The growth of modern sport in Asia varied self-evidently with the pace of evolution of the ‘sports movements’ in the individual countries. The Asian nations’ participation in the Olympic Games reveals, at merely one level, very different rates of progress. According to the Guinness Olympics Fact Book, during the 40-year period from the first Olympic Games (held in 1896 in Athens) to the eleventh (held in 1936 in Berlin), only two Asian countries won medals – India and Japan. And in the longer period up to the fourteenth Olympics (held in 1948 in London) only four Asian countries won medals – India, Japan, Korea and Iran.

While the first South Asian country to win an Olympic medal was India, the country that led the way more ostentatiously in the assimilation of modern sport in South-East Asia was Japan. This is reflected in the fact that at the tenth Olympic Games (held in 1932 in Los Angeles) Japan took fifth place in the medal count (seven gold medals, seven silver and four bronze). Then in 1964 Japan became the first Asian country to host the Olympics (the eighteenth Olympic Games). China, its huge neighbour, first entered the Olympics in 1932 with only one athlete, but at the fourteenth Olympic Games in 1948 presented 33 athletes. However, throughout this 12-year period it did not win a single medal. This surely reflected domestic political circumstances.

The purpose of this contribution is to describe and then analyse the evolution of modern sport in one Asian nation – Korea – in relation to the nation’s post-war political, economic, cultural and social development. Korea demonstrates that modern sport, politics, economics, culture and society are intrinsically linked, in varying degrees, of course, at various movements in a nation’s history, and that in the case of Korea modern sport was essentially the consequence of its political priorities.
Among Asian countries, the post-war development of Korean sport was unique. It was politically driven, resourced and endorsed and it was the direct product of anti-Communist, not Communist, ideological purpose. It was a phenomenon of the middle of the second half of the twentieth century – the time of Korea’s ‘Political Leap Forward’ in modern sport. Progress, as in the case of China at the end of the twentieth century, was exceptional. This period of rapid change, its causes, its consequences and its political, economic, cultural and social stimuli will be our concern below. First, however, it will be illuminating to simply describe the progress of modern sport from 1945 to 1992; then to relate this period to the crucial years of the Political Leap Forward and to examine the associated political, economic, cultural and social factors. All played their part.

Restriction of the timescale to between 1945 to 1992 is for several reasons. First, while modern sport was introduced into Korea in the late nineteenth century and spread initially due to the influence of English and American missionaries, there then followed the harsh and inhibiting period of Japanese colonialism. Consequently Korea did not take its place on the world sporting stage until after the Second World War. Second, the history of the halting progress of Korean sport before 1945 has already been discussed by the authors elsewhere. Third, after the Second World War Korean sport was closely linked to political priorities, purposes and personnel, and this association continued until the Sixth Republic (1988–92). Thus Korea furnished a fascinating illustration of a ‘marriage’ between politics and sport that greatly advanced the status, success and popularity of the latter. This has not been revealed until now to an international audience.

IMMEDIATE POST-WAR KOREAN SPORT

Korean sport during the first half of the twentieth century grew out of nationalism, but from 1910 until 1945 the Japanese colonial government in Korea controlled sport and suppressed much of its growth. As a result, organized sport was unable to flourish. Then, because of the Korean War of the 1950s, Korea afterwards was in ruins. Political chaos, social instability and economic destitution were the order of the day. This made it quite impossible for Korean sport to prosper. However, in the 1960s it did prosper – greatly – and by the 1980s had attracted the attention of the world. Arguably, there are at least two models that can
be usefully employed in any attempt to explain the progress of modern sport in the ‘global village’. The first embraces politically stable, socially advanced and economically prosperous nations that steadily establish first a system of elite sport, then general sport and then professional sport – not, of course, in simple linear progression. The reality is more complicated. Then there are the nations in which political ideology thrusts forward modern sport for its own ends and with its own rationalizations and with the extensive use of national resources. Korean sport in the latter half of the twentieth century clearly fits the second model.

THE KOREAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The key to Korean sport in the second half of the twentieth century was the school playground. Until the 1950s, remnants of Japanese imperialist education still survived. After the Korean War, because of the division of Korea and the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States, South Korean schools stressed anti-Communism and national defence. As a result, physical education was more like military training. However, in the 1960s there was a dramatic change. With the ‘Military Revolution’ of 16 May 1961, the Park Chung-hee regime (May 1961 to October 1979) was established. The rise to power of Park Chung-hee heralded great advances in the areas of economics, education, society – and sport.

After Park Chung-hee took over the reins of power, the catchphrase in Korean education was ‘education linked to nationality’, and the task of education was ‘to provide for the hard-working’ and ‘to foster the healthy’. These slogans revealed a determination to establish a work ethic and to develop an associated physical and mental toughness. Thus physical education came centre stage politically. All kinds of sports activities were recognized as important educational measures. The school physical education policy of the Park Chung-hee regime, which was at its height in the 1970s, had two purposes – to develop general physical fitness and to cultivate outstanding athletes – both in the interests of the nation.

Park Chung-hee’s regime did not stop at exhortations, slogans and visionary policies. It took concrete measures and pursued practical actions. In pursuit of the general physical fitness of the young, there were: the School Health Law, the School Physical Examination Law;
the Physical Fitness Badge System; and the School Physical Education
Facilities Standards Order.\textsuperscript{11} The Physical Fitness Badge System will
serve to illustrate the commitment of the regime. It was introduced in
1970 in all middle and high schools throughout the country.\textsuperscript{12} Later, a
points system for performance was added, both to the secondary school
entrance examination (1972) and the university entrance examination
(1973).\textsuperscript{13} Physical training was now compulsory for all Korean youth in
high school and university. The School Sports Movement was
introduced at the same time. The government encouraged schools to
raise their level of physical education. One outcome was that school
sport was divided into internal and inter-school sports programmes.
Representative systems were also introduced at local, regional and
national levels to stimulate and cultivate outstanding athletes. These
included the School Banner Support System and the National Youth
Games.\textsuperscript{14} These became the means for the expansion of a Korean sports
elite from the 1960s onwards.

The School Banner Support System was a national sports strategy
that encouraged all elementary, middle, and high schools to choose a
sporting event appropriate to their particular geographic or social
situation and then, if possible, select and train the outstanding athletes
in that event. This strategy was implemented in a highly systematic way.
Outstanding athletes were ‘uncovered’ and went forward to inter-school
competitions. A variety of scholarships and incentives were awarded to
the successful. School and regional authorities provided the fullest
support for exceptional athletes.

The newly established National Youth Games, like the School
Banner Support System, clearly symbolized the serious intention of the
government to raise the fitness of the nation in the cause of self-defence
and self-reliance, and to promote a confident image of South Korea to
the world. The first National Youth Games\textsuperscript{15} were held in 1972, and have
been held every subsequent year.\textsuperscript{16} The purposes of these games are
capsulated in the slogan for the Games provided by the Korean Sports
Council, ‘A Strong Body, a Strong Mind and a Strong Country’. The
goals of the KSC were set down as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item to provide basic sports to growing boys and girls and instil in them
  a competitive attitude,
  \item to construct the foundations for the revitalization of school physical education,
  \item the grassroots
  \item expansion of the sports population,
  \item the promotion of lifetime
\end{itemize}
sport, and the improvement of international competitiveness through the early discovery of outstanding athletes.17

The Ministry of Education and the Korean Sports Council during the Park Chung-hee regime went a long way to achieve their goals. The Youth Games were the apex of school sports endeavour. They became the catalyst for energizing schools and played a subsequent role in the popularization of sport and the discovery and development of outstanding athletes. Those athletes revealed by the Youth Games won automatic selection for entry into middle school, high school and university and in this way a coherent system for the progressive support, improvement and motivation of young athletes was built into the educational system. As a result, the performances of the Korean sports elite improved sharply.

The innovations began in earnest under the Park Chung-hee regime continued during the Fourth Republic (October 1972–October 1979), and the Fifth Republic (March 1981–March 1988) of the Chun Doo-hwan regime and the Sixth Republic (February 1988–February 1993) of the Roh Tae-woo regime. The efforts of these various regimes culminatively saw Korea host the twenty-fourth Olympic Games and the tenth Asian Games. These stupendous achievements produced a greatly increased general interest in sport. This led to a further expansion of school sport. Furthermore, from 1980 onwards the government actively encouraged participation in sport at home and abroad.18 With political endorsement, government resources, an effective strategy, public support and an enthusiastic education system, in less than 50 years a revolution in sport in schools occurred – in the interests of national defence, national self-reliance and national visibility.

**SPORT IN SOCIETY**

In the second half of the twentieth century, then, modern sport became part and parcel of school and society. Up until the 1950s the social situation in Korea was one in which organized sport was unable to develop. Modern sport was first introduced into Korea in the 1890s, as noted earlier, largely through the YMCA centres, from which it spread steadily to both schools and society.19 However, from 1910 to 1945, the period during which Japan ruled Korea, Korean sport was heavily regulated and largely suppressed and an independent sports system
could not prosper. Modern sport under civil leadership began only after the liberation from Japanese imperialist rule in 1945. On 17 August 1945, the Choseon Sports Society, which had earlier been disbanded by the Japanese imperialists, was re-established. In 1947 Korea joined the International Olympic Committee and in 1948 officially participated in its first Olympics (the fourteenth Olympic Games in London). In the 1950s, in spite of the political and social instability and the economic destitution that followed the Korean War, modern sport, under the aegis of the Korean Sports Council, slowly made progress. Korea gradually began to distinguish itself in international events such as table tennis, soccer, boxing, weightlifting and judo. Nevertheless, from 1945 to 1960 the social situation in Korea was not stable enough to support a modern sporting culture. The people’s interest in sport was not great. There were more pressing priorities. Thus, only a handful of athletes met international standards. However, as mentioned earlier, in the 1960s with strong government support, sport for the people entered a new and very active phase.

In 1961, the revolutionary government of Park Chung-hee called for a national revival and demonstrated a strong and committed leadership to this end. Sport was not excluded. During the 18 years and five months in which he was in power, Park Chung-hee simultaneously promoted an ‘elite sports policy’ and a ‘popular sports policy’. In the 1980s these policies, as stated above, were inherited by the Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo regimes. Excellent results were obtained.

The ‘social sports revolution’ of the 1960s to the 1980s had several distinctive characteristics. First, it was government-led. From the 1960s onwards, the government enacted laws and regulations to ensure the popularization of sport and the creation of a sports elite and crucially ensured financial support for the ‘revolution’. As is clear from Table 1, and as has been noted earlier, government policies aiming at accelerating the growth of modern sport began after Park Chung-hee arrived on the political scene in 1961. In June of 1961 his government implemented a People’s Educational Policy that included ‘developing healthy bodies and strong minds’, on the back of the slogan ‘Physical Fitness is National Strength’. Then various policies for promoting sport were put in place by means of the 1962 Peoples’ Physical Fitness and Sports Promotion Law. One noted element was the promotion of a national gymnastics system. It would not be an exaggeration to say that modern Korean sport in the second half of the twentieth century was built on the
### TABLE 8.1
AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF THE KOREAN SPORT MOVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Formally entered International Olympic Committee (June).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>First Korean participation in Olympics (14th Games in London) (July). Choseon Sports Society renamed the Korean Sports Association (Sept.).¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Formally entered Asian Games Federation (July).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Inaugural publication of Physical Education and Sports, the Korean Journal of Physical Education and Sports (Feb.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>First Korean participation in the Davis Cup (tennis) preliminaries (April).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Military Revolutionary Government decides to provide government support for the budget of the Korean Sports Council. Headquarters for the People's Reconstruction Movement of the Revolutionary Government adopts slogan 'Fitness is National Strength' and takes action to popularize 'People's Gymnastics'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Law promoting physical education and sport is promulgated 17 Sept. (Statute No. 1146). 15 Oct. is designated National Sports Day. Last week of each month established as National Sports Week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Jangchung Gymnasium opened. Gymnasiums built in each city and each seat of provincial government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Government plan to unify sports organizations promulgated. Three corporate bodies – the Korean Sports Council, the Korean Olympic Committee and the Korean School Sports Association – are integrated into the Korean Sports Council (March).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Korean Sports Council decides on Lifelong Annuity System for medal winners in Olympic Games, the World Athletic Championships, the Asian Games and the Asian Athletic Championships (Dec.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>First Korean gold medal in the Olympic Games (Chong-mo Yang, in freestyle wrestling at 21st Olympic Games, Montreal).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Jamsil Sports Centre opened (18 April), a large-scale international-standard sports facility with one floor under ground and three floors above ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>First professional Ssireum (Korean Traditional Wrestling) championship held (April).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Armed Forces Athletic Corps established (Jan). Roh Tae-woo appointed president of Korean Sports Council (Oct).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1988 Marksmanship Training Team for National Marksmanship Team established (June).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>The National Sports Council of Sports for All founded (Feb.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** ¹ The early name (in English) of the Korean Sports Council was the Korean Amateur Sports Association. It was later changed to the Korean Sports Council.

foundations of Park Chung-hee’s personal philosophy and strength of will. In a real sense, he was the ‘father of modern sport’ in ‘modern’ Korea. Most of the laws enacted to promote sport are concentrated in the 18 years when Park Chung-hee was in power. Even the idea of winning the 1988 Seoul Olympics for Korea originated during his regime. As mentioned earlier, his innovations were taken up enthusiastically by the Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo regimes, with the result that continuous progress was made and Korea took its place among those advanced nations of South-East Asia with advanced sports systems. This continuity is set out in diagrammatic form in Table 8.1.

Second, Korean sport evolved around a sports elite. It was certainly simultaneously promoted both as a popular sports movement and elite sports movement. However, the government initially laid emphasis on the establishment of a sports elite, so popular sport really got off the ground only after the successful creation of this elite. The Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law of 17 September 1962, which is often credited with having brought about the most revolutionary change in the history of Korean sport, explicitly stated as its goals enhancing the peoples’ physical fitness, fostering healthy minds and providing for a contented life for the people through popular sport. The specific details of this law included various measures to promote sport in general: the designation of a National Sports Day (15 October every year), the creation of a ‘sports week’ (the last week of each month), measures to advance local sport, the training of sports coaches, the establishment of sports facilities and so on. However, in spite of Herculean efforts by the government and sports organizations, there were limits to the success of the promotion of popular sport. Specifically during the 1960s and 1970s, the basic fact was that the economic condition of Korean society did not allow the public to take part in the sport available. There was simply insufficient leisure time. Earning a living preoccupied people. There was the further fact that there remained a shortage of swimming pools, gymnasiums and other facilities. Accordingly, Korean popular sport did not gain great momentum until the 1980s. In contrast, however, elite sport demonstrated remarkable progress. As can be seen in Table 8.1, from the 1960s onwards the government introduced institutions to enhance the skills of outstanding athletes, provided extensive training facilities and increased financial support for promising athletes. By way of example, gymnasiums for specialist gymnasts were erected in all cities, the Taenung Athletic Village was set up in 1966 for the exclusive
training use of national team members and later a decision was taken to set up a lifelong annuity system for medal-winners in major international events. In addition, the Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law implemented in 1962 included not only measures for popular sport but also provisions for the cultivation of elite sport, including the requirement that all places of employment designated by the president had to develop at least one sports team with its own coach; that all government or local self-governing organizations were to provide assistance with living expenses for outstanding athletes; and that all national enterprises or enterprises designated by the government were to employ promising athletes of exceptional athletic ability.

Government support for elite sport became even more extensive in the 1980s. The People's Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law of 1962, revised in 1971, was revised further in 1982. The stated goal of the first Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law of September 1962, as mentioned earlier, was 'to improve general physical fitness, develop healthy minds and promote a contented life for the people'. But the goal of the revised Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law of 31 December 1982 added the strategy of 'enhancing national prestige through sport'. This inclusion officially expressed the intention of the government to foster elite sport in the interests of national prestige. Elite sport was now to be favoured over popular sport in the interests of national glory.

Thus, in essence, Korean sport in general expanded during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, but this was especially true of elite sport. This is obvious from the achievements of Korean athletes in international events. For example, as can be seen in Table 8.2, the record of Korean athletes participating in the Olympics during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s reveals increasing success. The Korean marathon runner Kee-chung Son (better known as Kitei Son) had won a famous gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, but he participated as a Japanese national. Korea officially participated in its first Olympics as a nation at the fourteenth Olympics in London (1948). It obtained its first gold medal at the 1976 Montreal Games, when Yang Jung-mo won a gold medal in the freestyle wrestling. In the 1980s, however, Korea was placed in the top ten medal winning countries. The promotion of the elite sport in the two previous decades was clearly paying dividends. As was pointed out earlier, during the 40 years from the first Olympic Games in Athens, until the eleventh games in Berlin, only two Asian
countries won medals – India and Japan. Furthermore, the only two Asian countries to earn gold medals were also India and Japan. Of all the South Asian countries in terms of medals, Japan impressed most. In the tenth Olympic Games in Los Angeles (1932), Japan ranked fifth in medals won behind the United States, Italy, France and Sweden, with a total of seven gold, seven silver and four bronze. As already stated, in 1964 Japan was the first Asian country to host an Olympics (the eighteenth Games). Up until the 1960s the Korean Olympic medal tally remained behind Japan, but also behind that of India, Iran and Pakistan. In the 1980s, however, there was a startling change. There was now a direct correlation between political will, created infrastructure, available resources and Korean medal success.

In summary, the Korean ‘sports revolution’ had the following characteristics: after the end of the Second World War a private sports organization, the Korean Sports Council, took charge of Korean sport but achieved little. During the 1960s, in the wake of a new president with a military background, the government designed and implemented a new sports policy. Korean sport shot ahead in a remarkably short time.

### TABLE 8.2
OLYMPIC MEDAL RESULTS AT THE (SUMMER) OLYMPIC GAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Participants/Events</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Participated as Japanese nationals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>7/3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>67/7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>First official participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>43/6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>57/6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>75/8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>224/15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>First held in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>74/10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>68/8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>First North Korean participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>72/5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>First gold, Chong-mo Yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Did not participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>284/19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Did not participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>644/23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Second held in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>350/24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons are beyond dispute. First, Korea successfully created an ‘educational sports system’ in conjunction with a ‘social sports movement’, with the latter growing out of the former. Second, Korean sport was promoted by both non-governmental and governmental organizations, but the state took a pronounced and emphatic lead over time and provided continuous backing over several regimes. In short, there was continuity of endorsement. Third, Korea effectively developed both elite and popular sports systems and the success of elite sport served to open the door to popular sport. Thus, in a period of some 30 years Korean sport underwent a revolutionary change; it had been transformed. There could hardly be a better example of the powerful influence of politics in modern sport.

THE IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO MODERN KOREAN SPORT

While the growth of sport in modern nations is linked to political, social, cultural and economic circumstances, the driving force behind this growth is not infrequently ideological. This is certainly the case in Korea. Korean sport was the outcome of state agencies playing a far greater role than private agencies during a period of authoritarian rule and sustained political, economic and cultural transformation. Behind this state authoritarianism was a nationalistic ideology – a social Darwinian belief in the need to ensure national survival in the future after the humiliations of colonization and the traumas of civil war.

SOCIETY AND SPORT DURING SYNGMAN RHEE REGIME, 1945–60

Throughout the first part of the twentieth century Korea had a history of repeated ill fortune. Korea fell under brutal Japanese colonial rule in 1910 and was not delivered from it until 1945. Subsequently the country experienced a horrific civil war and was divided into North and South Korea, with Communism and democracy in confrontation across the thirty-eighth parallel. Soviet troops were above the border; American troops were below it. South Korea was an American satrapy. The American military authorities wielded supreme command over politics, the economy and education, and by supporting the establishment of a newly independent democratic government34 ‘tried to check the
influence of the Soviet Union on the Korean peninsula and establish a pro-American government. In 1948, three years after the American military government had been established, a legal and independent government was set up through democratic elections. This was the First Republic (1948–60) of the Syngman Lee regime. The regime held onto power for 12 years, but as a result of a gradual deterioration into a corrupt and dictatorial authority collapsed with the People’s Revolution of April 1960.

After the liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Korean sport faced a new phase under private non-governmental leadership. The American military authorities established a Department of Physical Education and Sport in the Ministry of Education that was responsible for both a school and a social sports policy. The Choseon Sports Society that had been disbanded by the Japanese in 1938 was now re-established. A variety of sports organizations were re-organized and the National Games were created. In addition, in 1947 Korea officially became a member of the International Olympic Committee, and in 1948 Korea participated in its first Olympics, the (Summer) Olympic Games in London. With the establishment of the new government on 15 August 1948, the Choseon Sports Society changed its name to the Korean Sports Council and modern sport was gradually introduced to the whole nation. But as a result of the Korean War breaking out on 25 June 1950, the new foundations of Korean sports culture collapsed. All the sports records of the Korean Sports Council were lost; Korean athletes were unable to participate in the First Asian Games and youth was mobilized for war.

The bald fact is that the Syngman Lee regime during its time in power (1948–60) never established a clear sports policy, and state support and sponsorship were insufficient. As can be seen in Table 8.1, the Syngman Lee administration left few signs of any concrete involvement in sport at governmental level, and as can be seen in Table 8.2, the record of the Korean team at the 1960 Olympics Games in Rome suggests that elite Korean sport had withered in the latter half of the 1950s. After the Korean War began, the Syngman Lee regime was obsessed with using the fear of Communism to purge opponents and so maintain its authoritarian rule. As a result, it was unable to provide a clear vision of national progress. One consequence was that the social conditions necessary for the development of sport were lacking. Then after the Korean War, the Korean economy entered a dark age, with the
national economy maintained by the United Nations and the American economic aid system. Korea relied on the UN Korea Relief Administration, and American FOA for everything from basic foodstuffs to the many supplies needed for restoration after the war. The 72 per cent of the post-war population living on farms became impoverished and the 28 per cent living in cities became mostly destitute. Understandably in these circumstances, from 1945 to 1960 the government was not interested in the promotion of sport. It had other pressing priorities – feeding, housing and educating a destitute nation – and the population itself was concerned with basic survival. Furthermore, if this was not enough, the political situation in Korea was not stable enough for sport to become popular.

SOCIETY AND SPORT DURING THE PARK CHUNG-HEE REGIME, 1961–79

The 1960s saw the dawn of modern Korean sport. Pronounced change in Korean sport dates from 1961, and the force behind this change was the Park Chung-hee regime. After the Syngman Lee regime collapsed on 26 April 1960, a cabinet system of government was adopted, and in August the Second Republic was born with Yoon Bo-seon as president and Jang Myon as prime minister. But the Second Republic did not last long. This democratic government under Jang Myon brought social chaos, with conflicting demands being made by different social classes and unabated street demonstrations. The Jang Myon government came under severe criticism for this state of affairs. Government incompetence and social unrest provided the justification for a military coup d'état. On 16 May 1961, Major-General Park Chung-hee led a successful coup – the ‘16 May Revolution’, formed a military government and took power. He served as the fifth, sixth and seventh president in the Third Republic, which began in December 1963, and as the eighth and ninth president in the Fourth Republic, which began in December 1972. In all, he ruled some 18 years until he was assassinated on 26 October 1979 by Kim Jae-kyu, Minister of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. A sea change in the history of modern Korean sport began at the same moment as the Park Chung-hee regime took office. Modern Korean sport and Korean military rule were closely connected.

As has already been confirmed in Table 8.1, all major developments in modern Korean sport are concentrated in the period from the early
1960s to the late 1970s – the period when Park Chung-hee was in power. In short, modern Korean sport, in a real sense, may be said to have begun with the Park Chung-hee regime. Korean society during the 1960s was far from being a stable and prosperous society in which non-governmental sports organizations could take the lead with confidence and success. As is shown in Table 8.3, the gross national product per capita in Korea in 1960 was a mere US$78, and even in 1980 it had reached only US$1,597. It was difficult, indeed impossible, for sport under the aegis of non-governmental organizations to succeed in such conditions of deprivation. Only the national government could successfully move modern sport forward. Support now came from the new regime.

Popular evaluation of the Park Chung-hee regime polarized after it collapsed. One view was of Park Chung-hee as a great man, the saviour of modern Korea, who had brought about an economic miracle that freed the country from poverty. The other painted him as a military dictator who set back the advance of Korean democracy. (Of course, they are not mutually exclusive.) As a result, the military government that he brought about on 16 May 1960 has been referred to as both an advantageous ‘coup d’état’ and a disadvantageous ‘military revolution’. In academia, assessments of the significance of Park Chung-hee have differed from scholar to scholar, but there has tended to be the same polarization. Assessments in the foreign press have also revealed polarization. For example, on 27 October 1979, the day after Park Chung-hee died, Henry Scott Stokes, in a special to the New York Times, wrote:

His enemies called him a corrupt and ruthless dictator who stifled dissent, eliminated opponents and created a police state nurtured in fear and repression. His loyalists called him a tough, pragmatic patriot who preserved his nation from Communism and wrought a national economic miracle with his iron will. In the more than 18 years since he seized power in a coup, President Park Chung-hee, with the blessing of the United States, dominated and revolutionized virtually every aspect of life for the 38 million people of South Korea, stunting political institutions while lifting industry, business and the standard of living to unparalleled levels for a developing nation.
Park Chung-hee was certainly a dictator and in some things he was a benign dictator. He forced through beneficial change that was substantial. Among other things, he was the author of a ‘Korean sports revolution’. Nearly all of the laws promoting sport, to rehearse the point again for emphasis, were enacted during Park Chung-hee’s rule – even the plan to attract the 1988 Olympics to Seoul was his inspiration. Because of this, it would not be an exaggeration to state that understanding Park Chung-hee provides a shortcut to understanding the causes of Korean sport’s astounding progress in the latter half of the twentieth century. Accordingly, if Park Chung-hee’s beliefs, his pronouncements concerning sport and his actions in power are examined, they reveal the potent source of a progression in sport as political. It is as simple as that.

Park Chung-hee’s strenuous personal involvement in the post-1960s sports revolution is closely related to his individual disposition. He was himself a distinguished sportsman and, in addition, an admirer of the martial mentality. He was born on 30 September 1917 in Kumi City, Northern Gyeongsang Province. After he completed middle school, he attended a teacher training college and became a teacher. Later he entered a military academy and became an army officer. He was athletic, intelligent and artistic, and he performed well on sports fields. Not only were his school grades excellent, he also had artistic talents. He showed great interest in poetry, painting, musical composition, calligraphy and piano playing. Over and above this, his playing of the Korean flute was considered of professional standard. As a student physically he was initially quite weak but he strengthened himself by devoting himself to sword training (Geomdo). As an adult he immersed himself in horsemanship, archery, swimming, golf, hunting and tennis. At all these activities he excelled. Once in power, he wanted a nation of sportsmen – the requirement, in his view, for a self-reliant nation – economically and militarily.

Park Chung-hee was out of the mainstream of Korean traditional culture. As mentioned earlier, he attached great importance to the martial frame of mind. Admiration for the scholarly and denigration of the martial was part of traditional Korean society. For centuries of the Choson Dynasty (1392–1910) the unagressive philosophy of the Chinese neo-Confucian philosopher Chu Hsi was revered. As a result, there was more than a tendency to look down on physical activity; and in Korean history there was an equal tendency for many rulers to ignore the worth
of folk games and sports. Park Chung-hee made full amends. He was the most militaristic of all the men of power in the modern history of Korea. He was convinced that a martial spirit could serve as a source of regeneration. He saw the political value of sport as an extension of the political value of the martial spirit. On 30 June 1966, in his opening address on the occasion of the inauguration of the Korean Hall of Physical Education, he stated that 'when we look at our history, the periods when our race flourished and developed were the same periods when the martial arts were revered and the people were physically strong.' On 5 October 1967, at the forty-eighth National Games, he claimed that the 'short cut to the reunification of the nation was an increase in national strength, and an increase in national strength began with an increase in physical fitness'. As a military officer who became president, he was certain in his own mind that the martial arts and sport could improve physical fitness and general morale and thus both directly and indirectly the defence of the nation.

Park Chung-hee’s leadership of the popular sports movement was based on his ‘Healthy People Policy’. During his years in power he continually stressed the need to cultivate a national character that possessed strong morale linked to physical health. The Korean dictionary definition of a ‘healthy people’ is given as a ‘sound people’. Park Chung-hee’s Healthy People Policy was aimed ultimately at creating a socially prosperous and strong nation. The policy was to foster a ‘sound Korean people’ to this end. In this context, sport was a means, in his view, of cultivating strong bodies and healthy minds. This is clear again and again from his speeches. At the first National Student Games in May 1966, he declared:

The rise and fall of a nation and the increase and decrease in its national strength depends on the physical fitness of a people. The physical fitness of a people is assessed on the basis of the strength and spirit of its youth. Twenty years from now, how much our motherland will change, and how much it will develop, depends on how strong and sound the bodies and minds of our young students are. At present we are pressing to mobilize all our national resources so as to establish a self-reliant economy. More than anything, the realization of this historical task demands robust bodies and minds as well as an independent and self-reliant national spirit that these bodies and minds will create, and it also
demands the spirit of unity and perseverance that is cultivated through sport.\textsuperscript{56}

Park Chung-hee’s speeches provide many examples of such rhetoric. In his speech at the opening ceremony of the National Games on 12 September 1968, for example, he declared:

Physical fitness is the foundation of national strength. We must not forget for even a moment that cultivating a strong and fit people and making sport an everyday part of people’s lives will provide the vitality necessary for the task of modernizing the Motherland.\textsuperscript{57}

There can be absolutely no doubt that Park Chung-hee’s ideological conviction that the ‘key to the development of the nation … was the character of the people’ was, for him, the source of ‘a pan-national sports movement in pursuit of the cultivation of progressive and vibrant nation’.\textsuperscript{58}

There was yet more to Park Chung-hee’s ideological convictions concerning the health of the mind and body – the reunification of Korea. In the process of pursuing modernization, the intention of the Park Chung-hee regime was to create once more a unified, and this time strong, nation. Park Chung-hee’s popular sports movement had nationalism as an ideological foundation. Here was a post-war nationalist movement with the aim of putting an end to foreign domination, ending internal discord and re-establishing a united country\textsuperscript{59} with sport as the cement of the national edifice, national consciousness and national unity.\textsuperscript{60} However, there is yet another aspect to his espousal of sport. In terms of self-interest, Park Chung-hee hoped by promoting sport to secure legitimacy for his regime and win popular support for his military rule. Nevertheless, there was far more than simply self-interest in his ideology, strategy and action. This is clear from the historical awareness displayed in his writings.\textsuperscript{61} He was acutely sensitive of the rivalry among the powerful nations of the world with their bitterly opposed political ideologies and the putative consequences for sucked-in nations. His ambitious intention was to pursue maximum autonomy in these circumstances.\textsuperscript{62} Consequently, during his regime, the ideology of self-sufficient and successful nationalism pervaded every aspect of life. To make the point one more time, sport was one means – an important means – of attaining this objective. Generally speaking, in order to maintain its sovereignty, a nation is faced with several basic tasks: political
security, social order, material prosperity and mass patriotism. These were the fundamental tasks of the Park Chung-hee government. The Korean sports movement was linked to them all. Arguably, above all else it was linked to nationalism, youth and the future. At the opening ceremony of the National Student Games of 1965, Park Chung-hee stated: ‘Whenever a country strives to restore and revive its people the cry from youth for national progress and rebirth is heard. Witness Ancient Greece, witness modern Germany and witness the unified Silla Dynasty from our own history.’ The later references in the speech to the nationalistic gymnastics movement (Turnbewegung) of Germany and to the Hwarangdo movement of the ancient Silla Dynasty – both militaristic in their emphasis – are revealing. Undoubtedly he thought of his national sports movement as a militaristic nationalist movement; he considered the sound physical fitness and high morale of the people achieved through a mass national sports system as the foundation of a new Korea, modern, strong and self-reliant; and he viewed elite athletes sent off to participate in international games and tournaments as warriors symbolizing the vitality, self-respect and self-confidence of the nation.

An understanding of the twentieth-century history of Korea, then, provides an understanding of the politicization of sport under Park Chung-hee. His knowledge of this history ensured that he lost no time in developing his national sports movement after his military revolution succeeded in 1961. Various innovations have already been mentioned earlier under the umbrella slogan ‘Physical Fitness is National Strength’, and there were more, including exemption from military service for outstanding athletes. Implementation of these policies left no doubt that the government would now actively intervene in sport in the interest of the well-being of the nation. He returned to this theme time and again. Early in his regime, he declared:

During the last two years, the revolutionary government, within the restrictions of time and conditions placed on it, has, on the one hand, enacted and enforced laws promoting physical education and sport and expanded and strengthened governmental sports organizations, while on the other hand it has reaped the rewards of devoting itself to unprecedented efforts developing the sports of this country by securing international exchanges and cultivating outstanding athletes. I am sincerely happy about this, and believe that it is a proud achievement of the revolutionary government.
Again:

The development of this country’s sport can be said to be a very important enterprise that aims at enhancing the wholesomeness of the everyday life of the people and, going one step further, at enhancing the respect and national prestige of our people abroad. The government has replaced the formalistic and makeshift physical education and sports policies of the past, promoted an active and long-term development policy, increased the physical fitness of the people and cultivated a more wholesome spirit so as to provide for a better social life.68

Finally:

It is not necessary to repeat that the influence of the sport of today contributes much to the enhancement in the level of the physical fitness of a country. Furthermore, we know full well how important the role sport has been in enhancing the national prestige and international reputation of a country. … We must know that our athletes going abroad to participate in international games and achieving splendid records have achieved more than hundreds of our foreign diplomats spending large budgets ever have.69

These excerpts reveal just how far he was committed to sport as a political tool, and how far he was prepared to pour resources into the sports systems, popular and elite. They reveal also how much he valued outstanding athletes as civil ‘ambassadors’ who enhanced the nation’s reputation abroad. From the moment he came to power in 1961 until his death in 1979, Park Chung-hee endlessly repeated mantras similar to the extracts above. His commitment to cultivating outstanding athletes and generally fostering strong bodies never wavered.70 Modern Korean sport, as a consequence, was the outcome of well-meaning political despotism.

SOCIETY AND SPORT DURING THE CHUN DOO-HWAN AND ROH TAE-WOO REGIMES, 1980–92

If the evolution of modern Korean sport is compared to the four seasons, then the 1960s was the spring when the seeds were sown, the 1970s was the summer when the roots took firm hold and the 1980s and 1990s were the autumn when the fruits ripened.
The sports policies of the Park Chung-hee regime in the spring and summer of Korean sport were inherited by the Chun Doo-hwan regime (March 1981–February 1988) of the Fifth Republic and the Roh Tae-woo regime (February 1988–February 1993) of the Sixth Republic. One thing in the autumn of Korean sport common to all three men was their military and athletic background. They were all military officers fond of sport. If Park Chung-hee left a legacy of great achievements associated with Korean sport, the same can be said, to a lesser extent, of Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo. Chun Doo-hwan, who seized the reins of power through a coup d'état in 1979, continued the sports policies that Park Chung-hee had set in train. In fact, he showed a deep interest in them. Roh Tae-woo, a central figure in the Chun Doo-hwan regime, became Minister of State for Sport. He thus played a key role in Korean sport in the Chun Doo-hwan regime, which witnessed the national hosting of the Seoul Olympic Games. He then followed Chun Doo-hwan as president.

Major sports initiatives in which the Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo regimes showed particularly strong interest included the winning and hosting of the Olympic and Asian Games – significant symbols of Korea’s entry onto the world sporting stage. After Chun Doo-hwan was inaugurated as president in 1981, he began, with Roh Tae-woo, his partner in the coup d'état that brought him to power, to bring to realization the aim of bringing the twenty-fourth Olympic Games to Seoul that had been set by the Park Chung-hee regime in 1979. On 10 August 1981, at the ‘Policy Meeting to Attract the Olympics’, Roh Tae-woo, who at the time was the Minister of State for Political Affairs, stressed the need to develop a nationwide strategy to win the Olympics for Korea. He formed a ‘Committee for the Movement to Attract the Olympics’ consisting of people from all walks of life and on 30 September 1981, the bid to host the twenty-fourth Games in Seoul was successful. This success in attracting the Olympics to Seoul was followed by an attempt to secure the 1986 tenth Asian Games. This too was successful. The plans to bring both the Olympics and the Asian Games to Korea had been announced simultaneously on 8 October 1979.

The act of bringing both the Olympic Games and the Asian Games to Korea greatly accelerated the forward momentum of elite sport in Korea. In 1982 Chun Doo-hwan established a Ministry of Sports within the Central Intelligence Agency Administrative Organization and he named Roh Tae-woo as the first Minister of Sport. Chun Doo-hwan
devoted much of his energy to sports promotion policies including the preparations for the Olympics and Asian Games, the cultivation of outstanding athletes and the training of capable coaches. Now followed strenuous efforts to locate more outstanding young athletes, to strengthen the capacity of the Sports Science Research Centre, to establish university sports science annexes, to create a national military athletic corps and to work to attract various international events to Korea (see Table 8.1). The results were strikingly apparent at the twenty-fourth Olympic Games held in Seoul in 1988. Even taking into consideration the advantage resulting from the fact that the games were held on home territory, Korea ranked an astounding fourth in the medal count, out of 160 countries. This result graphically demonstrated the ‘Political Leap Forward’ of elite sport, under three military-led authoritarian regimes.

The Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo regimes did not neglect popular sport. They poured resources into a ‘Sport for All’ programme. This had been promoted under the Park Chung-hee regime, but, as noted, little progress had been made because of a shortage of facilities and a general lack of interest among the public. But in the latter half of the 1980s, in line with the increase in economic growth, public interest in sport grew rapidly and the government responded with an equally rapid provision of resources, facilities and equipment. The encouragement of professional sport provides an excellent illustration. Before 1980 the only professional sports in Korea were boxing and golf. But in the 1980s Korea saw the emergence of professional baseball (1982), professional soccer (1983) and professional traditional Korean wrestling (Ssireum) (1983) A new era of professional sport opened. After successfully hosting the 1988 Olympic Games, the Roh Tae-woo regime of the Sixth Republic devoted even greater attention to popular sport than before. The Three Year Comprehensive Plan for the Revitalization of the People’s Lifetime Sports, also referred to as the ‘Hodori Plan’, was launched. In order to further this scheme, the People’s Lifetime Sports Association, a nationwide organization, was established. Within the framework of rapid economic development, popular sport flourished and by the 1990s a popular sports era had begun in Korea.

Korean sport in the 1980s was a success story. Three reasons stand out: first, the foundations laid by the sports promotion policies of the Park Chung-hee regime throughout the 1960s and 1970s; second,
significant social change brought about by economic growth; and third, the sustained influence of political power.

It is time to say something about social change and economic transformation in the Korea of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. As can be seen in Table 8.3b, during the years from 1960 onwards, such was the success of the economic development achieved that by 1997 the Korean economy, as measured by gross domestic product, had risen to eleventh in the world. The structure of society changed very rapidly. In the process of the transformation from an agricultural to an industrial nation, the urban population increased markedly. The population ratios of cities to countryside rose from 43.7 per cent in 1961 to 55.3 per cent in 1970, 71.6 per cent in 1980 and 84.5 per cent in 1990. Economic development and changes in social structure ensured public interest in, and opportunities for, sport. In short, and unsurprisingly, the Korean popular sports movement in the 1980s was, in part, a product of change in both social and economic structures – but for the most part, the result of political power, interest and support. In essence, therefore, an awareness of Korean politics is crucial to an understanding of the evolution of Korean sport in the second half of the twentieth century. It is also the case that its history was the history of individual initiative as much as institutional reform. The two went hand in hand, of course, but the former pushed the latter along. Ideology, politics and personality meshed into a moment of rapid innovation.

Park Chung-hee planned to remain in power indefinitely. As a result,

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*Source: [http://www.koreascope.org/sub/linex3-a.htm](http://www.koreascope.org/sub/linex3-a.htm).*

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*Source: [http://www.koreascope.org/sub/linex3-a.htm](http://www.koreascope.org/sub/linex3-a.htm).*
he was fiercely opposed by those of democratic persuasion; but he managed to hold on to power until 26 October 1979, when he was assassinated by his own subordinate, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Jae-kyu Kim. Now the Korean people hoped for a new democratic era – without avail. Recent Korean political history was repeated. On 12 December 1979, powerful military leaders including Major General Chun Doo-hwan, head of the Army Security Command, Roh Tae-woo and Ho-yong Chong launched another successful coup d’état. Under martial law declared in September 1980, Chun Doo-hwan became the eleventh president (1 September 1980–2 March 1981) and then the twelfth president (3 March 1981–24 February 1988) of Korea. During this time many people lost their lives. Many students and civilians who demonstrated in opposition to military government were killed, and many intellectuals, politicians and journalists purged. Nevertheless, the Korean democracy movement grew in strength after Chun Doo-hwan came to power. After nationwide democratic protests in 1985, Chun Doo-hwan and his successor Roh Tae-woo accepted the people’s so-called ‘29 June Proclamation’, which ‘called for constitutional reform producing the direct election of the president’. However, just before the 1987 election of the president, the two opposition candidates who had led the democracy movement, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, fell out; Roh Tae-woo took advantage of the confusion, won the election and became the thirteenth president of Korea with only 36.6 per cent of the votes cast. Korea had yet another military leader.

In history dictatorships have frequently used sport as a medium of political socialization. In recent times in Europe there have been Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, to mention only the more notorious dictators. More recently, elsewhere in the world, the South American military dictators of Brazil and Argentina in the 1970s used sport as a medium of social control. A similar phenomenon characterized Korean society during the 1980s, and in the wake of this phenomenon came the flowering of modern sport. Sport made a great leap forward in the 1980s on the back of political despotism. Politicians furthered, encouraged and developed Korean sport for both altruistic and ulterior purposes. As already noted, the Fourth Republic came into existence through a coup d’état. Whatever its nationalistic idealism, and the visions of its leader, it was an illegal government lacking the backing of the people. Accordingly, the new regime attempted the classical strategy using sport
as a means of distracting the people’s interest from politics and winning their support:

In conjunction with harsh policies aimed at ‘social and political purification…’ and the passing of endless laws ensuring tight control, once the regime felt secure it used blatant mass bribes to curry favour with the people including free colour television sets and at the same time the liberalization of the uniforms and hair lengths of middle and high school students, and ending of the night-time curfew. At the same time it made a huge effort to bring the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics to Korea posing as the champion of Korean nationalism, the source of a new international recognition and the means of raising the image of the Korean nation. 83

Of course, as mentioned already, the plan to secure the bid for the twenty-fourth Olympics for Seoul had been the brainchild of the Park Chung-hee regime – but had seemingly been stillborn with the death of Park Chung-hee. However, on his inauguration as president, Chun Doo-hwan resuscitated the apparently lifeless corpse.84 He declared: ‘We can not change without good reason something that was already decided on by a previous president and publicly announced both in Korea and abroad, but we must not shrink through defeatism from attempting to promote this historic enterprise.’85 Were his intentions altruistic? As a politician who had seized power, he certainly needed something to win over the hearts and minds of the nation; attracting the Olympics was a dazzling way of achieving this. After securing the Olympic Games, the Chun Doo-hwan regime pleaded for the setting aside of all political dissent until after they had been held. His opponents responded with the argument that the Olympics would be used by the dictatorship in the same manner that the Nazis used the 1936 Olympics in Berlin86 – as a political showpiece. A YMCA report at the time stated bluntly that the Olympics enterprise was a ruse by the military dictatorship to turn the attention of the Korean people away from internal politics and to smother social confrontation in national pride at worldwide attention.87

In his book The One-Hundred Year History of Korean Sport, published in 2000, the historian Lee Hak-rae wrote that the Fifth Republic, faced with a crisis of legitimacy, thought up the scheme to host the Seoul Olympics in an attempt to overcome this disadvantage,88 to overcome the instability the regime faced, to prevent dissidents from concentrating
their energies on political reform and to separate the common people from the democratic movement.

The use of sport as a distraction was not limited to the plan to secure the Olympic and Asian Games. The Chun Doo-hwan regime mounted a popular culture offensive involving, among other things, mass sport. After the Fifth Republic had secured the Olympics it began to promote sport on a large scale. There followed the expansion of professional sports, a rapid augmentation in the numbers and hours of sports broadcasts and an increase in newspapers’ sports pages. The promotion was only partially successful. In 1980 per-capita GNP was only US$1,597 and sports facilities were poor. Nevertheless, the motivation was clear. Lee Hak-rae wrote of the time that:

the Chun Doo-hwan regime, as a means of maintaining military rule that had turned away from any ardent desire for democracy, needed to create an epochal system to avert the attention of the people, and planned to use the professionalization of sports as one part of this artifice.89

It seemed to know what it was doing. Professional sport grew faster than expected and a government–controlled press that worked to stifle the interest of the people in politics certainly helped paralyse general political involvement. Television was a potent instrument of government seduction. Television sports broadcasts greatly increased. In September 1981, for example, the sports broadcasts of the three main television stations accounted for only eight per cent of total broadcast time, but by June 1984 this had grown to almost 25 per cent.90 Significantly, in the light of what has been written above, in the middle of the 1980s the phrase ‘A Sports Republic’ appeared. It brought ridicule down on the regime and it left very few in any doubt as to the ulterior motives that lay behind the strong government action. Nevertheless, there were positive as well as negative consequences of this interest. This must be frankly recognized. The military regimes, whatever their unpalatable politics and blatant actions, successfully promoted the rapid development of modern Korean sport. They have left a legacy of advantage to the nation at least in this regard. Both causes and consequences are, of course, complex. Nevertheless, Korean sport during the 1960s and 1970s, promoted by Park Chung-hee and then during the 1980s pushed by the Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo regimes, provides a fascinating illustration of the influence of politics on modern sport.
CONCLUSION

The process by which modern sport was introduced into, and spread throughout, the different countries of South-East Asia is complicated and as yet insufficiently recorded. This chapter has concentrated on Korean sport in the second half of the twentieth century. This later evolution is even less well covered.

The phases after the Second World War reveal specific characteristics which can be summarized as rapid expansion, government control and initially an elitist emphasis. An extensive system of modern sport was created in roughly a 30-year period, from the 1960s until the late 1980s. Until the 1960s sport was the responsibility of the private Korean Sports Association, a relatively passive and conservative body that had little impact. However, with the government taking control of sport in the 1960s it was all very different. The government simultaneously promoted a ‘school sports movement’, a ‘social sports movement’, a ‘popular sports movement’ and an ‘elite sports movement’. Until the middle of the 1980s government interest and investment were directed towards elite sports for reasons of national image abroad and impecuniousness at home. In modern Korea elite sport did not develop out of popular sport; popular sport developed out of elite sport.

The decisive agent in the successful advance of modern sport was the government. Underpinning its success, of course, was massive social change including urbanization, industrialization and economic progress. The modernization of Korean sport – a nationwide movement – owed much to the military regimes of Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo. In particular, Park Chung-hee, a Korean icon, initiated the Korean ‘sports revolution’. He was himself an all-round sportsman and he energetically promoted Korean sport at every level with a primarily nationalist intention – the creation of a healthy, strong, secure people. He is ‘the Father of Modern Korean Sport’. The military dictators Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo inherited Park Chung-hee’s policies and the 1980s saw the high point of the evolutionary saga – the winning of the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics. Korea had arrived on the world’s sports stage.

Finally, the similarities between the growth of modern sport in Korea and China might be usefully noted. Sport in both nations had ideological foundations arising out of political imperatives and political despotism.
Here, however, the similarities end and for a very good reason. In China sport was seen as a bulwark of Communism; in Korea sport was seen as a bulwark against Communism.

NOTES

Appreciative thanks are extended to Ok Gwang for assistance with the notes.

2. Ibid., p.36.
4. In all instances in the text, unless used in a pre-Korean War context, the terms ‘Korea’ and ‘Korean’ refer to South Korea.
8. In Korea there is a difference of opinion between conservatives and liberals over how to interpret the phrase *Gunsan Jeongbyeon* – ‘militarily achieved political change’. Conservatives often interpret it as ‘revolution’, liberals as ‘coup d’état’. Here this phrase is translated as ‘revolution’, but, in fact, in this chapter, depending on the content being explained, it can be understood as either the former or the latter.
11. Presidential Order No.4398, 4 Dec. 1969. This order set standards for the maintenance of all athletic fields and school facilities used for student physical education and sports activities. Yi-hyok Han, *Cheyouksa*, p.322.
12. Ibid., p.324.
15. See the Korean Sports Council Homepage at http://www.sports.or.kr/.
16. For the 29th Youth Games held in 2000, 17 events were included for elementary school students and 28 events were included for middle-school students. Elementary school student events included track and field, swimming, soccer, baseball, tennis, soft tennis, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, taekwondo and roller-skating. Middle-school student events included track and field, swimming, soccer, tennis, soft tennis, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, rugby, cycling, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, judo, traditional sword, archery, marksmanship, gymnastics, hockey, fencing, badminton, taekwondo, roller skating and canoeing. See the Korean Sports Council Homepage at http://www.sports.or.kr/.
18. Yi-hyok Han, *Cheyouksa*, p.326.
As one link in its imperialist policy, Japan suppressed and put Korean sports activities under surveillance. In 1938 even Korea's all-inclusive sports organization, the Choseon Sports Society, was forcefully disbanded. For details see Mangan and Ha Nam-Gil, 'Confucianism, Imperialism, Nationalism'.


Specifics included the requirements that 1) local autonomous government organizations held athletic games at least once a year or supported sports organizations in holding such games and 2) local autonomous government organizations held worker athletic games at least once a year. Physical Education Promotion Law, Article 8, Kyu-dong Lee, *Cheyouk Haengjung* [Physical Education Administration] (Seoul: Kyohak Research, 1986), p.256.

In accordance with directives of the president, national and local autonomous government organizations were to build, maintain and pay for athletic fields, gymnasiums, swimming pools and other facilities as determined by the president. Physical Education Promotion Law, Article 12, Kyu-dong Lee, *Cheyouk Haengjung*, p.256.


This People's Revolution broke out on 19 May 1960, under the leadership of students. This revolution, which opposed the corruption and authoritarianism of Syngman Rhee regime, is on record as the first revolution in Korean history which successful overthrew an oppressive government. As a result of this uprising, Syngman Rhee resigned his presidency and on 28 May 1960, went into exile in Hawaii (USA). See Lee Ki-baek, *Hankooksa Shinron*, p.485.

On 5 September 1945, the Choseon Friends of Sport Association was formally organized (committee chairman, Lee Sang-back) and on 26 November 1945, the forerunner of the Korean Sports Council, the Choseon Sports Society was inaugurated (eleventh president, Yoh Woon-hyong). From One-Hundred Years of Korean Physical Education, compiled by the Compilation Committee for One-Hundred Years of Korean Physical Education (1988), p.226.


Ibid., p.527.
The plan to bring the 1988 Olympics to Seoul was announced in October 1979. The person who drew up this plan at the time was Jong-gyu Kim, the chairman of the Korean Olympic Committee. Jong-gyu Kim had been the long-time head of Park Chung-hee's Secret Service. He began his plan to draw the Olympics to Seoul after close talks with Park Chung-hee. See Kwang-hon Ko, *Sportswa Jungchi* [Sport and Politics] (Seoul: Pureun Namoo Publishing, 1988), pp.93–9.

Park Chung-hee, ‘Naeui Sonyeon Sijol’ [My Youth], *Choson Monthly* (May 1984), p.84.

Representative songs that he composed included the ‘Saemaeul Norae’ [New Village Song] and ‘Naeui Jokook’ [My Motherland].


Mangan and Ha Nam-Gil, ‘Confucianism, Imperialism, Nationalism’.


Hak-rae Lee and Jong-hui Kim, ‘The Political Ideology’, 30; Yi-hyok Han, *Cheyouksa*, p.326.

Han Yi-hyok, *Cheyouksa*, p.326.


*Collection of Speeches by President Park Chung-hee, First Collection*, p.193.

Ibid., pp.263–4.

Ibid., p.270.


Hak-rae Lee and Jong-hui Kim, ‘The Political Ideology’, 337.


*Collection of Speeches by President Park Chung-hee, First Collection*, p.194.


*Collection of Speeches by President Park Chung-hee, First Collection*, p.539 (Expression of Gratitude on 4 October 1963, at National Games).

Ibid., p.88 (Second Physical Education and Sports Awards Ceremony on 27 April 1964).


Hak-rae Lee and Jong-hui Kim, ‘The Political Ideology’, 210

The plan to attract the 24th Olympic Games to Seoul was promulgated on 8 October 1979,
just before Park Chung-hee’s death. With Park Chung-hee’s death on 26 October 1979, the plan to draw the Olympics to Korea had to be tabled. Hak-rae Lee, *The One-Hundred Year History of Korean Sports* (Seoul: Korean Academy of Physical Education, 2000), pp.535–6.

72. Ibid., p.540.

73. At the time, after a physical fitness test was required nationwide of all students, 4,359 athletes were chosen. Ministry of Sports and Youth, *Administrative History of the Ministry of Sports and Youth* (1992), pp.90–91.

74. By 1990 sports science research centres had been established in some 35 universities starting with Seoul University. Hak-rae Lee, *The One-Hundred Year History*, p.480.


77. Hodori was the mascot for the 24th Olympic Games in Seoul. The goals of the Hodori Plan were to realize a healthy people and a social welfare society to accelerate social development by utilizing the stored energy of the people and to cultivate a healthy youth through wholesome leisure. Ministry of Sports and Youth, *Administrative History*, p.166.


80. On 29 June 1987, Roh Tae-woo, who was then head of the government party, accepted the citizen’s demands in a special proclamation submitted as a means of bringing the difficult social situation under control. These demands included the direct election of the president and the pardon of and reinstatement of political rights for Kim Dae-jung.


84. Ibid., p.388.


89. Ibid., p.302.