

Book Review: Communist Neo-Traditionalism By Andrew G. Walder

MUFFUH MILDRED VEUNYEH

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In the book *Communist Neo-Traditionalism* Walder talks about authority patterns in China or China's industries during and after Revolutionary period. He compares what is happening in China's industrial enterprises to what is happening in Russia (Soviet Union) industrial enterprises because these two have a similar administrative pattern which is Communism. He compares the characteristics of the post-revolutionary enterprises not only as a study of enterprise to enterprise relations but also to show how the communing society evolves. Walder places his concerns on the industrial workers, their organization, their relationships and their submission to party leaders in order to advance their positions in the enterprise and in the society. In his observations, he notices China's vibrant way of administration which he calls "Communist Neo Traditionalism". This kind of administration means the citizens and workers depend on social institutes of industries or country and on their leaders. Industries embody a system of organized dependence called "Danwei". To an extent, this was a historically new system of authority/administration as compared to old democratic and totalitarian systems. In this system workers were under organized dependency which gave them economic dependence on their enterprise, personal dependence on their supervisor and political dependent on the party leader and managers because "guanxi" (Relationship) is of great importance in this system. I think this dependency influenced people to work very hard in industries thus cultivating the spirit of hard work and good relationship because without all these the workers could lose their jobs as well as all the social benefits of (housing, health care, education for children, allowances). Walder also brings out the issue of the Communist party leaders cultivating the attitude of patron-client ties. Industry managers had to maintain good relationships with government officials "principle particularism". This divided the work forces politically and socially through a network of "instrumental personnel ties" which served as means for some industry workers to gain their personal interest. I think this system described by Walder as instrumental personnel ties was used by party leaders as control measures and check critics to shut them up through punishments, as well as to ensure dominance of the party and to check excesses of workers. I supposed this system called for suspicion and distrust due to betrayers among industry workers in China during this period. Walder writes openly about issues like "intuitional culture", "principle particularism" and "instrumental personnel ties" with a lot of rigor and respect. These methods of leadership had been identified by other writers and analysts but they did not analyze sociologically as Walder did. Walder did a lot of interviews in China, Japan, Soviet Union, United States to get material and these materials helped him to get considerable knowledge about institutional authority in all these areas. Most readers of the book ethnologies, anthropologies and sociologists have appreciated Walder's book.

Communist Neo-Traditionalism

Walder bases his work on official Chinese sources and intensive interviews with Hong Kong residents formally employed in Main Land factories so as to get vivid answers to some new research questions like reasons why many workers sided or depended on their superior. He also sorts answers to the central importance of stable vertical ties cultivated by party and management. He dismisses some old stereotype ideas about Communist Society concerning their bureaucracy and industrial life which makes us understand the system in general. The book helps readers to better understand China's Communist System. Charles Tilly of the new school of social research thinks Walder's analysis makes him prefer non-Communist industries because to him the fact that they have to show some loyalty to get instrumental and personal ties with government officials before the industry can function well is more demanding than capitalism. Walder named this kind of administration neo-traditionalism. He says the Communist society system of neo-traditionalism is fundamentally different from the image of totalitarianism or group theory, even though it shares some aspects with the totalitarian ideas, he focuses on Communist institutions that foster and organize social political control and social network as their main structural concept. There have been a lot of debate about neo-traditional society even

though Walder portrays it as successful, others scholars see it as a problem in metropolitan regions because it causes congestion high housing cost, fiscal diverse interest groups. Others like Morris 1991 still buy Walder's point of view that Neo Traditional development is a possible solution and provide common ground on which factory workers and state officials can discuss ideas.

Definition of Neo Traditionalism

The thesaurus dictionary defines Neo Traditionalism as reviving traditional method, combining tradition with newer element. For Walder Neo Traditionalism is a concept with the central notion being the formation of the communities where political loyalty is expected and rewarded with career opportunity. He calls this Communist Neo Traditionalism. He says he uses the word Neo Traditionalism in order to show the difference with other forms of modern industries or authority that are known for their relative political and economic independency of workers from management. He describes Communist Neo Traditionalism by the following elements: Labor is fixed rather than variable, Wages are not bargained, Capital is centrally planned, employment is valuable, management controls labor and the enterprise is in charge of the delivery of public goods, services of other materials. The party mostly controls workers, workers are answerable to supervisors. Therefore dependence is the order of the day in Neo Traditionalism. Walder analyses Neo Traditionalism as "organized dependence" a case where workers are economically dependent on their enterprise, politically dependent on the party and management and personally dependent on supervisors also known as "institutional culture" which is a way of association between workers and between subordinate and superior.

The factory as an institution: live chances in a status society.

Walder describes factories in China as social and political institutions. He distinguishes Communist Party factories from competitive market economies by saying that Communist factories follow a detail economy of central planning and labor as a factor of production whose cost does not affect the demand of skilled labor while market economies like America and Japan depend on labor as a factor of production whose use and cost must be kept to a minimum. As a social institution communist enterprise workers depend on the enterprises for their social wealth fare like housing access to scarce customer goods, special medication, education for kids and other public services as compare to other countries where social and public services are handle and provided outside the firm or enterprise by government, social service bodies or by private commercial transaction.

As a Political institute, Walder says the communist enterprise focuses on workers social and political identities that act like a government unit providing political services while controlling the enterprise, it handles issues of resident permits, municipal housing, court, police on behalf of workers. He compares this with Japanese and America enterprises who do not do any of these services for workers, all they need is the person's labor and care less about the person's wealth fare.

Susan Shirk views this system as a system of rewards "Vituocracy". Walder to an extent disagreed with this system because he says it has negative consequences when power is largely in the hands of enterprise managers who give social benefit to influence workers in favor of information from activities of workers. Walder also see communist enterprise as cooperation of small sized work shop that the communist put together to form enterprises. Crafting from cities and towns require from enterprises, they where group according to their various trade, which is not the case in capitals own enterprises. According to Walder these are the reasons why Chinese enterprises became large and modern with time (Nelson 1975) calls it modern factory because of their management bureaucracy. I think the communist enterprises had a good base because their formation where base on specific trade. These craft men were recruited with good experiences and different skills. In addition workers enjoyed benefits from social services and they had the opportunities to meet the state officials directly.

Walder also analyses demographic problems which where as a result of constant growth of the China's population due to good life style especially medical care. This growth forced peasants out of rural areas to move to urban areas to work in industries so there was a steady labor force but during the great leap many industries closed down due to lack of machinery and the labor force move back to rural areas. Later on the communist party restricted movements by introducing household registration movements, the Hukou system which restricted illegal immigrants from having jobs and access to food in towns. This led to employment adjustment in urban enterprises. About 27 million people became permanent workers and they produce 75% of countries gross value. Therefore making jobs difficult and causing high unemployment rate.

Walder describes the social and economic aspect of working relationships as good and advantageous to the workers who enjoy social services and state workers are favored.

Party-State in the Factory

Walder mentions that “the nature of working class politics has been profoundly influenced by the variation in the historic condition under which the proletariat enters the political arena”. Walder uses these quotes to explain the communist party involvement in the factory management. To him communist authority always play to roles, that of organization to shape political relationships by controlling enterprises (workers political association and activities). Walder says in order to do the communist party place state workers in strategic positions in factories usually mobilize workers and involve them in political activities while giving them benefits. He compares this to the authoritarian cooperation in Latin America which do not have such organizational skill. Walder to and extend sees state power on factory as problematic because it confuses the leader or manager of factory who may find themselves during political and business work at once therefore make political powers to always be present. Michael Gorsier pointed out that there can be a vast difference between formal past and actual control over uncertainty.

Theoretical Reflections

Walder at the end of the book thinks he limited his studies and writing on Chinese communalism and on the communist industries especially. He proposes that more research should be done on Neo Traditionalism in different communist societies and different context. Brantley Womack in the review of Walder book says “to an extent Chinese current problems and opportunities are as the result of a maturation of socialist institutions”. The question of whether work unit socialism can be more efficient and democratic needs to be exploited.