

Civil Society and Eurocentrism in Korean Democratization: A Critique from a Political Leadership Perspective*

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This paper is a critical examination of democratization process in Korea by reviewing two recent articles from a political leadership perspective, seeking to find new research themes for future Korean studies. Leadership is real in our social and political lives, but it has been neglected in modern political science and particularly by most Korean political writers. Political leadership and the state was no more than structural constraint in civil society-led historical process, and its existence and function were completely ignored in the liberalist model of development. But, the author, criticizing too much idealization of liberal democracy and the neglect of Korean tradition and experiences, suggests that we should take issue of leadership culture or morality for a healthy institutionalization of political democracy, and that we should develop new theories and models out of Korean experiences of modernization. In the self-referential approach, the author argues that Korean political scientists would analyze and assess how the political leaders as problem-solvers 'dictate' or manage the developmental process; that politics may be regarded, not as a simple management of interests or power relations, but as a visionary function attempting to build an ideal society' ; and that one may reformulate a Korean theory of ideal state based upon some Korean universal and humanitarian values.

Keywords: political leadership, civil society, Eurocentrism, democracy

* This paper was presented at The First Joint Conference of UC Center of Korean studies and The Academy of Korean studies on May 7-8, 2001, University of California, Berkeley.

1. Introduction: Democratization and Political Leadership

The last fifteen years or so beginning with the so-called June 1987 Uprising can be appraised as the most democratic period in Korea's contemporary history. During this time, Korea has experienced the politics of democratization undertaken by two presidents, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung. In 1993 Kim Young-sam was elected the first civilian president since 1961, and the election of Kim Dae-jung in December 1997 marked the first peaceful transfer of government power to an opposition party.

Today, Koreans can feel proud of their successful democratic transition. However, at the same time, many Koreans remain greatly dissatisfied with the current state of democracy in their country. Some demand further democratization, while others are turning away from politics torn by perennial regionalism and factionalism. They are deeply disappointed with the mismanagement of public policies and the corruption of leaders and elite. Political distrust and moral hazards prevail in the 'democratic and plural' Korean society. As such, nowadays in Korea, the pace and extent of democratization still falls below the expectations of the general populace. What are the reasons for this perception?

To this question, some may indicate several institutional or structural constraints in the Korean polity. But I think that in regards to modernization or political development in 'latecomer' countries, leadership factors are more important than institutional or structural ones. Leadership is one of the most tangible phenomena in political and social behavior, and politics by leadership is a distinguishing feature of the twentieth century with pressing needs arising from economic instability, war, and technological change. In this vein, politics can be considered, not merely as a power-struggle among "power-hungers," but as a problem-solving process in which leaders and elite "work and

1. But, ironically enough, leadership was neglected by most American political scientists. Along with Tucker, Paige (1977) and Burns (1978) are pioneering contributors to leadership studies in modern political science. And throughout the 1980s and 1990s up to 2000, political scientists in the fields of comparative politics and political philosophy have published a number of books on leadership, some of which can be cited as follows: Barbara Kellerman, ed. (1984, 1986); Joseph C. Rost (1991); Taketsugu Tsurutani and Jack B. Gabbert (1992); Robert Elgie (1995); and Timothy Fuller (2000).

compete” for popular support. It has been suggested that politics as leadership is an activity with utility for the polis and an activity of giving direction to the community of citizens in the management of their common affairs (Tucker 1981: 15-19).¹ Particularly in non-Western countries like Korea, the impact of political leadership upon the development process is quite salient. Thus a political leadership approach to third world modernization was attempted, and it was argued that the impact of elite and political leaders to the developmental process should be discerned from that of the masses; moreover, it is more reasonable to postulate that the extent or speed of political development would be dependent upon political leaders’ intent, will, and cultural characteristics (Chung 1995: 193-222; Shin 1995: 317-360).

Based upon this observation, with a view to finding new research themes for future Korean studies and providing a more sound understanding of modern Korean politics of democratization, I will critically review two recent articles written by Korean political theorists from a leadership viewpoint. The leadership approach has been neglected in modern political science and this oversight has been repeated by a number of American-educated Korean political scientists in their analysis and evaluation of modern Korean politics (Chung 1997: 25-29). The papers to be reviewed are Professor Choi Jang-jip’s “Democratization, Civil Society, and The Civil Social Movement in Korea” (2000) and Professor Kang Jung-in’s “Some Reflections on Recent Democratization in South Korea” (2000). In the following sections, I will summarize the main ideas in each paper and make a few critical assessments from a leadership perspective. My conclusion includes a brief summary and some tentative research topics for future Korean studies.

2. For a Successful Civil Society-led Democratization

Professor Choi Jang-jip examines the significance of the Citizens’ Alliance for the 2000 General Elections (CAGE), rejection campaigns against ‘immoral’ and ‘unfit’ candidates, and analyzes its causes, characteristics, and influences on democratization in Korea. At first, Choi discerns three features of political society that have structurally hindered Korea in carrying out democratization through political repre-

sentation: “the existence of an indigenous and autonomous political elite cartel,” “the lack of democracy within the party,” and “collaboration across the party lines to protect vested interests” (29-33). He explains that the CAGE movement was successful in making “an epochal change” in Korean politics because it took issue with “the problems of procedural democracy;” the target of reform was not just the political parties and the elite in political society, but the establishment and its vested interests in Korean society; its central support basis was the so-called 386 generation, who had participated in and supported the June 1987 Uprising, and utilized cyberspace in mobilizing popular support for the movement; and finally the people’s government has a congenial relationship with pro-democracy forces (44-49).

He also discussed the political consequences and limitations of the CAGE movement. Due to the campaigns, a number of younger candidates succeeded in entering the political circle, and many of the parliamentary seats were filled by new professional and intellectual elites who had no relationship with the previous regimes. However, the movement did not help in increasing the voting rate, and some pessimistic observers argued that the negative focus on disclosing past records of individual candidates only deepened voters’ negative view of the political community and elite and reinforced their negative attitudes toward politics (49-50).

Yet, in his conclusion Choi assessed the roles of the CAGE movement for democratization positively. First, it contributed greatly to resolving the crisis of democratic politics created by the dilemma inherent in democracy itself and the failure of representative politics in Korea. Second, the CAGE movement was also significant in supplementing the unsatisfactory reformative role of the state during the period of democratic consolidation. As a ‘progressive’ political scientist, Choi did not fail to indicate that “there are yet formidable structural constraints that make it difficult for the government alone to forge ahead with democratic reforms,” and that “the Korean civil society is still weak and the civil social movement must be further developed” (54-56).

From a clear theoretical perspective, Choi analyzes CAGE’s rejection and defeat movement as a typical case of a civil social movement for democratization in contemporary Korea, and it seems that he anti-

pates a successful civil society-led democratization which would challenge the Korean establishment and its vested interest as a whole. In his analysis of Korean democratization, it seems that he does not acknowledge the proper role of the state or political society. Yet if we agree that our concerns are not merely a spectator's 'perfect' observation of Korean democratization in terms of a specific theoretical perspective, but a practitioner's search of *what is to be done?* for the institutionalization of democracy, some critiques can be made from these problem-solving concerns.

First, while those who are critical of the rejection campaign argue that there was a "conspiracy" between the civil social movement leaders and the incumbent government to stage the rejection campaign, professor Choi simply acknowledges that the people's government has a "congenial" relationship with pro-democracy forces. But, as a matter of fact, President Kim Dae-jung was more than congenial. President Kim supported and encouraged the CAGE campaigns publicly, holding fast to his conviction that the participation of civic forces was necessary to compensate for the shortcomings of politicians incapable of resolving their own problems. He added that "civic group participation in political affairs is a reflection of historical exigencies." He also disclosed his intention to take the blacklist into consideration when nominating his party's parliamentary candidates.²

Yet, President Kim's remarks turned out to be a violation of election laws. This year in January, the Supreme Court declared the unprecedented "rejection campaign" launched by CAGE had been illegal, and warned that in a democracy the end does not always justify the means.³ This demonstrates that for the healthy institutionalization of political democracy, political leaders should be exemplars of practicing the principle of the "rule of law." It is not unfair to state that Korea's democratization has been delayed because political leaders have not been willing to abide by laws and regulations; they have not demonstrated to their follower-citizens what democracy is and what they are supposed to do for the shared goal of democratization. For sound democratization, political leaders should intentionally take initiatives in

2. *Korea Times*, January 26, 2000.

3. *Korea Herald*, January 29, 2001.

complying with laws and regulations. Yet, Choi's *structural* interpretation overlooks the crucial importance of leadership's role of being a legal exemplar in the democratization process.

Second, Choi admits that structural constraints are still formidable and civil society is weak, and thus the presence of newly-appointed lawmakers in the National Assembly through such rejection campaigns does not guarantee the development of party politics. He also argues that "the problem is not the (moral) qualifications of individual candidates, but institutionalized mechanisms of the electoral system" (50-51). Yet a brief examination of modern Korean politics reveals that what matters most is not the laws and institutions, but rather leaders and the elite. They were expected to comply with laws and regulations and be moral and democratic in their socio-political behavior. For the successful institutionalization of democracy, the mere transplantation of democratic institutions is not enough; this should be accompanied with democratic culture or habits on the part of political leaders and their unyielding will to make the democratic system "work" and "function."

Third, in Korean society, the word, "political" has no positive value, but at the same time, political value takes precedence over all other values and is actually the most powerful and highly desired value. Thus, the political culture of Korean society is characterized neither by the negative view that political value has no morality, nor by the positive view that it is superior to any other value. I think this ironical and ambiguous coexistence of contradicting views of politics has resulted from a far-fetched structuralist and realist view of politics as a power-struggle, by which the role of leadership and the political implication of morality is disregarded. Thus, political opportunism and vulgar pragmatism prevail in Korean politics. The conventional conception of politics as a mere power-struggle among private individuals has blinded us to the crucial role of power in politics and hence to the pivotal role of leadership (Burns 1978: 11). Now, for the sake of making Korean politics more healthy, we may have to turn to Robert C. Tucker's creative suggestion of a "leadership approach," which criticizes the conventional "power-oriented analysis" and emphasizes political leaders' vision and problem-solving abilities (Tucker 1981: 12). Leading and leadership have already become "a central theme of everyday conversation and

debate and a central topic of academic study” (Fuller 2000: 3).

Fourth, Choi admits that Korean civil society is still weak and the civil social movement must be further developed; he stated additionally that even the civil social movement, no different from politicals, is highly dependent upon the elite and key activists within its centralized structure (56). Yet, if we acknowledge the fact that Korea has ‘always’ been ruled by strong government or authoritarian presidents, and that power in organizations is centralized, not to mention the iron rule of oligarchy, Choi’s critical assessment of Korea’s weak civil society and its dependency upon key activists seem to be irrelevant. One might argue that he is “too theoretical” in his approach to Korean experience. Thus, in order to understand Korean democratization better, I think we may have to place more attention, not on “who gets what and how,” but rather on “what leader uses what and how and for what?” Instead of being preoccupied with a theoretical interpretation for a successful civil society-led process of democratization, we have to examine how and for what those dictators or authoritarian presidents have ‘dictated.’ Since sufficient theoretical explanations or empirical tests which would “hyperfactualize” the Korean experiences have been conducted, (56) now we need to examine why the strong Korean state could not successfully accomplish the institutionalization of democracy and what were the strengths or weaknesses of former and present Korean presidents, especially comparing with those in other Asian nations, for example, Singapore and the Philippines.

3. Eurocentric Politics of Liberal Democracy

In his paper Professor Kang Jung-in (2000), with a brief summary of the recent political history of South Korea since the late-nineteenth century, presents thoughtful reflections on the Korean experience of democratic transition, comparing it with the Western experience along with the theme of Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is an intellectual bias which reflects European superiority, European universalism, and Westernization / modernization thesis (196). Referring to the South Korean experience of the politics of liberal democracy since 1945, Kang describes the Eurocentric characteristics of democratization in latecom-

er countries as follows.

First, while changes Western nations experienced historically were caused predominantly by internal dynamics and logic, those in Korean society were necessitated by external pressure and dynamics. Thus changes in Korean society in have shown a dualistic nature, both teleological and causal, and historically, “democratization” in Korea has gained more attention and emphasis than the “Koreanization” of democracy (202-203). As a result, although Koreans make much of democracy, it has enjoyed a derivative legitimacy rather than an original and internal kind over the last fifty years. Thus, liberal democracy in Korea was nothing more than a borrowed cultural mode which represented the seemingly ideal system of the United States—the libetor—and democracy was not able to take deep root in the minds of politicians or the people (206-207).

Second, although even for European countries democracy and political stability are not old but recent acquisitions, the Korean elite and scholars have shown a tendency to make “too much idealization” of democratization in the West. They seem to suggest that while democratization in Europe began relatively early and proceeded rather smoothly, steadily and peacefully, Korean experience of modernization was deviant and perverse. They evaluate Korean democratization in the light of the doctored “historical” version of Western democratization, and subsequently internalize deep self-contempt and self-humiliation (“After all, we cannot!”). This too idealized vision of Western democratization played contradictory functions for Koreans; they were firmly determined to pursue the universal ideal of democratization at any cost, while democracy was often projected as an unattainable utopia beyond their reach, because their reality appeared all the more shameful and wretched (209-210).

Third, Kang explains that liberal democracy in modern Korea has been perceived as conservative due to the U.S.-Soviet Cold War confrontation, the political ‘success’ of pro-Japanese strata and anticommunist forces, the three years’ internecine Korean War, and ensuing authoritarian regimes (218-219). He also finds that Korean traditional cultures are more resistant to liberalism than to democracy, and judges that liberalism’s potential contribution to democracy has not been fully realized yet. He also summarizes the Asian values debates between Lee

Kuan Yew and Kim Dae-jung and admits that one notable characteristic of Asian-style democracy is “democracy without alternation among competing parties.” Yet, while seeing the recent government turnovers by peaceful and fair elections in South Korea in 1997 and in Taiwan in March 2000, Kang concludes that “the so-called Asian-style democracy is a cursory and precarious theorization at best” (222).

Korean democracy may not be satisfactory in light of the democratic ideals and advanced reality of Western democracies. Nonetheless, Kang believes the Korean reality as of the year 2000 to be “quite encouraging,” considering that it has taken more than two hundred years for the West to evolve into its currently existing democracies. He finally suggests, it seems, that an essential question which Korean political scientists and political practitioners have to ask is “how to perpetuate the ideal of democracy and translate it into viable reality without succumbing to easy disillusionment and cynicism.” Kang’s critique of the Korean experience of democratic transition deserves to be commended and it helps rediscover the ‘true’ nature of the politics of liberal democracy in modern Korea. Yet, his viewpoints can be criticized from a leadership perspective.

First, despite his critical assessment of the Korean experience of democratic transition from the Eurocentrism perspective it seems that Kang himself remains Eurocentric, particularly because he has not paid due attention to the crucial role of political leadership or “the political” in the democratization process. American political science has lacked conceptual focus on leadership behavior particularly due to the striking influence of the European intellectual tradition: the evolutionary determinism of Darwin, the psychological determinism of Freud, and the economic determinism of Marx. Thus, politicians have been viewed as “pygmies” or an “insignificant part of the system” (Paige 1977: 39-40). Yet, in the developmental politics of non-Western latecomer countries, political leadership has been “the pacification engineer, the initiator of new political order, and the creator of a new society” (Tsurutani 1974: 175). But in his analysis of Korean politics, Kang does not consider the various and significant roles of authoritarian dictators or democratic presidents in the democratic transition period. If it is true that even in the so-called democratized Kim Young-sam government (1993-1997), Koreans witnessed the same concentration of political power in the

hands of the president and his personal proteges as in the preceding military-authoritarian regimes, we may well have to ask how and for what they utilize their given and concentrated power in their management of state affairs, instead of simply criticizing their authoritarian power-wielding.

Second, Kang finds that democracy came to acquire legitimacy and moral supremacy among political leaders and the general populace through the repetition of hypocritical announcements made by the ruling elite, such as “We are practicing democracy” and negative confirmations made by the opposition forces, such as “It is not a democracy at all.” And Kang assessed that the incumbent government was “forced” to add such adjectives as “Korean style of,” “administrative,” and “national” to “democracy” just “to bridge the glaring gap between Korean political reality and the universal idea of democracy” (217). But, this sort of assessment may lead concerned students of Korean politics to underestimate President Park Chung-hee’s “self-referential”⁴ critique of the Confucian culture of the Chosŏn dynasty and the ‘democratic’ politics of modern Korea and his justification of an “administrative democracy” or “Korean-style democracy.” Of course, Park was a developmental dictator who oppressed many anti-government activists and opposition leaders. But it might be a methodological mistake for students of Korean politics to disregard his practical approach to political modernization which had been based upon the traditional Confucian lesson that a “full belly makes men courteous and moral”⁵ and his so-called “*t’aengja namu*” theory of democracy emphasizing cultural and historical differences between Korea and Western countries.⁶

Third, in a balanced account of the Asian values debate, Kang

4. This concept was suggested by Moon Syng-ek (2000), especially 71-82. According to him, a “self-referential” approach is concerned with an intellectual and practical attempt to solve problems by making “self-needs” satisfied, according to the specific situation.
5. This view is almost same with Seymour. M. Lipset’s theory of modernization that puts economic development prior to political democracy. See Lipset (1960) and Pye (1966). Recently, a Korean scholar, Kim Sang-gi, argued that “it is morally imperative that the people of poor countries overcome the absolute poverty that stifles all their human potential, because nothing is more violent than poverty,” and admitted that the decisive factor in Asia’s explosive progress has been strong leadership, a ‘Modern Prince’ (Kim Sang-gi 1998: 223-224)

understands that advocates of Asian values have been subject to the criticism that Asian values are upheld to mask political leaders' authoritarian and corrupt rule, and the critics of Asian values tend to forget that Asian democracies are still in the making, and his conclusion is that the "so-called Asian style democracy is a cursory and precarious theorization at best" (222). However, here we may have to understand that leaders and elite in Asian countries are not or have not been engaged in a theoretical experiment of venturing to find *theoria* or the truth. For Asian leaders and elite, the politics of Asian values is not merely an object for scientific observation or theoretical explanation, but a real and un-repeating "human enterprise" by which they have to achieve national goals of survival and progress. Hence, what we need is not just a theoretical explanation or empirical verification but a sincere examination of how various types of the politics of Asian values have been carried out, as a particular case or in a comparative approach.

4. Conclusion: Summary & Suggestions

Leadership is very real in our social and political lives. Its role and function are indispensable not only for economic progress but also in the democratization process. Political leaders operate within an environment which will both structure their behavior and constrain their freedom of action; additionally, they have the opportunity to shape the environment in which they operate, giving them the potential to leave

6. Thus, now we may be able to assess that President Park had considered the importance of continuity in the fabric of any society, and according to professor Tsurutani, this consideration is germane in the use of such terms as "development," "growth," and "modernization" —all terms that connote not transfiguration or metamorphosis but rather the maturing, the unfolding of potentials, and the adaptiveness. Tsurutani went further saying that "tradition and modernity need not and should not be rendered mutually exclusive; the process of national development is not a process of total re-creation, nor is it one of complete severance from one generic category of existence and headlong espousal of another, altogether noble one; what in fact takes place in the transitional period of development and modernization is that a society develops into a functionally and substantively superior, adaptively and operationally more sophisticated society without at the same time losing its generic links and autochthonic characteristics" (Tsurutani 1974: 176-177).

their mark upon the system. Political leaders and environment interact in the democratic system (Elgie 1995: 5-8). Yet, both 'progressive' Choi and 'liberalist' Kang have neglected the role of political leadership or the state⁷ in the Korean democratization process: political leadership or the state was no more than structural constraint in the civil society-led historical process, and its existence and function were completely ignored in the liberalist model of development. From this critical review, I would like to suggest some tentative ideas for future thought.

First, we must take issue of leadership culture or morality for a healthy and effective institutionalization of political democracy in Korea. Limits on power in a democratic system are basically of two kinds: moral and constitutional. But in contemporary political analyses constitutional or institutional limits have been focal points, and thus now we need moral and cultural limits on power for a healthy institutionalization of the democratic system. The health of political order depends upon the moral rectitude of its members, and the greatness of Machiavelli's thought depends on the tension inherent in the idea that there is a moral law, but rulers on occasion must break the law (Tinder 1995: 133-135). The Czech President, Vaclav Havel, defines politics as "morality in the practice" (Havel 1997) American President Franklin D. Roosevelt stressed that "the presidency is preeminently a place of moral leadership" (Bruns 1978: xi).

In developing countries, economic growth—the quantitative multiplication of material wealth—has been pursued at the expense of moral development (Harrison 1985: 427). From this aspect, leadership culture and morality in modern Korean politics and political education for the people at large must be reviewed. The democratic system can be an effective means to meet popular demands and expectations only when it is operated by democratic and moral people. Contemporary Korean politics are badly in need of new leadership culture that can create socio-political trust among those who are disappointed and frustrated with the current situation. In this context, we could reexamine

7. In Korea, the developmental state consists of a "strong" president and an "obedient" bureaucracy, and thus, it may well be said that a large part of the influence and power of the state originate from presidential leadership: policy initiatives, decision-making power, and policy-execution.

the traditional Confucian *sŏnbi* culture, as a model for Korean leadership culture. Historical assessment of the *sŏnbi* tradition is still somewhat unclear, with both positive and negative interpretations coexisting. Nonetheless, I believe, now is the time for students of Korean studies, especially social scientists, to create an analytic model of *sŏnbi* culture for pragmatic application in democratic citizenship education.⁸

Second, since most Korean political scientists have been engaged in “hyperfactual generalizations” by applying Western theories and models to Korean practice, they are infected by a sort of intellectual “self-frigidity,” and thus producing political knowledge of Korea which is irrelevant or far from reality (Ahn 1987: 481-482). Under these circumstances, the worst mistake students of Korean politics can make is to read into Korean politics what they see in the contemporary political process of Western countries.⁹ Those who are familiar with Korean political history will recognize the limited usefulness of the analytic dichotomy of civil society/state and liberalist account of Korean politics and culture.

Now it may well be argued that we must not repeat “the principle of a *drunkard’s search*” by studying Korean political phenomena with a pre-chosen research method, rather than selecting a proper method according to the situation (Kaplan 1963: 11; Kim Hong-u 2000: 714). We must develop new theories and models out of the Korean experiences of modernization and democratization, by which we will be able to help create a scientific description or explanation of neighboring latecomers in Asia that share similar historical backgrounds. In addition, applying a self-referential approach, we could rewrite the political processes of national foundation, modernization, and democratization, with due analytic focus on the “authoritarian” political leaders, Syngman Rhee, Chang Myon, Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan, Rho

8. Some studies of Korean *sŏnbi* culture have been attempted in the fields of history, humanities, and journalism. Chong Ok-ja, et al. (1998); Yi Kyu-tae (1988); Park Byung-ryun, et al. (2001); Chung Yong-hwa (2001).
9. The late professor Hahm Pyong-choon had already pointed out that the past Korean studies had been carried out with two assumptions: one is the “something had gone wrong with Korean politics” and the other is “whatever is wrong with Korean politics at present is due to bad influences from the past.” He argued that this cultural bias hinders a sound understanding of Korean politics and culture and thus, the past of Korea must be understood in its own right (Hahm 1975: 329, 355).

Tae-woo, Kim Young-sam, and Kim Dae-jung. asking such questions as, “as problem-solvers how did the political leaders ‘dictate’ or manage the developmental processes.”¹⁰

Third, do we still have to assess Korean politics *only* in terms of “imported” liberal democracy? Modern Koreans are familiar with the political term, liberal democracy, but, it seems they still feel ‘strange’ with its individualistic orientation and anti-state tendencies. I am not sure that community and relation-oriented Koreans¹¹ accept it as the only political ideology for which they and their posterity can dedicate their lives. One might even argue that, as a matter of fact, modern Korea has been governed by non-Marxist ‘socialist’ regimes that have maintained the principle of state-intervention and communitarian doctrines. Korea’s ‘free’ market has always been exposed to governmental and political interruptions. We may argue that Korean politics is still in the middle of postwar ideological chaos. Historically in modern Korean politics of liberal democracy, neither “top-down” nor “bottom-up” attempts for socio-political transformation have been successful, and no ‘liberal democratic’ political leaders have attempted ideological innovations with a view to narrowing the gap between its theory and practice. That’s why one could even argue that “politics, at least in contemporary Korea, may be regarded not as a simple *status quo*-oriented management of interests or power relations, but as a visionary function attempting to build an ideal society” (Kim U-chang 2000: 224).

It follows that we can explore a new political vision for a more efficient leap in the global market. Political leaders are expected to provide their followers/people with a vision that includes definitions of an

10. In this concern, the author has examined the politics of Asian values in Singapore with emphasis of Lee Kuan Yew’s leadership. See Chung Yoon-jae Chung, “Lee Kuan Yew’s Leadership for the Politics of Asian Values: The Singapore Case and Its Implications for Korea,” A paper presented for 2000 Annual Meeting of International Leadership Association, Toronto, Canada, November 3-5, 2000.

11. Koreans did not seek the ultimate meaning of life in their relationship with God. If there were a salvation for them, it was to be found in man’s relationship with other human beings, not with God. They were supposed to have a “trans-individual” conception of the self by modern Korean political thinkers; they think human beings are interrelated with each other, or even with the Divine or lifeless rocks in the mountain, not considering themselves as “isolated centers” in the universe (Hahm 1975: 338; Chung Yoon-jae 1999: 260-284).

ordered society, ideals, and values to be pursued. Anticipating the future of a unified Korea, one may reformulate a theory of a Korean ideal state based upon some universal and integrative values found in Korean tradition. Or, we can make the politics of liberal democracy more healthy by adjusting it to Korean values and ideals. In this age of democracy and globalism, we can interpret that the principle of *hong'ik in'gan chaese ihwa* (弘益人間 在世理化), the ultimate political goal in our national foundation myth, involves good humanitarian values for global enlightenment. Shin Ch' ae-ho's concepts of *a* (我, I) and *pia* (非我, non-I) may be flexibly applied in the global politics of identity-seeking and free competition. An Chae-hong's holistic concept of politics, *tasari*, which integrates systematically contending Western values—freedom to speak and equality for common well-being—may fit the post-Cold War politics of accommodation and well-being. Cho So-ang's *samgyun chuui* (三均主義) also includes a universal idea of global family, *segye ilga* (世界一家), which consists of mutually equal nations and peoples.¹²

Now it seems a moral imperative for Korean political scientists to attempt to overcome the political disillusion and cynicism caused by too much idealization of liberal democracy and the neglect of Korean tradition and experiences.

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12. This suggestion could be made with a simple reference to the experience of Meiji Japan's modernization. The task of national development in that feudal, tradition-bound society was carried out with amazing dispatch and efficiency in part because its modernizing leadership, instead of adopting the Western language and symbols of bourgeois revolution, political equality, and rationalism which was totally alien to the Japanese people, made clever use of traditional indigenous symbols and values for legitimizing itself and its policies in a manner that was evocative of pride in Japan's unique background and heritage. It was thus that tradition was rendered supportive of modernity, instead of remaining hostile and resistant to modernity (Tsurutani 1974: 130).

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