

Prof. dr hab. Bogusława Drelich-Skulska
Wrocław University of Economics
Institute of International Economic Relations

REVIEW OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Christopher Mark Weston

„Enhancing the Conceptual Framework of North, Wallis and Weingast: application to the case of North Korea”

(supervisor: dr hab. Aleksander Sulejewicz, prof. SGH)

Warsaw School of Economics

Collegium of World Economy

The structure of review is as follows:

1. Selection of research problem and subject of the dissertation
2. Objective and research hypotheses of the dissertation
3. Research methods
4. Structure and content of the dissertation
5. Formal dimension of the dissertation
6. Final conclusion

1. Selection of research problem and subject of the dissertation

The doctoral dissertation of Christopher Mark Weston is an interdisciplinary, interesting work, written using good analytical language. An attempt to address the case of North Korea through revision of North-Wallis-Weingast conceptual framework appears to be very ambitious and difficult task, however, relevant and valuable regarding up-to-date research carried out by many academic centers in the world. As author stated in the Introduction, North Korea “remains for many observers an unfathomable country and one that evokes measures of horror, disgust and fascination (...)” (p. 5), thus, while finding such a case as an attractive

research field, numerous obstacles and constraints need to be faced to prepare in-depth, comprehensive studies. Undoubtedly, North Korea is one of just a few isolated countries, able to maintain repressive regime and effective control over society for so many decades. Finding North Korea as the example of nation-state using violence and intrusive administrative apparatus to secure political monopoly of the one party, has already inspired many scholars and researchers, seeking for reasonable explanations of the phenomenon of this country. Importantly, author of the dissertation proved to be fully aware of the fact that quantitative analysis might be misleading when studying North Korean case, therefore, applied historical narrative measures, following criteria by Charles Tilly. Worth mentioning, as many other researchers, the author indicated the context of North-South gap and the path of development of Korean Peninsula, putting a special emphasis on the context of convergence in the early 70s, followed by consequent deterioration of the socio-economic performance of the North Korea. Various authors, including Ruediger, Johnson and Robinson, tend to study North Korea through the prism of institutional frameworks and determinants of hypothetical transformation into the market economy and application of market coordination. However, such a scheme used to address numerous variables, that determine probability of a given scenario, for instance, adopting hybrid China-like approach. The others, ie Kim and Roland, attempted to indicate, that transition is already underway, pointing out statistical indices, as Maddison did in his work. Furthermore, South Korean case could be found as reliable point of reference for the purposes of comparative analysis, also due to the fact that the gist of the former military regime seemed to differ from that emerging in the North, as argued by You. Finally, an attempt to refine and enhance the Conceptual Framework by North, Wallis and Weingast to examine North Korean case, enabled to understand the nature of the institutions and organizations “being in charge”, thus, determining what is North Korea today and what may be tomorrow. In the context of the above, it should be noted, that the title of the thesis has been formulated properly.

2. Objective and research hypotheses of the dissertation

The objective of the dissertation is “to examine and critique the Conceptual Framework of North, Wallis and Weingast and then to apply the enhanced model arising therefrom [linguistic error in the text] to the case of North Korea” (p. 1). The reviewer couldn’t have found clearly specified thesis of the dissertation, finding the statement of the aforementioned objective of thesis, namely, application of the revised North-Wallis and Weingast model to

the case of North Korea as partly inaccurate. Probably, it would be better to stress, for instance, the context of institutional determinants of the North Korean path of development or the model of state/regime through concisely, but unambiguously formulated thesis, supplemented by four theoretical hypotheses defined as theoretical, justification and empirical components of the dissertation, listed by the author when describing Analytical Framework of his work (p. 9). Subsequent elements of the introduction, namely two research questions arised from literature studies, as well as another five questions “to be addressed when considering North Korea” (p. 8-9) may induce confusion, due to lack of direct and clear hierarchy and relations with aforementioned objective and hypotheses. Consequently, reviewer has doubts whether the questions formulated below the analytical table would serve verification of hypotheses and realization of the main goal, then, constitute a component of the research methodology or were just a kind of critical comment to the review of theoretical works listed in the table (p. 7-8). Noteworthy, the Analytical Framework of the dissertation is complemented by “the central thrust” that “the Conceptual Framework can be refined and enhanced such that it accords with the original intention of North, Wallis and Weingast that promised a new approach encompassing consideration of ‘violence, organizations, institutions and beliefs’” (p. 7). Additionally, the author indicates the theory of double balance as the point of reference. Finally, two-step approach to the dissertation is declared, thus, Conceptual Framework analysis and its enhancement and refinement for the purposes of North Korean case. According to reviewer, even though this part of dissertation does not raise essential objections, it should be edited and structured more clearly. It should be emphasized, that both the main objective, as well as supporting hypotheses were verified on the basis of literature studies and considerations conducted in the reviewed dissertation.

3. Research Methods

The author used a range of research methods, appropriate to the objective and hypotheses formulated in the dissertation, namely studies and critical analysis of comprehensive literature, journals and the other source materials, however, does not indicate or clarify any research method explicitly, while justifying the historical narrative approach due to obstacles challenged by methods of quantitative or econometric sort, namely, deficit of reliable, comparable data. The content of the reviewed doctoral dissertation has been enriched with information from numerous books and articles published in leading scientific journals, ie “Journal of Economic Literature”, “Journal of Economic Perspectives”, prominent magazines

ie “Financial Times”, “The Economist”, “International New York Times”, “Wall Street Journal”, as well as government websites, reports and analysis of international organizations ie OECD, United Nations and World Bank. According to reviewer, critical analysis conducted by the author is based on comprehensive, properly selected sources.

4. Structure and content of the dissertation

The reviewed dissertation consists of seven chapters, introduction, conclusion, appendix, bibliography, list of figures and tables and summary both in English and Polish. Worth mentioning, each chapter begins with introduction, ends with conclusion, that makes the structure of dissertation homogeneous, cohesive and reader-friendly. According to reviewer, methodical and methodological solutions used in the dissertation, reflected through skillful critical analysis of abundant resources, confirms maturity of the author’s scientific workshop, as well as ability to conduct a thorough analysis, an important feature of the investigator. The structure of the dissertation is correct, the sequence and the content of the chapters do not raise objections, the logical consequence and substantive relationships are noticeable. It would be reasonable, however, to prepare tabular summary on page 27 using Microsoft Word, instead of scanning, while paying attention to text margins and placing each table within a single page for aesthetic purposes. Moreover, many tables lack references in the main text of dissertation.

Chapter I: Methodology of the Conceptual Framework

This chapter can be considered as an attempt to create a theoretical basis for the analysis of North Korean case using refined North-Wallis-Weingast concept. The author provides the essence of aforementioned interpretation of human history, accompanied by new approach encompassing consideration of violence, organizations, institutions and beliefs. An important aspect of this part of dissertation is the historical and empirical context of discussed Conceptual Framework, addressing British, US and French experiences. However, it might be useful to put some subtitles in the subchapter 1.3 to organize twenty-three page continuous text.

The first chapter confirms, that the author operates the conceptual apparatus - characteristic for discipline of analysis – freely, and has the ability - how useful in scientific work – to select information and present those issues, that are essential in terms of content of the following chapters of dissertation.

Chapter II: Critique of the Conceptual Framework

The second and the longest chapter of the dissertation is an interesting critical analysis of the North, Wallis and Weingast concept, providing comprehensive review of properly selected historical examples, starting with the Victualler's case study, Mexican "cartels" and South Korea. In the subchapter 2.3 the author addresses the issue of rents, covered by Conceptual Framework in the first theoretical chapter. Importantly, the author delivers definition of elites, that has been found as complementary term to understand the logic of evolving social order. According to reviewer, critical point of the second chapter is the description of Violence and Violent Capacity organizations, including military morale and military-industrial complex, empirically studied in the chapter 6. Furthermore, there is a reference to ideology and beliefs to understand, among others, the concept of *juche*, the role of symbols and myths, education and welfare, to be deeply analyzed basing on the example of North Korea in the last chapter of dissertation. Finally, the author confronts authoritarianism with totalitarianism.

In conclusions of this chapter author rightly pointed out both the importance of the Violent Capacity organization in historical narrative, as well as the role of ideology and beliefs to address the case of North Korea basing on the North, Wallis and Weingast Conceptual Framework (p.130-131).

Chapter III: Reconsidering South Korea's transition

The third chapter delivers in-depth comparative analysis of South Korean case in order to understand the evolution of Violent Capacity organization, economic organization, followed by explanations of economic miracle, engagement in Vietnam War, labor migrations, as well as partly questioned inclusive nature of institutional frameworks. Worth mentioning, the author attempts to address ideological issues, absent in the comparative analysis by You, included in the North, Wallis and Weingast works. At the end of the third chapter, the author lists two decisive factors laying behind South Korean success, namely, massive external inputs, including financial capital, as well as combination of state-directed economic planning and guidance (p.152-153). Again, the author proved to be mature investigator, pointing out the importance of the Violent Capacity organization in the case study, while questioning whether South Korea actually reached the status of mature natural state. According to reviewer, proposed findings, supported by skillful analysis – constitute a

significant added value of dissertation, paving the way toward the last four chapters, dedicated to North Korean case study.

Chapter IV: Political organization in North Korea

The fourth chapter outlines the political organization in North Korea, starting with the formal rules, through the rise of the Kapsan/Manchurian Partisan faction, the role of the KWP, state's lead organs and their evolution, classless system, surveillance and the role of women. Interestingly, the chapter has been enriched with the main results of the first-ever comprehensive studies on human rights in North Korea submitted by international community. The author questions the central control of the economy, while confirming state planning scheme to exist. Furthermore, the author proves, that the state of "an absence of war" enables to maintain an atmosphere of threat and tension to secure regime's existence and to conduct full control of the population (p.186-187). Finally, conclusion of the fourth chapter indicates totalitarian nature of the North Korean regime. The proposed structure of the chapter, as well as logic reasoning, confirms the maturity of the author's science research workshop.

Chapter V: Economic organization in North Korea

The fifth chapter of the dissertation, simultaneously the second addressing North Korean case, examines colonial inheritance of this country, provides summary review of post World War II period, including "three shocks" of the 90s, as well as the first decade of the XXI century, with special emphasis put on the currency reform conducted in 2009. An interesting contribution to empirical analysis could be found in subchapters 5.6 and 5.7, studying both "protection" rents and emergence of a "new class" in North Korea. It appears that, as the author argued, North Korean economic structure is more diversified and advanced that appears to be at first glance. Few examples are given here, including Kaesong Industrial Complex (SEZ), foreign trade organizations' activities, as well as joint ventures and private entrepreneurs that operate under quasi market conditions and auspices of "patrons and/or members of the dominant coalition" (p. 221).

Chapter VI: Violent Capacity organization in North Korea

The sixth chapter of the dissertation regards the Violent Capacity organization in North Korea, addressing Conceptual Framework by North, Wallis and Weingast. Starting

with reconsideration of the aforementioned concept, the author provides in-depth studies of the Korea People's Army (KPA), pointing out its role in, among others, construction, agriculture, mining, transport, as well as financial market. This part of the dissertation is complemented by the analysis of military-industrial complex in North Korea, concluded with Pyongyang's nuclear project, that used to gain attention of the international community through the years. The author indicates persuasively the importance of KPA in the "work for welfare" programme to maintain the existence of the state through military-economic nature of activities (p. 251). Among important findings, the "autonomy" of the KPA is stressed, reflected by officer class' prominence in the dominant coalition and "protection rents", as well as KPA's dual nature (p. 252).

Chapter VII: Beliefs and ideology in North Korea

The final chapter of the dissertation addresses the issue that has been omitted by North, Wallis and Weingast, however, is found by the author as critical component of totalitarian state, as stated in the chapter four, when drawing political organization of North Korea. Moreover, ideology appears to serve as the state religion in North Korea, as indicated in the chapter four, when considering human rights issues. The analysis embraces the concept of *juche*, the role of myths and symbols, ideological dimension of Kim Jong Il's period, as well as education and welfare aspects. The subchapter 7.5 is one of just a few in the dissertation that provides statistical data, regarding Human Development Index (HDI) in both Koreas, including life expectancy, an access to education, consequently, literacy rate. Noteworthy, the author finds development gap between two Koreas as a source of significant costs and challenges in the event of future reunification of the peninsula (p. 266). When concluding the chapter, the author indicates the importance of beliefs and ideology in terms of indoctrination and maintaining people's subordination to the ruling party and a state. Interestingly, the author finds the North Korean ideology, rooted in the identification of Kim Il Sung with the "father of the Nation" as a symbol inspired both by traditional forms of Confucianism, as well as certain aspects of Christianity, that has been present in the North in an earlier era (p. 266). Ideology seems to legitimate KPA's role in the state, rents for loyalty to dominant coalition, as well as *Songbun* system of stratification. Last, but not least, both ideology and beliefs are recommended by author as integral components of Conceptual Framework for the purposes of any kind of analysis to be made using the North, Wallis and Weingast approach.

In the Conclusion of the dissertation the author verified the four supporting hypotheses formulated in the Introduction, stating, that “Enhanced Conceptual Framework has achieved its objectives” (p. 277), then, extended, more holistic approach, addressing, among others, informal rules and ideological context of the social order favors better understanding of the North Korean case. Another valuable contribution of the author regarding the field of research is a set of additional comments and recommendations formulated at the end of the dissertation in order to encourage further studies on state development and social change using enhanced Conceptual Framework by North, Wallis and Weingast. According to reviewer, research undertaken by the author can be found as original and inspiring for institutional economists all over the world, however, as the author argued, more case studies and analysis need to be carried out to disseminate “fundamentally new approach to social science analysis” proposed by North, Wallis and Weingast (p. 285).

5. Formal dimension of the dissertation


When writing a doctoral dissertation, author used comprehensive literature, including mainly bibliography sources in English. It is worth noting, that Christopher Mark Weston operates freely the scientific publications, including books, journals, reports and political analyzes. The bibliography consists of 393 sources, however, lacking an appropriate classification and numeration, in some cases, also correct description and formatting (p. 289, 292-296, 299).

6. Final conclusion

In the opinion of the reviewer, evaluation of the submitted dissertation is positive. The topic of the dissertation is important from cognitive and practical perspectives, providing a solid base for further research on state development and social change of individual states from various parts of the world. It is also worth emphasizing, that the structure of the dissertation is transparent, both in terms of logic and reasoning sequences, as well as the editorial context. Its advantage is also a good use of source materials. Methodological inaccuracies pointed out in the first part of the review, as well as minor editorial errors do not change this assessment. Author was able to use multithreaded literature for the purposes of conducting research and analysis. The dissertation is written in correct, reader-friendly analytical language.

In addition, it is worth noting, that the conclusions drawn from the literature studies and source materials and provided findings may be used both by institutional economists for the purposes of further research, as well as in the didactic process. In this sense, it can be also considered, that the dissertation is an important contribution to the explanation of the phenomenon of the North Korean state.

Summing up, dissertation of Christopher Mark Weston entitled „Enhancing the Conceptual Framework of North, Wallis and Weingast: application to the case of North Korea" fully complies with the substantial and formal requirements of doctoral dissertation under the Act on scientific degrees and academic title and degrees and title in art of 14th March 2003 (Art. 13.1.). Therefore, I put a request for approval of dissertation of Christopher Mark Weston and admission to further stages of the conferment procedure for a doctoral degree.



Bogusława Drelich-Skulska