

## Social Control and Political Change in Late-communist Society: Application of the Chinese Case to North Korea\*

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### Abstract

*When the communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell, it was assumed that North Korea would undergo an eventual drastic political change but this realization has still not taken place, even after almost 20 years. Two different explanations are offered possible for the political change in the late-communist societies. In East European countries, who mostly fit the description of bourgeois civil societies prior to the founding of their communist monolithic regimes, the vitality of the civil society was instrumental in making change as the communist ideology and control mechanisms lost their effectiveness at the late-communist stage. The impact of the social change was overwhelming to their regimes. In China and North Korea, where communist regimes were founded without such previous experience, the growth of non-official social sectors threatens their political regimes, even though their level of social change is still below that required for the foundation of a civil society.*

*With the assumption that the East European regimes failed to accommodate social change whereas the Chinese regime have succeeded, this study examines the social control and political changes occurring in North Korea based on the Chinese experience.*

*This study relies on the dualistic criteria of social differentiation that Elemér Hankiss has proposed to analyze Hungarian society in the late 1980's. The second dimension of social existence, a kind of "second society" for explaining late-communist society can be utilized to understand the current and future situation of China and North Korea. Furthermore, this can point to North Korea's eventual political change in relation to social control, which can be explained based on the binary social differentiation and control mechanism of the second social dimension in China.*

*Even though North Korean authorities still control dissident elements through physical coercion and closed politics, they are still seriously limited in their policy choices due to the general weakness of the society. If the North Korean authorities do not overcome their current crises, then the crisis criteria of their regime will exceed the critical point of reform. If they opt to accommodate the "second society" by considering it as a security belt for the "first society" or consider the "second society" as a way of passing through democratic socialism, this could open up a variety of choices.*

*Keywords: Late-communist Society, Communist Monolithic Regime, Dualistic Criteria, Social Differentiation, Second Society, Democratic Socialism*

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\* Except for several personal names, the system of Romanizing the Korean alphabet is consistent with the July 7, 2000 Notice of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Korean names in this article are all written with the family name first, followed by the given name.

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## I. Introduction

In Political change in communist societies, including the downfall of communist regimes, can be explained in either of two ways. For East European societies, who fit the description of bourgeois civil society prior to the founding of their communist monolithic regime, the impact of the social change caused by a revitalized civil society was overwhelming for their late-communist stage regime.<sup>1</sup> In non-European societies, where communist regimes were founded without such previous experience, the growth of non-official social sectors threatens their political regimes, even though their level of social change is still below that required for the foundation of a civil society.

**Table 1. Dichotomized Criteria of Differentiation in Late-Communist Society**

Criterion	First Society	Second Society
Homogeneity versus Differentiation & Integration	Homogeneity, Diffuseness, Atomization	Differentiation & Integration
Vertical versus Horizontal Organization	Vertical Organization	Horizontal Organization
Descendance versus Ascendance	Downward flow of power and influence; bureaucratic dominance	Upward flow of power and influence; representative institutions
Statization versus Nonstatization	Predominance of state ownership	Predominance of non-state ownership
Centralization versus Noncentralization	Total centralization of all spheres of social existence	Moderate centralization; growing autonomy of economic and social actors
Political versus Socioeconomic Dominance	Political intentions and interests prevail over socioeconomic factors	Priority of socioeconomic factors
Ideology versus No Ideology	Strongly saturated with official Ideology	The non-ideological sphere and the sphere of alternative ideologies
Visibility versus Invisibility	The sphere of social reality of which the elite has a more or less clear view; and/or the sphere reflected by the "first public"	The invisible or only partially visible field of social reality; not reflected, or reflected only in a fragmentary and distorted way, by the "first public"
Acceptance versus Non-acceptance	Legitimate, ideologically and politically accepted sphere	The sphere of ambiguous legitimacy or illegitimacy

<sup>1</sup> Without a conceptual explanation of 'late-communist society', E. Hankiss described the detailed formation of the 'second society' as a characteristic periodical form arising in the post-stage of regime stability. Cf. Elemér Hankiss, The "Second Society": Is there an alternative social model emerging in contemporary Hungary?, *Social Research*, Vol. 55, No.1-2(Spring/Summer 1988).

Assuming that the political regimes in Eastern Europe failed to accommodate social change<sup>2</sup> whereas the Chinese has regime succeeded, this study will examine the current social control and political changes occurring in North Korea based on the Chinese experience, and partially on the East German experience.

According to Elemér Hankiss' research, Hungary in the late 1980's included a second dimension of social existence, a kind of "second society" that was governed by organizational principles different from those that governed the other; the dominant dimension of society. Accordingly, he proposed the following dichotomized criteria to distinguish the strong discriminating forces between these two societies in Hungary in the late 1980's.<sup>3</sup>

Increasing These alternative "system-foreign" organizational principles also emerge in the economic sphere as well as in public life, cultural life, social consciousness, or in the field of social and political interactions. Hankiss' criteria for explaining late-communist society can also be used to understand the current and future situation of North Korea. The Chinese experiences are also very useful for examining the effects of the "system-foreign" organizational principles and growth of the "second society" as regards the North Korean political regime and its direction of change.

## II. Political Change of China in Late-Communist Stage

In late-communist stage regimes reform policies accelerated social differentiation and produced heterogeneous interests among the social classes. Accordingly, the Communist Parties lost the persuasiveness of their ideological arguments, which were assumed to represent the general interest of all people.

The growth of civil autonomy in the economic sector encouraged the demand for political power to represent their interests. This social change weakened the Communist Parties' authority. Accordingly, the Communist Parties' capacity to control their respective societies determined the direction of political change.

In late-communist societies political changes moved in two directions. In China, the Communist Party, which succeeded in maintaining its authority and capability to control society, prevented any drastic political change. Whereas, in almost all East European countries, including the Soviet Union and East Germany, the Communist Party lost its capacity for social control along with its authority. This social turmoil then resulted in drastic political change.

### 1. Crisis of "first society" and Reform Policy

Before the decision on reform and opening up in the Third Plenary Session of the

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<sup>2</sup> Minton F. Goldman, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe, Political, Economic, and Social Challenges* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 3-22.

<sup>3</sup> E. Hankiss stressed the fact that the first and second society are not two distinct groups of people. They are only two dimensions of social existence governed by two different sets of organizational principles. Cf. Elemér Hankiss, *op. cit.*, 21-22.

Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in December, 1978, Chinese society faced “the crisis of three beliefs”: belief in Marxism-Leninism, socialism, and the Communist Party’s leadership. This crisis came from the social anomie caused by the radical transformation of the relations of production during the Great Leap Forward, and the extremely dogmatic leftist ideology during the Cultural Revolution. This was evidence of a crisis in the social consciousness of “the first society.”

The crisis of “the first society” was a critical issue among Chinese intellectuals and was so recognized even by the Communist Party. In the “Decisions on Several Historical Problems of the Party since the National Foundation” (關於建國以來黨的若干歷史問題的決議: *guanyujianguoilairuoganlishiwentidejuei*) adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP in June, 1981, the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution were defined as “incidents of leftist fallacy”, which stemmed from the lack of experience in socialist construction, the arrogance of the Party leaders including Mao Ze-dong, excessive belief in subjective factors, and the absence of research and experiment on reality.<sup>4</sup>

The intellectuals criticized the monopoly of power held by the Communist Party. The negative effects of this power monopoly of the Communist Party extended over the political sector plus the socio-economic sector before the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP. According to Zhang Zhan-bin(張占斌), the extreme centralization of power itself was the negative facet from which all political problems stemmed. Therefore, political reform meant nothing more than the decentralization of power.<sup>5</sup> Yen Jia-qi(顏家麒) and Wu Zhi-run(吳知倫) pointed out the negative effects of the over-centralization of power which included non-differentiation between the Communist Party and Government, the substitution of Government by the Communist Party, the inefficiency of both party and governmental organizations, the defectiveness of the legal system, and the difficulties in personnel recruitment.<sup>6</sup>

As regards the negative effects of the over-centralization of power in the economic sector, He Jian-zhang(何建章) criticized the planned economy: “The current centrally planned and controlled economic system based on ownership by all the people was basically adopted from the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Even though it has been reformed several times in the past, on the whole it has not outgrown the outdated Soviet style. Counting on administrative measures, economic management has not been effectuated through economic principles.”<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the planned economy’s administrative calculations failed to properly consider the relationships between factors of production and the relative value of products. These inaccurate calculations resulted in some serious negative effects: black markets,

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<sup>4</sup> Zhou Huahu et al., eds, *Zhonghuarenmingongheguodashijishibenmo*(Chronology of the PRC), Chengdu: Sichuancishuchubanshe, 1993, 227-228.

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Zhanbin, “*Quanliguofenjizhong: zhengzhitizhigaigedejiaodian*(Overcentralization of Power: the Focus of the Reform of the Political System)”, *Tianjinsheshehuikexue* (Tianjin Social Science), 1988, No. 3, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Yen Jiaqi and Wu Zhilun, “*hengzhitizhigaigedemubiaoxuanze* (The Goal of the Reformation of the Political System)”, *Zhengzhixueyanjiu*(Political Study), 1987, No. 6, 1-10.

<sup>7</sup> He Jianzhang, “*Woguochuanminsuoyouzhuojingjijihuaguanlitizhichuanzaidewentihegaigefangxiang* (Problems and Measures for the Reformation of the Economic Planning and the Managerial System in the State-owned Sector)”, *Jingjiyanjiu* (Economic Study), 1979, No. 5, 35.

speculation, the waste of resources, and so on. The imbalance between demand and supply caused by this inaccurate calculation was mostly regulated by extra-economic measures, i.e., administrative control.

Under strict party control of the thoughts and activities of individuals, individual initiative and civil autonomy could hardly exist. Zeng Ren-shen(曾仁森) cited the most negative effect of the over-centralization of power as the uniformity of public opinion and further criticized the situation as ideological totalitarianism where materialism is replaced by idealism.<sup>8</sup>

The standardized distribution system and infringements on the freedom of profession resulted in a passive attitude from the workers toward their jobs. The situation is best illustrated by such terms as *daguofan*(大鍋飯: eat out of one pot) and *tiefanwan*(鐵飯碗: iron rice bowl).

The purpose of the reform and opening up since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP was to eradicate the negative effects of the over-concentration of power. Nevertheless, the CCP still maintains the principle of “Centralization of the Big and Decentralization of the Small”(大集中•小自由: *dajizhong•xiaoziyou*). Furthermore, the degree of decentralization shows a remarkable degree of disparity between the political and other sectors, especially the economic sector.

Undoubtedly, the locomotive for reform policy has so far been the reformation of the economic system. The blueprint for economic reformation was presented in the “Decision on the Reformation of the Economic System”(關於經濟體制改革的決定: *guanyujingjitizhigaigedejueding*) which was adopted by the Third Plenary Session of the Twelfth Central Committee of the CCP in December, 1984. This Decision defined the goal of the reform policy as the development of a planned commodity economy based on public ownership. The CCP attempted to combine the merits of a planned economy with those of a market economy through organic interaction. It was different from conventional socialist economic policy, yet did not adopt a capitalist system. The CCP’s propagation of a planned commodity economy based on public ownership is central to Chinese Socialism(有中國特色的社會主義: *youzhongguotesedeshihuizhuyi*). The nature of this economic system is still subject to turbulent controversy.

However, Chinese Socialism could be interpreted as an alternative to “the first society”, aiming at an institutional rearrangement to introduce the second social sphere into the first society.

As for economic reform, the CCP started with a reformation of the ownership relations and management system. First, the CCP divided the existing predominant ownership by all people into three forms, i.e., ownership by all people, collective ownership, and private ownership. Since the recognition of companies in 1983, diverse forms of joint-stock enterprises have emerged. With respect to the reformation of the management system, the CCP initiated managerial autonomy and self-supporting accounting systems for production units. Furthermore, the CCP gave managers the right to dismiss

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<sup>8</sup> Zeng Rensen, *Shuchingfengjianzhuiyingxiangshiwoguozhengzhitizhigaigedezhongyaorenwu* (To Abolish the Influence of Feudalism is the Important Mission of the Reformation of the Political System), *Kexue-shihuizhui*(Scientific Socialism), 1988, No. 3, 40-45.

along with a labor contract system in 1986. During the transition to a market economy, these initiatives were inevitable to ensure the mobility of the labor market and make production units more responsible for their output.

Economic reformation was accompanied by the rearrangement of the legal system. In the conventional Chinese socialist regime, civil laws to regulate commodity relations had not been required, as the main legal relations were only those between the people and the state, or those between the state and collective units. Moreover, the decision or direction of the CCP was superior to codified laws. Signaling the reformation of the legal system, the constitutional amendment in the Fifth Plenary Session of the Fifth National People's Congress in April, 1982 declared the principle of the rule of law. In September of the same year, the regulations of the CCP, which were subsequently amended in the Twelfth National Party Congress of the CCP, also declared that the Party had to abide by the constitution and other laws.

Successive reformative policies also necessitated political change. The expansion of the market economy encouraged the demand for political participation. To cope with the changing situation, a series of political initiatives were taken transferring some central power to local governments and upgrading the status of the National People's Congress. The Second Plenary Session of the National Committee of the Fifth Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference(中國人民政治協商會議: zhongguorenminzhen gzhixieshanghuiyi) decided to abolish all levels of the Revolutionary Committees established during the Cultural Revolution and restore local governments and local people's congresses at several levels. This decision was followed by the promulgation of related laws and promptly put into practice, thereby allowing for the relative autonomy of local governments. The power of the central government was gradually transferred to local governments. As the constitutional amendment in 1982 abolished the direction of the Communist Party for the National People's Congress, the power of inspection and supervision by the Congress was strengthened.

The CCP was also reformed to eliminate its members' authoritarian working style and develop their profession. The "Party Purification Movement" was initiated after the Twelfth National Party Congress of the CCP in September, 1982. In accordance with Deng Xioping's proposal presented at this Party Congress, the four objectives of "being more revolutionary, younger, more intellectual and more professional" became the guiding principles of Party reformation.

Nevertheless, the reformation of the Communist Party was restricted by the principle of "Centralization of the Big and Decentralization of the Small." The CCP still sought after the concentration of essential power indispensable for its authority. As seen in the repeated emphasis by the CCP on the "Adherence to the Four Basic Principles", the maintenance of Party authority was generally considered to be a prerequisite for successful reform and opening up.

## ***2. Development of Second Social Sphere***

In spite of the Communist Party's desire to combine the merits of a planned and market economy, unforeseen problems began to emerge from the dual economic structure.

The principle of predominance of public ownership over other forms became at odds with the increasing proportion of private ownership. The ratio of the profit from state-owned industries to the revenue of the central government decreased from 85.4% in 1980 to 65.2% in 1993, while that from non-state-owned industries increased from 14.6% to 34.8% during the same period.<sup>9</sup> The proportion of total wages in the state-owned sector decreased from 82.4% in 1978 to 76.9% in 1995, whereas that in the collectively-owned sector decreased from 17.6% to 15.1%, and that in the private sector increased from 2.5% to 8.0% during the same period.<sup>10</sup>

The socialist ideology that assumes general welfare was thus threatened by egotism. The liberalization of economic activities, resulting from the expansion of the market economy, has been destroying the harmony in the national economy. The spread of mammonism, as is best illustrated by the Chinese word in fashion “*iqiexiangqiankan*” (一切向錢看: all for money), has resulted in the proliferation of various economic crimes. A noticeable disparity between the rich and the poor has developed. Yet, even the press like *Zhongguoqingnianbao* (中國青年報: Youth Daily) supported mammonism in an article titled “*Qiantemingyuhuifu*” (錢的名譽恢復: Money Restores Its Honor) in August 9, 1983. As evidenced by other press comments with almost the same tenor, critics against mammonism basically disappeared. According to E. Hankiss’ assumption, “system-foreign” organizational principles emerged in the economic sphere as well as in public life, cultural life, social consciousness, and in the field of social and political interactions.

As a result, economic crimes committed by public officials and civilians alike became rampant, including tax evasion and subsidizing through joint conspiracies between Party cadres and company managers, bribes, illegal monopolization, smuggling, and embezzlement by Party cadres or government officials abusing their authority.

The disparity between urban and rural incomes continued to widen after 1986, reaching a difference of 2.5 in 1993.<sup>11</sup> The regional gap between the rich and the poor also became serious (for example, the regional portion of GNP in 1991 was 55.0% for East China, 28.7% for Central China, and 16.3% for West China while the regional portion of the national income was 54.7% for East China, 28.9% for Central China, and 16.4% for West China).<sup>12</sup> The number of people living in absolute poverty reached 70 million in 1994.<sup>13</sup> This regional disparity and unequal access to socio-economic values has led to a crisis of integration and identity.

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<sup>9</sup> National Statistics Bureau, *Zhongguotongjinnianjian* (Statistical Yearbook of China) (Beijing: Zhongguotongjichubanshe, 1994), 215.

<sup>10</sup> Statistical Service Korea, *Junggukui juyo gyeongjesahoejipyo* (Major Economic and Social Indicators of PRC), 1996, 111.

<sup>11</sup> Tang Ping, “*Woguo nongcunjunminshourushuipingjichaiyenjiu* (A Study on the Income Levels and Income Disparity among the Rural Residents)”, *Guanlishejie* (The World of Management), Beijing, 1995, No. 2, 175.

<sup>12</sup> Wang Chunguang and Li Peilin, *Xinshenhuijegoudeshengzhangdian: xiangzhenqiye shehuijiaohuanlun* (The Bud of New Social Structure: Exchange Relations of the Village and Township Factories) (Jinan: Shandongrenminchubanshe, 1993), 198.

<sup>13</sup> *Renminribao*, 1995/04/24.

The principle of distribution according to labor contradicts that of other distribution systems. Since markets are imperfect, the value of labor cannot be estimated properly. However, this problem is even more serious in a centrally planned sector. Regardless, labor exploitation exists in both systems. For some private enterprises, their surplus value-created by the employment of labor-can be considered unearned income that comes from unpaid labor. In fact, even their stock dividend could be said to be unearned income.

Since the adoption of the labor contract system in 1986, people's livelihood, which had been secure in the conventional socialist system in exchange for authoritarian control, has started to suffer from instability. Companies are no longer free from the danger of bankruptcy. The instability of the people's economic activity is worsened by fluctuations in the market that could not have been imagined in the previously centrally planned economy.

Competition has become generalized at all levels, namely, among individuals, companies, and regions. The excessive privilege enjoyed by the eastern maritime regions has given rise to protests from inland regions. This economic disparity among regions encourages competition while escalating the conflict for distribution of resources.<sup>14</sup> Further, the introduction of the financial contract system(財政承包制: caizhengchengbaozhi), has brought about severe competition between local governments to secure financing, resulting in double investment or over-investment. As the market economy expands, the situation has worsened. Such being the case, the communal value or national consciousness above personal interest can hardly be expected. Here, E. Hankiss' proposition is confirmed once more.

One of the most serious problems in the expansion of the second social sphere is the uncontrollable migration of peasants called *Mingongchao*(民工潮). This floating population in China was estimated at about 80 million in 1995. Among these people, about 20-30 million are urban migrants seeking jobs who have from the rural inland.<sup>15</sup> Their proportion of the total population is higher in those regions where the income level is relatively high.

The Chinese rural population amounts to approximately 800 million. Of these people, about 400 million are laborers, yet only 200 million are employed in agriculture. In fact, even though villages and township factories(鄉鎮企業: xiangzhenqiye) employ about 100 million, there are still 100 million in the industrial reserve army. Accordingly, these unemployed flow into the cities because of the income disparity between the urban and rural regions, on the one hand, and the increasing demand for labor in large cities and the Special Economic Zones along the east coast, on the other.

After the establishment of the *Hukou*(戶口: household) system in 1958, it was strictly implemented by the Chinese government until 1978. The policy objective of the *Hukou* system lay in preventing the influx of the rural population into cities, which was vital to efficient economic planning. According to the *Hukou* system, people could not leave their native region or the place they were designated to live by the Party.

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<sup>14</sup> Gerald Segal, "China's Changing Shape", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (May/June 1994), 45-48.

<sup>15</sup> *Nongminribao* (The Peasant Daily), 1995/09/02.

The *Hukou* system started to be relaxed for several reasons: Firstly, industrialization accelerated the demand for labor in urban regions including the Special Economic Zones; Secondly, the inefficiency of the labor allocation system under central planning could not meet market demand; and Thirdly, the decentralization of power and relatively stronger local autonomy made it hard for the central government to insist on the strict implementation of the *Hukou* system. Accordingly, the Special Economic Zones, including Shanghai, began to adopt open *Hukou* systems. They issued provisional resident permits to those who invested a certain amount of money or those who were employed in certain professions. After around three years as a provisional resident, a provisional resident could get permanent resident status. In 1997, the Chinese State Council recognized the long term changeability of *Hukou* on the basis of marriage, school, job, etc.

The serious problem of *Mingongchao* dwells in the fact that the rural exodus results in many wanderers with no resident permit in cities. These urban migrants seeking jobs started to fill up the train stations and bus terminals and by the 1990s had begun to form slums in the large cities. While these migrants wandered around the cities begging for money, usually making less than 50 cents a day, China's nouveau riche enjoyed their new social clubs with annual membership fees of 10 thousand US Dollars or more.<sup>16</sup>

Even though these wanderers should have been punished for escaping from their *Hukou* area, the People's Armed Police was unable to deal with them because of their overwhelmingly large numbers. Therefore, the People's Armed Police basically left them alone as long as they were not connected to crimes, such as prostitution, drug trafficking, etc. This situation testifies to the inefficiency of the existing social control system facing the ongoing social transition.

Above all, the expansion of the market economy has highlighted the inefficiency of the centrally planned economy rather than supplement it. This means that continued economic growth is only possible by sacrificing the centrally planned economy. This is the most serious problem for the CCP, as it challenges the authority and controlling capacity of the Party. As such, the need to maintain its authority and controlling capacity is at odds with the general tendency of the reformation. As A. Hammond argues, even though a proletarian rebellion in a communist state may appear to be paradoxical, it is not impossible considering the actual situation of China. This very situation not only worries the Chinese authorities but also foreign analysts.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Social Control**

The direct control of the Party and government has turned out to be inefficient as social mobility has increased along with the expansion of the market economy. Accordingly, the CCP has gradually changed its style of control from a direct and concrete form to an indirect and general one.

The vital instrument of the CCP's social control is the maintenance of the predominance of ownership by all the people over other forms of ownership. State-owned

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Cody, "Rise of Market Economy Dents Iron Rice Bowl", *Washington Post*, January 1, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Allen Hammond, *Which World?: Scenarios for the 21st Century-Global Destinies, Regional Choices* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 160.

enterprises have so far been the upholders of Chinese Socialism. In 1994, even though their number represented only 26.8% of all enterprises, they produced 48% of the total national income, controlled 60% of the total capital, and employed 42% of the total workforce.<sup>18</sup> Wages in the state-owned sector dominated other sectors: in 1995, the state-owned sector recorded 76.9%, the collectively-owned sector 15.1%, and private sector 8.0%.<sup>19</sup> Even though the number of produced items distributed through central planning has decreased sharply from 256 in 1980 to 72 in 1990, important resources are still under state control.<sup>20</sup> These are used as the basis for the Party to influence important decisions on the national economy. These are the major macro control tools of the CCP.

The CCP also exercises direct control over government and society. In relations between the Party and the government, each level of the Party directs the corresponding level of government. For instance, every staff member of the Party Commission of each level also holds an additional office in the corresponding level of government, thus the Party's control over the government is direct and concrete. The United Front Work Department of the Party takes charge of national issues, political factions, overseas Chinese, religion, etc. The Central Propaganda Department controls the press and cultural sector through its direct control over the mass media and cultural affairs. *Renminribao* (人民日報: People's Daily) and *Qiu Shi* (求是: Seeking Truth) are still under the direct control of the Central Propaganda Department of the Party. Recently, this department has reinforced its control over the mass media. Especially since the incident of *Falungong* (法輪功), the Chinese government has forbidden the transmission of uncensored internet information and blocked internet sites of dissident groups living abroad. The Central Secretarial Office controls social organizations. The largest social organization in China, the All-China Laborers' Federation (中華全國總工會: zhonghuaquanguozonggonghui) and its three affiliated organizations, i.e., Labor Union (工會: gonghui), All-China Youth Federation (中國共產主義青年團: zhongguogongchanzhuyiqingniantuan), and All-China Women's Federation (中華人民共和國婦女聯合會: zhonghuarenmingongheguofunulianhehui) are under the direct control of the Central Committee as regards their political significance.

Despite the strong arm of the CCP in direct social control, the expansion of the market economy and the accompanying social trends, such as differentiation, heterogenization, and specialization, have rendered this direct control ineffective and urged the Party to change its control into indirect forms. Therefore, the Party faces a change in its control methods over to an indirect method that can control the interactions among social organizations. In other words, effectuating the control function not through social control but rather social integration. Foreseeing such a trend as inevitable, the CCP put great stress upon social engineering early on, and thus rearranged social organizations including the Laborers' Federations.

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<sup>18</sup> Shu Zhaoji, *Zhongguojingjiridiantoushi* (Focus on the Chinese Economy) (1996), translated in Korean by Jin Jungmi, *Zungukkyongjeui yamang* (The Ambition of the Chinese Economy) (Seoul: The Economic Daily, 1997), 140.

<sup>19</sup> Statistical Service Korea, *op.cit.*, 111.

<sup>20</sup> Shu Zhaoji ed., *Zhongguojingjigailun* (Overview of the Chinese Economy) (1992), translated in Korean by Kang Junyoung, *Junggukgyeongjegaeron* (Overview of the Chinese Economy) (Seoul: Jiyeongsa, 1995), 547.

The most disadvantaged since the reform policy took effect have been the industrial laborers. To secure the means to safeguard them, the CCP reorganized the Laborers' Federations in the early phase of reform. In October, 1978, the Ninth National Congress of the All-China Laborers' Federation was held for the first time in twenty one years. The new platform adopted in the Tenth National Congress in 1983 included an article on the independence of the All-China Laborers' Federation. This was felt to be a necessary step to encourage laborers to be more positive toward work and prevent the occurrence of negative effects related to the increased managerial autonomy in the enterprises. However, the reorganization and consequent autonomy of the All-China Laborers' Federation did not mean recognition of its political autonomy. Even though Articles 42 and 43 of the Constitution amended in 1982 stipulate the protection of laborers' rights and interests, the existing right to strike was deleted from Article 35. Yet, in practice, laborer's right to strike was not totally denied. Strikes over non-political issues, strikes that did not mobilize the nation, and strikes that did not encompass all industrial sectors were permitted, though in a limited sense.

When the *Tiananmen* Square Incident broke out, the All-China Laborers' Federation supported the demonstrators and some radical members attempted to take advantage of the unrest by securing actual independence for the Laborers' Federation. However, the CCP defined the demonstration a anti-revolutionary riot and as a result applied harsh repressive measures against to the Laborers' Federation after settlement of the incident. The amended platform of 1992 deprived the Laborers' Federation of any political significance and, consequently, its main role was confined to laborers' general welfare.

Another significant example of change in the CCP's means for social control was the foundation of the Chinese Consumers' Association (中國消費者協會: zhongguoxiaofeizhexiehui) in December 26, 1984, as it represented a shift from the producer's sovereignty under a centrally planned economy to a consumer's sovereignty in a market economy. However, the Association was not a genuine civil organization based on civil autonomy, but rather another instrument of indirect social control for the CCP.

To prevent "spiritual pollution", a possible side effect of the reform policy, the CCP emphasized "Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics." The Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics supposedly comprehends the whole super-structure corresponding to the economic base and is paired with the "Socialist Economy with Chinese Characteristics" in the reform policy.

The Fourth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP in September, 1979 decided on the Movement of "Five Attentions and Four Beauties" (五講四美: wujiangsimei): attentions to civilized ways, courtesy, sanitation, public order, and ethics; beauties of mentality, language, conduct, and environment. Later, the Party decided on the additional Movement of "Three Ardent Loves" (三熱愛: sanreai): ardent love for motherland, socialism, and the CCP. The Movement of "Five Attentions and Four Beauties" became the supreme ideology of the CCP in the construction of the "Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics."

The "Decision on the Guiding Principle for the Construction of the Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics" (關於社會主義精神文明建設指導方針的決議: guanyushihuizhuyijingshenwenmingjianshichidaofangzhendejueyi) in the Sixth Plenary

Session of the Twelfth Central Committee in September, 1986 was the synthesis of the party line toward this matter. It proclaimed that the construction of the Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics has a life and death significance for Chinese Socialism. According to this Decision, the construction of the Socialist Culture with Chinese Characteristics is composed of two parts: ideological and ethical development and educational and scientific development that are to be based on Marxism and Maoism.

In its process of ideological manipulation, the CCP changed its attitude toward Confucianism. The CCP leaders found Confucianism to be useful in combining economic development with authoritarian rule. For the CCP, what was important was the availability of Confucianism rather than crediting it for its contribution to the development of Asian capitalism.

In the closing ceremony of the Fifth Plenary Session of the Fifteenth Central Committee of the CCP in October, 1995, assuming that morality determines the stability, cooperative relations, and sound development of a society, Jiang Zemin stated that the Confucian values of loyalty, filial piety, faith, benevolence, courtesy, and intelligence are China's national spirit, and the basic elements required to unite the Chinese people and maintain development.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from that mentioned above, the CCP placed a ban on mass movements to prevent their negative effects as exemplified in the Cultural Revolution. In a Staff Meeting in January, 1980, Deng Xioping said that democracy and the rule of law should be developed further, but it should not rely on mass movements such as the Great Leap Forward, *Taming*(大鳴: the Hundred Schools Campaign) and *Tafang*(大放: the Hundred Flowers Campaign).<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the CCP deleted the related civil rights-*Taming*, *Tafang*, *Tabienlun*(大辯論), *Tazibao*(大字報)-from Article 45 of the Constitution amended in the Third Plenary Session of the Fifth People's Congress in September, 1980. In the Operational Meeting of the Central Committee(中央工作會議) in December, Deng argued that to stick to the Four Basic Principles(堅持四項基本原則: jianchisixiang-jibenyuanze), the Party should firmly follow the legal requirements.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the attempt to diversify the social control exercised by the CCP, the reform policies have instead intensified the contradictions in society. In the dichotomized social differentiation process, the Party now faces the difficulty of harmonizing the demands from an expanding market economy along with authoritarian rule. Throughout Chinese society, "wearing a yellow hat"(戴黃帽子: the worship of money) has come to replace "wearing a red hat"(戴紅帽子: the worship of communism).

The Chinese authorities counted on economic growth to secure people's trust in the CCP. It was a dangerous social contract to promise prosperity in return for the mo-

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<sup>21</sup> Zhonggongzhongyangtangxiaobao(central academy of the CCP), *Xuexijiangzemintongzhi zhengquechulish-huizhuixiandaihuazhongderuoganzhongdaguanxi*(Study Jiang Zemin's 「To Properly Handle some Important Problems in the Socialist Modernization」) (Beijing: Zhongyangtangxiaochubanshe, 1995), 200-201.

<sup>22</sup> Deng Xiaoping, *Dengxiaopingwenxian*(Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), Beijing: Renminchubanshe, 1987, Vol. 1, translated in Korean by Lee Sangkyu, *Deungsopyeong munseon* (Seoul: Ingansarang, 1989), Vol. 1, 256.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.359. The "Four Basic Principles" mean to stick to the socialist line, the proletarian dictatorship, the leadership of the CCP, and the Marxism-Leninism and Maoism.

nopoly of power. Hence, a breach of contract is liable to cause serious unrest, as well illustrated by the *Tiananmen Square Incident*.

#### 4. Driving Force for Reform and Political Change

When the CCP decided on the reform and opening up in 1978, it also coincided with the development of strong democratic movements. These movements resulted in serious unrest and challenged the authority of the Communist Party. The CCP began to repress these movements from 1979. During this era, democracy was the key issue among academic circles. Wu Jialin(吳家麟) emphasized the need to study the institutional merits of bourgeois democracy, apart from its class-based nature,<sup>24</sup> while Zhang Xianyang(張顯揚) and Wang Guixiu(王貴秀) laid stress on a constructive reexamination of bourgeois democracy.<sup>25</sup>

These assertions, however, were not acceptable to the CCP. In the Theoretical Operational Meeting, summoned by the Central Committee in March, 1979, Deng Xiaoping emphatically asserted that the country should stick to the Four Basic Principles to consolidate Chinese socialism. At that time, the editorials of *Renminribao* argued repeatedly that “democracy without the direction of the Communist Party cannot be a socialist one. It is just bourgeois democracy or anarchism.”<sup>26</sup> In the Operational Meeting of the Central Committee in December, 1980, Deng Xiaoping further defined the leadership of the Party as the essence of the Four Basic Principles.<sup>27</sup> In his statement in December, 1986, under the title “We resolutely oppose bourgeois liberalization(旗幟鮮明地反對資產階級自由化: qizhixianmingdifanduxichanjiejiziyouhua)”, he asserted, “Even though we advocate democracy, we cannot accept either bourgeois democracy or the separation of power.”<sup>28</sup> He even said, “There must be a means of dictatorship, which should not only be emphasized but also be used.”<sup>29</sup>

In spite of the firm position of the Party on bourgeois democracy, the non-correspondence between the political system and the economic system ignited a latent tension. The *Tiananmen Square Incident*, different from the previous democratic movements, was triggered by reformist intellectuals from both inside and outside the Party under the support of city dwellers. Considering the internal and external state of affairs, the incident was inevitable.

Firstly, witnessing the wild waves of reformation in East European socialist countries and encouraged by *Prestroika*, the Chinese people began to notice a relative delay in political reform compared with other reforms. The political reform thus far had

<sup>24</sup> Wu Jialin, “Guanyushehuizhuminzhudejigewenti(On Some Problems of the Socialist Democracy)”, *Renminribao*, 1979/05/22.

<sup>25</sup> Zhang Xianyang and Wang Guixiu, “Wuchanjiejiminzhuzhichanjiejiminzhu(Proletarian Democracy and Bourgeois Democracy)”, *Renminribao*, 1979/06/09.

<sup>26</sup> *Renminribao*, 1981/02/08.

<sup>27</sup> Deng Xiaoping, *op. cit.*, 359.

<sup>28</sup> Deng Xiaoping, *Dengxiaopingwenxuan*(Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), Vol. 3 (Beijing: Renminchubanshe, 1993), 195.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

only been a redressing of the existing political system rather than a fundamental political transformation.

Secondly, serious inflation before the *Tiananmen* incident had threatened people's living. During the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-1990), the total rise in average prices reached 62.1%, and the two years just before the *Tiananmen* incident measured 18.5% for 1988 and 17.8% for 1989.<sup>30</sup>

Thirdly, the Communist Party lost its authority due to rampant corruption in both the Party and the government, where advantage was taken of the reform policy for personal benefit. According to a survey performed by the Chinese Academy of Social Science in 1988, 83% of those polled thought that governmental officials were corrupt, and 63% of governmental officials recognized this corruption.<sup>31</sup> In 1989, 158,826 Party members were punished by the Discipline Inspection Commission (紀律檢查委員會: jilujianchaweiyuanhui) at various levels. This was the largest number since 1982, amounting to 3.2% of the total party membership.<sup>32</sup>

Fourthly, the most important reason was probably the growth of civil autonomy as a result of the reform policy, even though its scope was limited to regional and individual working places.

These problems were all recognized by the CCP. In the Third Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CCP in October, 1988, Zhao Ziyang admitted that even though the majority of the people supported the reform, they were still discontent with three points: soaring commodity prices, unequal income, and the corruption of governmental officials and party members.<sup>33</sup>

After the *Tiananmen* Square Incident, reforms retreated for a while, and a cautious warning against "Peaceful and Evolutionary Change" (和平演變論: hepingyenbianlun) was strongly supported by the conservatives. The conservatives supported this perspective to manage the crisis based on the assumption that the crisis in China and other communist countries was the result of the strategy employed by western countries to demolish socialist regimes in a peaceful way.<sup>34</sup>

In such a context, Deng applied the policy of "readjustment and recovery" (治理整頓: zhilizhengdun) to settle the domestic political disorder and exerted his efforts towards keeping a balance between the conservatives and the reformists. The reformists, including Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili (胡啓立), were expelled from the Politbureau of the CCP, while the conservatives including Li Peng and Yao Yi-lin enjoyed a relatively enhanced position. However, in the Fourth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CCP in June, 1989, Deng appointed Jiang Zemin as the General Secretary of the CCP and a member of the Standing Committee of the Politbureau, and Li Rui-huan as a member of the Standing Committee of the Politbureau. Later in the Fifth Plenary Session in November of the same year, Deng appointed Jiang as the

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<sup>30</sup> Statistical Service Korea, *op. cit.*, 221.

<sup>31</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 16, 1988.

<sup>32</sup> Guo Liping, "Fanfubaiwentitiantaohongshu(Synthesis of Debates on the Anti-Corruption Problem)", *Tianshuixuekan* (Tianshui Academic Review), 1991, No. 1, 55.

<sup>33</sup> *Renminribao*, 1988/10/28.

<sup>34</sup> Ma Shaomeng et al. ed., *Jiancishhehuizhui fanduihepingyenbian*(Stick to Socialism and Oppose to Peaceful and Evolutionary Change) (Beijing: Renmin Univ. of China Press, 1992), 44.

Chairman of the Central Military Commission. Consequently, the reformists were able to recover and hold a superior position over the conservatives.

However, the Jiang Zemin regime did not perform any actual political reform. Rather, following the *Tiananmen* Square Incident, the CCP worked at strengthening its leadership. In his address “On the Maintenance and Improvement of the People’s Congress System” (關於堅持和完善人民代表大會制度: *guanyujianchi hewanshanrenmindai biao dahui zhidu*) presented in the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh National People’s Congress in March, 1990, Jiang said that even though political reform was to be continued, a significant theoretical development concerning political reform since the *Tiananmen* Square Incident should be taken into proper account. He stated that the National People’s Congress should be maintained and the American style of separation of power should not be accepted.<sup>35</sup>

After the *Tiananmen* Square Incident, political reform centered on the optimization of the functional efficiency of the Party and the government through their reorganization. In effect, it was far from liberalization or the establishment of a competitive political system to ensure the political participation of the people. The Party’s efforts to maintain its authority resulted in a non-correspondence between the super-structure and the expanding market economy, foreshadowing latent political conflict.

Even though the *Tiananmen* Square Incident did not bring in any substantial political change, attentive observation allows us to find some implication of change. The “civil society” was developed to a certain extent within which the driving force for reform can be detected. This new phenomenon has been the focus of academic debate since the *Tiananmen* Incident. H. B. Chamberlain has argued that a civil society in a western sense appeared in China, as was shown in the East European communist countries.<sup>36</sup> G. White has refused to put the social change in a western sense. He evaluates it as the growth of a civil sector to the extent that opposition to state control and its collective expression were feasible, though in a limited sense.<sup>37</sup>

It would be controversial to define the socio-political nature of the *Tiananmen* incident as the emergence of a civil society in a western sense, as the incident was not initiated by a positive civil consciousness. In effect, it took the form of opposition in a passive way to the excessive control of the Party. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the growth of civil autonomy based on an expanding market economy, which had never been seen in any anti-governmental movement in the past.

In spite of the difference in perspectives, analysts agree that the private sector arose against the official sector in Chinese society. Even the Chinese scholar, He Jianzhang (何建章), from the perspective of social pluralization after the reform and opening up, laid stress on the emergence of the middle class.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Zhonggongzhongyangwenxianyanjiushi (research center for literary review), *Shisandailaizhongyaowenxianxuanpian* (Selected Bibliographical Review since the Thirteenth Party Congress) (Beijing: Renminchubanshe, 1991), Vol. 2, 940-947.

<sup>36</sup> Heath B. Chamberlain, “On the Search for Civil Society in China”, *Modern China*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1993), 199-200.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon White, “Prospects for Civil Society in China: A Case Study of Xiaosan City”, *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 29 (January 1993), 85-86.

<sup>38</sup> He Jianzhang, “*lunzhongchanjieji* (On the Middle Class)”, *Shehuixueyanjiu* (Sociological Study), 1990, No. 2, 1-2.

The Tiananmen Square Incident came as a result of the reform policy which severely damaged the people's homogeneity and showed to all the Party's weakness in representing its people. However, the general interest of the proletarian class was not able to last as the social stratification intensified along with disparity between the industrial sectors and regions. The limited political reform so far could not ensure the political participation of the people. Despite the National People's Congress upgraded power to inspect and direct governmental policies after 1982, this was not a substantial representative organization for the people, for the majority of its members were communists or, at least, pro-communist.

In general, the dislocation of the political super-structure from the economic base has intensified as a result of the dichotomized social differentiation. To cope with this situation, the CCP needs to set up some sort of institutional measure to represent the diverse interests in the economic sector, yet the ongoing social trend makes it hard for the CCP to take initiative on this matter at the same time. Nevertheless, insufficient development of the social integration and social networks to enforce and mobilize the driving force for reform means that the CCP will be able to maintain its authority and social control thereby preventing any drastic political change for the time being.

### **III. Characteristics of North Korean Society and Second Social Sphere**

#### ***1. Characteristics of North Korean Society***

In any society, there are always the poor and the socio-political deviators. The most important characteristics of North Korean society are concerned with social decomposition due to food shortage: the destruction of the family through child abandonment and the dispersing of family members, and the social deviation of intellectuals and the middle class. As shortage of food and goods have halted productive activities, which were already experiencing difficulties due to the deterioration of equipment and paralyzed educational organizations, the North Korean leadership has been unable to cope with the actual situation without foreign aid.

The state apparatus is immense, and it exercises a firm control over matters of public and national security. However, it has lost its dominant power over matters related to people's livelihood. To revitalize production activities, the North Korean authorities re-inaugurated the *Chollima* March of the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time they have limited the people who could open a street stall at the "Agrarian Fair" (장마당: Jangmadang) to women over 55 years old (since December 1st 2007, 49 years old), and forced all others to return back to their work place.<sup>39</sup> Despite these measures, the restoration of the economy has proved to be difficult as the basis of production was seriously destroyed.

The increasing dissatisfaction of the people has resulted in widespread unrest. However, this has not developed into any organized resistance. There are a series of

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.cbs.co.kr/Nocut/Show.asp?IDX=688729> (Search: Feb. 13, 2008).

related questions that can be asked: why and how can the North Korean political regime sustain itself? Will the rupture between the durable political regime and the precarious society lead to political change?

The Chinese and East European cases may help in answering these questions: political change is possible when the growth of the social force and the development of the social network overwhelm the durability of the political regime and the efficiency of the control mechanism. Civil autonomy and a “civil society” then develop along with the reform policy.

According to Miklos Haraszti, a civil society emerged in East Europe in the era of post-totalitarianism when ideological control and state repression were reduced to a certain extent. He classified the developmental process of East European civil societies according to three stages: post-Stalinism, post-totalitarianism, and post-communism.<sup>40</sup> According to this theory, Chinese society is in the second stage. However, North Korean society has not even entered the first stage. Recent reform policy, Kim Jung-il’s critique with regard to his father’s unification policy and his friendly gesture towards South Korea and the USA, allow us to cautiously suggest that North Korean society may be taking a first step into the first stage.<sup>41</sup>

## ***2. Enlargement of Second Social Sphere***

Even though it is too early to talk about a North Korean “civil society”, there is still a second dimension of social existence, a kind of “second society.” In so far as the institutional space is narrow for Hankiss’ dichotomized criteria, certain “system-foreign” organizational principles are under restraint: Homogeneity versus Differentiation and Integration, Vertical versus Horizontal Organization, Descendance versus Ascendance. Therefore, other principles emerge in North Korean society.

According to witness statements made by North Korean refugees, North Koreans are apparently docile due to the “Unique Leading System” of the state, and they live a socialist community life according to their Juche ideology. On one hand, North Koreans live in a collectivism-oriented society (“first social consciousness”), however, they also experience the individualism, nepotism, and disposition of the petit bourgeois (“second social consciousness”) as a generalized value orientation.

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<sup>40</sup> Miklos Haraszti, “The Beginning of Civil Society: The Independent Peace Movement and Danube Movement in Hungary”, in Vladimir Tismaneanu. (ed.), *In Search of Civil Society: Independent Peace Movement in the Soviet Bloc* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 14-17.

<sup>41</sup> As an extension to the ‘Improvement of Economic Management of July 1st’ in 2002, the North Korean government increased corporate autonomy and introduced, partially, the market mechanism through the ‘Comprehensive Market Introduction Measure’ of 2003. Subsequently, it was made known that they would execute factory (corporation) reform measures in 2005. From 2003, the factories would produce and sell products according to state planning but would be allowed to sell 30% of its output on the market. As prices rose but to extreme shortages, individuals and businesses alike sold products that should have been sold in public outlets on the market to make money. This reform measure is considered a sign of state recognition of the reality that factories or businesses, according to their own judgment, produce and sell goods based on market prices. <http://www.donga.com/fbin/news?f=print&n=200501160167> (Search: February 1, 2005).

Working-level staff apply laissez-faire policies to the people's second social life. For instance, even though individual travel is strictly controlled by law, travel for obtaining food is unrestricted and there is no punishment for theft of daily necessities. A comparison can be drawn with the Chinese policy with regard to the question of *Min-gongchao* (民工潮: the flood of urban migrants seeking jobs). Furthermore, it is assumed that inter-Korean relations will enlarge the second social space: second economy, second social consciousness, and second culture.

Although North Korean authorities still control dissident elements through physical coercion and closed politics, they are still seriously limited in their policy choices due to a general social weakness. If North Korean authorities do not overcome their current crises, then the crisis criteria of their regime will exceed the critical point of reform.<sup>42</sup> If they opt to accommodate the "second society", as was done in China, by considering it as a security belt for the "first society" or consider the "second society" as a way of passing through democratic socialism, a variety of choices could open up.

The Chinese and East European experiences show us that political unrest or drastic political change can be caused by excessive control or inefficient control when faced with the growth of civil autonomy or a "civil society."<sup>43</sup> Compared to the Chinese case, the North Korean control mechanism is much stronger, and the North Korean leadership has been able to sustain the balance between the development of civil autonomy and the efficiency of control. If an actual rupture between the durable political regime and the precarious society were to occur and not be corrected, the current North Korean regime would not survive the situation.

## IV. Class Policy and Nomenclatura of North Korea

### 1. Actual Meaning of "3 Strata, 51 Categories"

Since 1958, the North Korean authorities have been pursuing "the monolithic domination of socialist production relations" and "socialist proletarianization of the whole population" by the "collectivization of agriculture" and "collaboration in commerce and industry." To make all people a "red class", they have classified their population and struggled against anti-revolutionary elements under the "collective leadership" of the Workers' Party of Korea. For this purpose, they put resident registration into operation during the period between April 1964 and 1969. In February 1971, they classified their population as having 3 strata with 51 categories: 870,000 families (3,915,000 persons) as the "core stratum", 700,000 families (3,510,000 persons) as the "oscillating stratum", 1,730,000 families (7,935,000 persons) as the "hostile stratum." Their class

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<sup>42</sup> Kim Sung-chul et al., *Bukhan sahoejueui-cheje-eui wigisujun pyungga mit naeguryeok jeonmang* (Estimation on the crisis of the North Korean socialist regime and perspective on its durability) (Seoul: The Research Center for the National Unification, December, 1996), 158.

<sup>43</sup> Minton F. Goldman, *op. cit.*, 4-6.

policies focused on precautions against the oscillating stratum and hostile stratum and on ideological education for them.<sup>44</sup>

The North Korean class policies in the 1970s had two facets. On the one hand, they employed the policies of “*Zuckerbrot*” in order to gain voluntary consent from the population: elimination of the gap of urban-rural life inequality and minimization of the difference of classes through the “Three Technological Revolutions.” On the other hand, they employed the policies of “*Peitsche*” to make the workers, peasants, and office workers into a revolutionary proletariat through the activities of the Agencies of the Three Great Revolutions (ideology, technology, and culture), and to execute an absolute dictatorship against any anti-revolutionary elements.

Through the above class policies, the structure of social inequality of the past was destroyed, however, a new social inequality was institutionalized. Hence, a new hierarchy of classes was formed in socio-economic and cultural life as a result of class distinction according to the political activities or social ascription of the past.<sup>45</sup>

The social classification with 3 strata and 51 categories is basically meaningless today because it was based on the resident registration performed in the 1960s, and its main criteria were political activities under Japanese domination and during the Korean War. The people of this strata are now dead or beyond the age of social activity. However, it is still important to note that the result of the policies of class distinction resulted in the institutionalization of the new structure of inequality, which continues to have an important effect on today’s class formation in North Korea.

According to a relatively recent source, the North Korean population is currently classified with a core stratum of 5,980,000 persons (28%), oscillating stratum of 9,620,000 persons (45%), and hostile stratum of 5,770,000 persons (27%).<sup>46</sup> In spite of the implementation of these class policies for almost forty years, there has been no change in the component ratio of the strata. The increase in the “core stratum”, those who give voluntary consent to the regime is very slight: from 26.1% to 28%. (According to another source, it actually decreased to 20-25%). The existence of a hostile stratum of 5,770,000 persons (27%) means that their class policies have only changed the components of the classes, and that they have succeeded in neither enlarging the stratum of support nor reinforcing the social integration.

In spite of a diverse apparatus of social control, the low social integration within North Korea will only amplify the impact from outside when they open their society and are faced with the crisis of legitimacy.

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<sup>44</sup> For detail cf. Kim Yong-gi, “Gyegeupui Bulpyeongdeunggujowa Gyegeupjeongchaek(The unequal structure of class and class policy)”, *Bukhansahoeui Gujowa Byeonhwa*(The structure and change of the North Korean society) (Seoul: The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1987), 203-206.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208.

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Unification, *Bukhan-gaeyo 1991*(Epitome of North Korea 1991) (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 1990), 238.

## 2. North Korean Nomenklatura: adaptation of regime and crisis awareness

By concentrating social values in the *Nomenklatura*, the North Korean supreme leaders could use this as the base for their political regime. This may be the most important characteristic of the North Korean class policy and more or less a common phenomenon of totalitarian regimes. Accordingly, *Nomenklatura*'s adaptability to the regime and its awareness of crises are decisive factors for political change.

For this question, there is a double faceted contradiction. There is plenty of evidence concerning the alienation of the *Nomenklatura* from the regime: the refuge of Kang Myung-do, the former Premier Kang Sung-san's son-in-law and Lee Han-young, nephew of Kim Jung-il's lover, Sung Ae-rim, the scandal of the refuge of Sung with her sister, and the refuge of Hwang Jang-yup, theoretical founder of the *Juche* ideology. According to information from Kang Myung-do, Kang Sung-san worried frequently about the crisis of the North Korean regime. According to a survey performed in 1996 by the Research Center for National Unification in Seoul, in terms of the hopes for the future, the pride of job status and role, the "Core Mass" (*Haksim Gunjung*) was almost the same or even lower than the "Basic Mass" (*Gibon Gunjung*) and "oscillating stratum."<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, through private discussions with North Korean participants at international conferences or bilateral meetings, South Korean participants were left with the impression that the adaptation of *Nomenklatura* to the regime has already been completed. Therefore, further verification of this phenomena is needed by means of a qualitative analysis.

## V. Social Network and Control Mechanism in North Korea

During the three years since the flood in August 1995, about 3 to 3.5 million out of 22 million North Koreans have died of starvation or related diseases, and more than 300 thousand people have escaped from the country. This means that North Korean society is in the process of breaking down. However, there is no serious organized resistance or any evidence of a collapse in the political regime. This may be the result of the vertical and horizontal social control held by the secret police, *Bowibu*, Public Security Agency (*Inmin-boan-seong*), the National Censorship Committee, the Committee of Guidance for the Socialist Legal Life, the People's Neighbourhood Association, etc.

North Korean authorities are very fast in dealing with situations through the enforcement of temporary control measures in addition to the permanent control mechanisms. According to the order of Kim Jung-il to "stabilize the vagrants' livelihood of the whole country", they established the "Standing Committee of September 27" in 1995, and imprisoned the vagrants. Resisters and dissidents are controlled by means of six concentration camps (more exactly, political penal-labor colonies) and about 30 forced labor camps. According to Yun Dae-il, former agent of *Bowibu*, the handwriting of all residents above the age of 17 is recorded every year to investigate anti-Kim, anti-

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<sup>47</sup> Kim Sung-chul et al., *op. cit.*, 60-63.

government graffiti or leaflets.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, the durability of the political regime can be explained by its speedy response and cruel repression rather than by the efficiency of the control.

Similar to the East German experience prior to the “Revolution of 1989”, the fundamental reason for the constancy of the North Korean political regime may also dwell in the underdevelopment of a social network that can organize latent dissidents and resisters into a social force which could apply pressure on the political regime and promote political change. In the East German experience, the totalitarian control mechanism, which can be compared to North Korea’s but less efficient, could not prevent the formation of five dissident groups (“*Neues Forum*”, “*Demokratie Jetzt*”, “*Demokratischer Aufbruch*”, “*Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte*”, “*Sozialdemokratische Partei in der DDR*”) within a month following the repeated “Monday Meeting”, initiated on September 11, 1989. Therefore, it would appear that the driving force of political change lay in the East German society itself.

In comparison with the East German case, there are many differences in the functions of the social organizations which take the role of the “*avant-garde*” of the Party, especially when correlating these organizations with the emerging driving force for reform.

From this perspective, the “second society” and environment of socialist civil movements plus the mode of state control on social change must be analyzed. Attention must also be paid to the fact that German unification was preceded by political change in East Germany such as the start of the De Maizière government which allowed for the possibility of negotiations with the West German government for unification. The alienation of the ruling class from the former government also played an important role in the concrete context of the political change. These analyses suggest possible directions of North Korean political change.

When compared with China and East Germany, the most important characteristic of North Korean society is the deep penetration of the state control mechanism into the daily life of ordinary people. Relying on the authority of the Government, even low-level officers hold the power to control the people. For example, if a person were to provoke a party officer or stand up to an administrative officer, and this person did not fit the description of ‘good person’ by an authority from the person’s organization, he or she would be sent to a “Labour Training Unit”(*Rodong danryeondae*), a so-called “*Kotbak*”, treated as a burglar, thief, rapist, harlot, impostor, etc. This shows the depth and intensity of the North Korean control mechanism.

The neo-patrimonial system can also be seen in the North Korean society like in other underdeveloped societies with a low institutional level. For example, the Social Safety Guards exploit the residents of Sineuiju in collaboration with burglars, thieves and swindlers. For example, once at *Sinseongcheon* Station a passenger shouted in protest asking if dying of starvation was the prototype of socialism, the Safety Guards then arrested him plus all the other passengers around him. They were all then charged with an ideological crime and sent to the “Detention Center for Passengers” where the de-

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<sup>48</sup> Yun Dae-il, *Akui chuk jiphaengbu gukgaanjeonbowibuui naemak*(Inside Story of National Security and Integrity Agency, Governing Body of the “Axis of Evil”) (Seoul: Wolganjoseonsa, 2002), 81-87.

tainees are employed as manpower for gathering firewood. It is not only a question of corruption, but also of the privatization of state power. It has weakened the authority of the Party for social control, and the coercion and violence in the name of state have become a substitute for the authority of the government in the social system.

## VI. Symptoms of Political Change in North Korea

Since the late 1980's, political and social deviation have rapidly increased in North Korea. Can we therefore look forward to the advent of reform propulsive forces or to the development of social forces which can create an opportunity for reform with the existing closed totalitarian regime?

There are two contradictory opinions regarding the above question. Some scholars propose that difficulties will arise because the North Korean people have become "believers in the religion of Kim Il-Sung" and need no special control, as no dissident groups would appear to exist. However, this argument can be refuted by observing North Korean society where the people's perception of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jung-Il is quite normal in that they often make fun of them in a joking way. They look slightly at entrance into the Workers' Party of Korea. The control and command from above therefore would not seem to reach to the lower levels of society. There is also clear evidence of the existence of dissident groups: for example, more than forty military officers, including the Deputy Chief of Staff An Jong-Ho, were executed for plotting a military coup d'Etat on 25 April 1992, and for a similar plot at 6<sup>th</sup> Corps of the People's Army in 1995, a much larger number of military officers and agents of the *Politbureau* were executed and punished, and a final dissolution of the Corps. Accordingly, reform propulsive forces could be strengthened and organized, if the occasion should arise.

In the Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries, even though political recruitment of technical intellectuals of the technocrat type was active, creative intellectuals (writers, artists, etc.) were never represented in the core apparatus of political power. Recruitment from academic circles was very rare, therefore, the overlap of creative intellectuals and political power was always very low. As such, creative intellectuals tended to take the position of dissident outsiders.<sup>49</sup>

The North Korean case is also no exception, although the available proof is not sufficient. Criticism of the regime by intellectuals has been seen to stimulate the youth: the critique of Kim Jung-Il's economic policies by students at the Kim Chek College of Technology and the subsequent purge of their ten professors in 1990, damage to the portrait of Kim Il-Sung and his son, and the scattering of anti-Kim leaflets by a medical student in the May Day ceremony at Wonsan in the same year all point to the fact that there is a large dissident group in North Korea.

According to Zbigniew A. Jordan's analysis of the culture of Polish youth, cultural differences were evident between young people and different age groups in 1964.

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<sup>49</sup> An Byung-young, *Hyeondae gonsanjuuiyeongu, Yeoksajeok sanghwang ideology chejebyeondong*(Study on the contemporary communism, historical situation, ideology and change of regime) (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1982), 166.

Polish youths were similar to western “angry young men” in attire, hair style, musical gusto, sexual behavior, decadent literature, etc. For this reason, Z. Jordan explained that they could not find their position in either traditional norms or the bourgeois original rules. As such they manifested the “ideology of withdrawal” of “non-conformity” thereby rejecting and denying the world.

Z. Jordan’s analysis was a common phenomenon in East European societies under communist domination. Experts explain that this tendency of alienation in the youth culture originated from three main sources: First, tension between the traditional factors of “value of family” and communism infiltrated the domain of private life; second, the existence of serious discrepancies between individuals in terms of their access to the tools of goal-achievement recognized in the society; and third, discord between the individual value system and the communist value system. As a result, this produced collision between statism, which consolidates the domination of the party in the name of the proletariat, and the life conscience of the youth who were thirsting for personal liberty. The third source was the most important, and accelerated the normative disorientation and alienation of the youth.<sup>50</sup>

Understanding the culture of the youth in East European societies under communist domination is useful in understanding the youth culture in North Korean society today. The above three sources of alienation also exist in today’s North Korean society, and there is extensive evidence. The sex scandals (*buhwasageon*) of the youth are so frequent that the authorities cannot punish the persons involved. The young men sing South Korean or western popular songs, which could never have been imagined in the past. Nowadays, more North Korean young people are seeking refuge in the South for socio-economic reasons rather than politico-ideological reasons, and this number is seriously increasing as time progresses.

Andrzej Korbonski’s research indicates that with the alienation of the intellectuals and the youth as the background condition of liberalization in East European societies, the reform propulsive force could then be formed by these people alienated by the exclusive and dogmatic social policies.

Many sympathizers to the reforming and opening of the North Korean regime can be found among students recalled from abroad, middle-level staff (2-3% of the population) who know the South Korean reality due to confidential communication (*bitongsin*), and workers employed in tourism or in joint venture companies, etc.

## VII. Conclusion

The recent Chinese unrest actually originates in the dislocation of the political super-structure from the economic base. In contrast, the most important reason for the unrest in North Korea lies in the rupture between the strong control mechanism and the extremely enfeebled society.

This comparative study allows us to have an optimistic outlook for North Korean political change in spite of the anxiety of the North Korean leaders. The current strong

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-170.

control mechanism cannot be sustained in a decomposing society. This may be the first reason why Kim Jung-Il has shown such friendly gestures towards South Korea and western countries to induce their aid. The eventual reform and opening up of North Korea would enlarge the second social sphere and encourage civil autonomy to a certain extent. However, the North Korean leadership could still sustain a balance between the development of civil autonomy and the efficiency of control.

Considering that Chinese leaders launched a severe auto-critic against the negative facet of the “first society” and initiated various institutional measures to officialize or semi-officialize the second social sphere during the stage of post-totalitarianism, the North Korean leaders would need to try to enlarge their institutional space, and transform their control method over society.

In a conventional communist society, ideology takes charge over social integration and social regulation. As recognized by Emile Durkheim, social regulation is only effective to the extent of the social integration. Social integration is currently low in both China and North Korea. If the leaders of these two countries do not cope with this situation, the continuing dynamic equilibrium will apply pressure to the political regime through social disorganization.

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