

The Impact of Maturation of Democracy on Human Rights, Military Deaths, and Military Suicides : Evidence for Republic of Korea Military from 1973 to 2016

¹Yongjoon Park ²Sunggyun Shin

¹Assistant Prof., Dept. of Law & Public Administration, Korea Army Academy at Yeongcheon, Korea

²Assistant Prof., Dept. of Law & Public Administration, Korea Army Academy at Yeongcheon, Korea

E-mail ¹pyjlove16@gmail.com, ²tls159@naver.com

Abstract

We conducted an intervention time series analysis to examine the impact of democratization on human rights, military deaths, and suicides in the Republic of Korea (ROK) military. Our findings indicate that while the maturation of democracy significantly reduced military deaths and improved human rights, it had no substantial effect on military suicides. This study fills a gap in the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on how democratic transitions influence military outcomes over a 44-year period. By analyzing data from 1973 to 2016, we demonstrate the role of democratization movements and presidential elections in shaping military practices and policies related to human rights and soldier welfare.

Keywords: Democratization Movement, Regime Type, Authoritarian Government, Human right, Military Death

1. INTRODUCTION

In South Korea, the armed force is a core function of the nation and plays an essential role in defending the country from external threats and protecting the lives and property of the people [1]. In Korea, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) uses the fourth most massive budget among 17 government departments [2]. All males over the age of 19 must serve in the military for at least 21 months. Therefore, the military has a tremendous social and economic impact on the nation.

Since the 1970s, about 20,000 soldiers of the Republic of Korea (ROK) under the conscription have died [3]. These soldiers did not die in combat fields, but mostly from non-combat factors such as suicide, military car accidents, and firearm accidents. Considering that the U.S. Military has lost 8,500 soldiers in war zones around the world over the past 30 years, the number of deaths in the ROK Military is inordinately high [1].

Since the ROK military was founded in 1948, it has been recruiting human resources through conscription military service system for about 70 years. The conscription is a compulsory military service system. The biggest problem with the conscription system is that human rights are not respected or ignored in order to fulfill the mission of the military.

Korean male who served in military service under conscription had been subjected to excessive human rights violations by the military. In particular, the violation of human rights during the military regime was more severe.

The undemocratic system of the Korean military has had a negative impact on the military organization's reputation and public trust. The transition from the military regime to a democratic regime, that is, the maturation of democracy, has led military organizations to strive for improved military cultures, such as an emphasis on life, prevention of accidents, prevention of suicide, and respect for human rights. However, many Korean parents are still responding sensitively to accidents such as death, suicide, beatings, and human rights abuses in the military.

By 1987, South Korea had a military government (authoritarian government). Since 1988, the president has been elected by national elections. The transfer of regime type from the military (autocracy) regime to the democratic regime brought about an increase in the freedom of human rights within the military. Thus, we assumed that the transfer of power from the military regime to the democratic regime played a role in reducing the number of deaths and suicides in the military.

This study conducts intervention time series analysis of what is the impact of maturation of democracy on human right, military deaths, and military suicides in the Republic of Korea Military. Although previous studies have examined only military deaths and suicides, empirical studies on the impacts of maturation of democracy on human rights, military deaths, and military suicide are hard to find. To fill this gap, this study will conduct an intervention time series analysis. This study uses ROK military deaths and suicide data from 1973 to 2016. Total observations will be 44 years.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Linking Regime Type and Human Rights

Many studies show that regime type affects human rights. In general, democracy regimes might have a better respect for human rights [4-5]. The military regimes are based on force, and force is the key to coercion. According to the authors, many leaders of the military regime are characterized by ignoring the constitution and suppressing the human rights of the people [5]. Empirical studies examine the relationship between regime types and human rights.

One study analyzed the political and economic performance of military and civilian regimes [6]. It evaluated the performance of military and civilian regimes with a range of political, economic and military variables from 1951 to 70. They found that military regimes more likely than civilian ones to ban constitutions, assemblies, and parties.

Another study explored that the question of what kinds of regime types will be most evil and engage in human rights violations [7]. Also, they explore the relationship between economic conditions and human rights violations. The authors used the 122 countries data in 1984. Their statistical results find that more autocratic government, more likely to violate human rights.

Another analysis provide insight that there is no reliable evidence for the relationship between the military government and levels of repression of human rights [5]. The authors used the cross-national data in 153 countries from 1980 to 1987. According to the authors, military regimes negatively affect levels of human rights.

Further research examined empirical evidence relationship between government regime types and human rights [8]. Their research question is that do democracy and democratization protect the most basic of human rights? The authors used the cross-national data from 145 countries in 1987. According to their results, increased level of democracy negative affect gross violation of human rights.

Further research examined the relationship between democracy and human rights [9]. They test their hypothesis that democracy will have increased after the Cold War, causing increased government respect for human rights. This article uses a cross-national time-series dataset of 79 nations of the world with a population of at least 500,000 in 1981 for analyzing the relationship between democracy and human rights. The study suggested that governments that became more democratic after the end of the Cold War tended to manifest higher levels of respect for the right of their citizens. Considering the results of the research, we expect that regime change from military government

to democracy one increase in human rights.

2.2 Linking Regime Type and Military Deaths and Suicides

As democracy matures, does the number of military deaths and suicides decrease? There is no empirical analysis of the correlation between the maturity of democracy and military deaths. Although there is no study of the effects of democratization on military death and suicide, abundant observational studies have shown that the maturity of democracy indirectly affects military deaths and suicide. For instance, LaFree and Tseloni analyzed the correlation between democracy and murder incidence in 44 countries from 1950 to 2000. As a result, in the early period of democratization, the crime rate increased, and it became clear that the crime rate gradually decreased as it entered the democratic stabilization period [10]. Karstedt investigated the correlation between the level of democracy and the incidence of murders in 39 countries. As a result, crime rates were lower in countries with higher democratic values and higher crime rates in countries with less democratic values [11].

The studies examined the relationship between democracy and economic growth. Many studies show that democracy positively affects GDP and economic growth. Democracy claims to perform on average better than authoritarianism [12-16]. As noted by Chowdhury, they conducted an empirical study that examined the relationship between the effect of democracy and press freedom on corruption [17]. The result founded that democracy and press freedom can have a negative impact on corruption. Also, many other studies on democracy and corruption empirically confirm that corruption decreases as democracy matures [18-20].

Considering the results of the research, we expect that democracy has a negative impact on crime and corruption, and has a positive impact on economic growth. Based on the above arguments, we argue that transferring regime type from military to democracy has reduced military deaths and suicides.

3. DATA

This study conducts intervention time series analysis to analyze the effects of maturity of democracy on human rights, military deaths, and military suicides. This article uses ROK military death and suicide data, and freedom house's political rights and civil liberties data from 1973 to 2016 (n = 44). The collected data are analyzed by the Eviews.

3.1 Two Intervention Points (May 18, 1980, Gwangju Uprising, 1987 South Korean presidential election)

A series of democratic movements in South Korea began with the assassination of President Park Chung-hee on October 26, 1979. The abrupt termination of Park's 18-year authoritarian rule left a power vacuum and led to political and social instability. South Korean Army major general Chun Doo-hwan seized military power through the Coup d'état of December 20, 1979, and tried to intervene in domestic issues. The nation's democratization movements were being revived. In order to contend the military government, on May 18, 1980, the Gwangju uprising began. From May 18 to 27, 1980, up to 606 people may have died against the martial law government. This democratic movement may assume significant impact on human right, military deaths, and suicides.

In addition, from 1973 to 1987, the regime type of South Korea was autocracy regime. In 1987, the Korean people elected the president directly through the democratization movement. President Park Jung-hee was a military man and took control of the regime from 1963 to 1979 through a coup d'état. President Jeon Doo-hwan, also a former general, became a president through a coup. His term of office was from 1980 to 1987. Table 1 shows the type of regime in South Korea from 1973 to 2016.

Table 1. Type of regime in South Korea (1973-2016)

Year	1973-79	1980-87	1988-92	1993-97	1998-02	2003-07	2008-12	2013-16
Type	Military (Autocracy) Regime		Democracy Regime					
President	Park, Chung-hee	Jeon, Doohwan	Noh, Taewoo	Kim, Young-sam	Kim, Daejoong	Noh, Moohyun	Lee, Myung-bak	Park, Guenhye

By 1987, South Korea had a military government (authoritarian government). Since 1987, the president has been elected by national elections. The transfer of regime type from the military (autocracy) regime to the democratic regime brought about an increase in the freedom of human rights within the military. Based on the 1987 presidential election, we divided the military government from 1973 to 1987 and the democratic government from 1988 to 2016.

3.2 Military Deaths and Suicides

Data of military deaths and suicides were collected, including various secondary data. For instance, we collected the number of deaths and suicides as well as the defense budget, the National Assembly budget report, defense white papers, supplementary indicators provided by the Ministry of National Defense, open financial data, academic papers and books published in and out of the ROK, and research reports.

3.3 Human Right

To measure human rights, we use data on the Freedom House's Political Rights Index (PRI) and Civil Liberties Index (CLI). In the early 1970s, Freedom House has annually provided two democracy (human right) index, one on the extent of political freedoms, and the other on civil liberties [21]. To measure the level of democracy in each country, these ratings are used by many social researchers [22-23]. Political rights measure whether or not citizens are free to participate in the political process in terms of the electoral system and political rights. Civil Liberties measures freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, the rule of law, and individual autonomy. Each country is given a Political Rights Index and a Civil Liberties Index between one and seven, and the average of these two indices is the country's "Freedom Rating." Higher values indicate less freedom (democracy). In order to the empirical analysis, we reversed the scales that a higher value means a country is more democratic.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statics of the Sample

Table 2 shows the total number of military deaths and suicide in South Korea. According to Table 2, in the military regime from 1973 to 1987, the number of deaths in the military was 15,746, and the number of suicides among the dead was 4,912. Suicide accounted for 31.2% of all deaths in the military. In the military regime for 15 years, about 1049 people died in the military each year, and 327 people committed suicide. In contrast, between 1988 and 2016, there were 6,526 deaths in the military and 2,804 suicides over the 29 years of the democratic regime.

Table 3 shows descriptive statics of the sample in military deaths, military suicides, political rights, and civil liberties. In table 3, the military deaths ranged from 81 to 1555, with average deaths of 506. The military suicides ranged from 54 to 484 and the average is 175. The political rights are ranged from 1 to 5 and the mean is 2.6. In addition, the civil liberties are ranged from 2 to 6 and the mean is 3.11.

Table 3. Descriptive statics

N = 44				
Variable	Mean	S.D	Min	Max
Military Deaths	506	456	81	1555
Military Suicides	175	127	54	484
Political Rights	2.61	1.43	1	5
Civil Liberties	3.11	1.47	2	6

Figure 1 shows the Trend of military total deaths and suicides from 1973 to 2016. In Figure 1, military deaths and suicides have a fairly similar trend. From 1973 to 1975 military deaths and suicides increased. From then on, the number of military deaths and suicides continued to decline until 2016.

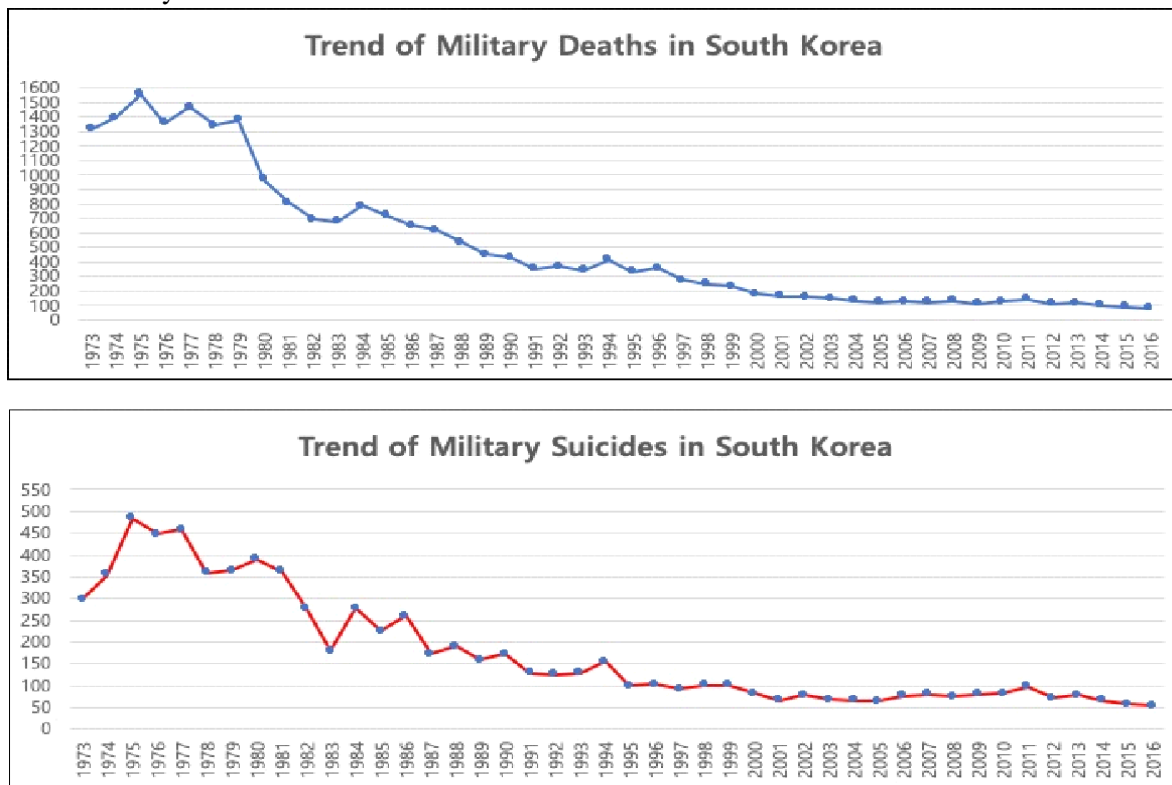


Figure 1. Trend of military total deaths and suicides from 1973 - 2016

As shown in Figure 2 the Trend of total freedom (human right) from 1973 to 2016. As you can see in Figure 1, total freedom, military deaths, and military suicides have quite similar trends. In 1975 South Korea's total freedom score deteriorated to 5.5. After that, the score of freedom improved to 4.5, and then to 198 in 1982, again to deteriorate. Since then, the level of freedom has been getting better.

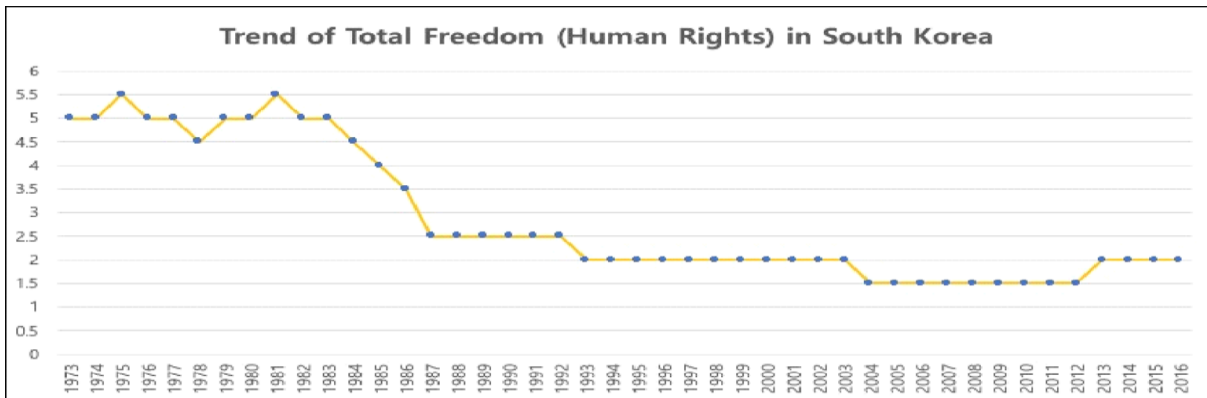


Figure 2. Trend of total freedom (human right) from 1973 - 2016

4.2 Intervention Time-series Analysis

Figure 3, 4 shows Trend of military total deaths and suicides from 1973 to 2016. In Figure 3 and 4, the trends of Figures 3 and 4 are very similar. After the first intervention (democratization movement), military deaths and suicides continued to decline, but 1984 temporarily increased. After the second intervention (1987 presidential election), military deaths and suicides continue to decline.

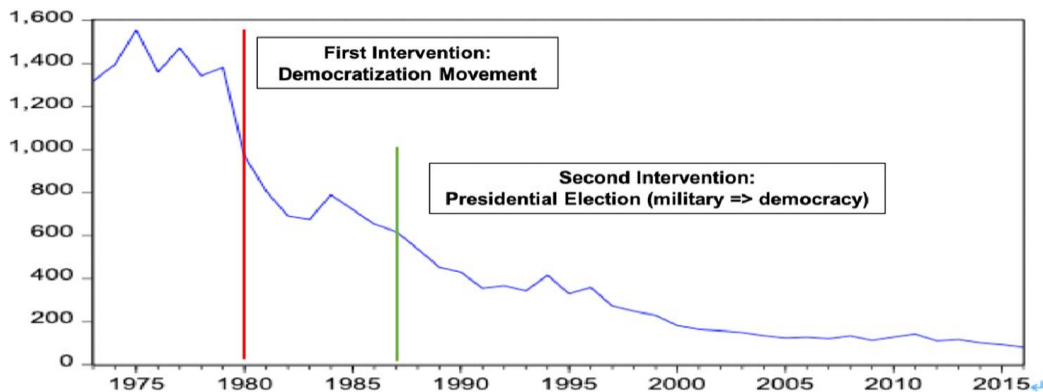


Figure 3. Trend of Military Total Deaths from 1973 - 2016

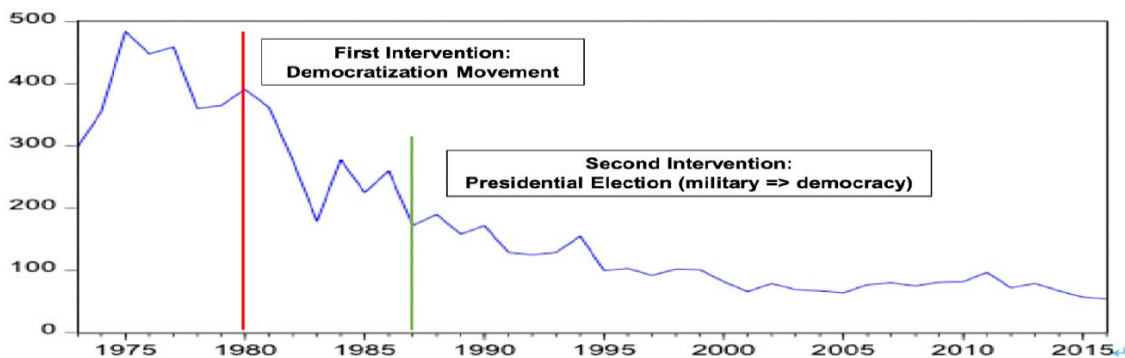


Figure 4. Trend of military suicides from 1973 - 2016

The trend of Human right is fairly similar with trends of military deaths and suicides. Figure 5 shows the Trend of human right from 1973 to 2016. In 1975 South Korea's human right deteriorated to 5.5. After the first intervention (democratization movement), the score of human right increased in 5.5. From 1982 to 1987, human

right dramatically improved. Since the second intervention (presidential election), the level of freedom has been getting better.

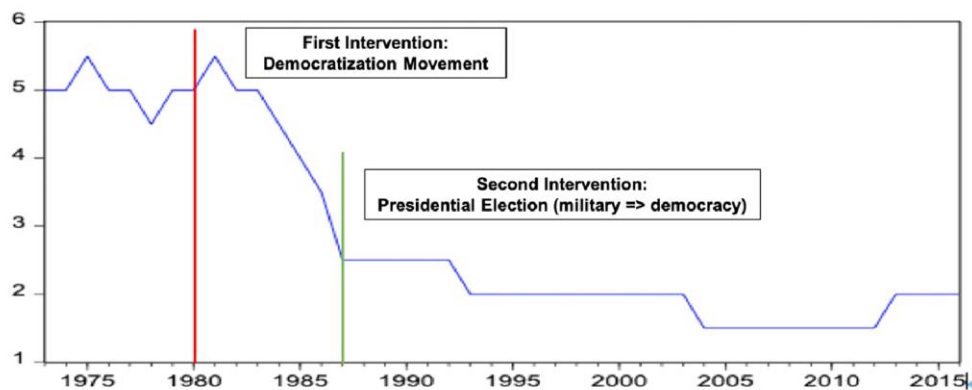


Figure 5. Trend of Human Right from 1973 – 2016

We predict that the maturation of democracy negatively affects military deaths suicides and improve in human right. Table 4 shows the result of military deaths of intervention time series analysis. In table 4, the democratization movement in its original level form lag 1 year is associated with a decrease of 221 in the first difference of total military deaths. Intervention 1 for democratization movement is associated with a significant decrease of 221 in the first difference of total military deaths.

Table 4. Result of military suicides of intervention time series analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	245.9098	148.7732	1.652917	0.1066
MILITARY TOTAL DEATH(1)	-0.174831	0.107399	-1.627868	0.1118
INTERVENTION1	-221.1165	84.60965	-2.613372	0.0128
INTERVENTION2	-227.3066	127.5918	-1.781515	0.0828
R-squared	0.193560	Mean dependent var		-29.16667
Adjusted R-squared	0.129894	S.D. dependent var		91.74857
S.E. of regression	85.58259	Akaike info criterion		11.82723
Sum squared resid	278326.4	Schwarz criterion		11.99273
Log likelihood	-244.3719	Hannan-Quinn criter.		11.88789
F-statistic	3.040229	Durbin-Watson stat		1.898541
Prob(F-statistic)	0.040579			

Table 5 show the result of military suicides of intervention time series analysis. According to the results of the analysis, there is no relationship between interventions and military suicides. Both intervention one and two are not associated with military suicides.

Table 5. Result of military suicides of intervention time series analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-67.78885	71.45290	-0.948721	0.3488
SUICIDE_NUMBER(1)	0.188964	0.165611	1.141013	0.2610
INTERVENTION1	-2.207194	37.36079	-0.059078	0.9532
INTERVENTION2	46.04056	57.20838	0.804787	0.4259
R-squared	0.087923	Mean dependent var		-5.738095
Adjusted R-squared	0.015917	S.D. dependent var		43.97619
S.E. of regression	43.62480	Akaike info criterion		10.47952
Sum squared resid	72318.69	Schwarz criterion		10.64501
Log likelihood	-216.0700	Hannan-Quinn criter.		10.54018
F-statistic	1.221050	Durbin-Watson stat		2.657152
Prob(F-statistic)	0.315312			

Also, Table 6 shows the result of the human right of intervention time series analysis. In table 6, Intervention 2 for the presidential election is associated with a significant increase of 0.68 in the first difference of Human Right.

Table 6. Result of human right of Intervention Time Series Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-1.122592	0.379184	-2.960549	0.0053
TOTAL_FREEDOM(1)	0.224518	0.072807	3.083765	0.0038
INTERVENTION1	-0.102014	0.156091	-0.653555	0.5173
INTERVENTION2	0.675744	0.253500	2.665656	0.0112
R-squared	0.321835	Mean dependent var		-0.071429
Adjusted R-squared	0.268296	S.D. dependent var		0.303866
S.E. of regression	0.259926	Akaike info criterion		0.233553
Sum squared resid	2.567338	Schwarz criterion		0.399046
Log likelihood	-0.904617	Hannan-Quinn criter.		0.294213
F-statistic	6.011194	Durbin-Watson stat		2.798700
Prob(F-statistic)	0.001865			

In sum, the crucial research question proposed in this study is whether maturation of democracy affects the human right, military deaths, and suicides. Analysis of the intervention time series model shows that the maturation of democracy has been found to have a negative impact on military deaths and human right. However, both interventions (democratic movement, presidential election) have not a significant impact on military suicides.

5. CONCLUSION

We have examined the impact of the maturation of democracy on human rights, military deaths, and suicides

in South Korea. Our study confirms that the democratization movement significantly reduced military deaths in South Korea, and the presidential election contributed to improvements in human rights.

We provide empirical evidence that the maturation of democracy has impacted human rights, military deaths, and suicides. Since the ROK military was founded in 1948, we recognize that it has been recruiting human resources through a conscription military service system for about 70 years. Conscription is a compulsory military service system, and the biggest problem with this system is that human rights are often not respected or are ignored to fulfill the military's mission. We have found that under the Korean conscription system, it has become internalized that individual human rights are inevitably neglected.

The protection of military human rights requires not only declarative efforts but also practical policies to strengthen the rights of soldiers. Additionally, we highlight that the nature of the conscription system is likely to suppress or infringe upon the human rights of soldiers. Therefore, we argue that there is a need for discussions on how to supplement and develop the military draft system, especially as concerns grow within the military, government, and society about military culture and human rights violations.

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