

<http://fortune.com/2016/10/29/south-korea-president-protest/>

Thousands of South Korean Protesters Call for President to Resign



South Koreans hold signs during a rally calling for President Park Geun-hye to step down in downtown Seoul, South Korea, Saturday, Oct. 29, 2016. Thousands of South Koreans took to the streets of the capital on Saturday calling for increasingly unpopular President Park Geun-hye to step down over allegations that she let an old friend, the daughter of a religious cult leader, interfere in important state affairs. The letters read "Park Geun-hye step down."

Over allegations she let an old friend interfere in important state affairs.

Thousands of South Koreans took to the streets of the capital on Saturday calling for increasingly unpopular President Park Geun-hye to step down over allegations that she let an old friend, the daughter of a religious cult leader, interfere in important state affairs.

The evening protest came after Park ordered 10 of her senior secretaries to resign over a scandal that is likely to deepen the president's lame duck status ahead of next year's election.

Holding candles and signs reading "Who's the real president?" and "Park Geun-hye step down," the protesters marched through downtown Seoul after holding a candlelight vigil near City Hall. Police estimated that about 9,000 people turned out for the biggest anti-government demonstration in Seoul in months.

"Park has lost her authority as president and showed she doesn't have the basic qualities to govern a country," Jae-myung Lee, from the opposition Minjoo Party and the mayor of the city of Seongnam, told the protesters from a stage.

Park has been facing calls to reshuffle her office and Cabinet after she acknowledged on Tuesday that she provided longtime friend Choi Soon-sil drafts of her speeches for editing. Her televised apology sparked intense

criticism about her mismanagement of national information and a heavy-handed leadership style that many see as lacking in transparency.

There's also media speculation that Choi, who holds no government job, meddled in government decisions on personnel and policy and exploited her ties with Park to misappropriate funds from nonprofit organizations.

Prosecutors on Saturday widened their investigation by searching the homes of presidential officials suspected of interacting with Choi and receiving their office files from the Blue House—the presidential office and residence. Prosecutors had previously summoned some of Choi's key associates and raided their homes and workplaces, as well as the offices of two nonprofit foundations Choi supposedly controlled.

The saga, triggered by weeks of media reports, has sent Park's approval ratings to record lows, and the minority opposition Justice Party has called for her to resign. The Minjoo Party, a larger opposition party that has refrained from calling for Park's resignation over fears of negatively affecting next year's presidential election, said Park's decision to shake up her secretariat was too little, too late, and called for stronger changes, including the reshuffling of her Cabinet.

Park's aides on the way out include Woo Byung-woo, senior presidential secretary for civil affairs, and Ahn Jong-beom, senior secretary for policy coordination. Lee Won-jong, Park's chief of staff, tendered his resignation on Wednesday.

Woo has been blamed for failing to prevent Choi from influencing state affairs and has also been embroiled in separate corruption allegations surrounding his family.

Ahn, whose home was searched by prosecutors on Saturday, is under suspicion that he helped Choi pressure South Korean companies into making large donations to the Mir and K-Sports foundations, launched in October last year and January this year, respectively. Choi reportedly masterminded the creation of the two nonprofits, which managed to gather around \$70 million in corporate donations over a short period of time, and is suspected of misappropriating some of the funds for personal use.

Park's office said she plans to announce a new lineup of senior secretaries soon.

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/south-koreas-million-strong-march/>

South Korea's Million-Strong March

Seoul's protesters are united not only in anger at their president, but in hope that their voices can force change.

Last Saturday upwards of one million Koreans poured into central Seoul to demand President Park Geun-hye's resignation after it was revealed her longtime friend, Choi Soon-sil, bestrides state affairs. This was the largest Korean demonstration in roughly three decades and organizers have planned two more on the Saturdays ahead.

To put that number in perspective, Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution in 2014 was one-tenth that size and was witness to almost 500 injuries and 955

arrests. Yet despite its immense proportions, Seoul's protests have seen just 55 injuries and no arrests.

In fact, despite the volcanic outrage pouring across the country and the near unanimity of opinion on the matter — Park now has an approval rating of 5 percent overall, and zero percent among Koreans under 30 — the demonstrations have been host to a remarkably convivial crowd. In between full-throated diatribes by speakers who visibly tremble with anger, a placid voice tells participants, "Please remember to dispose of your rubbish in the appropriate receptacle. Thank you and have a nice day."

The crowd was also impressively organized, especially considering it's composed of a motley assortment of interest groups ranging from the anti-religious to Green Party supporters to rice farmers, who've been suffering ever since Park loosened Korea's protectionist policy toward them. These farmers are subsidized at a rate 2.5 times higher than the OECD average, but at the rally, they gathered between Namdaemun and City Hall wearing small red stickers that said, "Guarantee the Price of Rice."

"You're American?" a rice farmer who was the worse for drink asked as I made my way through the crowd. "Hey, hey, you wanna know why Trump won? Because Americans looked at Korea and saw how a corrupt woman has ruined our country!"

One reason such a large crowd has been able to remain so well organized and free of injury is because, for the most part, it's relatively docile. Indeed, the mood on Saturday was predominantly festive, with many senior adults, couples, and toddlers alike waving banners, holding signs and clapping along. There were hot dogs being sold as "haya (resign) dogs," cartons of "Stop Park Soy Milk" being handed out for free, people waving "#NotMyPresident" signs (in English), and plenty of drunken merrymaking, sing-alongs, and dancing.

"Yankee, go home!" one young man shouted as I passed, and for a brief moment, I thought I'd run across an ugly crack in an otherwise merry façade. But then he smiled in a way that indicated he had no idea what the words meant except perhaps that it was some sort of way to greet Americans. He stepped forward, warmly shook my hand, and repeated with a disarming smile, "Yankee, go home."

I passed the main stage in front of City Hall, where the crowd was so thick it took half an hour to walk 100 meters. There was another stage at Gwanghwamun Square, where a band played anti-Park rock music and I saw a Westerner holding up a giant black-and-white sign that read (in Korean), "Believe in Jesus if you want, but keep it out of politics."

As the evening wore on, the rally became a candlelight vigil. A group of protesters came closer to the Blue House that night than police usually permit, and there was some pushing between the crowd and armored officers, but no one was seriously injured. By around 9:30 pm, the crowd was still massive, but groups of people were already starting to leave.

The festive mood remained a constant throughout the night, and in fact, it seemed most of the people there were more interested in having a good time than anything else. That isn't to say they weren't angry or that their anger was without purpose, but it didn't show. Their joyfulness wasn't one of tactical frivolity, either. They were simply full of hope — the beating hope that their future can change because they hold the reigns of democracy in their hands.

That may sound a little maudlin, but as an American, and particularly these days, it resonated.

I have my reservations about the movement. An untempered hope leads to complacency, and a political movement that coalesced after vast systemic corruption was laid bare might want to look up every once and while to make sure it doesn't center too much on a single person's crimes. Still and all, what was truly stunning about the demonstration wasn't that it was so big, so peaceful, or so focused (despite its broad constituency), but that it was such a clear and open opportunity for change — and no one seemed willing to let it slip by

<http://time.com/4583033/south-korea-protest-demonstration-seoul-park-geun-hye-choi-soon-sil/>

Huge Numbers Demand the Ouster of South Korea's President in a Fifth Week of Protests

What began as a rally against South Korea's President Park Geun-hye has morphed into a general indictment of a nation's social ills

With her face [adorning urinals](#) and dripping blood in protest portraits, there can be little doubt that South Korea's most unpopular person is currently President Park Geun-hye.

For the fifth weekend running, crowds estimated from 500,000 to 1.5 million have thronged central Seoul to demand her ouster. On Saturday, hundreds of provincial farmers, many driving tractors, joined a demonstration that paralyzed the capital, shutting down streets spanning out from palatial Gwanghwamun Square. As they gathered, performance artists and traditional Yonggo drummers competed for attention beneath a seated golden statue of 15th century King Sejong.

Excited crowds held candles aloft. Looking on were squads of riot police, almost exclusively drawn from the 19- to 39-year-old age group among whom Park's approval rating polls have sunk to a politically unprecedented 0%. (Owing to residual support among diehard conservatives, her approval rating across all ages stands at a paltry 4%.)

"We cannot wait even one day [for her to quit]," protester Cho Mi-sun, a 51-year-old teacher, tells TIME. "She's not normal and too dangerous to rule this country."

Park, the daughter of the late former President and military dictator Park Chung-hee, was elected in late 2012 on electoral promises to rein in the chaebol — the massive South Korean conglomerates that dominate the economy and exert a major influence on politics. But prosecutors accuse her of actually boosting their clout through her longtime confidante, Choi Soon-sil.

'Everything is wrong with Korea'

Choi's father was Choi Tae-min, the founder of a religious cult, who died in 1994. He was close to Park and her father, and claimed that he could receive messages from Park's mother — killed by an assassin's bullet meant for the dictator — from beyond the grave. Confidential U.S. [cables](#) obtained by WikiLeaks describe Choi as having a Rasputin-like power over the First Family.

According to prosecutors, Park regularly shared classified documents with the younger Choi, allowing her to tweak speeches and inform national policy. Choi was indicted on Nov. 20, accused of using her influence and access to squeeze more than \$70 million from the chaebol, including such global names as Hyundai, LG and Samsung. Investigators [raided](#) the offices of Samsung after accusations that a controversial merger was approved by the government in return for a "donation" to one of Choi's foundations, as well as to an equestrian school where her daughter, a dressage champion, trained.

Yet to focus on a cultish hand in the presidential drama is to overlook some very real-world grievances. What began as a protest against alleged corruption at the highest level has morphed into a general indictment of the ills of Korean society. In a survey of 21,000 Koreans last year, 88% of respondents admitted considering emigrating to another country because of a sluggish economy, distrust in the government and a lack of social mobility. While South Korea is commonly seen as an economic marvel, and by some metrics remains Asia's [most developed](#) nation, it also copes with income inequality and soaring living costs. National household debt has hit a record \$1.1 trillion, meaning the population is extremely vulnerable to rising interest rates and other headwinds. For many Koreans, economic dissatisfaction is exacerbated by country's conservative social codes and notorious sexism.

"Everything is wrong with Korea," says protesting train driver, Kim Seon-uk, 39, huddled in the tent in central Seoul he's pitched every day for the past month. "Park needs to quit now."

Prosecutors accuse Park of being Choi's accomplice, though the President is protected from criminal indictment by the constitution, unless for insurrection or treason. Besides Choi, two former Park aides have been charged with various charges relating to abuse of power, fraud and coercion and leaking classified documents. Impeachment proceedings against Park are slated for early next month.

'People increasingly see the entire game is rigged'

The fallout could have serious consequences for regional if not global stability. South Korea is arguably the most important U.S. ally in East Asia. The constitution of Washington's other major ally, Japan, largely precludes it from taking an active role in security matters. Thus the relationship between Washington and Seoul is of crucial importance if the simmering antagonism of North Korea, an aspirational nuclear power, is to be contained — a fact underscored by the presence of 28,500 American troops in South Korea.

"The question for South Korea going forward is how credible will the commitment from [U.S. President-elect Donald] Trump be when he's Commander in Chief," Professor Sean O'Malley, a political scientist at South Korea's Dongseo University, tells TIME.

Park has been especially hawkish on North Korea following Pyongyang's fourth nuclear test, agreeing to the deployment of U.S. THAAD missile batteries much to the annoyance of North Korea's only real ally, China. That could change with her ouster. Alarmed by Trump's threats to force allies to pay the full costs of their own defense — Seoul paid \$866 million, or about 40% of the total, in 2014 — some in South Korea's opposition are already saying that rapprochement with Beijing makes more sense. Trump's talk of raising import levies — half of South Korea's GDP comes from exports — only adds to the feeling that Washington isn't to be relied upon.

In the meantime, the protests against Park continue to build. The demonstrators are a cross-section of Korean society: there are trade unionists, students, representatives of parties of the left and right, feminist groups and families. (A particularly poignant contingent is formed by the relatives of the 304 people, mostly high school children, who lost their lives in the [entirely preventable](#) 2014 [Sewol ferry disaster](#) — itself seen as another symptom of the country's malaise.)

Young faces, and female ones, are prominent in the crowd. South Korea boasts one of the world's toughest education systems, contributing in no small part to the [world's highest teen-suicide](#) rate, as young people struggle to get into [one of the top three universities](#). And yet education is no guarantee of a job. Youth unemployment stands at a record high of 9.4%.

"People increasingly see the entire game is rigged, and the only people who get ahead have significant social and economic capital," says Professor Michael Hurt, a culture specialist at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul.

The game is especially rigged against women. South Korea [ranks](#) 115 out of 145 nations on the 2015 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report. In terms of educational attainment, it places even lower than Saudi Arabia. Park maybe the nation's first female President but she has always been more a dynastic scion than trailblazing feminist. Her presidential campaign capitalized on the support of older conservatives, who still venerate her father for spearheading the nation's miraculous transformation into a world-leading economy in the 1960s and '70s, despite his trampling of human rights.

Violence and discrimination against women have actually increased during her term, and women find the glass ceiling lower and tougher to crack. While political protests in South Korea have historically been orchestrated by men, the current demonstrations have seen women taking a leading role. That Park has done little to soften Korea's patriarchal culture only heightens a sense of betrayal.

"[Park] spoiled it for us," says 17-year-old high school student Kang Hee-soo, scrawling a scornful message to Park on a protest wall in central Seoul. "Many people now say, 'Look at her, that's all a woman can do.'"

'She deserves to be impeached'

Despite the protests and plummeting polls, Park has steadfastly refused to resign, instead ensconcing herself in the presidential Blue House, where she grew up. Impeachment is gathering pace: the process requires more than two-thirds of the 300-seat national assembly, meaning at least 29 lawmakers

from Park's Saenuri Party would need to join the 171 opposition legislators. Forty have already promised to do so.

"President Park betrayed the people and the Saenuri Party and gravely violated the constitution," Kim Moo-sung, former party chairman, [told local media](#) on Nov. 23. "She deserves to be impeached."

Constitutionally, the Prime Minister would take over in that case. However, Park fired [Hwang Kyo-ahn](#) from the post in early November, and her nominated replacement has not been ratified by the National Assembly, leaving the possibility of a damaging power vacuum. Despite the antipathy to Park, the main opposition Democratic Party only polls an approval rating of 31%, with Park's ruling Saenuri Party at 15% and the splinter People's Party at 14%.

"The opposition haven't played the very strong hand they have been dealt," says Dongseo University's O'Malley. "Their vision and policies have not been well articulated."

One possibility to succeed Park is Ban Ki-moon, who ends his term as U.N. Secretary-General next month, though he is generally perceived as a political lightweight. Another choice is Seoul's popular mayor, Park Won-soon (no relation to the President), a former left-wing activist, who would wield the backing of a large proportion of the capital's residents.

But the opposition is dawdling, largely to better prepare for presidential elections slated for next autumn. For protesters, that is intolerably long to wait. "There's no appetite among the public for any type of political strategizing," says Christopher Green, a Korea expert at Leiden University in the Netherlands. "They just want to see the back of Park Geun-hye."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/half-a-million-south-koreans-celebrate-impeaching-of-president-park-geun-hye>

Half a million South Koreans celebrate impeaching of president Park Geun-hye

Large numbers of protester have taken to the streets marking Friday's suspension of Park's presidential powers with music, chanting and fireworks

Angry protests against the South Korean president, [Park Geun-hye](#), have turned into celebrations following her [impeachment](#), with thousands braving freezing temperatures over the weekend to declare a victory for people power. Large numbers of protesters returned to the streets of Seoul on Saturday, marking Friday's suspension of Park's presidential powers with candlelit vigils, music, chanting and impromptu firework displays.

For the sake of South Korea, President Park Geun-hye must go now

Some among a crowd organisers estimated at 500,000 played drums and gongs, while other held up an effigy of park dressed in a prison uniform.

Despite the festive mood, people who had gathered just outside the presidential Blue House made it clear they were still not satisfied, calling on Park to resign immediately rather than await [a ruling on the legitimacy of her](#)

[impeachment](#) by the constitutional court.

After MPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of impeachment, Park said she would wait for the court's nine judges to confirm whether or not the move was valid – a process that could take up to six months.

But at the weekend, protesters demanded that Park vacate the Blue House, where she is expected to remain, shorn of her powers and shunned by much of her own party, while the judges consider their verdict.

She may have been able to hear crowds outside chanting: “Park Geun-hye, get out of the house!” and “Come down and go to jail!”

Kim Hye-in, a demonstrator who was attending her sixth anti-Park demonstration, said impeachment was just a first step. “It was a day when we all realised how strong we can be collectively,” Kim said. “But we aren't there just yet. We need to keep gathering strength and protest until the court officially removes her from office.”

Kim In-sook, a café owner, handed out free coffee to protesters. “I am giving away coffee to celebrate Park's impeachment and to call for her arrest,” Yonhap quoted Kim as saying. “I want to share in the people's joy.”

Park has denied any legal wrongdoing in a [corruption and cronyism scandal](#) that has left her fighting for her political life, four years after she became South Korea's first female president.

She is accused of helping her longtime friend, [Choi Soon-sil](#), coerce South Korean companies into handing over tens of millions of dollars in donations to foundations run by Choi.

Choi faces embezzlement charges while Park, who has been named as a formal suspect, has apologised for her “naivety” but denied seeking any personal gain. Park's lawyer described as groundless prosecutors' allegations that she was “collusively involved” in Choi's alleged activities.

Moments after she was impeached, Park apologised for her “lack of virtue” and the turmoil her relationship with Choi has caused, but resisted calls to step down. Her powers have been temporarily transferred to the country's prime minister, Hwang Kyo-ahn.

Analysts believe Park is reluctant to resign because scandal-hit South Korean presidents who leave office before their single, five-year term has ended leave themselves open to criminal charges.

Park's impeachment has prompted talk of a resurrection of popular resistance in [South Korea](#), three decades after huge demonstrations led to the introduction of free and fair elections.

“We accomplished a peaceful revolution,” said Park Seong-su, a frequent anti-Park protester. “For long, people were told by politicians what to do, but on Friday, it was the will of people that forced politicians what to do.”

The overwhelming vote in favour of impeachment, with opposition MPs joined by scores of lawmakers from Park's Saenuri party, came after several consecutive weekends of protests with a combined attendance running into the millions.

Park will be removed from office if at least six of the constitutional court's nine justices support her impeachment, with a presidential election held within 60 days. But if at least six judges are opposed, Park's presidential powers will be restored and she could limp on until the end of her term in February 2018.

There have been warnings that failure to uphold the impeachment vote would

be a betrayal of the South Korean people and could lead to civil unrest. “Then the candles will turn into torches,” said protester Kim Hyeong-seok.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/26/world/asia/korea-park-geun-hye-protests.html?_r=0

Protest Against South Korean President Estimated to Be Largest Yet

SEOUL, South Korea — Hundreds of thousands of South Koreans filled central Seoul on Saturday to demand President [Park Geun-hye](#)’s resignation, in what appeared to be the largest turnout yet in a series of weekly protests against the embattled leader.

Despite cold weather and the first snow of the season, a crowd that organizers estimated at 1.5 million gathered to denounce Ms. Park, who has been accused by prosecutors of helping a friend commit extortion and is facing the possibility of impeachment within weeks.

The police estimate of the turnout was much lower, at 260,000, but the crowd seemed larger than at an [enormous rally in the capital](#) two weeks earlier. It was the fifth consecutive Saturday marked by a large protest against the president.

The demonstrations have been peaceful and almost festive. Street vendors sold candles, mattresses and hot snacks on Saturday, and a few roadside shops gave protesters free coffee. Buddhist monks beat wooden gongs as they marched. Mothers showed up with children, or with pet dogs wrapped in padded vests, and young couples bundled in winter coats sang along as loudspeakers blared catchy tunes calling for Ms. Park’s ouster.

One such song quoted from [South Korea](#)’s Constitution: [“The Republic of Korea shall be a democratic republic.”](#)

Prosecutors have [identified Ms. Park as a criminal accomplice](#) in the case of Choi Soon-sil, an old friend who has been charged with using her influence to coerce businesses into donating large sums to foundations that Ms. Choi controls. In news reports, Ms. Park has also been accused of letting Ms. Choi [wield undue influence in state affairs](#).

Ms. Park, who cannot be prosecuted while in office, has [apologized](#) twice to the public over the scandal but has refused to resign as opposition lawmakers, major newspapers and some members of her own party have demanded.

Opposition parties hope to impeach her with the support of some lawmakers from her party. The National Assembly is expected to vote on an impeachment bill by Dec. 9.

No South Korean president has ever been removed from office through impeachment.

On Saturday, some protesters chanted, “Imprison Park Geun-hye!” as they marched toward the presidential Blue House. “Come out and surrender!” they shouted.

Hundreds of buses and thousands of police officers had been deployed to form barriers around the complex. One group of demonstrators was stopped just 200 yards from the presidential compound.

Protesters holding candles marched through central Seoul late into the night. Rock musicians performed on the main thoroughfare, replacing the lyrics of popular songs with phrases that criticized and ridiculed Ms. Park. Some people carried doctored images of Ms. Park in a prison uniform and handcuffed.

On smaller streets, citizens spoke to the crowd from the back of trucks. One teenage girl railed tearfully against Ms. Park for failing to respond effectively to the [Sewol ferry disaster in 2014](#), which left more than 300 people dead, most of them teenagers.

She also criticized the government-written history textbooks that Ms. Park's administration has said it plans to issue for use in all middle and high schools starting next year.

Protesters accused Ms. Park of trying to take South Korea back to the time when it was ruled by military dictators, including her father, Park Chung-hee, and the practice of shaking down businesses was commonplace.

At one point, at the suggestion of organizers, the protesters all blew out their candles to symbolize the darkness into which, they said, Ms. Park has led the country.

Many protesters said they wanted Ms. Park to be impeached, providing a dramatic end to her tenure.

"What we have seen happening at the Blue House is just like a soap opera," said Kim Yong-jin, a high school senior. "We just hope that it ends like a soap opera — with poetic justice."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/22/world/asia/south-korea-park-geun-hye-women.html>

Gender Colors Outrage Over Scandal Involving South Korea's President

SEOUL, South Korea — A popular South Korean singer, Lee Seung-chul, recently posted on Twitter what he called a sad joke that reflected public outrage over a scandal involving the country's president, [Park Geun-hye](#).

"If Hillary is elected, the United States will have its first female president. If Trump is elected, it will have its first crazy president," went [the joke](#), which was widely shared online. "[South Korea](#) got both in 2012."

Ms. Park's 2012 victory was hailed as a milestone for South Korea's deeply patriarchal society. But four years later, pressure is mounting across the country and even from within her party for Ms. Park to step down or face impeachment. This week, she became South Korea's first sitting president [to be accused by prosecutors](#) of a criminal conspiracy.

The scandal surrounding Ms. Park has left many South Korean women infuriated with the president and fearful that it could be used to argue that women are unfit to lead. They worry that the country, already among [the lowest in global gender-equality rankings](#), could become even more resistant to elevating women to positions of power.

"We have had more than our share of outrageous male politicians," said Kim Yun-jeong, 22, who had a placard that said "Park Geun-hye, OUT!" at a recent demonstration in Seoul, the capital. "But I feel men now saying, behind

our back and with a smirk on their faces: ‘See! This is what we get when we have a woman president for a change.’”

Ms. Park’s troubles stem from her decades of ties to [Choi Soon-sil](#), a daughter of Choi Tae-min, the founder of a fringe religious sect who befriended Ms. Park in the 1970s. Ms. Choi was indicted Sunday on charges of using her influence with Ms. Park to extort millions from businesses. Prosecutors said Ms. Park was an accomplice of Ms. Choi, but she is protected by the Constitution from criminal indictment.

Ms. Park has agreed to [submit to an inquiry](#). But on Tuesday, her lawyer, Yoo Yeong-ha, tried to use Ms. Park’s gender as a shield, saying that she was “a woman before being president” and that her “privacy as a woman” should be protected from prosecutors who sought to question her.

Women’s groups were having none of it.

“They are not investigating her privacy as a woman but her acts of destroying constitutional order as president,” a group of women’s advocacy organizations said in a joint statement. (Mr. Yoo declined to elaborate on what Ms. Park’s privacy had to do with the investigation.)

South Korea’s women have been just as loud as its men in denouncing Ms. Park. Recent polls have found her to be deeply unpopular among both men and women.

And in the huge [protests](#) that have filled central Seoul over the past four weekends, women have often led peaceful marches — an unusual sight in South Korea, where anti-government demonstrations often feature men clashing with riot police officers.

During a Nov. 12 rally that attracted one million people by some estimates, a student from the Sacred Heart Girls’ High School in Seoul, Ms. Park’s alma mater, took the podium. “You have become an object of shame for us,” the student said of Ms. Park, prompting wild cheers from the crowd. “We can no longer tolerate you representing our nation.”

Although Ms. Park is often called South Korea’s first female president, that label fails to capture the complicated ways in which people here regard her presidency.

Ms. Park has never been considered a champion of women’s rights, either as the president or as a legislator before that. According to Kim Young-soon, a leader at the Korean Women’s Associations United, gender inequality has actually worsened under Ms. Park, with sex crimes on the rise and a growing wealth gap taking a harder toll on women.

Her presidential campaign was aimed at securing the support of older conservatives who still revered her father, the military dictator Park Chung-hee, for leading the country out of poverty in the 1960s and ’70s. Many saw in Ms. Park a modern version of her charismatic father.

South Koreans like to say that they see Ms. Park not as a female president but as Park Chung-hee’s daughter. That places her in a peculiar and precarious position in South Korea, where patriarchy rules the political and corporate worlds.

A widely shared Twitter post last year summed up the challenges Ms. Park has faced in the shadow of her father’s legacy and with the cultural misgivings over female leaders: “When President Park Geun-hye does well, she wears

the clothes of Park Chung-hee. But when she does badly, she becomes a woman.”

So far, Ms. Park’s gender has not been an outright issue in the scandal, but it has colored the outrage. Older conservative men who have turned against Ms. Park since the scandal often disdainfully refer to her as an “unfilial daughter.”

Online, men have attacked Ms. Park and Ms. Choi by invoking an old Korean diatribe against assertive women: “If a hen crows, the household collapses.” (When a man used that phrase at a recent protest, it set off both cheers and boos from the crowd.)

In the local news media, [photographs have emerged](#) that show urinals painted with images of Ms. Park and Ms. Choi. People have derided Ms. Choi, who has no background in government or policy making, as an “ajumma,” or homemaker, “from Gangnam,” a Seoul district often associated with affluence and moral weakness.

“President Park is taken as evidence that women are not qualified for politics,” a feminist group [said last week](#), protesting what it called gender prejudices tainting the campaign against Ms. Park.

Ms. Park has seldom spoken of her gender. But she has styled herself after her mother, Yuk Young-soo, who is seen as a symbol of feminine sacrifice among older Koreans. The former first lady was fatally shot in 1974 by a pro-North Korean assassin who had targeted her husband. For decades, Ms. Park’s hairstyle has reminded people of her mother.

Ms. Park during her inauguration in 2013. Though she is South Korea’s first female president, Ms. Park has not presented herself as a champion of women’s rights.

She has also built a muscular political reputation in what some analysts have called an attempt to dispel the notion that a female leader would be weak on security issues. She has been hawkish on North Korea, predicting its collapse and promising military retaliation if provoked. At home, she has been a disciplinarian, stressing national order and calling her critics “unclean forces.” Her upbringing and manners have led critics to accuse her of acting with a sense of entitlement. Those accusations have carried a powerful punch in South Korea, where many have grown disillusioned with so-called imperial male leaders in politics and in the corporate world, and expected a less rigid style from the first female president. Many of the most bitter criticisms have come from other women.

Ms. Park once sat motionless in the rain, waiting for an aide to step forward and pull her hood over her head, [according to the aide](#), Jeon Yeo-ok, who later parted ways with Ms. Park and caused a sensation when she recounted the tale. “She is the kind of woman who would wear her crown to a nightclub,” Ms. Jeon said in 2012.

It is not the only time that Ms. Park, who once named Queen Elizabeth I of Britain as her role model, has been accused of behaving like royalty.

During a presidential debate in 2012, Lee Jung-hee, the head of a small left-wing party, accused Ms. Park of trying to become “not a female president but a queen” and denounced what she called her “disconnectedness and arrogance.”

After Ms. Park came to power in early 2013, her government disbanded Ms. Lee's party on charges of being pro-North Korea.

Many, including members of Ms. Park's Saenuri Party, now find Ms. Lee's criticism to have been prescient.

"We have been living in a monarchy," Kim Sung-tae, a Saenuri lawmaker, said during a recent party meeting. "And our party has been loyal vassals for Queen Park Geun-hye."