

# THE POST-COMMUNIST CONDITION IN MONGOLIA

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Mongolia is one of the countries with a socialist past which ended with perestroika in 1990 in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Today Mongolia is in a transition period. In this paper, I want to discuss two questions. First what happened with this free market oriented capitalist economy in Mongolia? And second does Mongolia have a parliamentary democracy? The Mongolian conversion from a Buddhist religious country to a secular socialist industrial country is a good example for Tibet. Also the Mongolian transition from socialism to democracy may a good or bad example for North Korea. In this paper I present the Mongolian successes and failures of modernization.

## I. POST-COMMUNISM AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Post-Communism is a name given to the period of political and economic transformation or transition in former communist states located in parts of Europe and Asia, in which new governments aimed to create free market oriented capitalist economies with some forms of parliamentary democracy.

The Socialism Project in Mongolia was not finished. It was interrupted. Now we have in Mongolia another project: Democracy . Mongolia is on the way to democracy.

The process of political transformation is now to be determined in advance. Its goal is already known – incorporation into the global capitalist system of Western liberal democracy. From that point on, the concept of transition has been almost exclusively applied to the so-called postcommunist societies and denotes a transition to democracy that began with the

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historical turn of 1989–90 and continues, more or less successfully, mostly in Eastern Europe.

Political philosophy can be defined as philosophical reflection on how best to arrange our collective life - our political institutions and our social practices, such as our economic system and our pattern of family life. (Sometimes a distinction is made between *political* and *social* philosophy, but I shall use ‘political philosophy’ in a broad sense to include both.) Political philosophers seek to establish basic principles that will, for instance, justify a particular form of state, show that individuals have certain inalienable rights, or tell us how a society’s material resources should be shared among its members. This usually involves analyzing and interpreting ideas like freedom, justice, authority and democracy and then applying them in a critical way to the social and political institutions that currently exist. Some political philosophers have tried primarily to justify the prevailing arrangements of their society; others have painted pictures of an ideal state or an ideal social world that is very different from anything we have so far experienced.

## II. MONGOLIA-AN EXAMPLE FOR TIBET?

The Mongolian experience of transitioning from a deeply religious Buddhist country to an educated country from 1924 to 1990 may be important experience for Tibet. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin and other communist theoreticians left many ideas on how to develop a socialist state. Mongolia was such a socialist state.

Above all Communism is of itself a universal doctrine. It is addressed to the whole of humanity. And the Soviet experiment was an attempt to create a model of society, which could potentially be realized in any country.

My analysis of Communism is dictated not by the desire to justify or judge it, but exclusively by the desire to understand it.

In the year 1924, Mongolia has decided to go from a deeply religious Buddhist country directly to a socialist political system which was suggested by Moscow because it was not possible to go to capitalism as usual. Mongolia had no industry, no schools, no university, and no medical system. People were illiterate. From 1924 to 1990, Mongolia developed from very underdeveloped country to industrial socialist country. Mongolia modernized their society. And, Buddhism lost his holy dictatorship. Mongolia became secular. It is a position that religious belief should not influence public and governmental decisions.

Tibet can be like Mongolia going from deep under-developed religious country to an educated industrialized better country. The Dalai Lama betrayed Tibet. Tibet people can take their fate into their own hands. Tibet can modernize its society. Of course, it is a complicated process to be like Mongolia, a laicist country. Laicism is a concept of a secular society, denoting the absence of religious involvement in government affairs as well as absence of government involvement in religious affairs.

Ludwig Feuerbach discusses the false or theological essence of religion, i.e. the view which regards God as having a separate existence over man. Hence arise various mistaken beliefs, such as the belief in revelation which he believes not only injures the moral sense, but also “poisons, nay destroys, the divinest feeling in man, the sense of truth,” and the belief in sacraments such as the Lord’s Supper, which is to him a piece of religious materialism of which the necessary consequences are superstition and immorality.

Perhaps for the Eastern European Countries, socialism was underdeveloped in comparison to Western countries. But for Mongolia socialism was a big rescue, industrialization and education. Immanuel Kant said about Enlightenment: “Have courage to use your own understanding!”--that is the motto of enlightenment. The Soviet Union demonstrated the possibility that a society could exist outside of a market economy. Until the appearance of the Soviet Union all non-market socialist models for the construction of society had remained theoretical and utopian. The Soviet Union showed that the capitalist market is not a vital condition for society to function effectively. The circumstance of the existence of the Soviet Union was limited in time and cannot serve as a repudiation of this basic fact. This means that the Soviet experience of a socialist non-market type of organization for society could in the future serve as a prototype for the creation of a society of the same type – although it could be on a completely different basis and in completely different historical circumstances

## III. MONGOLIA: AN EXAMPLE FOR NORTH KOREA?

The experience from socialism to transition in the years from 1990 to the present is also important to North Korea. But, these experiences are not only positive. We can call post communist transformation as Building capitalism . They produced oligarchic capitalism. Karl Marx believed capitalism brought prosperity to only a few and poverty to many.

In post-communist transition Mongolia entered serious economic crisis with high

inflation and output nearly in free fall. There were three big problems:

- Shock therapy
- Explosion of crime
- Oligarchs

In economics, shock therapy refers to the sudden release of price and currency controls, withdrawal of state subsidies, and immediate trade liberalization within a country, usually also including large scale privatization of previously public owned assets. American economists developed the idea of this shock therapy and many countries, like Mongolia, suffered economic crises through this idea. I call it —hegemony—. But it is an inhumane idea and is a psychic shock for people.

The explosion of crime means that during transition, all values, morals, and rights are thrown into chaos. The society is collapsing. The country is still in a situation of transition from one constitution to another constitution. There is a vacuum of rule and law. Hobbes said in his book —Leviathan—: War of all against all. The privatization was a great destruction of human capital.

The oligarchs started small. Before perestroika, they lived the lives of citizens, stuck in a deadend system, cramped apartments, and long bread lines. But as Communism loosened, they found gaps in the economy and reaped their first fortunes by getting their hands on fast money. As the government weakened and their businesses flourished, they grew greedier. The state auctioned off its own assets, and they grabbed the biggest mines, and factories through privatization.

They went on wild borrowing sprees, taking billions of dollars from gullible Asian or western lenders. When the currency collapsed, the tycoons saved themselves by hiding their assets and running for cover. This is a saga of brilliant triumphs and magnificent failures, the untold story of how a rapacious, unruly capitalism was born out of the ashes of communism.

Post-communist transformation has been an intense battle. On one side of the barricades stood radical reformers, who wanted to build a normal society. Their main opponents were rent seekers, not old communists. The rent seekers' goal was plain: to make as much money as possible on transitional market distortions. Their endeavors led to a great misallocation of resources and slumping output. Their hunger for state subsidies and subsidized credits boosted inflation, disorganizing the whole economy. All their successes skewed income and wealth distribution in their favor.

After 1990, Mongolia, like other East European countries, went from socialism to so

called democracy. But it failed. Political scientists from industrialized countries remarked that Mongolia is in the way to democracy. We have to do our homework ourselves. In socialism we had a society with no classes. Today, we have classes with no society.

And in our time, many sociologists consider the cultural revolution of 1968 the point of transition from the society of production to the society of consumption. The transformation states are mostly authoritarian and pervasively corrupt: Not democracy but kleptocracy. It is a term applied to a government subject to control of fraud that takes advantage of government corruption to extend the personal wealth and political power of government officials and the ruling class (collectively, *kleptocrats*), via the embezzlement of state funds at the expense of the wider population, sometimes without even the pretense of honest service. The term means “rule by thieves”.

#### IV. MONGOLIAN DREAM: ASIAN HIGH TECH COUNTRIES

Mongolia is a developing country like other countries in the third world. Mongolia has to develop. Through definition, a developing country is a term generally used to describe a nation with a low level of material well-being.

On the other hand, Mongolia is in a period of frustration. The Four Asian Tigers or Asian Dragons are the highly developed economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. These regions were the first newly industrialized countries, noted for maintaining exceptionally high growth rates and rapid industrialization between the early 1960s and 1990s. In the 21st century, all four regions have since graduated into advanced economies and high-income economies. However, attention has increasingly shifted to other Asian economies which are now experiencing faster economic transformation.

The Mongolian government said in 2030 Mongolia is going to be a knowledge economy. But all four Asian Tigers have a highly educated and skilled workforce and have specialized in areas where they had a competitive advantage. For example, Hong Kong and Singapore became world leading international financial centers, while South Korea and Taiwan became world leaders in information technology.

In the last twenty years, Mongolia has learned that democracy cannot develop a country. By this token it becomes clear that the combination of Communism and democracy poses a particular difficulty, because Communism understands itself as an international and even

non-national principle of power; and thus goes beyond the bounds of the national state, which is the place where democracy emerges and develops.

Even the United States, certainly a society that is relatively more capitalist than most others, is, as will become apparent, amazingly socialist and has gradually become more so over time.

Democracy is the power of the people. When this power is declared the question always arises: who are these people who are summoned to rule? So far only one answer has been given to this question and that is: the nation. The concept of the nation arose during the French Revolution in parallel with the emergence of the contemporary concept of democracy. The French Revolution was also understood as the struggle of the nation against the aristocracy. Therefore democratic revolutions and movements unavoidably lead to nationalism.

## V. MONGOLIAN TRAUMA: HISTORY

Today we have in Mongolia a historical dead end: Escapism to the past and glorification of its own history. This is more or less pure nationalism. Through psychological analyzing, this escapism to the so called glorious history is an inferiority complex. It means an advanced state of discouragement, often embedding itself into one's lifestyle, and sometimes resulting in a retreat from difficulties. A complex is a core pattern of emotions, memories, perceptions, and wishes in the personal unconscious organized around a common theme, such as power or status.

Friedrich Nietzsche has written in his book —On the Use and Abuse of History for Life—, the following about historical fever with humans: —These thoughts are out of season, because I am trying to represent something of which the age is rightly proud—its historical culture—as a fault and a defect in our time, believing as I do that we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognize the fact.

Nietzsche differentiated between beast and man why the man is historical: —The beast lives *unhistorical*; for it “goes into” the present, like a number, without leaving any curious remainder. It cannot dissimulate, it conceals nothing; at every moment it seems what it actually is, and thus can be nothing that is not honest. But man is always resisting the great and continually increasing weight of the past; it presses him down, and bows his shoulders; he travels with a dark invisible burden that he can plausibly disown, and is only too glad to

disown in converse with his fellows—in order to excite their envy. And so it hurts him, like the thought of a lost Paradise, to see a herd grazing, or, nearer still, a child, that has nothing yet of the past to disown, and plays in a happy blindness between the walls of the past and the future. And yet its play must be disturbed, and only too soon will it be summoned from its little kingdom of oblivion. Then it learns to understand the words “once upon a time,” the “open sesame” that lets in battle, suffering and weariness on mankind, and reminds them what their existence really is, an imperfect tense that never becomes a present. And when death brings at last the desired forgetfulness, it abolishes life and being together, and sets the seal on the knowledge that “being” is merely a continual “has been,” a thing that lives by denying and destroying and contradicting itself.

Nietzsche said: History regarded as pure knowledge and allowed to sway the intellect would mean for men the final balancing of the ledger of life. Historical study is only fruitful for the future if it follows a powerful life-giving influence, for example, a new system of culture; only, therefore, if it be guided and dominated by a higher force, and do not itself guide and dominate. History, so far as it serves life, serves an unhistorical power, and thus will never become a pure science like mathematics. The question how far life needs such a service is one of the most serious questions affecting the well-being of a man, a people and a culture. For by excess of history life becomes maimed and degenerate, and is followed by the degeneration of history as well. The fact that life does need the service of history must be as clearly grasped as that an excess of history hurts it; this will be proved later. History is necessary to the living man in three ways: in relation to his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance. These three relations answer to the three kinds of history so far as they can be distinguished —the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*.

Karl Jaspers: One must be bound neither to the past nor to the future. It is essential to be utterly committed to the present. (*Weder dem Vergangenen anheimfallen, noch dem Zukuenftigen. Es kommt darauf an, ganz gegenwaertig zu sein.*)