

# *Introduction*

The need to study political leadership can hardly be overstated, particularly in a country such as Korea, whose political order has been transformed from stagnant monarchy to subjugated colony and finally divided nation without the emergence of a national leader or group of leaders, charismatic or otherwise, who could command the respect of the entire people. Despite the importance of leadership studies, however, there is no definitive study of a monarch or political leader of the traditional Korean kingdom that delineates the unique elements of Korean leadership style, nor is there a comprehensive study of the leaders of the Korean independence movement. Likewise, there is an almost total lack of such studies for the postwar period, during which the division of the country has produced leaders with disparate ideologies alien to Korea's traditional heritage and culture.

Perhaps it is difficult to characterize the nation's political leaders because of the nature of the Korean struggle against foreign domination. Political assassins and extremists are often eulogized as leaders without due appraisal of the direction and effects of their activities. Much of the literature available on Korean leaders was written by sycophants and servile flatterers of those about whom they wrote. In order to understand modern Korea, it is imperative that objective examinations of the political leadership styles of Syngman Rhee, Kim Il-sŏng, and Pak Chŏng-hŭi be undertaken.

The efforts in this volume are not intended to meet the need for such a comprehensive study of Korean leadership, but they are a modest beginning. The magnitude of the task necessitates that they be only an introductory examination of the problem. And a long list of disclaimers might be added. This volume is not a biographical sketch of important leaders, traditional or contemporary, nor is it a systematic exposition of all major phases of political leadership. Some important groups with strong impact on political leadership, for example, military, economic, and cultural leadership groups, are

not treated here. Rather than dwell upon the disclaimers, however, it is more appropriate to introduce the nature of the attempts and some of the findings of these preliminary investigations.

This book is a product of a two-year collaborative research project in which twelve scholars studied and analyzed selected aspects of political leadership in Korea. Along with a succinct analysis of traditional leadership of the Yi dynasty, it includes examinations of legislative leadership, party leadership, bureaucratic leadership, and popular perceptions of political leadership in South Korea. To these have been added two studies of Communist political leadership in North Korea, one analyzing the leadership group of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea and the other analyzing the adoption of a new constitution in the fifth Supreme People's Assembly in December 1972 and the reconstituted leadership of the North. The final chapter presents a summary of our studies. Admittedly, the volume concentrates more on modern Korea than traditional Korea and, understandably, contains more empirical research on South Korea than on North Korea.

The first essay by James Palais, on political leadership in the Yi dynasty, presents a good example of royal leadership style in King Sejong, probably the most outstanding ruler of the dynasty. It also deals with the Machiavellian leader Yönsan'gun, an archtyrant, and the Taewön'gun, who was not a king at all, but exercised assertive leadership as regent for his son. This essay shows that the Yi dynasty had its great monarchs at its beginning, later surviving without able men at the top. It also examines the roles played by bureaucratic leaders, aristocrats and the literati, and rebel leaders.

Korean royal leadership in general suffered from four major restraints. The king was relatively weak because he was a member of the Sinitic cosmological order. Second, his bureaucracy was controlled by the yangban, and the aristocracy and bureaucratic institutions were means to check royal authority. Third, the king was unable to cut into the wealth and privileges of the upper class, and, finally, the king was subject to the restraints of the universally accepted Confucian norms of regal conduct. Leadership style was constrained by the dynastic structure and institutions, the values of the society, and tradition. There was no room for the exercise of charismatic leadership in the Yi dynasty.

The next three essays deal with legislative, party, and bureaucratic leadership in South Korea. In an effort to assess the role of legislative leadership in democratic development, the performance of legislators in South Korea from 1948 to 1967 was studied to

determine the extent of democratic commitment and the sources of democratic attitudes. Contrary to widespread ideas of a decline of legislative functions in South Korea, the study by Chong Lim Kim and Byung-Kyu Woo found no significant decline in the level of legislators' performances over time. There is, however, a remarkable correlation between legislative action and the degree of legislative autonomy. Another important finding in this study is the presence of a higher commitment to democratic principles among the legislators who were elected in urban districts and who were members of the opposition party. There was also found to be an inverse relationship between the level of formal education and the degree of democratic commitment among South Korean legislators.

Political parties are often claimed to play less than adequate roles in South Korea. The role of the opposition party in the political process is particularly said to be minimal. The study of party leadership by Bae-ho Hahn and Ha-ryong Kim attempts to ascertain the factors constraining South Korean party development. Its conclusion is that party leaders fail to play an influential role because of the strength of the administration, the reliance on nonparty organization, the aspect of Korean culture that stresses avoidance of interpersonal conflicts, and, finally, the lack of interest in organization. As a result, party leaders are prone to pursue personal interests at the expense of official party goals.

The study of administrative leadership is based on interviews with 176 senior bureaucrats whose values and attitudes are discussed within the broad context of their social background, administrative experience, and attitudes toward development. The dominance of the military in South Korea's government is given special attention by Dong-Suh Bark and Chae-Jin Lee in their comparison of the social, administrative, and developmental attributes of career civil servants with those of persons recruited from the military.

Interestingly, social and administrative variables such as educational level and administrative promotion in the South Korean bureaucratic elite were found to predict attitudes toward development better than such other variables as class origin, military professionalism, and administrative function. The study also shows that younger bureaucrats are not always more interested in development than their older colleagues, and that military service alone is insignificant as a determinant of commitment to national development. Another important finding of this study is that there is a propensity among South Korean bureaucrats to give lower priority to democratic political norms than to national security and

economic growth. The bureaucrats studied seem to be more authoritarian and unitarist than democratic and individualistic, and they seem predisposed to constrain civil liberties and freedom of the press for the sake of anti-Communist struggles, to demand individual sacrifices for the public interest, and to use whatever methods necessary to achieve their tasks.

How do the people perceive their political leadership and what do they expect from their leaders? The next study by Sung-chick Hong and Young Ho Lee probes these questions by examining three major criteria for democratic leadership: responsiveness, legitimacy, and effectiveness. The study, which surveyed five segments of South Korean society—high school students, university students, farmers, journalists, and legislative aids to national assemblymen, assumes that repeated satisfaction with leaders leads to citizen allegiance to the system and that disappointment leads to alienation.

Hong and Lee's study suggests there is a strong undercurrent of political alienation in South Korea. Leaders are often perceived to be unresponsive to citizens' needs, illegitimate in their rule, self-seeking, and inefficient in the performance of their duties. Such negative reactions were more frequent among the urban and educated segments of the society than among the farmers. Among the groups surveyed, the most negative were the university students and journalists, while the farmers tended to be generally uncritical of their leaders. The authors qualify their findings by stating that South Korean leaders and government officials might indeed perform poorly, but the population's critical response may be the result of unrealistically high expectations. Whatever the case may be, this empirical study indicates that South Koreans' perception of their leaders and government officials is negative according to all three criteria of democratic leadership.

Systematic analysis of North Korea is more difficult than a comparable study of the South because of the unavailability of source materials and the inaccessibility of the leaders and the people to researchers. The examination of North Korean leadership in this volume is thus more confined in scope and method. The two studies presented here attempt to assess North Korean leadership by examining the structure of the leadership and the pattern of change in the powerful Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. The first study by Dae-Sook Suh is a survey of change in leadership from the first to the fifth party congresses; the second

study by Chong-Sik Lee is a discussion of the line-up of top leaders following the adoption of the new constitution in 1972.

Following the partition of Korea, the northern leaders induced change in their ranks by removing any and all who had ever collaborated with the Japanese. Thereafter, Kim Il-sŏng successfully eliminated all factional leaders and consolidated his position by recruiting younger leaders with proper education and "party spirit." By such weeding and recruiting, North Korean Communist leaders developed a unique system for accomplishing rapid change in leadership. Fewer than half the members of the Central Committee at any time have been re-elected to the succeeding Central Committee, and fewer than one-third of the candidate members have been promoted to full membership in the Central Committee. In most cases, this has limited members of the Central Committee to a single term. Excepted from this pattern are the old partisans from Kim's Manchurian guerrilla revolutionary days, his most significant group of supporters. The leadership of the Central Committee seems to have developed from a struggle among various factional groups into domination by a single group. Developments since 1966 indicate an intragroup struggle among partisans on policy issues. The North has effectively eliminated the old revolutionaries from the anti-Japanese revolutionary days and has successfully recruited new and younger leaders trained and educated under the North Korean system.

The leadership line-up following the adoption of the new constitution, the first overhaul in twenty-five years, is discussed in detail in the second study of Communist leadership. Close scrutiny of the leaders assigned to various new positions provides evidence that the North Korean political structure was vastly reorganized to conform to Kim's leadership style. Top leaders in the inner circle are those close to President Kim Il-sŏng, but a trend toward functional specialization among top leaders is also apparent. Various important government and party organs such as the presidency, the Central People's Committee, the State Administrative Council, the Supreme People's Assembly, the Secretariat, and the Political Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea are described to provide an up-to-date picture of North Korean leadership.

The final chapter is an effort to summarize impressions of the goals, needs, and methods of our investigation and to offer suggestions for subsequent exploration. Glenn Paige maintains that the goals of this type of undertaking should be to describe and explain,

to compare, and to understand the behavior of political leaders. These kinds of studies may also assist leaders in executing their functions and increase citizen competence in assessing leadership performance. A few suggestions are made for improving future research on Korean political leadership and for conducting comparative analyses of North and South Korean political leaders. Of special importance for future efforts is a three-dimensional concept—more precise description and interpretation of leadership at the highest level, and engagement of scholars from various social sciences in the development of political leadership studies.

The need for methodological refinement is also pointed out, particularly the need for greater precision in definition of socioeconomic status variables, evaluation of ambiguous answers to questionnaires, development of a research design that will permit comparative analysis, and the need for making concepts more relevant and operational. Paige stresses the importance of studies that combine personality, role, organizational, task, value, and setting parameters of political leadership in future investigations.

The contributors to this volume hope this modest beginning will lead to many future inquiries into political leadership. In a country where an orderly constitutional transfer of power in the top leadership has yet to occur, the study of leadership style is important, to say the least. Whether applied to deciphering the political strategies of the leaders or as an aid to understanding their basic norms for the future of Korea, the study of political leadership is an important element in understanding the modern Korean political scene. In view of the authoritarian tendencies and general lack of democratic attitudes among top leaders in both North and South Korea, a basic inquiry into the culture that produces such leaders should also be undertaken as a prerequisite to the future study of political leadership. The emergence of a virtuous and benevolent leader, if not a fiery revolutionary, who can command the respect and popular support of all the people is sorely needed in a divided country such as Korea.

DAE-SOOK SUH

CHAE-JIN LEE