

The issue of nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula and the question of legitimacy and support of the nondemocratic leaders are some of the current political challenges. The roots of the Korean nuclear pursuit reach all the way back to the 1970s when the authoritarian South Korean president Park Chung-hee ordered the launch of the so-called Project 890. The United States, Seoul's protector and sponsor of many years, had to find a way of how to deal with that situation and to consider their alliance with South Korea. This thesis is mostly an analysis of the American support of the South Korean authoritarian regime at the end of the 1970s. The main aim is to evaluate whether it was possible for the US to reduce its economic and military assistance at the end of Park's rule and to promote the democratization of the country. It tries to explore the factors, which influenced the US decision. Subsequently, it verifies Owen and Poznansky's theory on the existence of two conditions needed for the US to be willing to stop supporting the pro-American authoritarian regime and to allow the democratic elections to take place. This work builds on their theory and adds some other aspects, relevant to this case. It argues that the Korean nuclear pursuit could have been one of the significant factors for the American decision, demonstrating Park's unreliability as the US ally.