

The Mario Einaudi Center  
for International Studies

## Working Paper Series

### **The *Suryong* System as a Collectivist Developmental Strategy**

by

**Young Chul Chung**

Paper No. 02-05

October 2005

**The Mario Einaudi Center  
for International Studies**

170 Uris Hall  
Cornell University  
t. 607-255-6370  
f. 607-254-5000  
Einaudi\_Center@is.cornell.edu  
www.einaudi.cornell.edu



# **The *Suryong* System as a Collectivist Developmental Strategy**

by

**Young Chul Chung**

## **Abstract**

Many Western studies, seeing North Korea through the prism framed by the Cold War, depicts it as one or some combination of three images: a satellite of the Soviet Union, a totalitarian regime, or a feudal dynasty. This paper argues in contrast that it is best to explain North Korea's political institution centered around *Suryong* as a product of the collective choice to pursue the often contradictory dual goals of building a "socialist utopia" and achieving economic development. In pursuit of these goals, the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) has adopted a collectivist developmental strategy that places a premium on collective efforts and non-material incentives. Several problems arose in the process of implementation, and particularly serious were the challenges of de-Stalinism from outside and dogmatism from within as well as individualism among the public. The KWP responded with political projects: to solidify the Party and strengthen its unity with the public while privileging ideological incentives over material rewards. The series of choices has led to the establishment of the *Suryong* system where Kim Il-Sung occupies the central position of power around which the Party and mass are organized. While the *Suryong* system faced particularly difficult challenges in the 1990s, Kim Jong-Il's 'Military-First Policies' sought to institutionalize the system further by using the military to diffuse *Suryong* system's normative values throughout the society. This paper concludes by considering some of the negative consequences that the pursuit of such a strategy has brought about.

## **About the Author**

Young Chul Chung is currently a Research Fellow at Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University. He received a Ph.D. in Sociology from Seoul National University and has published a number of books and articles on North Korea, including *Towards a Unified Korea in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Seoul: Seoul National University press, 2005), *North Korea's Reform and Opening* (Seoul: Sunin, 2004), "Is North Korea Moving Toward a Market Economy?" and "North Korean Reform and Open: Dual Strategy and Silli (Practical) Socialism."

## **Contact Information**

Young Chul Chung, Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University, 140-1 San 56-1, Sillim-Dong, Gwanak-gu, Seoul, 151-742, Korea, Tel: 02-880-8501, Fax: 02-879-1496, Email: [chungyc@dreamwiz.com](mailto:chungyc@dreamwiz.com)

## 1. Introduction

In the conclusion of an article published in 1963, Glenn D. Paige argued that the “Communist politics in North Korea have been characterized by a degree of harshness which it is difficult for an outside(r) to understand...”<sup>1</sup> Over forty years have passed since then and North Korea still remains a nation of mystery to outsiders. And whether then or now, it is difficult to find any qualitative improvements, if there have been one made, in the expressions that describe North Korea. Totalitarianism, satellite state and absolutist state etc... Today North Korea is referred to as the last remaining Stalinist regime on the face of the earth: One party dictatorship, one ideology, fanatic loyalty to the leader and various apparatuses that insinuate into all aspects of the society. These features are comparable to those of Stalinist Soviet Union.

All these apparent traits qualify Friedrich and Brzezinski’s description of ‘totalitarianism’. However, is it possible to make classification of North Korea based on its skeletons? As Alex Inkeles pointed out, the evaluation of a model is not whether the social model is right or wrong, but how rich or poor it is.<sup>2</sup> If one pays heed to this argument, the totalitarian model only provides a partial explanation of North Korean society. And these features that have been understood as totalitarian can be commonly found in any number of societies. Furthermore, such can be seen more often in nations that are described as authoritarian.<sup>3</sup>

Since the 1950’s and the periods following détente, civil rights and other new social movements in US, the totalitarian model has come under heavy attacks. However, with the revival of the Cold War during the Reagan-Thatcher era, the model was newly resurrected and merged with political and ideological purposes to evidently become further expanded and reproduced upon.<sup>4</sup>

And today, North Korea exists as a testament to the revitalized theory of totalitarianism. As Kongdan Oh has simplistically and yet, compellingly drawn, the image of North Korea is that of Kim’s Dynasty agreed upon by the union of totalitarianism and Confucianism.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, as it is revealing in the title of Adrian Buzo’s book, North Korea is merely a dynastic model of an Asiatic totalitarianism.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the only one who has

---

<sup>1</sup> Paige, Glenn D. & Lee, Dong Jun, 'The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea,' *The China Quarterly* No. 14 (April June, 1963), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Inkeles, Alex, 'Models and Issues in the analysis of Soviet,' *Survey* 60 (July, 1966), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich and Brzezinski cites six features as being particular to totalitarianism: Official ideology, single man’s party, system of terror by police control, monopoly on communications system, state directed economy. Friedrich, Carl J. and Brzezinski, Zbigniew K., *Totalitarian Dictatorship & Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1956), p. 31. However, such characteristics can be seen to differing degrees in all nation-states. In particular, the monopoly on weapons is commonly found in most nations and in regards to the ideology and the one-party system, this is also evident in authoritarian states as well. And as for the state directed economy, this is commonly prevalent in all socialist states.

<sup>4</sup> As for the history of totalitarianism see, Gleason, Abbott, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Ch. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Take a look at Kongdan Oh’s work. She predetermines North Korea as a dynasty that has been forged by totalitarianism and Confucianism. Oh, Kongdan and Hassig, Ralph C., *North Korea through the looking glass*(Washington D.C: Brookings, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Buzo, Adrian, *The Guerilla Dynasty* (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 1999).

applied more social scientific understanding of totalitarianism to North Korea, so far is McCormack. He describes North Korea as a neo-totalitarian state and even then, views North Korea as having deviated from the classical model of totalitarian state.<sup>7</sup>

As Edward Said has pointed out, the Orientalism of the West is verily evident in its taxonomical exercise. Orientalistic views and analysis are applied not only towards the Orient of the West, but also towards all Others that are at its opposite. The most critical problem of the Orientalistic view is in its refusal to recognize the cultural parity (cultural relativism) of others or in its dismissal of the history and the values of Other. Such perception leads to the reproduction of knowledge in a fixed framework and the knowledge reproduced within reinforces the existing perception, thus creating a cycle of entrenchment.

Today in the West, particularly the perception of North Korea within the American academia is almost Orientalistic.<sup>8</sup> To be more precise, it can be called 'North Korean-ism'. Before 'North Korean-ism' can be validated as a theory, it must first be tested with historical and structural analysis of the present situation in North Korea.

This article is divided into two parts. The first will provide an overview of the critical works on the Suryong system of North Korea in the Western academia and highlight the problems associated with each approach. And the second will examine the North Korean Suryong system through the use of 'developmental strategic' methodology. Through the 'developmental strategic' analysis, the article will demonstrate how the Suryong system was formed during the process of implementing a collectivistic developmental strategy while carrying on the struggles against individualism and revisionism.

## **2. The evaluation of North Korea's Suryong political system in the West**

### **1) North Korea Studies in the US: The entrapment of the Cold War**

The view of North Korea within the Western academia, accumulated over the past fifty years, has still yet to be freed of the constraints of the Cold War. The reason for this lies in North Korea never having invited much scholarly interests, but the other comes from the academia still being hampered by the restraints of the Cold-War ideologies. Starting in the mid and the late 1980's, the increased interest on North Korea has brought according output of works and yet, neither the boundaries of scholarly interests nor the quality of works have improved much. In fact, the narrow scope of researches that are more often concentrated on the nuclear missiles issues of the 1990's and the policy-directed researches have led to a decrease in the analyses of the history, the structure and the present situation of North Korea. This has led to policy formulation on North Korea that is want for accurate knowledge and reveals the biases and the paucity of critical examination based on few select information. When summarized, North Korean studies carried out so far is as follows:

---

<sup>7</sup> McCormack, Gavan, 'Kim's Country: Hard Times in North Korea,' *New Left Review*, No. 198, March/April 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Such perception of the 'problem' that is North Korea is quite clearly shown in the problematization of North Korea. That is, the solution to the 'problem' (with North Korea) is not sought from the causes itself, but it is deduced from the very existence of North Korea. Therefore, the solution has to derive from North Korea's very system, as seen in the advocacy of the regime 'collapse', 'change' or 'negotiation'.

**Table 1: The trend of North Korean studies in US**

Time period	Researchers	Research Topic	Ideological Orientation	Theoretical framework and Methodologies	Sources
Cold war ('50-'60)	Dept. of State, CIA, Dept. of Defense	Satellite state, Power struggle	Anti-Communism Anti-Sovietism	Sovietism Totalitarianism	CIA briefings Newspaper
Détente ('70)	R. Scalapino, Chongsik Lee, Daesuk Suh, Glen D. Paige, etc.	North's policy toward South, North's power structure, The history of Korean communism, Kim, Il Sung, etc.	Anti-Communism Revisionism(the leftist intellectuals)	Totalitarianism Confucianism	Partial primary sources, Nodong sinmun (newspaper of Korean Worker's Party), etc.
New Cold war ('80)	B. Cumings, G. McCormack and Revisionist(Halliday, Allen Brun, Martin-Hart Landsberg), etc.	North Korean system, North-South relationships, North Korean economic line/model, Suryong political system, Juche Ideology, etc.	Anti-Communism Revisionism	Totalitarianism Confucianism Marxist Theory	Govt. documents, newspaper primary sources witness testimonies(travel accounts)
Post-Cold war ('90 - present)	Kongdan Oh, N. Eberstadt, M. Noland, Victor Cha, Samuel Kim, C. Amstrong, etc	North Korean regime collapse, North's Reform and Open, Unification of North-South, Nuclear and Missile issues	Anti-Communism Liberal Democracy	Totalitarianism Confucianism Reform and Open Theory	Defector's testimonies newspaper primary sources travel accounts

What is evident in the above <table 1> is in US how many of the early studies on North Korea were conducted by governmental institutions and how their contents were tailored to the themes of power struggles of North Korea and North Korea's characteristic as a satellite state. In the 1980's, there have been more researchers and perspectives became diversified as to range from the existing totalitarian approaches to the revisionisms of the Left theorists. Also, their (the revisionists) introduction to South Korea has been met with an outpouring of responses.

However, since the end of the Cold War, although the studies of North Korea in US have quantitatively increased, qualitative wise, the scholarship has suffered stagnation. The reason for this lies in the shift that has occurred since the end of the Cold War, where the studies on North Korea have moved from being an academic discipline to that of policy making with researches primarily focused on nuclear and missile issues.<sup>9</sup>

Number of reasons, such as language and sources can be cited as underlying factors for stagnation of North Korean studies in US, but more immediately, this has to do with the fact that within the discipline, the majority of researches on North Korea are based on contempt and hostility towards the regime. Furthermore, it is not only the paucity of sources

<sup>9</sup> In much of the works produced in South Korea after the Cold War, themes of regime collapse, reform and opening up of North Korea were dominant. However, by the end of the 1990's, these works have been criticized for their overt projection of subjective optimism.

that needs to be addressed but more so than this, it is the deficiency in the interpretational skills of the sources that has yet to be improved. If one were to analyze the current reception and analytical methodologies used in US, one can find following characteristics.

First, much of the studies on North Korea in US are replete with hostility and contempt. Works of Kongdan Oh, Victor Cha and Eberstadt can be cited as such examples. In particular, Eberstadt's analysis of North Korea's politics, economy and society, his empirical analysis in particular, despite having derived from the North Korean demographic studies, regrettably abound in contempt.<sup>10</sup> As Hazel Smith has argued, North Korea that is perceived is not only a 'mad' actor but a 'bad' one as well.<sup>11</sup> However, as Smith has pointed out, the two cannot coexist, since in terms of 'rationality', a 'mad' actor cannot be rational, but a 'bad' actor can be one.

If this is so, then where lays the origin of such self-contradiction? Mainly, this is traced to the remnants of the Cold War hostilities that have yet to be cleared up. Another (cause) is the historical memory of having aimed guns at each other and waging wars. However, the more considerable (factor) is North Korea posing strong challenges to the interests of United States. As a result, the perception of North Korea has yet to be freed from the 'security paradigm'<sup>12</sup> and consequently, their perception still remains ensnared in 'the trap of the Cold War'.

Second, in regards to methodologies of North Korean studies, scarcity of source materials and an excess of theoretical determinisms are evident. The American academia is in possession of extensive materials and theoretical accumulations accrued on Soviet Union and China. And also, these works carried out by American scholars during the Cold War were responsible for their success in the theoretical confrontations with Soviet Union and other socialist blocs. And yet, in research and in analysis of North Korea, it is hard to find such assiduity. In fact, recent studies on North Korea have been marked by its usage of unfounded testimonies of North Korean defectors, poor source materials that are mainly derived from newspaper and magazine articles and an overt dependence of secondary sources.<sup>13</sup>

Also, although this is research on North Korea, it is rare to see the use of materials from North Korea. This reveals a startling truth about the discipline: despite being an area

---

<sup>10</sup> Eberstadt, Nicholas & Banister, Judith, *Population of North Korea* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992); Eberstadt, 'The Old North' *The World & I*, Vol. 15(2000).

<sup>11</sup> Smith, Hazel, 'Bad, mad, sad and rational actor? Why the 'secrutization' Paradigm makes for poor policy analysis of north Korea,' *International Affairs* 76, 1(2002).

<sup>12</sup> Smith, op cit.

<sup>13</sup> (U.S Dept. of State, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2004*, released on Sept. 15, 2004). Currently, there are not too many infrequent hearings of North Korean defectors being held in US. The problem lies in the publicizing of these testimonies without much verifications done in the first place. This is incurring much backlash from some members of the defectors community. In the State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2004*, there are uncorroborated and incredible accounts of biological experiments conducted on Christians who have refused to accept Juche ideology. Many defectors express strong criticisms towards the use of questionable testimonies given by few defectors. In South Korea, although the defector testimonies are treated as important source materials, efforts are taken to ensure its veracity.

study, the scholarship hardly makes use of primary materials from the given area. In addition to this, what is also visible is the attempt to compensate the lack of primary sources with theoretical observations. In particular, this excess of theoretical determinism, rather than utilizing concepts such as totalitarianism, Confucianism and autocracy as conclusions derived from the analysis of the historical and the structural trends of North Korea, by assigning (these concepts) a priori, creates further gap in comprehension.

This is a violence committed in the name of theory. Such theoretical violence produces the perception of the validity of selective collection of information and of only materials pertinent to theory as having value.<sup>14</sup> However, materials alone cannot substitute analysis. Perhaps it is easier to wield violence onto one that is the target of one's enmity and hostility.

As shown above, the study of North Korea in US, is not carried out as philosophical, historical or structural inquiry of the 'North Korean phenomenon', but is dominated by formalized theories and a priori definitions. As Armstrong has argued, "a researcher of a given area must thoroughly be aware of the concepts in its totality."<sup>15</sup> However, the current state of North Korean studies in US sees North Korea as an Other to be observed and a poorly conceptualized totality. As a result, North Korea is defined based on a priori assumptions and exists only in so far as it can be perceived through the prisms of the Cold War.

## **2) North Korea as viewed in the States: Three Images of North Korea**

### **The satellite state theory**

In his book, Adrian Buzo establishes several concepts to compare Stalinist system and North Korea and based on this, argues that North Korea's dominant sphere of state activities – for examples, politics, leadership, ideology, economy and social mobilizations etc – cannot be understood without the blueprint provided by Stalinism.<sup>16</sup> For him, North Korea can only be comprehended with Stalinism as its barometer. And from this, the image of North Korea that comes across is a transplanted Stalinist regime as well as a satellite state. The origin of North Korea as seen from the West is that of a mere puppet of Soviet Union. Labeled a 'dummy', North Korea began as a transplanted Soviet revolution and took off as a copycat of Stalinist system. This is clear in the American researches of the past, where they have almost unilaterally depicted North Korea as a 'satellite' state.<sup>17</sup> This is situating North

---

<sup>14</sup> Many materials that use testimonies of those who had lived under the regime attest to this. In Helen-Louise Hunter's work, one can see selective usage of records that cannot be easily interpreted according to American values and testimonies of defectors that are highly biased and as for Kongdan Oh, only subjective evaluation has value. For Bruce Cumings' example of Kang Cholhwan, it is the 'fact' of Kang's return to the normal community despite having lived in the labour camp rather than the living condition inside labour camp itself that merits attention. This poses a contrast to the above.

<sup>15</sup> Armstrong, Charles K., 'An Interview with Gari Ledyard,' *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2003, pp. 143-185.

<sup>16</sup> Buzo, op cit. p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Up until the 1960's, this attitude was quite dominant. The State Department publications during the Korean War and in materials that were later re-edited North Korea is defined as a satellite state of Soviet Union. Department of State, *North Korea: A Case Study of a Soviet Satellite*, Report of the Department of State Research Mission to Korea, Office of Intelligence research Report N0. 5600, May 20, 1951 (Reprinted by

Korea in the same relationship as that of between Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. As a satellite state, North Korea in its usage of Stalinist ideology, developmental lines and idolization of its supreme leader, is in fact a small Stalinist state.<sup>18</sup> However as seen from the historical process of North Korea since '1950s particularly around the development of Suryong system and Juche ideology, North Korea has developed its own political and structural system different from just a small Stalinist state.

Much of the ignorance of the American academia, as seen in the assignation of North Korea as a satellite state of the Soviet Union derives from their lack of understanding of the history of North Korea. Scholars such as Daesuk Suh, Chong-Sik Lee and Scalapino have already done much historical examinations of North Korea and Kim Il Sung and have shown the long history of the communist movements in Korea.<sup>19</sup>

The ideology of North Korean communist leadership, as the history of the Third World national liberations testify to, is very deeply rooted in anti-imperialism and nationalism.<sup>20</sup> Charles Armstrong, in his research on the construction of culture of North Korea has shown how even from the earliest period, North Korean cultural formation possessed much autonomous nationalistic traits.<sup>21</sup>

Evaluating North Korea as a transplanted Stalinist system and a satellite state is the result of rather mechanistic application of Cold War factions headed by US and Soviet Union since the end of the WWII.<sup>22</sup> As the later history of North Korea shows, the Sino-Soviet conflict, changes within the international communist bloc and the consolidation of Juche ideology transformed relations within these nations. Although it is quite clear that North Korea in its foundational stage, during Korean War and in later developmental phase

---

Government Printing Office, 1961)

<sup>18</sup> Although differing from this, similar traits can also be found in Chalmers Johnson's work. He sees South Korea as a successful satellite state of US and North Korea as a satellite of Soviet Union. Johnson, Chalmers, *Blow Back* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.: 2000); Also, the satellite theory is linked to the argument of Kim's acquisition of power made possible with the aid from the top, the Soviet Union. And a more preposterously expanded claim made from this argument is the 'stooge theory'. The 'stooge' theory was propagated as core anti-North Korean ideology in the 1960's – 70's that coincided with the rise of Park Chung Hee's military dictatorship. Yi Yongmyong and Huh Dongchan are the most famous proponents of this argument. Yi, Yongmyong, *Kim Il-sung Yoljon* (Seoul: Sinmunhwasa, 1974), Ho, Dongchan, *Kim Il-sung Pyongjon* (Seoul: Pukhan Yonkuso, 1987). Daesuk Suh's works in the 1980's have done much to overturn the 'stooge theory'. Daesuk Suh has shown that although Kim had less than an illustrious career as anti-Japanese guerilla that is depicted by North Korea today, he had in fact, been active as anti-Japanese guerilla in Manchuria. Suh, Dae-Sook, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> Suh, Dae-Sook, *ibid.*; Scalapino, Robert A. & Lee, Chong-Sik, *Communism in Korea* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1972). Their works have become much focus of criticisms today. Although they have done much for early studies on North Korea, since the 1980's, many works produced in South Korea have taken further steps.

<sup>20</sup> As for North Korea's first generation of revolutionaries, in particular the historical treatment of Kim Il Sung's nationalistic views, see Han, Hong-ko, 'Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria,' Ph D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Armstrong, 'The Formation of North Korean Culture: 1945-1950' *Hyondae Pukhan Yonku*, vol.2 issue 1, 1999

<sup>22</sup> As for the historical process of seeing North Korea as either 'puppet state' or 'satellite state' see, Chong Yong Wook's presentation.



received massive aid from Soviet Union and support from China, for these Korean communists, what was more important was the struggle to establish their 'Juche'. For them, Juche meant an 'independency' from outside and signified being 'masters' of their own fate.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, 'Juche' was not only anti-foreign, but also included loyalty to the 'minjok' (nation).<sup>24</sup> In his speech given in 1955, Kim Il Sung shows very clearly how he and others define Juche:

What is Juche in our ideological efforts of the party? What are we doing? We are not waging revolutions of any other nations, but that of the Korean Revolution. This Korean Revolution is the Juche of our ideological efforts of the party. Therefore, all ideological efforts must become subservient to the good of the Korean Revolution.<sup>25</sup>

The establishment of the Juche conveyed independency from socialisms of Soviet Union and China as well as imperialism of US and heralded self-determination of their own fate and action. Such beginnings of 'Juche', according to North Korea has long history, but the most immediate reason lay in the internal conflicts within North Korea, the Sino-Soviet tensions and the power struggles surrounding the development of socialism in North Korea from the 1950's.<sup>26</sup> Taken from this view, the depiction of North Korea as a 'satellite' or as a transplanted system of Soviet Union is a typical static view of history that renders the early formation process as an absolute.

Such static view of history faced a serious challenge in 1968. This was none other than the SS Pueblo Incident. In the aftermath of the crisis, Johnson in his speech (Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> 1968) recalled that North Korea seems to be a nation out of the pressure of the U.S.S.R.<sup>27</sup> During their attempts to solve the crisis, the Johnson administration came to realize that despite their heavy pressure bearing upon the Soviet Union, North Korea did not follow the orders of the Soviet Union. Also, Kosikin the premier of USSR at the time, at the request of Johnson, repeatedly made demands for the return of the captives but was refused. V.

---

<sup>23</sup> Selig Harrison defines North Korea's Juche as either 'self-reliance' or 'independence'. Bruce Cumings see it as "DPRK as having primacy over all else in all matters that are related to DPRK". Harrison, Selig S., *Korean Endgame* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002); Cumings, Bruce, 'The Corporate State in North Korea,' Koo, Hagen (ed.), *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), p. 213.

<sup>24</sup> Park, Han Sik, 'The Nature and Evolution of Juche Ideology,' Park, Han S.(ed.), *North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Il Sung, 'Sasang saop eseo kyojojuui wa hyongsikjuui rul toechi haggio juche rul hwakrip hal ttae taehayo (To combat doctrinism and formalism in our ideological efforts and to establish Juche)' Kim Il Sung Chojakjip 9 [Writings of Kim Il Sung] (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1980), p. 467. Such statement can be seen as continuous of his earlier speeches from the 1930's when he was involved in anti-Japanese guerilla work. "The master of the Korean Revolution are none other than Korean people themselves, the Korean Revolution must be carried out by the efforts of the Korean people alone, carrying it out in ways befitting to our reality and possessing resolute stance and attitude on this, I concede it is most important." Kim Il Sung, 'Choson Hyokmyong ui chinro (The path of the Korean Revolution (1930.6),' Kim Il Sung Chojakjip, vol. 1, 1979, p.5

<sup>26</sup> More specifically, this is from Kim Il Sung's speech given in 1955 titled, 'Sasang saop eseo kyojojuui wa kyongsikjuui rul toechi haggio juche rul hwakrip halt tae taehayo' [To combat doctrinism and formalism in our ideological efforts and to establish Juche]

<sup>27</sup> Johnson's speech

Tkachenko, who was in charge of North Korean affairs at the Ministry of International Affairs testified that for a long time, North Korea had exercised the independent initiative.<sup>28</sup> In fact, what this revealed was how even the Soviet Union was already refuting the notion of North Korea as a satellite state. By the 1960's, the argument of North Korea as a transplanted system of Soviet Union and a satellite state was becoming obsolete.

### **Power and Succession: Suryong political system as an absolutist system**

The most common evaluation of North Korea made in the West is that of an absolutist system that has been merged out of totalitarianism and absolutism. And such evaluation finds support in two phenomena. One is the cult or the idolization of the supreme leader Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and the other is the hereditary succession of power. In fact, for outsiders, the idolization and the hereditary succession cannot easily be comprehended and makes North Korea appear as an 'exceptional' state or an 'abnormal' state.

Generally, the Suryong political system is interpreted as a pursuit of absolute power by the individual and hereditary succession of power is understood as Kim's decision to not to repeat the experiences of the socialist states, in particular, the history following the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's attack on the Stalinist regime. In fact, for many theorists of the Left, their initial sympathies waned after the formation of the Suryong system and with the establishment of hereditary succession of power.

From the viewpoint of democracy, Suryong system is a feudal and an anti-democratic case. As if to prove it, in 1997, Hwang Jang Yop who defected to South Korea defined North Korea as 'a feudal absolutist monarchy' and denied North Korea as being a socialist state.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the Suryong system of North Korea is contrary to the orthodox of the 'Party-State System'. The Suryong system can be categorized as a 'party upon party' political system and it has come under attack for this very reason of power transference from father to son.

However, such criticisms of the Suryong system and the power inheritance dismiss (the need for) structural comprehension of the Suryong system and the historical formation of power inheritance. In particular, these (criticisms) are mainly concentrated on the succession of power from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il. Generally, inheritance denotes a systemization or a purposeful display of power authority based on bloodlines. Seen from this perspective, the lack of structural and historical analysis of power inheritance and its topical problematization is quite common in US academia. In fact, the inheritance of power can be found in many nations, including democratic capitalist systems. Most recently in Syria, power was transferred from the father to the son, and this was similarly found to be the case in Taiwan and Singapore. Even if one were to exclude the Nehru-Gandhi family, in Japan as well as in US and in Europe, there have been cases of influential politicians with backgrounds as members of established great families. This shows that the handing down of power cannot be simply explained as remaining traces of an Asiatic patriarchy, and on the flip side, the

---

<sup>28</sup> Hankyoreh sinmun [Hankyoreh Daily Newspaper], Oct. 19th, 1993

<sup>29</sup> Hwang Jang Yop, Nanun, yoksau chinrireul poatta [I have seen the truth of history] (Seoul: Hanul Academy, 1999)

power inheritance from Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il can be understood as being parallel to that of political practices found in other nations.

Until now, the power inheritance of North Korea has been understood from two perspectives. One was to understand it from ideo-cultural perspective where undemocratic nature of power inheritance is derived from East Asian Confucianism. The other is to see this from a power-centered perspective, where the situation in North Korea is solely understood in terms of Kim Il Sung's will to power.

The most vocal proponent of the former view where North Korea is the merger of 21<sup>st</sup> century totalitarianism and Confucian monarchy is Kongdan Oh. She argues that Kim Jong Il succeeded his father despite lacking leadership capabilities.<sup>30</sup> The key here is Confucian patriarchy. As an example of father-son succession, McCormack cites the example of Chiang Kai Shek and Chiang Ching Kuo of China and Taiwan, but he insists although they represent nationalist state and ideology, they were its representatives rather than nation building actors and singles out North Korea as an unusual case not to be found anywhere else.<sup>31</sup>

For him, North Korea is neither democratic nor republican, but of an absolutist monarchical system.<sup>32</sup> It is almost a modern version of 'l'Etat, c'est moi'. Such perception of seeing power succession in North Korea as Confucian and patriarchal system not only emphasizes the Asiatic peculiarities, but also shows another facet of Orientalistic tendencies. This demonstrates ideological bias as well as deficiency of analysis that places an overt reliance on cultural explications.

Another approach, the power-centered perspective analyzes the Suryong system and the inheritance issue on the basis of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's will to power. That is to argue that the end result came about due to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's pursuit of autocratic authority. The events that took place after the deaths of Stalin and Mao Zedong fostered fear of collapse of the autocratic regime in the event of Kim's death. And Kim Il Sung, the argument explains, in order to secure his posterity, sought autocratic authority and focused on the transference of power to his son.

Such argument is a step further taken in that it emphasizes the problem of succession in the bloc and its parallel effect on North Korea. However, such explanation ignores the diversity of succession problems among the socialist countries and Kim's power consolidation process as well as the formation of succession system as well. Furthermore, considering the fact that succession procedure was not created by Kim Il Sung's individual

---

<sup>30</sup> Oh, Kongdan, op. cit. p. 9, 102. As for the lack of Kim Jong-il's leadership, she points to charisma as well as his avoidance of the public. She argues that Kim Jong Il's leadership was only possible because of his father's reputation and as such, she sees Kim less as a charismatic leader but as a transactional leader. From such conclusion, she argues that although the North Korean elites do not show respect and loyalty to Kim Jong Il, the support has been possible through Kim Jong Il's offering of carrot and whip. Unfortunately, no evidence are cited (in the work) to support her arguments.

<sup>31</sup> McCormack, *Target North Korea* (New York: Nation Books, 2004), p. 52.

<sup>32</sup> McCormack(2004), *Ibid.* p. 51.

will alone, this also shows complete ignorance of the issues of succession.<sup>33</sup> Like Kongdan Oh or McCormack's arguments, for North Korea that has been defined either as dynasty or as monarchy, the will of the supreme leader is the sole variable for explication. However, even if one were to accept that Kim Il Sung's glory had critical bearing on Kim Jong Il's securing of power, what needs to be equally taken into consideration is Kim Jong Il's own power consolidation process. Many of the criticisms of power inheritance ignore this point. In fact, the crucial weakness of the power-centered perspective lies not so much in the lack of macro-analysis of social development, but the neglect of the dynamics of North Korean society with its singular focus on power. Such view can also be found in Bruce Cumings as well.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, defining North Korea as a familial state or assuming the patriarchal inheritance to be comprehensible within the bounds of Korean Confucian tradition, one overlooks facts such as Kim Jong Il's leadership capabilities and his growth into a leader and also of North Korea's own dilemma regarding this patrilineal inheritance. As Vladimir Tikhonov points out, such argument maybe palatable to the American readership but this altogether misses the reality.<sup>35</sup> The history and the reality surrounding the power inheritance recedes into the background and only its cultural characteristics become emphasized. If one were to recognize the importance of the influence of Confucian culture on North Korea, the importance of the reality faced by North Korea needs to be recognized as well.

### **The cult of the individual and idolization: lessons from history**

To outsiders, what makes North Korea appear quite strange is its cult and the idolization of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. For many who have visited Pyongyang, the city appears as if awash in statues and portraits of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. And with this image of the exotic scenery, one easily overlooks the pragmatic, the symbolic and the functional significance of such objects and deems the entire society to be totalitarian system replete with the cult of the individual. In fact, the cult of the leader in North Korea is described as comparable to that of Stalin or Mao or as even surpassing them. With more than 30, 000 statues and other paraphernalia of Kim Il Sung gracing the nation, this bespeaks the autocratic nature of the Suryong system. As Byung Chul Koh has rightly pointed out, for the outside observers, it is the cult of Kim Il Sung that comprises the most important feature of North Korea.<sup>36</sup>

The cult of Kim Il Sung began with the appearance of Kim Jong Il in the 1960's. With the purge of 'The August Faction Incident' ending in Kim Il Sung's consolidation of power, the cult earned a parallel status with 'Juche' and with Kim Jong Il's arrival, became

---

<sup>33</sup> The ones who had critical influence in the selection of Kim Jong Il as the successor was not Kim Il Sung, but his colleagues from the anti-Japanese guerrilla days. They convinced Kim who was not as sure to appoint Kim Jong Il as the successor. For more on the selection of Kim Jong Il as the successor and its processes, see Chung, Young Chul, 'Kim Jon Il Cheje Seongripui SahoeJungchijeok Kiwon' [The Social and Political Origins of Kim Jong-II's Regime in North Korea], Ph.D dissertation. Seoul National University, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Cumings, Bruce, North Korea: Another Country(New York: New Press, 2004), ch. 4; Amstrong, Charles, 'The Myth of North Korea,' Cumings (ed.), Chicago Occasional Papers on Korea, Selected Papers Vol. 6, The Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, 1991.

<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Tikhonov, Hayan kamyon ui cheguk [Empire of White Mask] (Seoul: Hakyoreh sinmunsa, 2003)

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, Helen-Louise, Kim Il-Sung's North Korea (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1999), Nam Seong Wook, trans. [CIA: Report on North Korea] (Seoul: Hansong, 2000) p. 49 re-cited.

an official discourse. The cult was carried out in several ways, beginning with the usage of symbolic languages (ex. Kim's titles) in the cult. Examples of this can be found in the long honorifics and titles that are bestowed upon Kim Il Sung's name when addressing him<sup>37</sup>

The second was in the usage of spatial symbols (such as in the installation of statues and the designation of his old battlefields and his birthplace as historical sites). The archetypical examples are the massive statue of Kim Il Sung which proudly occupies the center of the city of Pyongyang and the historical sites and the monuments related to him that are placed throughout the nation. Such representations foster an illusion of Kim Il Sung being everywhere and also functions to create his paternal love and to feel his presence as intimately as possible.<sup>38</sup> And these monuments that are placed, in turn become expressions of love and loyalty towards Kim Il Sung. It is placed as if to always feel father's love and his presence.<sup>39</sup>

The cult of Kim Il Sung is criticized as a quasi-religious state and a method of brainwashing for the people of North Korea.<sup>40</sup> Andrew Holloway argues that the cult of Kim Il Sung has two purposes, one being the inculcation of absolute loyalty to the leadership and unifying people through common belief and the other being loyalty as well as learning to follow the example of the leadership.<sup>41</sup>

What is quite clear is that the cult of Kim Il Sung had close ties with the culture of the Confucian tradition.<sup>42</sup> In particular, Bruce Cumings points out that both North and South Korea seem to have tradition of reverence towards the leadership or their scriptures.<sup>43</sup> However, as much as tradition may be of a factor, one must understand that there were

---

<sup>37</sup> According to Choson chonsa [The General History of Choson], in the early modern history of North Korea, "under the wise guidance of the glorious party center, many new words and expressions were created in our language. Most of all, many polite expressions designated for expressing the greatness of our supreme leader were created and entered our everyday language of the people" Choson chonsa (Pyongyang: Kwahakpaekkwasa, 1982), p. 330.

<sup>38</sup> As for an excellent work that examines the North Korean political situation (Kim as supreme leader/ Kim Il Sung and the Suryong system) from the perspective of East Asian culture, the image of the patriarch within the Confucian tradition of family and the following North Korean political state, see Charles Armstrong (1991).

<sup>39</sup> Kim Il Sung's statues, starting with the massive statue of Kim in Pyongyang, are in every regions. The statue is not simply a monument, but Kim's alter living presence. Byung Chul Koh writes in his travelogue that "...literally Kim Il Sung exists everywhere." Hunter, op. cit. p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> One American website list Juche ideology as the world's 10th largest religion. According to this website, North Korea's Juche ideology is a religion that has 1.9 million practitioners. (<http://www.adherents.com> - Nov. 4th, 2004 search).

<sup>41</sup> Holloway, Andrew, 'A Year In Pyonyang' ([http://www.aidanfc.net/a\\_year\\_in\\_pyonyang\\_3.htm](http://www.aidanfc.net/a_year_in_pyonyang_3.htm) - Oct. 25th, 2004 search). The two objectives that he had observed were what the leadership had most struggled with in their attempts to seek solutions to the current problems. In short, they had portrayed the collective as an alterative response towards the emergent individualism and Suryong as the completed human being of an utopian society, and as a form of political expression for this, established the Suryong political system.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce Cumings and Armstrong locate the origin of North Korea's cult of the leadership within the East Asian Confucian tradition. However, by examining such cultural tradition in the context of its significance in North Korea's early modern history, they avoid the pitfalls of the cultural deterministic theories. Selig Harrison also argues that if North Korea's political system were to be categorized in the tradition of Western political science, the corporatist model as argued by Cumings, would be the most appropriate one to apply.

<sup>43</sup> Cumings, Bruce, 'Kim's Korean Communism,' Problem of Communism, March-April, 1974, p. 34.

political developments that occurred during the formation of the socialist state and also as well, concurrent efforts taken to solve immediate problems. The demand for the establishment of Juche in North Korea included resistance towards the dogma of formalized Marxist-Leninism and the revisionist trends within the system.<sup>44</sup>

During this process, North Korea began to see its leadership as a popular living embodiment of the changes for the good of the majority and demanded that it (leadership) became one. Meaning, rather than a cult, they defined Kim Il Sung's leadership as a leadership personified. The coinciding of the increasing visibility of the cult with the rising demand for the establishment of Juche ideology was for this very reason. And the symbolization, coming to possess affinity with Confucian tradition, achieved success without much opposition.

In particular, the totalization of the personified leadership of Kim Il Sung, with the historical charisma and his popularity shown in the post-liberation period, and the demands for strong leadership as means to end factional struggles, almost naturally became an object of worship. Certainly, during this process, the extremities of the cult showed the negative end results of its dysfunctions. According to McCormack, the cult of the leader was even contrary to the 'Juche' ideology as well, since it had negative effects on the creative role of the masses.<sup>45</sup> Koon Woo Nam, in his long-time study of the political situation of North Korea in the 1970's, expresses his assessment as follows:

With the intensification of the factionalism, there was fierce and bloody competition, with loyalty to the factions overriding loyalty to the party, the concentration of struggles made members of the factions to become distanced from social issues and rendered them blind to the external threats that they had been facing from the beginning and to the end of the Korean War. If such serious factionalism pervaded society and if North Korea were to experience further sufferings as a result of continued with political instability and social chaos, all this would undermine North Korea's economic growth as a socialist state... Therefore, the emergence of a strong leader to govern North Korea was of necessity for national survival, for North Korea as a communist state.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, the cult of Kim Il Sung has risen from the need for strong leadership, the demand for the establishment of Juche ideology and its affinity with cultural tradition. And the cult that had thus begun became progressively extreme with the establishment of 'Suryong political system' in 1967 and came to be appointed as the supremest value by Kim Jong Il. However, sidestepping the assessment of its positivity or negativity, the startling outpouring of grief shown North Korea following the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994

---

<sup>44</sup> North Korea traces the origin of the Juche ideology in the resistance and the struggle against toadyism and opposition towards formalism. Kim, Jong Il, 'Juche sasang e taehayo' Kim Jong Il sonjip 6[Selected Writings of Kim Jong Il] (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1996)

<sup>45</sup> McCormack, Gavan, 'North Korea: Kimilsungism - Path to Socialism,' Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Vol. 13, No. 4. 1981, p. 54.

<sup>46</sup> Nam, Koon Woo, The North Korean Communist Leadership (1945-1965) (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1974), pp. 141-142.

demonstrates the veracity of the cult.<sup>47</sup>

The North Korean situation mentioned above is an important theoretical proof in classifying North Korea as a totalitarian state. Today, it is not easy to find a society where one leadership and unitary ideology dominates the whole entire society like North Korea. For this reason, North Korea does fit into the totalitarianism that Shapiro has described. Furthermore, as O'Hanlon has pointed out, it is partially true that as a 'Hermit Kingdom' North Korea resembles Soviet Union under Stalin and China under Mao Zedong.<sup>48</sup>

Also, the argument of an autocracy and a patriarchal state merged with Confucian tradition provide partial explication. However, problem with this explanation lies in the fact that the conceptualization of North Korea as a totalitarian, Confucian, autocratic society fails to show the fundamental characteristics of North Korea society. There is a wider gulf that exists between the problem of categorization of North Korea and seeing North Korea realistically with the use of historical and structural analysis.

The attempt to seek better understanding of North Korea's Suryong system as a political system must be sought from the collective developmental strategies that they pursued. I will argue this as a 'developmental strategic approach'.<sup>49</sup> In specific, the Suryong political system was chosen as the political system to materialize the utopian ideal in response to North Korea's political development and the structural problem. As Lowenthal pointed out, after the revolutions, the socialist nations faced serious dilemmas over the construction of their political ideal, the utopian society and the immediate task of economic reconstruction.<sup>50</sup> And in order to resolve this dilemma, they sought various methods.

In so doing, they experienced political, ideological and economic changes. Some, as in the case of Soviet Union and Eastern Europe went through transitional periods and the others like China, underwent evolutionary shift from left to right. The problem of the US academia is that their analysis of North Korean totalitarianism rarely comes from systematic treatment of the contemporary problems that North Korea faced and also in liberal applying predetermined totalitarian ideology to North Korea.

---

<sup>47</sup> Hunter, op. cit. 257. According to Hunter, although there is no need to do so, the North Korean defectors still maintain their practice of the cult of the Kim. p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> O'Hanlon, Michael E. & Mocizuki, Mike M., *Crisis on the Korean Peninsula* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), Ch. 1.

<sup>49</sup> For an excellent analysis, see Yi, Tae Sop, 'Pukhan ui chiptanjuui chok palcho chonryak kwa suryongchegyue ui hwakrip' [The Collectivist Developmental Strategy and the Establishment of the 'Suryong System' in North Korea, 1956-1967], Ph.D dissertation, Seoul National University, 2001. Also, as a reaction against the discussion of totalitarianism, the works edited by Chalmers Johnson analyzes the socialist political situations from the development theory point of view. Johnson, Chalmers (ed.), *Change in communist system* (Stanford, California: Stanford Univ, Press, 1970).

<sup>50</sup> Lowenthal, Richard, 'Development vs. Utopia in Communist Policy,' Johnson, Chalmers (ed.), *Ibid.*

### 3. A New Analysis of the Suryong System as a Political System in North Korea

#### 1) Challenge towards the power-centered perspective: The Approaches of the Developmental Strategy

To challenge the power-centered perspective on Suryong system, I'm going to borrow the approaches of developmental strategy. That is North Korea's Suryong system was developed through its struggle against the historical, political, economical problems in-and-out of North Korea.

The discussions of North Korea's Suryong system as a political system have been carried out by McCormack (neo-totalitarianism),<sup>51</sup> Bruce Cumings (socialist corporatism),<sup>52</sup> Wada Haruki (guerrilla state, regular army state)<sup>53</sup> and Suzuki Masayuki (Suryong socialism).<sup>54</sup> Among these (works), if McCormack sees North Korea as having deviated from the totalitarian model, Bruce Cumings traces the social structure of North Korea as concentric and as a familial state centered on a patriarchal relationship with the peoples of the nation. In contrast to this, Wada Haruki sees North Korea as a guerilla state where Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese guerrilla experience have been reformulated as the governing principles of social organization. Recently, he has argued that the guerrilla state represented by Kim Il Sung has been changed to the regular army state of Kim Jong Il. Suzuki Masayuki sees North Korea's Suryong system as a symbiotic existence of socialism and Confucian tradition.

What is common in all these theories is that they all cite the particularistic of North Korea to be one of organizational unity and the unique social relationship between the Suryong and the mass. In comparison to this, Charles Armstrong, instead of seeing the nature of North Korean society through one definition, examines it over various periods. According to him, North Korea is the most successful model of the indigenization of Stalinism and is unique in its own. Also, the system has been formed as a result of historical process.<sup>55</sup>

As such, the reason for the diverse spectrum of views on North Korea's political system has to do with the particularity of North Korea, which cannot be easily understood under current existing political theories. And the specifics of the organizational principles and the managerial theories of North Korean society still have not been clearly identified.<sup>56</sup> As mentioned above, these specific explanatory models of North Korea's Suryong-political

---

<sup>51</sup> McCormack(1993), op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Cumings, Bruce, 'Corporatism in North Korea,' *Journal of Korean Studies* 4(1982/1983).

<sup>53</sup> Wada, Haruki, (Lee Chong Suk trans.), *Kim Il Sung kwa manju hangil chonjaeng* [Kim Il Sung and Anti-Japanese Wars in Manchuria] (Seoul: ChangjakkwaPipyong, 1992); Haruki, Wada, 'The Structure and Political Culture of the Kim Jong Il Regime: Its Novelty and Difficulties,' Park, Jae Kyu (ed.), *North Korea in Transition and policy Choice: Domestic Structure and External Relations* (Seoul: Kyungnam Univ. Press, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Suzuki, Masayuki. (Yoo Yong Gu trans.), *Kim Jong Il kwa Suryongje Sahoejuui* [Kim Jong Il and Suryongje Society] (Seoul: Joonang Ilbosa, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> Armstrong, Charles, K., 'The Nature, Origins, and Development of the North Korean State,' Kim, Samuel S. (ed.), *The North Korean System in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> In explaining his corporatist argument, the history of Korea and the formation of North Korean state is unique cannot be easily identified by the political theories of the West. Cumings(1982/1983); Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); Cumings(2004), op. cit.



system have been produced after the 1980's. If the arguments on the Suryong-political system, particularly the satellite state theory or the puppet regime theory can be summarized, it is as follows.

**Table 2: Methodologies and theories of Suryong-political systems**

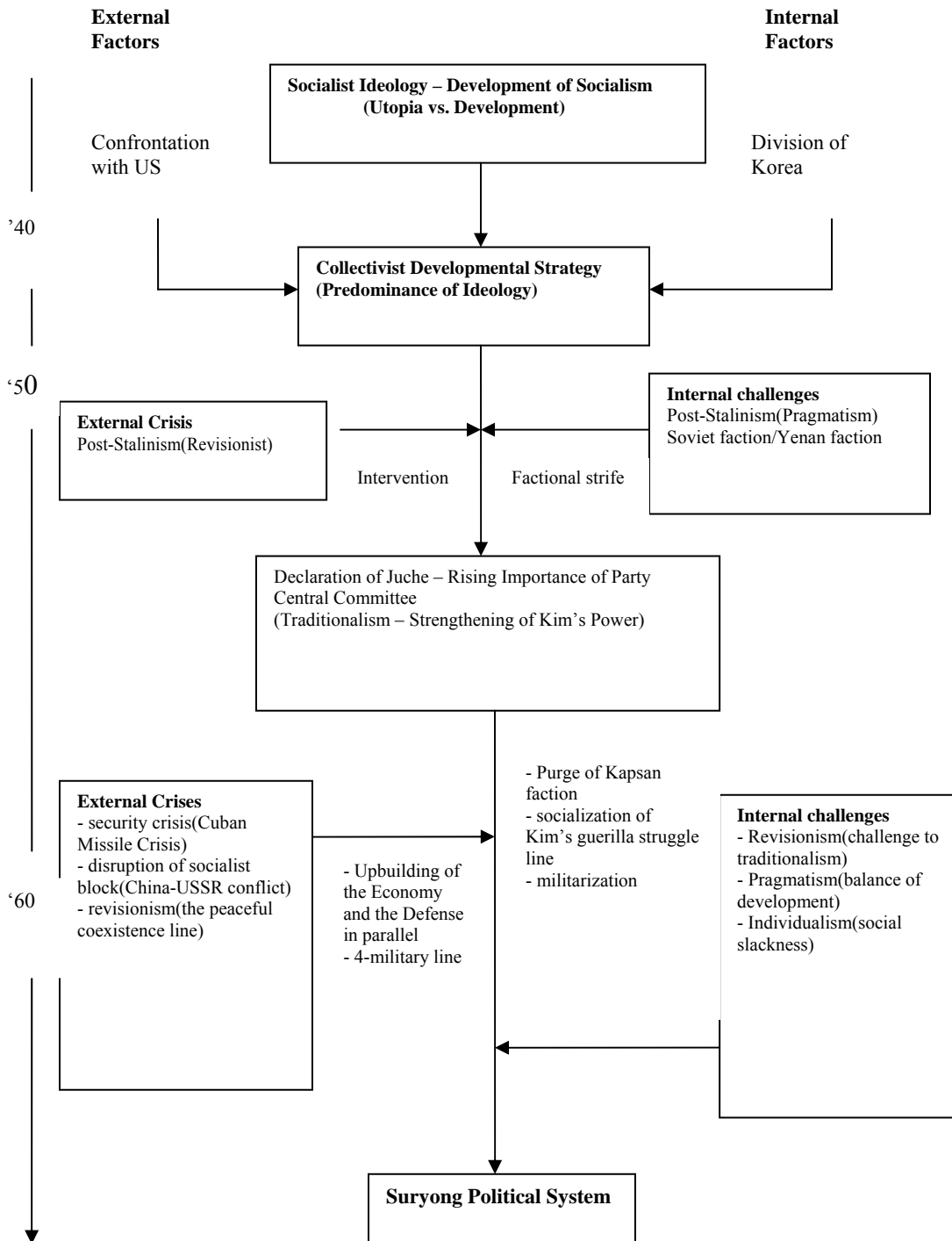
	<b>Satellite state theory Puppet regime theory</b>	<b>Power struggle theory Bloody purge theory</b>	<b>Totalitarianism Confucianism</b>	<b>Guerilla state Regular army state</b>	<b>Corporatism Suryong system state</b>
<b>Background</b>	Height of the Cold war	Cold War/ Détente('70)	New Cold War/ Post-Cold War	Cold War → Post- Cold War	Cold War → Post-Cold war
<b>Contents</b>	Denial of autonomy	Kim Il Sung's Will to power Fractional struggles	Analysis of power structure Confucian corollary	North's historical experience centered	State-Society relationships Historic-cultural centered
<b>Methodological approach</b>	Ideology centered	Ideology centered Power centered	Ideology centered Power centered	Power centered Historic-cultural centered Social structure	Power centered Historic-cultural theory Social structure
<b>Purpose</b>	Anti-Soviet Union, Anti-North Korea	Anti-communism Anti-North Korea	Anti-communism Anti-North Korea	Objective view of North Korea	Objective view of North Korea
<b>Evaluation</b>	Control-dependent relationships Socialist dependency	Dismissal of history and reality Kim, Il Sung centered	Stagnant view of history Kim Il Sung centered	Kim, Il Sung centered theory Limitation of historical dynamics	State-Society relationships Limitation of historical dynamics
<b>Major figures or Researchers</b>	Dept. of State, CIA, Dept. of Defense	Scalapino Korean-American scholars	McCormack Kongdan Oh Victor Cha	Wada Haruki	Bruce Cumings Suzuki Masayuki

As seen above, during the early periods of Cold War, North Korea was understood as a satellite state of Soviet Union or a puppet regime and as such did not seem to merit an independent analysis. The power struggle theories of the 1950's and 60's, and studies centered on the purges were not too different. However, corporatism and guerilla state (regular army) theories have distanced themselves from the Cold War conflict and with emphasis on the history of North Korea and concordant application of the power structure, which they later distance themselves from, they see the Suryong system based on much more broad analysis of state-society relationship.

However, their limitations are clear. These (theories) have yet to distance themselves from obsessive concentration on absolute power structure. In particular, focusing too much on Suryong political system as a system of absolute power, they ignore the historical reality and the decision making process taken by the North Korean leadership. Furthermore, these theories mentioned above cannot explain the continuous transformation and development of North Korea, the catalyst for its changes and also of the various internal conflicts and dynamics that consequently took place.

In taking a step towards overcoming such limitations, this article will analyze the Suryong political system of North Korea as a result of dynamics of change and the choices made. This will make possible the explication of the changes within the system as a tension between the socialist developmental ideals and its reality and also one between the ensuing conflict and the result of decisions made. One can call this a 'developmental strategic approach'. And such methodologies will make possible for the acceptance of the preexisting works and yet at the same time, will expand further to create a new model which will overcome the preexisting limitations.

**Diagram 1: The factors and the evolution of the formation of the Suryong political system of North Korea.**



As clear from the above diagram, socialist states start out with the mission of developing and realizing the socialist ideals. During this process, political power is not an

aggrandizement of personal power, but a ‘goal-oriented power’ that stimulates social changes and creates a social system and order from the above.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike Marx’s prediction, power in the context of successful socialist revolutions in underdeveloped nations assumes much more active role as an agent for restructuring and developing social order. As such, it becomes the most vital instrument in the actualization of the socialist ideals. This illustrates how the dispute over the developmental lines during the processes of socialist development inevitably escalates into power struggle. Therefore, power struggle within socialist states should not be interpreted as it is. North Korea is not an exception to the above phenomenon and in fact, the conflict and the struggles engaged by the developmental lines was what made it possible for the creation of the Suryong political system as we know today.

## **2) ‘The Clash of the ‘Developmental’ Strategies and the Formation of the Suryong System.**

### **Utopia and Development**

First of all we can understand the formation of the Suryong system in the context of getting over a common dilemma of utopia versus development in socialist states. In addition to this, the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the North Korea’s first generation of revolutionaries, the division of Korea and their contraposition to US and concurrent political and security crisis, the geopolitical condition of being surrounded by four power states and most of all, the strong ideological commitment in the construction of utopian society by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of the revolution, all made North Korea choose a path that was different from other socialist states.<sup>58</sup> That’s why the developmental line of North Korea, from the beginning walked a different path from that of the Soviet Union, China and Eastern European countries and the Suryong system was established as the needed system to maintain and develop the country.

Unlike the prediction of Marx, most of the socialist revolutions were successful in the underdeveloped states. As a result, in order to achieve ideological objectives, social transformation and economic development, these nation states came to attribute much more significance to the usage of power. The socialist nations faced dilemmas while confronting the structural contradictions inherent between the policy objectives of ideology and development and subsequently, the developmental objectives took on a much more urgent

---

<sup>57</sup> As such, this article will analyze the Suryong system from the developmental point of view and yet at the same time, articulate power as political leadership. Meaning, North Korea’s Suryong system is less of pursuit of ‘absolute power’ and more of political structure that functions as nucleus of North Korea’s developmental strategy. As for criticism towards the power-centered approach, see Robert Tucker’s *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia & London, Univ. of Missouri Press, 1981)

<sup>58</sup> The utopia that was sought by Kim Il Sung and his first generation of revolutionary colleagues contained the uniqueness of construction of communist society and the ideal of Korean society. If the universality was to follow the communist ideology, the particularity was to follow the present reality. In particular, for them, the utopia was to be a collective society that was made up of union of communist individuals and the image. Kim Il Sung repeatedly emphasized (in regards to this) was ‘an abundant social community where (one lived) in a house graced with tiled roof (as opposed to thatched roof) and eating white rice and meat’. Therefore, the utopia that they sought was socialism that was based on and developed from the ideology of communalism.

role. Lowenthal expressed this as dilemma of utopia versus development.

In general, the experiences within socialist states saw the primacy in the pursuit of ideological objectives during the early phases of the revolution. But gradually pragmatic goals were introduced and in the end, the pragmatic goals ended up taking precedent. This shows transformation of these states from 'revolutionary state' to 'post-revolutionary state' and implies changes within nature of the regime whereby the weakening of the ideology leads to the primacy of the pragmatic economic development. Also, this has parallel relations to change of personnel from revolutionary elites to bureaucratic elites, highlighting the switch from being a 'red' to an 'expert'.

Then what was North Korea's developmental line? Simply put, the developmental line of North Korea, from the beginning walked a different path from that of the Soviet Union, China and Eastern European countries. As Kim Il Sung expressed, as a part of their destined goal, North Korea had to pursue twin objectives of construction of socialist state and national reunification.<sup>59</sup> And the perception of victim mentality and entrapment further fueled the commitment to ideology.

The policy line of North Korea was economic development that had on its top, the communistic reformation of human beings (the utopian objective). This was expressed as thematic of dual occupation of spiritual and material fortresses and is noted for the superiority of the ideological factors over the material factors within the synthesis. However, despite the superiority of given ideology, a line that neither maximized (the superiority of the ideology) nor leading to the dismissal of the pragmatist objectives existed as well. It was a compromised one. If that was the case, then how was North Korea to respond to this? The answer lay in the further solidification of the party, which was the foundational basis of socialist revolution and state construction and further intensification of the mass line that had survived through the national liberation struggles. Here, they found means to forge stronger bond between the party and the mass.

The unification and the solidification of the party and the mass were carried out in two ways. One was ideological education that sought to reform people into communist human beings and the other was an aggressive promotion of the mass-line. And in order to successfully carry this out, leadership 'from the top' had to be stressed. First, the thought revolution implied a thorough study and inculcation of 'Juche' ideology. The inculcation of the 'Juche' ideology was a process to render one into a 'political man'. Second, the aggressive pursuit of the mass-line, as evinced in the Chollima Movement of the 1950's and the Chongsan-ri Spirit and Chongsan-ri Method of the 1960's, was to be a union of the party cadres and the masses. In other words, this was to be union of the leader and the masses. As Bruce Cumings has shown, North Korea's mass line was not what Mao had sought in his speech of 'from the mass, to the mass' but that of 'to the mass, from the mass and to the

---

<sup>59</sup> In the mid-1950's, Kim Il Sung saw the construction of socialism and 'national unification' as the two major projects of 'Korean Revolution' and among them, attributed primacy to 'national unification' above that of social development. Kim Il Sung, 'Dangwon dul sok eseo kyegup kyoyang saop ul teouk kanghwa halttae taehayo' [The need for further intensification of class education of the party cadres], Kim Il Sung chojakjip 9 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongchulpansa, 1980).

mass'.<sup>60</sup>

The developmental strategy of North Korea that placed supremacy of the ideological objects faced crisis in 1950's. This was the death of Stalin and ensuing wave of post-Stalinism. As a result, North Korea, which became alarmed, underwent a major power struggle stirred by members within the party. The 'August Factional Incident' of 1956 was a challenge towards Kim's developmental strategy that placed emphasis on ideological objectives and along with the increasing wave of post-Stalinism, incited power struggles. The Soviet and the Yenan faction argued that the control of the military, the legislative, the juridical and the mass organizations should not be under the leadership of the party leader and attempted to separate power.<sup>61</sup> Such attempt to separate power was related to the issue of increase in productivity that was being discussed at the time and posed a direct contrast to Kim Il Sung's focus on development of heavy industrial-centered and simultaneous development of light industries and agriculture. They placed more emphasis on the economic demands, in particular, the profit of the individual in comparison to Kim's argument of socialist restructuring based on the mass ideological education. This was an effort to bring the changes that occurred in Soviet Union in the aftermath of Stalin's death; the shift away from heavy industrialization – the increased production of the necessary good – and partial liberalization and increased deregulation based developmental lines, into North Korea.

To Kim Il Sung, their demand was a challenge towards Juche and was resurrection of the toadyism of the past Korean communist movements which depended on Soviet Union and China. Furthermore, at a time when North Korea was just beginning to launch socialist development amidst the ruination of the Korean War and despite the threat felt from the post-Stalinist wave, the questions became perceived as between the 'establishment of Juche' or the 'socialistic dependency'. Consequently, their argument was seen as revisionism to Kim and challenge towards the supremacy of the ideological objectives.<sup>62</sup> This decided differences in developmental lines ended in power struggles. What later came to be depicted in the annals of North Korea as 'the second arduous march', the 'August Faction Incident' was a power struggle born out of clash between two developmental strategies.<sup>63</sup>

In the history of North Korea, the 'August Faction Incident' was the greatest challenge toward Kim Il Sung and also the greatest political upheaval ever to take place. At the time, the sense of crisis felt by Kim Il Sung's faction was so acute that in Nodong sinmun (Workers' Daily), they announced public support of Soviet Union's criticisms of Stalin. For North Korea that had never officially criticized Stalin, this was unprecedented.<sup>64</sup> This in turn, showed how the power struggle of the 1950's in fact was domestic factional responses to the

---

<sup>60</sup> Cumings(1974), op. cit. pp. 28-29.

<sup>61</sup> For this see Yi Tae Sop, p. 114

<sup>62</sup> In 1955's Kim Il Sung's public emphasis on 'Juche' can be seen as a warning towards such trends that began to appear after Stalin's death.

<sup>63</sup> Kim Jong Il called the 'August Faction Incident' of 1956 as the 'second arduous march'. This was made in reference to the '100 days of arduous march' that first took place during the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle from Nov. 1938 to Jan. of 1939. Ho, Dam, Kim Jong Il Wiinsang [Biography of Kim Jong Il] (Tokyo: Jae ilbon Chosonin chong ryonhaphoe chungang sangim wiwonhoe, 1996), p. 28

<sup>64</sup> Nodong sinmun, Aug. 1st, 1956

external stimuli posed. As a result of the ‘August Faction Incident’, North Korea further intensified the ‘unification and solidification of the party and the mass’. The victory of the Kim Il Sung’s faction spelled an increased and more thorough adherence to the existing developmental strategies. Further retrenchment of the party leadership into all organizations within the society and increased commitment to communist ideological revolution were promoted as well. In 1958, Kim Il Sung insisted that the central project of the time was in ‘overcoming the remnants of the old capitalistic thinking and in rearming of the entire workers with communist ideology.’<sup>65</sup>

Now surpassing socialism, it was communist ideology that was beginning to be emphasized. And furthermore, the central committee of the party indeed became the brain of the party. The consolidation of the party central committee with Kim Il Sung at its core meant the consolidation of Kim Il Sung’s power. And thus began the traditionalizing of the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggles as revolution and the official appearance of the North Korean ‘traditionalism’.<sup>66</sup>

### **Traditionalism and Revisionism**

The crisis of the 1950’s was the invasion of revisionism that had been emblemized as post-Stalinism. This line argued for placing the ideological objectives in the foreground, separating the party, the politics and the military and also, emphasized the supremacy of pragmatic objectives. Much of the success of Kim Il Sung’s faction during the ‘August Faction Incident’ of the 1950’s lay in the total support Kim received from the core members of the party and the masses. The support for Kim Il Sung’s ideological objectives came from not only his popular charisma, but also his daily contact with the masses and party cadres through the implementation of the mass line. Kim Il Sung, while carrying on his argument with the Soviet and the Yen-an factions, for most contentious issues in the debate, he utilized the strategy of directly appealing to the masses, in particular to the core party cadres and the most zealous of the workers.<sup>67</sup> The mass line taken by Kim Il Sung was the most crucial impetus in pushing forward his developmental strategy of ‘the unification and the solidarity of the party and the mass’ onto the basis of mass support. As a result, the mass supported

---

<sup>65</sup> Kim Il Sung ‘Kongsanjuui kyoyange taehayo’[On the education of Communist Ideology(Nov. 20th, 1958)], Kim Il Sung chojakjip 12 (Pyongyang: Choson nodongdang chulpansa, 1981), p. 592. Furthermore, in a speech, he points out that “although we are trying to live by the spirit of collectivism, individualism is trying to undermine our collective achievement.”

<sup>66</sup> The ‘traditionalism’ used here is not of the conventional usage of the word ‘tradition’, but rendering of Kim Il Sung’s revolutionary struggles into tradition, in specific, ‘revolutionary traditionalism’. ‘Revolutionary Traditionalism’ became official from the later 1950’s and through the Suryong system, became absolutized and institutionalized as it is known today.

<sup>67</sup> If the ‘August Faction Incident’ took the characteristics of power struggle that sought to resolve the internal party conflict, there were continued oppositions from various administrators and technocrats who were in line with the pragmatic objectives of the Soviet and the Yen-an faction. Faced with this, Kim Il Sung, rather than continuing to appeal to the bureaucrats and the technocrats, directly appealed to the fervent support of the masses and used this as means to solidify his developmental lines. The most famous example of this is his field leadership wielded at Kangsun Steel Company that later became the antecedent for the ‘Chollima Movement’. When his conflict with the party and the bureaucrats surrounding the steel production did not abate easily, he took his case directly to the workers of the Kangsun Steel Company. As a result, from here, on machines that was capable of producing 60, 000 tons of steel, (the company) produced 120, 000 tons. After this, such examples became models for nationwide mass movements.

Kim Il Sung and the Soviet and the Yenan factions lost out.

After the ‘August Faction Incident’, Kim Il Sung began to further reinforce his ‘Juche’ line. To Kim Il Sung, ‘Juche’ was similar to the developmental strategy that emphasized the primacy of ideological objectives in the construction of a utopian society. Overcoming the crisis of the 1950’s, revolutionary traditionalism began to be asserted in order to establish ‘Juche’ and the ideological revolutionary efforts, such as studies of communism, came to merit serious attention. Revolutionary traditionalism was none other than traditionalizing Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese guerrilla experiences and rearticulating it as the main principle for the ideology and the actions of the party and the mass. By the end of the 1950’s, the traditionalizing of Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese guerrilla activities coalesced with the establishment of ‘Juche’ and became the most important ideological and mass movement efforts. And with this, the power and the prestige of Kim Il Sung catapulted even higher.

During the 1960’s, the crises came from different places. There were three main crises that North Korea faced during this period; the security threat, the debate on speed and balance and the expansion of individualism. First was the security threat. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 propelled an acute sense of security threat within North Korea. Also, with Khrushchev’s revisionist line, the conflict between Soviet Union and China was beginning to escalate. There was a split occurring within the socialist bloc.

Faced with such security threat and the schism of the socialist bloc, the response of North Korea was none other than the refortification of the ‘Juche’ ideology. De-emphasizing the current economic development and opting instead for the line of ‘simultaneously carrying on the building up of the economy and defense’, the strengthening of the national defense was initiated.<sup>68</sup> Publicly announced in 1962 and officially adopted in 1966, this ‘line of simultaneously carrying on the building up of the economy and defense’ was a response formed out of the supremacy of ideology- oriented strategy as championed by Kim. Hampered with limited resources and adhering to the stratagems of self-sufficiency, this line that simultaneously pursued the strengthening of national defense and the rapid economic growth became in reality, the fortification of the worker’s ideological thought processes and the maximization of the mass mobilization.

With the looming external threat, in order to mobilize the internal resources as greatly as possible, the collectivistic solidarity within (the society) had to be further bolstered and to do so the political leadership of the party had to be maximally flexed. Kim Il Sung’s response to the external threats was to discipline the revolutionary ideology and become emphatic on the developmental strategy of strengthening the party.

---

<sup>68</sup> North Korea’s line of ‘simultaneous carrying on the build up of the economy and defense’ was a developmental line that was formed in response to the external security threat. With the adoption of this line, the economic development in North Korea began to face difficulties in the distortion of the resource distribution, disequilibrium of the economic structure and the burden of the cost of national defense. Also with the pursuit of ‘the four great military lines’, all people were placed under the hardship of having to hold scythe and hammer on one hand and a gun on the other hand. And North Korea began to pursue ‘war-time’ system of development.



However, second crisis erupted from here as a result. As encapsulated in the expression, ‘debate on speed and balance’, conflicts surrounding the pursuit of two different developmental strategies emerged. To Kim Il Sung faction’s insistence on economic policy based on the superiority of continued speed, some groups within the party began to advocate for more balanced development of economy. Their argument of balanced development policy reflected reforms or plural economic policies of the 1960’s Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Specifically, they demanded for the increase of material incentives to the workers, the introduction of commodities-currency exchange value and opposed the strengthening of national defense as well as calling for relative accordance be given to the light industry. And in this, they were critical of Kim Il Sung’s emphasis on speed based economic policies.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, their line was an opposition to the line of ‘simultaneously carrying on building up economy and defense’. If the line of ‘simultaneously carrying on building up economy and defense’ was a line that reflected Kim Il Sung’s developmental strategy of the supremacy of ideology, their line was a developmental strategy that placed emphasis on pragmatism. In other words, if the real objective for the Kim Il Sung’s line was in fact the strengthening of national defense and the pursuit of heavy industry dominated and an unequal developmental strategy for this very purpose, their line was to refute this and to promote balanced developmental strategy that placed the civilian economy first.

The third crisis came from the social laxity that came with the expansion of individualism. Among workers, farmers and other masses, those whom were responsible for leading the economic development through Chollima Movement of the 1950’s, there began to appear symptoms of individualism and pragmatic sentiments. The fervor of the early revolutionary phase was fading away and selfishness, negativism and conservatism began to seep in.

The rising individualism was the protracted result of the ‘fatigue symptoms’ that followed after a steady growth of the economy in the 1950’s and the attention shown to individual profit came on the foothill of achieving the growth. These developments were related to the fact that although the mass mobilization of the 1950’s and the ensuing economic growth had brought much material gains, the security crisis of the 1960’s and the ensuing national defense strengthening efforts, in fact weakened the material incentives. In reality, the wage increase of workers in 1960’s was minimal at best and investments in light industries were decreasing due to the rising distortion in the distribution of material resources that was caused by the strengthening of the national defense.<sup>70</sup> This contributed to the

---

<sup>69</sup> One example of this policy was the introduction of ‘bogus money’. ‘Bogus money’ was intended to calculate the wages of the workers in currency and then pay the workers with ‘bogus money’ first and depending on the quantity of the ‘bogus money’, paying the real wages accordingly. They first attempted to introduce this at the Keomduk mine, North Korea’s largest nonferrous production site, but faced with resistance from the workers, failed.

<sup>70</sup> The wage increase of the workers rose in 1954-1956 on average 58% and in periods from 1957-1960, almost 134%. However, from 1961-1964, on average 5% and it was frozen until 1969. In fact, one can conclude that during the 1960’s, there was very little, if any wage increases. Choi, Chung Kuk, ‘Urinara inmin kyongje palchon eseo ui sokto wa kyunhyong’ [On rapidity and balance in the people’s economic development of our nation], *Kunroja*, Feb. 1963(vol.3), p. 35; Chung, Hyuk Nam, ‘Inmin saenghwal ui hyangsang ul wihan uri tang ui pitnaneun kuhyon’ [The glorious realization by our party to improve the

weakening of material incentives and on the level of the individuals, fostered negativism and narrow departmentalism. These negativism, conservatism and narrow departmentalism posed decisive hindrance to comprehensive (economic) growth attempted in the 1960's. North Korea called these symptoms "great obstacles to technological innovation" and even argued that eradication of such tendencies will propel technological innovation forward.<sup>71</sup>

In all of the three crises, the most critical problem was the second problem that rose under the guise of the third problem of social symptoms. Some party cadres and politburo members, taking in the waning enthusiasm of the masses towards the revolution, tried to displace the ideological goals and posit pragmatic objectives at the forefront. Furthermore, they challenged the revolutionary tradition or traditionalism that had been intensifying since the latter part of the 1950's. Their attacks assumed the appearance of North Korea's internal recognition of the external security threats and the changes following the split within the socialist bloc. In fact, like the 1950's, this was an internal response to an external shock.

And this took the form of debates surrounding the pursuance of developmental strategies. Much of the conflicts surrounding the developmental strategies were very much debates. And yet, the revisionist tendencies underlying the ideological orientation of their developmental strategies could not be ignored. Their challenges towards Kim Il Sung's revolutionary tradition was a direct challenge towards the establishment of the 'Juche'.<sup>72</sup> If the crisis of the 1950's could be characterized as challenge towards 'Juche', the crisis of the 1960's was very much a challenge towards the traditionalism that sought to consolidate 'Juche'.

The solution (proposed) to address the schism of the socialist bloc and the ensuing security threat, the challenge of the party revisionists towards traditionalism, the increasing individualism among the populace and the concomitant social laxity, was to strengthen the internal solidarity. Even here, two conventional methods were mobilized. One was the intensification of the ideological revolution and the other was the pursuance of the mass line. The ideological revolution meant rearmament with Kim Il Sung revolutionary ideology and the pursuit of mass line denoted increasing the revolutionary fervor of the entire population with the core workers functioning at the center. And in order to do this, the directives from the top became even more intensified. This was an outright refusal to recognize the attempt by the revisionists to separate control apparatuses or of the plurality that sought to inculcate

---

living standards of the people], *Kunroja*, Sept. 1965(vol. 18), p.13.

<sup>71</sup> Hong, Soon Kwon, 'Sahoejuui kunsol ui apjang e seonun chongnyon dul ui yongyero un immu' [the glorious responsibility of the youths who are at the forefront of construction of socialism], *Kunronja*, March, 1963 (vol. 6), p. 9-10; By the 1960's North Korea actively pursued economic development through science and technology. And these attempts produced moderate results. However, from the mid-60's, the increased spending in national defense and its distortion of resource distributions led to severe lack of resources and also hampered domestic growth. One cannot help point out increased expenditure in national defense as the historical cause of North Korea's economic stagnation.

<sup>72</sup> Their challenge towards Kim Il Sung's revolutionary tradition was expressed by their attempt to foster a cult of Pak Kum Chol, who was one of the leaders of the Kapsan faction. At the time, they controlled the propaganda bureau (Kim Toh Man) and tried to promote Pak's revolutionary efforts as to be on par with Kim Il Sung's revolutionary tradition, through plays and films. The one who discovered this and exposed their efforts, leading to their destruction was none other than Kim Jong Il. For Kim Jong Il's activities at this time, see Chung, Yong Chul (2001), op. cit.

creative developments from below.

Unlike the response demonstrated in the 1950's, during the crisis of the 1960's, the party looked into means of forming the entirety of the society into an organic unit. This was the latticing the unified solidarity of the Suryong, the party and the mass into a singular organism. The Suryong system signified the birth of an organic social structure.<sup>73</sup> The Suryong system that was founded in 1967 was very much the birth of an organic entity with Kim Il Sung, as the Suryong at the center with all the components of society organized into concentric unit surrounding him. And the connective that linked all the various components was Kim Il Sung's ideology or Kim Il Sung's revolutionary tradition. As a systemic expression of the traditionalists towards the challenges posed by the revisionists, the Suryong system had become finite.

### **Individualism and Collectivism**

The birth of the Suryong system, as seen above is an end result of collectivist and traditionalist responses towards the challenges of pragmatism, revisionism and individualism. The reason for North Korea's insistence on collectivism and traditionalism in the end was very much for the establishment of their goal, the 'Juche'. In order to achieve this, they needed a complete enclosure from the revisionist ideology. Furthermore, in order to eliminate the remaining traces of individualism and old capitalistic thoughts in people's head, each individual had to become part of a unified whole and had to be armed with a single and collectivistic ideology. As Allen Kassof has argued, since the pursuit of separate profit by individual and the collective is contrary to the demands of the center that seeks the conformity of the profit, individualism poses to undermine the system's long-term goals.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, seen from this light, the Suryong system of North Korea was very much a totalitarian system.

If this was the case, then why did Kim Il Sung and North Korea's elites made the historic decision to found the Suryong system? Primarily, the reason derived from the goal of increasing power and heightening collectivism amongst the party and the mass with Kim at its center during the sharp clashes between the ideological objective and pragmatist goals, and that between the traditionalists and the revisionists. And this can be seen as an end result of the power struggle that emanated from the internal strife within the party. As such, the Suryong system of North Korea can be regarded as a result of Kim Il Sung's increase of power earned from his victory in the struggle. However, more importantly, the increase in power was not the end itself sought by Kim Il Sung, but was pursued as means to organically compose the whole society for the express purpose of establishing the 'Juche'.

What the North Korean party leadership was concerned with the most in the 1960's was the proliferation of individualism. The proliferation of individualism posed a grave

---

<sup>73</sup> The social organicism that has been argued by North Korea differs from the Stephan White's theory of state organicism by its connotation towards an East Asian concept of 'the great family'. Bruce Cumings' argument of socialist corporatism attempts to explain North Korea's organic structure from this point of view as well.

<sup>74</sup> Kassof, Allen, 'The Administered Society: Totalitarianism without Terror,' World Politics, Vol. XVI, No. 4 (July, 1964), pp. 558-575.

threat to North Korea that already felt threatened by the security crisis. The adoption of the line of ‘simultaneous building up of defense and economy’ and the implementation of ‘the four great military lines’ with its increased expenditure in defense posed great problems to building an economy and in this worsening condition, higher mobilization of labor productivity and discipline and commitment in the work place had to be secured to continue the growth.

The reality however, was the expansion of the symptoms of ‘fatigue’ following the rapid growth of the 1950’s and the profusion of individualism following the emergence of revisionism. This became manifested as negligence and laziness in the work place, violation of rules, and obsession with profit. And as such this went very much against productivity-oriented culture of socialism. At that time, the proliferation of individualism had direct impact on the economic growth. The first ‘7 year plan’ that was ambitiously put forward (by the leadership) could not be carried out as planned and in the period of 1965-66, the gross agricultural and industrial output was registered in the minus. The national income in 1966 had also significantly dropped below as well. In 1966, the growth percentage of the agricultural output was -13.6%, the industrial output was -3% and the national income growth was -8.5%.<sup>75</sup> The cause for the decline in economic growth lay in the distortion of the resource distribution due to the increased defense expenditure and the proliferation of individualism. Therefore, Kim Il Sung could not ignore the rise of individualism.

Combating individualism could not be carried out by strengthening of Kim Il Sung’s power alone. In order to respond to such trend, the populace was amalgamated into fully mobilized units and the possession of a routine, organizational, disciplinary and self-sacrificial abilities were demanded from them. This was to transform the social structure of North Korea into a one organic unit. And the precedent for this, they found in Kim Il Sung’s anti-Japanese guerrilla struggles of the past where in this unit comprised of the supreme commander at its center, the soldiers came to acquire synchronized mobilization and order and a quality of absolute self-sacrifice. The fundamental nature of North Korea’s Suryong system came from here. With the increase in Kim Il Sung’s absolute power, the goal (of the Suryong system) was in transfiguring the populace into entering a relationship between that of the Suryong and the soldier.<sup>76</sup> This was the creation of a North Korean style of collectivism. The basic reason for North Korea’s decision to found Suryong system derives from this motivation.

The collectivism sought by North Korea was carried out in two directions. One was to form the party and the mass into a unified organism and the other was to arm them with the single ideology of the Suryong that was intended to act as a connecting tissue for these relationships. In order to create a unified solidarity amongst the party and the mass, the first task was to create a single union of all social organizations with the party at the center. First, the party that had begun as communist party in the early period, was renamed as the Workers’ Party in 1946 (South Korean Workers’ Party and North Korean Workers’ Party

---

<sup>75</sup> For statistics on North Korean economy from 1950’s to 1960’s, see Yi, Tae Sop, op. cit. p. 210-228.

<sup>76</sup> The model of Suryong-soldier relationship derives from Kim Il Sung’s experience in the anti-Japanese guerilla days. Considering this, Wada Haruki’s ‘guerrilla state’ theory is convincing in its description of the characteristic features of the North Korean system.

respectively) and in 1949, was finally amalgamated into Choson Workers' Party. The Party was to be formed of exemplar members of the society and was to represent all strata of the society. Currently, the membership in Choson Workers' party reaches over 15% of the population. When compared to other socialist states, this registers higher ratio of population per party members. If one were to compare this to the 1983 statistics, the Soviet Union registered its membership at 18 million or 6.7% of the population, Czechoslovakia with 1.6 million at 10.4%, Romania with 3.3 million at 14%, Vietnam with 1.7 million at 3.0%, Mongolia with 70, 000 at 4.2% and China with 40 million at 3.8%. Compared with these nations and Romania, North Korea's ratio of population per party membership remains quite high.<sup>77</sup>

**Table 3: The Increasing trend in the membership of Choson Workers' Party**

Time Period	Number of Members	Number of Party Cells
The 3 <sup>rd</sup> Assembly of the Expanded Directorial Committee of the North Korean Division of Choson Communist Party (1945.12)	4,530	
The Founding Congress of North Korean Worker's Party (1946.8)	366,000	12,000
The 2 <sup>nd</sup> National Congress of North Korean Worker's Party (1948.3)	725,762	29,762
The 5 <sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Central Committee Members. (1952.12)	1,000,000	48,933
The 3 <sup>rd</sup> National Congress of Choson Workers' Party (1956.4)	1,164,945	58,258
The 4 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of Choson Workers' Party (1961.9)	1,311,563	65,000
The 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Choson Worker's Party (1965.10)	Approx. 1,600,000	
The 5 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of Choson Workers' Party (1970.11)	Approx. 1,730,000	
<Nodong sinmun> Aug. 29 <sup>th</sup> 1972. article	Approx. 2,000,000	
<Nodong sinmun> Jan. 29 <sup>th</sup> 1978. article	Approx. 2,000,000	200,000
The 6 <sup>th</sup> National Congress of Choson Workers' Party (1980. 10)	Approx. 3,220,000	Approx. 210,000

\*Source: Ministry of National Unification, *2004 Pukhan Kaeyo (2004 North Korea Compendium)* (2003. 12)

\*\*The figure for party membership of 1980 was calculated on the basis of one representative per 1000 party member. Currently, it is difficult to assess the exact number of North Korea's party membership. Some sources state the party membership of 1980 to be around 2 million and from this extrapolate the 1988 membership figure around 2.5 million.

\*\*\*Membership in KWP is possible over 18 yrs of age, and must spend one year as a candidate cadre.

<sup>77</sup> What such high ratio of population per party membership shows is not only the mass nature of the party but also the bureaucratization and the overloading of responsibilities. In fact, with the party intervening upon all organization and sectors, the organizational whole of the party was swelling.

Not only this, but the mass organizations that have party as its center comprises all components of the society. In fact, workers', farmer's, youth and women's organizations all are formed as masses with the party as its root and the branches.

**Table 4: The current status of major mass organizations in North Korea**

Name of Organization	Eligibility	Membership	Organizational modus operandi and activities	Foundation date
The general federation of trade unions of Korea	Laborers, Urban workers (age 31 to 65, woman 60)	Approx. 1,600,000	- work place units - ideological education, skills learning, productivity competition leadership	Nov. 30 <sup>th</sup> , 1945
The union of agricultural workers of Korea	Agricultural cooperative members (31 to 65, woman 60)	Approx. 1,300,000	- agricultural workers - ideological education, agricultural production leadership	Jan. 31 <sup>st</sup> , 1946
The Kim Il Sung socialist youth league	Youth (14 to 30)	Approx. 6,000,000	- Schools and work units - party's reserve, ideological education, labor mobilization	Jan. 17 <sup>th</sup> , 1946
The Korean democratic women's union	Women (31 to 60)	Approx. 200,000	- Women with no organizational association - Ideological education, labor mobilization	Nov. 18 <sup>th</sup> , 1945
The Korean children's union	Children (7 to 13)	Approx. 2,000,000	- School units - communal living	June, 1946

\*Source: Kim Dong Kyu, *Pukhanhak chongnon [Collection of North Korean Studies]*, (Seoul: Kyoyukkwahaksa, 1999), p. 142

Such mass organizations, under the political leadership of the party, function as a transmission belt. In short, the unified solidarity of the party and the mass has become structuralized through the union of the party and mass organizations. On the other hand, what cements the connection between the party and the mass organizations is the Suryong ideology. The party is placed as the vanguard unit to actualize the Suryong ideology and the party and based upon the Suryong ideology, the party carries out its political leadership towards the state and into all mass organizations. In order to do this, what is emphasized is the maximal ideological education. The thought education is carried under the guidance of the party towards all the members of the mass organizations. Therefore, the objective of North Korea's collectivism is the unification of ideology and organizations.

In general, the Suryong system or the organization of an entire society with the Suryong at the center provides a picture of strict hierarchy. However, as Bruce Cumings has pointed out, the Suryong system has a concentric structure with Suryong as its core. Kim Il Sung compared the one heart unity of Suryong-party-mass as akin to a peach. The concentric relationship of the seed, the flesh and the skin was North Korea's Suryong system.<sup>78</sup> The

<sup>78</sup> Kim, Il Sung, 'Minjok Olympic wiwonhoe wiwonjang kyum sajang ilhaeng kwa han damhwa' [A conversation with the National Olympic committee head and its members], Kim Il Sung chojakjip 43

North Koreans describe their society as a ‘big family’.<sup>79</sup> In other words, what connect the relationship between Suryong-party-mass are not coercive measures and disciplines but fraternity and loyalty that act like parental love to bond the members of the family together.<sup>80</sup> The fraternity and loyalty that acts as substitute for parental love and blood ties in the family originated from the days of the anti-Japanese guerrilla activities. Such definition of relationship demands putting the creativity of the collective before the individual and the greater good of the collective over the individuals as well.

Then how was the Suryong system possible? As seen above, the evaluation of the Suryong system of North Korea has been analyzed from the ideological and power-centered approaches. However, as a ‘purposeful leadership’, the secret for the birth of the Suryong system was in the union with two other leaderships. The personality leadership possessed by Kim Il Sung himself and the positional leadership that came about as a result of increase of his power.<sup>81</sup> The charisma of Kim Il Sung had by far the most popularity in North Korea. The formation of Kim Il Sung’s charisma has been emphasized through his anti-Japanese credentials and his abilities and the results shown in the socialist reforms of the early period (land reform and other various reform measures) in North Korea. Furthermore, his ordinary contact with the mass made possible a more easy infusion of his personality leadership into the mass. Such amassing of the personality leadership was decisively further intensified through the study of Kim Il Sung’s revolutionary tradition and its institutionalization from the latter part of the 1950’s.

This was the process of creating a more systematized leadership. The Suryong system was based on Kim Il Sung’s personality leadership and creating an union with his power and as a result, the Suryong system was a personalized leadership which attributed absolute place and role to Kim Il Sung.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, during this process, North Korea’s cultural tradition or the Confucian patriarchy played a major role, and the pressure from the power above was a decisive factor. However, the most important factors were Kim Il Sung and the reality that surrounded him and his concordant responses.

---

(Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1996), p.139.

<sup>79</sup> North Korea declared in 1976 that ‘our society had transformed into one big family’. Editorial, ‘Yongsaeng pulmyol ui juchesansang yi kuhyun han kachang uwolhan uri nara sahoejuui chedo rul teouk kongko palchon sikkimyo cholongsong kachi jikija’ [Let us further develop and steely defend the superior socialist system of ours that have been saved by the immortal ideology of Juche] *Kunroja*, 1976, vol. 9. p.7. The interesting fact is that the declaration of North Korean society as a ‘big family’ was declared about 10 years after the official establishment of the Suryong system in 1967. The above can be interpreted as the manifestation of the previous efforts Suryong system that had begun to take root.

<sup>80</sup> Fraternity and loyalty can be a ‘lesson of blood’ learned during Kim Il Sung’s activity as anti-Japanese guerrillas. What allowed small guerrilla members to survive was fraternity and loyalty to each other.

<sup>81</sup> Here I interpret personality leadership to be personalized leadership and positional leadership as the ensuing power and structural mechanism. According to this, the personality leadership was created on the basis of Kim Il Sung’s own charisma and power, and the positional leadership has been formed on the basis of Kim Il Sung’s position within the system. As for the formation of Kim Il Sung’s leadership, see, Chung, Yong Chul, ‘Kim Il Sung kwa Kim Jong Il leadership pikyo’ [Comparative analysis of the leaderships of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il], *Kyeongje wa Sahoe*, Fall 2002 (vol.55).

<sup>82</sup> One good way of understanding the Suryong system of North Korea is to compare it to the activities and the managerial policies of large conglomerates. Their visits to work sites and the governing orders, unitary corporate ethics and its following management policies show similarities to the Suryong system of North Korea.

### **3) Unintended consequences: The dilemma of the ‘conversion’ to the purpose and the means**

The birth of the Suryong system signaled the transformation of the North Korea into a uniquely different system. The effort to create a collectivist society or social organicism demanded a tightly woven order from all elements of ideology, politics, economy, society and culture. As a result, North Korea in the 1970’s undertook efforts to reorganize the lax social organizations and the theoretical systematization of Juche ideology and saw the creation of collectivist aesthetics and culture and uniformed leadership within politics.

First, the Juche ideology was promoted as the official state ideology. During the 5<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Choson Workers’ Party, the Juche ideology was promoted as the leading ideology along with Marxist-Leninism. And gradually replacing Marxist-Leninism, it came to be recognized as the sole ideology. By the 1980’s, the constitution of the party recognized Juche ideology as their only leading ideology.<sup>83</sup> Now, the Juche ideology was transformed from practical ideology to pure ideology.<sup>84</sup> As the unitary ideology, the Juche ideology became the principle for all of North Korea’s social organizations and activities. And from this, as Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il continuously emphasized, North Korea transformed into a system ruled by no other ideologies than Juche.

Next, there were changes within the political structures. In order to secure the leadership of the Suryong, the Juseok system was created and the monolithic system of leadership by Suryong that oversaw party-government-military was formed. The supreme people’s assembly that had presided over the juridical sphere became defunct and with the cabinet becoming policy administrative board, the role came to be placed with the chairing committee. With the adoption of socialist constitution in 1972, absolute power was bestowed upon the Juseok.

Afterwards, the massive cult of Kim Il Sung was undertaken. With the ‘10 Principles on establishing the monolithic ideological system’, absolute obedience and loyalty to the Suryong became the most important social values.<sup>85</sup> With such idolization, all expressions regarding Kim Il Sung and everything surrounding him became objects of worship. Furthermore, such cult of worship extended even to his family.

Such transformation brought unintended consequences. Although the Suryong system had its original purpose in socialist collectivism, many contradictory symptoms began to appear. Furthermore, the Suryong system, as a goal for collective society became means

---

<sup>83</sup> After this, the Juche ideology undergoes systematization and in 1985 with the publication of 10 volume works on the Juche ideology, the ideology came to possess a theoretically completed system.

<sup>84</sup> As for pure ideology and practical ideology see, Schurmann, Franz, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Univ. of California Press, 1968).

<sup>85</sup> ‘The 10 Principles regarding the establishment of monolithic ideological system’ was put forward by Kim Jong Il and demanded absolute and implicit loyalty to Kim Il Sung. It also, demanded loyalty to himself, the successor. For this see, Kim Jong Il, ‘Chon dang kwa on sahoe e yuilsasang chegye rul teouk teunteun yi seuuja’ [Let us further strengthen the monolithic ideological system throughout the entire party and the society] (April, 14th, 1974),’ *Juche hyukmyong wiop ui wansong ul wihayo 3* [To complete the revolution of Juche] (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1987)



itself. The Suryong system came to replace the collectivism.

As an unintended consequence of the Suryong system, the creativity of an individual was first severely limited. Kim Jong Il argued that 'creativity was impermissible for ideology'.<sup>86</sup> With the stifling of individual creativity, individuals became loyal and passive beings who faithfully carried out the task issued from above. The Suryong system was created to counteract the variant of the individualism of the 1960's and the cooling down of the revolutionary fervor of the workers and their negativism and yet, it ended up creating a new form of negativism. Such negativism, when seen from the viewpoint of the individual, was a rational choice.<sup>87</sup>

To respond to this new development, many 'innovative movements' were initiated from the top, but with the weakening of the material incentives and the continued primacy of the political ideology, these measures did not reap much success. With the maximization of the ideological goals, the pragmatic objectives were constrained. Furthermore, with Suryong system replacing the collectivism, the transference of the means and the objectives occurred. The collectivism which Suryong system pursued was introduced as the community of the 'revolutionary Juche'. And this was what North Korea attempted to achieve through the merger of the Suryong, the party and the masses. However, as the Suryong system came to replace the collectivism itself, the Suryong system became the absolute power structure.

These problems showed that as the present North Korea continuously transformed itself through the contemporaneous problems it historically faced, the rising set of new problems pressured changes upon the system. This meant that the introduction of the Suryong system into the society did not signal the completion of the collectivism of North Korean society. The present situation demanded sustained resolution to the problems of bureaucratism and new forms of individualism that were inherent within collectivism.

And these new challenges ruptured during the catastrophic crises of the 1990's, and bearing the task of resolving these problems is what North Korea faces today. The historical experiences and decisions arisen during the materialization of the utopian reality and contemporary developmental problem are forcing as even at this moment, changes in North Korea.

However, despite the unintended consequences and the rising new challenges, North Korean society under the Suryong system today when compared to other societies, possesses

---

<sup>86</sup> Kim Jong Il, 'Dang saop ul kunbonjok uiro kaeson kanghwa hayo on sahoe ui Kim Il Sung juuihwa rul him itkye takuchija' [Let's carry out fundamental improvement and intensification of the party projects so that we can further strength Kim Il Sung-ism through out the entire society], Juche hyukmyong wiop ui wansong ul wihayo 3 [To complete the revolution of Juche], (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1987), p.225

<sup>87</sup> With the further intensification of the order from the above, for the individuals below, the rational choice was to simply carry out the given task. Uncalled for creative initiative could cause political turmoil and create a situation where one would have to bear responsibility for the result. It was a form of bureaucratism and self-protectionism. As such symptoms began to manifest, Kim Jong Il began to criticize that the cadres were only carrying out the given task, but were not tackling the work with enthusiasm. This is a structural problem that was brought by the Suryong system.

long durability that comes from strong collectivistic solidarity, formation of organic social structure and the construction of the Suryong-centered social values. This demonstrates to certain extent, the success of the collectivistic formation of the society that was originally intended by the Suryong system society. Clearly, one cannot surmise the completion of the collectivism with the establishment of the Suryong system. The endless conflict between individualism and collectivism cannot be resolved with the establishment of system itself alone. Accordingly, even with the establishment of the Suryong system, North Korea had to further intensify the ideological revolution.

The Suryong system shows the long continued struggle against bureaucratism and systematic ideological education and reinforcement of studies undertaken to combat individualism and revisionism. And as a result, this became the foundation of internal strength that allowed the system to survive despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist bloc and the great policy reversal by China. What makes North Korea significantly different from other socialist states is found here.

#### **4. Conclusion: The Dilemma of Utopia and Development**

The establishment and the intensification of the Suryong system transformed North Korean society into a single unitary organizational society and forged an organic state based upon the unification of the leader and the ideology. However, the Suryong system faced a crisis in 1994. This was the death of Kim Il Sung.

The death of Kim Il Sung can be considered as historical division in North Korea. That is, since the declaration of the government of DPRK, it has not once experienced power changes during peacetime or even following the death of a supreme leader. Furthermore, no one could predict what the effect of the death of the Suryong, or Kim Il Sung would bring to the society. Compounding the situation furthermore, at the time, North Korea was experiencing the collapse of the socialist bloc, the escalation of the tension with US regarding nuclear issues and was undergoing one of the most severe food shortage crisis. Many defectors were crossing the border and social order was unraveling. Cracks were beginning to appear on the collectivity and organizational ability demanded by the Suryong system. In a situation such as this, the choice for Kim Jong Il who had just inherited the Suryong system - in fact, the architect of the system - was very clear. The existing Suryong system had to be continued.

Having completed the 'arduous march' from 1994, from 1998, Kim Jong Il began to call for 'army centered politics or military first politics'. The 'army centered or military first politics' is not, as some have referred to as, a political system that is dependent on the military. The 'army centered politics' came about as a result of Kim Il Sung's death, the collapse of the socialism, the security threat surrounding the nuclear missile issues with the US and the economic crisis within the system.

The 'army centered politics' as defined by North Korea is first, the securing of peaceful condition, second, the role of the military as the leading charge, third, expansion of the exemplarity of the military in the society and fourth, the armament with revolutionary

army spirit.<sup>88</sup> With the ‘army centered politics’, the military functions as a force holding the gun in its confrontation with the (American) imperialist forces and the other, as the vanguard in reconstructing the collapsed economy from the very forefront and also aims to reorganize the workers, the farmers and the urban workers as well as of the entire society.

In North Korea, the military had not only been active in its traditional role as a force, but also as labor supply as well. In fact, the military in North Korea was a ‘uniformed labor force’ and with the crisis of the 1990’s, their dual role as military and labor force only became more pronounced. This can be confirmed in the fact that before ‘army centered politics’ entered official discussion in 1998, the military had been already massively mobilized into major economic constructions of the society.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the ‘army centered politics’ is not politics dependent on the military, but North Korea’s own unique governing practice that sought to overcome the crisis of the 1990’s and produce new alternatives.

And this is closely related to the changed situation surrounding the Suryong system of North Korea as well. As argued above, the Suryong system is the collectivization of the entire society and this has shown in the formation of the Suryong, the party and the mass as the revolutionary Juche and the organization and disciplining of the entire society. In the crisis of the 1990’s, the unit that still managed to maintain its organizational, disciplinary and self-sacrificial capabilities was the military. Also, military was a unit that can absolutely obey the orders of the supreme commander and exhibited the ideal examples demanded by the Suryong system.

At a time when the party organizations were debilitated and unable to perform its crisis management, in the 1990’s, the military was the sole unit capable of socially reconstructing the collectivity and organizational capacity asked by the Suryong system. The reason for (the adoption of) ‘army centered politics’ lay in the expansion of the organizational, disciplinary and self-sacrificial capabilities as well as the absolute loyalty to the supreme commander as possessed by the military into the rest of the society.<sup>90</sup> To be precise, this was an expansion of the effort model of the party organizations within the military into the rest of the society.<sup>91</sup> For this reason, the ‘army centered politics’ contains

---

<sup>88</sup> Kim, Dong Nam, ‘Widaehan ryongdoja Kim Jong Il tongji ui sonkun chongchi nun sahoejuui kyongje kangkuk kunsol ui kyolchong jok dambo’ [The army centered politics of the supreme leader Kim Jong Il is the decisive collateral in the construction of socialist economic power nation]. *Kyongje yongu*, 2002. vol. 2

<sup>89</sup> The mobilization of the military into large scale construction sites can be found in the Mount Keumkang power plant (Anbyon youth power plant), Pyongyang-Kaesong highway expansion project, Mount Keumsoo historical palace construction and massive infusion into Daeheungdan agricultural estate. In particular, the heroics shown by the military in the construction of the Mount Keumkang power plant later became the model for later ‘revolutionary army spirit’. Especially, the history of the construction of the Mount Keumkang power plant became published as a novel titled, *Chonggum ul dul’go* [Holding aloft the bayonet] (Pyongyang: Munhak yesul chulpansa, 2002).

<sup>90</sup> Kim Jong Il emphasized that the society need to learn the examples set by the military. Kim Jong Il, ‘Olhae e dang saop eseo hyukmyongjok chonhwan ul irukindae taehayo’ [On having accomplished revolutionary reversal in the party efforts this year], (Jan. 1st. 1997), *Kim Jong Il sonjip* 14 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 2000).

<sup>91</sup> The core of the ‘army centered politics’ is based on the evaluation of the party organizational efforts of the military. The argument is that the reason for the army’s ability to maintain its position during time of crisis is due to the firm upholding of the party organizations within the military.

the core of Kim Jong Il's Suryong political system. And concomitantly, Kim Jong Il's 'army centered politics' can also be interpreted as Kim Jong Il's resolve to never abandon the 'Juche' line consolidated during Kim Il Sung's time.

North Korea today is at a crossroad having to make difficult decisions regarding the Suryong political system. That is, they are facing the dilemma of whether to continue with the utopian goal as demanded by the Suryong system or to further incorporate the pragmatic objectives. The army centered politics show North Korea's commitment to the primacy of the ideological objective. However, a wide unabridged gap lies between the will and the reality and this can be seen in North Korea's current situation.

This is related to North Korea's recent pursuit of pragmatic policies. The increased pursuit of pragmatic policies is closely tied to North Korea's reform and liberalization policies. The new economic management improvement policy of 2002('7.1 policy') can be seen as a strategic choice made by North Korea that had managed to survive the crisis of the 1990's. The '7.1 Policy' has adopted pragmatist policies such as the separation of power, deregulation, material incentives and others as means for promoting economic growth. The most dramatic transformation is the introduction of the market and the increased usage of commodities-currency exchange. Such changes in North Korea can be analyzed as pursuing the dual strategies of maintaining the Juche line and the primacy of the ideological objective and achieving the pragmatic objectives at the same time.

Although the reforms and the liberalizations seen in North Korea today gives more active recognition to individual initiatives, when seen within the framework of the Suryong system, these are also intended to not to undermine the collectivism as well. How this will be played out, further observation needs to be made. However, unless the current economic conditions improve, the tensions immanent in individualism and collectivism will more likely exacerbate. This is the dilemma that the Suryong system, the ideal pursued by North Korea faces and the most real dilemma that is confronting the 'army centered politics' today.

The ideal of the utopia is impossible unless the supporting developmental objectives are met. As in the case of China, where the primacy placed on pragmatic goals in the construction of the utopia resulted in the totalization of the pragmatic objectives as the absolute, North Korea also cannot be freed of such dilemmas as well. And yet, despite such dilemmas, North Korea will not easily abandon collectivist development strategies to (achieve) utopian ideals. For North Korea, abandoning the collectivist developmental strategy will signify the disintegration of the Suryong as the political system and this would in effect spell the dissolution of their own system.

## References

### 1. Korean Language

Amstrong, Charles, K., 'Pukhan munhwa ui hyongsong 1945-1950 [The Formation of North Korean Culture 1945-1950],' Hyondae pukhan yongu, vol.2 no.1, 1999.

Choi, Chung Kuk, 'Uri nara inmin kyongje palchon eseo ui sokdo wa kyunhyong [On speed and balance in the development of people's economy],' Kunroja, Feb. 1963. vol. 3

Chung Hyuk Nam, 'Inmin saenghwal ui hyangsang ul wihan uri tang ui pitnaneun kuhyon [The glorious realization by our party to improve the living standards of the people],' Kunroja Sept. 1965 (vol. 18).

Chung, Young Chul, 'Kim Il Sung kwa Kim Jong Il leaderdship pikyo [Comparative analysis of the leaderships of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il],' Kyongje wa sahoe, Fall 2002 (vol.55).

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Social and Political Origins of Kim Jong-Il's Regime in North Korea', (Ph.D dissertation. Seoul National University, 2001).

Editorial, 'Yongsaeng pulmyol ui juchesansang yi kuhyun han kachang uwolhan uri nara sahoejuui chedo rul teouk kongko palchon sikkimyo cholongsong kachi jikija [Let us further develop and steely defend the superior socialist system of ours that have been saved by the immortal ideology of Juche],' Kunroja, 1976, vol. 9.

Hong, Soon Kwon, 'Sahoejuui kunsol ui apjang e seonun chongnyon dul ui yongyero un immu [the glorious responsibility of the youths who are at the forefront of construction of socialism],' Kunronja, March, 1963 (vol. 6)

Huh, Dong Chan, Kim Il Sung pyongjon: hogu wa silsang [Biography of Kim Il Sung: Illusion and Reality] (Seoul: Pukhan yonguso, 1987)

Hwang Jang Yop, Nanun, yoksau chinri rul poatta [I have seen the truth of history] (Seoul: Hanul Academy, 1999)

Kim, Dong Kyu. Pukhanhak chongnon [Collection of North Korean Studies] (Seoul: Kyoyuk kwahaksa, 1999)

Kim, Dong Nam. 'Widaehan ryongdoja Kim Jong Il tongji ui sonkun chongchi nun sahoejuui kyongje kangkuk kunsol ui kyolchong jok dambo [The army centered politics of the supreme leader Kim Jong Il is the decisive collateral in the construction of socialist economic power nation],' Kyongje yongu, 2002. vol. 2

Kim, Il Sung, 'Minjok Olympic wiwonhoe wiwonjang kyum sajang ilhaeng kwa han damhwa [A conversation with the National Olympic committee head and its members],' Kim Il Sung chojakjip 43 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1996)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Kongsanjuui kyoyange taehayo [On the Education of Communist Ideology(1958. 11)],' Kim Il Sung chojakjip 12 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1981)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Sasang saop eseo kyojojuui wa hyongsikjuui rul toechi haggio juche rul hwakrip hal ttae taehayo [To combat doctrinism and formalism in our ideological efforts and to establish Juche(1950. 12)],' Kim Il Sung Chojakjip 9 (Writings of Kim Il Sung) (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1980).

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Choson Hyokmyong ui chinro [The path of the Korean Revolution (1930.6)],' Kim Il Sung Chojakjip 1 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1979)

Kim, Jong Il, 'Olhae e dang saop eseo hyukmyongjok chonhwan ul irukindae taehayo [On having accomplished revolutionary reversal in the party efforts this year (Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>. 1997)],' Kim Jong Il sonjip 14 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 2000)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Juche sasang e taehayo [On Juche Ideology],' Kim Jong Il sonjip 6 [Selected Writings of Kim Jong Il 6] (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1996)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Dang saop ul kunbonjok uiro kaeson kanghwa hayo on sahoe ui Kim Il Sung juuihwa rul him itkye takuchija [Let's carry out fundamental improvement and intensification of the party projects so that we can further strength Kim Il Sung-ism through out the entire society],' Juche hyukmyong wiop ui wansong ul wihayo 3 (To complete the revolution of Juche) (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Chulpansa, 1987)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Chon dang kwa on sahoe e yuilsasang chegye rul teouk teunteun yi seuuja [Let us further strengthen the monolithic ideological system throughout the entire party and the society (April, 14<sup>th</sup>, 1974)],' Juche hyukmyong wiop ui wansong ul wihayo 3 (To complete the revolution of Juche) (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang chulpansa, 1987)

Ministry of National Unification, 2004 Pukhan kaeyo [2004 North Korea Compendium] (2003. 12)

Suzuki, Masayuki, Yoo Yong Gu trans. Kim Jong Il kwa Suryongje Sahoejuui (Seoul: Joonang Ilbosa, 1994).

Tikhonov Vladmir, Hayan kamyon ui cheguk [Empire of White Mask] (Seoul: Hakyoreh sinmunsa, 2003)

Wada, Haruki, Lee Chong Suk trans., Kim Il Sung kwa manju hangil chonjaeng [Kim Il Sung and Anti-Japanese Wars in Manchuria] (Seoul: Changjak kwa Pipyong, 1992)

Yi, Tae Sop, 'Pukhan ui chiptanjuui chok palcho chonryak kwa suryongchegye ui hwakrip [The Collectivist Developmental Strategy and the Establishment of the 'Suryohng System' in North Korea] (Ph.D dissertation, Seoul National University, 2001).

Yi, Yong Myong. Kim Il Sung yoljon (Seoul: Sin munhwasa, 1974).

Choson chonsa (Pyongyang: Kwahak paekkwa sajon chulpansa, 1982)

Hankyoreh sinmun, article, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1993.

Nodong sinmun, article, Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1956.

## 2. English Language

Amstrong, Charles, K., 'The Myth of North Korea,' Cumings (ed.), *Chicago Ocasional Papers on Korea*, Selected Papers Vol. 6, The Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'An Interview with Gari Ledyard,' *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2003

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Nature, Origins, and Development of the North Korean State,' Kim, Samuel S. Kim, (ed.), *The North Korean System in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2001)

Buzo, Adrian, *The Guerilla Dynasty* (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 1999)

Cumings, Bruce, 'Kim's Korean Communism,' *Problem of Communism*, March-April, 1974,

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Corporatism in North Korea,' *Journal of Korean Studies* 4(1982/1983)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Corporate State in North Korea,' Koo, Hagen (ed.), *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997)

\_\_\_\_\_, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York: New Press, 2004)

Department of State, *North Korea: A Case Study of a Soviet Satellite*, Report of the Department of State Research Mission to Korea, Office of Intelligence research Report N0.

5600, May 20, 1951 (Reprinted by Government Printing Office, 1961)

Eberstadt, Nicholas & Banister, Judith, *Population of North Korea* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Old North' *The World & I*, Vol. 15(2000)

Friedrich, Carl J. and Brzezinski, Zbigniew K., *Totalitarian Dictatorship & Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1956)

Gleason, Abbott, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

Han, Hong-koo, 'Wounded Nationalism: The Minsaengdan Incident and Kim Il Sung in Eastern Manchuria,' Ph D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1999.

Harrison, Selig S., *Korean Endgame* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002)

Haruki, Wada, 'The Structure and Political Culture of the Kim Jong Il Regime: Its Novelty and Difficulties,' Park, Jae Kyu (ed.), *North Korea in Transition and policy Choice: Domestic Structure and External Relations* (Seoul: Kyungnam Univ. Press, 1999).

Holloway, Andrew, 'A Year In Pyongyang' ([http://www.aidanfc.net/a\\_year\\_in\\_pyongyang\\_3.htm](http://www.aidanfc.net/a_year_in_pyongyang_3.htm), Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 search)

Hunter, Helen-Louise, *Kim Il-Song's North Korea* (Westport, Conn.; Greenwood, 1999)

Trans by Nam, Seongwook, 『CIA Report on North Korea』 (Seoul: Hansong, 2000)

Inkeles, Alex, 'Models and Issues in the analysis of Soviet,' *Survey* 60 (July, 1966)

Johnson, Chalmers (ed.), *Change in communist system* (Stanford, California: Stanford Univ, Press, 1970)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Blow Back* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.; 2000)

Kassof, Allen, 'The Administered Society: Totalitarianism without Terror,' *World Politics*, Vol. XVI, No. 4 (July, 1964)

Lowenthal, Richard, 'Development vs. Utopia in Communist Policy,' Johnson, Chalmers (ed.), *Change in communist system* (Stanford, California: Stanford Univ, Press, 1970)

McCormack, Gavan, 'North Korea: Kimilsungism - Path to Socialism', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 13, No. 4. 1981,

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Kim's Country: Hard Times in North Korea,' *New Left Review*, No. 198, March/April 1993

\_\_\_\_\_, *Target North Korea* (New York: Nation Books, 2004)

Nam, Koon Woo, *The North Korean Communist Leadership(1945-1965)* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1974)

Oh, Kongdan and Hassig, Ralph C., *North Korea through the looking glass* (Washington D.C: Brookings, 2002)

O'Hanlon, Michael E. & Mocizuki, Mike M., *Crisis on the Korean Peninsula*(New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003)

Paige, Glenn D. & Lee, Dong Jun, 'The Post-War Politics of Communist Korea,' *The China Quarterly*, No. 14 (April-June, 1963)

Park, Han Sik, 'The Nature and Evolution of Juche Ideology,' Park, Han S.(ed.), *North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996)

Scalapino, Robert A. & Lee, Chong-Sik, *Communism in Korea* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1972)

Schurmann, Franz, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Univ. of California Press, 1968)

Smith, Hazel, 'Bad, mad, sad and rational actor? Why the 'secrutzation' Paradigm makes for

poor policy analysis of north Korea,' *International Affairs* 76, 1(2002)

Suh, Dae-Sook, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988)

Tucker. Robert, *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia & London, Univ. of Missouri Press, 1981)