

Special Feature

Anticommunism and
the National Identity of Korea in
the Contemporary Era:
With a Special Focus on
the USAMGIK and Syngman Rhee
Government Periods

Oh Il-Whan

Introduction

The national identity of the citizens (*gungmin*) of a country does not suddenly emerge, but is rather formed from the members of the community's shared historical experiences as well as their common perceptions of such experiences. To this end, the current national identity of the Korean people (*gungmin*) should be perceived as the result of communal experiences that occurred during the flow of modern and contemporary history. Viewed from this standpoint, the national identity of the Korean people was greatly influenced by the Japanese colonial era and the history of conflict that has prevailed since the advent of the national division. In most cases, people automatically think of 'ethnic identity' when the term 'national identity' is brought up. In the case of Korea, the identity of the political system has, as a result of the unique situation known as the national division into North and South Korea, greatly influenced the formation of the national identity. This study examines the process through which the state identity that represents such an important element of the national identity of the Republic of Korea was formed after liberation. In particular, emphasis is placed on the notion of anticommunism that has proven to wield the most influence as far as the formation of the state identity is concerned.

A response to the concept of communism,¹ anticommunism became the political ideology that the Republic of Korea, which had adopted liberal democracy² as its structural framework, inevitably pursued after liberation.

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1. Communism, an idea based on the theory of proletarian revolution organized by Marx and Lenin, is geared towards the socialization of production tools and the establishment of a classless society, as well as the elimination of class domination through private ownership. Marxist theory perceives a class struggle between the capitalists and the laborers who possess the tools of production as necessary in order to actualize a communist society. The communists ultimately call for the elimination of the state, which they regard as an implement for class domination.
 2. Liberal democracy refers to a political principle and type of government that combines liberalism and democracy. It is an apolitical entity under which a constitution that guarantees individual freedom and rights based on the notion of human dignity is instituted, and decision making is taken within the framework of popular sovereignty and constitutionalism by the people's representatives, who are elected by the majority based on a democratic process. While liberal democracy restricts the majority's ability to infringe on the minority's rights through the constitutional guarantee of basic human rights, it also supports the majority's right to express their political opinions based on a democratic election process and a parliamentary system (Wikipedia).

Korea's standing as a member of the free world led by the U.S. greatly impacted its decision to adopt anticommunism as a response to the Cold War that pitted the United States against the Soviet Union. In this regard, this approach should be perceived as an attempt to protect its political system from a North Korea that had adopted a communist system under the auspices of the Soviet Union.

Above all, Korea's priority amidst the endless confrontation with a North Korea that had provoked the Korean War was that of focusing on national security. The ability to maintain and strengthen national security was predicated on the capacity to directly confront the communist and related ideologies that threatened the liberal democratic system. Simply put, the acceptance of anticommunism emerged as an inevitable measure which had to be taken in order to stop a communist offensive. From this perspective, anticommunism can be seen as having been the protective shield of the liberal democratic system. In fact, anticommunism could be more strongly justified by fears over North Korea's persistent propaganda and incitement in South Korea, as well as their unified front strategy, military provocations and potential offensives which could lead to a second Korean War.

A look at Korean contemporary history makes it evident that anticommunism contributed to enforcing an awareness of security amongst the public, and to the improvement of the ability, from a security standpoint, to respond to the psychological and physical threats emanating from North Korea during the Cold War era that followed liberation. During the industrialization period, anticommunism served as a mechanism through which to effectively mobilize the nation's resources, and can as such be seen as having to some extent contributed to the astonishing economic development that was achieved. The national confidence gained from this successful industrialization greatly influenced the national identity of a Korean people that had long suffered from a colonial mentality, and also had a tremendous impact on political culture. Of course, the unwanted outcome of the political abuse of anticommunism also occurred in some instances. More to the point, anticommunism was frequently used to justify the maintenance and enforcement of dictatorships, thus reversing the flow of political development. These can be regarded as the negative results of the acute confrontation between the two Koreas.

Previous studies have tended to overemphasize the negative impact which anticommunism had on the values of liberal democracy and political development. However, they have by and large overlooked crucial periodic

elements such as the presence of the Cold War order and the uniqueness of the North-South Korean relationship. This study examines the impact which anticommunism, in its capacity as the protector of liberal democracy from the national security standpoint, has had on the national identity of contemporary Korea.

This study also includes an analysis of the political discourse based on a review of available literature. The use of such an analysis of the political discourse can be regarded as a very appropriate method of perceiving the true nature of Korean politics. Any attempt to understand a political phenomenon or incident must inevitably include an awareness of the political discourse at the time, a discourse which can be regarded as representing the prevailing thoughts and opinions amongst the people (Oh 1999:30-31). The anticommunist discourse should also be regarded as falling under this category.

The Formation Process of Anticommunism during the USAMGIK and Syngman Rhee Government Eras

The Formation of Anticommunism during the Era of the USAMGIK (September 1945-August 1948)

Shortly after having achieved liberation on August 15, 1945, the Korean peninsula found itself thrown into a new world order led by the United States and the Soviet Union. While Soviet military entered North Korea, the United States occupied South Korea. The new world order which developed after World War II and the division of the nation into North and South Korea inevitably placed the Korean peninsula at the forefront of the emerging Cold War. While this process saw South Korea become a member of the U.S.-led liberal democracy camp, North Korea joined the Soviet-led communist camp. Furthermore, the emergence of the communist People's Republic of China had the effect of further consolidating the ties between South Korea, which was geopolitically close to China, and the United States. South Korea's inclusion in the 'anticommunist alliance' set up in opposition to the Soviet-led communist camp following the onset of the Cold War can only be regarded as natural when we consider the influence which the United States, which regarded anticommunism as an important element of its policy, exercised in the South.

The United States policy toward the Korean peninsula at the time was that of 'stabilizing the South Korean system.' The United States determined early on that its response to the Soviet Union on the Korean peninsula would greatly influence wider U.S.- Soviet Union relations throughout the world. The United States' position of gaining an upper hand in its negotiations with the Soviet Union in order to secure its supremacy over the latter was also an important element of its policy toward the Korean peninsula (Baek 1995:219).

The left-wing initially garnered broad support within Korean society itself. More to the point, the left-wing received widespread support from peasant farmers and intellectuals influenced by socialism because they were seen as struggling against Japanese imperialism. Such support was also heightened by the fact that they called for forced land reform and the immediate resolution of the matter of pro-Japanese elements (An Cheol-hyeon 2009:47). This situation can be regarded as the result of a strong sense of antagonism towards a Japanese imperialism that had been characterized by extreme right-wing militarism. As a result, the left-wing inevitably seized political leadership within the liberated spaces after liberation until the USAMGIK structure was put in place (An Cheol-hyeon 2009:45). Most of the members of the left-wing faction attempted to communize South Korean society. In this regard, such efforts were led by such entities as the Communist Party of Korea, which later became the Workers Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*), as well as the All-Korean Federation of Trade *Unions*.³

Under these circumstances in which the left-wing wielded a predominant influence within South Korean society, the moderate socialist Yeo Un-hyeong and the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI) began to wield great influence. As part of efforts to forestall its rivals within the newly liberated spaces, the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence proclaimed on September 6, 1945 the establishment of the Korean People's Republic (KPR). This move, which occurred prior to the entry of the U.S.

3. The left-wing believed that Korean society after liberation should move down the path of socialist development. While socialists engaged in independence movements opposed to Japanese imperialism, they believed that after achieving independence Korean society should become a socialist one in which classes and the gap between rich and poor disappeared. The communists for their part believed that socialist reform should be brought about, even if this meant using radical methods involving violence (An Cheol-hyeon 2009:45).

military, was made possible by the formation of an alliance with Park Heon-yeong. Yeo Un-hyeong and Park Heon-yeong supported the selection of Syngman Rhee, who had not yet returned from the United States, as the Chairman of the Korean People's Republic (KPR). This move was designed to create the impression that they embraced the conservative group while they set about entrenching the Korean People's Republic (KPR). However, Syngman Rhee did not recognize the Korean People's Republic (KPR) after his return to Korea on October 16, 1945 and reacted coldly toward the supporters of the Korean People's Republic (KPR) (Kim Yong-uk 2000:123-135; Han Bae-ho 2008:95).

As the anti-Korean trusteeship movement spread on the Korean peninsula in January 1946, the leftist camp suddenly changed stances and began, at the behest of the Soviet Union, to support the idea of a trusteeship, a notion that ran contrary to that of nationalism. As a result of this stance, the left not only lost much of the support they had gained from the South Korean public after liberation, but also found the foundation for this support greatly eroded. On the other hand, the right-wing group that included Syngman Rhee and the Korea Democratic Party (*Hanmindang*) used this opportunity to greatly expand the ranks of the anticommunist right-wing camp. This was achieved by consciously emphasizing the symbolic effects of the anticommunist ideology rather than the nationalistic elements of the anti-trusteeship stance (Kim Untae et al. 1989:9).

In May 1946, the leftists were involved in the so-called 'Jeongpansa Incident' which saw 13 million won in counterfeit notes be printed as part of efforts to ease the financial difficulties of the Communist Party of Korea and perturb the Korean economy. While the Communist Party of Korea came out against the arrest of the individuals involved on the grounds that the whole affair was a frame-up, the AMG used this incident as an opportunity to begin its full-scale suppression of the left-wing. The leftist camp responded to this campaign by paving the way in August 1946 for the integration of three left-wing parties, namely the Communist Party of Korea, the People's Party of Korea, and the New People's Party of South Korea, into the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Nammodang*). The Workers' Party of South Korea (*Nammodang*) responded to the AMG's issuing of an arrest warrant for Park Heon-yeong on September 7, 1946, a move that has been regarded as the onset of the latter's full-scale suppression of the left, by beginning to advocate the use of direct

violence and riots designed to weaken the authority of the AMG. Examples include the September General Strike ostensibly led by the All-Korean Federation of Trade Unions and the ensuing Daegu October 1st Incident. The AMG responded to these two incidents in a decisive manner. First, the AMG arrested 1,200 people involved in these incidents which it viewed as a challenge to its political standing cloaked under the cover of a labor movement that had been launched by the leftists. The rigid suppression employed by the AMG resulted in many of the mass left-wing inspired organizations collapsing. The leftist members who had engaged in violent acts and riots sought to avoid American suppression by fleeing to mountainous areas (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:144-147).

Shortly after the September General Strike, the Communist Party of Korea incited workers in the Daegu area, a region that had displayed strong leftist tendencies, to launch the strike that touched off what would become known as the Daegu October 1st Incident. While the key actors behind this incident were the members of the Communist Party of Korea, the National Federation of Peasant Unions and its organizational strength were at the forefront of this strike. However, the leaders of the Communist Party of Korea responded to events in a haphazard manner (An Jae-seong 2009:380). On October 1, 1946, the leftist camp attempted to make use of the anger that was simmering at the regional level to launch a riot and violent demonstrations at 40 factories in Daegu. The deaths of two individuals during the demonstration sparked an attack on the Daegu police force on October 2 that resulted in the killing of scores of policemen. They also paralyzed public security by occupying the majority of police stations in Daegu. Having determined that the situation had reached serious proportions, the AMG proclaimed martial law in the Daegu area in the afternoon of October 2, and implemented a rigid suppression strategy. Demonstrators fled to neighboring towns such as Dalseong, Chilgok, and Seongju, murdering police officers, rightist figures and their family members, as well as burning and looting police stations and government offices, along the way. All of this had the effect of throwing Gyeongbuk Province into chaos. The AMG responded by mobilizing the police, who proceeded to shoot hundreds of leftists that had participated in the riots and ensuing violence and to arrest 7,000 people. Many of the leftists escaped to mountainous areas. In this regard, these individuals can be regarded as the point of origin of the 'partisans' that burst onto the scene after the Jeju

April 3rd Incident of 1948 (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:147-149). The September General Strike and the October 1 Daegu Incident had the effect of greatly damaging the communist party in South Korea, and also led to the destruction of what remained of the people's committees at the provincial level (Committee for the Compilation of an Encyclopedia of Korean History 1990:293).

The AMG's rigid suppression of such leftist demonstrations was rooted in an awareness of the Soviet Union's desire to, from behind the scenes, communize the entire Korean peninsula. The memoirs of Terenti Shtykov, who was at the time the deputy commander-in-chief of the political department of the Maritime Province of Siberia that exercised exclusive control over Korean issues, make it clear that while the September General Strike and October 1st Daegu Incident were led by the Communist Party of Korea, this was done with the instruction and support of the Soviet Union (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:149).

The looming establishment of a separate government in South Korea spurred the leftists, including the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*), to initiate the so-called February 7th Incident revolving around opposition to the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea's entry in February 1948. This incident greatly stimulated the AMG. The Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) instructed its members nationwide to engage in a violent struggle against the holding of elections that would establish a separate government in South Korea, and singled out Syngman Rhee and the AMG for forging ahead with elections in South Korea alone. As part of its efforts to communize the south, the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) introduced various incendiary slogans such as "no to the establishment of a separate government in South Korea," "simultaneous withdrawal of the U.S. and Soviet military forces," "return the reins of government to the People's Committee," "let's overthrow pro-Japanese elements such as Syngman Rhee and Kim Seong-su, the local arms of U.S. imperialism," and "long live the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)." In keeping with the instructions and slogans of the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*), leftists initiated violent acts and strikes nationwide. They paralyzed traffic, communications, and transportation as part of their efforts to disturb the administration of South Korea. Leftists attempted to create chaos on a scale that would make the establishment of the Republic of Korea impossible. They preyed on South Korean people's

fears of the division, and blamed the AMG and Syngman Rhee for what they saw as the emergence of two Koreas. However, they ignored the fact that North Korea, under the leadership of the Soviet Union and Kim Il-sung, was already in the process of establishing a separate government in North Korea. (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:150-152)

The Jeju April 3rd Incident was spurred on by the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*)'s instructions to leftists to engage in violent struggles nationwide as part of efforts to have the first general election leading up to the establishment of the Republic of Korea set for May 10, 1948 cancelled.⁴ The Jeju area at the time had strong leftist leanings. To this end, this situation was occasioned by the fact that the leftist-led People's Committee had exercised autonomous rule over the area during the period that immediately followed liberation. The Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) made active use of the closed social conditions on Jeju Island, the general economic backwardness and limited business that prevailed on the island, as well as the insular mentality of the people of Jeju to entrench itself and related military organizations in the area (Yang Yeong-jo 2007). Using slogans such as "let's push back U.S. imperialism," "let's overthrow U.S. imperialism," "no to the holding of general elections and establishment of a separate government in South Korea," "yes to the establishment of a Korean trusteeship," and "let's overthrow Syngman Rhee and his gang of traitors," the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) proceeded to incite the people of Jeju to violence. Having received the order from the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) to initiate violent riots, a 'People's Democratic Army,' which came to be known as partisans, consisting of some 1,500 leftists proceeded at 2:00 in the morning on April 3, 1948 to launch armed riots on Jeju Island. The majority of the police stations on Jeju were attacked, burnt down or destroyed. All in all, 13 policemen were killed in this initial wave of attacks. The police and national defense units proved unable to quell these brutal actions.⁵ Thereafter, the partisans hid out

4. The Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) singling out of the general election of May 10 resulted in the destructive actions undertaken by the leftist group becoming increasingly serious as the first general election approached. The leftists attacked police stations and right-wing organizations under the guise that their attempts to block the general election were motivated by the desire to ensure the establishment of a unified government.

5. The armed riots started when 350 members of the People's Democratic Army attacked 12

in their stronghold on Halla Mountain, from where they orchestrated the killing of policemen and known rightists. Alarmed by the situation, the AMG launched a pacification campaign aimed at the active suppression of partisans that ran from May 15, 1948 to May 15, 1949. The pacification campaign involved operations designed to sever communications between local residents and the partisans. However, many civilians were mistaken for partisans and murdered or summarily executed during such operations. For example, the mass execution that took place in the village of Bukchon-ri, which has widely been regarded as the village which suffered the greatest losses as a result of the pacification operations launched in Jeju, was the result of the soldiers involved in the pacification mission having been ambushed by partisans as they were passing through the village. The ensuing massacre, which involved the slaying of every member of the village, was initiated by survivors of the initial partisan attack intent on revenge (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:153-161). On October 31, 2003, President Roh Moo-hyun apologized on behalf of the national government to the people of Jeju for the April 3rd Incident, stating that many innocent people had lost their lives during the armed riots that began to be plotted by the Jeju Office of the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) on March 1, 1947 and broke out in a full-scale manner on April 3, 1948, as well as during the ensuing armed conflicts and pacification campaigns that lasted until September 21, 1954 (The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident 2003:543). The government has made efforts to console the victims and the families of those who suffered at the hands of the state power apparatus and taken measures to restore their honor.⁶

police stations and right-wing organizations at 2:00 am on April 3, 1948. They advocated slogans, such as "stop the oppression of the police and the Northwest Youth Association (*Seobuk Cheongnyeondan*)," "no to general elections and the establishment of a separate government in South Korea," and "establish a unified government." During the early stages, the AMG regarded the situation as a 'security matter,' and decided to remedy the situation by increasing the police and Northwest Youth Association presence in the area. However, when the situation proved irresolvable, the commander of the United States occupation forces in Korea Lieutenant General John R. Hodge and the head of the 24th Infantry Division Major General William F. Dean ordered local garrisons to launch an active suppression campaign (The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident 2003:534).

6. The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident was inaugurated on August 28, 2000, and tasked with contributing to the improvement of human

The AMG implemented anticommunist policies as part of its efforts to separate the people from the leftists that had begun to infiltrate Korean society right after liberation. Its personnel policy revolved around the appointment of individuals such as Jo Byeong-ok who possessed a strong anticommunist mindset and had internalized the anticommunist ideology during their studies in the United States (Lee Na-mi 2011:219-223). However, the appointment of such individuals proved to be inefficient in terms of effectively overcoming the social and political chaos created by leftists with the support of the North Korean communist party. Jo Byeong-ok was both an avid anticommunist and anti-Japanese nationalist. He perceived the development of a police force as the only means to prevent communists from seizing power in South Korea, even if this meant employing Koreans who had belonged to the military police during the Japanese colonial era. Such personnel policies have naturally been criticized for having protected anti-nationalistic and pro-Japanese elements from Korea's liberal left wing as well as the opposing communists (Han Seung-ju 2000:84). The fact that pro-Japanese elements were hired by the AMG consequently provided cover for the leftists' attacks on the government, which in turn limited the effectiveness of anticommunist policies. The perceived protection of pro-Japanese elements inevitably raised the ire of the people, a situation that in turn provided leftists with more fodder for their political attacks on the government.

However, the AMG had no other choice at the time but to employ pro-Japanese elements. In fact, the most pressing tasks which leaders faced after liberation were those of establishing an independent state and eliminating the pro-Japanese elements who had cooperated with colonial Japan. However, the separation of these two tasks proved to be no easy chore. This difficulty rested in the fact that those with a pro-Japanese background, most of whom were administrative officials, technical officials, and entrepreneurs that possessed administrative techniques, experience, and capital, were needed to establish a government and build up a country that at this point sorely lacked human and physical resources. The general belief at the time amongst the Americans was that the full eradication of the pro-Japanese group would allow leftists to

rights and national unity by, in accordance with the Special Act for Investigation of the Truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident, revealing the truth about the Jeju April 3rd Incident and restoring the honor of the victims and their families.

seize political power and establish a new unwanted direction for the country. The ideological and leadership competition being waged by the United States and Soviet Union across the 38th parallel also helped shape the AMG's decision to continue to employ those who had gained administrative and technical experience under the Japanese colonial government, and to focus on strengthening the anticommunist ideology rather than eliminating pro-Japanese elements. The desire of the AMG to initially retain some of the officials and technicians from the Japanese colonial government, and the subsequent reappointment of pro-Japanese individuals by the Syngman Rhee government, can be regarded as a byproduct of an international political situation characterized by the U.S.-Soviet conflict and of a domestic environment marked by a chaotic political situation (Kim Hyeon-u 2000:83-84).

The maneuvering of leftists incited by North Korea and the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) forced South Korea, which belonged to the liberal democratic camp, to view the possibility of the communist ideology emerging as the prevailing school of thought and North Korea's maneuvers toward the South as threats to the very survival of its system. This naturally became one of the main elements which spurred South Korea to adopt 'anticommunism' as one of its ruling principles.

The Formation of Anticommunism during the Syngman Rhee Government (August 1948- April 1960)

The Syngman Rhee government was inaugurated on August 15, 1948. In this regard, the new government was formed following the general elections held on May 10 and the subsequent opening of the National Assembly. At this time, any Asian leader who adopted an anticommunist and anti-Soviet platform could expect to receive the support and sponsorship of the United States, and this even in situations where geopolitical factors made removing Soviet influence difficult (Baek 1995:236). The Syngman Rhee government, which found itself directly confronted by the North Korean threat, adopted anticommunism as the main implement through which to protect national security. Although it was a newborn government, this approach allowed the Syngman Rhee government to effectively overcome the threats to its security that loomed from both a domestic and international standpoint. Syngman

Rhee, who had studied in the United States for a long period of time, was well aware of the basic nature and evil influence of communism. To this end, he never let his proverbial guard down. This is evidenced by the following passage taken from President Syngman Rhee's speech to celebrate the 6th Anniversary of Independence Day on August 15, 1951.

Communism is also a revolutionary school of thought. Those who advocate communism also assert that they fight for freedom and equality. They also stress the fact that they go one step beyond democracy by guaranteeing political and economic freedom. ... Theoretically, I accept that their assertions are right. ... The so-called ideal state which communists claim to aspire to in their propaganda to some extent already exists in the form of the United States, a country that the communist nations have expressed their vehement opposition to. The very imperialism and militarism which the communists attacked are currently on display in the Soviet Union. It is very difficult for the naive masses to get away from such ruses once they have fallen prey to them. It is all but impossible for those of us who understand this reality to simply ignore or pretend we do not know what is going on. Although little can be done to help those who have fallen victim to their ruses, we must do our utmost to awaken those who have not yet succumbed to this disease. We must awaken these innocent people so that we can save them. Those who cannot be saved should be separated from the others like we would do to someone who has a contagious disease. We must, whenever necessary, respond to their shows of force with our own displays of power. Freedom is a value that one should be willing to fight for at the risks of our own lives. We must stand together and protect democracy. Otherwise, we will not be able to stop the specter of communism. (Rhee 1951)

The formal establishment of separate governments in South and North Korea in August and September 1948, which in effect affixed the South Korean regime to the liberal democratic camp and the North Korean one to the socialist camp, naturally deepened the conflict between the two Koreas over their respective political systems. Under these circumstances, the Syngman Rhee government had no choice but to rely on the exclusive support of the United States to consolidate its ruling system. The support of the United States proved to be an effective resource for a leadership which emanated from a social group whose social base within society remained weak. For the United States, which had watched the rapid weakening and defeat of Chiang Kai-shek

on the Chinese mainland, the provision of military and economic support to South Korea was perceived as necessary measures which should be taken to stabilize a system which was regarded as the foundation for the securing of U.S. influence in East Asia (Baek 1995:228-229).

The Syngman Rhee government was able to build on the efforts of its predecessor the AMG and introduce Western-style democracy to South Korea. Based on his own experiences in the United States, the first president of South Korea Syngman Rhee placed great importance of the establishment of a government that was rooted in the notions of a democratic republican structure. American-style representative democracy soon became an important element of the political legitimacy of the Republic of Korea that found itself pitted against the Soviet system of North Korea. The legitimacy of the Syngman Rhee regime rested on the presence at the very least of the features of representative democracy. This can be understood as the main reason why despite his endless desire to expand his political power, Syngman Rhee never abandoned certain external features of liberal democracy such as the maintenance of the National Assembly and election procedures. These particular elements of Syngman Rhee's political approach can be explained by the fact that the weakness of Korea's civil and political society at the time meant that the state was able to maintain its power without having to resort to extreme violence or the politics of terror. However, this was also the result of the pressure that was at the time applied by the U.S. government, which exercised great influence over the political process in Korea, on its Korean counterpart to respect liberal democratic processes and implement rational economic policies (Kim Yeong-myeong 2006:71).

Meanwhile, the extreme conflict between the left and right over the general elections on May 10 continued after the establishment of the Syngman Rhee government. Such conflicts led to continuous political instability and social chaos.

Well aware of the effectiveness of the guerilla attacks launched by partisans based in Halla Mountain during the uprising on Jeju, the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) planned to launch partisan activities from other mountainous areas of Korea such as Jiri Mountain. This plan came to pass during the so-called Yeosu-Suncheon Incident of 1948. The spark that lit what would become the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident was the refusal of low-ranking leaders of the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*)

who belonged to the 14th regiment stationed in Yeosu to take part in the pacification campaigns taking place on Jeju. In keeping with the initial plan that had been drawn up, forty members of core communist cells, including Ji Chang-su from the personnel department of the 14th regiment, occupied the weaponry and munitions hangars on the night of October 18, 1948. Using slogans such as “let’s refuse to be deployed to Jeju,” “overthrow the police,” and “North-South unification,” these individuals incited other soldiers to participate in the rebellion. The participation of the majority of the soldiers in this uprising touched off what can best be described as a full-scale rebellion. The three sergeants who opposed the rebellion and twenty officers including the 1st battalion commander who attempted to mediate the situation were killed by the rebels. By the early morning of October 20, Yeosu was under the control of the rebels, and the ‘Military Committee Pertaining to the Refusal to Accept Deployment to Jeju Island’ had been installed. In the afternoon of that same day, the rebels proceeded to also occupy neighboring Suncheon. Thereafter, the rebels successively occupied Boseong, Gwangyang, Hadong, Namwon, Gurye, and Gokseong, and secured outlying places such as the Jiri and Baekun Mountain ranges as rear zones from which they could in the future engage in a prolonged struggle. The North Korean flag was raised in all occupied areas. Several policemen, rightists, and their family members were summarily executed through ‘people’s courts.’ The Syngman Rhee government proclaimed martial law in Yeosu and Suncheon on October 22 and set out to eradicate the rebels. To this end, it succeeded in retaking these areas on October 27, or seven days after the outbreak of the rebellion. However, 1,000 of the individuals who led the rebellion went into hiding in Jiri Mountain, where they continued the armed struggle and waged long-term guerilla warfare. Along with the Jeju April 3rd Incident, the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident constituted the biggest armed rebellion in the aftermath of liberation. It subsequently became an important incident which provided the foundation for partisan activities in the provinces of Jeolla, Gyeongsang, and Gangwon (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:161-165). The Yeosu-Suncheon Incident clearly exposed the laxity of the security system in South Korea, and proved the extent to which communist organizations were entrenched within South Korea after the establishment of the government (Han Bae-ho 2008:146).

The year 1949 saw North Korea and the Workers’ Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) further strengthen their provocations in South Korea. Led by

Park Heon-yeong, the Workers' Party of South Korea (*Namnodang*) set the weakening of the South Korean government through guerilla warfare and the unification of the Korean peninsula under the North Korean flag via the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the initiation of an attack on South Korea at the appropriate time as its core goals. In June 1949, 704 representatives from 71 North and South Korean leftist parties and social organizations gathered in Pyeongyang to establish an umbrella organization called the "United Democratic Fatherland Front of Korea." At this time, the new grouping announced its Proclamation of the Peaceful Unification of Korea based on unification under communism, and sent out 1,000 letters regarding 'Measures for the Unification of the Fatherland' to various political parties, social organizations, media outlets, publishers, and educational, cultural and religious organizations as well as to U.S. military forces, the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) and the United Nations Secretary-General. These Measures for the Unification of the Fatherland called for unification to be achieved by military force if necessary.

There is no other option. We can either let the southern part of our fatherland and the people go down the path of national disintegration and colonial subjugation at the hands of the traitors who sold out our fatherland and people to the American imperialists, or take the independent path towards the unification of the fatherland by saving the southern part of our fatherland and the people of south Korea from the United States and Syngman Rhee and the traitors. There is no third option. (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:165-167)

North Korean provocations vis-à-vis South Korea became even more pronounced from mid-1949 onwards. The North followed up the establishment of the 'United Democratic Fatherland Front of Korea' in June 1949 by grouping all partisan activities in South Korea under the umbrella of the so-called 'people's guerilla army' in July 1949. To this end, the partisans in Odae Mountain were referred to as the first regiment, the partisans of Jiri Mountain as the second regiment, and the partisans of Taebaek Mountain as the third. Led by Park Heon-yeong, the people's guerilla army used propaganda slogans such as "unification is imminent" and "the people's army is set to arrive from North Korea" to induce or compel scores of young people to head to the mountains and become members of their partisan units and engage in guerilla activities.

The partisans frequently came down to local villages to steal rice and clothes. Civilians who did not cooperate with the partisans were routinely murdered. In September 1949, North Korea dispatched 2,000 individuals who were originally from southern areas to South Korea in ten waves to take part in guerilla activities. It was amidst such circumstances that the military and police of South Korea launched a strong pacification campaign that began in the winter of 1949 and lasted until the spring of 1950. As a result of this campaign, the partisans were all but destroyed. Kim Il-sung subsequently used this failure as an opportunity to label Park Heon-yeong as an enemy of the people who had negatively impacted the revolutionary capacity of leftists in South Korea, and to eventually execute Park (Hyeondae Sasang Yeonguhoe 2009:167-170).

In short, the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident and the actions of partisan units provided the Syngman Rhee government, which had come to power espousing the tenets of liberal democracy, with an opportunity to pursue the further strengthening of anticommunism, or of measures against communism, as a means to protect its political system. This is evidenced in the following excerpt from President Syngman Rhee's speech given on the 4th anniversary of national liberation in which he warned the people about what he perceived as the true nature of the communist party and communists.

The voices of communists are designed to deceive others. They whisper that they will provide people with food, land, fortune, and freedom. How can they give such things to others when they do not have any of them? People naively believe these sweet whispers and gladly become their slaves. Regardless of whether they live in the deep countryside or urban areas, the individuals who believe their words become nothing more than another cog in the communist machine, and soon find themselves devoid of any personal life or freedom. To become a member of the communist party is to secure one's status as a slave. ... Murdering people represents the most commonly used implement by which the communists attempt to control the world. Severe punishment, arson, and skepticism are also commonly used tools. These are designed to reject the heavenly way and humanity and to plant the seeds of fear in individuals' minds in order to control their thoughts and ideology. These are the tools used by communists to create their regime of terror. By building up a despotic state after having destroyed human society through anarchism and chaos, they serve only the interests

of the few. (Rhee 1949)

Amidst this situation characterized by the domestic internalization of the international Cold War order and turbulent social and political relations, the Syngman Rhee regime did not focus on the advantages that might be gained from reform, but instead strove to protect the existing power structure, maintain and entrench the domination of Syngman Rhee supporters, and eventually build up its support base. Examples of such behavior include the blatant efforts to stem the purge of pro-Japanese elements in the name of security (Baek 1995:235). Given the circumstances that prevailed at the time, such a move on the part of the Syngman Rhee government can be regarded as having been inevitable.

The Syngman Rhee government found itself having to respond to the division into two Koreas by crafting a strong state that could play an active role in the establishment and maintenance of a powerful anticommunist system. Here, administrative officials and policemen who had gained valuable experience during the Japanese colonial period would inevitably have been perceived as useful resources through which to secure such objectives (Baek 1995:220). In fact, former members of the military police during the Japanese colonial period, who had ample experience in terms of the search and arrest of independence activists and communists, were increasingly employed as the security situation deteriorated. Those who had served as policemen during the Japanese colonial period greatly contributed to the propping up of the conservative group led by Syngman Rhee in the newly liberated spaces through such means as the crushing of leftist elements. Because of such achievements, Syngman Rhee appointed many of them to core positions within the government, including the police, after the establishment of the Republic of Korea (Han Bae-ho 2008:146). Under these circumstances, the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities established in September 1948 to weed out pro-Japanese elements could only be regarded by Syngman Rhee as a proverbial thorn in his side. The competition with North Korea over the supremacy of their respective political systems spurred the Syngman Rhee regime to rigidly punish the leftists that sought to overthrow the government. However, it showed itself to be much more lenient toward pro-Japanese elements that had experience managing national affairs on the grounds that such resources were required to establish a new state. During this process, the

Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities effectively became nominal in nature.

Shortly after the announcement of the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities, the Syngman Rhee government hosted anticommunist gatherings that involved the mobilization of residents via the police and administrative organizations. It sought to weaken the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities by labeling those who implemented the Act as implements of the communist party and malicious individuals who sought to provoke national disintegration. Moreover, it also started an active campaign against the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities. For example, on September 23, 1948, public assemblies called the 'Anticommunist rally for the preservation of the country' and the 'National convention to celebrate the transfer of power to the new government' were organized by the President of the *Daehan Ilbo* Lee Jong-hyeong. During this gathering, the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities was vehemently criticized and those who passed the law were singled out as members of the communist party. The *Daehan Ilbo* also released an article on the establishment of the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities in which it called for the 'purge of all National Assemblymen who serve as implements of the communist party' (Lee and Gang 1988:77; Baek 1995:221).

President Syngman Rhee also released a special statement in which he asserted that the activities of the Special Investigation Committee on Anti-national Activities organized in accord with the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities violated the separation of powers (administrative, legislative, and judicial). The special statement also panned the unconditional arrest of experienced policemen under the current circumstances in which leftists were committing murders and engaging in arson, and called for an amendment of the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities. Shortly thereafter, the Syngman Rhee government arrested the members of the Special Investigation Committee on Anti-national Activities on the grounds that some of them had had secret communications with the communist party. The members of the Special Investigation Committee on Anti-national Activities were even attacked by the police. The Special Investigation Committee on Anti-national Activities was officially disbanded after a bill which shortened the period until which the Act on the Punishment of Anti-national Activities was to be in effect from June 20, 1950 to August 31, 1949 was passed in the National Assembly.

In short, amidst a situation marked by the advent of two Koreas with different ideologies and political systems, the consensus regarding the need to weed out pro-Japanese elements became a conflictive notion that directly confronted the more pragmatic value known as anticommunism. In other words, faced by the threats emanating from the communist North, the South Korean regime, desiring to protect its system, chose to replace the old enemy known as Japanese imperialism with a new one called communism. Thus, the Syngman Rhee government could not, when viewed from the standpoint of the protection of the ruling system, give precedence to demands for the elimination of pro-Japanese elements over anticommunism (Baek 1995:221). The disbanding of the Special Investigation Committee on Anti-national Activities tasked with eliminating pro-Japanese elements consequently provided leftists with a legitimate gripe for their political attacks on the Syngman Rhee government. Moreover, this decision also became a significant political albatross for the Syngman Rhee government further down the road.

While anticommunism started to become entrenched within Korean society during the AMG period, it was only effectively consolidated as the ruling ideology following the inauguration of the Syngman Rhee government. The establishment of the National Security Act⁷ amidst the crisis atmosphere that prevailed as a result of the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident had the effect of institutionalizing anticommunism and establishing it as the ruling ideology. The National Security Act was motivated by the profound impact which the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident had on the government. Viewed from the present standpoint, political conflicts between the left and right wing can be perceived as having been a natural occurrence. However, the year 1948 marked the first year of the newly inaugurated government of the Republic of Korea which quickly identified security and the advent of the preparations needed to respond to the threat emanating from the North as the most important issues (Jo Jun-hyeon 2006b). The enactment of the National Security Act made it

7. Having failed to stabilize the political situation during the early days that followed the establishment of the new government, the Syngman Rhee regime established the National Security Act on December 1, 1948, or shortly after the emergence of the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident. The passage of this new law was justified on the grounds that there was a need to legally prepare for any leftist attempts to initiate riots or overthrow the Republic of Korea (Jo Jun-hyeon 2006a).

possible to further clamp down on pro-communists by allowing the meting out of a death sentence or life imprisonment to ‘any person who organizes a group or association for the purpose of provoking the government or causing a uprising, or any person who engages in activities designed to implement the goals of such associations or groups’ (Gong 210:84-85). Thus, anticommunism became a legally entrenched notion after the enactment of the National Security Act, which in turn led to its playing an important role in the Korean political process in the future.

On the other hand, the Korean War, allowed anticommunism to become the decisive element in the formation of the identity of modern Korea by internalizing anticommunist notions within the psyche of the Korean people.

As part of their efforts to strengthen the communist system, the Kim Il-sung led North Korean communists, who claimed to be the only legal government on the Korean peninsula, accelerated their preparations for a war to unify the Korean peninsula by force. While focusing on developing the military capacity needed to successfully attack South Korea, Kim Il-sung secretly visited the Soviet Union and China in April and May of 1950 to gain approval for his war plans from the two countries. In this regard, President Syngman Rhee stressed the fact that global communist strategists had decided to use Korea as a test case for their plans for global domination (Rhee 1952b).

Desiring to cover up their intention to attack South Korea, the North Korean authorities called for peaceful negotiations with the South. The leadership instructed North Korean soldiers to initiate various military skirmishes along the 38th Parallel. It also instructed and incited leftists within South Korea to initiate an armed struggle. It was amidst such circumstances that the United States withdrew its forces from Korea, with only a few military advisers remaining in accordance with the decision of the United Nations. Having determined that the situation in South Korea was ripe for the unification of the nation under communism, North Korea began the offensive that officially started the Korean War on June 25, 1950. The Syngman Rhee government, which had promoted the notion of ‘march north and unify,’ took up the “fight on the grounds that there would be no political surrender to the communist party” and to save the North Korean people “who were suffering under red despotism” (Rhee 1952a).

The great damage and suffering caused by the Korean War had the effect of further heightening hostility toward North Korea within South Korea,

which in turn further entrenched the anticommunist mindset within society. During the three harsh years in which the war was waged, the South Korean people ceased to see the North Korean people as members of the same nation, and developed the feeling that the two societies were mutually exclusive. This was particularly true of the ruling class of North Korea, including Kim Il-sung, which were regarded as being antinationalist. This tendency greatly influenced the establishment of a national identity that revolved around a 'Korea' (*hanguk*) that was clearly distinguishable from North Korea.

In the aftermath of the Korean War, the hostile actions undertaken by North Korea, which were perceived as external threats, helped to strengthen the internal cohesion within South Korea. Thus, the Syngman Rhee government was able to easily ensure national integration by invoking internal unity through the anticommunism policy whenever it encountered a potential political crisis (Kim Il-yeong 2004:174). More to the point, the notions of 'anticommunism' and 'march north and unify'⁸ repeatedly advocated by the Syngman Rhee regime became ideological tools used to maintain the legitimacy of the regime domestically. The Syngman Rhee regime used anticommunism, objection to the armistice, and the notion of 'march north and unify' as justification for efforts to mobilize the public through such means as national movements and public rallies (Baek 1995:235-236). In short, anticommunism became entrenched as the main national policy guideline in the aftermath of the Korean War (Kim Il-yeong 2004:174). Consequently, the anticommunist policy that had been pursued under the AMG was further strengthened after the Korean War. As such, anticommunism was able to establish a firmer base than any other ideology on Korea's political topography.

In addition, the Syngman Rhee regime proved to be very adroit at using the strategic value of Korea, which had been heightened as a result of the Korean War, on the diplomatic front. One prominent example of this adroitness was the regime's ability to have the Korea-U.S. Security Treaty signed by engaging in 'blackmail-based diplomacy' in which he highlighted

8. From the standpoint of the United States, Syngman Rhee's notion of 'march north and unify' was regarded as an expression of excessive anticommunism. It also raised concerns that the U.S. would find itself involved in an unwanted war. Such worries became an important element of the United States' initial strong opposition to the establishment of a Korea-U.S. Security Treaty (Choe Hee-sik 2010:161).

the importance of strengthening the anticommunist front in order to offset the international threat emanating from North Korea, the Soviet Union, and China.⁹ Based on this awareness of the geopolitical values of the Republic of Korea, which had become entrenched as the forward base of the anticommunist camp's efforts to impede the communization of East Asia, the Syngman Rhee regime was able to successfully establish the identity of the Republic of Korea as an anticommunist state. In other words, President Syngman Rhee can be said to have been skilled at using anticommunism to facilitate national integration and mobilization. President Rhee's advocating of the 'one nation ideology' (*ilmin juui* 一民主義) was closely related to this phenomenon. Syngman Rhee was deeply concerned that the aggressive actions of the hostile communists in North Korea might lead to national disintegration. In this regard, the one nation ideology (*ilmin juui*) can be viewed as the expression of Syngman Rhee's desire for national integration. The principles of the one nation ideology are as follows: "Our nation is one, our territory is one, our spirit is one. Our way of life is one, we are treated as one, and our politics and culture are also one. Anything that has failed to achieve oneness should be integrated until it becomes one. All obstacles to oneness should be eliminated." The principles of the one nation ideology (*ilmin juui*) include the implications that the Republic of Korea should be one. These principles can be regarded as the expression of the national will to eliminate any obstacles to the achievement of oneness (Gong 2010:87).

In addition, the majority of anticommunists, who had suffered greatly as a result of the socialist policies that prevailed in North Korea during the Korean War, relocated to South Korea. Many of these individuals were Christians from protestant churches. As such, by the time the Korean War had ended, protestant churches in South Korea had become places where 'ardent anticommunists' met. Thereafter, the leaders of the protestant churches placed

9. The United States was initially lukewarm towards the establishment of an alliance relationship with Korea. Although the Korea-U.S. Security Treaty was eventually concluded thanks in large part to the blackmail-based diplomacy of the Syngman Rhee regime, the United States made strong efforts to curb what it perceived as Korea's extreme Cold War strategy. The United States' notion of an alliance with South Korea was one that revolved around ensuring deterrence vis-à-vis North Korea. The U.S. initially planned to repulse any attack on South Korea through the United Nations, utilizing the U.S. military forces stationed on the Japanese mainland and on Okinawa (Kim Il-yeong 1999:254-256; Choe Hee-sik 2010:165).

a great emphasis on anticommunism throughout the duration of the Syngman Rhee regime. The leaders of protestant churches who entered the center of political power became actively involved in the criticism and attacks leveled at socialists (Gang In-cheol 2007:62-63).

Reinterpretation of the Role of Anticommunism in Korean Politics

The continuous provocations and political attacks emanating from North Korea and leftists in South Korea, unification slogans that were based on the notion of march north and unify, as well as the concrete application of the anticommunist ideology, greatly influenced the political awareness of the public, who severely suffered Korean War and national division, and expanded the political power of President Syngman Rhee (Kim Yeong-myeong 2006:74-75). The endless confrontation with a North Korea that was under the protection of the Soviet Union and China – two countries with which it shared an ideology, political system, and boundaries – led the people of South Korea to equate ‘anticommunism with national security.’ President Rhee’s political line inevitably created an atmosphere in which the national division was further concretized. However, had such a line not been adopted, it would only have been a matter of time before the communization of South Korea came to pass (Kim Un-tae 1989:401). Under these circumstances, the daily anticommunism discourse became one of the main elements behind the formation of a new political culture, and greatly influenced the political awareness of the Korean people. This situation – whether positive or negative – inevitably impacted the political process in Korea. One finds examples during the authoritative dictatorship era in which the powers that be intentionally created a security crisis that would allow them to win elections by stimulating a sense of anticommunism amongst the people. Such maneuvers made active use of ‘the Northern wind’ (*bukpung* 北風), in the form of the very real threat emanating from North Korea, for political gains. In addition, the military provocations initiated by North Korea, as well as its propaganda and incitement efforts aimed at South Korea, were used by the dictatorships to rationalize their own existence amongst the public by enhancing the awareness of the need for security.

The Syngman Rhee government was able to control the politics and economy of Korea based on the police and bureaucratic organizations it had inherited from colonial Japan and the AMG. However, the lack of industrialization, weak class structure occasioned by this lack of industrialization, and the underdevelopment of social organizations and interest groups rendered the formation of an independent civil society all but impossible. The police and bureaucrats played a key role in ensuring the expansion of the power of Syngman Rhee through such means as intervening in illegal elections and engaging in the political oppression of opposition parties. In particular, the police force, which emerged as the main organization used to suppress the leftists during the AMG period, found itself having been further strengthened after the establishment of the Republic of Korea, and in particular the Jeju April 3rd Incident, Yeosu-Suncheon Incident, and the Korean War. Thereafter, the police played an important role in preserving the Syngman Rhee regime through direct interference in constitutional upheavals and illegal elections such as the Busan Incident of 1952, the selective constitutional amendments of 1952, and the constitutional amendments of 1954. The bureaucrats who gained experience during the AMG period also played an important role in helping the Syngman Rhee regime hang on to power. Both the AMG and Syngman Rhee regimes turned a blind eye to the task of rooting out pro-Japanese elements after liberation, and chose to allow Japanese colonial era bureaucrats to remain in power on the grounds that such professional resources were needed to ensure effective administration of the state (Kim Yeong-myeong 2006:69-70). Thus, the development of a potent response to the clear and present threat posed by North Korea was regarded as more urgent than the elimination of pro-Japanese elements. Simply put, the stimulation of anticommunist sentiment proved to be an important variable in the political decision-making process.

Most of all, the Cold War dynamics internalized as a result of the division created an environment that was advantageous for Korea in terms of the maximization of security assistance from the United States. It also created a negative environment in that it made it possible to use the situation as an excuse to eradicate the political opposition.¹⁰ The U.S. government planned

10. Rather than focusing on minimizing the infiltrative power of the international Cold War

to economically rebuild a Korea that stood as an anticommunist bulwark under the Cold War order, stem the expansion of communist power on the peninsula, and create an exemplary liberal democracy (Kim Yeong-myeong 2006:80). Of course, despite the efforts of the United States, the authoritative patriarchal behavior and spotty political actions of Syngman Rhee often pushed things in a direction that ran contrary to U.S. expectations.¹¹ The powers that be prevented any criticism of the political system, and resorted to using the potential North Korean threat and raising examples of previous provocations whenever the political situation became disadvantageous to them. For example, under the Syngman Rhee regime, any political criticism of Syngman Rhee made amidst the political and social chaos caused by the conflict between the rightist and leftist camps was regarded as ‘pro-communist activities.’ North Korea and communists were used to strengthen his political power and to justify his dictatorship. The Syngman Rhee regime frequently equated anticommunism with liberal democracy.¹² In this regard, some scholars have asserted that although the ruling ideology of the Syngman Rhee regime was

dynamics into the domestic situation, President Syngman Rhee’s basic response to the division was one that revolved around strengthening the South Korean system by making use of the pressure emanating from the Cold War structure internally and gaining a military edge by maximizing support from the United States. In other words, President Rhee opted for a method that strengthened the political system and maintained his political power by making use of the confrontational dynamics created by the Cold War and the division (Baek 1995:145).

11. The U.S. government also intervened in Korea’s political process. For instance, the U.S. government pressured the South to implement the second general elections in 1950 as planned. It also interfered to try and find a resolution to the Busan Political Incident of 1952. It was during this process that it established the so-called ‘Plan Eveready’ that revolved around the elimination of Syngman Rhee. It also pressured Syngman Rhee to resign his presidency because of the furor surrounding his attempt to amend the National Security Act in 1958. The U.S. government deemed that the risks of Bolshevization could be overcome by letting the centrist elements of the Liberal Party (*Jayudang*) engage in progressive reforms. However, the failure of these centrist elements to prevent the Amendment of the National Security Act in 1958 and the subsequent execution of Jo Bong-am on July 31, 1959, spurred the U.S. government to search for a means to turn its back on the Syngman Rhee government. The U.S. finally forced Syngman Rhee to resign his presidency during the uproar that surrounded the April 19 Revolution in 1960 (Lee Wan-beom 2004; Kim Yeong-myeong 2006:80-81).
12. The Syngman Rhee regime emphasized the fact that the Cold War was a conflict between the democratic and communist camps. In particular, it emphasized the fact that communist North Korea was an antinational and antidemocratic entity that opposed the national and democratic government of South Korea. Under this logic, anticommunism naturally became defined as the core value of democracy (Gang Jeong-in et al. 2009:67).

ostensibly based on ‘Western-style liberal democracy and anticommunism,’ the anticommunist ideology played a dominant role while liberal democracy only functioned as a symbolic ideological mechanism (Lee Na-mi 2011:232). Meanwhile, others have argued that the ruling ideology of Syngman Rhee fundamentally destroyed the ethical notions of liberal democracy, and that the use of extreme anticommunism to ensure respect for the notions of liberal democracy facilitated the advent of a national division that reflected the wider structure of the major powers (Park Gwang-ju 2010:49). Furthermore, other researchers have pointed out the fact that this anticommunist ideology imposed from the top was used as a means to defend and rationalize previous government regimes’ power and their moral shortcomings (Jo Hyeon-yeon 2000:26). Some have even gone as far as to state that anticommunism was the core ideology that legitimized state violence. For example, the National Security Act is seen as having represented a legal system rooted in the anticommunist ideology which was designed to justify the violent actions undertaken by state organizations by defining them as the exercise of governmental authority (Park Won-sun 1997; Byeon 2007:88).

The anticommunist policy was undoubtedly used as a cover to suppress the political opposition or violate human rights whenever the powers that be experienced a political crisis. In this regard, the political abuse of anticommunism can and should rightfully be criticized (Kim Il-yeong 2004:174). However, one should not overlook the fact that the anticommunist policy served as a protective shield that allowed the Republic of Korea to entrench itself as a liberal democracy during its early days as a newborn country. Any liberal democracy that does not feature a mature civil consciousness must inevitably remain a weak one. Furthermore, under circumstances characterized by a white-hot confrontation between the two Koreas and daily attacks by the leftists, anticommunism became a ‘necessary evil’ that helped to prop up liberal democracy in South Korea.

Those who are critical of anticommunism inevitably view the National Security Act in a negative light (Jo Guk 1988:331-332; Park Won-sun 1992). For example, the Syngman Rhee regime is seen as having used the sense of crisis created by the Yeosu-Suncheon Incident to pass the National Security Act designed to institutionalize anticommunism. The National Security Act became an institutional tool used to suppress opposition groups and conduct purges of government ministries, local governments at the provincial and

county levels, schools, and social organizations (Baek 1995:236). Of course, the Syngman Rhee regime, which placed such a heavy emphasis on anticommunism, could impede the emergence of potential opposition groups and the formation of resistant elites by invoking the need to protect the system from the communist threat. Furthermore, by restraining the formation of a class-oriented interest structure, the Syngman Rhee regime was also able to fundamentally block the development of social opposition groups (Baek 1995:240). Meanwhile, other scholars have identified the National Security Act as a 'law that stands above the constitution' and as the 'evilest of evil laws' which has been used to institutionalize state violence and place excessive limitations on physical freedom (Jo Hyeon-yeon 2000:26). The so-called Progressive Party (*Jinbodang*) Incident of 1958¹³ that resulted in Jo Bong-am being sentenced to death can be regarded as an example which highlights the validity of such criticisms in cases where the personal freedom and basic rights of individuals were encroached upon as part of crises that in reality had little to do with national security.

However, Korea's geopolitical location next to the Soviet Union and Communist China, its hostile relationship with North Korea, and the constant efforts of the domestic left wing to undermine the state, inevitably led to the development of a strong security consciousness. Under such circumstances, anticommunism could inevitably be used for political ends. Furthermore, although anticommunism clearly impeded the improvement of liberal democracy and placed limits on individual freedom, viewed from the

13. The Progressive Party (*Jinbodang*) Incident revolved around the arrest of the members of the *Jinbodang*, including its chairman Jo Bong-am, because they were suspected of having contacted North Korean spies and supported the unification plan put forward by North Korea. Jo Bong-am had emerged as a strong political force after having obtained 2.15 million votes (30% of the overall effective votes) during the third Presidential Election on May 15, 1956. The members of the *Jinbodang* were arrested and their party registration was cancelled on the grounds that their principles and policies were reminiscent of the communist theories and principles of the Workers' Party of North Korea. The Rhee regime subsequently executed Jo. In 2007, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the Progressive Party (*Jinbodang*) incident had been fabricated by the Syngman Rhee regime to eliminate a political enemy and recommended the reexamination of the incident. Fifty-two years after his execution, the Supreme Court declared Jo Bong-am innocent of the charges that had been brought against him. The court concluded that the accusations that the *Jinbodang* had negatively impacted liberal democracy and adhered to the North Korean line by advocating the peaceful unification of Korea were baseless. This incident has been labeled as an example of a 'legalized murder' committed by the state.

standpoint of the protection of the communal system, it also had a tendency to be identified with liberal democracy.

Meanwhile, the influence of the leftists tended to gradually weaken as anticommunism was increasingly emphasized during the AMG and Syngman Rhee regimes marked by the establishment of divided governments and the Korean War. The political position of the left wing and revolutionary centrists was greatly weakened within political society, to the extent that both the ruling and opposition parties came to be characterized by a conservative anticommunist outlook. The ruling and opposition parties showed little differences in terms of their basic direction with regards to the means to build up the state, unification methods, and the basic approach that should be followed as far as economic development was concerned (Baek 1995:240). The conservative group within South Korea was able to enhance their political position by making active use of the anticommunist ideology that had been strengthened as a result of the Korean War. By condemning anti-government and progressive groups that challenged their political position as antinational criminals or pro-communists, conservatives were able to maintain their grasp on political power (Gang Jeong-in et al 2009:58).

Political cleavages existed within the power elite during the early stages of the Syngman Rhee regime. However, although President Rhee was involved in severe conflicts with the opposing Korea Democratic Party (*Hanmindang*) over who should exercise hegemony within the ruling bloc, the two sides nevertheless closely cooperated with one another in dealing with the threat emanating from the North and leftist opposition. Thus, as the cleavages between the two Koreas were much bigger than those within South Korea, the latter inevitably superseded the former. Here, attention should be paid to the fact that little ruptures tended to be overlooked or mended whenever the state was confronted by larger ones (Park Myeong-rim 1995:191-192). As a result of this fact, despite the chaos that has characterized Korean politics, the confrontation with North Korea is regarded as having stimulated the psychological competition between the systems that led to the national integration and mobilization which made the successful industrialization and prosperity of today possible.¹⁴

14. Park Myeong-rim has stressed that the other side of the painful national division was

In order to maintain the identity of the Republic of Korea amidst circumstances characterized by the absence of any fundamental changes in the domestic and international conditions surrounding the Republic of Korea, that is to say, amidst a situation in which the internal and external threat in terms of the potential overthrow of liberal democracy have not completely disappeared, it becomes as essential to maintain the ruling principles that have been forged through our history as those which have been stipulated in the constitutional law. The national identity spelled out in the Constitution of the Republic of Korea is one that is rooted in the very existence of the Republic of Korea. It is entrenched in Article 1 of the Constitution which states that the democratic republic is based on the notion that national sovereignty rests with the people. The people who have obtained the nationality of the Republic of Korea based on this reality must accept the legitimacy of the manner in which the state was formed and the existence of such a state, and abide by constitutional obligations such as the acceptance of the symbols of the state (Gang Gyeonggeun 2006:87). To this end, it becomes difficult to abide by the ruling principles stipulated in the Constitution when one fails to abide by the ruling ideology known as the maintenance of anticommunism (in its fundamental form as the protector of liberal democracy rather than as a political implement) that has greatly contributed to protecting the Republic of Korea. Ultimately, the primary goal behind the establishment of the Republic of Korea, namely 'the impediment of the communization of South Korea' cannot be achieved under such circumstances (Yang Dong-an 2004:16). The political, economic, and cultural developments that have been passed down to the present all become meaningless once national security has been lost.

The threat emanating from North Korea will always be present as long as the North does not abandon its desire to communize South Korea. The North's ultimate goal, once it becomes impossible to implement a full-scale war, is that of raising internal disturbances within South Korea that will eventually result in the overthrow of the government. The achievement of these goals, through whatever means possible, has become an essential element of the North's own identity. As such, North Korea's various political proposals

competition. In his optic, the division played the constructive function of bringing about growth through the competition between the two Koreas (Park Myeong-rim 1995:199).

and undertakings vis-à-vis the South Korean people should be seen as nothing more than ruses designed to achieve its ultimate goal of communizing the South. As such, we should always take precautions and not allow ourselves to be deluded by their tricks. Under such circumstances, one must inevitably conclude that communists can only be controlled through power, and not through persuasion or dialogue.¹⁵ Viewed from this standpoint, the ‘logic of negation,’ in which survival only becomes possible by overthrowing the enemy, became an unavoidable denouement. Consequently, it was only natural that the political identity of South Korea was established based on the ‘negation of North Korea,’ otherwise known as ‘anticommunism’ (Oh 1999:32). In short, anticommunism can be regarded as having functioned in Korean politics as an ideology which has helped protect the ‘state power’ (*Machtstaat*) that constitutes one of the preconditions for the implementation of liberal democracy.

Conclusion

The anticommunism that prevailed during the Cold War era inevitably did not lead to an improvement of the values of liberal democracy, nor did it contribute to political development; on the contrary, it can be said to have damaged liberal democratic values. However, the positive aspects of anticommunism should not be overlooked. Anticommunism contributed to protecting liberal democracy from the Soviet Union and Communist China, both of which neighbor the Korean peninsula, as well as from a hostile North Korea, and to strengthening national security as well as industrialization. Anticommunism also had a great impact on efforts to integrate and mobilize the nation in order to emerge victorious in the competition between the two Koreas to prove the supremacy of their respective systems. Therefore, the success of the Republic of Korea today can be regarded as the result of having selected the path of a liberal democracy that has continuously maintained a market economy and open

15. President Park Chung-hee is said to have made the following strong utterance with regards to the Panmunjeom Axe Murder Incident involving North Korean soldiers on August 18, 1976: “Sticks can be regarded as the only medicine that works on crazy dogs.”

structure, elements which in turn were made possible by an anticommunist policy that impeded the expansion of communism. Although this can be regarded as a consequential conclusion, the Republic of Korea has achieved astonishing economic development and its people enjoy freedom and human rights that were made possible by the actualization of political democratization. Meanwhile, North Korea, which adopted a socialist system, has violated the freedom and human rights of its people, and in some cases has even deprived them of the very right to live (Kwon 2011). Simply put, the prosperity which Korea enjoys today was made possible by the fact that it served as an anticommunist bulwark that was able to repulse the pressure being applied by the communist forces.

Some elements within Korean society today have condemned anticommunism as a 'legacy of the Cold War structure,' and claimed that anticommunism has impeded the development of a liberal democracy and has obstructed efforts to bring about reconciliation between the two Koreas. Some have even asserted that anticommunism should not be included amongst the ruling principles of the country.¹⁶ However, these assertions are based on a blatant misunderstanding of the true nature of North Korea. Under its military-first oriented Songun politics, North Korea continues to pose a serious threat to the security of Korea. This threat has been amplified by the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as nuclear weapons and missiles. It has also sought to bring about the communist unification of South Korea by causing dissent within Korean society through such means as propaganda and incitement as well as its unified front strategy. Viewed from this standpoint, claims that anticommunism should remain as one of the ruling principles of the Republic of Korea until the enemy's attempts to communize South Korea have realistically been rendered useless should be regarded as holding sway (Yang Dong-an 2004:18-19). Thus, it will

16. Kim Myeong-seop (2011:20) has suggested that it is necessary to separate opposition to the dogmatic anticommunist ideology into 'anti-anticommunist ideology' and 'opposition to anticommunism' per se. Kim has asserted that if the absolute value of 'anticommunism' is held up as 'the anticommunist ideology,' then anticommunism should be seen as opposition to the communist ideology in and of itself. He also emphasized the fact that a fair evaluation of the brutality of anticommunism can only be appropriately implemented when it also encompasses an analysis of the brutality of communism.

remain difficult for the Republic of Korea to give up its anticommunist stance as long as a hostile North Korea refuses to abandon its desire to unify with South Korea under communism and to bring about fundamental changes to its system through reform and an opening policy.

The one-sided calls for the abolishment of the National Security Act under the current circumstances can be seen as a conclusion reached by romantics who choose to ignore the realistic threat emanating from North Korea, or as another tactic designed to destroy national security undertaken by those who have fallen under the spell of the North's unified front strategy. The North's sinking of the *Cheonan* on March 26, 2010 and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island on November 23, 2010 are brutal acts which clearly expose the true nature of the Kim Jong-il regime that has hidden behind slogans such as 'through the strength of our nation' (*uri minjok kkiri*). Nevertheless, one can only be disappointed at the manner in which Korean society reacted to these blatant provocations. Some have even supported North Korea's distortions that the *Cheonan* incident is a fabrication invented by the Korean government to suit its own purposes, and that the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island was a justified reaction on the part of the North Korean military to the provocative military exercises being conducted by Korean forces. One cannot help but question whether such individuals even accept any element of the identity of the Republic of Korea. This can be regarded as the result of the North's endless unified front strategy¹⁷ which seeks to use pro-North Korean leftist groups within the South Korean society as their revolutionary bulwark, continuously succor like-minded groups within all classes of society, and eventually unite the low, middle, and top classes of society within South Korea. It is very difficult for the Republic of Korea to eliminate anticommunism under the current circumstances in which North Korea continues to threaten South Korea in a military manner and to attempt to achieve a 'revolution within South Korea' designed to overthrow liberal democracy through clever propaganda and

17. Pro-North Korean leftists in South Korea represent the resources which North Korea seeks to exploit in order to strengthen its revolutionary capacity within South Korea. As such, it is estimated that North Korea will use such implements as the Anti-Imperialist National Democratic Front (AINDF) as well as Office 225, which is part of Pyongyang's espionage apparatus in charge of spies and sleeper agents in South Korea, to further strengthen its support amongst pro-North Korean leftists (Yu 2011:44).

incitement efforts such as the unified front strategy. Although its tactics may have changed somewhat, North Korea continues to adhere to the strategy of achieving the unification of South Korea under communism.¹⁸ While the anticommunism based on communal principles has in some ways damaged liberal democracy under which individual freedoms are regarded as being of great importance, it can also ironically be regarded as having protected liberal democracy in Korea. Viewed from this standpoint, anticommunism and liberal democracy can be seen as having formed a cooperative relationship in Korea that has had as its goal opposition to North Korean efforts to overthrow the Republic of Korea. This is why the ‘necessary evil’ that is the National Security Act must be maintained. In conclusion, it was inevitable for Korea, which found itself confronted by North Korea, to select anticommunism. As such, the condemnation of anticommunism from the sole standpoint of democratization should be regarded as being of limited value. That being said, efforts should be made at the state level to compensate those who were unfairly victimized and damaged as a result of anticommunism through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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18. The preamble of the revised North Korean Workers’ Party Charter adopted at the third Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) Delegates’ Conference held on September 28, 2010 states: “The North Korean Workers Party shall struggle to drive out the American invader from South Korea, to end foreign control and intervention, to destroy the reinvasion attempts being made by Japanese militarism, and to actively support the struggle of the South Korean people to democratize society and ensure their right to live. The North Korean Workers’ Party will struggle to achieve the reunification of the fatherland based on independent, peaceful unification, the great national unity on our own nation (*minjok*), and to bring about the unified development of the state and nation (*minjok*).”

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Oh Il-Whan (iwoh@bohun.or.kr) is CEO of VHS Education and Research Institute. He obtained his M.A. from the University of Paris 7, and his Ph.D. from the University of Paris 10, France, where he majored in political sociology. He is the author of several books including *Odyssey of Social Science* (2001), *Issues of Modern Korean Politics* (2000), etc.

Abstract

The national identity of the Korean people is the result of shared experiences during Korea's modern and contemporary history. In this regard, anticommunism, which greatly influenced society following the birth of the Republic of Korea, was closely related to the identity of the Republic of Korea.

In general, the national identity tends to be identified with ethnic identity. In the case of Korea, which found itself under the unique environment characterized by the division of the nation into two Koreas, the identity of the political system has greatly influenced the formation of the national identity. This study focuses on the formation of the identity of the political system, and in particular on the anticommunism that is regarded as having exercised the greatest influence on the formation of the identity of the political system. Previous studies have exhibited a tendency to overemphasize the negative impact which anticommunism had on liberal democratic values and political development, while overlooking a periodic situation that was characterized by the advent of the Cold War order and the uniqueness of the North-South Korean relationship. Anticommunism, which is based on communal principles, has in some ways had a negative impact on liberal democracy, under which individual freedom is regarded as being of great importance. However, viewed from the standpoint of national security, anticommunism ironically can also be regarded as having served as a bulwark that protected liberal democracy. The Republic of Korea could not have achieved its current levels of economic prosperity and political democratization if it had not served as an anticommunism bulwark that protected its system from the political attacks of the communists. Consequently, it was inevitable for the Republic of Korea, which found itself confronted by North Korea, to opt for the 'necessary evil' of anticommunism.

Keywords: anticommunism, national identity, liberal democracy, communism. AMG, Syngman Rhee government, Korean politics