

## Korean Social Affairs

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This paper gives an integrated historical abstract of Korean Politics and Society. Different dynasties are explored from Korean social and religious traditions. As in the modern period, this paper contains the reviews of the Six Republics up to 2003, marked by the Administrations under the successive Presidents and main social affairs. Underlying philosophy in shifting Korean Society are examined in four sections: political, economic, social and cultural. This paper also deals with the proclaimed unification policy and its accomplishments so far under the leadership of the Kim Dae- Jung Administration.

**Key Words:** Political Culture, Authoritarianism, Democratization, Economic Development, Unification Policy

### I. Korea's Social Evolution in its History

Korea is a country blessed with a long, distinguished history, culture and traditions dating back some, 5,000 years<sup>1</sup>. Koreans take pride in the highly developed civilizations of Silla and Paekche which followed that of Koguryo.

General Wang Kon founded a new dynasty in 918. He named it Koryo, symbolizing it as the successor to Koguryo. Korea became known in the West by the name of the new kingdom. The Koryo period in Korean history lasted to 1392. During the Koryo period Buddhism came to gain stronger influence and became the dominant force in Koryo culture<sup>2</sup>. It became a state religion and many beautiful Buddhist temples were built. The number of converts to Buddhism increased greatly, and by the 13<sup>th</sup> century various sects took deep root in Korea.

By the end of the 1300's, the control of the Koryo

government was greatly weakened and Yi Song-Gye, general of Koryo, had been ready to take over. As he carried out a military coup against the King in 1388, he seized absolute power and placed a new puppet king. By 1392, General Yi had eliminated his enemies, most Koryo nobilities and sent Koryo's last king to exile.

General Yi established a new dynasty and named it Yi dynasty, which lasted until 1910. Yi Song-Gye became known by his posthumous title of Tae-jo of the new dynasty. Korea was renamed Choson, or the Land of Morning Calm.

In Yi (Choson) dynasty period, Confucian political principles guided the conduct of the government and the officials. Therefore, the social order and the pattern of behavior of the people were established on Confucian precepts<sup>3</sup>. The traditional Korean government is principally based on Confucian socio-political doctrines. It became the

state's official philosophy During the Yi Dynasty ( 1392-1910 ). In the Confucian Tradition, government is a reflection of authority conferred by the mandate from heaven. Therefore, a good government must assure a proper elite-public-in-general relationship based on an authoritarian hierarchical social order, not on a contractual arrangement or "rule of law"<sup>4</sup>.

Japan occupied Korea<sup>5</sup> in 1905 and annexed it as a Japanese possession in 1910<sup>6</sup>. Japan then ruled the land as the harsh colonial master of the peninsula until the end of W.W. II in 1945. With Japan's surrender to allies on August 15, 1945, Korea was liberated from the thirty-six years of rule under Japanese imperialism. However, Korea was, and still is divided into two states— Communist North Korea and the southern Republic of Korea. The Cairo Agreement of the United States, Great Britain and China made public on December 1, 1943, stated that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent."<sup>7</sup>

The leaders of the same three allied nations met again in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam in July 1945, they reaffirmed the principles agreed upon earlier at Cairo. A month later, the Soviet Union also subscribed to the Potsdam Declaration<sup>8</sup>. On August 8, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Faced with the possibility that the entire Korean peninsula could be occupied by Soviet troops, the United States proposed on August 13, to the Soviet Union to divide Korea into two military operational zones along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel<sup>9</sup>. As the war ended, the Russian occupied the north of Korea; United States Forces occupied the south. Two states, Communist North and American-supported South Korea resulted<sup>10</sup>. The rapid erosion of the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union

made it difficult for the two powers to agree on the future of a divided Korea. The problem of unification was eventually referred to the United Nations. After efforts to have elections for the whole country, the United Nations recognized a government set up in the south as the only lawful government of the Republic of Korea<sup>11</sup>. During the three years of American military occupation( 1945-1948 ), the Korean economy barely rose above a subsistence level<sup>12</sup>.

According to Korean history, the first general election was carried out on May 10, 1948. One hundred seats allocated to the northern provinces were left unfilled, but the voters chose one hundred and ninety-eight representatives of the Korean people. The South Korean Constitution was first promulgated on July 17, 1948. In accordance with its provisions the first presidential election was held on July 20, 1948, and Syngman Rhee emerged as the winner<sup>13</sup>. Then on August 15, 1948, the establishment of the government of the Republic of Korea was announced to the Korean people.

The contemporary Korean government<sup>14</sup> may be divided into six periods: a) the Rhee Government under a presidential system( the First Republic: 1948-1960 ) led by Syngman Rhee; b) the Democratic Party Government under a parliamentary system( the Second Republic: 1960-1961 ) led by Chang Myon; c) the Park Government under a presidential system( the Third Republic: 1963-1971 and the Fourth Republic: 1972-1979 ) led by Park Chung-Hee and following his death, by Choi Kyu-Hah; d) the Chun Government under a presidential system( the Fifth Republic: 1980-1987 ) led by Chun Doo-Hwan; and e) the Roh Tae-Woo Government ( 1988-1992 ); the Kim Young-Sam Government

( 1993-1997); the Kim Dae-Jung Government ( 1998-present) under a presidential system ( the Sixth Republic) . The Constitution has been amended nine times<sup>15</sup>.

## II. The Political Process of Successive Governments

### 1. The First Republic

When Rhee was elected the Korean Republic's first president in 1948, it was presumed that he could lead the republic to realize an American-style "democracy"<sup>16</sup> However, his personality traits and behavior were more like those of the autocratic monarchs of the Yi dynasty. The assembly and the press were restricted under the National Security Law<sup>17</sup>. On June 25, 1950, North Korea, with Soviet and Chinese backing, invaded the South<sup>18</sup>. The invasion was contested and ultimately repulsed by the forces of the United States, South Korea, and fifteen other nations under the flag of the United Nations. During the Korean War, Dr. Rhee's autocratic rule was strengthened while his Liberal Party became corrupt and abusive<sup>19</sup>. In July 1950, after promulgating martial laws, President Rhee and the Liberal Party forced his opponents in the National Assembly to pass a constitutional Amendment, instituting a direct election of the president. Dr. Rhee was re-elected in 1952 and then forced the Assembly to extend his term as president<sup>20</sup>.

### 2. The Second Republic

The Second Republic was established soon after "the student uprising of April 19<sup>th</sup>" 1960. A national election was held to constitute a new National

Assembly on July 29, 1960. The main opposition against the Rhee autocracy, the Democratic Party, occupied 175 seats out of the 233 in the Lower House and they also occupied thirty-one out of the fifty-eight seats in the House of Councilors<sup>21</sup>. The newly established National Assembly elected Yun Bo-Sun as president and Chang Myon as Prime Minister. The Democratic Party instituted a parliamentary-cabinet type political system similar to the British system. The power of the President was to be symbolic, while the executive power was vested in the cabinet, collectively responsible to the Lower House. Chang Myon served as the first Korean ambassador to the United States and as Prime Minister under President Rhee. He was a well-educated man, however he lacked fortitude and political skills. At the same time, the ruling Democratic Party itself was badly split and it had no suitable solutions to economic and social problems<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. The Third Republic

As a result of the military revolution of May 16, 1961, the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction headed by General Park Chung-Hee took over the combined legislative, executive, and judicial functions of the government. Although Park began his rule by coup, he sought to legitimize it by resigning from the army, forming the Democratic Republican Party, and winning a presidential election. After amending the Constitution, the general elections of 1963 made Park the President. Besides compromising the legitimacy of his rule, Park concentrated ever greater powers under his direct control in the Blue House( president's residence) . As opposition grew, he increasingly relied upon a com-

bination of patronage, successful economic policies, and the coercive powers of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency. Park, in time, followed Rhee's pattern of first using irregular methods to amend the constitution to give himself another term<sup>23</sup>.

#### 4. The Fourth Republic

On October 17, 1972, martial law was again declared throughout the country. The National Assembly was dissolved. Political parties were banned. All colleges and universities were closed. An amended constitutional draft was endorsed by an emergency cabinet meeting, making it possible for Park to prolong his presidency indefinitely. By way of an indirect presidential election, Park created the National Conference for Unification. The conference was to consist of 2,359 "non-partisan deputies" from small districts that could be readily controlled by the ruling groups. Moreover, the president was empowered to nominate one third of the National Assembly members for election by the National Conference for Unification, and also to dissolve the Assembly whenever he deemed it necessary. The new constitution was approved by a national referendum conducted on November 21, 1972, while the country was promulgated as the so-called "yusin"( revitalizing reform) constitution<sup>24</sup>. The yusin constitution was aimed at ensuring political stability, and at completing the historic task of national revival through socio-economic progress under strong presidential leadership. Although President Park's autocratic rule was detrimental to the promotion of political democracy; he had transformed an economically backward country into a prosperous nation<sup>25</sup>. The assassination of President

Park on October 26, 1979, brought about the disintegration of the yusin system. President Choi Kyuhah, who had been Prime Minister under President Park, headed the transition period. President Choi resigned on August 16, 1980, and Chun Doo-Hwan was elected president by the National Conference for Unification on August 27.

#### 5. The Fifth Republic

The Fifth Republic under President Chun Doo-Hwan was established under the new Constitution promulgated on October 27, 1980. The chief significance of this Constitution was its stipulation of a single seven-year term<sup>26</sup>. Chun took his one-term pledge seriously. However, having seized power through military means and cemented his power in the Kwangju uprising<sup>27</sup> and having been elected president by a rubber-stamp college of electors, Chun lacked legitimacy and stature in the eyes of the people<sup>28</sup>. Chun's strong authoritarian character became his greatest weakness. During General Park Chung-Hee's lengthy reign and that of successor General Chun Doo-Hwan, South Korea experienced dramatic economic gains, but its political arrangements seemed frozen in time. This discrepancy gave rise to growing public discontent. "The June Resistance", as the political crisis of mid-1987 is sometimes known, was the turning point for South Korea in its shift from authoritarianism toward democratic practice, from strong-arm politics to civil society and the rule of law<sup>29</sup>.

## 6. The Sixth Republic

### ( 1) The Roh Tae-Woo Government

On June 2, 1987, Chun summoned the Central Executive Committee of the ruling Democratic Justice Party and announced that he has chosen his friend, Roh Tae-Woo, as the party's presidential candidate. Thus on June 29, 1987, Roh presented his "Democratization Declaration" to the people. Consequently on October 12 the National Assembly passed the 9<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment providing for direct presidential elections, and the new constitution was approved in a national referendum on October 27. In the direct presidential election held on December 16, 1987, Roh won with a plurality vote because the opposition groups managed to split and run both Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung against the ruling party candidate<sup>30</sup>. Roh's inauguration on February 25, 1988, marked the first peaceful transfer of presidential power in South Korea since 1948<sup>31</sup>. The 1987 Constitutional amendment was a milestone in the history of South Korean democracy. The Constitution of the Sixth Republic provided for a three-branch governing system whereby law-making functions are in the preserve of the National Assembly, administrative functions are in the preserve of the executive branch, headed by the President, and judicial functions belong to the courts. Structurally, these three branches are highly independent of each other. The Constitution designed to eliminate all vestiges of authoritarianism was especially significant because it was the first revised constitution to grow out of an arrangement between the ruling and opposition parties, which participated in its creation. The most

striking change is the adoption of the direct election of the President for a single five-year term<sup>32</sup> and the curtailment of his powers through the abolition of presidential emergency power and the presidential authority to dissolve the National Assembly<sup>33</sup>. President Roh began his term of office promising that authoritarian rule would end and that "the June 29th Declaration" would continue to be faithfully implemented. In the 13<sup>th</sup> term National Assembly elections that were held in April 1988, the ruling Democratic Justice Party managed to win only 125 out of the 299 seats, while of the remainder, 71 went to the Democratic Party for Peace, and 60 to the Reunification Democratic Party, 35 to the New Democratic Republican Party, and 8 to the independents. For the first time in the history of the Republic, a government party failed to obtain a majority of seats in the legislature. Because of the minority status in the National Assembly, the government had a hard time in pushing its agenda. The Roh's ruling Democratic Justice Party merged with the opposition parties ; Kim Young-Sam's Reunification Democratic Party and Kim Jong-Pil's New Democratic Republican Party in January 1990. The grand conservative coalition comprising two-thirds of the total membership called itself the Democratic Liberal Party<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, in an effort to strengthen the opposition, Kim Dai-Jung's Democratic Party for Peace absorbed the New Democratic Union and renamed itself the New Democratic Party in April of 1991. During the Roh years the South Korean political institutions evolved in a significant way. In March 1991 local elections were held for the first time to elect representatives to the city, county, and district assemblies<sup>35</sup>. Prior to this, local governments had been simply local branches of the central

government, with the latter appointing and dispatching the chiefs.

## ( 2) The Kim Young-Sam Government

The election for the 14<sup>th</sup> presidential term was held on December 18, 1992. The three major candidates were the ruling Democratic Liberal Party's Kim Young-Sam, the opposition Democratic Party's Kim Dai-Jung, and the newly organized Unification People's Party candidate Chung Ju-yung, founder of the Hyundai Group<sup>36</sup>. Kim Young-Sam was elected, winning 42 percent of the vote, outpacing Kim Dai-Jung, his former opposition party colleague and fellow participant in the fight against authoritarian regimes. In his inaugural remarks of February 25, 1993, the civilian and democratic administration of President Kim Young-Sam vowed publicly to create a "New Korea" while the ruling party decided to call itself the New Korea Party. The president also announced, in August 1993, the implementation of the real - name financial transaction system designed to eliminate corruption and irregularities in the economy. President Kim expected the reform campaign against corruption to continue throughout his five-year term, His anti-corruption efforts extended not only to the administration and party, but also to military, banks, universities and even traffic police<sup>37</sup>. In October 1995 scandal engulfed Roh Tai-Woo when it was discovered that he had accepted hundreds of millions of dollars in political funds, much of it for his own personal use. Following Roh's arrest, the net closed on Chun Doo-Whan himself, arrested on December 1st for his own slush funds<sup>38</sup>. The public trials of the two former presidents began on December 18, 1995.

During the trial Chun admitted that he had spent an astounding six hundred and eighty million dollars in slush funds collected from forty-three conglomerates during his presidency from March 1981 to February 1988. Roh also acknowledged that, during his presidency, he had received donations amounting roughly to five hundred and seventy five million dollars from thirty-five of the nation's leading industrial conglomerates from February 1988 to February 1993<sup>39</sup>. Kim Jong-Pil, who had broken away from the Democratic Liberal Party organized the United Liberal Democrats in May 1995. Meanwhile, in September Kim Dai-Jung announced the formation of a new party, the National Congress for New Politics. In the 15<sup>th</sup>- term National Assembly elections of 1996, the hopes of the National Congress for New Politics were shattered when it ended up getting only 79 of the 299 seats. The ruling New Korea Party won 139 seats, the United Liberal Democrats took 50, the Democrats got 15, and the remaining 16 seats went to independents<sup>40</sup>. The local government elections held in 1995 were direct electoral exercises throughout South Korea to choose 5,758 local officials. Voters were to choose four groups of local officials:( a) Wide-area government heads such as mayors of the largest cities and provincial governors,( b) heads of basic local units,( c) councilors for wide-area governments and( d) councilors for basic local units<sup>41</sup>. Under the Roh and Kim administration, revisions in the labor laws allowed room for much more collective action. There were several violent strikes, for example, at the Hyundai shipyard on Ulsan. Although South Korea had organized labor unions since 1945, they have a tradition of being more politically oriented. The communists used unions

for political purposes from 1945 to 1948; Syngman Rhee used them for political purposes from 1948 to 1960. Since that time, organized labor activity has been severely circumscribed to prevent wage increases that would hurt Korea's export drive. Until late 1987 Korean labor laws were highly restrictive<sup>42</sup>. With the usable foreign exchange reserves nearly exhausted in November 1997, the Korean government requested emergency assistance from the International Monetary Fund to avoid a moratorium on its foreign debt<sup>43</sup>. Thus on December 20, 1997, financial reform bills were legislated to provide the legal basis for financial reforms. According to the revised Bank of Korea Act, the independence of the central bank has been substantially reinforced.

### ( 3 ) The Kim Dae-Jung Government

The presidential election was held on December 18, 1997. The Kim Dae-Jung of the National Congress for New Politics had triumphed over the Grand National Party's Lee Hoi-Chang by only 1.5% of the votes cast. Moreover, the slim margin of victory had been achieved only by forging an alliance with Kim Jong-Pil of the United Liberal Democrats<sup>44</sup>. With the inauguration of Kim Dae-Jung to fill the 15<sup>th</sup> presidential term on February 25, 1998, the era of the Government of the people dawned. However, his accession came in difficult times—the severe recession caused by the Asian financial crisis. It left Korea with debts estimated at more than one hundred and fifty billion dollars<sup>45</sup>. President Kim began to work to help the nation overcome the economic crisis. He formed the Tripartite Committee of representatives from labor,

management and the Government. In April 1998 the Financial Supervisory Commission was established under the Office of the Prime Minister to function as a neutral independent supervisory policy-making body. To initiate the process of public sector reform the Government Reform Office in the Planning and Budgeting Commission was launched. A plan for reducing the number of civil servants by approximately 10% was announced. Five ministries were eliminated out of the total number of 22<sup>46</sup>. The Government has achieved less success in its attempt to reform the corporate sector. In January of 1998, President-elect Kim met with the heads of the big “Chaebol”<sup>47</sup> and hammered out a five-point accord. That agreement called for improvements on transparency, elimination of cross debt payment guarantees, improvements in financial structure, specialization in core businesses, and strengthened accountability. Thus came the notion of “big deals”, or business swaps among the “chaebol” as a mechanism to focus the groups on a limited number of core competencies. The top five “chaebol” agreed to consolidate business in seven industries and halve the number of their subsidiaries to one hundred and thirty<sup>48</sup>. In 2000 elections, during the 16<sup>th</sup> term of National Assembly, President Kim Dae-Jung's Millennium Democratic Party and the main opposition Grand National Party both failed to gain a majority for the National Assembly. With 273 seats being contested on the crucial election, which was dubbed a midterm referendum on Kim's performance, including economic reform and the engagement policy toward the North. The Grand National Party has succeeded in remaining the largest party in terms of seats, with 133, failing only four short of a majority. The governing Millennium



Democratic Party, also made an impressive advance, bringing its total to 115, while of the remainder, 17 went to the United Liberal Democrats, 2 to the Democratic People's Party, 1 to the splinter New Korea Party of Hope, and 5 to the independents<sup>49</sup>.

### III. Underlying Philosophy in Changing Korean Society

South Korea passed through a phase of remarkable industrial development, making it a major exporter of many commodities until this expansion was checked by the Asian economic crisis. One reason South Korea has industrialized rapidly is that they have invested heavily in education. A well-educated work force, both white and blue collar, is a general property of late industrialization, distinguishing it from earlier industrial change<sup>50</sup>. By then it had become the World's twelfth largest economy. Most families had television sets, refrigerators and washing machines. South Korea became a major ship builder and exporter of motor vehicles. Education was actively encouraged, so that now nearly the whole population is literate<sup>51</sup>.

In order to comprehend the underlying philosophy of Korean society, four key aspects must be examined: the political, the economic, the social and cultural.

#### 1. The Political Aspect

In the political aspect, there are two problems: The first is the problem of legitimacy of political power. The second is government's rational decision-making ability.

Legitimacy is a pre-requisite for the long-term survival of a regime. Legitimacy is the widespread acceptance of the regime's authority, regardless of one's feelings on its specific performances. The legitimacy of democratic governments comes from the popular perception that governments are structurally accountable to their citizens<sup>52</sup>. A major institutional requirement in the consolidation of a newly established democracy is to clearly establish civilian control of the military<sup>53</sup>.

It has been argued that Asian culture, with its Confucian roots, presents something of a barrier to the spread and consolidation of liberal democracy. Confucianism emphasizes the group over the individual, authority over liberty and responsibilities over rights. Therefore, there have been relatively fewer democratic transformations among the Asian nations. The Philippines, Taiwan, and South Korea are the most notable examples<sup>54</sup>. In South Korea, Kim Dae Jung had been known for decades as a fighter for democracy. In 1971, after Kim was narrowly defeated in the presidential election, President Park Chung Hee nearly had him assassinated, banned all political parties, and introduced the autocratic Fourth( Yushin) Republic. Throughout the 1970s, Kim battled tirelessly for human rights. In 1980, at the time of prodemocracy protests in Kim's home province of south Cholla, General Chun Doo Hwan, he soon came to grab power for himself, arrested Kim and had him sentenced to death for allegedly provoking the Kwangju uprising. With his charismatic personality and his impeccable democratic credentials, Kim won supporters in his own right—and an international reputation helped him to earn him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000<sup>55</sup>.



In South Korea, too, a substantial proportion of the population had converted to Christianity in the postwar years. From a context of “Confucian authoritarianism and Buddhist passivity” that comprised 99% of the population at the end of World War II, some 25% of the population had become Christian by the mid-1980s<sup>56</sup>. These Christians formed the nucleus of opposition to the authoritarian regime. Street demonstrations had become a daily occurrence<sup>57</sup>.

And then Herbert A. Simon’s “bounded rationality”<sup>58</sup> came to be widely recognized as an accurate portrayal of much choice behavior. Ideas of limited rationality emphasize the extent to which individuals and groups simplify a decision problem because of the difficulties of anticipating or considering all alternatives and all information. Anticipating future consequences of present decisions are often subject to substantial error<sup>59</sup>. At this point I can only emphasize my interpretation of Simon’s theory “Except God no person can make a perfect decision.”

In this context, basic decisions—choices between conflicting demands and allocation of national resources—are strongly centralized in South Korea<sup>60</sup>. The Bureaucracy itself is dependent upon the Blue House; both ministers and local leaders derive their authority from the president, on an almost personal base, and thus they are not in a position to evoke commitments to the legitimacy of the system. Business leaders are much too dependent upon the government<sup>61</sup>.

I strongly support Dr. Israel Scheffler’s “Ideal Direction.” He has suggested that the democratic ideal aims to structure society so that authority rests on the free consent of its members. Such an

aim requires the institutionalization of reasoned procedures for the critical and public review of policy. It demands that judgments of policy be viewed not as the fixed privilege of any class or elite but as the common task of all and it requires the supplanting of arbitrary and violent alteration of policy with institutionally channeled change ordered by reasoned persuasion and informed consent<sup>62</sup>.

## 2. The Economic Aspect

Social justice is among Western man’s most prized ideals and most highly treasured values. It has both a political and an economic dimension, and it is this latter, essentially economic aspect that shall concern us here. For we conceive of distributive justice as embracing the whole economic dimension of social justice, the entire question of the proper distribution of goods and services within the society<sup>63</sup>. We can bring our discussion of distributive justice into sharper focus by considering in some detail John Rawls’ recent contribution to the subject. *A Theory of Justice* is a powerful, deep, wide-ranging, systematic work in political and moral philosophy which has not seen its like since the writings of John Stuart Mill, if then<sup>64</sup>. John Rawls suggests that the fundamental principles of distributive justice would be chosen in this way:<sup>65</sup>

First Principle — Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

Second Principle — Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

- ( a ) to the greatest benefit of the least privileged,
- and

- ( b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity<sup>66</sup>.

In the context of John Rawl's theory, the Republic of Korea was making sustained progress in reducing poverty in the 1990s: the urban poverty rate fell an average 20 percent a year during 1990-1997, and there were no increases in inequality. But then economic crisis struck sharply increasing unemployment and poverty. The incidence of poverty in urban areas doubled from 9 percent a year during 1997 to 19.2 percent in 1998. Unemployment rose from 2.6 percent in the second quarter of 1997 to a peak of 8.7 percent in early 1999<sup>67</sup>. The most serious problem caused by the restructuring effort in the financial, corporate, and public sectors of South Korea is unemployment. According to Chungang Daily news, dated February 13, 2001, one of the biggest conglomerates, Dae Woo authority announced to the labor union they will layoff 1,785 laborers. Prior to this phenomenon, in South Korea the authoritarian regime suppressed participation but encouraged some income redistribution along with growth. Early land reforms, rapid development of education, labor-intensive, export-oriented industrialization, and substantial American advice, support, and pressure has marked the Korean experiment<sup>68</sup>. However population aging, urban mobility and modernization are causing a growing crisis of elderly care. Moreover, the low-wage-based industrial miracle of South Korea is rapidly being exhausted, implying the likely emergence of unemployment and a host of new welfare problems<sup>69</sup>. As the economic crisis began at the end of 1997, the need to make the rigid South Korean labor market

more flexible emerged. Finally, in February 1998, the newly formed three-party committee of labor, management, and government reached a consensus to make layoffs possible<sup>70</sup>. In order to cope with this unemployment, the government is carrying out various projects to help the unemployed find new jobs and also to establish a social safety net system.

### 3. The Social Aspect

Social scientists have suggested using models, corresponding to real world phenomena, to guide investigation and analysis of administrative practices that actually prevail in existing policies. Fred W. Riggs suggests the "prismatic - sala" model for developing countries<sup>71</sup>. The "prismatic" model is of the hypothetical type as the fused and the diffracted, designed to represent a situation intermediate between the fused and diffracted ends of a continuum, it combines relatively fused traits with relatively diffracted ones. It refers to a social system that is semi-differentiated, standing midway between an undifferentiated fused society and a highly differentiated diffracted society<sup>72</sup>. As Fred W. Riggs indicated, in developing countries there are some characteristics of transitions as portrayed in the sala model. The sala <sup>73</sup> is associated with unequal distribution of services, institutionalized corruption, inefficiency in rule application, nepotism in recruitment, bureaucratic enclaves dominated by motives of self-protection, and in general, a pronounced gap between formal expectations and actual behavior<sup>74</sup>.

In the context of Fred W. Riggs' model, there are several examples of institutionalized corruption, which have happened in South Korea recently. Two former presidents had been imprisoned after being

convicted of bribery. While they were in jail, a son of the incumbent president was engaged in similar illegal practices. Also in a two-month statistical study dated from November 2000 to January 2001, according to the *Chungang daily news* February 3, 2001, the Kim Dae Jung government publicly announced the results of its inspection. There were 8,209 government officials found guilty of corruption and irregularities. Prior to this, when President Kim Young-Sam came into office in 1993, he backed up a pledge to cure what he termed “the Korean disease” by declaring his own assets and announcing that his presidential Blue House would no longer collect political funds. The cabinet ministers and ruling Democratic Liberal Party leaders were ordered to make public declaration of their assets. As a result, several top lawmakers, including the speaker of the National Assembly, were forced to quit after revelations that they had amassed wealth or committed other “irregularities.”<sup>75</sup> Consequently many Koreans, especially the college-educated, show little respect for the rule of law<sup>76</sup>. The media is weak and vulnerable in South Korea; hence there has been significant corruption. The practice of accepting “white envelopes” containing cash from news sources is believed to have begun in the 1960s when Park Chung-Hee consolidated his power<sup>77</sup>.

#### 4. The Cultural Aspect

In the cultural aspect, there are two serious problems in South Korea: one is regionalism, and the other is authoritarianism.

Korean regionalism arose from Confucian familism; the culture of Confucian familism had entrapped individuals in an internally contradictory

identity. A voter would expand his circle of identity from family or school ties toward broader regionalist sentiments when forced to make a choice among candidates in an election<sup>78</sup>. Blind regional loyalties, which have determined voting patterns in South Korea’s past elections, ran havoc again in the recent general election. As a result, the two-party system, represented by the ruling Millennium Democratic Party and the main opposition Grand National Party, has been consolidated amid the humiliating retreat of the United Liberal Democrats, which failed to garner enough seats to form a floor negotiating group. The Grand National Party swept almost all the Assembly seats in its traditional stronghold of the Kyongsang areas, while the Millennium Democratic Party retained its supremacy in the Cholla region<sup>79</sup>.

Moreover, there are local prejudices based on region and social status. Perhaps most pronounced is the less-than-friendly rivalry between the provinces of Cholla-do and Kyongsang-do. A rivalry can be traced back to Three Kingdoms period<sup>80</sup>. Because four presidents were born in Kyongsang-do, people of that region are suspected of being in higher favor and benefiting more than others. However, residents of Cholla-do have felt left out of South Korea’s economic growth and political development<sup>81</sup>.

In Korean history, those who ranked above others, on whatever level, have tended to be extremely authoritarian. Those who had power flaunted it and used it to benefit themselves, their families, and friends. In other words, I think that authoritarianism has had a great influence in today’s Korean society. Historically speaking it mainly began during the Choson dynasty, which lasted almost five

hundred years. According to Confucian tradition, the younger must implicitly be subject to and obedient to the elder and also to any authority figure. This is true in families as well as society. This syndrome is still a major factor in the make-up of Koreans and is responsible for a great deal of the tension and competition that exists in Korea's political and business worlds<sup>82</sup>. Finally authoritarian rule is, by its very nature, unaccountable. Those who wield power are free to amass and allocate resources as they wish<sup>83</sup>.

#### IV. The Unification Policy of the Kim Dae-Jung Government and its Accomplishment

It would be impossible to conclude this study without making some reference to the historic June 2000 journey of President Kim Dae-Jung to Pyongyang. His 'three stage' approach to Korean reunification posits self-reliance( solving reunification issues in a spirit of self-determination, without outside interference), peace( negotiation rather than conflict and sabre-rattling) and democracy ( with consensus and national consultation being the guiding forces of negotiation) as its main principles. Seeking the path of least resistance from the North, Kim has couched his overtures in conciliatory terms, unlike his hostile predecessors whose military-dominated regimes did not regard the North as a partner for peace. The first principle of self-reliance had long been a key issue for the North; as for 'democracy,' Kim couched this principle not in absolute terms, but rather as it relates to the mutual spirit of the negotiations. He has envisaged an initial confederation between the Koreas, followed by a north-south federation of regional

autonomous bodies, and finally, a centralized government or a series of autonomous governments ( similar to the federal system of the United States, or the four-territory devolutionary approach in the United Kingdom)<sup>84</sup>.

On June 13, 2000, President Kim Dae-Jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il held a one-on-one meeting. Although the summit did not settle any of the important security problems on the peninsula, its very existence was important<sup>85</sup>. The joint agreement signed by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jung Il in Pyongyang on June 14, 2000 marked the beginning of a new era on the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Peninsula has been divided since the end of the Second World War. Then on June 25,1950, the Korean War blazed into bitter conflict. Just over three years later, the guns fell silent without winners. That the governments of both Koreas have signed an agreement to aspire toward reunification is extremely significant and will force neighboring countries to reformulate their regional security arrangements<sup>86</sup>. Taking up all the problems of mutual concern, they reached a comprehensive agreement on five main agendas. Following is 'Initiatives of the joint declaration'.

- ( 1) The South and North, as masters of national unification, will join hands in efforts to resolve the issue of national unification independently.
- ( 2) Acknowledging that the different formulas that the North and South favor for reunification have common factors, they will strive to work together to achieve this goal.
- ( 3) The South and North will exchange groups of dispersed family members and their relatives

around Aug.15 and resolve as soon as possible humanitarian issues, including the repatriation of communist prisoners who have completed their terms in jail.

- ( 4 ) The South and North will pursue a balanced development of their national economies and build mutual trust by accelerating exchange in the social, cultural, sports, health and environmental sectors.
- ( 5 ) In order to put these agreements into practice, the South and North will hold a dialogue between government authorities at an early date. President Kim Dae-jung cordially invited National Defense Commission chairman Kim Jong Il to visit Seoul and he agreed to do that at an appropriate time<sup>87</sup>.

In the five-part accord, the two Koreas have agreed to work for reunification and acknowledged 'Common factors' in their approaches to reunification and consensus to operate channels of dialogue between the government authorities. On the international front, in the meantime, the Pyongyang summit has caught the world by surprise and drawn keen interest from the international community. Specifically, the United States, Japan and China have shown particular interest in the evolution of the historic event and have sent words of encouragement.

The Pyongyang summit did not just "happen"<sup>88</sup>. It developed as a result of careful planning in South Korea and of a convergence of several factors in North Korea. President Kim Dae-jung's priority, which was to lay the foundation for a new set of relationships with his neighbors: China, Russia, Japan, and to create a new dynamic with North Korea to remove the Cold War structure, was very

clear even before his inauguration.

However, it seems the world powers are watching the process and results of the talks with both expectation and apprehension in view of their potential effects on their nations. As a whole, it is natural that the interested countries, to varying degrees, are not inclined to wish for any rapid, radical development of the Korean situation that could affect the balance of power in Northeast Asia as well as the current regional order<sup>89</sup>.

The current diplomatic effort of South Korea is President Kim Dae-Jung's policy of "Constructive Engagement" with North Korea( more commonly referred to as the "Sunshine Policy").<sup>90</sup> Its declared principles are that South Korea "will not tolerate armed provocations of any kind and , " "does not intend to absorb North Korea". This comprehensive strategy embraces both cooperation and deterrence<sup>91</sup>. Both Korean states are committed to the ideal of reunification, which is a universal aspiration of the people in both north and south. Reunification is probable in the long run. However, fixing the terms of reunification poses seemingly insurmountable problems<sup>92</sup>.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Woo-Keun. Han, *The History of Korea*( Seoul, Korea: The Eul-Yoo Publishing Company, 1970) . Refer this source for detailed explanation of Korean History.
- <sup>2</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, *A Panorama of 5000 years: Korean History*( Seoul, Korea: Hollym, 1987) , p. 42.
- <sup>3</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, op. cit., p. 51.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*( Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1993) , p. 270.
- <sup>5</sup> Korea is a peninsula, roughly the size of New York and Pennsylvania combined. Strategically located between

- the greater powers of China, Japan and Russia. Korea has suffered, nine hundred great and small invasions, in its two thousand years of recorded history and five major periods of foreign occupation-by China, the Mongols, Japan and after W.W. II, the United States and the Soviet Union. [See Von Oberdorfer, *The Two Korea: A Contemporary History*( Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997), p. 3].
- <sup>6</sup> Von Oberdorfer, op. cit., p. 5.
- <sup>7</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 100.
- <sup>8</sup> Ki-Baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, translated by Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz( Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 373.
- <sup>9</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, *Introduction to Korean History and Culture*( Seoul, Korea: Hollym, 1993), p. 214.
- <sup>10</sup> Colin Mason, *A Short History of Asia*( New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) p. 274.
- <sup>11</sup> J. M. Roberts, *History of the World*, third edition ( London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 1000.
- <sup>12</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, *Korean Politics: The Quest for Democratization and Economic development*( Ithaca: Cornell university Press, 1999), p. 25. Between 1945 and 1948 the United States provided \$409 million in relief funds to South Korea.
- <sup>13</sup> Ki-Baikl Lee, op. cit., pp. 378-379. At that time the Korean constitution prescribed that the president be elected indirectly, by the National Assembly.
- <sup>14</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 271.
- <sup>15</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society*, third edition( Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 152 Five of the amendments-1960, 1963, 1972, 1980, and 1987-constituted essentially new constitutions.
- <sup>16</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., p. 31. Dr. Rhee was educated at George Washington, Harvard, and Princeton universities.
- <sup>17</sup> National Security Law was promulgated on December 1, 1948 [John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., pp. 36-37.] to control the activities of "antistate" organizations in South Korea. The law's ostensible purpose is to protect national security, but it has frequently been applied selectively to punish domestic dissidents. The law was amended in May 1991 to limit offenses to those that would "endanger the security of the nation or basic order of liberal democracy,"[Donald Stone Macdonald op. cit., pp. 294-295.]
- <sup>18</sup> Von Oberdorfer, op. cit., p. 8. The Korean War was the first ever to be fought by the United Nations in response to an act of aggression by a communist state. For the Korean people, the three-year conflict was a colossal human tragedy leading to a permanently divided peninsula in which ten million people remain separated from their families. {See Brian Catchpole, *The Korean War: 1950-1953*( New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 346-347}.
- <sup>19</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, op. cit., pp. 282-283.
- <sup>20</sup> At that time, the tenure of the presidency was the four years.
- <sup>21</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., p. 44.
- <sup>22</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, op. cit., pp. 287-288.
- <sup>23</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority*( Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 219.
- <sup>24</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
- <sup>25</sup> Andrew C. Nahm, op. cit., p. 300.
- <sup>26</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 272.
- <sup>27</sup> Kwangju incident of May 1980. Also called the "Kwangju uprising," the "Kwangju massacre," and the "Kwangju Democratization Movement." A violent ten-day confrontation in May 1980 between martial law troops under the control of military strongman Chun Doo-Hwan and anti-martial law demonstrators in which about 200( by government estimates) Kwangju citizens were killed. Human rights groups typically put the death toll much higher. Fallout from the Kwangju incident hobbled the Chun and Roh regimes and ultimately led to Chun's arrest in 1995. [see, Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 294].
- <sup>28</sup> Von Oberdorfer, op. cit., p. 163.
- <sup>29</sup> Von Oberdofer, op. cit., p. 161.



- <sup>30</sup> Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*( New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 389.
- <sup>31</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., p. 110. President Rhee, of the First Republic, was ousted from office through the student uprising of 1960: the Second Republic of Premier Chang was overthrown by the military coup led by Park in 1961, Park in turn was assassinated in 1979; and Chun had seized power through another coup in 1979.
- <sup>32</sup> The presidential term is five years, and no one is allowed to seek a second term. This single-term provision is a safeguard for preventing anyone from holding the reins of government power for a protracted period of time.
- <sup>33</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 273.
- <sup>34</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*( Seoul: Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service, 1998), p. 154.
- <sup>35</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 124.
- <sup>36</sup> Large South Korean business conglomerates, engaged through their component units in many lines of industry, which have played key roles in the export drive of the Republic of Korea from the mid-1960's. Well-known examples are Hyundai, Samsung, and Daewoo.
- <sup>37</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., pp. 119-120.
- <sup>38</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 126.
- <sup>39</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., p. 174.
- <sup>40</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 155.
- <sup>41</sup> John Kie-Chiang Oh, op. cit., pp. 154.
- <sup>42</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 151, p.214.
- <sup>43</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 242.
- <sup>44</sup> Byung-Kook Kim, "The Politics of Crisis and a Crisis of Politics; The Presidency of Kim Dai-Jung " [Kongdan Oh ed.] *Korea Briefing 1997-1999*( New York; M.E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 36.
- <sup>45</sup> Colin Mason, op. cit., p. 276.
- <sup>46</sup> *A Handbook of Korea*, op. cit., p. 237.
- <sup>47</sup> "Chaebol" is a family-owned and managed group of companies that exercises monopolistic control in product lines and industries. The Korean model of strong state-business coordination, huge concentration in the economy and cheap-labor cost advantages remains alive and well. [See Bruce Cumings, op. cit., p. 326, p. 331.]
- <sup>48</sup> Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse; The Future of the Two Koreas*( Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2000), p. 232.
- <sup>49</sup> *The Korea Times*, Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 2000.
- <sup>50</sup> Alice H. Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant; South Korea and Late Industrialization*( Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 215.
- <sup>51</sup> Colin Mason, op., p. 275.
- <sup>52</sup> Lawrence C. Mayer with John H. Burnett, Suzanne Ogdenn, John P. Tuman, *Comparative Politics; Nations and Theories in a Changing World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.( New Jersey; Prentice Hall, 2001), pp.75-76.
- <sup>53</sup> Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*( New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 245.
- <sup>54</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*( Norman; University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 300.
- <sup>55</sup> Dorothy J. Solinger, "Ending One-Party Dominance: Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, *Journal of Democracy*" ( Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, January 2001, volume 12, number 1), pp. 39-40.
- <sup>56</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 73.
- <sup>57</sup> Lawrence C. Mayer, op. cit., p. 221.
- <sup>58</sup> James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organization* ( New York; Wiley and Sons, 1958), pp. 138-139.
- <sup>59</sup> James G. March, "Bounded Rationality, Ambiguity, and the Engineering of Choice", *Decision making* [David E. Bell, Howard Raifa and Amos Tversky eds.]( New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 35.
- <sup>60</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 135.
- <sup>61</sup> Lucian W. Pye, op. cit., p. 223.
- <sup>62</sup> Israel Scheffler, *Of Human Potential: An Essay in the Philosophy of Education*( Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 122.
- <sup>63</sup> Nicholas Rescher, *Distributive Justice*( New York: The



- Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.), p. 5.
- <sup>64</sup> Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Cambridge Mass.: Basic Book, Inc., 1974), p. 183.
- <sup>65</sup> Richard Hudelson, *Modern Political Philosophy* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), p. 81.
- <sup>66</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 53.
- <sup>67</sup> The World Bank, *World Development Report: Attacking Poverty* (Washington D.C.: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 167. And *The World Bank, East Asia: Recovery and Beyond* (Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2000), p. 117.
- <sup>68</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, G. Gingham Powell, Jr., Robert J. Mundt, *Comparative Politics: A Theoretical Framework*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1996), p. 184.
- <sup>69</sup> Gosta Esping Andersen, "After the golden Age? Welfare State Dilemmas in a Global Economy", *Welfare States in Transition* [Gosta Esping Andersen ed.] (London: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 23.
- <sup>70</sup> Doo-Won Lee, "South Korea's Financial Crisis and Economic Restructuring", *Korea Briefing 1997-1999* [Kongdan Oh ed.] (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>71</sup> Fred W. Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society* (Boston: Houghton - Mifflin, 1964), p. 102.
- <sup>72</sup> Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 1996), pp. 100-101.
- <sup>73</sup> Fred W. Riggs employs the word "sala," used in Spanish and other languages (including Arabic and Thai) to refer to various kinds of rooms, among them government offices, thus suggesting the "interlocking mixture of the diffracted office and the fused chamber which we can identify as the prismatic bureau." [Fred W. Riggs, op. cit., p. 318.]
- <sup>74</sup> Ferrel Heady, op. cit., p. 105.
- <sup>75</sup> Michael Breen, *The Koreans: Who they are, What they want, where their future lies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 238.
- <sup>76</sup> Doh Chull Shin, *Mass Politics and Culture in Democratizing Korea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 263.
- <sup>77</sup> Michael Breen, op. cit., p. 234.
- <sup>78</sup> Byung-Kook Kim, "Korea's Crisis of Success", *Democracy in East Asia* [Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner eds.] (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 129-130.
- <sup>79</sup> *The Korea Times*, Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup> 2000.
- <sup>80</sup> Three Kingdoms Period: A period of three or more centuries when three Korean states coexisted in the Korean peninsula-Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla. Silla unified much of the peninsula by conquering the other two kingdoms in A.D. 668. [Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 298.]
- <sup>81</sup> Kevin Keating, *Passport Korea* (California: World Trade Press, 1998), p. 24.
- <sup>82</sup> Boye Lafayette De Mente, *Korean Etiquette & Ethics in Business* (Chicago NTC Business Books, 1994), pp. 27-28.
- <sup>83</sup> Dorothy J. Solinger, op. cit., p. 35.
- <sup>84</sup> *The Korean Herald*, Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000; Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000; Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000; Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000; *The New York Times Weekly Review*, Sunday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2000. *The Japan Times*, Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2000.
- <sup>85</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "South-North Reconciliation and 21<sup>st</sup> Century N.E. Asian International strategic Relations", *Korea Observer* (Seoul: The Institute of Korean Studies, vol. 31, no. 4, Winter 2000), p. 635.
- <sup>86</sup> Editorial, *Mainichi Daily News*, June 17, 2000.
- <sup>87</sup> "Initiatives of the joint declaration", Associate Press, delivered by *Mainichi Daily News*, June 16, 2000.
- <sup>88</sup> Opinion, A special section produced in cooperation with the Yomiuri Shimbun, *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2000.
- <sup>89</sup> *The Korea Times*, Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup> 2000.
- <sup>90</sup> Ralph A. Cossa and Alan Oxley, "The U. S. —Korea

Alliance”, *America’s Asian Alliance* [Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb eds.]( Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 65.

<sup>91</sup> “President Kim Dae-Jung Commemorates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Republic of Korea”, *Korea Update*, Vol.9, No.6( August 15<sup>th</sup> 1998), p. 4.

<sup>92</sup> Donald Stone Macdonald, op. cit., p. 234.

