Suyoung Kim¹

The Less-Known History of the Voluntary Sector in an East Asian Welfare Regime: A South Korean Case

¹ Department of Social Welfare, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea (the Republic of), E-mail: bethany@snu.ac.kr.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0766-6046>.

Abstract:

Although the voluntary sector is internationally valued as an integral component of the welfare mix, studies on East Asian welfare regimes have primarily focused on state-market-family interactions, paying scant attention to the long-standing and pivotal role of voluntary agencies in their construction. This case study illuminates this less-known aspect of modern welfare history in the context of South Korea, with a particular focus on the activities of voluntary organizations. The study categorizes South Korean voluntary associations into four types and examines their different contributions in shaping South Korea's welfare regime, by applying Young's framework on government–voluntary organizations relations. This historical exploration on the South Korean voluntary sector aims to deepen understanding of an East Asian welfare state regime. It further suggests that current welfare mix debates, focusing on the service delivery role of voluntary organizations within Western European welfare states, should be broadened.

Keywords: voluntary organizations, welfare mix, welfare regime, East Asia

DOI: 10.1515/npf-2018-0028

1 Introduction

Although voluntary associations have historically played an essential role in welfare regimes, classic welfare state theories such as those by neo-Marxists or institutionalists would primarily center around the state–market dynamics and disregard voluntary organizations as “the vestige of pre-welfare state institutions” (White 2006, 45). However, in the era of welfare state restructuring, previously peripheralized voluntary organizations have been mainstreamed and reinstated at the heart of welfare regime debates (Kendall 2000). From the 1990s onwards, third sector scholars have enthusiastically pursued studies on the roles of voluntary organizations within modern welfare states (Gidron, Kramer, and Salamon 1992; Salamon 1995; Salamon and Anheier 1998). Emphasizing welfare pluralism, many studies have replaced the ‘welfare state’ concept with ‘welfare mix’ models within which voluntary organizations are considered a key element alongside the state, market, and family (Evers 1995; Powell 2007).

As suggested by Wood and Gough (2006), this alternative view, incorporating the voluntary sector, is useful for analyzing social welfare configurations in non-Western societies like South Korea, where, in the absence of a fully mature welfare state, non-state agencies have played crucial roles in welfare production. The inappropriateness of Western-based welfare state theories for elucidating South Korea's social welfare system has been acknowledged. Several scholars have attempted to situate South Korea within one of “three worlds of welfare capitalism” (Esping-Andersen 1990), mostly within liberal and corporatist worlds and less commonly within social democratic welfare state regimes (Kuhnle 2004; Kim 2002 for more details). However, evaluating South Korea using Esping-Anderson's typology, which was originally designed for Western welfare states, has its inherent limitations. Notwithstanding variations in gross social expenditure between about 15 % (liberal welfare states) and 30 % (social democratic welfare states) of the GDP, all Western welfare states spend a considerable percentage of their GDP on social security. Thus, South Korea, which has expended far less on social security compared with liberal welfare states (less than 10 %), cannot appropriately be positioned within any of these three categories. Moreover, whereas Western welfare states commonly entail a long history of democracy and capitalism, authoritarian governance and state-led developmentalism have characterized many East Asian countries such as South Korea.

Suyoung Kim is the corresponding author.

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Rather than applying Western-derived theories, some scholars have alternatively suggested East Asian exceptionalism. One strand of this research has indicated the subordination of state welfare to the market economy as the main characteristic of East Asian welfare regimes (Holliday 2000; Kwon 2002, 2009). Viewing these regimes in terms of a “developmental welfare state” (Kwon 2002) or “productivist welfare capitalism” (Holliday 2000), they have demonstrated how authoritarian East Asian governments selectively introduced social policies for industrial workers in ways that propelled rather than disrupted economic development. A second research strand has underscored the Confucian familial culture (Jones 1990, 1993; Kim and Hong 1999). Referring to East Asian countries as “Confucian welfare states” (Jones 1993) or “*oikonomi* welfare states” (denoting the Greek term for household) (Jones 1990), they have shown how in a context where the state has saddled families with the responsibility of caring for elderly parents, children, and poor kin, Confucian family welfare has compensated for deficient state welfare.

By revealing the unique interplay of state, market, and family within society, debates on East Asian welfare regimes have elucidated some of the distinguishing features of the South Korean welfare system. Nonetheless, they have largely overlooked the role of the voluntary sector. Studies by some South Korean scholars, published in international journals, have discussed the advocacy role of voluntary organizations in introducing several social welfare policies (Kim and McNeal 2005; Kim and Moon 2003; Kwon 2003). However, they have repetitively cited one or two publicized policy advocacy cases, especially those introduced after political democratization in the 1990s. Such studies can lead to the mistaken impression, among an international readership, that the engagement of voluntary agencies in the area of social welfare in South Korea is a recent phenomenon.

Throughout South Korea’s modern history, diverse types of voluntary associations have emerged, grown, and declined. In particular, “international aid organizations” (*haeoe wonjo danche*, 海外援助團體), “government-sanctioned voluntary organizations” (*kwanin mingan danche*, 官認民間團體), “people’s movement-based organizations” (*minjung undong danche*, 民衆運動團體) and “citizens’ movement-based organizations” (*simin undong danche*, 市民運動團體) have been widely recognized as four representative types of voluntary associations that feature in South Korea’s modern history (see Choi 1996; Wells 1995; Yu and Kim 1995). Although these distinct categories are currently bundled together within all-embracing Western concepts, imported in the early 1990s, such as “the voluntary sector”, “the third sector”, and “civil society”, they have different origins, missions, and values. Thus, to gain a more complete picture of the South Korean voluntary sector, it is necessary to temporally extend the analysis beyond the democratic period and investigate these various groups. Consequently, this study attempts to delineate the four varieties of voluntary organizations, identifying their differentiated functions within South Korea’s welfare regime, rather than generalizing their roles based on a singular merged entity.

For this purpose, the next section reviews existing debates on the roles of voluntary organizations within welfare regimes and introduces Young’s voluntary sector modes as the study’s analytical framework. Based on the application of Young’s framework, the following three sections investigate varying roles of the four types of voluntary organizations within South Korea’s modern welfare history, which can be divided into three phases – the warfare period (from 1945 to 1960), the military period (from 1961 to 1992), and the democratic period (from 1993 to present). Last, the conclusion draws together the multi-layered roles of voluntary organizations in fabricating the texture of South Korea’s current welfare regime and discusses the implications of the study. Through its historical review, the study aims to elucidate the missing piece of an East Asian welfare mix that has rarely been discussed within previous debates on developmental or Confucian welfare states.

2 The Roles of the Voluntary Sector within Welfare Regimes

Within Western welfare states, an increasing focus on the voluntary sector was triggered, in part, by growing scepticism about the efficiency of welfare states. As part of welfare state reforms, governments have increasingly turned to the voluntary sector to provide a growing array of welfare services formerly assumed by the state. Accordingly, a number of scholars have probed into the service-providing roles of voluntary agencies within modern welfare states. Salamon (1995), for instance, has observed that voluntary organizations have become essential contracted “partners in public service,” with governments acting as financers and voluntary organizations acting as deliverers. Similarly, Gidron, Kramer, and Salamon (1992) categorized four models of government–voluntary sector relationships within welfare states (government-led, dual, collaborative, and voluntary-led) determined by the allocation of responsibilities for financing and welfare delivery. Salamon and Anheier (1998) further classified seven developed countries into four voluntary sector regimes according to the degree of government welfare spending and the scale of the service-providing voluntary sector. This classification essentially corresponded to Esping-Andersen’s welfare regime categories as follows: liberal (low government spending and large voluntary sectors, e. g., the UK and US), social democratic (high government-

tal spending and small voluntary sectors, e. g., Sweden and Italy), corporatist (both sectors being large, e. g., Germany and France), and newly added statist regimes (both sectors being small, e. g., Japan).

The aforementioned studies have charted the service delivery activities of voluntary organizations within advanced welfare states. However, direct application of these frameworks to non-Western societies is questionable on several grounds. First, as pointed out by many scholars (e. g., Johansson, Arvidson, and Johansson 2015; Strachwitz and Zimmer 2010), current welfare mix discussions tend to attach less importance to the political dimension of voluntary organizations. In particular, a number of countries in Asia, Latin America, East Europe, and Africa have and continue to be under authoritarian regimes. Consequently, the relationships between many voluntary associations and these countries' governments remain antagonistic. This political tension is inadequately captured through a Western-derived conceptual lens, focusing primarily on the service delivery role of voluntary organizations acting in concert with democratic governments. Second, current research on the voluntary sector, applying a Western-derived frame, posits relations between domestic voluntary organizations and the national state. However, in post-war East Asian countries like South Korea, as well as in contemporary developing countries, international NGOs, acting as the principal service providers, are mostly financed by donor agencies and not by governments. As noted by Wood and Gough (2006), the activities of international NGOs do not straightforwardly fit into Western-derived models of relationships between domestic voluntary organizations and national welfare states. Third, states are assumed to be stable (democratic and developed) like Western European welfare states in prevailing debates. However, many Eastern European and East Asian states have experienced dramatic politico-economic transformations from authoritarian to democratic or from developing to late-developed states (Pennerstorfer and Neumayr 2017). Consequently, they have evidenced dynamically shifting government–voluntary sector relations. Alternative frameworks that can encompass such drastic social changes are thus required to properly analyze the voluntary sector in the context of a transitional welfare regime.

Young's (1999, 2000) voluntary sector models, derived from theoretical and historical inquiry, can provide such an alternative framework. Critiquing a narrow vision of voluntary organizations as partners in public service, Young conceptualized three modes of voluntary organization–government relations: supplementary, complementary, and adversarial. In the supplementary model, voluntary organizations are conceptualized as fulfilling demands for welfare services not provided by the government. They consequently provide social welfare services on a voluntary basis independently from the state. In the complementary model, voluntary organizations are viewed as partners to the government. They deliver government-financed public welfare services on behalf of the government. In the adversarial model, voluntary organizations impel the state to make changes in social welfare policies. Social movements and campaigns belong to this category.

Based on this tripartite lens, Young (2000) conducted historical investigations of voluntary organizations in the US, UK, Israel, and Japan to assess whether the three modes could provide useful insights relating to different national settings. He found that the roles of voluntary agencies in all of these countries were multi-layered and best understood as a composite of the three modes. Moreover, the most salient roles of voluntary organizations have changed over time. Young posited the following hypotheses. The supplementary mode becomes more prominent when a government is relatively passive and is not held accountable for social welfare and related problems. The complementary mode tends to be advanced during times when national unity and control are required. Last, the adversarial mode is likely to flourish during times of social disruption when societal groups seek policy changes (Young 2000, 169).

Young's models present a somewhat simplified depiction of voluntary organizations. Nevertheless, they offer a useful framework for illuminating the voluntary sector of an East Asian country, as they incorporate voluntary organizations' independent welfare production and political actions besides their engagement in welfare partnerships. Attending to the changing modes of voluntary agencies also enables us to better understand a dynamic East Asian society, notably South Korea. However, actual historical analysis is required to acquire specific details about South Korea's voluntary sector. Consequently, the following sections trace three successive phases of South Korea's modern welfare history that unfolded during its warfare, military, and democratic regimes, shedding light on the activities of voluntary associations during each phase.

3 The Voluntary Sector during the Warfare Regime

3.1 Underdevelopment of Welfare State

In the history of modern Western welfare, the two world wars are considered to constitute a crucial turning point for the (re)construction of the core welfare state structure (Titmuss 1976). The term "welfare state", coined by Archbishop William Temple (as a contrast to the "warfare state"), was subsequently adopted throughout post-war Europe (Eisner 2000). However, Korea after World War II remained a state at war, as the country

was immediately drawn into another global conflict—the Cold War. After its liberation from imperial Japan in 1945, Korea was placed under UN trusteeship for three years, resulting in the division of the Korean peninsula into North Korea, a socialist state supported by the Soviet Union, and South Korea, a democratic government supported by the US. Defining itself in opposition to the socialist North, the South Korean government engaged in political repression of leftists. Specifically, the National Security Law, introduced in 1948 by the liberalist president, Syngman Rhee, provided a legal basis for political repression. Under this law, those who supported socialism, or who recognized North Korea as a legitimate political entity, were accused of threatening national security and duly punished. That 550,915 people were punished for violation of this law during the Korean War (from 1950 to 1953) shows how extensively the legislation was applied (Bae 1991).

It is thus not surprising that “social security” was thoroughly supplanted by “national security” in post-war South Korea. Social security schemes such as public assistance and social insurance were introduced solely to enhance national security. For instance, rewarding patriotism, the Rhee government introduced special public assistance schemes for poverty-stricken families of soldiers and policepersons killed or wounded during the Korean War through the Military Relief Act of 1950 and the Police Relief Act of 1951. However, assistance for the general public was only legislated much later, in 1961. The civil servants’ pension, which was the only form of social insurance introduced during that period, was also a reward provided to civil servants for their fidelity to the state.

With the exception of certain occupational groups, ordinary citizens and workers had no resource to social safety nets. The primary concern of the Rhee government was to demonstrate economic superiority over North Korea. Before the mid-1970s, the South Korean economy lagged behind that of North Korea, because most the pre-war industrial infrastructure was located in the North. To outpace North Korea’s advancement, South Korean workers were, therefore, urged to endure low incomes and long working hours, with state welfare taking a backseat.

3.2 The Supplementary Role of International Aid Organizations

While the state invested in a war against the “socialist evils” posed by North Korea, voluntary organizations shouldered the burden for the war on “five giant evils” (disease, want, ignorance, squalor, and idleness)” identified in the Beveridge Committee Report. Young (2000) has observed that “the supplementary mode becomes more prominent when government is relatively passive in its approach to social policy or slow to respond to social issues” (169). Given the government’s unresponsiveness to the poor, voluntary organizations during this period evidently served as supplementary welfare providers. Above all, international aid organizations (*haeoe wonjo danche*) were at the forefront. Given the Confucian emphasis on strong family bonds, families are widely considered to have traditionally assumed responsibility for welfare provision in East Asian countries (Jones 1990, 1993; Kim and Hong 1999). However, in practice, family welfare support was inadequate among the poor, especially during South Korea’s warfare period, as individuals were often too poor themselves to help their kin. In 1950, as one of the countries with the lowest incomes, globally, South Korea’s GDP per capita was US\$67, with more than 50 % of the population living in absolute poverty (Ha 1989). Thus, as in development countries today, international relief was vital to compensate for the deficit in state welfare and family support.

Particularly, after the Korean War, the entry of international aid organizations into South Korea occurred on a substantial scale. In December 1950, the UN called on international organizations to provide refugee relief in South Korea and launched the United Nations Civil Assistance Command, Korea to coordinate the efforts of participating organizations. In 1955, 49 foreign agencies were accordingly registered, and later the number of foreign voluntary agencies entering in South Korea soared up to 123 in 1961 (Korean Association of Voluntary Agencies [KAVA] 1995, 78). The international aid organizations devoted considerable efforts to providing emergency relief. Between 1953 and 1959, their cash aid amounted to US\$15,000,000 and many tones of supplies in medicine, grains, and clothing were provided to indigents (see Table 1).

Table 1: Relief work carried out by international aid organizations in South Korea (1953–1959).

	Cash (USD)	Aid Items (million tons)				
		Grain	Clothing	Medical Supplies	Others	Total
1953–55	3,701,592	20,126	8,205	420	4,671	33,422
1956	1,881,792	36,528	1,991	135	1,312	39,966
1957	1,903,352	114,756	4,112	600	2,456	121,932

1958	2,755,362	93,298	1,952	93	16,638	111,981
1959	2,096,557	81,229	2,466	320	1,239	85,254

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare (1965, as cited in Kim 2007, 63).

Another key activity of these organizations entailed building social welfare institutions such as orphanages, nursing homes, community welfare centers, and shelters. In 1953, the number of orphanages operated by international organizations totaled 440, accommodating more than 55,000 war orphans. They also instituted courses in social welfare at universities to provide training for local social workers. A Department of Social Work, the first of its kind, was set up in 1947 at Ehwa Women's University with the help of foreign Christian-based organizations. Kangnam University subsequently launched its Social Work Department under the auspices of YMCA in 1953, followed by the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare at Seoul National University shortly thereafter. In this way, international aid organizations played an indispensable part in setting up welfare facilities and importing Western modes of social work to war-devastated Korea.

As a result of such activities, international aid organizations were hailed as "the Second Ministry of Health and Welfare" (KAVA 1995, 77). Indeed, as Table 2 reveals, the ratio of international aid to the annual budget of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) rose from 36.2 % in 1958 to 61.6 % in 1960. By 1961, the amount of international aid had expanded to more than double the MOHW budget (216.3 %) (World Vision Korea [WVK] 1993). Given that governmental welfare measures during this period mostly targeted war veterans, police officers, and public servants, it stands to reason that welfare services for the general poor were largely provided by international aid organizations.

Table 2: Ratio of international aid to the annual budget of the South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare (1958–1988).

Year	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
Ratio (%)	36.2	27.9	61.6	216.3	106.2	124.7	201.0	165.9	119.6
Year	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Ratio (%)	76.5	43.9	65.8	105.7	72.2	99.9	109.9	145.6	34.7
Year	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Ratio (%)	14.6	15.8	12.7	10.3	10.1	6.4	5.6	5.6	4.0

Source: WVK (1993, 209).

4 The Voluntary Sector during the Military Regime

4.1 Introduction of State-Provided Welfare

The period of military rule was characterized by the suppression of democracy and soaring economic growth. In the wake of the student-led "April 19 Revolution" in 1960, Syngman Rhee's 12-year dictatorship was dismantled, creating an apparent space for political liberation. However, hopes for the resumption of democracy were deflated in 1961 following a military coup directed by Chunghee Park. Beginning with the Park government, a series of military leaders held political power from 1961 to 1992.

State-planned developmentalism was a key feature of the military reign (Cole and Lyman 1971). Through consecutive five-year economic development plans commencing from 1962, Park sought to achieve rapid economic growth to justify his military coup. These state-led economic measures were highly successful. GNP per capita rose from US\$80 in 1960 to US\$1,592 in 1980, while the growth rate of the manufacturing industry over the same period was 20.3 %.

Economic growth was accompanied by the introduction of state welfare programs. Most of the country's basic social security schemes were initiated during this period. The Park government enacted the Livelihood Protection Scheme in 1961, which was the first public assistance scheme for ordinary people living in poverty. Industrial accident compensation and health insurance schemes were also introduced around this time (in 1963 and 1964, respectively). Moreover, the National Pension Law was legislated in 1973, although the oil crisis that year delayed its enforcement until 1988.

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to view this period as marking a transformation from a "warfare state" to a "welfare state". For one thing, social expenditure was still meager. Wilensky (1975) has defined welfare states as those that spend 5 % of their GDP on social security. But Korea's social expenditure accounted for just 0.71 % and 2.32 % of the GDP in 1965 and 1985, respectively (Korean Institute for Health and Social Affairs [KIHASA],

2003). Moreover, the military governments did not exhibit “welfare statism”, that is, the belief in or advocacy for a welfare state. As Walker (1984) has pointed out, the welfare state does not simply implement welfare programs; it also embraces a set of societal ideals. For example, Western welfare states were founded on a social consensus regarding the state’s responsibility for people’s wellbeing, citizenship, and social rights (Marshall 1992). Conversely, South Korea lacked a meta-philosophy undergirding the welfare state, and concepts like citizenship and social rights rarely featured in policy discourses during this period.

Clearly, certain intentions lay behind the introduction of state welfare. Besides mitigating their political illegitimacy, the military wanted to use welfare programs as tools for economic development (Holliday 2000; Kwon 1997). One reason the Park government had for introducing pensions was to mobilize pension funds as financial resources for investing in the heavy chemical industry. Insurance for health and for industrial accident compensation was aimed at fostering healthy and productive workers to advance industry. Consequently, this insurance was first offered to regular workers within large companies with 500 or more employees. The provision of public assistance was restricted to impoverished, economically inactive individuals under 18 or over 65 years, as this was thought to hamper the economic independence of working-age individuals. In this sense, welfare scholars have described South Korea’s welfare regime as an example of productivist welfare capitalism, or of a developmental welfare state whose welfare policies are intended to buttress the position of productive elements within the society and to support economic development (Holliday 2000; Kwon 2002). During this period, voluntary organizations could be bisected into government-sanctioned voluntary organizations (*kwanin mingan danche*) and people’s movement-based organizations (*minjung undong danche*) according to their attitudes towards the authoritarian regime.

4.2 Complementary Role of Government-Sanctioned Voluntary Organizations

Young (2000) observed that “the complementary relationship, with an emphasis on government assimilation and control of nonprofit organizations, is likely to become more prominent in times requiring national unity” (169). The period of military rule exactly coincided with the imposition of a complementary role on voluntary associations for achieving national unity and social control. To consolidate the dictatorship, the military needed to prevent the emergence of anti-government organizations. Thus, immediately following the 1961 coup, the Park government introduced the Social Organizations Registration Law, whereby all voluntary associations had to register with the government so that anti-government forces could be ferreted out. Consequently, 155 trade unions were declared illegal. Moreover, to nip evolving anti-government organizations in the bud, the government proactively planted pro-government organizations within various societal sectors, including the media, trade unions, and schools. Such organizations were described as “government-sanctioned” (*kwanin*, 官認), “government-friendly” (*kwanbyeon*, 官邊) or “government-controlled” (*oyong*, 御用) voluntary organizations.

In particular, government-sanctioned social welfare institutions illustrate how the voluntary sector was mobilized within complementary public welfare partnerships during this period. Industrialization is generally recognized as an important backdrop for the development of state-provided welfare, curtailing the informal support provided by families and traditional communities (Cutright 1965). However, the South Korean military government was callous with regard to welfare provision, even after massive industrialization, eschewing its responsibility and leaving welfare provision to voluntary organizations such as international aid organizations. In 1962, the National Relief Coordination Committee was intentionally established by the Park government to foist public service tasks on to international aid organizations. In 1964, international aid agencies became obliged to (re)register with the MOHW every year and to submit annual progress reports under the Foreign Voluntary Organizations Law. Such state interventions made it difficult for foreign agencies to freely fulfill their own missions, leading to their eventual withdrawal in the 1970s (KAVA 1995, 216). Only a few organizations such as World Vision, Compassion, and the Salvation Army opted to stay behind (WVK 1993).

Social welfare institutions such as orphanages, shelters, and local social welfare centers, formerly operated by international aid agencies, were immediately brought under state control. To integrate these within the rudimentary state welfare system, the government introduced the Social Welfare Services Act in 1970. Accordingly, social welfare institutions were bracketed into several categories, including facilities for children, the aged, and the disabled, and these were required to register with the state. If an institution met the state’s criteria, it was officially recognized as a “government-sanctioned social welfare institution” and became eligible to receive state subsidies. As shown in Table 3, the state subsidized 65–85 % of the operational costs of such institutions, which were then supposed to deliver social services on the state’s behalf.

Table 3: Financing of government-sanctioned social welfare institutions in South Korea in 1991.

Types of Social Welfare Institution	Financing Source (%)				
	State Subsidy	Voluntary Donation	Service Fee	Others	Total
Institutions for children	65.0	12.0	15.8	7.3	100
Institutions for the disabled	82.1	4.7	9.8	3.4	100
Institutions for the elderly	84.3	7.2	5.7	2.8	100
The whole social welfare institutions	78.4	7.0	10.4	4.2	100

Source: Foundation of Korean Industries (1991, 27).

The resulting partnership between the state as “financer/regulator” and government-sanctioned welfare institutions as “service deliverers” has been a conspicuous feature of the Korean welfare delivery system since the 1970s. In 1992, 95 % of social services were delivered by government-sanctioned welfare institutions, with less than 5 % provided by state agencies. From the state’s perspective, partnership was a cheaper option than direct service delivery. By strategically offering subsidies, the military state was able to minimize public spending on social services to a level far below 0.1 % of the GDP (Lee 1999, 34).

However, from the perspective of the voluntary sector, this partnership was essentially a patron-client relationship. Authorized by the Social Welfare Services Act, the state had the legal legitimacy to impose tasks on welfare institutions and to intervene in their management, personnel decisions, and budget spending. Because of their dependence on state funds, they had no option but to obey state commands. After the withdrawal of the international agencies, the ratio of international aid to the MOHW’s annual budget dropped from 216 % in 1961, to 14.6 % in 1980, to just 2 % in 1991 (WVK 1993, 203–209). Consequently, social welfare institutions tended to exhibit an apolitical or sometimes pro-government attitude to avoid irritating the military regime, their chief financer. For this reason, government-sanctioned welfare institutions during the military reign have been criticized for being “extended arms of the state” (Kim 2007, 133).

4.3 Adversarial/Supplementary Roles of People’s Movement-Based Organizations

Whereas “legal” government-sanctioned voluntary welfare organizations acted under the auspices of the state, another stream of voluntary associations, associated with people’s movements, took an anti-government stance. Owing to the state’s indifference to the public’s wellbeing, the grievances of the disadvantaged steadily accelerated, sporadically exploding in the form of extreme acts. For instance, Taeill Chun, a 22-year-old sewing factory worker, immolated himself in a marketplace in 1970, shouting “Act on basic labor laws!” In 1971, 50,000 slum residents participated in the Gwangju Wilderness Revolt, setting fire to police stations and chanting “Guarantee poor people’s survival rights”. Such uprisings led progressive intellectuals to turn their attention to the “oppressed people” (*minjung* in Korean). They identified the urban poor, workers, and peasants as three core *minjung* strata and attempted to organize them into anti-government *minjung* movements (Wells 1995).

The intellectuals who were most eager to initiate *minjung* movements were progressive clergymen and students (Ogle 1990). Having witnessed the state’s exploitation of *minjung*, a group of clergymen, drawing inspiration from Latin American liberation theology, began to organize anti-government activism. In 1973, Protestant associations such as the National Church Council and the Committee for Church and Society articulated their anti-authoritarian stance. In 1974, 400 young Catholic priests formed a network called the Catholic Priests’ Group for Justice. University students comprised another dissent group, especially after the diary of the deceased Taeill Chun was published in 1983. The diary revealed Chun’s abiding desire to befriend university students, who could teach him about labour laws and social theories (Cho 1983). This revelation fuelled the resolve of many students to commit themselves to *minjung* movements.

To build relations with *minjung*, a great number of dissidents went to factories, rural villages, and urban slums to live and work alongside them. During the late 1980s, an estimated 10,000 students were working incognito in factories in Seoul and Incheon. Progressive clergymen also built “*minjung* churches” under the alias of community churches in urban slums. These encompassed day care facilities, free dispensaries, and night schools to ensure regular contact with poor residents and to conscientize them. Although the military regime overtly oppressed secular voluntary organizations, it was relatively cautious about intervening in the “sacred sector” because of churches’ extraterritorial rights and fear of provoking international criticism. Thus, *minjung* churches served as the centripetal force for *minjung* movements, providing gathering sites and funds. This locally rooted activism constitutes a unique quality of *minjung* movements. Unlike Western-oriented campaigning organizations, *minjung* movements encompassed grassroots facilities. They offered alternative welfare services such as education, health care or child care to *minjung* marginalized by the developmental welfare state.

Consequently, during the period of military rule, *minjung* organizations served both as supplementary welfare providers for socially marginalized people, and as political opponents of state policies. Of course, their vision of welfare provision was completely different from that of government-sanctioned welfare institutions. While the latter delivered services primarily in partnership with the military governments, *minjung* organizations used service delivery as a channel for fostering anti-government movements. Thus, the voluntary sector during this period performed what Gramsci (1971) described as “a dual function of civil society”. On one hand, this sector functioned as an extended arm of the state, and on the other hand, it constituted a field for counter-hegemonic struggles.

5 The Voluntary Sector during the Democratic Regime

5.1 Establishment of Welfare Statism

Enduring anti-government movements eventually compelled military leaders to relinquish control to the democratic bloc. Following the victory of Youngsam Kim, a civilian politician, in the election held in December 1992, democracy prevailed under the governments of Daejung Kim and Moohyun Roh, who initiated a wide range of welfare reforms. Given the indifference of the military regime to welfare provision, it fell to the democratic regime to amplify the social welfare system. Accordingly, unemployment insurance was introduced in 1993 and national pensions were extended to all citizens in 1999. The coverage of public assistance was also substantially expanded in 1999 to include working-age poor individuals. Consequently, social spending rose from 4.52 % in 1990 to 11.09 % of the government budget in 1998 (KIHASA 2003).

It was also during the democratic period that genuine welfare statism began to take root. The civilian governments declared national manifestos that recognized social rights and the state’s responsibility for people’s wellbeing. Thus, the Youngsam Kim government introduced “globalization of the quality of life”, the Daejung Kim government introduced “productive welfare”, and the Moohyun Roh government introduced “participatory welfare”. Additionally, the Daejung Kim government replaced the five-year economic development plans with the first five-year development plan for social security (1999–2003, continuing during the period 2004–2008) under the Roh government. The new national development plan emphasized “balanced development” between social and economic priorities and included social welfare expansion and equity enhancement at its core. Many scholars have, therefore, claimed that a genuine welfare state is emerging in Korea (Lee 1999, 23) that is “moving beyond East Asian welfare productivism” (Kim 2008, 109).

However, substantial welfare expansion was not smoothly conducted even during the democratic regime. Although the Democratic Party of presidents Daejung Kim and Mooyhyun Roh was more welfare-friendly than the conservative Grand National Party, many of whose members were associated with the previous authoritarian bloc, the latter still held the majority of seats in the National Assembly. Furthermore, the Labor Party, “legally” formed in 2000, won only 10 out of 299 seats in the 2004 general election, despite this coming after democratization. Therefore, unlike its counterparts in European countries, the Labor Party in South Korea could not be expected to assume leadership in welfare state construction. It was in this context that citizens’ movement-based organizations became the mainstay of welfare policy making.

5.2 The Adversarial Role of Citizens’ Movement Organizations

Freedom of assembly and association gradually blossomed after the introduction of democratization. In 1994, the Social Organization Registration Law was abolished and replaced by the Civil Social Organizations Notification Law, under which voluntary associations could be freely established without requiring state permission. Consequently, voluntary associations mushroomed. As Figure 1 illustrates, 56.5 % of the 4,023 voluntary organizations listed in “A Conspectus of Korean Voluntary Organizations” were formed during the 1990s.

Figure 1: Founding years of voluntary organizations in South Korea (N=4,023).

Source: Citizens' Newspaper (2000)

Among the newly formed associations, the most outstanding were the citizens' movement-based organizations (*simin undong danche*). Following the military period, many progressive individuals believed that the era of extra-legal demonstrations that characterized the *minjung* movements was over, and that gradual legal social reforms were now required to deepen democracy. They distinguished their *simin* (citizen-based) movements from the earlier *minjung* (people-based) movements to highlight their identity as rights-bearing and rights-claiming citizens operating within the law.

Simin movements partially overlapped with the Western concept of "new social movements". While *minjung* movements primarily concentrated on political revolution by workers, farmers, and poor people, groups formed under the *simin* movement began to raise issues related to identity, lifestyle, or culture, promoting feminist, ecological, peace, or LGBT movements. The Sarangbang Group of Human Rights (founded in 1992), the Korean Federation of Environmental Movements (founded in 1993), and the Korean Solidarity for LGBT Rights (founded in 1997) were all part of this new wave of social movements.

However, the prime agenda of *simin* movements remained focused on macro political-economic changes. In Western countries, new social movements exploded in the 1960s, when redistribution issues were largely dealt with by welfare states. However, South Korea's welfare state was still underdeveloped. Thus, *simin* movements were not only interested in non-economic issues; they also continued to campaign for economic redistribution and equality. People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), a renowned South Korean citizens' movement founded in 1994 by 200 young progressive citizens, mostly professors, lawyers, and doctors, played a pioneering role in this area. Describing its objectives as centering on "economic justice" and "participatory democracy", the PSPD established the Social Welfare Committee and embarked on a series of social welfare campaigns, with which many other *simin* organizations subsequently aligned themselves (PSPD 1994). They proposed universalizing public assistance, enlarging social insurance coverage, and integrating fragmented health insurance funds. The PSPD also lobbied, conducted nationwide campaigns, and petitioned for the legislation of such welfare policies. As the main axis of the PSPD comprised lawyers and professors, they even formulated welfare policy bills themselves and submitted these to the National Assembly, aided by progressive politicians. The universalized public assistance, the National Basic Livelihood Guarantee of 1999, and the health insurance reforms of 1998 all originated from bills developed by the PSPD.

As Kim and McNeal (2005) have observed, without the active policy advocacy of *simin* organizations, it would have taken much longer for the democratic governments to execute welfare expansion. Indeed, the political leverage of *simin* organizations in the unique context of post-democratic South Korea, where authoritarianism endured in state institutions such as the National Assembly, administrative authorities, and the courts of justice, is incomparable. Gallop Korea's survey in 2002 reported that *simin* organizations were considered as the most trustworthy authority. As shown in Table 4, public confidence in these organizations (77.0%) far exceeded confidence in the National Assembly (11.1%) and in administrative bureaucrats (23.4%). This was one reason why Daejung Kim and Moohyun Roh, as minority presidents, sought to ally themselves with *simin* organizations when enacting social policies.

Table 4: People's trust in social organizations (N = 1,552 respondents).

	Trust	Distrust	No Response	Total
Citizens' Movement Organizations	77.0 %	19.7%	3.3 %	100 %
Religion	50.4 %	43.2 %	6.4 %	100 %
Media	46.9 %	49.6 %	3.5 %	100 %
Business Circle	34.4 %	62.1 %	3.5 %	100 %
Court of Justice	30.5 %	67.8 %	1.7 %	100 %
Administrative Bureaucrats	23.4 %	75.9 %	0.7 %	100 %

National Assembly Members	11.1%	88.5%	0.4 %	100 %

Source: Gallop Korea (2002).

The influence of *simin* organizations was not limited to welfare policy introduction. They also led efforts to consolidate welfare statism by popularizing the concepts of citizens, citizenship, and social rights. Social welfare scholars from the PSPD took the initiative in publicly disseminating such notions through press interviews, public statements, and academic forums. Through their propaganda, ideas about citizenship and social rights became widely known. The motto of the PSPD's Social Welfare Committee: "welfare is the social right of every citizen" was even adopted as a welfare policy slogan of the Daejung Kim government (Office of the President 2000). Thus, without primarily exploring the advocacy role of *simin* organizations, we cannot explain the advancement of the social welfare system during this period.

5.3 Complementary Role of Voluntary Organizations

While *simin* organizations prompted the introduction of social policies, other voluntary organizations increasingly began to partner with the democratic governments to undertake public service delivery. In Western welfare states, welfare partnerships have expanded in the process of downsizing state-led public service delivery. However, it is noteworthy that welfare partnerships multiplied in South Korea in the course of welfare expansion. In response to previously repressed and newly emerging social needs, the democratic governments extended the coverage of existing social services and launched a great number of new service programs, including the Self-Sufficiency Program, the Homeless Shelter Program, and the Childcare Centre Program.

Partnerships between the government and social welfare institutions, designed during the military reign, were consolidated during the phase of rapid expansion of social services. To implement new programs quickly and to minimize the rising cost of service provision, rather than establishing new state facilities, the government sought to use existing government-sanctioned social welfare institutions as front-line service delivery agencies. To facilitate this process, the Social Welfare Services Act, promulgated in 1970, was amended in favor of voluntary organizations after democratization. For example, in 1997, the procedure for founding social welfare institutions was changed from one requiring permits obtained in advance from the government to ex post facto reporting. However, the basic partnership structure, in which the government financed and entrusted voluntary organizations with public service provisions, remained intact and was even strengthened.

What distinguished welfare partnerships during this period from those during the period of military rule was the active participation of *minjung* organizations. After democratization, a large number of leaders from *minjung* organizations joined or were co-opted into the institutionalized political arena. They included Hakyu-son Son, an anti-poverty activist, who became the Governor of Gyeonggi Province in 2002, and Myeongsuk Han, a labor activist, who became the Prime Minister in 2006. Many other *minjung* activists were elected as members of the National Assembly. Besides individual activists being co-opted, a considerable number of *minjung* organizations were also institutionalized within the state welfare system as partners in public services. As previously discussed, *minjung* organizations were deeply embedded within poor neighborhoods accommodating the main targets of welfare services. They also had long experience of providing residents with alternative community services like free child care, medical care, education, and training services. The democratic governments thus invited these organizations, as well as traditional social welfare institutions, to partake in newly initiated social services as local delivery partners. A host of *minjung* organizations assented to the partnership proposition as political democratization had mollified the extreme hostility that previously existed between the government and *minjung* organizations. Moreover, whereas in Western Europe, welfare partnerships are generally understood in terms of welfare retrenchment, in South Korea, they constituted a chain of expanding welfare during this period.

With the government's financial support, *minjung* organizations began to establish new public service centers, which included homeless shelters, childcare centers, and self-sufficiency centers (community centers providing job training and other services for working-age people) within local communities. For example, when the government initiated the Self-Sufficiency Program in 2000, 71 out of 157 self-sufficiency centers were entrusted to *minjung* organizations and their affiliates, while 86 centers were entrusted to traditional social welfare institutions (Kim 2001, 78). Through the forging of such partnerships, a number of *minjung* organizations were incorporated into the state welfare system, serving as complementary welfare partners together with social welfare institutions. Even though a number of former *minjung* organizations have retained their focus on social movements outside of public administration, the institutionalization of old social movement-related groups within the public welfare system has been a notable trend during the period of democracy.

6 Conclusion

The role and significance of the voluntary sector within East Asian welfare regimes has been downplayed both within East Asian welfare studies and international voluntary sector research. East Asian societies, including South Korea, have been conventionally associated with authoritarian states, developmental capitalism, and a Confucian family-oriented culture. This orthodox perspective connects to representations of South Korea’s welfare regime as that of productivist welfare capitalism, a developmental welfare state, or a Confucian welfare state. In these debates, voluntary organizations rarely feature as important actors within the social welfare system. However, this case study has revealed the profound engagement of voluntary associations in the construction of South Korea’s social welfare system. Historically, international aid organizations, government-sanctioned social welfare institutions, and *minjung* and *simin* movement-related organizations have actively participated in molding South Korea’s welfare regime in various ways. Young’s models, which conceptualize the historical positions of voluntary agencies as being supplementary, complementary, or adversarial to that of the government, provide a useful framework for examining the four types of voluntary associations discussed here. Figure 2 presents a visual summary of the roles of South Korean voluntary organizations.

Warfare Regime (1945–1960)	Military Regime (1961–1992)	Democratic Regime (1993–Present)
International Aid Organizations <u>Supplementary</u> welfare providers	mostly withdrawn	
	Government-sanctioned, Voluntary Organizations <u>Complementary</u> welfare partners	<u>Complementary</u> welfare partners
	People’s Movement-based Organizations <u>Adversarial</u> social movements <u>Supplementary</u> welfare providers	partly co-opted <u>Complementary</u> welfare partners <u>Adversarial</u> social movements
		Citizens’ Movement-based Organizations <u>Adversarial</u> social welfare campaigns

Figure 2: The stratigraphy of voluntary organizations within South Korea’s welfare regime.

As shown by Figure 2, the voluntary sector’s roles are multi-layered and its predominant functions have changed over time. After the world wars, Western societies (re)built welfare states and introduced various public welfare programs for national rehabilitation. However, in South Korea, international aid organizations assumed responsibility for social restoration as supplementary welfare providers and provided most social services, as the post-war state was both unwilling and unable to fulfil its responsibilities. During the period of military rule, domestic voluntary organizations took contrary stances. While government-permitted social welfare institutions served as complementary welfare deliverers in conformity with the developmental welfare state, *minjung* organizations opposed productivist welfare capitalism and experimented with alternative community welfare praxis for impoverished *minjung*. During the democratic period, *simin* organizations took the lead in propagating welfare statism and fostering welfare expansion, while some *minjung* organizations, as well as traditional social welfare institutions, served as complementary welfare partners in the delivery of expanded public welfare services. In this way, voluntary organizations have played pivotal roles in shaping South Korea’s welfare regime, albeit in diverse ways, by supplementing, complementing, or confronting governmental policies. These findings demonstrate that voluntary organizations in South Korea are not merely a part of the welfare mix, but are at the heart of it.

However, this case study has only covered one East Asian society, and we cannot apply sweeping generalizations to other East Asian societies. Nonetheless, many East Asian societies that share historical periods of economic destitution or political dictatorship in common may plausibly encompass similar layers—reliance on international aid organizations at one time, palpable tension between government-controlled and

anti-government organizations, or the recent popularity of civil society movements—within their voluntary sector stratigraphy. Additional comparative research is required to identify general features of East Asian voluntary sectors and to synthetically examine how such traits have shaped the peculiarities of East Asian welfare regimes.

This case study also calls for a broadening of the analytical scope of international voluntary sector research. Voluntary associations have risen to prominence in the world scene as a result of what Salamon (1993) termed “the global associational revolution”. However, existing studies on the roles of the voluntary sector within welfare regimes have disproportionately spotlighted service-delivery voluntary organizations within advanced welfare states. A few scholars, notably Salamon and Anheier (1998), have considered the voluntary sector in non-Western countries (mostly, Japan). However, they have also designated these as statist voluntary sector regimes characterized by low government welfare spending and a small service-providing voluntary sector. As Pennerstorfer and Neumayr (2017) have indicated, a diverse range of non-Western cases have been relegated to this category. It is highly likely that South Korea is also considered as such. However, a narrow focus on the service-delivery role of domestic voluntary organizations undervalues other aspects of the voluntary sector. In the case of South Korea, the relief provided by international aid organizations, unofficial community services offered by *minjung* groups, and the political struggles of *minjung* and *simin* movements to advance social welfare are disregarded. Therefore, more comprehensive frameworks that incorporate the variegated activities of global and local voluntary organizations should be designed to apprehend the significance of voluntary associations in non-Western welfare regime contexts like South Korea.

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