

This paper offers an exploratory investigation of how Korean political leaders, in particular President Rhee, employed various versions of America to support their process of state building. It investigates what kind of America stood out in the public speeches of President Rhee as he struggled to build and stabilize a new state. What kind of picture of America did Rhee, the dominant figure in the founding years, draw? Which aspects of the image of America did Rhee highlight and which did he downplay in his speeches? In other words, what particular elements of America's complex and multidimensional character loomed large in the political discourses of state building in newly independent South Korea?

Scholarly attention to these questions may enrich the fields of Korean history, American studies, and comparative politics. First, it helps us identify and understand more fully the conceptions—perceptual artefacts—of America that were imprinted on the minds of Koreans when they set out on the uncertain, untrodden journey of modern state building. Images of America through the eyes of Koreans during this critical transitional period, in particular, remain blurred even today under a veil of noble, almost divine, tint. Attempting to answer these questions holds the potential to help clarify this picture.

Second, this paper may contribute to the discipline of American studies

by identifying multiple faces that America projects to the world. The term "America" itself resonates with non-Americans in many different ways and connotes many different things of which Americans themselves may not be aware or wish to acknowledge fully. Identifying what kind of America mattered in the largely traditional Korean society of more than seventy years ago may help deepen and broaden our understanding of America itself.

Third, the questions raised in this paper may help rekindle a debate in the field of comparative politics regarding the relevance, or lack thereof, of the American model in other nations' state building. The issue of America's influence was intensely debated in the 1950s and 1960s. But it was debated as if there existed only one version of the American model. Proponents praised the American model as offering a sweeping guideline for newly independent nations, while opponents stressed the harms that non-Western nations who were former colonies suffered. This paper, by contrasting differing versions of the American model, makes clear the need for further discussion and analysis from new angles on what images and aspects of America have best suited the task of state building in other nations historically.

Addressing the questions posed in this paper may provide insights for addressing contemporary problems as well. Various symptoms of crisis—economic malaise, social conflicts, political polarization, governmental impasse, environmental degradation, and pandemics—have plagued nearly every country in the world to a greater or lesser degrees over the past decade. Many people across the globe feel confusion, instability, anxiety, and even generalized but potent resentment, anger, and animosity. These conditions have given rise to renewed reforms of institutions in many nations, which some political pundits have dubbed a "Second State Building." Indeed, in the past several years, numerous South Korean politicians, civil activists, and media commentators have vigorously proposed a Second State Building for the nation. The issue of state building, long dormant in South Korea and many other countries but now resurfacing to address contemporary needs, thus demands a reassessment of the global influence of the American model.

This paper represents an initial exploration of the subject as it applies to South Korea. There are many methodological challenges for research in this area. The most serious one is the difficulty in determining how to observe and interpret images of America in the minds of Koreans living more than seventy years ago. No polling data exists. Newspapers, magazines, and

literature provide only partial, arbitrary, or even skewed pictures. Hence, this paper examines the public speeches of President Rhee in which he mentioned the word "America" in an effort to conjecture more broadly about the different aspects of America that composed Koreans' perceptions.

I recognize problems in focusing on these speeches, in particular the issue of whether the language President Rhee employed in his speeches communicates something far different from what the Korean citizenry actually perceived of America. I believe that a number of aspects of Korean culture and history and the characteristics of Korean people at the time support the proposition that Rhee's speeches simultaneously mirrored and shaped the views of ordinary people to a significant extent in the late 1940s. They are the high levels of illiteracy and poverty, the importance of elder-centered Confucian values, hierarchical colonial legacies, and the lack of experience with democratic-republican rule in Korea at the time. A majority of Korean people could be assumed to have regarded themselves as passive subjects and to have largely believed or at least followed what political leaders told them.

This paper consists of five sections. Section 2 reviews the literature on the relevance, or lack thereof, of the American model for state building in other countries. Whether favorable or not to importing the American model, the literature tends to understand it overly simplistically as if there were only a single version of it. This criticism is supported in Section 3, which distinguishes the two widely contrasting versions of America: the "Tudor" polity prevailing before the twentieth century and the "Progressive" state rising to prominence during the turn of the twentieth century. Section 4 explores the Korean experience and analyzes the presidential speeches of President Rhee, identifying the concepts of America he highlighted and articulated to Korean audiences. The final section discusses implications of the research findings and suggests areas for future research.

2. Theoretical Review: State Building and The American Model

Issues regarding state building have attracted the keen attention of leaders of nations, politicians, policy makers, academics, and the public more generally. Scholars tend to define state building as a very broadly encompassing task every country—new and old alike—must tackle. For example, Professor Stephen Skowronek (1982) delineates the U.S.'s state building as a long evolving process begun in the late eighteenth century and extending at least through the early twentieth century: "Short

of revolutionary change, state-building is most basically an exercise in reconstructing an already established organization of state power. Success hinges on recasting official power relationships within governmental institutions and on altering ongoing relations between state and society" (p. ix). But in more casual usage, state building refers to requisite activities performed when a new nation is created. A newly independent nation's tasks are many: establishing a political system, structures of governance, and foundational laws; consolidating state power and determining the allocation of authority within the nation; and creating national unity and political identity as a single country. All these activities and functions are subsumed under the concept of state building.

During the 1950s and 1960s, state building was a salient and urgent matter worldwide. A host of newly independent nations who had been colonies had to build state structures and establish legal and institutional authority from scratch. Some of them adopted hierarchical and oppressive communist approaches or less ideological forms of statist authoritarianism. Others broadly followed or attempted to follow somewhat loose and ambiguous forms of Western liberal democracy. State building in non-communist countries did not tread a clear-cut ideologically driven route, and instead evolved in more complex ways. Accordingly, it generated a vast academic literature featuring diverse and competing perspectives.

However, that literature failed to produce an all-encompassing theoretical model. This was no surprise given the wide variety of forms of state building that had emerged globally, depending significantly on the particular local contexts and conditions of each new nation. Every theoretical model or argument offered in the literature, insightful as it may have been, could not avoid having to admit some descriptive exceptions to it or some limitations to its applicability or explanatory value. Theoretical insufficiency is particularly evident in the two leading theories applicable to non-communist nations: Professor David Easton's theory based on the liberal democratic tradition, and Professor Carl Schmitt's theory based on a collectivistic statist worldview (Easton, 1953; Schmitt, 1996). Both display fundamental drawbacks in accounting for state building.

Turning first to Easton, Easton's theoretical approach looks inward to the development of institutions within the state itself as an autonomous entity. To him, politics relate to allocation of values by authoritative coordination. A state is where allocative processes take place; state building involves the establishment and expansion of those allocative processes. Easton's famous theory may be convincing as far as fully autonomous and stable

states are concerned. But virtually all states in their early launching stages do not enjoy high levels of autonomy or stability. With colonial legacies lingering and with no prior experiences with a modern form of democratic rule, newly independent states struggle to distance themselves from foreign influences. Regardless of their desires or intentions, most new states confront considerable challenges as they begin their perilous journeys as independent nations and face formidable pressures from other more established and powerful countries that necessitate interaction with them (Pye, 1964, pp. 11–14). Often, these external forces make it impossible to reach wholly self-interested, independent decisions on value allocation. Easton's theory thus fails to account for state building in new states as most new states acquired their independent status not through gradual self-directed progression, but rather by abrupt change influenced by global dynamics.

Unlike Professor Easton, Professor Schmitt looked outward to foreign influences and defined politics in terms of a state's distinguishing its friends from its foes among nations. Politics involves recognizing external friends and foes, thereby assuring a nation and its people's survival against the threat posed by foes. Only when people belonging to the same national territory correctly distinguish foreign friends from foes, and are shielded from the threats of foes, can the state and its politics succeed. To Schmitt, "[t]he ultimate political decision is existential, not normative" (Poggi, 1978, p. 7).

Schmitt's outward-looking theory nicely suits new states in their fledgling phase. Most of the new states in the post-WWII era acquired independence amid the large-scale global confrontations and intricate strategic dynamics of the Cold War. These new states felt the squeeze of international political forces at play. Their need for foreign support as fledgling states forced them to be dependent on other more established foreign powers. And it put them in the difficult position of quickly needing to discern friends from foes as a means of survival, as Schmitt highlighted as of paramount importance in his theory of state building. While Easton's value-allocating thesis might apply accurately to autonomous and stable states, Schmitt's coldly realistic approach more accurately describes the predicaments and experiences of newly independent states struggling to stand on their own feet.

But Schmitt's approach falls short too. First, while heeding the importance of international conditions in defining a state and its politics, his theory barely touches the very process of state building. A state is depicted

as if it were already well past the launching phase. As Professor Gianfranco Poggi explained, "[a state] is itself the product of politics, which must first create it and can only then defend it. And in creating the collectivity in the first place, politics can hardly do without precisely those symbolic public processes that Easton emphasizes and Schmitt disdains" (Poggi, 1978, p. 11). Before or at least during the time that the crucial outward-looking process of identifying external friends or foes takes place, state structure must have taken form and state power must have gained traction inside the national boundary. In other words, state building precedes or at least coincides with the political function of a state determining who its foreign foes are and deterring them. Schmitt's theory unfortunately does not appreciate the crucial importance of this initial process of state building.

Second, Schmitt's theory overemphasizes perhaps to the point of single-minded obsession threats from foes. Security against enemies is undoubtedly of utmost importance to any country, especially vulnerable infant states. But new countries find not just foes in the world, but beneficent friendly nations as well with which they become allied. A new nation's aspiring leaders and its citizenry may seek to learn from these countries and even try to resemble them.

Newly independent states, with neither prior experience of their own as a nation nor a prevailing native model of state building, tend to take exemplary cues from one or more advanced foreign nations. Importing a foreign model from abroad, trying to replicate its success, and injecting its components into domestic settings are often important components of new states' strenuous task of state building. This type of importation often proves to be a relatively effective way of persuading and rallying a large public audience to support the process of state building. Citizens of new nations, who are generally undereducated and ill-informed, tend to feel perplexed regarding which leaders to listen to and follow, and what direction the nation or they themselves personally should take. For such people, the model of an exemplary foreign country provides an appealing paradigm to pursue.

Saying that new independent nations completely lacked their own native models of state building would also be a significant overstatement. All nations with sizable populations have at least some type of vision of their own for their future, but imported foreign models often take center stage in new nations' state-building process. Highly uncertain and volatile political, social, and economic conditions that many new states face can result in internal feuds among various local leaders advancing different visions for

the nation. These competitions over the course of the future for the country can motivate the country's citizens to look for foreign exemplars that provide clearer or perhaps idealized visions for the future. Foreign nations that achieved success and estimable status on the world stage may appear very attractive to populations of new nations that are much less prosperous, modern or otherwise successful. Some of these foreign countries that people may wish their nation to emulate may be perceived as beneficent. Local political leaders themselves may prefer to resort to foreign rather than indigenous models, believing the former would more easily gain public support.

Examining new Asian and African states in the 1950s and 1960s, Pye (1964) notes a clear outward-aspiring tendency: "[T]here is also what we may call a 'world' or a 'cosmopolitan' culture which is closely related to the nation-state system. . . It is based upon a secular rather than a sacred view of human relations, a rational outlook, an acceptance of the substance and sprit of the scientific approach, a vigorous application of an expanding technology, an industrialized organization of production, and a generally humanistic and popularistic set of values for political life" (p. 15). To the eyes of former colonial residents who wished to build a functional state system and did not subscribe to a rigid Marxist doctrine, Western countries that were seen as modern and civilized naturally emerged as the enviable models to emulate. Those model countries boasted of economic prosperity they attributed to mature capitalism. They exemplified political development driven by the mass appeal of liberal democracy. And most impressive to new nations who perceived themselves mired in social backwardness, the model countries exhibited modern advances in rational social management, scientific progress, technological breakthroughs, cultural vibrancy and sophistication, and a generally improved quality of life.

The United States led the non-communist advanced model countries in the post-WWII era. This comes as no surprise, given the U.S.'s decisive role in ending the WWII and ushering in the age of post-colonialism. During the ensuing Cold War, America's global leadership was not confined to security and economic dimensions; it reached the psyches of people around the world. The cultural and moral values of intellectual elites as well as the general public, at least in the so-called Free Bloc, displayed the heavy imprint of America during the 1950s and 1960s. The concept of America—a name with a more casual nuance and mythical import than the technical name the United States—seemed effortlessly to gain prominence as the leading global exemplar of an imagined progress of civilization that was

irreversible. America became the symbol of the blossoming of the modern world and optimistic hope for a better future. The American model provided newly independent nations in the post-WWII world with a promising vision for state building. It was not just an example to follow and learn from, it was a blueprint for future success. Just copy and transplant the American model into the soil of new nation, and the future would be bright.

Both leaders of new nations and policymakers in the U.S. drove the appeal of the American model of governance. As discussed above, political elites in new nations prioritized the importation of the American model as an easy and effective way of gaining popular support for their state-building projects. American policymakers, anxious to expand the country's sphere of influence over the Cold War globe, welcomed the trend in many new nations to venerate America as a model for state building.

American social science scholars of the time also joined in. Political scientists specializing in political development and modernization, in particular, did not hesitate to promote the American model to the world. Professor Donal O'Brien (1979) succinctly summarizes this tendency among 1950s and 1960s political scientists such as Gabriel Almond: "The process of modernization, in less advanced areas of the world, is therefore very simply to be understood as one of 'transition' in which backward polities will grow increasingly to resemble the American model" (p. 51).

But the initial enthusiasm among political scientists soon faded. An increasing number of scholars and pundits began to cast doubt on the universal applicability of the American model. The persisting dismal conditions of some newly independent countries—political chaos, economic misery, and social instability—inevitably fueled suspicion about whether the American model would work in less advanced and less favorable conditions in Asia and Africa. Most of the new nations in these regions, which neither adopted a hard-core Marxist approach nor inherited the British colonial legacy, tried to import at least some parts of the American model. History, however, has demonstrated how disappointing some of the consequences were. Equating modernization and political development and the imported American model proved naïve.

Samuel Huntington, one of the prominent political scientists of the second half of the twentieth century, voiced vigorous criticism of the American model as a universal exemplar (Huntington, 1968). To him, the American model was a product of America's particular historical context, thereby confining its relevance to the U.S. itself. Describing the American model as being inherited from colonial settlers in the early years of the

18th century, Huntington (1968) declared emphatically: "the effort to see connections and/or parallels between what happened in America in the eighteenth century and what is happening in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere in the twentieth century can only contribute to monstrous misunderstandings of both historical experiences" (p. 409). According to Huntington, new post-WWII nations had their own historical experiences that differed greatly from that of the U.S. Huntington (1968) stressed that these new nations would be ill-advised to apply directly the American model to their state building, observing that "the problems of government and political modernization that the contemporary modernizing states face differ fundamentally from those that confronted the United States" (p. 409).

What distinguished contemporary new nations from the America of the nineteenth century and before from Huntington's perspective had to do with the differing needs for state authority and accordingly differing visions of what it would entail. "Today, in much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, political systems face simultaneously the needs to centralize authority, to differentiate structure, and to broaden participation" (Huntington, 1968, pp. 412–3). To Huntington, these values were the most urgent needs and concerns for state building at the time. But in Huntington's view, the American model was derived from the pre-industrial past and did not prioritize them. To the contrary, the American model based on the unique history of the U.S. consisted of decentralization of power, complex interrelated structures, and filtration of the public will through institutional labyrinths. Huntington called the American model a "Tudor" polity, invoking the historical colonial legacy of the Tudor royal family of sixteenth and seventeenth century Great Britain. Tudor polity, which evolved out of the British colonial legacy in America, does not map well to modern non-Western countries, created from very different historical circumstances. Huntington thus viewed the American model as falling far short of providing for the most important need of new nations' state building in the latter half of the twentieth century: political order through centralization (concentration of power), differentiation (clear division of responsibilities and authority in government structure), and participation (direct and broad engagement of the public). Indeed, Huntington argued that in new Asian and African nations "the primary need is the accumulation and concentration of power, not its dispersion, and it is in Moscow and Peking, and not in Washington that this lesson is to be learned" (Huntington, 1968, p. 138).

Huntington and some of his American colleagues who emphasized the

importance of stable political development opposed universal adoption of the American model, as did neo-Marxian critics. Of course, their reasons for doing so were diametrically opposed. Neo-Marxian scholars vociferously condemned the American model because they feared and objected to the specter of American imperialism that they perceived to be an undemocratic influence on fledgling new states. As O'Brien (1979) observed, "Commitment to an imperial mission in these [U.S. policymaking] circles has involved a declining emphasis on the desirability of democratic politics in America's client states" (p. 61). By contrast, Huntington and his colleagues considered the American model based on liberal values and featuring decentralized limited authority to be out of date and an ineffective means of establishing political order and social stability for new lesser developed nations (O'Brien, 1979, p. 69). Pye (1964) summarizes the doubts that scholars who prioritized the establishment of order harbored on the applicability of the American model to post-WWII state building: "Is a commitment to liberal democratic values likely to be a major handicap in nation building? Doesn't the situation call for hardheaded and single-minded leadership?" (p. 6).

On one hand, these critiques of the "American model" are legitimate. As both Huntington and his colleagues as well as neo-Marxists agree, the American model is not universally relevant. But we need to be careful not to represent the American model simplistically. Huntington depicts the American model as a Tudor polity, but the model is more complex and multifaceted than he suggests. The Tudor polity is only one aspect, albeit a very important one, of the American model. In the eyes of leaders and citizens of new nations, some elements of the American model are positive while others are negative, and some are passively inward looking while others are actively overreaching. The issue of state building involves so many dimensions and aspects that it defies a simplistic approach. The common problem that discredits critics of the American model—Huntingtonians and neo-Marxians alike—is their neglect of this complexity.

3. THE "TUDOR" POLITY AND "PROGRESSIVE" STATE MODELS OF AMERICA

The United States of America is the country's official name, but, in a more casual sense, people inside and outside the country often call it simply America. This semantic distinction bespeaks the questions that some people have when thinking about the country: Is it more a unified single entity or more a democratic federation of semi-independent states? Its large size

and complex economic and social history make it impossible to paint one simple picture of the nation and its culture. And the single word "America" which does not convey the reality that the country consists of fifty states, further blurs its perceptual shape to the non-American. Two contrasting images of America emerge from this ambiguity. One is the so-called Tudor polity that, in Huntington's description, represented the country before the twentieth century. It highlights decentralization, a limited government, and democratic governance. The other I call the "Progressive" state in the spirit of the turn of the century Progressive Movement. It emphasizes the progress of human civilization, rational management and governance, and global leadership.

However, one model did not simply replace the other in whole at a specific time. The Tudor polity, though significantly weakened in the twentieth century, has persisted and co-existed with the new Progressive state. America since the early 1900s has had a mixed character simultaneously containing the old and new systems. Depending on the aspects of America upon which one chooses to focus, one may find the country to resemble one or the other of them. In this way, we can say that the American model has been a hybrid since the early twentieth century. Because the Tudor polity preceded the Progressive state, let me begin by describing it first.

Skowronek (1982) noted that America in its early years "presumed the absence of extensive institutional controls at the national level" (p. 4). As the name suggested, the United States was, on the surface, formed in pursuit of such values as unity, unification, and cohesiveness that the pre-Constitutional Confederation and colonial system lacked. But the reality fell far short. The newly founded United States maintained most of its colonial culture, and a Tudor polity, characterized by decentralization and limited governmental power. Skowronek (1982) even called the early U.S. a "fictive state" in the sense that concentrated state power and a clearly differentiated state structure—core components of a state—were largely missing (p. 7). Even after independence from Great Britain, the new country continued to be a polity where communal societies formed during the colonial period remained intact and retained much of their status and influence. Here, national governmental institutions, trapped in the lingering old polity, existed as a nascent and feeble part of locality-centered social and political networks.

The power vacuum at the national level was filled by the courts and political parties. Skowronek (1982) observed, "this broad dispersion of

governing power" to "widely scattered regional centers of action" meant "[t]he triumph of the state of courts and parties" (p. 23). "Parties … were the cornerstone of an old order, an order that presumed the absence of strong national controls," and "[t]he judiciary's governing capacities were stretched … to fill the 'void in governance' left between party hegemony and rapid social change" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 41). The Tudor polity, despite power dispersion and weak state leverage, could survive and function through the nineteenth century largely because of "the ingenious extraconstitutional framework of courts and parties . . . that articulated a coherent mode of governmental operations" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 287).

Some may idealize Tudor-like America as a place of idyllic communal life, but it was far from paradise. As Professor Charles Bright explained, "[i]t was dominated by small elite factions," while [t]he federal government remained remote from everyday life" (Bright, 1984, p.128). Local political elites reconciled their differences and maximized their interests in a symbiotic manner. The earlier impetus toward a modicum of centralized national power, generated by the creation of the United States, dissipated in the face of growing resentment from local political elites or "bosses" who cloaked themselves under the mantle of "Jacksonian democracy." The "Jacksonians were active in checking and reversing the growth of state power, … and historians have often noted a steady decline in federal activity, especially in economic promotion, after about 1830" (Bright, 1984, p. 133). Voter mobilizations, precipitated by the campaign of Jacksonian democrats, opened the door for mass democracy, but also helped to consolidate political parties flexing their muscle in local settings (Bright, 1984, p. 135).

Locally based party systems dominated throughout the entire country, and party-brokered political connections prevailed as the backbone of American political life. The political elites in local party organizations found an ally in the judicial branch. "It was left to the courts to supervise the activities of business in the economic sphere," and the courts came to play a role in a case-based piecemeal manner "as policemen of the boundary between state and economy" (Bright, 1984, p. 139).

However, this Tudor polity consisting of many parochial small worlds ultimately began to erode as every part of the country became nationally interconnected in the late nineteenth century in the wake of industrial revolution. The state lacked sufficient power and capability to tackle national-level problems. "A system designed to distribute favors and rewards found it very difficult to formulate policy based on choices

and the reconciliation of conflicting interests" (Bright, 1984, p. 147). Crisis symptoms included growing recognition of economic inequality, urban unrest, rural alienation, labor disputes, ethnic conflicts, and political disenchantment. These crises frightened many intellectuals and professionals and led to amplified voices calling for multi-dimensional reforms in economic and political systems. The Tudor polity no longer addressed the needs of the newly urban and industrial country, and systematic reforms characterized as the Progressive state gained traction, particularly in urban centers and among business and intellectual elites.

The leaders of the Progressive movement were mostly middle-class intellectuals working in specialized professions: lawyers, teachers, professors, scientists, engineers, accountants, journalists, writers, and social workers. "The challenge of building a new kind of state in America was taken up … by an emergent intelligentsia rooted in a revitalized professional sector and a burgeoning university sector" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 42). These Progressives advocated a long list of reform measures embodying such values as rationalism, science, pragmatism, and morality (Wiebe, 1967; Hofstadter, 1955). Regulation of monopolies and industry, improvement of work environments, prohibition of child labor, urban development, merit-based bureaucratic recruitment, and greater citizen involvement in public affairs topped the Progressive reform list. Their agenda for civic enlargement, in particular, included the secret ballot, direct election of U.S. Senators, party primaries for electoral nomination, ballot initiatives, and women's suffrage. Progressive reformers viewed big business monopolists and local party bosses as dual enemies of America, whose business and political collusion posed a grave national threat. Progressives thought their reform goals would require national centralization and efficient management of government by capable nonpartisan bureaucrats and prioritized creating an effective federal government to solve urgent problems and build an advanced and civilized country.

As the Progressive Movement gained political support and resonated more popularly, nonpartisan bureaucrats, who carried out the reforms and undertook systematic management of the federal government, rose to prominence and took the place of some of the political and social base of local party machines. Along the way, the President as chief executive took center stage both domestically and globally (Bright, 1984, p. 151). This turn-of-the-century Progressive departure to a new America meant "the reconstruction of the American state" and brought "a qualitatively different

kind of state" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 4). Stimulated and propelled by the Progressive Movement, America in the early twentieth century experienced "the reconstitution of institutional power relationships" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 166). The new America came to witness an emboldened presidency and "a national administrative apparatus as the centerpiece of a new governmental order" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 165).

This historical transition was a repudiation of the time-honored Tudor polity, whose decentralized character had resulted in parochial local party bossism and big business monopolies. The new Progressive state called for national centralization and governmental initiatives to establish a better democracy and more sound governance. "Modern American state building was pursued in the name of re-harnessing the vital energies of political democracy and the private economy to ever higher levels of achievement" (Bright, 1984, p. 287). Although advocates for Progressive reforms played a key role in the process, this type of fundamental change would have never occurred without the symptoms of crisis described above. Rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth century stoked urbanization and economic nationalization as well as increased social complexity and struggles between labor and capital, thus revealing the inadequacy of a Tudor polity to confront these modern problems, some of which were enormous.

The American Progressive state grew in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century in two phases: "state-building as patchwork" (1877–1900), followed by "state-building as reconstitution" (1900–1920) (Skowronek, 1982, pp. 3–18). The second phase was particularly critical, with its effect of "restructuring the institutional supports for democracy and capitalism" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 17). Notably, Progressives pursued the dual goals of more participatory democracy and better governing, and "merged hopes for a responsible new democracy with hopes for a responsive new political economy" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 165). Unlike their Tudor-oriented predecessors, reformist Progressives sought effective governing and policy achievements, acting as "independent policy advocates" and stood "in the vanguard of American state-building" (Skowronek, 1982, pp. 44–45).

Compared to earlier generations' emphasis on decentralization and local and community governance, Progressives envisioned a new state which made national integration and government-led stability top priorities. Centralization on a federal level with the government playing a much more active role required a strong bureaucracy equipped with policy expertise

and management skill. As Skowronek (1982) noted: "By transforming ideological conflicts into matters of expertise and efficiency, bureaucrats promised to reconcile the polity with the economy and to stem the tide of social disintegration" (p. 166). A decentralized polity began to give way to a multi-institutional but integrated governmental system with institutional checks and balances that also possessed policy-making capability. The state took prominence, wielding its clout vis-à-vis the authority of local communities, although internal feuds over governing initiatives also emerged: "Structural reform no longer pitted institutional outsiders against a firmly entrenched structure of political and institutional power; it now pitted institutional insiders against each other in a struggle to redefine political and institutional prerogatives" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 169).

Deviating from a decentralized local-based polity with no need for strong national leadership, the new Progressive state prioritized national centralization under presidential leadership. "The bureaucratic remedy promised the chief executive his own national political constituency, independent institutional resources, and an escape from the limitations that a locally based party state imposed on national leadership" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 170). Nonpartisan Progressive reformers, most of whom were professionals, found an ally in independent-minded presidents, in particular Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and to a lesser degree William Howard Taft. "The creative dimension in state-building politics—carried largely by new cadres of professionals standing outside established centers of institutional power in the late nineteenth century—was taken up in the executive office by three consecutive Presidents in the early twentieth century" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 171). An old polity dominated by partisan politicians and the judiciary declined, while a newly arising reform system empowered the executive branch. As Skowronek (1982) observed, "the executive-professional reform coalition pursued a course of redistributing institutional powers and prerogatives away from Congress and the courts toward the President and the bureaucracy" (p. 172).

Of course, the executive branch did not have absolute dominance in the Progressive state; there was a balance of power between the President and Congress. President Taft, for one, stressed the importance of "reconciling [new bureaucratic powers] with the original constitutional design" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 174). Taft, who had been a lawyer and would serve as a Supreme Court Chief Justice (1921–30) after his presidency, argued that a strict interpretation of the Constitution would be necessary to legitimize the task of "rearticulating lines of authority and reestablishing governmental

order while expanding national administrative capacities" (Skowronek, 1982, p. 173). Taft's successor Woodrow Wilson, who was a former scholar of legislative politics, also advocated a balanced, cooperative partnership between an active executive and democratic Congress. During the Wilson administration, Skowronek (1982) noted, "national administrative development became an extension of party development and was worked through the President's cooperative partnership with fellow partisans in Congress" (p. 175).

In the early twentieth century, America was reformed, reframed, and even reconstituted into a Progressive state. It eventually evolved into a strong Keynesian governmental system with activist executive branch initiatives culminating in the New Deal and with the extensive administrative programs and services becoming the centerpiece of governmental operations. A Tudor polity run in a piecemeal way by the courts and party organizations gave way to a Progressive state centrally planned and operated by national administrative apparatuses. Concrete Progressive achievements that created a solid foundation for a new America included: anti-trust laws, tight business regulations, improved workplace environments, prohibition of child labor, merit-based bureaucrat recruitment, direct election of U.S. Senators, the secret ballot, party primaries, ballot initiatives, and women's suffrage.

The historic rise of the Progressive state meant a significant diminishment of Tudor polity, but not complete extinction of it. The two different concepts of America have since co-existed and sometimes competed with each other. Some aspects of American institutions and governance have continued to maintain their decentralized nature, while others now feature more centralized, efficiency-seeking, and achievement-bound governmental initiatives. Observers can find both Tudor legacies and Progressive inventions, depending on which aspects of the country they examine. American governance has become a complex hybrid.

This multifaceted and hybrid character of American governance affords people in other countries with a wide variety of images when attempting to characterize America. Politicians, in particular, have great latitude to highlight different versions of America strategically in accordance with their own interests and priorities and in different contexts of their countries. Especially politicians in newly independent nations, who seek foreign exemplars either to follow or to justify their actions could strategically choose different versions of the American model to utilize with ease. For instance, founding leaders could point to the Tudor model to legitimize a

democratic-republican form of government with free and fair elections of representatives. But they could invoke the Progressive model if they sought to build efficient government structures, consolidate governmental authority on the national level, and exercise active central leadership. In the following section, I will apply this theoretical framework to the historical experience of South Korea during its founding years from 1948 to 1950.

4. "America" in Public Speeches of President Syngman Rhee

Having lived in exile in the U.S. for decades, Syngman Rhee not surprisingly viewed America as a touchstone even prior to South Korea's independence. A combination of historical events—the U.S.'s decisive role in the liberation of the Korean peninsula from colonial rule in 1945, U.S. military rule in the South for three years following liberation, and the South's hostile confrontations with the North Korean communist regime backed by the Soviet Union—further contributed to Rhee's heavy reliance on the U.S. as an authoritative reference point after he became South Korea's first president in 1948. As theorized in Section 2, political leaders in a new nation tend to resort to foreign models to assist them in the highly uncertain, uncharted, and complex task of state building. President Rhee, in particular, found America the most suitable foreign exemplar. But, as discussed in Section 3, the American model is a hybrid of two substantially divergent approaches, and President Rhee was able to use different aspects of the American model selectively and purposefully in presenting images of America to the South Korean public.

In Rhee's speeches, he sometimes emphasized the democratic origins and character of America that I have referred to as Tudor polity; at other times he stressed America's strong central government and its national policies and programs to provide effective assistance to the weak and poor across the country, which I have termed the Progressive model. On one hand, Rhee wanted to institute a democratic form of government as soon as possible and wanted Korean people to embrace democratic principles and values. The Tudor polity provided an ideal model. On the other hand, he had a responsibility to secure national integration, social stability, and economic well-being for the fledgling nation, and accordingly tried to exercise strong leadership and centralized authority over the South Korean population, who were largely supportive of him. The Progressive model fit extremely well in this context.

President Rhee's public speeches delivered in the two-year span from

his inauguration (July 24, 1948) to the outbreak of the Korean War (June 25, 1950) provide a multitude of examples of Rhee's employing both models selectively in his political maneuverings as South Korea's founding leader.*** Turning first to Rhee's use of the Tudor model, on August 15, 1948, day of independence after American military rule when the new nation was officially launched, Rhee delivered a speech in which he touted America as a country founded on the principles of justice, human rights, and popular sovereignty, that sought to spread those ideals and make them a reality worldwide (Public Speech, August 15, 1948). Rhee wanted to bestow legitimacy on the new South Korean state by articulating and emphasizing how he and the new nation also embraced those ideals and considered them the foundation of their new nation as well. Just over six months later, to justify a democratic-republican form of new Korean government, Rhee recalled the American Revolution which ended British monarchical rule in America and how the newly independent United States created a new republican form of government, embodying ideals of freedom and popular sovereignty (March 1, 1949). In a speech urging Koreans to build a stable and peaceful country, Rhee identified the U.S. as its most benign foreign partner because its democratic system naturally cultivated the values of peace and stability (August 4, 1949).

Trying to bolster his legitimacy as the first democratically elected South Korean president (albeit indirectly by National Assembly members rather than directly by the people), Rhee emphasized free elections as a core component of American democracy. American politicians banding together in rival political parties, Rhee said, engaged in fierce confrontations during election campaigns, but once the election was over and regardless of the result, they ceased to fight, and instead formed a broad coalition to work for the betterment of the country (December 28, 1949). Rhee particularly extolled examples of losing candidates conceding elections and congratulating the winners, regardless of how narrow the electoral margins may be, and no matter how hostile they had acted toward each other as they competed for the seat. He praised America's peaceful processes of transition of power through elections in such a glorified way because he wanted to quiet grumbling critics and political opponents and to gain cooperation and support from all political circles and the South Korean public as well.

Rhee also emphasized the fundamentally democratic nature of America

*** Rhee's public speeches are documented in the Presidential Archives, Korean Ministry of Public Administration and Security. https://pa.go.kr.

to justify his heavy reliance on U.S. aid and assistance for state building. He described what he considered to be a noble and self-reinforcing mechanism of democratic systems: the peace-loving attitudes of citizens of a democracy are reflected in their government's tangible policymaking, and those benign actions of their government in turn further deepen the peaceful values of the people, which leads to further policymaking promoting peace. In other words, democracy begets peace, and vice versa. Rhee then claimed that foreign assistance from the U.S., one of the most advanced democratic nations, entailed no imperialistic ambitions and simply manifest naturally from pure respect for freedom, justice, peace, and welfare of humankind (November 2, 1949).

Rhee often emphasized the liberal democratic tradition of America in his speeches because he wanted to draw a sharp contrast between it and what he considered to be the harmful and dangerous communist regime in North Korea and its primary sponsor, the Soviet Union. He drew a stark distinction between what he characterized as America's benign foreign policy and hegemonic ambitions and imperialist motivations driving the communist forces rooted in North Korea (March 1, 1950). As political leader of a new and fragile new nation, Rhee found making such clear-cut distinctions between communist ideology and American liberal democratic values to be an effective strategy to prevail over communist advocates and sympathizers both in North and South Korea. He endeavored to let the South Korean citizenry know how ideologically opposite America, which he considered a benign savior, was from their northern enemy and its big brother, the Soviet Union.

Making this distinction was an important component of Rhee's strategy to build a South Korean state that could stand up against communist threats and aggression from the north. In a speech to the National Assembly, Rhee quoted his American "friends," who claimed that democracy and communism could not exist together and that for global peace and order to exist, communism needed to perish completely (May 3, 1949). Whenever an opportunity arose, Rhee did not neglect reiterating how the American President and Congress sought to exterminate communists for the sake of world peace and prosperity as well as for Korea's sociopolitical order and economic growth (June 14, 1949).

But images of America in President Rhee's public speeches were not confined to its democratic dimensions reflected in the Tudor model of America. Rhee also frequently depicted America through the lens of the Progressive model as a nation with strong governmental institutions and

active engagement in both domestic and global affairs. As the founding president of a newly independent nation, Rhee must have felt an urgent need to establish state structure and government authority as soon as possible—no less than the need to establish democratic institutions and practices. The Progressive model of America as a foreign exemplar to support and justify his actions was a favorite topic in Rhee's public talks.

He extolled America for having achieved an advanced civilization based on scientific progress, lauding the U.S. commitment to environmental preservation and protection as an example of such advancement (March 28, 1949). In his speeches, Rhee repeatedly ascribed America's prosperous civilization to its pragmatic tradition of learning by doing; Americans respected practical values and common sense over abstract ideological dogmas or purely academic theories. He praised Americans for prioritizing engineering and other applied fields over literature, philosophy, or theology (July 15, 1949). In highlighting the broad capabilities and efficient governing mechanisms of the American Progressive state, Rhee identified the importance of the U.S.'s making systematic management of government a top priority of state polity. For example, Rhee pointed to America's systematic management of firefighting and fire prevention as a successful model for South Korea to follow (November 10, 1949). A government managed and operated in a systematic and efficient manner, a key feature of the American Progressive model, was what Rhee desperately sought for his urgent task of state building.

President Rhee also felt the utmost need for law and order, as do all political leaders of newly launched nations in varying degrees. Enforcement of law and order, however, could easily fall a prey to sociopolitical rivalries and conflicts in new nations. On this subject, Rhee again resorted to the American model in his speeches. He articulated how American democracy never meant creating lawless conditions in which people could do whatever they wanted without limitation. According to Rhee, America, despite its democratic tradition that cultivated a culture of personal freedom and expression and individualism, had accepted the concept of political bossism and had never neglected the importance of order based on hierarchy (April 18, 1950). To Rhee, maintaining law and order based on existing social hierarchy was crucial to South Korea's state building, just as it was to the American Progressive state in the twentieth century to create a more stable and prosperous U.S.

The image of the American Progressive state that Rhee tried to impress upon the South Korean public not only featured a strong government with

effective leadership, but also projected benign state authority actively helping and protecting poor and disadvantaged people domestically and globally. This active and beneficent image looms large in the Progressive model of America. The Tudor version certainly offered the image of a friendly neighbor but did not provide an active means to achieve such a relationship. Rhee needed to justify the U.S.'s continuing overwhelming presence in South Korea and his heavy reliance on American aid and assistance during the process of state building. The Progressive image of America as a benign older brother actively helping a weaker sibling solve problems was ideal for this purpose. To imprint this Progressive image of America onto the South Korean public, Rhee persisted in speech after speech to portray America as Korea's savior from Japanese colonial rule. In a speech on the very day of official independence, Rhee emphatically pointed out that Korea had been liberated from Japanese colonial rule thanks to America's active involvement (August 15, 1948). In many subsequent addresses, he attributed Korean liberation specifically to the role of the American military led by General Douglas MacArthur (October 21, 1948; November 28, 1949). In fact, Rhee's speeches did not confine the U.S.'s role as a savior to Korea; he underlined America's active benevolent outreach and unhesitating engagement it offered to all fledgling non-Western countries (March 23, 1949; August 4, 1949).

This image of the Progressive American state as a savior was ubiquitous throughout Rhee's public addresses. America had not only saved Korea from Japanese colonial rule, but it was at that moment protecting South Korea from communist aggression and economic disaster, the two most pressing issues threatening the infant republic. Rhee stressed that without U.S. President Harry Truman's active leadership against communist threats, Korea as well as other democratic countries would have succumbed to them (March 1, 1950). Rhee specifically expressed his appreciation for U.S. military assistance on numerous occasions (November 17, 1948; April 19, 1949; May 10, 1949; June 14, 1949; August 15, 1949; November 2, 1949; March 1, 1950). Also, touting America as a savior from poverty, Rhee repeatedly thanked the U.S. for economic aid both in terms of supplying goods and supporting the country financially (October 22, 1948; June 14, 1949; June 28, 1949; August 15, 1949; November 2, 1949; January 21, 1950; March 1, 1950). Specific areas of American aid that Rhee underscored were: construction of infrastructure, transportation, and communication (January 25, 1949), food supplies (November 23, 1948), technical and technological assistance (May 10, 1949), and social welfare

support through such organizations as the Red Cross (May 1950).

Indeed, the United States played a highly influential role in almost every dimension of South Korean state building in the nascent years of the nation, 1948 to 1950. But this overwhelming presence drew suspicions and criticisms from some segments of the South Korean society. Anti-Rhee political groups, in particular, criticized the close ties with the U.S. that Rhee ardently prioritized. Accordingly, Rhee attempted to fend off these attacks from his opponents by repeatedly showcasing in his speeches the Progressive images of America as a beneficent global leader that provided aid and assistance to all new and weak nations engaged in the difficult task of state building (June 9, 1949; December 10, 1949). Rhee placed his fragile new nation under the broad global umbrella of a benign America to bestow strong legitimacy on his decisions and policy. In so doing, he elevated the Progressive model of America to the fore, regulating the Tudor model to the background in these aspects of his rhetoric.

In sum, President Syngman Rhee in the first years of South Korean state building selectively emphasized various aspects of the multifaceted American model in his public speeches. He employed the concept of foreign importation of the American model to support his goal of establishing and stabilizing his new state. By selectively highlighting elements of the Tudor and Progressive versions of the American model at different times, Rhee tried to justify to his South Korean audience particular components of his vision of South Korean state building: a democratic-republican form of South Korean government, his strong authority and autonomy as President, his government's staunch anti-communist stance, and the new nation's heavy reliance on U.S. aid and assistance.

5. Conclusion

I consider this paper to be an initial exploration into Rhee's use of various aspects of the American model in his speeches during the launch of the South Korean nation, not a final and definitive study of the subject. Further research is needed to reach deeper into the details of Rhee's ideas as they relate to his rhetoric and to examine more closely the particular contexts in which particular speeches were delivered. We also need to investigate the degree to which Rhee's public speeches reflected South Koreans' attitudes at the time and in turn how much they might have shaped Korean people's perceptions of these issues and perspectives on them. We cannot assume that they accurately represented the average Korean

citizen's point of view during those early years. And as a twenty-first-century observer, I humbly acknowledge the potential for my own bias in analyzing Rhee's public speeches delivered over seventy years ago and have endeavored to be attentive to such risk. Below are three other specific areas for further scholarly inquiry.

First, there are many other models of America that have been imprinted on people around the world other than the two versions I have discussed in this article, and there are many other countries and widely divergent historical contexts in which different versions of the American model have been applied. Investigating and analyzing these myriad situations offers an almost unlimited number of areas for future research. Systematic comparison of those images of America in a variety of national contexts would generate a broad range of knowledge about the multifaceted character of America in the eyes of the world.

Second, the strategies political leaders especially of new nations have employed to import foreign models to support state building deserve extensive further research. This article specifically addresses President Rhee's use of versions of the American model in the process of South Korean state building. But politicians around the world have had their own particular reasons to import foreign exemplars. Savvy leaders of new nations often stress their determination to repeat the success of a foreign country in their own nation through selective use of only favorable aspects of a foreign exemplar to legitimize government authority and their policy positions. Research into such strategic use of importation of foreign models in many diverse nations would create a wealth of knowledge about the dynamics of state building.

Third, although this paper focuses on importation of a foreign exemplar for state building at the formation of the Republic of Korea over seventy years ago, insights into this history may be applicable to reform efforts across the globe today. Recently, worsening symptoms of system fatigue and decay, evident in political polarization, policy gridlock, and social confrontation, have prompted many advanced democracies to initiate new state-building reform drives. As Professor Skowronek (1982) explained, the concept of state building is not necessarily confined to the beginning years of new nations. The concept is useful to understanding long-evolving reconstructions and rearrangements of systems and priorities of governance. Strategically using a foreign exemplar—notably the U.S. because of its global status—can be an important component of reform projects.

The image of a 'Tudor' America may be referred to when prioritizing

democratic advancement, and a Progressive America may be evoked insofar as coordinated effective governing is concerned regardless of whether a nation is new or well established. But, unlike the immediate post-WWII period when America thrived as a paragon of national virtue and enjoyed virtually unchallenged global respect and influence outside the communist world, today America itself is mired in crisis. With America no longer perceived as the ideal global model of governance, political leaders in countries around the world may no longer view importing an American model as an effective strategy for state building. As the future unfolds, research into this subject will be of vital relevance.

Bibliography

Bright, C. C. 1984. "The State in the United States during the Nineteenth Century." In Charles Bright and Susan Harding. Eds. *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*. The University of Michigan Press.

Easton, D. 1953. *The Political System*. Alfred A. Knopf Publishing.

Hofstadter, R. 1955. *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* Vintage Books.

Huntington, S. P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Yale University Press.

O'Brien, D. C. 1979. "Modernization, Order and the Erosion of a Democratic Ideal." In David Lehmann. Ed. *Development Theory: Four Critical Studies*. Frank Cass.

Poggi, G. 1978. *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction*. Stanford University Press.

Presidential Archives, Korean Ministry of Public Administration and Security. "Presidential Speeches." https://pa.go.kr.

Pye, Lucian W. 1964. "Democracy, Modernization, and Nation Building." J. Roland Pennock. Ed. *Self-Government in Modernizing Nations*. Prentice-Hall.

Schmitt, C. 1996. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George D. Schwab. University of Chicago Press.

Skowronek, S. 1982. *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920*. Cambridge University Press.

Wiebe, R. H. 1967. *The Search for Order, 1877–1920*. Hill and Wang.