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## **Towards Democracy: Why did the 1980 Gwangju uprising emerge?** Shin, Yosup

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## **Towards Democracy: Why did the 1980 Gwangju uprising emerge?**

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## **1. Introduction**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1980, as citizens in Korea gathered on the streets to fight against the Military government, a massive social movement outbreaked in Gwangju, Jeolla province (Warnberg, 1987, p. 33). After the liberation from Japanese Colonialism in 1945, authoritarian regimes were placed in South Korea, and the assassination of President Park Chung-hee built a new power base that supported him and brought a new authoritarian government ruled by a military leader, Chun Doo-hwan (Lee, 1981, p. 125). This political vacuum brought several concerns and cynicism toward the new authoritarian government, leading to a democratic uprising against the authoritarian government and its regime led by Chun Doo-hwan. Despite its significance in the history of democratic consolidation in Korea, the Gwangju uprising remains highly contentious since it is unclear to conclude what made the democratic uprising emerge (Warnberg, 1987, p. 53). Therefore, limited research on the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement led to the research question: *why did the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising emerge?* This research applies two theories to the Gwangju democratic uprising to analyze how different features of the movement affect the emergence of the uprising and to see which theory explains the best of the emergence of the movement.

First, the research examines previous literature's contributions to social movement emergence, mobilization and the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising in Korea. Next, the focus of this paper shifts to discuss chosen theories of social movements and emergence to apply them to the 1980 democratic uprising in Korea. Necessary concepts will be defined as well. After that, independent variables from each theory are explored and determined so that which features that caused the Gwangju democratic uprising can be analyzed. Finally, a historical overview and analysis will be discussed with a conclusion. The last section, thus, presents a summary of the findings, argumentation, and implications for future research. The research is assessed by using a congruence procedure to compare observations within cases in order to evaluate theories. Therefore, this research analyzes how different independent variables retrieved from each theory affect the dependent variable.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section reviews relevant literature on democratization under authoritarian rule including its condition, and comprehensive framework for understanding the complex processes

and mechanisms involved in democratization. Moreover, a significant background of the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising along with different factors that possibly led to the emergence of the democratic uprising in Korea will be reviewed.

### ***2.1 Democratization under Authoritarian Rule***

In the past and even in the present, democratization has been taking place all over the world as a means of fighting against authoritarianism and achieving democracy. Democratization under authoritarian rule occurs due to combinations of different factors such as political and moral attractiveness toward democracy, the impact of external powers, and the citizens' resistance toward democracy (Wesołowski, 1990, p. 457). Then, Tilly (2000) argues that democratization involves various actors and factors under different conditions, and those features interplay throughout the process of democratization (p. 1). Geddes (1999) also agrees that democratization under authoritarian rule occurs as a result of several factors and mechanisms, and the recent studies of democratization of the late 20th century suggest that authoritarianism broke down in characteristically different ways since the form of democratization varies across different regions (p. 115). While many scholars agree that the emergence of democratization in authoritarian states varies, each scholar focuses on different concepts and theories. Huntington assessed different democratizations throughout global history and categorized three waves of democratization (Dooenspleet, 2000, p. 384). The first wave introduced the emergence of democratic regimes throughout the nineteenth century, and the second wave, which was at the end of World War II, was relatively shorter than the first wave (p. 384). Lastly, the end of the Portuguese dictatorship brought the success of the third wave of democratization from the 1960s to 1970s (Huntington, 1991, p. 12). By using case studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wesołowski (1990) introduced three factors that make authoritarian regimes become weaker and collapse eventually: 1) economic decline, 2) political inefficiency of authoritarian rule, 3) change in the political system of the Soviet Union (p. 439). Society's resistance to authoritarian government revealed those three factors, and this showed how an authoritarian regime could be diminished by itself to cause a transition toward democracy (pp. 439 - 442). Even though most scholars who researched democratization agree that it is a complex process within the social movement, the reasons and conditions for the emergence of democratization differ. Thus, research about the emergence of democratization requires critical investigation of what specific features can cause democratization.

Moreover, different scholars trace the roots of democratization and figured out each democratization emerges with different conditions and causes. Tilly (2000) strongly opposed recent research which only specified certain cause-effect relations since democratization does not follow a single path, but it has unique conditions in certain circumstances (p. 1). For instance, Tilly's (2001) figure of the process and mechanisms of democratization shows that democratization begins with certain events such as revolution, colonization, and confrontation with the regime, and those events accelerate the change of political mechanisms which cause alterations of public politics, inequality, and networks of trust (p.3). In short, Tilly tries to argue democratization does not include a single causal mechanism, but it comes along multiple paths. Moreover, Huntington (2001) specifically researched the third wave of democratization and argued that democratization transformed through multiple phases with different causes (p. 45). Huntington (2001) argued that the very first step to make social movement emerge is the emergence of a group of people within an authoritarian regime who desire to achieve democracy, and the author also stated that many cases showed that reformers initiate the process of democratization since they believe it is simply "right" form of the government like other developed countries (p. 45).

## ***2.2 Emergence of 1980 Gwangju democratic movement in Korea***

Many social movements are formed for several reasons such as common interests, building blocks of organization, and group identities (Almeida, 2019, p. 65). Almeida (2019) delineates that less powerful individuals generally find themselves subject to political or economic dominance which includes loyalty to the values, beliefs and governing institutions, also defined as hegemony (p. 64). While Almeida tends to focus on how social movements emerge when groups with common interests initiate collective action to fight against hegemony and bring a change to society, McAdam et al. (1996) focus on how social movement emergence is affected by three broad factors: the structure of political opportunities, forms of organization, and framing processes (p. 2). McAdam et al. (1996) criticize that many scholars tend to focus on a single aspect of the social movement and argue that those three factors are connected in shaping the emergence of social movement (p. 7). Even though scholars focus on different factors when it comes to researching social movement emergence, many scholars including Almeida and McAdam emphasize that a comparative perspective in analyzing the emergence of social movement is necessary to

understand in-depth which factors led to the emergence of the specific social movement (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 17).

Regarding the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising, various scholars researched its structure and development. Warnberg (1987) pointed out a few significant points that caused the movement such as the government's use of military power on student protests and its use of martial law (p. 53). One of the most significant points of Warnberg's article is that the article includes an eyewitness story, and it was published only 7 years after the Gwangju Democratic uprising. Moreover, the article was written by a foreign scholar. However, the article lacks an explanation of the remaining subjects of controversy and confusion.

Lee (1981) also provided a historical background of the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising only a year after the movement and focused on what initially caused the emergence of a new authoritarian government (pp. 125-127). Since the article was published only one year after the movement, it covers a slightly wider range of historical events such as the political vacuum and the Yushin constitution of 1972 (p. 126). Therefore, the article provides more in-depth historical research on the emergence of the Gwangju democratic movement from a Korean scholar's perspective.

An article by Lewis (2002) breaks down the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement into different parts and demonstrates the movement in detail such as May 18, which is the date when the Gwangju uprising began (p. 3). This article provides the most detailed overview of the Gwangju democratic movement regarding the beginning of the violent revolt and the aftermath of the movement (Lewis, 2002, pp. 59-61). Lewis is a Western eyewitness of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement who was sheltered by a Korean family, so the article contains the author's memories and photos and provides a narrative explanation of the movement in detail. Thus, the article provides trustful insight into the Gwangju democratic movement from the perspective of a non-Korean scholar.

Moreover, the May 18 History Compilation Committee of Gwangju (2013), written as HCCG later, published a book which presents an overview of the different events during the Gwangju democratic movement, and the members of the compilation committee are from South Korea. This

review of the Gwangju democratic movement provides its overview in detail, and it presents the stories of the government and activists group together.

Overall, many scholars researched not only the concept of democratization but also its causal mechanisms and processes. Even though all waves of democratization are significant, literature on the third wave of democratization was mostly reviewed for this research regarding its temporal similarity with the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement. Literature about the 1980 democratic movement focuses on its historical background and the emergence of the uprising. Even though the aforementioned literature significantly contributed to the studies of democratization and democratic movement in Korea, it lacks theoretical approaches to why democratization emerges and occurs, especially for the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement. Therefore, this research focuses on a theoretical explanation of why the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement emerged by using literature and theories of social movement.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

As mentioned in the previous sections, social movements are formed for several reasons. Thus, it is difficult to clearly figure out the reason why certain social movements emerge. This difficulty applies to the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising as well because of multiple causes and a lack of research from scholars. To answer the research question, this section provides a discussion and conceptualization of theories that will be used and other concepts that can be useful to the research.

#### ***3.1 Political Opportunity Theory***

Political opportunity theory, also known as “political process theory”, suggests that social movements emerge from different political opportunities (Tarrow, 1998, pp. 18-20). The concept of political opportunity in the theory is an external political environment and struggle that provides incentives for collective action, and the external political environment indicates the resources external to the activist group (Tarrow, 1998, p. 77). In the political opportunity theory, political opportunities refer to various dimensions of opportunity. Crossman (2019) suggests that a certain political opportunity must be present before the movement itself to initiate the social movement and achieve the movement’s objectives, and changes within the political system reveal the

vulnerabilities which give people opportunities to bring social movement. McAdam (1982) also states that the destroyed political status quo encourages people to begin collective action to fight against a new political order (p. 42). Almeida (2019) specifically suggests strong mobilization and emergence of protest when different types of opportunities appear at the same time (p. 52). Tarrow (1998) also introduced different dimensions of political opportunities including repressions, instability of political alignments, division of elites, and influential allies, but the author argues that a mix of open and closed access to political rights is likely to encourage people to initiate social movement (pp. 78-80). According to Zepeda-Millán (2017), while the good news model helps the emergence of social movement when all features appear simultaneously, the bad news model increases the chances of social movement when the threat is easily recognizable, occurring from a single source to be blamed easily, affecting larger groups, and imminent over time to provide enough time to initiate the social movement (p. 154). However, Almeida (2019) also points out that there are political circumstances where opportunities and threats are acting simultaneously, and it is important to consider the incentives of social movement from both opportunities and threats (p. 57).

In order to summarize what political opportunity theory argues, political opportunity theory is a framework within social movement theory that examines how changes in the political environment provide possibilities for collective action, and many scholars argue that political changes in the political environment or landscape could create doors for social movements. In the case of the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising, the long-lasting authoritarian regimes which had been in place in South Korea since 1945 liberation from Japanese colonialism were the biggest concerns of citizens, and incidents such as 12.12 military insurrection and the declaration of Martial law by authoritarian government were clear political opportunities for citizens who desired legitimate democracy to fight against authoritarian regime under the military government. Based on many scholars' arguments and political opportunity theory, the following hypothesis is generated for this research:

*Hypothesis 1: the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement emerged due to different political opportunities rather than the framing process*

### **3.2 Framing Theory**

In framing theory, social movements are not just the product of preexisting ideologies or institutional arrangements, but they are actively constructed carriers of ideas and meanings (Benford & Snow, 2000, p.613). First, framing theory begins with three core framing tasks which are diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 199). Diagnostic framing involves identifying and specifying a problem which needs to be addressed, then activists frame responsible parties to blame (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 200). Diagnostic framing, therefore, is a significant step to identify the issue and create a shared understanding of the issue between activists and potential supporters. Prognostic framing provides potential solutions and strategies to the diagnosed issues such as planning action to achieve the activists' goal, and motivational framing involves emotional appeals or cultural sorority to inspire people to join the social movement and collective action (pp. 200-202). Those combined strategic steps efficiently frame certain parties and encourage more people to join the social movement. After that, activists align their frames to reach and bring an even broader audience, and this process involves bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 624-625). Processes of frame bridging include broadening the frame to connect multiple groups in the social movement and sharpening the focus of the frame to a specific grievance (Almeida, 2019, p. 83). Frame amplification is an interpretive process that clarifies the existing values or beliefs within the social movement by emphasizing particular grievances to elicit cultural and emotional values, and frame extension refers to extending the interest of the frame to form a movement coalition (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624). Unlike other frame alignment processes, frame transformation seeks to get rid of old understandings and reframe with new ones (p. 625). At the end of the framing process, leaders of the social movement and activists use communication channels such as media, and speeches to disseminate their messages to audiences, then they investigate the effectiveness of their framing strategies to observe whether the framing process is delivered to intended audiences (Almeida, 2019, p. 98). By strategically framing certain actors and actions, activists in the movement can construct and communicate their grievances and goals. Therefore, the framing process creates interpretive schemes among activists, and the frame alignment process allows those schemes to pervade individuals who were not involved in the social movement. While political opportunity theory argues that certain political opportunities must be present before the movement emerges, Gamson and Meyer (1996) argue that social movement also generates different opportunities to conduct another social movement or develop the movement (p.

276). During the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, different types of circumstances were enough to frame certain actors, propose solutions, and inspire public participation. For instance, the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement could be divided into different events which will be discussed in detail later such as a declaration of martial law, the assassination of President Park Chung-hee in 1979, the 12/12 Incident, and the May 18 Incident (Warnberg, 1987, pp. 35-36). In light of those events, this research focuses on how different frames played an important role in spreading the values of social movements and encouraging people to take action on the democratic movement in Gwangju. Based on the process of framing theory, the following hypothesis is generated for this research:

*Hypothesis 2: The 1980 Gwangju democratic movement was facilitated by different types of frames and alignment processes rather than the use of political opportunities*

### **3.3 Conceptualization**

Each theory has important concepts that must be defined to understand the theory itself, and some concepts of social movement also must be defined to understand the research question. Therefore, this section will define those necessary concepts for this research. For political opportunity theory, the independent variable (IV), political opportunity, is broadly defined as the external environment or events that influence the social movement to achieve its goal (Suh, 2001, pp. 439-440). Opportunity can further be divided into different types of political opportunity that affect the emergence of social movements. As aforementioned, Almeida (2019) introduces opportunities into two models to differentiate different conditions of social movement emergence: good and bad news (p. 50). Good news, characterized by opportunity, indicates political environments which increase people's chances of achieving their goals if they organize and initiate social movements, and those opportunities are namely institutional access, conflict among elites, changing political alignment/election, relaxation in governmental repression, and multiple centers of power within the regime (p. 50). On the other hand, bad news, characterized by threats, could affect the mobilization of social movements since the existing situation may get worse if the social movement is not undertaken, and different features drive the emergence of the social movement: 1) economic problems, 2) environmental or public health threats, 3) erosion of rights, and 4) state repression (Almeida, 2019, pp. 50-53). In order to critically measure the political opportunities of

the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, this research follows Suh's (2001, pp. 439-40) definition as a broad concept and uses Almeida's (2019, pp. 50-53) differentiation of political opportunities. Thus, political opportunity is defined by the external events that enhance the chance of mobilizing social movement. political opportunity can be grouped into bad news vs. good news, or hybrid environments.

For framing theory, the independent variable (IV) refers to different types of frame and frame alignment processes. Goffman (1974) defines the term "frame" as a scheme of interpretation that enables people to locate, perceive and identify different circumstances within their lives (p. 21). Snow and Benford (2000) also define the concept of "framing" as a method by which individuals, groups, and organizations analyze and understand information to create the level of reality construction (p. 614). As indicated by Snow and Benford (1988) above, diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing are included to define the term "frame" and used to measure the use of framing during the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement. Thus, a frame itself can be defined as a method and action which enable individuals to analyze information and motivate collective action such as defining the problem, proposing the solution for the problem, and appealing to participate in the social movement.

The dependent variable (DV) emergence of social movement is defined as the process of organizing collective action and mobilizing resources to address complaints and pursue change (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1214). However, scholars who focus on specific theories consider the emergence of social movements differently. For instance, Snow and Benford (2000) consider the emergence of social movement as the construction of different frames within the social movement with framing tasks (p. 614). McAdam (1982) argues that the emergence of social movement is the process when political opportunities align with resources and cognitive liberation to initiate collective action (p. 51). This paper considers the different features of movement emergence suggested by different scholars, but the definition of social movement emergence must be the same for both IVs to figure out which theory explains the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement better. Therefore, the dependent variable is defined as the action or process such as organizing collective action, framing certain problems, and using political opportunities to pursue and initiate political change.

#### **4. Methods**

#### **4.1 Research Design**

The research design of this study is a single case study using a congruence procedure which applies two theories to the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement and figures out which theory explains the emergence of the democratic movement better. The congruence procedure enables comparative analysis of multiple theories to test the congruency of theories (Van Evera, 2016, p. 28). It aims to understand how IV -political opportunity or framing process- leads to the DV-emergence of social movement, specifically the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement. In order to compare the application of two theories in a single case, a congruence procedure will be used. The congruence procedure is selected based on its ability to make comparative observations within a single case to test theories (Stephen, 2016, p. 58). This method allows us to measure the congruency between the expected and observed features to test theories (pp. 58-59). Since the research question aims to find why the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement emerged, the congruence theory is useful to answer which theory explains the reason for emergence the best. Although many scholars of social movement provide theories of social movement emergence, comparative research between multiple theories to research the emergence of why the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement has not been conducted. Therefore, the congruence procedure allows us to test which values covary more in line with the prediction of the hypothesis of each theory (p. 62) Lastly, the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising lacks a theoretical approach. Therefore, the use of the congruence procedure provides a richer understanding of the topic itself and comparative research on a single topic to figure out the cause of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement.

#### **4.2 Operationalization**

In order to analyze this research, the main variable and causal mechanisms need to be operationalized into measurable values (Beach & Pedersen, 2019, p. 12). First, the independent variables, political opportunities and framing process, will be measured by analyzing the presence of each core feature. For political opportunity theory, the political opportunities will be measured by analyzing how different types of political opportunities affect mobilizing and encouraging citizens to initiate the democratic movement in Gwangju. Moreover, IV focuses on contracting and expanding political situations such as the declaration of Martial law, constant use of force by the military government, shifts in leadership, and government repression toward citizens which

would cause the 1980 democratic movement in Korea. This analysis mainly considers how opportunities, threats, and even a hybrid political environment played significant roles in making the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement emerge.

For framing theory, the framing process will be measured by analyzing how activists generated different types of framing, and how the framing alignment process played a key role in mobilizing activists and initiating the social movement.

The emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, the dependent variable, will be assessed by different indicators. The number of participants, duration and intensity of movements, and even government response will be used to analyze how IVs, political opportunities and framing processes, affected the outbreak of the Gwangju democratic movement. Gwangju democratic movement is not a single event, but it contains significant events within a certain duration. Therefore, in terms of the outbreak of the democratic movement, mainly three stages of the movement will be assessed to figure out the causal mechanism with IVs and different stages: 1) May 18 – fight between activists and special forces, 2) civil armed militia taking over the city to fight against special forces and militarized government, 3) fight between citizens and martial law troops (Chung, 1997).

### ***4.3 Case Selection***

The political opportunity theory predicts that actions such as exposing the weakness of enemies and communicating information create political opportunities, which are crucial factors of collective action (Tarrow, 1998, pp. 71-72). Framing theory examines how different framing features and processes encourage individuals to construct collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 632). Many scholars researched the emergence of social movement using two aforementioned theories, and they became the mainstream of social movement theory. However, scholars haven't specifically researched the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement due to a lack of resources and controversies over the topic. Eventually, some scholars analyzed the development and aftermath of the Gwangju democratic movement, but a theoretical approach to explain the emergence of the movement is still needed. Therefore, the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement is selected to answer "Why did the 1980 democratic movement emerge" with theoretical analysis. To test two theories for the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, it is significant to analyze how IVs, political opportunities and the framing process, caused the uprising. The

research primarily focuses on the Gwangju democratic uprising itself which happened from May 18 to May 27 1980 with three aforementioned incidents (Chung, 1997). For some researchers, the Coup d'état of December 12 1979, also known as the 12.12 military insurrection in Korea, is also considered a part of the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising since the army Major General Chun Doo-hwan who was the main actor in conducting the 12.12 military insurrection was in charge of riots and massacre of citizens in Gwangju during the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising (Warnberg, 1987, pp. 34-35). Due to its historical significance and relationship with the democratic uprising in Gwangju, the 12.12 military insurrection will be considered as well. Although some scholars try to go back further such as the era of Japanese colonization or liberation and find the starting point which affected the emergence of the democratic uprising, this research focuses on the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising itself using two theories since events such as May 18 uprising is more likely to be considered as the beginning of the Gwangju democratic uprising. Therefore, the selected case, the 1980 Gwangju democratic uprising, contains 12.12 military insurrection and three incidents in May 1980. The selected cases examine how the Gwangju democratic uprising emerged by looking at the political landscape and incidents during the Gwangju democratic uprising. The chosen case is good to analyze since it is a typical case of a democratic movement which involves features such as state repression, martial law, student mobilization, and even armed citizens. Moreover, not many scholars have researched the emergence of the Gwangju democratic movement yet, so this research can provide theoretical suggestions for the Gwangju democratic movement itself.

#### ***4.4 Data Collection***

Since the Gwangju democratic movement was held under an authoritarian regime where most media were controlled by the government, it is challenging to find news articles or reports entails the democratic movement at that time (Youm, 1986, p. 881). Therefore, the collected data for this research are mostly literature and articles written by scholars and eyewitnesses. Due to such limitations, the data for this research must fulfil two criteria. First, the literatures cover the historical overview of selected cases to conduct theoretical analysis for each stage of the movement. Second, the literatures must include selected IVs from each theory. Lastly, By using data from domestic and international scholars, the research can avoid bias and controversies in the movement.

All stories of eyewitnesses will also be used to analyze what kind of political opportunities and framing processes were present, and what kind of roles they played in causing the Gwangju democratic uprising. Most collected primary data are archived by using web archives.

## **5. Analysis**

### ***5.1 Historical Overview***

A historical overview will be provided in this section to understand the analysis. The 1980 Gwangju democratic movement took part after the assassination of President Park Chung-hee on October 25, 1979, which caused political change, dispute, military takeover, and the emergence of new authoritarian rule (Lee, 1980, p. 125). After the assassination of President Park, Prime Minister Choi Gyu-ha took over the position of acting president and martial law was declared at the same time (HCCG, 2013, p. 56). While national politics were having such a complicated time, Jeong Seung-hwa wanted to exclude some “politically minded officers” who were positioned in important districts in the national politics, and this was a clear sign from Jeong that military leaders should not oversee national politics (p. 56). However, Chun Doo-hwan, a Korean army general in 1979, was not comfortable with Jeong’s decision since it was so clear Jeong was trying to solidify his power, and this led Chun to initiate the December 12 coup (p. 57). Under the pretext that Jeong was present at the scene of Park Chung-hee's assassination, Chun planned to eliminate Jeong and take over the military, so Jeong was arrested with other military generals (Time, 1979). With key government figures arrested and even the prime minister vacant, the 12/12 military coup d’état was an opportunity to bring military dictatorial rule under Chun Doo-hwan (Park, 2009, p. 254). After the 12/12 coup d’état, Chun’s military takeover happened quickly on 17 May 1980 (Shorrock, 1986, p.1195).

From May 6, 1980, various university student councils launched meetings to discuss rumours of a new dictatorship under Military power with Chun (HCCG, 2013, p.74). Students marched in the streets on May 15 to demand the end of emergency martial law, and they even officially announced that all students resist any school closures due to the martial law (p. 74). On May 17, martial law was officially extended resulting prohibition of political actions and meetings, censorship of all media, and Seoul police started to raid student council meetings at different universities to arrest them due to their support for democracy (pp. 75-76). Therefore, the

democratic social movement began on May 18, 1980, for a demonstration against the military government in Gwangju (Warnberg, 1987, p. 33). From May 18 to 21, a fight between citizens (activists) and special forces such as martial police and armies continued (Warnberg, 1987, pp. 38-42). On May 21, some demonstrators took guns from police stations outside Gwangju and stole more weapons to form the Citizen's Army since activists realized they needed weapons to protect themselves and fight against the military forces (HCCG, 2013, pp. 96-97). As a result, the movement became brutal in only a few days, and more deaths of innocent citizens were continued. Finally, on May 27, the martial forces entered the center of Gwangju with weapons such as tanks, and all citizens who fought against them were brutally killed (pp. 107-109). When military soldiers invaded different buildings to arrest all citizens and left the Citizen's army, the Gwangju democratic uprising wrapped up (Warnberg 1987, p.46; HCCG, 2013, pp. 109-110).

## ***5.2 Overview of Analysis***

To test how political opportunity theory and framing theory explain the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, finding the presence of IVs during the movement is necessary. Therefore, the analysis will be conducted mainly in two sections: 1) the application of political opportunity theory, and 2) the application of framing theory. For each application, the presence of specific IVs will be analyzed by using collected data. Then, the applications of theories will be analyzed to conclude which theory explains the emergence of the Gwangju democratic uprising the best with findings from previous analyses. Lastly, alternative explanations and limitations will be discussed.

## ***5.3 Application of Political Opportunity Theory***

Scholars define political opportunity as the external political environment which creates incentives for the collection action (Tarrow, 1998, p. 77). As Almeida (2019) proposed, political opportunities are divided into two groups which are good and bad news (p. 50). For "good news", the theory expects that chances of winning benefits and achieving what people want are higher if people organize the social movement using such "good news" opportunities (p. 50). To begin the analysis, the Gwangju democratic movement lacks features of institutional access. Institutional access as political opportunity refers to "an opening in the political system for excluded social sectors which could benefit specific groups" (Almeida, 2019, p. 51). However, the President and

politicians did not make any statement stating that they are open to change in a particular sector such as workers, employers, or students, but the conversation between citizens and the government was very limited due to martial law and authoritarian regime. Regarding the conflict among elites, it was present before the democratic movement. Many scholars and historical data indicate that the December 12 Coup d'état happened due to Jeon's plan to take the military out of politics which encouraged Chun's plan to take over the government (HCCG, 2013, pp. 56-57). However, these conflicts between political figures and military groups did not directly play the role of political opportunity to cause the Gwangju democratic movement since the conflicts caused the Chun's Coup, but it is difficult to say that the conflict caused the mobilization of citizens to fight against Chun's military government. The next opportunity is the multiple centers of power within a society. As indicated above, the Gwangju democratic movement initially began by the University student councils, and they successfully made other people such as teachers, workers, and other citizens join the demonstration for democracy by May 18 (HCCG, 2013, pp. 74-76). Lastly, there was a short-term relaxation in governmental repression from the army. On May 21, the army decided to withdraw to the outskirts of the city which provided citizens to understand the remaining confusion and realize the status of the uprising (Warnberg, 1987, p. 42). In the afternoon of May 22, citizens formed a group called "May 18<sup>th</sup> Coordinating Committee of 15" to negotiate at the military headquarters by proposing their demands such as stopping the deployment of combat forces and releasing all students and youths who were held in detention (p. 42). Seeing the formation of the coordination committee and their attempt to negotiate with the military, clearly shows how relaxation in governmental repression provided space for citizens in Gwangju to mobilize collective actions. From McAdam and Tarrow's (2018) five features of "good news" opportunities, changing political alignment is absent for the emergence of the Gwangju democratic uprising since South Korea had an authoritarian regime from the post-Korean war which did not provide any political parties to favor certain social movements (pp. 25-26). Moreover, the conflict among political elites was not related to the emergence of the democratic movement itself.

For "bad news", also referred to as threats, scholars refer to negative conditions which deteriorate the circumstances in society (Almeida, 2019, p. 53). First, "bad news" threats suggest that material conditions of life are one of the principal forces generating collective action. Economic issues motivate people to generate collective action since deterioration of the material condition directly impacts their lives, and situations like mass unemployment, economic crises,

and government austerity allow groups to be engaged in social movements (Almeida, pp. 53-54). In the 1980s, the domestic economy was indeed falling due to a decline in trade and poor harvest (Márquez-Ruarte & Aghevli, 1985, p.8). However, Yun (1997) argues that middle-class Korean people were worried about social movements generating even more economic development which made them hesitate to support the movement (p. 153). Thus, it is not likely to say economic problems encouraged people to mobilize collective action during the Gwangju democratic uprising. Then, scholars state that the erosion of rights motivates collective action. Once many citizens perceive a loss in their rights, it is highly likely to see the emergence of collective action, and Almeida (2019) provides the removal of democratic elections and policy changes which reduces the rights of particular groups for example (p 55). During the 1980 democratic movement in Gwangju, the extension of martial law showed how the military government tried to reduce the democratic rights of citizens, especially students. On May 18 1980, martial law was extended over the entire country, and this caused several outcomes such as the closure of schools, and the prohibition of political actions, meetings, and strikes as well (HCCG, 2013, p.76). Eyewitnesses of the Gwangju democratic movement argue that more students and citizens joined the demonstration to protect their rights and perceived interests (Warnberg, 1987, p. 50). Lastly, it is likely to see collective action and defiance when the government uses their army, police, and special forces to repress their citizens through violence and intimidation (Almeida, 2019, p. 56). The author argues that continuous governmental repression can cause more radical or revolutionary action since civil society may perceive overthrowing the government and directly fighting against the forces as the only way to end state repression (p. 56). Lewis (2002) witnessed several street fights, acts of brutality, and escalation of violence from the state forces (p. 7). Moreover, the military started to use armored vehicles and tanks to suppress demonstrations, and they announced the military forces could not guarantee the citizens' lives if they remained on the streets stating that military forces enforcing martial law were making every effort to bring the city's order back (p. 7). This governmental repression played a key role in making citizens caused the creation of the 5.18 incident settlement committee to settle the agenda, negotiate with the military, and fight against the military forces (pp. 28-30). Lastly, environmental and public health threats are also introduced as one of the features of "bad news" threats. However, the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement did not include collective actions to improve national environmental and public health qualities such as pollution, HIV/AIDS, and other environmental hazards.

#### ***5.4 Application of Framing Theory***

For framing theory, the analysis mainly focuses on the presence of four framing features and tasks during the democratic movement in Gwangju: 1) diagnostic, 2) prognostic, 3) motivational, and 4) frame alignment. First, diagnostic framing indicates framing some event of social life as problematic and demands alteration (Almeida, 2019, p. 84), Lewis (2002) provided the beginning of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement on May 18 and indicates citizens marching to the provincial office building chanting different slogans such as “End martial law!” and “Down with Chun Doo-hwan” (p. 3). Warnberg (1987) also stated that students gathered to demonstrate the release of all arrested students and the discontinuation of martial law (p. 38). Prognostic framing refers to proposing solutions to those diagnosed issues, and it states what needs to be done to resolve problems in society (Almeida, 2019, p. 85). This framing can be found through the formation of the 5.18 Gwangju incident settlement committee. Since the movement got violent on May 18, the Citizens’ Army stole and captured multiple weapons aiming at the liberation of Gwanju from government repression and military brutality (Lewis, 2002, p. 27). The committee organized several discussions with the Citizens’ Army and a group of students, and they also managed to negotiate with the government. While the citizens were divided due to distrust toward the government, the committee settled on what they had to do for the liberation of Gwangju, which was withdrawing some weapons but proposing a list of demands (pp. 32-33) These demands include the release of people who have been detained, prohibiting punishment of citizens, and stopping use of provocative language (p. 33). Then, motivation framing indicates moral appeals to people outside of activities to be engaged in that collective action, and this framing heavily relies on emotional pleas and cultural beliefs to encourage people to join the collective action (Almeida, 2019, p. 85). First, youth activism was one of the most significant motivation framing during the Gwangju democratic movement. As mentioned above, the movement began by University student councils, and these efforts from students made their teachers and other citizens join the movement. Warnberg (1987) described that students were restless and vocal against Chun Doo-hwan and martial law, and more than thousands of students marched in the streets of Seoul to appeal their beliefs against martial law (p. 36). Lastly, frame alignment considers how different frames align with the other beliefs and values of people outside the movement, which are potential supporters (Almeida, 2019, p. 83). Lewis (2002) elaborates on the uprising rally to protect democracy, which

involved more than one hundred thousand people and was led by youth political activists (p. 33). While many students and activists were distressed due to the initiative stance of the incident settlement committee, public rallies were conducted to spread “consensus on democratic protections and the right to life” (Lewis, 2002, p. 33). In the end, the rallies managed to spread unity and solidarity in terms of how to secure democracy through democratic movement (p. 33)

### ***5.5 Discussion of Analysis***

Considering the analyzed features of each theory throughout the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement, different features from both theories were present during the Gwangju democratic movement. However, this analysis enables one to test which theory explains the emergence of the Gwangju democratic movement better between political opportunity theory and framing theory. First, the application of political opportunity theory to the democratic uprising provides several opportunities were present to encourage people to generate collective action. Even though the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement did not show all features of political opportunities, six out of nine opportunities were present according to different eyewitnesses of the movement. Opportunities related to citizens’ rights, and state repression played key roles as political opportunities. The political opportunity argues that strong mobilization is expected when “good” news opportunities occur at the same time (Almeida, 2019, p. 57). For “bad news” threats, strong mobilization of social movement is expected when the threats affect multiple groups, occur from a single source to easily blame that single target, and happen over time so that activists can have adequate time to organize the collective action (Zepeda-Millán, 2017, p. 154). However, “Good news” opportunities such as conflict among elites and relaxation in government repression did not happen simultaneously, but those opportunities were generated at different times. Moreover, threats such as repression did not provide adequate time for citizens to organize the demonstration and activity on May 18. The military stopped the attack for a brief moment, hoping to get the citizens to surrender, but citizens created an incident committee to take time to come up with plans such as negotiating with the military and countering the repression by themselves (Lewis, 2002, p. 27). Therefore, the analysis is insufficient to say that the “good news opportunities and “bad news” threats had a strong and direct effect on the mobilization of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement.

Applying the framing theory in the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement to analyze its emergence, the emergence of the Gwangju democratic movement showed a strong correlation with different framings. Diagnostic framing such as proposing the end of martial law and protection of democracy not only successfully defining the issue of martial law but also blaming Chun Doo-hwan as a person to cause the issue. The formation of the 5.18 Gwangju incident settlement committee played a key role as prognostic framing since the committee managed to inform citizens and the Citizens' army what they had to do against the brutal state repression. Young university students being political activists act as motivation framing since the young generation showing restless attitude against martial law and state repression encouraged the older generation such as professors and older citizens to join the collective action toward democracy. Lastly, the continuous rallies during the democratic movement let activists share the consensus on democratic protections and the right to life. This strengthened the unity and solidarity of activists in terms of how to secure democracy through democratic movement, which aligned different frames. Thus, the hypothesis *"The 1980 Gwangju democratic movement was facilitated by different types of frames and alignment processes rather than use of political opportunities"* is supported by this research.

Nevertheless, some scholars propose alternative explanations by using different theories and analyses. Kern and Laux (2017) used the contentious politics approach to argue how social movement and institutional politics led to the democratization process (p. 246). The authors focus on relational mechanisms during the collective action to make a theoretical analysis of how democratic transitions work throughout the democratic movement in Korea (p. 246). This research enables one to study the dynamics of the democratization process and analysis of Korea's transition to democracy by focusing on significant events during the democratic movement in Korea. Yun (1997) researched democratization in South Korea using the political opportunity structures, but the author focused on resources of social movement organizations and the alliances of diverse societal sectors (p.145). This research focuses on how those two institutional features are influenced by political opportunities. This study can provide a great comparative analysis between the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement and another democratic movement in 1987 by explaining the two different approaches toward democracy (p. 146).

## **6. Conclusion**

This research was conducted to investigate which theory best explains the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement. The goal of this research was based on the lack of a theoretical approach to identify what features led a movement to emerge. To answer the research question, two theories were selected which are political opportunity theory and framing theory. Thereafter, this research analyzes the presence of IVs from both theories by using academic literature and articles written by eyewitnesses. For political opportunity theory, two models are broadly analyzed: 1) “good news” opportunities and 2) “bad news” threats. The presence of opportunities are threats were indicated during the Gwangju democratic movement. The analysis using political opportunity theory, however, has found that the opportunities and threats did not directly cause the emergence of the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement due to the lack of causal effect of IVs. On the other hand, different types of framing processes and framing alignment were analyzed for framing theory. The analyzed IVs are diagnostic, prognostic, motivation framings, and frame alignment. The analysis using framing theory has found that three types of framing processes and framing alignment were present and played key roles in mobilizing the democratic movement in Gwangju. University students’ demonstrations against martial law and governmental repression played a significant role in framing processes and mobilizing activists to initiate the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement.

Therefore, the findings of the research indicate that the hypothesis “*The 1980 Gwangju democratic movement was facilitated by different types of frames and alignment processes rather than use of political opportunities*” is accepted.

Nevertheless, the research had several limitations. First, the research used two theories to find the reason why the 1980 Gwangju democratic movement emerged, but there are more than two social movement theories that cover the emergence of social movement. Thus, different types of research with other theories quantitative research using different theories could make alternative outcomes. Second, in the 1970s to 80s, Korea was an authoritarian state with the use of martial law. This indicates the media such as newspapers and records of policy changes are limited. Still, this research used articles written by foreign eyewitnesses of the Gwangju democratic movement and various academic articles written by Korean and non-Korean scholars.

Considering these limitations, future research can be quantitatively conducted to precisely measure the effect of political opportunities and framing processes with more social movement theories. Furthermore, it is highly recommended to include more primary sources from Korea and

interviews of people who went through the democratic movement in Gwanju to make a richer analysis.

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